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KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A Newsletter for Parents and Service Providers
of Colorado Children with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness
January—February 2024

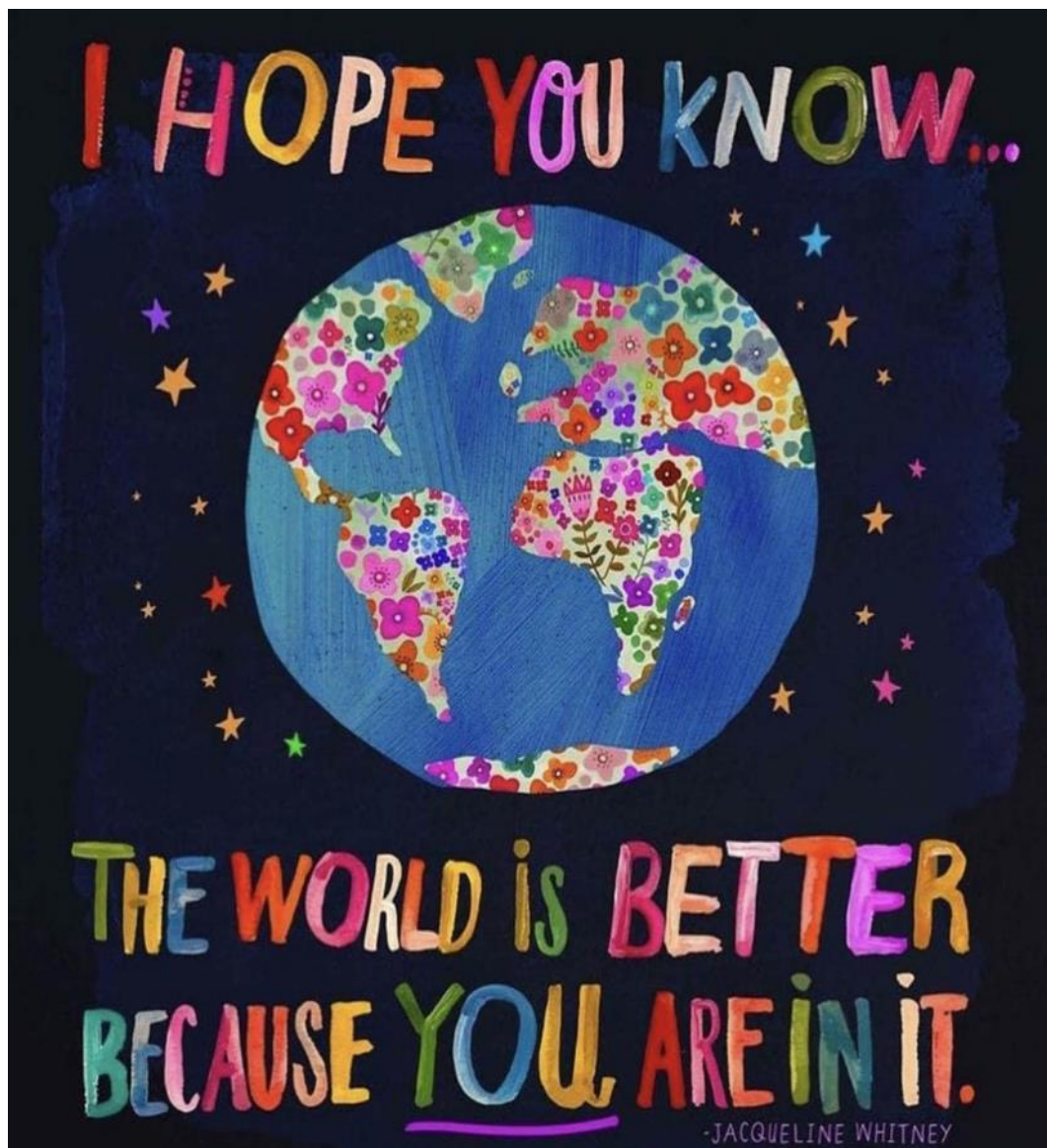


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Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Project Purpose and Staff: The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (aka the Colorado Deaf-Blind Grant) is in the final year of its federally-funded five-year grant cycle. The purpose of the project, awarded to every state and US territories is to identify children and youth with deaf-blindness and provide free technical assistance (TA) to the identified children, their families, and service providers.

Key project activities are to maintain an annual Child Count process, host professional learning events, and provide tiered and customized technical assistance. The current project has three broad goals: (1) timely identification, (2) family networking, training, and TA support, and (3) professional training and TA support, and 4) intervener recruitment and training / support.

The project has an active website, lending library, and Deaf-Blind Advisory Task Force. We have four CDE employees (**Tanni Anthony**, **Gina Herrera**, **Roberta Curtis**, and **Jessica Meisel**) and our contracted Family Engagement Specialist **Cindy Colwell** on board with the project. For training and support documents and resources, please check out our website at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-db>



Child Find Count of Colorado Children and Youth with Deaf-

Blindness: As you identify new children with deaf-blindness, please reach out to Tanni Anthony (anthony_t@cde.state.co.us) or Gina Herrera (herrera_g@cde.state.co.us) to complete the Child Count Form at any time of the calendar year. The paperwork for the December 1, 2023 was disseminated to administrative unit contacts in late November with a return date of March 15 (or sooner), 2024! If you did not receive this paperwork and believe you are the contact for your agency or administrative unit, please reach out to Roberta Curtis at curtis_r@cde.state.co.us

Thanks for all you do to ensure our learners with deaf-blindness are identified and supported.

2024 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs

Save the dates of June 24-25, 2024 for our in-person training on the important topic of ***From Interaction to Formal Language - Becoming the Excellent Observer and Thoughtful Communicator with Children who are Congenitally Deafblind*** presented by Christopher Montgomery, M.Ed., TVI. During this 2-day, interactive conference we will explore ideas and questions for the adult interaction partner of congenitally deafblind learners with emerging language.

Topics covered will include:

- Experiencing the world through the sense of touch;
- The Five steps of Interaction;
- An introduction to the Tactile Working Memory Scale (TWMS)

Our plan is to disseminate the flyer and register by mid-February. First priority will be public school teams working with a school-age student with deaf-blindness.

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project Offers Intervener Training

The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (aka the CO Deaf-Blind Project) offers intervener training and mentoring to provide support throughout the intervener certification process. Our next cohort begins in January 2024, and a second cohort will begin August 2024. Please be proactive with identifying personnel who will thrive in this important role!

This program provides a wonderful opportunity for individuals who would like to receive intervener training, and to obtain it free of charge if they are working with a student who is registered on the Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count. The program is designed to provide the background knowledge needed for working with students who are deafblind and leads to National Intervener Certification. For more information, please contact Jessica Meisel at Meisel_j@cde.co.state.us



Free Technical Assistance for Learners with Deaf-Blindness

Technical assistance is the term that field uses to mean “support” or “information” for individuals providing support to children and youth (ages 0-21) with deafblindness. This might be families of children and youth who are deaf-blind, school personnel, and agencies providing services to such children and youth.

Technical assistance may also include:

- personalized on-site consultation with family members / early intervention agency staff / school staff
- in-service training customized to the team’s needs
- workshops sponsored by the project across the state
- family support service, such as Parent Retreats, coffee hours, family outings etc.

We are here to support you! **To request a school or home visit**, complete our e-Technical Assistance Request Form located [here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/techassistrqst](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/techassistrqst)

Return the form by fax to 303-866-3808 or email attachment to Gina Herrera at Herrera_G@cde.state.co.us. You can also call Gina at 303-253-0451. Or fill out our new Google Form for Technical Assistance located at <https://forms.gle/FAWsSVo2itikrtLR6>



DeafYES! Center for Deaf Empowerment and Recovery

Video free: Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing

[Vital Signs: Health Care Access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Patients](#), this was recommended from our friends in the Pacific Basin. Please check it out and share with families as it is appropriate!

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News



NCDB Important Resources—Be in the Know!

Fact Sheet in Spanish

The National Center on Deaf-Blind (NCDB) popular factsheet, "[An Overview of Deafblindness](#)," is now available in Spanish. Like the English version, it covers what deafblindness is, how many children are affected, and how children who are deafblind learn and communicate. Please share this important resource with Spanish-speaking families and educators in your state. [¡Ahora en español!](#)

Deaf-Blindness in the IEP: There is a new "Family Key Topic" on our website. [Including Deafblindness in the IEP](#) provides information families share with educators and administrators, about practices for identifying, assessing, and educating children who are deafblind. Please share this important resource with your families with a child who is deaf-blind.

IEP Team Discussion Guide on Intervener Services – Redesigned: [Are Intervener Services Appropriate for Your Student Who Is Deafblind?: An IEP Team Discussion Guide](#) has been refreshed and updated to make it easier to read and use. The content remains the same except for minor wording changes. The purpose of the guide is to help teams make informed decisions by understanding how a student's deafblindness affects their access to information, communication, social relationships, and conceptual learning.

Intervener Definition – Now Available in Spanish: [Intervener Services and Interveners in Educational Settings: Definition](#) is available in Spanish. This document discusses the intervener's primary roles, how they participate as a member of a student's educational team, and essential components of intervener training.

OHOA-CEC Competencies Alignment Document - Updated: The Council for Exceptional Children's intervener competencies were updated in 2022, with the title "Initial Specialty Set: Deafblind Intervener."

A new NCDB document, [Alignment of OHOA Modules with Council for Exceptional Children 2022 Intervener Competencies](#), lists which competencies are addressed in each of the 27 OHOA modules. Thanks to the state deafblind project personnel and university faculty who helped develop the document.

4to24 App: For Parents of Deaf-Blind Youth

The 4to24 app is a free mobile app created for parents of youth who are deaf-blind or have combined hearing and vision loss and additional disabilities. It covers ages 4 to 24, from preschool age into young adulthood. It focuses on reaching the youth's highest potential for independence, community engagement, and employment.

There are two versions of the 4to24 app for two distinct populations: (1) deaf-blind children and youth who have additional disabilities and (2) children and youth who are blind or have low vision. They previously have presented information about the blind/low vision version, which can be found on their [website](#).

The app provides information, activities, and links to resources to inform parents about skills and experiences that would be helpful for their child as he or she grows. For youth who are deaf-blind, app information focuses on building skills and as much independence as possible, with attention to topics like developing a communication system, planning for the future, and creating a profile of the youth's abilities and preferences to share with a support network. It offers suggestions for activities that are flexible for a broad range of ability levels.

Modules of information are delivered about once a month and are self-paced, so the information can be utilized when convenient. To sign up, download the app and create an account by registering as a new user. The app will ask for some basic information on your child's age and grade so that it can start you at the right level.

To learn more about the 4to24 app for parents of deaf-blind youth, visit their [website](#).

DbI NETWORK OF THE AMERICAS

TOPICAL DISCUSSION

SAVE THE DATE

for our next Topical Discussion!

**'Building Partnerships between
Families and Schools'**

Join us to hear examples of
Family - School collaboration models in
Mexico and Canada.

This is an opportunity to share and discuss:

What's working for you? What's not
working?

Thursday February 15, 2024

3:30 pm PST/4:30 pm MST/5:30 pm CST/6:30 pm EST



<https://perkins-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0pc0GuqjMuH91wHWU2g9JBW0c7rKZSKpQs>



The Colorado Chapter for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Wreaths Across America 2023

Saturday December 16, 2023—Fairmount Cemetery, Denver

This in from Barb Galgano: The day was perfect, and the weather couldn't have been better for this year's Wreaths Across America event. Although our group was small this year, we were mighty! Our group, consisting of only eight individuals, took great pride and honor in placing over 75 individual wreaths! Participants consisted of Heather Solberg and family/friends, Annabel and Cadence Flores, Bob King, and Barb Galgano. Thank you to all of you for your commitment and dedication to making this event successful year after year!

Hope to see you next year on December 14, 2024



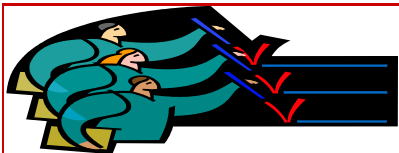
CAER group



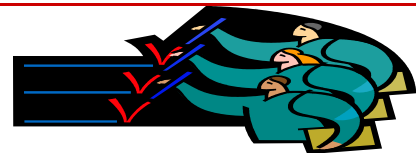
Cadence Flores (Eaglecrest High School, 11th grade)

Cadence & Annabel Flores





CHECK IT OUT!



January 31st Assessment Accommodations Office Hour for TVIs

A special office hour specifically for District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) will occur from 4:00-5:00 pm MT on Wednesday, January 31, focusing on assessment accommodations for students with visual impairments, including blindness. We invite you to join this special office hour where we can focus on testing and providing assessment accommodations for students with visual impairments, including blindness.

