

## **Designing Educational Services for Students Who Are Deaf-Blind in General Education Classrooms: Summary of a Satellite-Broadcast Training**

by

Dr. Kathy Gee, CSU Hayward, Julie Maier, LeConte Elementary School,  
Berkeley Unified School District, Sandra Sutor, mother of a sixteen-year-old son with  
C.H.A.R.G.E. association.

When given the informational and instructional supports needed, individuals who are deaf-blind can be active and successful children and adults in inclusive educational, community, and work settings. This presentation highlighted some of the issues to consider and some of the strategies which can be utilized by educational teams from the perspectives of a parent, an inclusive education support teacher, and a teacher educator. Specific topics included: defining an inclusive school; instructional practices which support successful inclusive classrooms; the unique needs of students who are deaf-blind; a process for planning adaptations, supports, and embedded instruction; case examples across the age range; facilitating social interactions & friendships; family perspectives; supports for social relationships; and collaboration between home and school.

### **From Mainstreaming to Integration to Inclusion**

Inclusive schools, as originally conceived, are those designed to meet the educational needs of all their community members within common, yet fluid, environments and activities. For professionals who have been involved in this movement over many years, inclusion signifies something quite different from the earlier “mainstreaming” approach in which students with disabilities were “allowed access” at specified times into general education classrooms. Contrary to what many people may think, the inclusive schools movement represents school improvement on many levels for all students, not just the physical placement of individuals with various abilities and disabilities in general classrooms. The notion of inclusive education has developed from a long history of integration of students with disabilities, and the growing recognition that diversity is an asset not a liability.

At the student level, a successful inclusive learning community fosters collaboration, problem solving, self-directed learning, and critical discourse. It supports students with extraordinary gifts and talents to move at their natural learning rate and supports students with particular learning difficulties or motivational problems to get quick and effective assistance, gaining learning strategies as well as remaining part of the exciting content of the themes and lessons. Students with specific disabilities receive creative and effective supports through transdisciplinary

teaming to maximize their success. Teams of personnel from mental health and education work with students with emotional disabilities to find successful ways to support their emotional and academic growth. Fluid instructional groupings within heterogeneous classrooms, groups of classes, or multi-age classes allow the teachers to work with both heterogeneous and homogeneous partners and groups of students at various times of the day.

Inclusive schooling means that special education is no longer defined as a placement but as a service, provided to students with various challenges within the general education program in their neighborhood schools. When a school commits to an inclusive model, students with disabilities (no matter how severe) lose neither services or support, but gain the opportunity to have full membership and to grow in functional and meaningful ways in the social and learning contexts of their nondisabled peers. When a school commits to an inclusive model, the staff is freed from the weight and the expense of energy spent on determining who should get in, instead the staff is given the mission to spend their energies on how to teach every student.

While some school districts and authors have taken a divergent foray into “time” as the crucial issue (i.e. the amounts of minutes in regular education as a way of defining inclusion), those involved with inclusive schools as described above, define it in connection with broader school restructuring based on key assumptions of both values and research-based practice. Understanding first what inclusive schooling really means and then making a commitment to it, is the first step needed to form the guiding base or mission at a school. Once this base exists, it promotes and influences the use of effective instructional practices for all students.

In an inclusive school:

- special education exists as a support service vs. a place;
- educational outcomes for all students in the school include mastery of social and life skills, cooperation and collaboration, problem solving, creative and critical thinking skills; and, the ability to maintain social relationships, in addition to academic achievement skills;
- there is zero-exclusion: all students, regardless of disability category, are assumed to be members in all aspects of their age-appropriate, neighborhood schools;
- educational supports include a wide variety of instructional formats, groupings, staffing patterns, adaptations, and student collaboration strategies;
- all teachers have skills to instruct students developing in a “typical” manner, as well as students who need some extensions and some adaptations to the typical academic curriculum;
- team members with specialized teaching skills (knowledge in depth of particular content areas or learning challenges) and knowledge/clinical expertise for individuals with low incidence disabilities share their knowledge in collaboration with other team members utilizing trans-disciplinary principles (i.e. role release, teaching others, cooperative goal structures, etc.), group problem solving strategies, and outcomes-driven approaches;
- support from other specialized personnel (related services) is also collaborative (i.e., an “integrated therapy” model guides the delivery of services);
- educators collaborate to serve all students in the best possible way;

