



The Changing Face of NMSBVI Outreach Programs

Children who are blind or visually impaired have so many, many needs as they progress from infancy to adulthood. Never has it been clearer to those in the field that it does, indeed, 'take a village' to raise a child with blindness. In our efforts to meet the ever increasing societal demands to educate children with their peers; to, through our educational process, provide solid, competent members of the adult work force; to ensure that all children have equal opportunities to discover themselves and their world, NMSBVI continues to look at the way we serve students in New Mexico.

History

For the past several years NMSBVI, has partnered with a variety of early intervention organizations, educational institutions, families and other stakeholders to develop programs that are far-reaching throughout the state and that address the fluctuating needs of students who are blind/visually impaired and their families. We have partnered with New Mexico State University to develop a personnel preparation program that is available to any educator in the state who desires to gain the skills necessary to teach students who are blind. We have worked with the Public Education Department to create New Mexico licensure for Teachers of the Visually Impaired as a way to begin to ensure that all children needing these services can have access to a highly qualified teacher. Through a partnership with the Department of Health, we have developed a statewide program that serves infants and toddlers, aged birth to three who are or who are at risk for a diagnosis of visual impairment.

Beginning in July 2006, NMSBVI has made the next change in the process of serving students who do not wish to attend the residential campus. The Outreach Program for school-aged students has moved to Albuquerque and joined with the Early Childhood Program to create a solid, birth through twenty-one program, statewide, that serves our children. The program is made up of the birth-to-three program, a preschool in Albuquerque that has operated since 1974 and the school-aged program.

Outreach Services to Students in Public Schools

Students who are blind/visually impaired and who attend public school, belong to that school district. School districts are intensely committed to providing services that help their students develop needed skills and competencies for graduation. NMSBVI can partner with schools to support that development. We can help in several ways:

1. If your school district would like to have their own Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialist, NMSBVI provides scholarships to the educator to complete the required coursework. Experienced Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) as well as Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) are available to mentor, support, answer questions and help an educator gain the experience needed to work confidently in the field.

Outreach Continued

2. If you think your school district is too small or does not have enough students in need of a TVI or O&M instructor, we can put you in touch with other small districts that have the same problem, so that you can explore the possibility of sharing a TVI or O&M instructor. Or we can put you in touch with TVI and O&M individuals who may be willing to contract with you for more services than NMSBVI can provide.
3. We can provide direct service through a joint powers agreement. We will let you know what your students needs are through assessment; we will recommend services; we will work with you to figure out how those services can be provided.
4. We can provide training to teams, families, or even provide district level training. We have multiple types of training available now and will develop others to meet your needs.
5. We will continue to offer state-wide training by bringing in experts in the field who can provide continuing educational opportunities for your staff and families.
6. We are in the process of piloting a Low Vision Clinic to help identify specific vision technology that students with low vision may need for their education.
7. The Alamogordo campus and the Outreach Department are working together to develop short-term placement opportunities that target specific skills for your students for whom you may not have the appropriate "in house" resources.
8. We will continue to support your district to register your students through the American Printing House for the Blind registry project so that vision specific materials may be ordered.

Simply put, the mission of our Outreach Program is to build capacity in every district that has a child with the issues of blindness/low vision. We believe that, together, we can meet the needs of your students and that, together, we can change the face of blindness in New Mexico. Thank you for choosing us to partner with you in this wonderful work!

Outreach Director

Linda Lyle has worked with the NMSBVI team since 1994. She is a Teacher of the Visually Impaired. Prior to her role as Outreach Director, she was Director of Early Childhood Programs for NMSBVI. She lives in Albuquerque with her husband; they have three sons.

"I am passionate about children and about how they learn. I believe that systems work when individuals within that system can articulate shared dreams and vision. Those working in the Outreach Program that serves school aged children have articulated for themselves that all learning happens in the context of relationship and that building supportive relationships for students, families and school teams is a priority. We will provide quality VI services in your district, for your children. Together, we are going to make a difference."