CoAlt and Students with BVI Office Hour—Online Office Hours for DACs and TVIs

Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at 4:00-5:00 pm

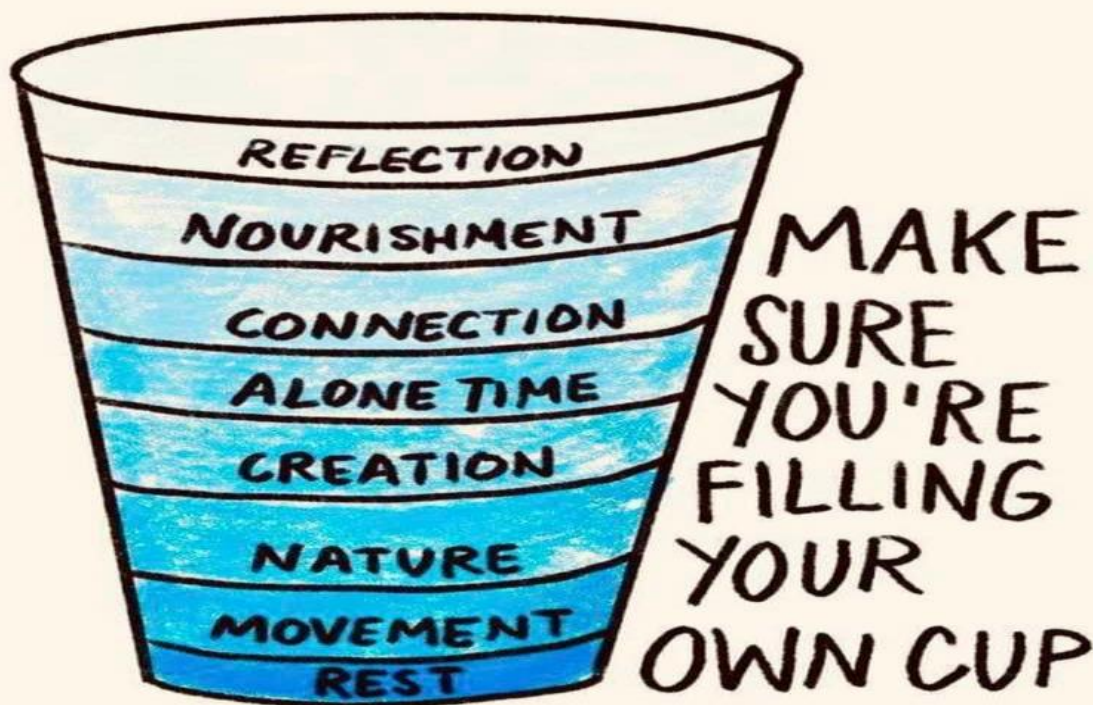
To join, use this link: [CoAlt and SWD Office Hour \(Special TVI Accommodations session\)](#)

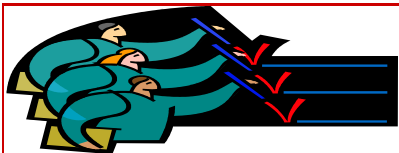
2024 AERBVI Conference Announcement

The 2024 AER International Conference will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina and the Call for Presenters is open! Their 40th Anniversary conference will be held at the Sheraton/Le Meridien Hotel in uptown Charlotte from July 24-28, 2024.

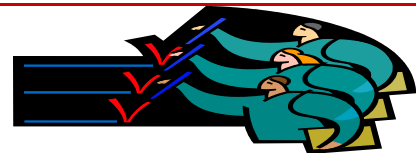
APH Professional Development for ACVREP Credit

Please remember that if you are a Colorado COMS, you need to retain your ACVREP certification to renew your CDE O&M license. If you are looking for more educational opportunities, head over to **APH Hive**. Their FREE eLearning platform for educators and families can be accessed at any time to earn ACVREP credits from the comfort of your home and office. With a growing course catalog covering categories like Early Childhood, Expanded Core Curriculum and more, we're compiling the resources you need to serve students. [Learn more and sign up today!](#)





CHECK IT OUT!



Join Math Minds Unseen: Empowering Students with Visual Impairments in Mathematics!



We are excited to share this news from Dr. Anitha Muthukumaran, a TVI in Douglas County School District.

Are you working with a student in 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th grade with a visual impairment who loves math? We have an exciting opportunity for you! "Math Minds Unseen" is a virtual math club designed specifically for students like you. Our goal is to empower you to solve problems appearing in competitive math such as in Mathcounts and AMC competitions, regardless of your prior experience.

What We Offer:

- Free Registration: Join our journey at no cost.
- Digital Accessibility: Easy access to math content. Tactile materials are provided if needed.

Math Level: Whether you're a math enthusiast or new to math competitions, if you're learning 5th to 8th-grade math, you'll find the problem sets here enjoyable and suitable. Prior competition experience is not necessary.

Club Details:

- Frequency: Monthly sessions.
- Tentative Timing: First Monday of every month, 4:15 PM - 5:45 PM MST (6:15 PM - 7:45 PM EST), starting February 5, 2024.
- Format: Solving 6-10 math problems per session with instructor-led discussions. Individual attention as needed.
- Instructors: Three accomplished high school students, a TSVI, and an accessibility advisor.
Advisors: Guidance from leaders in the field.

Expectations:

- Independence: Students should independently access and use technology in virtual meetings.

Parental Support:

Parents can assist with logistics; however, student independence is encouraged.

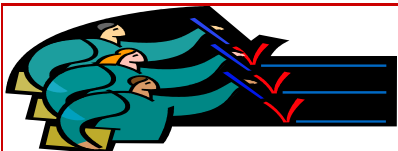
How to Join:

Email us at mathmindsunseen@gmail.com.

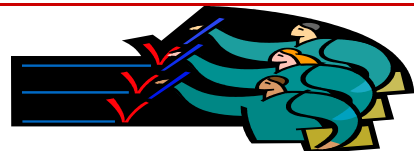
Receive Zoom details and if needed, receive tactile materials one week before each session.

For more information, visit our website at [Math Minds Unseen](#).

Don't miss this chance to enhance your mathematical skills and be part of a supportive community. We look forward to welcoming you to Math Minds Unseen!



CHECK IT OUT!



Center for Assistive Technology Training (CATT)

The Center for Assistive Technology Training (CATT) Project is a collaboration between the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). Our mission is to provide assistive technology training to teachers of the visually impaired, utilizing a “train the trainer” model, while also providing training for students and families. Devices are provided through APH and training is provided through AIDB employed trainers serving a nine-state region: The SW CATT proudly serves a six-state region, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Our trainers travel throughout the region to meet the needs of providers. They specialize in training and educating on assistive technology for the Blind and Low Vision community. For more information, go to: <https://seeitourway.org/contact-us/>

Strategies for Supporting Executive Functioning Needs

©Pathway 2 Success · www.thepathway2success.com

Have homework written down in the same spot every day



Explicitly teach executive functioning & study skills



Give an extra 3-5 minutes to organize before transitions



Schedule a weekly organization time



Create routines and practice them often



Incorporate movement during instruction

Create an end-of-the-day checklist to remember materials



Provide brain breaks during and after instruction



Clearly explain academic & social expectations



Keep an extra set of books at home and in the classroom



Use countdowns & time checks during work periods

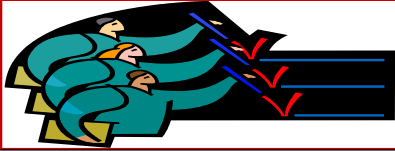


Have students set up homework binders

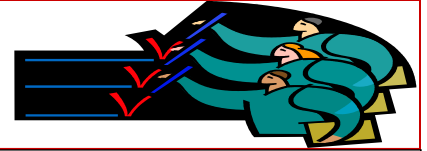
Find more tips at:

www.thepathway2success.com

Clipart by Kate Hadfield



CHECK IT OUT!



OSEP-Funded TA Centers

OSERS' technical assistance centers are ready to address your questions regarding the IDEA and best practices and alternate models for providing special education and related services, including through distance instruction. The National Center for Systemic Improvement is the primary source for technical assistance resources during the COVID-19 national emergency for IDEA Part B programs. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center is the primary source for IDEA Part C programs. For questions pertaining to Part C of IDEA, States should contact their [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center State Contact](#). For Part B of IDEA, states should contact the [National Center for Systemic Improvement](#).

** Early Childhood

The [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#) is providing State Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs with the [latest information](#) on funding and guidance.



** NCSI

The [National Center for Systemic Improvement's](#) website has a wealth of information to support educators and outcomes for children with disabilities.



** Proficient Communicators Who Are Deaf-Blind

The [National Center on Deaf-Blindness](#) has compiled and organized [Resources for Providing Technical Assistance During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). It covers OSEP guidance, distance TA, resources for families and service providers, and online learning for proficient communicators who are deaf-blind. The page is being regularly updated with input from state deaf-blind projects and national partners.



** Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

[TIES Center](#) has launched a distance-learning series that provides a framework for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to get through these new transitions, engage fully in academics online, and interact with their teachers and peers, a critical component of well-being. TIES Center is regularly adding resources to the distance learning series that offer the following recommendations to support the inclusion and engagement of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Current resources include:

- [TIES Distance Learning #1: Morning Meetings](#)
- [TIES Distance Learning #2: A Collaborative Start to Behavioral Supports](#)
- [TIES Distance Learning #3: Effective Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\) Within the Distance Learning Environment: What in the World Does That Look Like?](#)



** Accessible Materials and Technologies

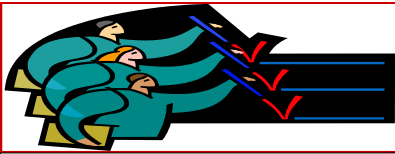
The [National AEM Center at CAST](#) has developed resources to support students who need accessible materials and technologies while learning remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.



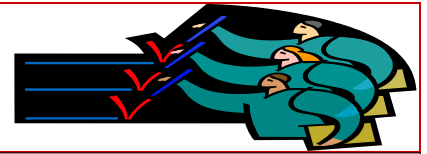
** eBooks

[Book share](#) provides accessible eBooks for eligible individuals with barriers to reading. The resources linked here will help students with dyslexia, blindness/visual impairment, cerebral palsy, and other print reading barriers to continue learning during school closures.





CHECK IT OUT!



Amazing Training Opportunities Coming Your Way!

Let's Get Accessible! Document Accessibility and Design

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 @ 12:30 - 4:30 PM

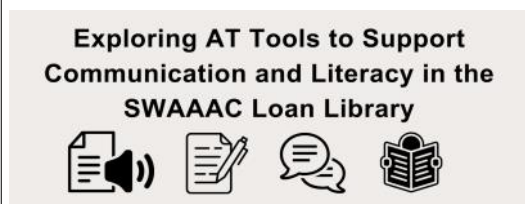


When digital resources are created with accessibility and design in mind, they become available to more people, including assistive technology users, people with disabilities, and more. This interactive training will explore current best practices in creating documents using Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and Adobe Acrobat Pro. Participants will have opportunities to practice implementing the concepts discussed and will leave with a handout that serves to describe and provide examples of key

accessibility and design considerations. While this training will focus specifically on document accessibility, similar concepts apply to all other types of digital content, including web applications, email communications, slide decks, and more. [REGISTER FOR THE SPRING WORKSHOP](#)

Exploring AT Tools to Support Communication

Wednesday, February 21, 2024 @ 3—4 PM, MST



The SWAAAC Loan Library has a wide variety of AT tools to support communication and literacy for students with Complex Communication Needs (CCNs) in CO public schools. This webinar will explore some of the newest devices and resources to hit the shelves of the loan library. They will cover a variety of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, as well as resources that support the development of literacy skills and promote active and meaningful participation.

[REGISTER FOR THE FEBRUARY WORKSHOP](#)

The Deaf. Blind. Limitless. (DBL) Conference



This conference, hosted by AIDB, will take place at Sonesta hotel in Denver, Colorado, **March 12-15, 2024**. This event is designed for teachers, professionals, and administrators serving students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deafblind. CEUs, ACVREP, and RID credits will be offered to participants accordingly. Here is the link to register: [DBL Conference Registration and More Information](#)

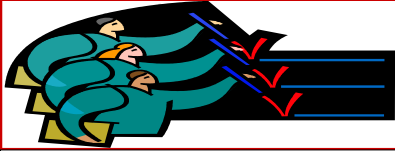
The 2024 Virtual Conference for Assistive Technology and Education (CATE)



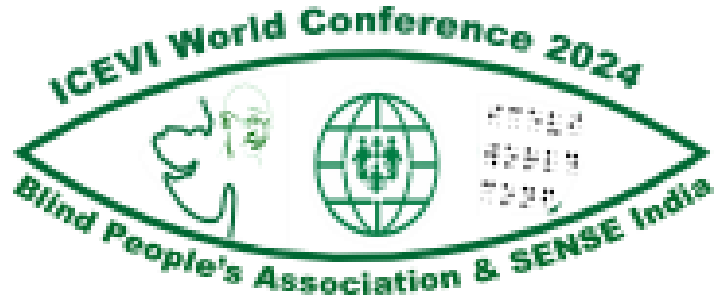
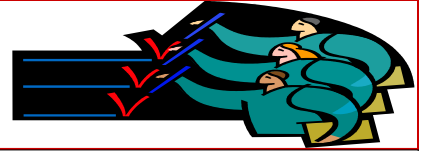
The Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE) and the Colorado Department of Education are proud to announce open registration for the 2024 Conference for Assistive Technology and Education (CATE).

This training will be held on **June 6 - 7, 2024** and will feature sessions with nationally-renowned trainers addressing a wide variety of assistive technology topics related to the academic support needs of students with disabilities.

** More information and event updates will be posted on the [CATE webpage](#) as they become available!



CHECK IT OUT!



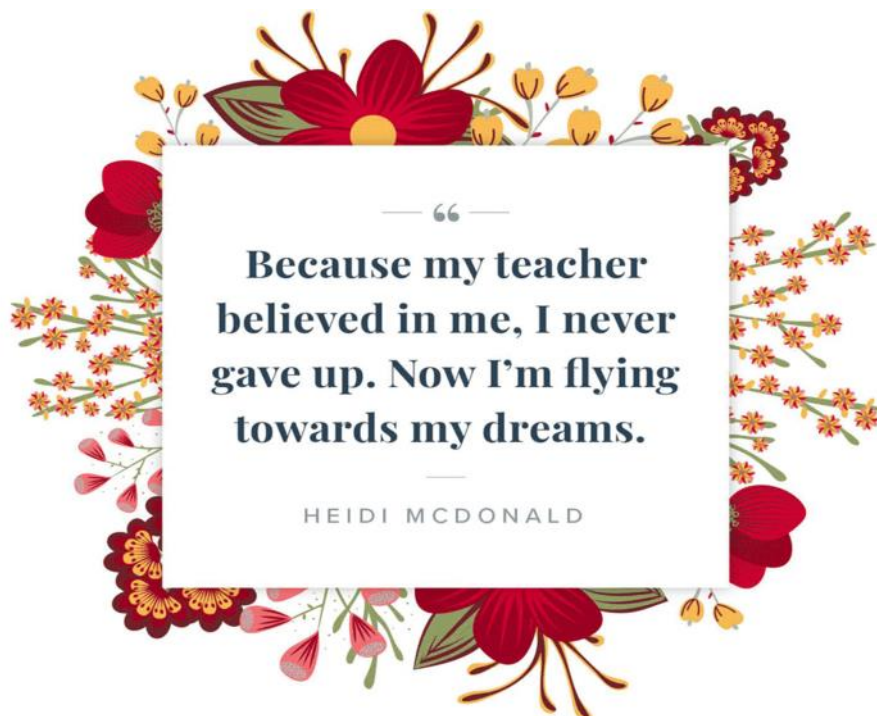
Dear friends and colleagues,

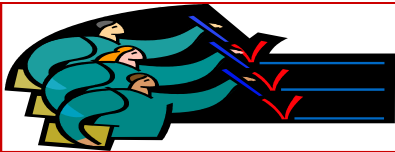
We trust your pens and keyboards are busy with preparing your abstract for the ICEVI World Conference to be held in Ahmedabad, India, on 14-17 November 2024. The conference will be held at the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University campus, and speakers and delegates will include the world's leaders in education, researchers, practitioners, technology experts, and parents who support children and young people with visual impairment.