- a consistent effort is made to facilitate the social networks and relationships of the students with disabilities;
- the pedagogy at the school reflects a merger of exemplary practices from both regular and special education;
- a great amount of effort is put forth to ensure that the staff is as effective as possible;
- every effort is made to accommodate to the unique learning characteristics of each student, including the need for intensive and direct instruction;
- if a goal cannot be met within the general education classroom, other parts of the school building and the community are used as regular instructional environments;
- resource (or special study) rooms are utilized by all students for individual and small group work;
- here is a planned and consistent effort to transition graduates from the school system into integrated work and living, with an emphasis on self-determination and social support networks.

### **Seven critical approaches to instruction in support of inclusive classrooms**

From demonstration, experience, and research there is now a significant amount of information about the types of instructional practices which are facilitative of inclusion. Seven critical approaches were discussed:

1. Embedded instruction in meaningful activities. Embedded instruction of skills means that teachers arrange for basic and complex skills to be learned within the context of age-relevant and functionally motivating activities in the classroom, school, and community.
2. Learning styles and multiple intelligences. Based on the work of Gardner (1983) and Hanson, Silver, & Strong (1990), these strategies bank on the varied intelligences and learning styles which all children and youth bring to classrooms. Teachers plan lessons and instructional methods based on these concepts, and as a result, include more learners.
3. Establishing a “community of learners” and nurturing positive relationships. Teaching teams use approaches to teaching that foster community, student-to-student dialogue and interaction, and collaborative learning. Teachers supporting students with disabilities see the development of friendships as a high priority and actively facilitate positive social relationships.
4. Promoting self-determination and self-regulated learning. Teachers involve students in classroom dialogues about cognitive processes and learning strategies. An important part of the teacher’s role in this process is to model and think-aloud the thoughts and strategies of a more expert member of the classroom community (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers foster and develop self-determination and person-centered planning with students with disabilities and their families.
5. Responsive instruction. Teachers are responsive to individual student needs through flexible, systematic strategies and supports. Teachers develop observation skills which enable them to analyze learning processes taking place and interact with each student as a unique learner.
6. Systematic instruction and assessment within the context of teaching. Assessments are conducted within the process of teaching, allowing teachers to make adjustments as

necessary and measure process as well as product. Teachers plan systematic instructional strategies, evaluate them, and make changes as necessary.

- Positive and invitational approaches to instruction and behavioral support. Teachers promote self-esteem through their approach to students, other staff, and to instructional design. Teachers recognize the importance of “intentionally inviting” students to learn, reflect on their own interactions with students, and can articulate why they are interacting in a particular way. Teachers utilize curricular and instructional approaches that demonstrate the value of these approaches for a wide range of learner styles and abilities. Through their instructional strategies they avoid and prevent many behavioral challenges. Teachers also recognize and analyze the communicative bases of challenging behavior and the social context in which it exists. When students have serious behavioral challenges, teams functionally assess the environments and interactions that form the context for the student’s behavior, as well as the student. The purpose of positive interventions is to promote inclusion in home, school and community, and to foster quality of life, not simply the reduction of behavior or the removal of the student.

### **The learner who is deaf-blind: Constructing context from depleted sources**

Individuals who are deaf-blind are a highly diverse group. Their information gathering disabilities have a broad effect on learning and development, and may be paired with other physical or cognitive disabilities. Learners who are deaf-blind can be characterized by their reduced ability to access the multiple cues which provide the information they need to:

- gain the contextual referents or “script” of a social learning context;
- move to gain contact with the environment;
- anticipate the steps in daily routines; and,
- discriminate social situations and interactions.