Remember the Direct Braille Slate?

Sherri Lyle, COMS/TVI

Designed by Wayne Gardin and Lawrence Hawk, this slate allows one to Braille from left-to-right because the slate has "bumps or pins instead of holes ... and a hollow instead of a solid stylus." The stylus produces raised dots by pushing paper down around the pins on the slate.

So far, blind users of the standard slate have been disinterested in using the Direct Braille Slate because the dots are reported to be less easy to read as embossed dots and "ghost" dots can be produced if the user is not careful while "hunting" for the next dot position. However, for family, friends, professionals, or those who find using a standard slate difficult, such as children and those with dyslexia, this is a handy way to leave a quick note to a Braille reading friend, student, or client.

On a personal note, I have used a Direct Braille Slate for almost twenty years and the feedback from my Braille reading friends is that the Direct Braille Slate produces perfectly readable Braille.

lhwk@esper.com
(865) 986-6174

W. Gardin & L. Hawk
Direct Slate
1683 Cattleman's Dr.
Lenoir City, TN 27772

Price: \$24; when the current stock runs out, the new price will be \$35.

Literacy at Any Time - Part II

Judy Bates, Librarian, NMSBVI

Reading aloud to your children – even to your older children – is one of the best things you can do and will create happy memories. Listening to books on tape is also a fun family activity, and there are excellent tapes and CDs available at the NMSBVI Library or your local library. Curl up with your child and a good book.

The following are great reads, and the approximate reading levels are indicated in parentheses. The NMSBVI Library has many of these books in large print, print-Braille, Braille, or on cassette.

Another excellent source of great books is the New Mexico's Land of Enchantment suggested reading website: www.loebbookaward.org.

Dog Stories:

Hello, Goodbye, I Love You: The Story of Aloha, A Guide-Dog for the Blind by Pamela Bauer Mueller (6.0). In Braille from Seedlings. The heartwarming story depicts the love journey between the boy who raises a guide dog puppy, a visually-impaired woman, and the dog, Aloha.
Jasper's Day by Marjorie Parker (2.9). Today, Riley's family is celebrating Jasper's Day. Everything they do will be in honor of Jasper – sort of like a birthday. But it isn't Jasper's birthday. The old dog's cancer has become really bad. Riley knows they can't let him suffer any longer, but letting go will be the hardest thing he's ever had to do.

Funny Read-Alouds:

Elvis the Rooster Almost Goes to Heaven by Denys Cazet (2.1). Elvis the rooster thinks he has died when he fails to crow the rising of the sun, but the chickens find a way to restore his cluck.
Mrs. Chicken and the Hungry Crocodile by Won-Ldy Paye and Margaret H. Lippert (2.3). When a crocodile captures Mrs. Chicken and takes her to an island to fatten her up, clever Mrs. Chicken claims that she can prove they are sisters and that, therefore, the crocodile shouldn't eat her.
Wild About Books by Judy Sierra (4.1). In print-Braille at NMSBVI. A librarian named Molly McGrew introduces the animals in the zoo to the joy of reading when she drives her bookmobile to the zoo by mistake.

For Older Students:

Any of Tularosa author Brian Burks' books:

Soldier Boy (5.6). A boy who grew up in the slums of late nineteenth century Chicago runs away, joins the cavalry, and fights with General Custer in the Battle of Little Bighorn.

Walks Alone (5.4). After a surprise attack leaves many of her people dead, fifteen-year-old Walks Alone, an Apache girl wounded in the massacre, struggles to survive and rejoin the refugee band.

Wrango (5.2). When young George McJunkin leaves his home in Texas and joins a cattle drive along the Chisholm Trail, he experiences the hardships of being a Black cowboy after the Civil War.

Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two by Joseph Bruchac (6.4). After being taught in a boarding school run by whites that Navajo is a useless language, Ned Begay and other Navajo men are recruited by the Marines to become code talkers, sending messages during World War II in their native tongue.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson (4.5). Also in Braille @ NMSBVI. A traumatic event near the end of the summer has a devastating effect on Melinda's freshman year in high school.

A Must-Read for Parents:

Just Enough to Know Better: A Braille Primer by Eileen P. Curran. In print-Braille from National Braille Press.

Did You Know?

The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) offers free services to New Mexicans with disabilities to help them get the assistive technology (AT) services they need.

The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) began in 1990 under a federal grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). NMTAP is funded under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988. NMTAP is a program of the New Mexico Public Education Department, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

Our mission is to help persons with disabilities enhance their quality of life through the use of assistive technology. To fulfill this mission, the NMTAP staff provides the following services to New Mexicans with disabilities and their families:

Assistive Bank of Loanable Equipment (ABLE)
Offers teachers, therapists, case managers and DVR counselors the opportunity to try out an assistive device with their students/clients prior to purchase.

Financial Loan Program

NMTAP, in conjunction with a financial institution, offers low cost financial loans to qualified persons with disabilities to purchase assistive devices or equipment.

Information & Referral

NMTAP can help you identify local assistive technology service providers, potential funding sources, information about transportation, help with finding a job, other related programs, and help determine the types of benefits for which you qualify.

Training Services

NMTAP offers regional trainings throughout the state year round. If your school district, agency, or family would like additional training on assistive technology, please contact our office.

NMDVR / NMTAP

Voice 1-800-866-2253

TTY 1-800-659-4915 FAX (505) 954-8608

The Assistive Device Lemon Law, enacted in 1998, establishes a one year warranty and other protections for consumers of assistive devices.

Under the law, the manufacturer/ dealer is responsible for repairing the device at no charge to the consumer during the warranty period.

If you or someone you know is having a problem with an assistive device, you should first contact the dealer/manufacturer from whom you purchased the device, and try to resolve the problem directly with them.

If you believe the dealer/manufacturer is not complying with the law, you can contact: Consumer Protection Division of the Attorney General's Office at (505) 827-6060 (Voice) 1-800-678-1508 (TTY) 1-800-597-4327.

The New Mexico Protection & Advocacy System can also be contacted at: 1-800-432-4632.

Jot-a-Dot • A New Tool for Braille Production

Jot-a-Dot is a new device to write Braille. Braille was originally invented in 1829, and remains the foundation of written communication in education and employment for all blind people. Jot-A-Dot has a standard 6 dot Braille keyboard, and enables writing from left to right. The six keys have been ergonomically designed to suit the widest possible hand size and shape. Jot-A-Dot is made of high impact resistant plastics and weighs less than .5 kg, so it can be easily carried by anyone to write Braille anywhere.

Conveniently, it's also possible for writers to check what they've just written, and to start writing again from the same position they stopped.

Jot-A-Dot was developed by the Australian Company Quantum Technology. To see a video of the device being used, visit www.jotadot.com.au/

Low Vision; What it Means for Students

Linda K. Jordan & Tracy Mosbarger

The field of low vision came into being early in the 20th century. Educational services to meet the needs of children with affected vision were expanded as professionals in the field developed positive educational outcomes and the number of children with affected vision increased due to medical advances.

Today students with low vision continue to have unique educational needs. There is no doubt that many students identified as “blind” or “visually impaired” have visual acuities that could be enhanced. These students could benefit from low vision devices. This group of students is in as great a need of service as those who are considered “blind.” Toward fulfilling the educational needs of students in New Mexico, a team of professionals from the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired are currently researching, designing, and seeking funding to bring alive a Low Vision Clinic designed to serve students across the state of New Mexico. Our first pilot Low Vision Clinic will be held November 10th and 11th in Artesia!