To register for the conference, go to [Conference Registration](#) Early bird (discounted) registrations close **31st March 2024**. Full conference details are available on the dedicated conference website, <https://icevi2024wc.org/>

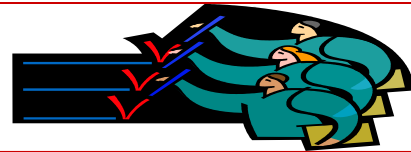
We look forward to seeing you in the beautiful historical city of Ahmedabad in November!

Sincerely, Frances Gentle, ICEVI President,
On behalf of the Programme and Host Committees of the ICEVI 2024 World Conference





CHECK IT OUT!



Recruiting for Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts and UEB Math/Science Courses

Project INSPIRE is a 5-year training grant to support braille literacy for professionals and students to build their skills and knowledge in the braille codes for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

What courses are being offered at no cost?

NEMETH COURSES

- **Course 1:** Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts and Strategies for Supporting the PreK-1st Grade Student in Building Math Skills
- **Course 2:** An Introduction to Nemeth Code Symbols Used in Grades 2 to 5 and Strategies for Supporting Elementary Students in Building Math Skills
- **Course 3:** Grades 2 to 5: Nemeth Code Symbols for Fractions and Spatial Problems, Instructional Tools, Materials and Technology
- **Course 4:** Geometry and Tactile Graphics for Students in Grades 3 to 8
- **Course 5:** Nemeth Code Symbols Used in the Middle Grades and Strategies for Supporting Math Learning
- **Course 6:** Nemeth Code Symbols Used in High School and Strategies for Supporting Math Learning

UEB MATH/SCIENCE COURSES

- **Course 7:** An Introduction to UEB Math/Science for Pre-Kindergarten-1st Grade Students and Strategies for Supporting Math Learning (You will learn the symbols used in UEB Math/Science. The methods and materials are the same as in Course 1.)

Who are the target groups for the courses?

Teachers of students with visual impairments Paraprofessionals who support braille readers
Individuals who are preparing braille materials University students preparing to become TSVIs

How are the courses structured?

Participants will: (a) complete a pre-test, (b) complete 7 self-paced lessons, and (c) complete a post-test.

What are the logistics of the courses?

- **Dates:** February 19 to April 5, 2024
- **Delivery Model:** All materials will be online. There will be an optional assignment with an answer key.
- **Time Commitment:** 12 to 15 hours
- **Happy Hours:** Three optional happy hours will be held on February 29, March 7, and March 14 from 6-7 PM Eastern.
- **You may only enroll in one course.** Courses **do not** need to be completed in order.
- If you complete all course activities and earn 80% or higher on the posttest, you will receive a certificate.

How can I learn more and sign up for a course?

Please sign up at https://uofsc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d5ggvdZ5MNyITyu. **Registrants will receive more info on Feb. 19.**

For more information or with questions email: rosenblu@arizona.edu

Website: <https://www.uscupstate.edu/project-inspire/>

Facebook: Project Inspire: Increasing STEM Braille Potential

No Limits to Learning—CCB Youth Programs

This is a 7-week program and will be offered June 21 through August 9. This longer program will provide each student with additional instruction to cement their skills and confidence. Students enrolled in this seven-week program will have the opportunity to attend the National Convention of the NFB that will be held in Orlando Florida. They will learn about techniques of airport travel, how to navigate a large hotel, a wide array of technology, meet blind people, attend meetings to learn more about the NFB and much more. To participate in this program applicants must be 16 years of age or older. They are required to submit an essay discussing why they want to attend the national convention. Except for attending the National Convention, this shorter program will cover all elements listed above, including challenge recreation activities. Applicants for the 4-week program must be 15 or older. For more information, please reach out to Chaz Davis at cdavis@cocenter.org

Resources and Materials

APH Adapted Physical Education and Sport Courts

SPORTS COURTS kit components laid out against a yellow background. On top of a stack of tactile court layouts, the floor hockey court has been attached to the magnetic board. Yellow and red 3D players are positioned around the court. Check out the SPORTS COURTS blog (<https://www.aph.org/adapted-p-e-and-sports-courts/>) to read Amanda Dennis’s interview and learn more about this unique tool.

APH Adventure and Travel Tips

- Skiing for People who are Blind or Low Vision (<https://aphconnectcenter.org/visionaware/recreation-and-leisure/sports-and-exercise/skiing/>)
- Walking Well from Head to Toe in Summer and Winter (<https://aphconnectcenter.org/low-vision/walking-well-from-head-to-toe-in-summer-and-winter/>)
- Traveling on Trains and Buses (<https://aphconnectcenter.org/visionaware/living-with-blindness-or-low-vision/getting-around/transportation/traveling-on-trains-and-buses/>)

NEW DEC Recommended Practices Monograph—Leadership: Leading from Where You Are

The DEC Recommended Practices provide guidance to families and professionals about the most effective ways to improve learning outcomes and promote development of young children, birth through age 5, who have, or at-risk, for developmental delays or disabilities. Leadership: Leading From Where You Are is the ninth edition of the DEC Recommended Practices Monograph Series, and it offers professionals and families multiple ways to implement the leadership practices across the settings in which children grow and learn. Edited by Ruby Batz, Sheresa Boone Blanchard, Deborah L Rooks-Ellis, and Sondra M. Stegenga. [Preview the Table of Contents & Message from the Editors.](#) [Purchase the Book Here.](#)

New OSEP Guidance on Assistive Technology

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) published updated guidance for the provision of Assistive Technology (AT) devices and services on January 22, 2024. This guidance includes a *Dear Colleague Letter (DCL)* and *Myths and Facts* document. Highlights from the DCL include “beyond ensuring equitable access to technology and educational materials, children with an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or an individualized education program (IEP) may also need AT devices and services for meaningful access and engagement in education. In fact, when developing an IEP, teams are required to consider whether the child needs AT devices and services. [...] These devices and services must be available, accessible, and appropriate for children with disabilities and their families” (OSEP, pg. 2). The *Myths and Facts* document highlights 28 myths about requirements under Parts B and C of the IDEA, devices, services, deployment of devices and services, costs, and funding sources. [Read the Dear Colleague Letter and Myths and Facts document on the OSEP AT Guidance Webpage.](#)

Utilize or share the Getting Started Guide 2020:

[Getting Started 2020: A Guide for People New to Vision Loss](#) offers essential guidance for those navigating the complexities of a recent eye condition diagnosis. It is a compass directing individuals toward tools, support systems, and information. Continuously updated, it acknowledges the evolving landscape, especially post-COVID-19, emphasizing virtual support systems and multiple accessible formats. It is available in English and Spanish.

TEACH Colorado Resource Guides

Do you know a future educator? Over the past year, TEACH Colorado has expanded its list of comprehensive guides to help aspiring educators explore licensure options, prepare for content exams, find financial aid and more. Be sure to share these resources with future educators in your community!

[Visit TEACH Colorado’s Reports and How-To Guides webpage for more information.](#)



Initial Licensure and Endorsement Specific to Special Education Specialist: VI

For information about the endorsement requirements for the Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21, go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

<p>Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21: (9.02)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Must hold a master’s degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution in special education visual impairment or its equivalent, as determined by the Colorado Department of Education. ✓ Must have completed a program from a regionally-accredited institution for Special Education Specialists: Visually Impaired that includes prescribed field experience requirements.
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For information about the endorsement requirements for the School Orientation and Mobility Specialist, go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

<p>School Orientation and Mobility Specialist Ages 0-21: (11.03)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bachelor’s degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution. ✓ Completion of a preparation program from a regionally-accredited institution for school orientation and mobility specialists. ✓ Completion of practicum or internship, which must be in a school setting and equivalent to a minimum of 350 hours, full-time, under the supervision of an Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) licensed orientation and mobility specialist. ✓ Passing of the ACVREP exam. ✓ Hold a current and valid ACVREP Certified O&M Specialist certificate (for initial and renewal licenses). Do not let your ACVREP Certification expire.
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Educator Talent Website

Check out the Educator Talent website! Their mission is to develop, deploy, and support talent management and human capital development strategies for districts and schools so that the most effective educators are in every school and classroom and all students are prepared for college, career, and life.

Check it out at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent>.



Funding for IEP Translation Costs

The new Colorado HB 23 1263 for IEP Translation should serve as a reaffirmation of Colorado's commitment to providing this essential service to families with LEP free of charge to facilitate meaningful and ongoing participation in the IEP process. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA) funds can be used in conjunction with other state and local funding sources to cover the costs of language interpretation services as well as for written and oral translations of finalized Individualized Education Program documents (IEPs) and other IEP related documents including but not limited to the Prior Written Notice (PWN), Consent to Evaluation, and the Procedural Safeguards. Administrative Units receive an additional annual allocation from the fiscal note attached to the HB. The AU's allocation is determined by the prior year's Multilingual Learners with Individualized Education Programs (Dually Identified Students) count as reported in the December count collection. You should have already received your fiscal year 2023 allocation.

Fact Sheet: [IEP Document Translation: HB 23-1263: Language Access for Families with Limited English Proficiency](#)

Spanish Language Version: [Traducción de Documentos IEP: HB 23-1263: Acceso al Lenguaje para Familias de Habilidad Limitada del Inglés](#)

District and School Input on the format of the Colorado Academic Standards

The Standards and Instructional Support Office seeks input on how the Colorado Academic Standards are formatted and organized on the website. [Please give us your input using this optional survey.](#) The results will help the SIS Office tailor professional learning about the current standards and consider if there might be a need to revise the current format. This survey will remain open through February 16, 2024. Please note that the actual content of the Colorado Academic Standards is revised on a rotating schedule with one third of the content areas reviewed every two years. Computer Science is currently under review and revision. For more information, please contact SIS Director, Samantha Messier at messier_s@cde.state.co.us.

Educator Recruitment & Retention (ERR) Financial Assistance Program

ERR financial assistance program funds available for fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) have been fully allocated. Applications that could not be funded will be kept active in the COOL system until an update on ongoing award balances is available, which we anticipate will be in March. Educators who submitted applications during the October/November window will be first to receive any funds that may become available this spring on a first-come-first-served basis. It is unlikely that CDE will be able to accept additional applications in the spring. An [online interest form](#) will be utilized again to capture information from educators who would like to apply for the financial assistance. In addition to providing contact information should funds become available, these form submissions help CDE quantify the unmet need for this program across the state.

Financial assistance has been awarded to 662 educators so far this year. And 208 of them filled positions in rural or small rural school districts. The average award amount was \$7,502. The retention rate of educators awarded financial assistance in the first year of the program (2021-22) is 99%.

Detailed program information and updates, including a link to the most recent legislative report, can be found at [Educator Recruitment and Retention Program website](#).



Important Reminder: Principal/Administrator READ Act Requirement

For the 2024-25 budget year and each budget year thereafter, districts are required to submit evidence that each K-3 principal and each K-3 administrator, as defined in state [rules](#), successfully complete evidence-based training designed for K-3 principals and administrators in the science of reading. CDE's Early Literacy and School Readiness team will be offering the next Principal/Administrator Read Act office hours on Thursday, January 8 from 3-4 p.m. These office hours will focus on answering questions and sharing key information and resources designed to support districts in ensuring all applicable principals/administrators meet the Aug. 1, 2024 evidence-based training deadline.

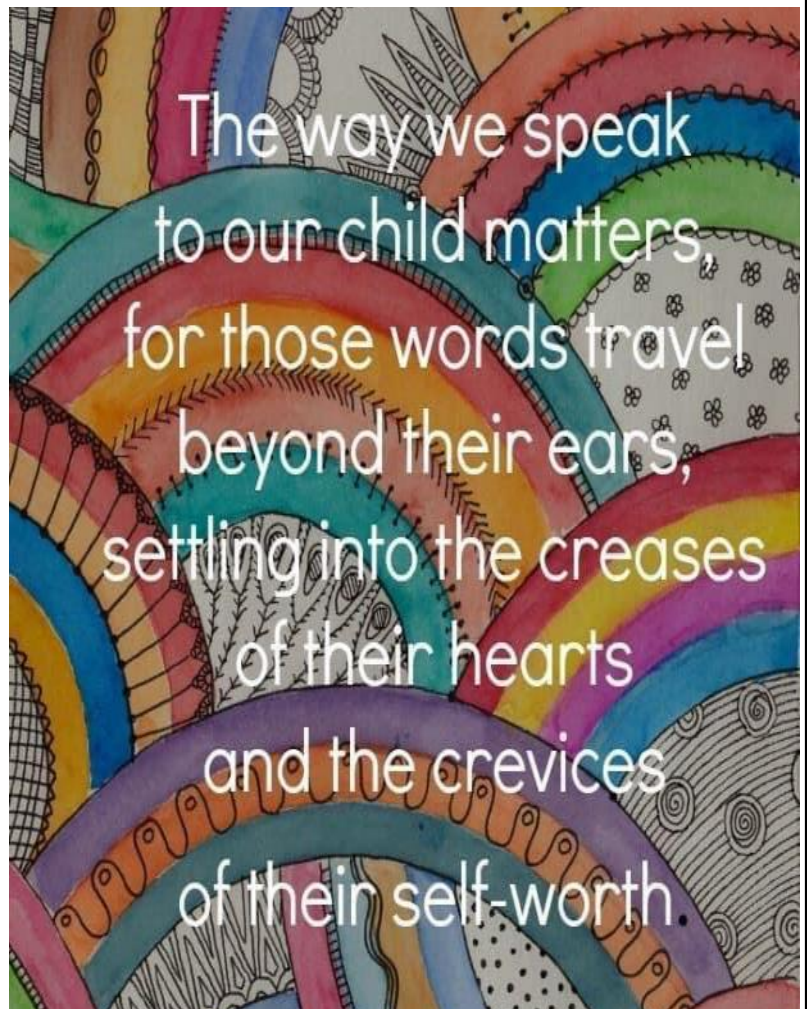
Visit the [READ Act Principal/Administrator Training webpage](#) to register and [Learn more about the Colorado READ Act Requirements](#). For more information, contact Karol Gates at gates_k@cde.state.co.us.