When designing instructional services for a student who is deaf-blind, the team will have greater success if they consider the following points:

1. Remember that the disability is in information gathering. Take just as much time to plan how the student will receive information about routines, activities, and tasks as the time spent deciding what the student should do in the activity.
2. Concepts must be understood through more than one sensory or communicative avenue. Teach concepts through each student’s means of understanding.
3. We see and hear the person who is deaf-blind, but she or he cannot fully see and hear us. This means that the student is constantly constructing context from depleted sources. This also means that the student doesn’t have an immediate source of feedback for her/his own behavior in social, educational, and work, situations. The student is not as easily able to observe how other people interact in particular settings.
4. Get close (if needed) as determined by the student’s communication system. Conventional expectations about personal space may not be followed.

5. Wait! Allow extra time for the student to make a response, answer a question, or reciprocate a greeting. It takes longer for the student to access and make use of incoming information.

### **Team Planning and Organization**

In order to avoid passive participation and un-connected instruction, the team needs to consider the following three areas carefully in relationship to each instructional unit in each content area/class period.

- How will the student become an informed participant in the instructional activities of the unit? An informed learner has had information delivered in a manner which is accessible, given his or her language skills and sensory capabilities. Time has been allowed for the student to perceive the information, and concepts have been explained through the use of alternatives to observation and discussion. He or she has not only received, but has been given the opportunity to comprehend, clear and contingent cues for the sequences of behavior in an activity, a lesson, a job, a class period, etc.
- How will the student become an active participant in the instructional activities of the unit? An active learner is a participant who has been given various means of control within the activity. Active, in this definition, does not necessarily mean physically independent, or semi-independent. Active participation means that the student is connected to the curriculum or activity in meaningful ways, has ways to contribute to the curriculum, and is provided opportunities to meaningfully demonstrate what she/he knows.
- How will this student's IEP objectives be met within this instructional context? How will that be implemented and evaluated? Sometimes educational teams end up providing separate instruction on IEP objectives and simply "participate" in the general education activities. When that happens the inclusive classroom is under-utilized and the point of inclusive education is lost. In most instances with creative brain-storming and problem solving, instruction can be embedded within the daily instructional activities of the other students. Support teachers, or special education teachers, need to carefully get the information regarding the instructional unit in each content area from the general education teacher. Understanding what the expectations are for the whole class and what the purpose of each activity is will help the team to align and embed the instructional objectives of the student who is deaf-blind. There may be objectives, however, that require a different setting or context, such as mobility, supported work, and functional community skills. There may be times when other settings are useful for small group instruction with peers. There may also be times when additional collaboration is necessary to assist the general education teacher to create a more facilitative learning environment for all the students, making it easier to accommodate and embed instruction for students with disabilities.
- What supports are needed? Specific adaptations, modifications, and supports need to be determined by each unit of instruction vs. stamping one strategy on all situations. This requires regular planning between general and special educators at the beginning of each unit. It also requires flexible service delivery systems.

- How will this student be assisted to access the social context of the class and utilize it to make connections with peers? Because communication and social interaction are so crucial to all students' development, this area should be considered carefully in each context. Staff members need training and ongoing assistance to facilitate interactions and assist the student who is deaf-blind to be a part of the social learning context.

### **Family Perspectives**

Sandra Sutor brought thoughts and experiences that her son has had since being included, starting in the third grade through high school. Her son is sixteen years old and has C.H.A.R.G.E. association. She discussed how inclusion was decided as an option for her son and the benefits as well as the struggles that her family has had. Despite some of the difficulties, she would not trade the inclusive education experience and what it has offered her son for a more segregated experience. Sandra shared, through slides and video, examples of her son's development and his educational and social needs. She also shared his relationships with other children and his involvement in the school.

Teacher styles, strengths, and needs. Sandra discussed how different teacher styles have both helped and hindered her son's education over the years. She appealed to professionals to get ongoing training, and to universities to train teachers to honor and respect student differences and learning needs, to be creative problem solvers, and accountable educators.

Looking at a child's strengths and interests to create a program. Sandra stressed how important it is for the team to be truly student-centered. Consider the student's preferences and interests and utilize those as much as possible. Her son has an interest in music which has been an avenue for self-esteem as well as social development.