We wish to thank everyone who has been involved in this process for all their hard work and support toward helping to make the Low Vision Clinic possible; Dianna Jennings, Superintendent of NMSBVI for bringing the proposal to the board of education for approval; Carolyn Delone and Linda Jordan for giving up their summer to pursue grant applications, Carolyn is also hard at work looking at writing additional grants to fund future clinics! And a BIG Thanks to Linda Lyle for helping us push to get this pilot clinic happening!

For those individuals interested in the progress of the Low Vision Clinic, additional information can be obtained by contacting:

Tracy Mosbarger (505) 859-1309 or tmosbarger@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us

Linda Jordan (505) 491-0373 or ljordan@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us

Have You Seen These?

<http://earthfiles.com>

Offers updated reports about science, medicine, the environment and real X-Files. Earthfiles reporter and editor, Linda Moulton Howe, is an Emmy Award-winning TV producer, investigative reporter and author. Earthfiles.com received an *Encyclopaedia Britannica* award for internet excellence in June 2000 and the WebAward for Standard of Excellence in 2003.

Brain Injury Association of America

Every 23 seconds, one person in the US sustains a Traumatic Brain Injury.

An estimated 5.3 Million Americans currently live with disabilities resulting from Traumatic Brain Injury. For information about products, conferences, and living with a brain injury visit

www.biausa.org

<http://braillefont.com>

Free Braille translation program. Care should be taken when using these programs, as errors may occur. This site contains translations and tips for literary Braille code, Nemeth Braille code, computer Braille code, music Braille code, Braille formats, computer produced Braille, Braille input methods, Braille translation/transcription, Braille ASCII, 6-dot Braille alphabet, 8-dot Braille Alphabet, 6-dot and 8-dot punctuation, and 8-dot Braille symbols.

Would You Like to Be On the Tid Bits Mailing List?

Name _____ Title/Organization _____

Address _____

Attention: Sherri Lyle • NMSBVI • PO BOX 5165 • Silver City • NM • 88062

FAX (505) 534-1310 • style@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us

This document is a compilation of resources, for information purposes only.

Upcoming Learning Opportunities

AER and Lighthouse International are working together to provide easy access to continuing education for vision rehabilitation professionals. AER members receive discounted tuition, but anyone is welcome. The lessons are interactive, easy to use and they are compatible with screen reader software. They are ACVREP approved. The following lessons are available to you now:

Functional Vision and Vision Impairment
Working with Low Vision Spectacles
Understanding Loupes and How they are Used
Hand Magnifier Fundamentals
Stand Magnifiers: How they Work, How they Help
Control of Light: Principles that Help in Daily
Living Situations
Starting Low Vision Care in Your Practice: What
You Need to Know

Contact: www.lighthouse.org/ce, or
education@lighthouse.org or call
(800) 829-0500 or

Socorro, New Mexico; K-Bob's
October 21, 2006 - 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Orientation and Mobility Focus Group
Speakers:
Traffic Control Engineer
Department of Transportation
Gail Melpolder, Commission for the Blind:
O&M with VI Adults
Janice Duseau, COMS/TVI
Discussion Panel: O&M techniques

Conferences

Many conferences offer stipends to help families attend conferences so don't be afraid to call for more information.

Baltimore, Maryland
Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel
September 8-9, 2006
11th Annual BIAA Leadership Conference
"The Push and Pull of Advocacy"
Brain Injury Association of America State
Assembly, Society for Executive Director
and the National Office invite you to attend
the 11th Annual State Affiliate Leadership
Conference.
Contact: www.biausa.org

Omaha, Nebraska; Hilton Omaha
July 13-15, 2007
Families Connecting with Families
A national conference covering all aspects
of raising and educating a child with a
visual impairment; interactive sessions and
panel discussions to address parents'
most pressing interests: Braille, social
skills, college preparation, getting a first
job, children with low vision or additional
disabilities
Networking with other families and
professionals
Daycare for children
Activities designed especially for teens

For more information visit:

www.napvi.org,
www.afb.org,
www.seeingeye.org