Teaching Learning Conditions

The Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Education Association are encouraging all school leaders, and school support professionals to participate in the statewide Teaching Learning Conditions Colorado survey. This confidential and anonymous survey will be available at www.TLCCsurvey.org until 5 p.m. on Friday, February 23.

Individuals who work in schools can get their site survey codes from their CEA representative or school leaders. The biennial survey provides an important opportunity for educators, building leaders, and school support professionals to provide feedback and insights on the teaching and learning conditions of their schools and districts.

The Colorado Department of Education uses survey responses to understand the areas where educators need resources and support. Schools and districts that reach 50% staff participation and at least five responses can also access survey results to help them understand the needs and concerns of the educators in their communities. Educators and support professionals will receive unique codes that allow them to complete the survey anonymously. This confidential survey can be completed in 15 minutes and includes questions on topics such as facilities and resources, professional development, instructional practices, student and staff wellbeing, and resources for new teachers.





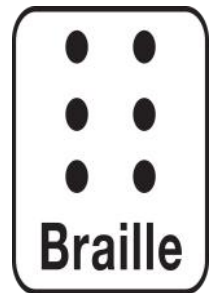
Licensure Requirements for TVIs and Orientation and Mobility Specialists Colorado Initial Licensure in the Endorsement Area of Visual Impairment

For information about Colorado licensing requirements in the area of Special Education Specialist: Visual Impairment and/or School O&M Specialist, please refer to the information contained within Educator Licensing’s Endorsement Requirements page at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

Initial CDE Braille Competency Testing Requirements

Initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate: All licensed teachers endorsed in the area of visual impairment, including those individuals employed on a temporary status (Temporary Educator Eligibility-TEE), who are completing their university program in visual impairment, must have a valid CDE Certificate of Braille Competency or a CDE Renewal Certificate of Braille Competency on file with their current administrative unit of employment. This certificate expires five years from its initial issue from CDE.



The CDE Certificate of Braille Competency must be earned no later than May 31st of the first instructional year as a teacher of students with visual impairments, with a Colorado administrative unit. If a TVI moves from one Colorado administrative unit to another, the expectation of first-year braille competency demonstration does not “reactivate” from year-to-year. The testing clock begins with the first day of Colorado employment as a TVI.

The initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate expires five years from its date of issue.

Renewal CDE Braille Competency Certificate

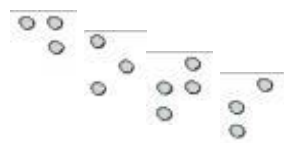
There is a one time expectation to renew the initial CDE certificate five years after its initial issue. This is accomplished by completing 15 renewal modules across the five year renewal period. These modules must be taken with one of the CDE Braille Proctors. Candidates who are in the renewal process should plan on completed three braille renewal modules during each of the five year renewal requirement.

For more information about Colorado’s braille competency requirements, please go to:

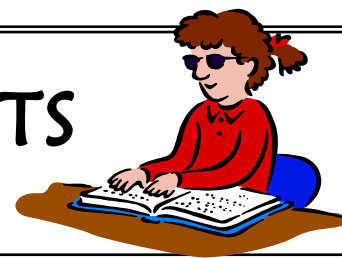
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs



You can do it !



CONNECTING THE DOTS



Colorado Braille Competency Committee

Please keep this information handy if you are in the process of earning your initial Colorado Braille Competency Certificate or working on your renewal modules. The CDE Braille Competency Committee members serve as part-time employees of the Colorado Department of Education's Exceptional Student Services Unit for their important role in: (a) developing, refining, and reviewing braille competency testing and support materials, (b) proctoring test sessions for initial braille competency and renewal modules, (c) providing approved mentoring to test candidates, and (d) other duties, as needed, to support our UEB competency process across the state.

The committee consists currently of the following individuals:

Tanni Anthony	(303) 866-6681	Anthony_T@cde.state.co.us
Nancy Cozart	(303) 905-4074	Nkcozart@cde.state.co.us
Christine Maynard	(719) 229-4981	Maynard_C@cde.state.co.us
Brenda Shepard	(303) 995-7913	Shepard_B@cde.state.co.us
Julie Wetzstein	(303) 819-7887	Wetzstein_J@cde.state.co.us

Christine Maynard is our southern region proctor/mentor for initial testing and renewal modules. Nancy Cozart, Brenda Shepard, and Julie Wetzstein are metro proctors for the renewal modules. Brenda Shepard is our northern proctor for initial testing and renewal modules. Tanni Anthony is the proctor for initial braille competency testing for the greater metro area. If there is a testing need on the western slope, please contact Tanni.

The Practice Test items have been posted on the braille competency webpage—that information and other resources can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs.

Thanks for being a steward of braille competency—our students are counting on your expertise for their specially designed instruction and instructional materials.

UEB Technical Versus Nemeth Braille Codes

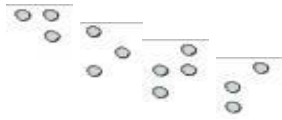
The Colorado Department of Education does not dictate a math code for students with visual impairment, including blindness. Two math codes are approved by the Braille Authority of North America. The decision about the math code is an individual student-by-student or an IEP decision. Both codes are viable for instruction and state testing.

For more information, contact Tanni Anthony at (303) 503-4647 or anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.

Braillewriter Repair

- Kirk McCall (303) 875-4527 (phone) and email km2320@msn.com
- Mark Carpenter (719) 634-8720 (phone) and email carpdiane@yahoo.com





CONNECTING THE DOTS



Seedlings

ATTENTION: EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS! Have you heard of our Braille for Beginners (B4B) program? Through B4B, we send free braille books to Early Intervention Programs who serve toddlers and preschoolers, ages birth to 3 with vision loss.

Hundreds of print-braille-and-picture books have been sent to Early Intervention Programs across the U.S. to share with the families they serve.

If you are an Early Intervention Program interested in receiving free braille books through B4B, please contact Kari, our B4B Program Coordinator at: <mailto:seedlink2@ameritech.net>

THE LEGO BRAILLE BRICKS LIVE SESSIONS Q1/2024 The LEGO Foundation is offering 3 45-minute LEGO Braille Bricks live sessions for Q1 2024. Anyone can join in: whether you are following the current online course, have participated in a previous webinar or are just curious. These monthly interactive sessions are all independent and have specific topics with special international guests. This is a great opportunity to talk live, share experiences and knowledge, and challenge each other to go further with LEGO Braille bricks. For those of you following us from the USA, you can benefit from ACVREP credits for each session. Register today, for each session!

- February 27 - 6 PM London time/1 pm NY time New pre-braille activities https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_T0GNg5YwTNK25Z06gNXdoQ#/registration
- March 5 - 6 PM London time/1 pm NY time New braille activities https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_CaiWJoV7SueDX8NQC6E9A#/registration

Introduction to The Dot Experience

This past May, APH broke ground on The Dot Experience, a museum that will highlight APH's history and commitment to braille. We are excited to set the standard for accessibility and lead as a model museum of inclusivity and accessibility. Set to open in 2025, they have updated APH's Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/APHMuseum/>), X (<https://twitter.com/DotExperience>), and old museum pages in preparation, which now direct visitors to the new landing page for The DOT Experience (<https://thedotexperience.org/>).

Hello Colorado TVIs,

I am writing to share the link to our 2024 Braille Challenge event website page for the Metro Denver region scheduled to be held at the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB) in Littleton on **Friday, February 23, 2024**.

The Braille Challenge page of the CIMC website page has been updated. Registration Forms are now available in English and in Spanish. [2024 Metro Denver Braille Challenge website page](#)

The Due Date to submit your registration forms is February 12th.

If you would do us a favor and send us a quick email if you think you have a student who will be participating, we would appreciate it. We need to forecast how many tests for each category to order early next week. Please email us the number of students and which grade level test category they will be taking.

If you have questions, call any CIMC staff. Thanks, Jim Olson



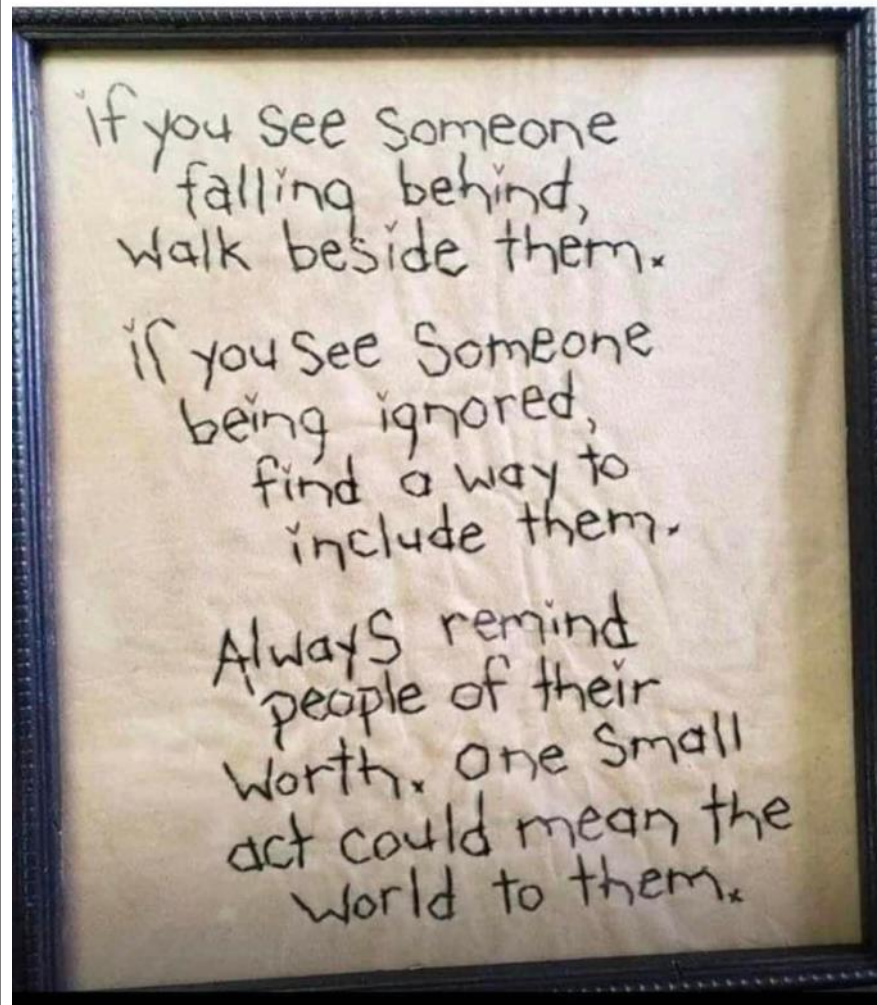
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)



Department Announces Multilingual Education Campaign

As part of its [Raise the Bar: Create Pathways for Global Engagement](#) initiative, the US Department of Education launched “[Being Bilingual is a Superpower](#)” to promote multilingual education and bolster high-quality language programs and a diverse multilingual educator workforce nationwide. This initiative, led by the Department’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), seeks to advance research-based bilingual education and language instruction in early learning settings and beyond. It also strives to further the understanding of bilingualism and biliteracy as an educational and economic imperative for student success, global competitiveness, and engagement.

OELA hosted a [convening](#) with education leaders and stakeholders on Nov. 16 in Washington, D.C., to hear [Secretary Cardona’s vision](#) and the Department’s efforts to provide every student a pathway to multilingualism. Additionally, the Secretary released a [letter to families, educators, and school leaders](#) to share resources for English learners, including Raise the Bar [metrics and data visualizations](#), the completed [English Language Family Toolkit](#) (also available in Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic), and a [Seal of Biliteracy infographic](#). (Note: [OELA will host a series of webinars](#) to help introduce and showcase resources, review all six chapters of the toolkit, and recommend ways and best practices to share it with families.)



Teachers: Leaders Shaping Lives

The US Department of Education launched its campaign to elevate the teaching profession and promote educator diversity, “Teachers: Leaders Shaping Lives.”

The campaign is headlined by a new [public service announcement \(PSA\)](#), developed in partnership with TEACH.org and One Million Teachers of Color. The goal of the PSA is to inspire more talented people — especially those from underrepresented communities — to become teachers, while also elevating and celebrating the teaching profession.

The announcement builds on the Department’s [commitment](#) to accelerating academic recovery by working with state and local leaders to address educator shortages.

A stack of colorful books is on the left, and a yellow pencil with a pink eraser is on the right, both set against a blue circular background.