Social relationships and friendships. Children and adults who are deaf-blind need support and facilitation to develop meaningful relationships with a variety of peers. In addition to the obvious need for communication interpretation, support is needed to develop opportunities to spend time together doing fun things, to share, to learn how to support each other, to take enough time for relationships to develop, etc. This must be an important part of all educational programs. Loneliness is a common complaint amongst individuals with disabilities, and educational teams need to do everything possible to help address this challenge.

In summary: collaboration, openness, and creative instruction are the keys.

### **Can My Child Play, Too?**

Carol Stensrud, Ed.D., Certified Recreation Therapist, and ADA Inclusive Recreation Consultant

This brief introduction to opportunities for school age children who are deaf-blind is the beginning of a series of newsletter inserts related to play, recreation, leisure and life-long learning opportunities for families and children with disabilities.

Play is the SOUL of the child. Play is essential to learning and living. Play is everyone's human right. The answer to the question "Can my child play, too?" is YES. The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act mandates nondiscrimination in all public, non-profit and private recreation service agencies. The world is becoming everyone's playground.

The following are guidelines for locating and identifying appropriate community recreation opportunities for your child. These resources are found in the Parent Training Guide to Recreation, provided through an OSERS grant-sponsored project from the Center for Recreation and Disability Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### **Locating Community Recreation Services**

Your child has the same legal right to recreation services as anyone else in this country. If you want to locate services for your child, call various agencies in your community to see what they offer and determine whether the opportunities will meet the recreation needs and interests of your child. Once you know what programs are provided, consider the following questions with regard to your child's disability:

- Can programs/services be adapted, if needed, to accommodate your child?
- If applicable, are the facilities accessible?
- Is assistance available for your child, either in getting in and around the facility and/or in the program itself?
- Is transportation to the facility provided by the agency?
- What, if any, are the fees for the services?
- Are programs for children with disabilities only or is the program integrated?

Children with disabilities can participate in recreation programs offered by a wide variety of community agencies. While some programs are specifically designed for persons with disabilities only, parents should not limit the participation of their children to these special programs. Some of the local agencies and facilities that often sponsor recreational opportunities include:

### **Community/Municipal Recreation Departments**

Of all agencies serving children with disabilities, public recreation departments usually have the most equipment, facilities and staff, and usually provide the greatest variety of services. As they are part of the city, county or district government, these departments are paid for with public money.

Included in the municipal recreation department are facilities, gyms, ball fields, playgrounds, swimming pools. Often these departments sponsor cultural events, concerts, art exhibits and movies, as well as special interest clubs like hiking, theater, and arts and crafts. They also provide extra features such as day trips, social get-togethers, holiday celebrations and activities for the entire family.

## **Commercial Organizations**

Movie theaters, dance studios, skating rinks and bowling alleys usually do not have special programs for children with disabilities, but can often provide necessary adaptations and equipment.

## **Community Centers, Churches and Synagogues**

Operated and paid for by private organizations, social, religious or fraternal groups, they offer the same types of programs as municipal recreation departments. They often provide education programs as well. In addition to sports, arts and crafts, social and cultural activities (music, plays, etc.), many of these agencies, (e.g., YM-YWCA) sponsor summer day and residential camps. Some also offer programs specifically designed for children with disabilities.

## **Libraries**

These provide special materials for children whose disability may affect their ability to read. Among the materials available: recordings of stories and books; books in large print; and Braille editions of various reading materials. Libraries mail books and other items to children whose disability limits their mobility. Further services often include discussion groups, storytelling hours and classes in reading improvement, and arts and crafts. Another factor to bear in mind, many libraries built in the last few years were made accessible with ramps, elevators, low drinking fountains and specially designed toilets.

## **Museums and Zoos**

Many museums offer “touch hours” that permit children with vision impairments and other disabilities to handle statues, stuffed animals, rocks and other items. In addition, they may provide educational and cultural programs and offer activities such as day trips by bus, fragrance gardens and nature trails for persons who are blind, classes in nature study and geological and archaeological expeditions in the local neighborhood and surrounding region. Zoos often offer educational programs and special events and may allow children to pet harmless animals.