Comprehensive
Literacy for All

3-DAY INTENSIVE WORKSHOP

COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION
FOR CONVENTIONAL LEARNERS



DAVID KOPPENHAVER



KAREN ERICKSON

Authors of

**COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY FOR ALL:
TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT
DISABILITIES TO READ AND WRITE**

**APRIL 29-MAY 1, 2024
EMBASSY SUITES
DENVER CENTRAL PARK
DENVER, CO**

DETAILS AT

www.campalec.com

Camp ALEC

AAC Literacy Education Communication



Calendar of Events

2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024

- February 2** **CIMC First Friday**—virtual
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- February 7-9** **Metro Low Vision Evaluation Clinic** at the Anchor Center for Blind Children
 Contact: Roberta Curtis @ curtis_r@cde.state.co.us
- February 9** **Metro Regional TVI/O&M Specialist Meeting**— Virtual
 Contact: Nancy Cozart at ncozart@lps.k12.co.us
- February 13** **Southern Region Meeting:** Host/Location: Academy 20 SD from 2:30—4:30 PM
 Contact: Melissa Shular at melissa.shular@asd20.org
- February 21** **Sound Bites**— 3:30-5:00 p.m.—College Prep Considerations for Students with BVI
 Registration: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/3003fe0868204b739e52e195b0e9e6d6>
- February 22** **Braille Challenge** at CSDB in Colorado Springs
 Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
- February 23** **Braille Challenge** at the Colorado Center for the Blind in Littleton
 Contact: Jim Olson at Jolson@csdb.org
- February 24** **Adaptive Ski Program** – Eldora Ski Resort 9ski expenses paid for – limit 8 students)
 Contact Chaz Davis at cdavis@cocenter.org
- February 26** **Deaf-Blind Webinar Series** – Conceptual Learning for Children with Deaf-Blindness: Part 1
 Contact: Tanni Anthony – Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
- March 1** **See the Future Scholarship Applications Due**
 For more information: <https://www.seethefuture.org/efl-app-info.html>
- March 1** **CIMC First Friday**—virtual
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- March 12-15** **Deaf.Blind Limitless Conference**—Denver
 Registration: www.aidb.org/dbl
- March 13** **Sound Bites**— 3:30-5:00 PM—Magnifiers and How to Use Them
 Registration: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/3003fe0868204b739e52e195b0e9e6d6>
- March 25** **Deaf-Blind Webinar Series** – Conceptual Learning for Children with Deaf-Blindness: Part 2
 Contact: Tanni Anthony – Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
- April 3** **Metro Region TVI/COMS meeting** - virtual (3:30 to 5 pm)
 Contact: Nancy Cozart at ncozart@lps.k12.co.us or Jeannie Lei at jlei@cherrycreekschools.org




Calendar of Events

2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024

April 5	CIMC First Friday —Virtual Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
April 6	Metro Regional TVI/O&M Specialist Meeting — Virtual Contact: Nancy Cozart at ncozart@lps.k12.co.us
April 10	Sound Bites — 3:30-5:00 PM—Topic to be Determined Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/3003fe0868204b739e52e195b0e9e6d6
April 11	Vision Coalition —Virtual Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
April 15 - 26	Spring 2024 SAT and PSAT Administration Dates
May 1	See the Future Fund Education for Life Scholarship Applications Due Go to: https://www.seethefuture.org/efl-app-info.html
May 2-3	CDE O&M Seminar —Adams 12 Conference Center Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
May 3	CIMC First Friday —virtual Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
May 14	Southern Region Meeting : Host/Location: Ute Pass BOCES from 2:30—4:30 PM Contact: Chloann Woolley at cwoolley@upboeces.org
June 6-7	Colorado AT Conference —virtual http://www.swaaac.org/conference-for-assistive-technology-and-education-cate
June 17-21	STEM Exploration Lab / 3D Printing and Astronomy Camp – CCB Registration: https://sjsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e9idPoolE587702
June 21- Aug 9	No Limits Learning Contact: Chaz Davis at cdavis@cocenter.org
July 24-28	AER Conference — Charlotte, NC Contact: www.aerbvi.org
November 14-17	ICEVI World Conference —Ahmedabad, India
December 14	CAER Wreaths Across America – Fairmount Cemetery, Denver

2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025

November 5-8	Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference —Huntsville, AL
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AFTER A THREE-YEAR PAUSE...IT IS BACK!
THE 7TH ANNUAL

EARLY CHILDHOOD SUMMIT

JUNE 5-7, 2024
BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

Fostering Dignity and Equality for Every Child: Strategies for Inclusive Placements, Curricula, and Instruction in Early Childhood Programs Presented by Erin E. Barton, PhD, BCBA-D

Join us as Dr. Barton guides participants through what it means to know that respecting the dignity and worth of all children is a fundamental commitment that goes beyond ethical considerations. It is a recognition of the inherent value and rights of every child, regardless of their abilities, background, or circumstances. However, many of our systems are not designed to do so. Dr. Barton will provide specific strategies for supporting the dignity of children with disabilities or children who might have disabilities and their families within early childhood programs; birth through kindergarten entry. Dr. Barton will provide a rationale for the equal worth of every child through inclusive placements, curricula, and instruction while describing what that looks like in practice using specific indicators. Participants will engage in group discussions and activities that will be used to foster learning. Participants will work in teams to create an action plan to improve services in their early childhood settings.

Dr. Barton's overarching goal will be to empower participants with actionable insights and strategies, fostering a more inclusive, respectful, and dignified environment for every child in early childhood programs. Over this two-day event, participants will explore key topics that focus on:

- Naturally Occurring Inclusive Placements
- Designing Inclusive Curricula
- Evidence-based Strategies
- Professionalism

Registration

- Begins March 1, 2024 and ends by May 1, 2024
- Sessions: half-day on the 5th, full-day on the 6th, and half-day on the 7th
- Includes: breakfast & lunch on June 6th, breakfast on June 7th, and internet access each day
- Full Summit registration - \$150.00*

*You may receive one graduate credit from the University of Northern Colorado for full Summit participation for an additional charge.



Beaver Run Resort and Conference Center

Each participant will reserve and pay for their own lodging. A block of rooms is available at a reduced rate for participants (cost starts from \$146).

Let us know about your interest in participating by completing this brief survey:

https://unco.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9uEZVl5wFhPWz9s

Direct content questions to: hasan.zaghlawan@unco.edu

Sponsored by Bresnahan-Halstead Center at the University of Northern Colorado and the National Partnerships and Head Start Collaboration Office and organized in partnership with Early Intervention Colorado at CDEC and The Early Childhood Special Education Team in the Exceptional Student Services Unit at CDE.



STEM Career Exploration Lab 2024 3D Printing and Astronomy Camp



Calling all High School Students and Graduating Seniors!
Thinking about planning your education and career journey?
Interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)?

Join a research study to help improve STEM for students with visual impairments

Funded by the National Science Foundation

Principal Investigator Dr. Thomas Madura of San José State University



As part of this study, use tactile models, sound, and hands-on activities designed for the visually impaired to:

- *Build a 3D printer and make objects using 3D printers*
- *Learn about the universe from actual scientists*
- *Learn about Moon phases and the inside of the Sun*
- *Hear the Sun and use sound to understand light and waves*
- *Build a constellation in 3D and trace the life cycles of stars*
- *Discover the shape and structure of star clusters and galaxies*
- *Learn about the Big Bang and the structure of the universe*



Complete surveys and interviews about your experience to help us improve the activities

Meet and talk to STEM professionals with blindness/visual impairments like:

- *Kenneth Silberman of NASA, an Engineer, Programmer, and Patent Attorney*
- *Nicolas Bonne, an Astronomer and Project Lead for the Tactile Universe*

Go on free field trips to local museums and STEM businesses!

Room and Board for participating students with visual impairments*

Twenty-four hour safety and supervision: camp assistants, social activities, and new friendships

**Only for students with visual impairments*



Space is limited, apply now!



When: June 17th through 21st 2024

Where: Colorado Center for the Blind, Littleton, CO

For Parental Consent Forms, Details, and to Register Visit:

https://sjsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e9idPoolE587702

Visual Impairment, including Blindness

Thank you to all of people who took time to discuss, craft, and comment on the updated eligibility criteria of Visual Impairment, Including Blindness. Thank you also to the Colorado State Board of Education for their careful view and constructive feedback on the draft version and the ultimate final version, which is effective as of June 2023.

The updated eligibility criteria can be found in the [Rules for Administration of the Exceptional Children Education Act](#).

2.08(11) A child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness has an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects the child’s educational performance and that requires specialized instruction. The term includes low vision, blindness and/or progressive vision loss.

2.08(11)(a) A determination that a child is an eligible child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness may include but not be limited to:

2.08(11)(a)(i) Visual acuity of no better than 20/70 in the better eye after correction;

2.08(11)(a)(ii) Visual field restriction to 20 degrees or less; and/or

2.08(11)(a)(iii) A physical condition of visual system which cannot be medically corrected and, as such, affects visual functioning to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed.

These criteria are reserved for special situations such as, but not restricted to cortical visual impairment and/or a progressive visual loss where field and/or acuity deficits alone may not meet the aforementioned criteria.





2024 SEMINAR ORIENTATION & MOBILITY

📍 Adams 12 Conference Center
1500 E. 128th Avenue
Thornton, CO 80241

Date: May 2-3, 2024
Time: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Registration is limited to Colorado O&M Specialist or O&M Specialist-in-university training who reside in Colorado.

Topic: **Orientation and Mobility Strategies and Communication Techniques When Working with Students Who Are Deaf-Blind**

We have two amazing colleagues who truly understand the specially design instruction required for learners with deaf-blindness. This is time of great evolution in the intersecting fields of deaf-blindness and orientation and mobility.

Carolina Gonzalez has been an orientation and mobility specialist with the Texas School for the Blind/Visually Impaired since 1990 and with the Texas School for the Deaf since 2007. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in special education with an emphasis in visual disorders from the University of Chile, Santiago in 1979. Carolina earned her master's degree in Peripatology from Boston College in Boston Massachusetts in 1981. She has been a frequent presenter on the topic of communication / O&M strategies for learners with deaf-blindness.

Requirements to Receive Credit

- Must attend both days of training
- Write a graduate-level application paper.

Fifteen (15) CDE contact hours and
One (1) UNC grad semester hour will be offered

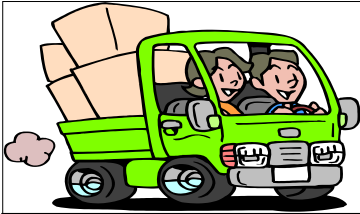
For more information or questions about
the seminar contact Tanni Anthony at
anthony_t@cde.state.co.us

Heather Withrow of Austin, Texas, is a mother of three children, one of whom is DeafBlind, one of whom is Deaf, and one of whom is a CODA*. She received a Bachelor of Arts in graphic design from Gallaudet University, a Master of Education in Special Education with a concentration in Orientation and Mobility as well as a graduate certificate in Deafblindness from Texas Tech University. In addition to serving as a mother and an advocate for Deaf and DeafBlind Texans, she works as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) and is a member of the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD) Governing Board.

[**REGISTER HERE**](#)

Questions regarding registration, please contact
Roberta Curtis, curtis_r@cde.state.co.us

📧 **Registration is open until April 15, 2024**



TRANSITION INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING ON!

Career & Canine Connections Information Webinar

Thursday, February 8, 2024, 7:00 – 7:30 PM EST

Imagine a week where career dreams meet wagging tails! Join the Careers & Canine Connections Info Session to explore exciting job options, discover the power of guide dogs, and make lifelong connections. A collaboration between Guide Dogs for the Blind and the APH ConnectCenter will offer a week long career readiness and hands on with guide dogs experience.

Hear from past participants and program staff on the benefits of participating along with having questions answered. [Register Here for Career & Canine Connections Information Webinar](#)

Press Release: DVR Awarded \$14 Million from the Disability Innovation Fund

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) participation in the Pathways to Partnerships Innovative Model Demonstration Project will increase the availability of innovative transition services for children and youth with disabilities in Colorado.

Stay tuned for more information in the next newsletter about a great new online resource for secondary-aged students involved with DVR and other resources they are developing.

See the Future Scholarship Fund

Applications Due March 1



The See the Future Fund is pleased to award scholarships to qualified Colorado students who are blind/visually impaired. The scholarship fund is made possible through generous donations. All scholarships are awarded based on academic achievement, school and community service, and education need.

Scholarships totaling up to \$42,000 may be awarded. Probable distribution will be one (1) \$12,000 four-year scholarship, one (1) \$10,000 four-year scholarship, one (1) \$8,000 four year scholarship, and three (3) \$4,000 two year scholarships. The Selection Committee will determine the final number of scholarships awarded and the amount of each scholarship.

The application deadline for this year's selection will be March 1, 2024. For more information about the application criteria / application / selection process, go to: <https://www.seethefuture.org/efl-app-info.html>

just for PARENTS

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB)

NFADB is the largest nonprofit organization serving families of individuals who are deaf-blind (combined vision and hearing loss). [Check out the NFADB website.](#)

The organization provides information on deaf-blindness, hosts webinars on a variety of topics, and is very involved in national conferences to support families of children with deaf-blindness.



National Organization of Parents of Blind Children

Founded in 1983, the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC) is a membership organization of parents, educators, and friends of blind children reaching out to give each other vital support, encouragement, and information. They have thousands of members in all fifty states plus Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

The NOPBC offers hope, encouragement, information, and resources for parents of blind or low-vision children. NOPBC provides emotional support and a network for families. They also provide information, training, and resources to empower families to take an active role in guiding their child's development and education.

Their status as a division of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), an important organization of blind people in the world, provides many benefits. NFB provides its members information about the societal, legislative, and technological issues that affect blind people. One of their most exciting activities is their annual conference. Every year since it was established, the NOPBC has conducted an annual conference for parents and teachers of blind children as part of the national convention of the NFB.

The program has grown to include five exciting days of workshops, training sessions, activities for all family members, including sighted siblings, and countless opportunities to meet blind adults and other families and children from around the country. Most states have an NOPBC affiliate chapter. Colorado has one! For more information, call the Colorado Center for the Blind at (303) 778-1130.



Calling all parents of children who are blind or low vision! Discover a treasure trove of insights tailored just for you. Dive into our "Letters to Parents" series on APH FamilyConnect, where professionals share information, stories, and resources.

[Letters to Parents: Occupational Therapy for Children Who Are Blind or Low Vision](#)

[Letters to Parents: What a School for the Blind's Principal Wants Parents to Know](#)

[Letters to Parents: A Student Teacher's Personal Journey](#)

[Letters to Parents: Youth and Outreach Librarian](#)

just for PARENTS

Family Engagement Impact Study Outcomes

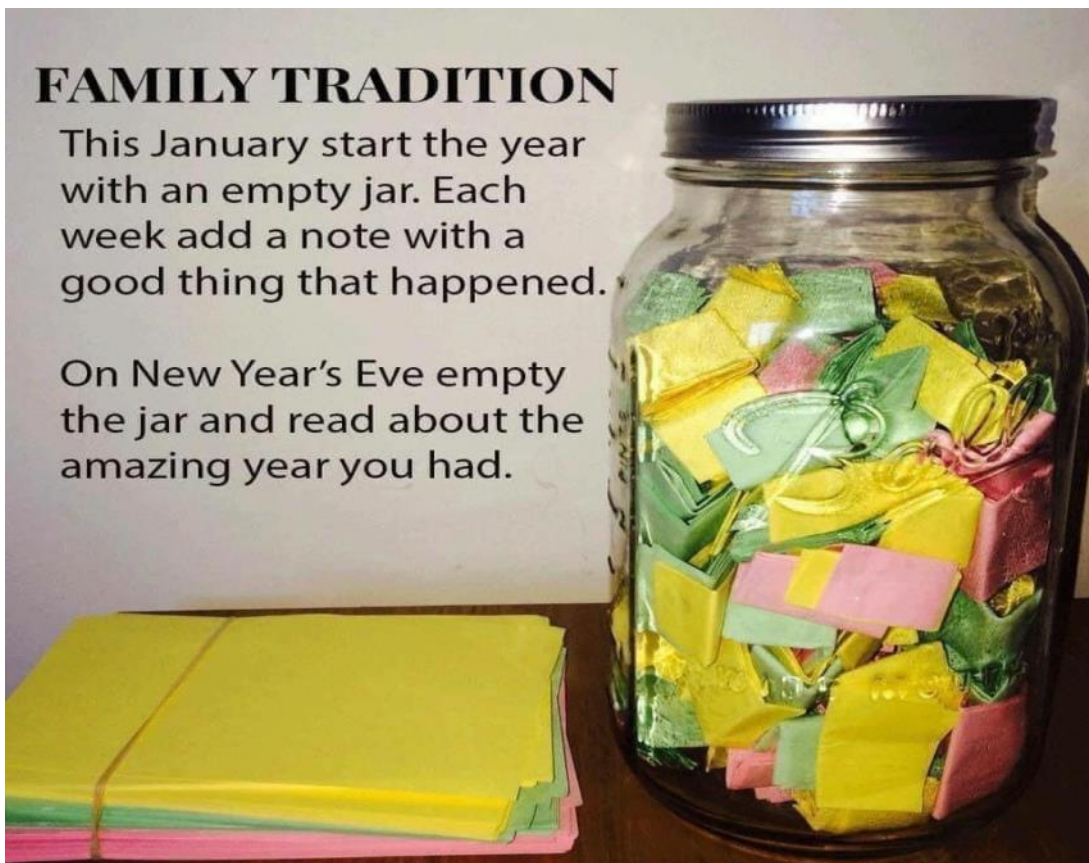
Student attendance and learning outcomes suffered during the pandemic. A study from Learning Heroes and TNTP, [Investigating the Relationship Between Pre-pandemic Family Engagement and Current Student and School Outcomes](#), found that schools with [strong family engagement had less reduction in absenteeism, attendance, and achievement](#).

Building Partnerships With Families Series

Working with families to build strong and effective partnerships that can help children and families thrive is the [goal of parent and family engagement](#). These partnerships are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families. Visit the HHS' Administration for Children and Families' Family Engagement webpage at the link above for resources, including tips, strategies, and courses, from Head Start's "Building Partnerships With Families Series."

Essentials for Parenting Family Resource

Did you know there is a [free online resource for parents and caregivers of youth between the ages of 11 and 17](#)? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Essentials for Parenting Teens webpage offers articles, videos, and activities for parents and caregivers on the best approaches to parenting teens from experts, recognized leaders in the parenting field, and parents.



just for PARENTS

Join us for a Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conference in 2024!



The Exceptional Student Services Unit at CDE plans conferences throughout the year that are family-centered and designed to offer support, information, and education to parents and professionals who are Colorado residents. [view the FAQs about PEP](#) for more in-depth information.

Parents Encouraging Parents

- Parents Encouraging Parents are conferences, abbreviated as PEP, for families and parents who have children with disabilities, ages birth to 21.
- Parents include parents as couples, single parents, legal guardians, adoptive, and foster parents.
- A support person may attend and accompany a single parent. A support person is one who is helping a parent to raise a child(ren) with a disability or who is a caretaker of the child(ren) with a disability in the family (can include grandparent(s) or other relatives).
- PEP conferences are arranged in a conference setting, and parents can obtain information relating to parents, parenting, educating, and supporting a child with a disability.
- Professionals are also invited to attend to obtain information relating to educating and supporting a child with a disability and their family. Professionals must work with children and youth with disabilities (ages birth to 21) and their families.

PEP is a non-specific disability conference that focuses on commonalities, not diagnoses.

Spring PEP Conference: Friday and Saturday, May 3-4, 2024. Location and hotel venue are pending.

Apply at one of the links below:

In English: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/094dc81ea0b24c2ba35720813508c26e>

En español: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/0699a55e9a4e456692821deed33b850c>

Please note on the application important changes as of October 2023 to the in-person PEP conferences:

- In-person PEP conferences will now be on a Friday and Saturday, rather than on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.
- Lodging will be paid for by the Colorado Department of Education if a participant's commute is more than 50 miles to the hotel traveling one way (rather than 35 miles).

Certificates will be issued for 15 hours for completing an in-person PEP conference in its entirety (rather than for 18 hours).

At the end of the day,
the most overwhelming
key to child's success is
the positive involvement
of the parents.

Jane D. Hull



HealthyPlace.com

just for PARENTS



Working Together

Working with groups? Use the Facilitator Guide!

These online courses provide families and educators with a number of strategies for working together and through conflict:

- Course 1: Intro to the Series
- Course 2: IEP Meetings & Beyond
- Course 3: Listening & Responding Skills
- Course 4: Managing & Responding to Emotions
- Course 5: Focusing on Interests to Reach Agreement

Self-directed courses!

REGISTER AT:
www.cadeworks.org

Engaging Parents in Productive Partnerships

Educators contend with significant pressures resulting from insufficient resources, inadequate professional development opportunities, and an ever-changing landscape of educational initiatives and mandates. Despite such challenges, school staff partner successfully with parents in millions of meetings each year to create appropriate IEPs for students who receive special education and related services. Engaging Parents in Productive Partnerships is an easy-to-read guide of suggestions on how educators and service providers can effectively collaborate with parents including specific recommendations for IEP meetings.

[Read the Resource](#)



IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

We are facing our first real shortage for this school year for TVI s= teachers of students with visual impairments and O&M Specialists = orientation and mobility specialists.

Please keep in touch with Tanni about our job openings. If you know of an anticipated opening in your part of the state, please begin working to recruit someone into our field by ensuring he or she has an opportunity to learn about being a TVI and/or an O&M Specialist. This may be a para-educator, a brailist, and/or a colleague already in the teaching profession. Please work with Dr. Paula Conroy to learn more about the UNC distance education / graduate program to prepare TVIs and O&M Specialists in Colorado!

If you are looking for a job, please check out the listings below and also reach out to Tanni, who will have a current list of work across the state, including TVI and O&M Specialist contract work. Together, we can fill in the needed gaps to serve all of our students.

Metro Region

- ◆ **1 FTE for TVI / O&M Specialist** in Adams 12 School District. For more information, please contact Heater Greicius at gre008602@adams12.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI (or part time)** TVI at the Anchor Center for Blind Children. For more information, please reach out to Tammy Miller at tmiller@anchorcenter.org
- ◆ **1 FTE for TVI/O&M Specialist** in Cherry Creek School District. Please contact Amy Barr at abarr2@cherrycreekschools.org
- ◆ **1 FTE for TVI / O&M Specialist** in Denver Public Schools. Please contact Michelle Chacon at michelle_chacon@dpsk12.net
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist Position** in Littleton School District. Please contact Jennifer Templeton at jtempleton@lps.k12.co.us

Northern Region

- ◆ **1 FTE or part-time TVI / O&M Specialist**—Windsor School District. For more information, please contact Jennifer Sedaghat at Jennifer.sedaghat@weldre4.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist** in Thompson School District for this school year. Please contact Maddie Karanevichas for more information at maddie.karanevich@tsd.org





IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

Southern Region

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI Position**—Colorado Springs District 11. For more information, please contact Nancy Melo Maresh at nancy.mereshmelo@d11.org or (719) 520-2158.
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI Position**—El Paso County District 49. For more information, please contact Rhonda May at rhonda.may@d49.org or (719) 491-4630.
- ◆ **1 FTE** for a Secondary Social Studies teacher at CSDB. Please contact Jamie Lugo for more information at jlugo@csdb.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI** for a preschool /BVI position at the School for the Blind at CSDB. For more information, contact Jennifer Thompson at jthompson@csdb.org
- ◆ **1 PTE TVI Contract Work**—Widefield School District 3 for SY 2024-2025. For more information, contact Rachel Lake at lakerachel@wsd3.org

Western Region

- ◆ **1 TVI / O&M Position** in the Colorado River BOCES. For more information, please contact Julie Goldberg at Julie Goldberg at goldberg@crboces.org
- ◆ **1 PTE TVI/O&M Specialist**—Northwest BOCES. For more information, please contact Courtney Lincoln at Courtney.Lincoln@nwboces.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI/O&M Specialist** with Mountain BOCES and Summit School District. Please contact Susan Udenberg at sudenberg@mtnboces.org or Ellen Clark at ellen.clark@summitk12.org.
- ◆ **Contract Work TVI and O&M Specialist** in Rio Blanco BOCES. For more information, please contact Bradley Bauer at brad.bauer@meeker.k12.co.us.

Across Metro, Northern, and Western Regions

- ◆ **Contract Work with Flexible Hours**—A Shared Vision. For more information about working in many areas of the state with the 0-2 population, please contact Steve Lindauer at slindauer@asharedvision.org.

TVIs and O&M Specialists—If you are getting ready to retire, please do not let your CDE TVI and/or O&M licenses expire, as you are in a great position to keep contributing with part-time or substitute work. Please keep in touch with Tanni, if you are interested in this type of work after your retirement! We are seeing many retired TVIs and O&M Specialists come back to contribute as subs for maternity leave, do contract work, and/or work at A Shared Vision. If you want to be on the CDE's TVI and/or O&M Specialist contractor list, please be in touch with Tanni at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.

Virtual Meeting – January 24, 2024

Persons in Attendance: Tanni Anthony, Paula Conroy, Nancy Cozart, Chaz Davis, Donna Keale, Paula Landry, Tammy Miller, Erin Schroeder, Jim Olson, Michelle Reed, and Chloann Woolley

Guest: Cheryl Austin **Absent:** Melissa French

MISSION OF THE VISION COALITION: The purpose of the Vision Coalition is to bring the collective resources of the group together to address state priorities improving services to students who are blind/visually impaired. (April 1998)

ACRONYM LEGEND

ASV	A Shared Vision
BVI	Blind / Visually Impaired
CAER	CO Chapter of the Association of the Education/Rehabilitation of the Blind/Visually Impaired
CCB	Colorado Center for the Blind
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CIMC	Colorado Instructional Materials Center
COMS	certified orientation and mobility specialist
CSDB	Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
ESSU	Exceptional Student Services Unit
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
TVI/TSVI	Teacher of students with blindness/visual impairments

MEMBERS OF VISION COALITION FOR THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR

- A Shared Vision – Paula Landry
- Anchor Center for Blind Children – Tammy Miller
- Colorado AER Chapter – Paula Conroy
- Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program – Chaz Davis
- Colorado Department of Education – Tanni Anthony
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Michele Reed
- Colorado Instructional Materials Center – Jim Olson
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind – Jamie Lugo
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Outreach – Donna Keale
- Metro TVI / COMS– Nancy Cozart
- Northern TVI / COMS – Melissa French
- Southern TVI / COMS – Chloann Woolley
- University of Northern Colorado – Paula Conroy
- Western TVI / COMS – Erin Schroeder

Norms of the Vision Coalition: Stay present. Verbally identify yourself before you speak. If we get into a serious discussion, please wait for your turn (we will assign someone to take stock of who is next in the discussion). Vision Coalition meetings are a confidential environment. We are here for the common good of students, families, and our profession. In the spirit of improvement, we will bring critical issues to the table.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Our last metro meeting was focusing on strategies Dr. Cathy Smyth presented on Dr. Rachel Pilling's Make It Easier (MIE) concept. Thanks to DPS for organizing the event and Cathy for sharing the information! We also discussed the new VIB eligibility guidelines; job titles (TVI vs Vision Teacher) and the language we use to describe our roles; and implementing information from the state conference.

Thanks to Peg Collins from Douglas Co. for setting up the event in early January for a tour of the Sensory Gym in Denver. Learn more at the following link.

<https://www.thesensoryclub.com/denver>

2nd Semester Meeting Dates: (virtual meetings only now) Thursday, February 9th 3:30 to 5 p.m. hosted by Littleton Public Schools and Thursday, April 6th 3:30 to 5 p.m. host TBA.

Vacancies: full time TVI / COMS in Denver, Littleton, and Cherry Creek School Districts and Anchor Center for Blind Children. Part time in Englewood School District.

Northern Region (Melissa French)

Aryn McNicol is working to schedule an April Northern meeting. Hanna Waldman has moved to St. Vrain School District to fill the vacant position left by Christopher Holmes, who retired midyear.

Vacancies: Full time opening in Windsor School District and Thompson School District. There will also be contract work available in the northern region for next year.

Western Region (Erin Schroeder)

The Western Slope TVI/COMS have continued to meet virtually this school year. We have met to support one another with questions about IEPs, eligibility, and strategies for different levels of learners. We appreciated getting the brailled CMAS practice tests this year. It will be helpful for students to be able to practice with their peers. Most of us typically attend the deaf-blind webinars in addition to the Sound Bites professional learning conversations. We always look forward to learning something new.

Vacancies: There are openings for full time / contract work in Mountain BOCES, Summit School District, Colorado River BOCES, and NW BOCES.

Discussion: It is great to see the braille-format CMAS practice tests. Tanni reminded everyone that CDE Assessment Unit is hosting a webinar on January 31th specific to CMAS allowable accommodations for students with visual impairments, including blindness.

Southern Region (Chloann Woolley)

The Southern Region has had a great attendance with our traveling meetings. Our meetings held this quarter were hosted by DVR and District 49 (Falcon).

The meeting on October 24th hosted by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) was a full house of attendees that were greeted with donuts. The DVR staff shared their department procedure, identified team members, and explained their roles. Handouts were shared about creating a work ability statement, Referral for Pre-Employment Transition Services, DVR Handbook, and general overview of services. See linked DVR Handout.

On January 9, 2024 - District 49 (Falcon) hosted the meeting with poppy seed cake and tea, thank you Lori Mattick and Lori Wilson. Sara Noel (CSDB Outreach), Deb Andrews (District 20), Melissa Shular (District 20), and Ruthie Osborn (District 20) shared their best take-aways from the Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference held November 29 - December 2, 2023, in St. Pete Beach, Florida. They indicated that the GITWL Conference will continue. The next conference will be in Alabama in 2025. Along with shared secession highlights linked below, a major take away reported was that the Learning Media Plan process may be changing its focus. The LMP is in the process of merging into more understanding that learners with low vision and blindness have a toolbox of audio, visual, and tactile supports that can provide access to literacy, not identified as a primary and/or secondary literacy mode but defining the literacy task/activity to be completed using the appropriate tool (mode) for success. Getting in Touch with Literacy Handout

The Southern Region TVI-DVR group has a Microsoft teams site established to share meeting minutes and shared documents. Thank you to Jim Olson for making the information accessible to everyone.