## **Service Clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, federated women’s clubs & local women’s service clubs)**

These groups often operate recreation programs similar to those offered by the municipal recreation department. In some cases, they also sponsor summer day and residential camps.

## **Youth Agencies (The Girl Scouts, Boys’ Clubs, Campfire Girls, and 4-H Clubs)**

Although these organizations sponsor many of the same activities as municipal recreation departments and community centers, these youth agencies are particularly useful because of the special understanding and experience they bring to serving the needs of children and teenagers. In working with children with disabilities, they try to give each child something he can do to achieve a feeling of success.

### **Summer Opportunities for Individuals who are Deaf-Blind**

CAMP PACIFICA. Ages 7-15, overnight camp. 1st session: August 2-August 8, 2nd session: August 9-August 16. Counselor/camper ratio - 1:3, campers requiring 1:1 may either bring their own support or, if appropriate, a Counselor in Training can be provided as the 1:1. Campers with behavioral issues are invited to attend. Call (209) 526-3782.

BREAK THE BARRIERS. Sport and Art Day Camp, ages 6 and older. Counselor/camper ratio - 1:6, campers with behavioral issues are invited to attend but need to bring their own support. 181 E. Sierra, Fresno. Call for dates: (209) 432-6292.

OPERATION CHALLENGE. Summer Program, day and overnight trips. White water rafting trips, water skiing, overnight camping trips in Donner State Park. Reservations required. Ability to meet the needs of people with behavioral challenges decided on an individual basis. For camper ratio and price call (530) 581-4161. (Ask about their winter ski program at Tahoe Adaptive Ski School.)

ENCHANTED HILLS/LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND. Family camp weekend in October. Also sessions during the summer that may be appropriate. Ratio 1:3. Call Frank Lester (415) 431-4572 TTY. (California Relay Service (800) 735-2922).

CAMP ME AND MY FAMILY. Family camp for individuals with multiple low incidence disabilities and their families. Camp is not being conducted this year because of a lack of funding, however there will be a Camp Me and My Family picnic on July 25th. The site has not been determined, but it will be in the Bay Area. Call Cindi Avanzino at (800) 822-7884 x22 or Mary Anne Landis at (707) 463-4897.

CAMP RUBBERSOLE. Mendocino County. Call Cindy Lemas at (707) 964-5228.

CAMP BLOOMFIELD. Operated by the Foundation for the Junior Blind. The camp is in Malibu. Six sessions, one to two weeks in length. June 21-August 23. \$25 per person. Counselors do not know sign language. Cannot meet the needs of individuals with behavioral issues. Call for information: Bob Cabeza (213) 295-4555. CAMP TALOALI. Oregon, Ages 9-17 - two sessions are horse programs and two are field trip programs. All sessions in August. Cost \$210-\$225, scholarships available. For information call (503) 769-6415 TTY (Oregon Relay Service - (800) 735-1232).

GIRL SCOUTS CAMPING. Ability to provide necessary supports is decided on an individual basis. Call for dates, locations, and further information: Joshua Tree Council (800) 225-4475;

Mt. Wilson Vista Council (626) 445-7771 or (213) 682-3375; Greater Long Beach Council (562) 421-8456; Spanish Trails Council (909) 624-6696 or (626) 331-7325 or (562) 693-0268.

DEAF CAMPS. [ASDC@AOL.com](mailto:ASDC@AOL.com)

AMERICAN CAMPING ASSOCIATION. Has available a national guide of camps for children of all abilities for \$19.95. (800) 428-2267; FAX (317) 342-2065.

NATIONAL EASTER SEAL SOCIETY. Provides a list of camps for children with disabilities free of charge. VOICE (800) 221-6827; TTY (312) 726-4258.