Future Southern Region TVI-DVR Meetings:

February 13, 2024 – Hosted by El Paso County District #20 (Air Academy). Please contact Melissa Shular for location details. The meeting agenda has changed. Meeting participants will be going under blindfolds. Please bring your long white cane and a sleep shade (Mind fold brand if you have one).

May 14, 2024 - Hosted by Ute Pass BOCES. Please contact Chloann Woolley for location details. The agenda will include summer programs, training, and scheduling meeting dates and topics for the following year.

Vacancies: Full time positions in D49 and Colorado Springs 11. There is part time work in Widefield.

Discussion item:

Do we have a universal form for the eye doctor report? Sumer Bellinder shared a registration form of VI students used within her last state of employment. A southern region member mentioned that Colorado also made such a form through the Vision Coalition group. No one was sure who had this form. It was shared that doctors requested payment to fill out such a form in the past. Members indicated that a universal form used across the state is ideal. Comments were made that the current FDB/MDB form does not provide enough information. I've attached the OCULAR REPOT for review.

The Vision Coalition discussed this a few years back and a such a form was developed for Aus or agencies to customized. This form is located at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs Tanni will send out this link via the listserv and the forms also shared by Sumer, A Shared Vision, and Nancy Cozart.

A Shared Vision (Paula Landry)

This 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization is Colorado's leading provider of early intervention vision services for children who are blind or visually impaired. Our goal is that all families of children with visual impairments have access to and receive essential early intervention services from a community of highly skilled and collaborative professionals.

Leveraging a unique and flexible operating model, A Shared Vision strives to attract and support a highly skilled workforce, build partnerships throughout the state, and provide a breadth of programming that grows the capability and capacity of all early intervention providers to serve families with very young children who are blind or visually impaired.

Through our Early Intervention Vision Services Program, our team of fifteen teachers provides early intervention home-based vision services to families and young children in 55 counties across Colorado. In 2023, A Shared Vision supported 175 families, providing 1,865 educational service visits. These numbers represent 69.8% of all vision services statewide. Since our beginning in 2016, we have supported 742 families with 11,000 visits! They have used a Quick Response model to do a first visit with new families to help triage the next steps with families.

One area of new practice is that toddlers whose third birthdays happen in late spring/ over the summer can now continue with Part C services throughout the summer when school services are not available.

Discussion: A question came up about how to discern the numbers of infants and toddlers. The proposal to Part C resulted in a collaborative count of the three BVI EI entities. One challenge is that not every infant and toddler with visual impairment has been registered with the CIMC. Jim will follow up on registration needs with the involved agencies.

We are continuing to coordinate our new referrals in the Denver/Boulder metro area with Anchor Center. However, our most significant collaboration beginning in 2023 is a proposal submitted to EI Colorado from A Shared Vision, Anchor Center, and the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind to address the shortage of EI-TVIs in the state, the inadequate compensation, the challenges of providing services within rural communities, and the sustainability of the current service provisioning model. The proposal was presented on October 31, and we are waiting to learn the next steps.

Would you enjoy working part-time in early intervention supporting families with very little ones who are blind or visually impaired? Contact Paula Landry at plandry@asharedvision.org if you are interested in learning more about A Shared Vision and joining our team.

Anchor Center for Blind Children (Tammy Miller)

Program Updates: We are having a fantastic school year! We have expanded our preschool program from 2 to 3 days/week this year, which has been an exciting change for us and our students. We are at capacity with twenty-eight students enrolled in Preschool but have no current wait list. There are forty-three students in our Infant and Toddler Program, and thirty-two students in our Home Visit Program, with many new referrals for each program rolling in each week.

Preschoolers can enroll at Anchor Center, enroll in their district's preschool, or do both! The new UPK funds go to the district if the child is dually enrolled, but tuition assistance is available to all families based on need. In order to access the UPK funding, all students need to have a Child Find evaluation, and if the family decides to enroll only in Anchor Center's preschool, the family forgoes the IEP established by the school district for that year. Additionally, most CCBs are now funding the tuition for the Toddler program for those children receiving EI services.

Our Research Team, led by Dr. Cathy Smyth, continues to grow, and we have many research projects underway! Our NAVeG research project (newborn screenings for brain-based visual impairments), now in its second phase and showing promising results for the future of newborn vision screenings, is underway at Children's Hospital of Colorado. The NAVeG team (Cathy Smyth, Tammy Miller, and Elise Darrow) continues to have requests for trainings on the screening from TSVIs and early interventionists across the country. They have trained EI professionals in nine states and have 3-4 more in progress/scheduled over the next few months. The response has been exciting!

The CVI Initiative, headed by Elise Darrow, is working on exciting projects with students who have brain-based visual impairments, including case studies and other research projects in our center-based programs. She, along with Cathy Smyth, continue to represent Anchor Center as presenters and attendees of both education and medical conferences nationwide and are collaborating with vision specialists from around the world on CVI-related research.

Staffing: We are currently hiring Teachers for Students with Visual Impairments, either full- or part-time (flexible schedule). Contact Tammy Miller tmiller@anchorcenter.org to apply or for more info.

Events: We have Community Days planned for each month of the school year for all our students and their families, including swimming, playground visits, adaptive horseback riding, etc. Our Family Services team holds Night Watch respite events, and we will continue to have one per month starting in October. Our 14th Annual Visions of Love: Wine Tasting Event will take place on Feb. 2. Given that the Anchor Center is funded in nearly in full by charitable gifts, we are extremely grateful for the support of our sponsors and guests.

Playground Update: We have a new, beautifully designed, inclusive playground, thanks to the Toni Stephenson Memorial Fund! It features ramps for wheelchairs, adapted swings, equipment for movement and musical exploration for kids of all abilities, and it has been an incredible addition to our already-amazing building and campus. We welcome any visitors who want to come check it out!

Headquartered in Denver for 40 years, Anchor Center for Blind Children specializes in serving children with visual impairments or combined vision and hearing loss during their most formative years of development, ages birth to five years. Staffed by a transdisciplinary team of highly trained teachers of students with visual impairments, early childhood special educators, therapists, and a pediatric ophthalmologist, Anchor Center's vision services are customized to meet each child's unique needs and strengths. Families also receive support, guidance, practical knowledge, and connections to other important resources. Anchor Center's primary programming includes: vision assessments and pediatric ophthalmology exams; early intervention home-based services (for children, ages birth to 3 years); center-based programming for infants (newborn – 18 months), toddlers (18 months – 3 years), and preschoolers (3 – 5 years); occupational, physical, and speech/language therapies; recreational, music, and horticultural therapies; summer camps and family respite care; and family support, including programs for caregivers and siblings. The Anchor Center charges a nominal tuition fee for toddler and preschool programs but does not charge for infant services. No child is ever denied access to services based on the family's inability to pay.

Discussion: Praise to ASV, Anchor Center, and CSDB for their shared work with identification and service support to Colorado families with infants and toddlers who are blind/visually impaired or deaf-blind. The work is impressive across their referral coordinators to move through the list of newly referred children.

Colorado AER Chapter (Chloann Woolley)

The chapter needs personnel who are interested in meeting, holding office, and offering CAER events. If this is an interest area, please reach out to President Chloann Woolley. This is a new role for Chloann, which is exciting! Heather Solbert is serving as Treasurer. There is the current question of whether CAER should merge with another entity, which would mean that funding would be shared. The Northern Rockies AER Chapter is strong and includes several states. This is one model that has worked. There is more opportunity with numbers and the virtual aspects of meetings have really opened the door for participation. There will be a CAER Banquet on May 2. They have had four meetings this year. CAER needs people who are engaged – both to be on the board and to be responsive to the CAER support activities such as mini grants.

Colorado Center for The Blind Youth Programs (Chaz Davis)

Recently, our year-round youth program has been focusing on STEM and outdoor oriented activities as there have been several requests for such programming. During the fall, we hosted a nature / conservation activity at the Carson Nature Center in Littleton. Students had the opportunity to interact with animals local to the environment, examine owl pelts, and identify different animal claws, wings, and skulls which allowed for a greater understanding of the Colorado ecosystem.

In October, as part of the NFB of CO State Convention, students from nearby school districts attended a STEM Day at the Marriott at Lone Tree. Led by blind female professionals in various science disciplines, Students were able to take part in chemistry and physics experiments in a completely accessible way.

Our young students were able to participate in a rock-climbing experience with Denver Rock Climbing Company, an outdoor climbing outfit that meets students where they are so that they can build confidence through challenge recreation. One student exclaimed that he rarely gets to do outdoor activities like everyone else but felt free when he was climbing.

In November, logistical issues prevented us from being able to host a collaborative event with the Boy Scouts of America for an outdoor skill building activity. We hope to partner with the troop during the upcoming year for a fun-filled event building fires, knot tying, and assembling shelter.

This past month, our Blind Parents division of the NFB of CO in collaboration with our blind youth attended an interactive tour with South Metro Fire Rescue Station 12. Participants blind and sighted enjoyed learning about the different tools that the fire department uses, getting an up-close understanding of the various fire apparatus, and even talking to a firefighter in full bunker gear. Participants said that they felt more comfortable around firefighters and seeing them as being more approachable.

Next month, CCB will be partnering with Ignite Adaptive Sports, a program based at Eldora Mountain. Our students will be able to enjoy skiing, snowboarding, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, and more! Our organization has been working with Ignite for over 30 years and even though our students may not become life-long skiers, the exposure to a new experience can prove to be invaluable.

Through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, CCB has been awarded an outdoor equity grant that will support outdoor recreation, conservation outdoor education, and STEM activities through 2025. This grant will allow our organization to expand our reach and offer more outdoor based programming for Blind CO youth.

Looking ahead to the summer, we will be hosting several camps and summer programs for blind youth in Colorado and beyond. Through a partnership with the National Science Foundation and several agencies that serve blind youth in CO, high school aged students will be able to attend a one-week residential camp starting June 17 at the Colorado Center for the Blind. The focus of the camp is to understand astronomy using 3D printed renderings. Participants will assemble the printers and become familiar with their function as well.

CCB will be hosting our Confidence Camp for blind youth ages 5-11. This day camp will run for 10 days and will expose students to increased Braille literacy, empowerment through cane travel activities, and challenging themselves through recreation too. The dates will be finalized for Confidence Camp in the next two weeks.

This summer the Colorado Center for the Blind will again offer its No Limits to Learning program for blind teens. In addition to the 4-week program we offered in 2023, we will also offer a 7-week program that will include attending the National Federation of the Blind convention in Orlando.

No Limits to Learning 7-week program: Dates: June 21 through August 9. This longer program will provide each student with additional instruction to cement their skills and confidence. Students enrolled in this seven-week program will have the opportunity to attend the National Convention of the NFB that will be held in Orlando Florida. They will learn about techniques of airport travel, how to navigate a large hotel, a wide array of technology, meet blind people, attend meetings to learn more about the NFB and much more. To participate in this program applicants must be 16 years of age or older. They are required to submit an essay discussing why they want to attend the national convention. There is a focus on college-readiness.

No Limits to Learning: 4-week program and the dates are July 12 through August 9. Except for attending the National Convention, this shorter program will cover all elements listed above, including challenge recreation activities. Applicants for the 4-week program must be fifteen or older.

Discussion: Age range of children for family activities: four through 21. For students who need to return to school in early August, they may need to depart a few days early from the No Limits program. They do accept students with additional disabilities to their blindness. There are requirements for basic self-care abilities – getting up in the morning, self-grooming, and taking medications independently. For more details, talk to Chaz at cdavis@cocenter.org.

Colorado Instructional Materials Center (Jim Olson)

A big welcome to our new Administrative Assistant, Danielle Steel, to the CIMC. Danielle Steele started in mid-December and is primarily responsible for processing order for brailers, technology, software, and APH orders.

With input from some of our wonderful early education TVIs, the CIMC has recently revised the “CIMC registration of an Infant with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness” and the “CIMC Exit Form of an Infant with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness.” Both forms have been disseminated to our agencies providing early intervention services for birth through two year-olds. If there is feedback on the forms, please reach out to Jim. They will also update the school-age registration form.

Important updates for both our statewide count and our federal quota census database census. The deadline for school districts to submit both of their two count reports to the CIMC has been extended by two months, from the end of January 2024 to the end of March 2024. The ‘effective date’ for both counts remains Monday, January 1, 2024.

Important update to the federal quota census for January 1, 2024. Beginning in 2024, APH will institute a modified definition of blindness for the purpose of carrying out the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind. In the 2024 Census for students to be eligible for registration in the Federal Quota program, they MUST meet the following criteria: (1) Meet the Definition of Blindness (MDB); (2) Function at the Definition of Blindness (FDB); and a NEW criteria: “IF NEITHER are met, students may also be eligible because they qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) definition of blindness: an impairment in vision, that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance (34 CFR §300.8(c)(13)).* ”

Stay tuned for whether there will be changes in when APH materials can be ordered for a newly registered child based on the time of year when they are first registered. Braille books can be ordered at any time and a braille writer will be provided as soon as the student is registered, and these needs are established. With that said, braille devices tied to APH funds may not be immediately available.

The CIMC First Friday meetings are going strong! Glad to see this attendance to equalize information across the state.

Friday, February 23rd is the Braille Challenge at the Colorado Center for the Blind. If students cannot travel to the metro area, there is an option for virtual. Here is a link: <https://csdb.colorado.gov/denver-braille-challenge>

Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) School for The Blind (Jamie Lugo)

CSDB is celebrating our 150th Anniversary in April. Students are learning about the history of CSDB through lessons prepared by teachers each month. Students watch videos of alumni giving them advice as well. These videos can all be found on the CSDB YouTube channel. Others can also watch the videos at: <https://csdb.colorado.gov/about->

[csdb/celebrating-150-years-of-csdb/explore-our-past](#) There will also be a campus program in April. There will be a summer weekend for alumni festivities.

Campus Activities: Secondary students with additional disabilities are learning about opinion writing in literacy. They shared their opinions about different musical instruments and will be exploring tactile graphics displaying their opinions. White Cane Day was celebrated at Acacia Park on October 13th. City council woman Yolanda Avila presented an official proclamation. Both bands, the Bulldog Band and PRIDE band performed songs, students danced, and poems were read. Our guest speaker this year was Quaiyim Gray, a paraprofessional in the blind school. Tactile art was displayed and described in large print and braille. Elementary students were asked the question: "Where can your cane take you?" This opened a variety of ideas of current, future, and make-believe places that students would love to one day independently travel to. Students have learned some important beginning concepts of how to create landscape using perspective foreground, middle ground, and background. Finally, our CSDB staff band made their big debut singing "Celebration" The entire student population attended, blind/vi and deaf hard of hearing students. It was truly the best White Cane Day yet!

During the self-determination unit of our expanded core curriculum class, students learned about the IEP and their role in their own IEP meeting. They also explored the anatomy of the eye and are currently working on making a 3D representation of an eye using a variety of art materials. Two individuals from the Colorado Springs office of Accessibility, American Disability Act Title II spoke to class. Students learned about the importance of self-advocacy when something is not accessible in their community and the process for alerting the city to the issues. Elementary Career Education classes are learning about different community helpers. Students made police hats, visited the Children's Village (fire station), and we have some guest speakers coming in to talk about their jobs. The Post Secondary Preparation class visited and volunteered their time to Concrete Couch. They learned how to use various tools, identify wood by smell, and made tactile tiles out of clay for their tactile Kiosk. Unity Day was Oct 18th. Staff and students were encouraged to wear orange. Students created a chain of links with their pledge to stand united against bullying at CSDB.

The School for the Blind hosted its first ever Spelling Bee on Friday, November 10th, with activities available for interested students of all ages and abilities. Assistive Technology: CSDB was a testing site for the new Monarch refreshable braille display. Seven students were involved in testing this device as well as numerous staff. A CSDB Day of the Dead Ofrenda was displayed at the Fine Arts Center in collaboration with neighboring public schools.

Young scientists are conducting experiments to test their hypotheses about multiple things. One group is studying if a plant can grow by disco light, another is testing the effects of classical music on the growth of a plant. Some other students are tracking the growth of either pumpkin seed or sunflower seeds to see germination firsthand. Finally, students are completing poems, songs, or raps about renewable resources and how humans need them for survival.

- Parent Braille Classes will run January 18th – February 29th.
- Final 3 Superintendent Candidate Interviews, 1/22/2024
- Presentations and Q&A with Superintendents, 1/23/2024
- Board Vote for Superintendent, 1/29/2024
- CSDB Braille Challenge will be on February 22nd. Our backup date will be February 29th.

Here are few links to some fun videos of recent events at CSDB:

- School for the Blind Winter Program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoJmSoxglnQ>
- Extra-Curricular Activities at CSDB: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBzAr0ZxKtc>
- Blind Awareness and Perspectives: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBvQjdrP13s>

Campus Construction: This was a student led initiative. They will begin construction shortly. Also, they are working on other building updates.

Superintendent Search: There are three finalists for this position. They just completed interviews and a Q and A opportunity with the candidates. There is currently an opportunity for input. The next board meeting will be an open meeting for the discussion of next steps.

Vacancies: Preschool Teacher (TVI)

Discussion Items:

Are there topics for parents or TVI trainings that CSDB could assist with at regional meetings, Sound Bites, etc.?
Technology is always a big topic for further training with hands on training and specific to devices / age groups. If you have recommendations, please send to Jamie at jlugo@csdb.org

Does anyone else have a need for uncontracted braille format CMAS tests? This is not a need based on the TVIs represented on the Vision Coalition. Students taking general CMAS tests are typically using contracted braille by third grade. Students who are eligible for the alternate assessment have the option for uncontracted or contracted braille. To gain more information, this could be a good topic for the listserv to further canvas the state.

Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) Outreach Services (Donna Keale)

Ashley Renslow has taken over as the Interim Outreach Director (arenslow@csdb.org) as CSDB searches for our next director. The TVI's/COMs have been busy with their caseloads in both school districts and with early intervention. Ashley and Donna are both collaborating with teams to support the 2025 Western Region Early Intervention Conference, WREIC.

University of Northern Colorado (UNC) VI Program (Paula Conroy)

The VI Program is going strong! Paula is currently working on accreditation, which is a lot of work. Silvia Corres Torres is working with doctoral students. Corey Pierce is stepping down as Director of Special Education and Tracy Gershwin will assume this role. UNC currently has a hiring freeze. Currently they are using past doctoral students as adjuncts. The cohort currently has a few Colorado candidates. Enrollment is down across the country for university programs.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) (Michelle Reed)

Staff Updates: Our current vacancies include a Field Instructor O&M/VRT for the Denver Metro area, Field Instructor O&M/VRT for the western slope and a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in Colorado Springs.

The Personal Adjustment Training Unit continues to provide training in the community. We continue to discuss and examine ways to provide comprehensive services to the people we serve that include remote training, in-person training, and Zoom virtual group sessions (Reflections, Enrichment Hour, Women's Group, and two Braille Groups) and a Men's Group. We are also going to begin discussions on how to offer in person training opportunities at the Denver Metro Regional Office. However, the Personal Adjustment Training Center based program at the Denver Metro Regional Office will not be reopened. At present, DVR personal adjustment training will continue to be provided in the community and the field.

BLVS and DVR are looking at pre-employment transition services including training/job development support, collaborating with other youth with disabilities, collaborating with other states, and increasing vendors to provide more options and opportunities. We have a new vendor who is providing statewide Pre-ETS services. Statewide referrals would be virtual, and Colorado Springs local services can be hybrid. She is meeting with people 1:1 for now and will be offering six group workshops the week of March 25th. She is finalizing the curriculum. Her name is Josie Shea and she was a former rehabilitation counselor in the Colorado Springs office.

Colorado Department of Education (Tanni Anthony)

Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project: We are closing the final year of our current project. A new grant award was made that will be effective from October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2028. The project's mission is to provide free technical assistance to parents and service providers of children and youth, ages birth through 21, who are deaf-blind or who have both a vision and a hearing loss. The project has a lending library and a website with a multitude of electronic resources that are available to families and educational personnel.

- Project Staff: Tanni Anthony and Gina Herrera are Co-Directors on the grant project. Jessica Meisel is our Technical Assistance (TA) Specialist. Jessica provides onsite consultation and customized training to the educational teams of the children with deaf-blindness. She is also leading our training and support to school-based interveners. Cindy Colwell is the Family Specialist.
- To request FREE technical assistance, please contact Gina Herrera at Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us
- Annual Deaf-Blind Count: The December 1, 2023 Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count forms were disseminated to the field in early October and should be returned to CDE through a secure online portal. The forms for each Colorado administrative unit, Anchor Center for Blind Children, and A Shared Vision are sent to a designated contact who is a TVI. Please note that a child can be registered at any time in the calendar year. If you work with a learner with both vision and hearing loss, please be sure to work with Tanni to register the child. All learners identified as having combined vision and hearing loss are eligible for free technical assistance. This can be child-specific consultation and customized staff training.
- Project Webpage: The CDE DeafBlind webpage URL is <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp>
- Project Trainings: Three webinars have been scheduled for this school year. The first one occurred on January 22 with Dr. Susan Bruce and focused on self-determination. Over sixty people attended. The February and March seminars will feature Linda Alsop and focus on building a conceptual framework for students with deaf-blindness. The Summer Institute has been planned and Tanni will be sending out the flyer and registration information shortly.

BVI State Funded Activities: The CDE has a strong commitment to services and supports to our students and the staff who serve them. We are pleased to offer professional learning and technical assistance to the special education field serving children who are blind/visually impaired.

- Sound Bites: Sound Bites are monthly virtual training / dialogue sessions based on identified topics of needs. The topics for the 2023-24 school year are almost finalized. Tanni has sent out Calendar Invites and information with the registration link. There has been consistently excellent attendance at these virtual training opportunities. We have the January, February, March, and April trainings left for this school year.
- CDE/CSDB Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics: Drs. David Simpson and Kara Hanson are filling the optometrist roles and Karin Hensel is the Low Vision Therapist who will serve the northern and metro regional clinics. Jim Olson is the Low Vision Therapist for the southern clinic. Roberta Curtis will be our statewide clinic coordinator. There was no Western Region Low Vision Evaluation Clinic this school year due to a low number of students. The Northern Clinic occurred in November and the Metro Clinic will be held in February.
- CDE O&M Seminar: The registration flyer for the May 2023 seminar has just been disseminated. We will focus on strategies specific to learners with deaf blindness with featured speakers Caroline Gonzales and Heather Withrow.
- Recruitment and Retention: We have openings in several parts of the state. Please share any expected vacancies with Tanni so we can be as proactive as possible with new recruits. Contract TVI and O&M staff are needed in several AUs. A Shared Vision and Anchor Center need more TVI / O&M Specialist support. Please keep Tanni in the loop on anticipated and real vacancies. If you want to be on the CDE list of contractors, please reach out to Tanni.
- Listservs: The CDE ESSU maintains two separate listservs specific to personnel working in BVI programs in Colorado school districts. One is specific to Colorado TVIs and COMSs. The second one is specific to Colorado braillists. It is important to remind all users of these listservs that personally identifiable information (PII) on students and parents should never be posted in any listserv messages. If anyone has questions about the listservs, please be in touch with Tanni.
- Parent Database: We currently have about 250 parents registered on the CDE Parent Database. This is out of over 1,200 families across the state. The database is used to email out the Keeping in Touch newsletter link and, on rare occasion, mailing to families. It is important to keep it maintained with accurate names and addresses of families of children with visual impairment, including blindness who are currently enrolled in our Colorado early intervention or public-school programs. As children graduate or families move out of state, we need to those families. As new families come into the system, please help Tanni to be proactive with getting families registered on the database. This is a voluntary process – so families need to complete and sign their registration forms.
- Braille Competency: All TVIs who are new to the field are expected to demonstrate braille competency in their first year of employment in this role. If a TVI extends this date, the administrative unit of employment is at risk for a citation of noncompliance. A Practice Test is posted on the Visual Impairment, Including Blindness website. It

includes practice multiple choice items and braille samples. Please be aware that all TVIs in Colorado public schools must renew their braille certificate one time after the first five years of initial certification.

Keeping in Touch Newsletter: The August-September, October, and November - December 2023 editions have been posted to the CDE BVI webpage. There are 3 more editions to go January – February 2024, March-April 2024, and May 2024). Please be sure to share the email messages with the link with parents and paras, as we are no longer mailing out the newsletter and do not have the email addresses of most parents who have signed up to receive the newsletter.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Proposed CDE BVI Budget for 2024-25

The following activities are on the docket.

- ⇒ Braille Competency Testing / Mentor Support
- ⇒ CDE O&M Seminar
- ⇒ CDE State Conference on BVI (topics: Brain Based VI: Assessment and Strategy)
- ⇒ CIMC Interagency Agreement
- ⇒ Vision Coalition
- ⇒ Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics
- ⇒ Sound Bites (monthly virtual trainings) (ECC follow-up, low vision, SDI, trauma)
- ⇒ FVA Make and Take

DISCUSSION ITEMS

VIB Eligibility: Tanni reviewed the eligibility tenets of the VIB criteria. She will send out the CDE approved PPT to TVIs to have in hand for their local district training.

Recruitment Needs: We must be creative and vigilant about bringing new people into the field. Ideas included (a) identifying parents and paraeducators as candidates for personnel preparation programs; (b) providing these individuals information about existing programs with federal funding supports or other funding supports; (c) identifying a cadre to support; and (d) checking to see if CSDB might be a site for housing practicum students to incentivize Colorado as an employment site.

Virtual TVIs: We are seeing more people working as a CO employed TVI who are offering services virtually. This is a trend we are seeing. What is helping is a collaborative model of school-based providers. One area of discussion will be the ability to confirm braille competency. There are areas of teaching that may be more conducive to virtual training. It also helps if there is a hybrid model with in-person connection opportunities. This might also be an opportunity to consider short term placements at CSDB. This may be a possibility given adequate space / FTE within CSDB. Another area might be how to use a hybrid model within CSDB. Possible challenges to address: (a) ability to be licensed in CO (have these people finished accredited programs), (b) braille competency, (c) AT needs of student for training on equipment and problem solving broken equipment, (d) cost of possibly providing double equipment to the person out of state and for the student, (e) quality braille and O&M instruction, (f) do contracts support the TVI “bringing” a kid to the LVE clinic or other activities or other activities that may be beneficial for the student, (g) do these providers have specific training on virtual teaching / coaching practices, (h) how is the technology working for all things that a virtual TVI may need to observe and interact with the student and the IEP team, and (i) how does this work with paraeducators and others to support the practices when the TVI is not available (which is a fair comparison to an in person itinerant model)

We have more to learn about how this can work effectively. This might be a presentation on this topic that we can use for hiring school districts so we can learn more about how this can work well.

Next Meeting Date

April 11, 2024, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Agenda Items

- Program Updates
- IEP Service Time with Jon Paul Burden
- Specially Designed Instruction



colorado connections

Braille Competency News



◆ Congratulations to **Alyshia Shelton**, a TVI in Littleton School District, for earning her initial CDE Certificate of Braille Competency. Congratulations to **Jeanine Holmes** of Poudre School District for earning her CDE Renewal Certificate of Braille Competency! Woo hoo to **Jennifer Holt** for earning braille renewal clock hours. Thank you to proctors **Brenda Shepard, Nancy Cozart, Chris Maynard,** and **Julie Wetzstein** for all of their great work to support braille competency certification.

Professional Development

- ◆ A very special thank you to **Dr. Susan Bruce** for her presentation on Self Determinations for Students with Deaf-Blindness on January 22, 2024. We had so many TVIs / O&M Specialists take advantage of this 90-minute training with 53 participants. This topic is one of our ECC core components and Dr. Bruce gave us a lot to consider with how we identify self-identification needs and strategies across the age span for our little ones through secondary education.
- ◆ Our big thanks to **Cara Johnson** for an excellent presentation on Executive Functioning for Students with Blindness/Visual Impairment. Thanks to the 25+ TVIs / O&M Specialists who attended! It was outstanding!

Personal News

- ◆ Congratulations to **Morgan and Tyler Harrington** the birth of their daughter on December 22, 2023! Welcome to the world, Maeve Marilyn! We wish the family all the very best!

What people THINK teaching is:



What TEACHING really is:





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