GOLDEN ACCESS PASSPORT. Passport holders receive free lifetime entrance to federal parks, historic sites, recreation areas that charge an entrance fee and gives free admittance to accompanying passengers in a vehicle. It can be obtained from any visitor center or entrance station. For information call the National Park Service Information in Washington D.C., Public Information Line (202) 208-4747; Accessibility Office (202) 343-7040; <http://www.nps.gov>

WILDERNESS INQUIRY. The company combines people of all ability levels and ages in its trips and will conquer almost any natural barrier for travelers: white-water rafting, sea kayaking, and dogsledding are just a few of the outdoor adventures. (800) 728-0719.

ACCESSABILITY TRAVEL. For general travel advice and information on special tours, call (800) 610-5640; <http://www.disabled-travel.com>

ACCESS TRAVEL: AIRPORTS and NEW HORIZONS FOR THE AIR TRAVELER WITH A DISABILITY are available free from Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009; (719) 948-3334.

### **A Real Circle**

Nora O'Farrell & the Students of a Fifth Grade Class in San Francisco, California

Circle of Friends is a way of facilitating social supports for students with disabilities, including deaf-blindness. Circles can be structured in many ways, can be named many things, and truly offer endless possibilities for interactions to take place at school, at home, and many other locations.

The concept of the Circle was developed by Marsha Forest of Canada. Typical students participate in an activity that gets them to begin to think about how many people they each have in their lives: family, friends, relatives, teams, clubs, paid people, etc. This leads to a discussion about building a Circle of Friends for the focus student (who experiences disabilities). Interested students are encouraged to sign up, and the "club" begins to meet at lunch, after school, or some other weekly time.

The following are quotes taken from writings done by "Joan's" friends who participate in her Circle.

“Joan is a girl that would be a good, close friend.”

*Jeffrey*

“I like being with Joan. She is always talking positive and doing positive things. She is always happy.”

*Kayla*

“Joan is fun to be with because she is funny. You can play with her. You can play kickball, basketball, and a lot more stuff with her. In the morning her says good morning boys and girls. She can sing. She can spell a lot of words. It’s fun to be with Joan in the lunch club. She is a good friend to me. She is a good classmate.”

*Cleveland*

“I like to help Joan. I also like getting to know disabled people and Joan better, and to help them, not to fear their weakness, but to face their weakness, and to be part of her friends, that’s what counts.”

*Hin Heng*

“I learned about many different things, and different ways to help many people that are disabled kids. I have learned how many people are different in ways like Joan. She have taught me many things like walking with my eyes and not bumping to things. All you do is feel. That why I like all people.”

*Adreena*

“I like to be a helper.”

*Meyana*

“I like playing with Joan and my other friends, we play many board games and she is very smart. Reading Braille writing. She knows how to walk down the stair on her own (WOW!) with a cane.”

*Jimbo*

“I like Joan because she is a sweet girl and I like to play with Joan and I like being in the Circle of Friends and I wish that Joan don’t have to go to another school and I like when Joan sing to me because she sing like an angel to me and I like Joan very, very much.”

*Stephanie*

“I get to help Joan sound out words. And just to have fun. Doing things with the group and Joan. Because Joan can always learn something new. And just getting to know Joan.”

*Sterling*

“Joan is fun to play with her. Joan is paralyzed and although she is paralyzed she still act like she can see when we watch a movie.”

*Muey*

“I like to help people. I love people and kids. People are very important. They have to be healthy.”

*Darcell*

“I think it’ll help Joan. It’ll also help me to get to know about Joan and help me to know about other kids. I also think that Joan needs that because she has to know about us in order to do things with us.”

*Rosina*

“It’s fun and lots of things to do like play games and make stuff. And it makes you feel happy for yourself.”

*Jewel*

If you would like more information on Circle of Friends or other social support ideas, please call Nora O’Farrell at the Connections Project - (415) 338-6227 x1.

### **CDBS Welcomes New Staff Members**

CDBS welcomes three staff members who have joined the project since the publication of the last newsletter. Sandy Staples is now serving as the Educational Specialist for southern California (the counties of Orange, San Diego, Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino). Sandy comes to CDBS from Lodi, California where she served as an itinerant vision and orientation & mobility specialist. Jo Anne DeJaco joins the project as a part-time Family Specialist in San Diego County. Jo Anne brings her experience of raising her daughter, Cassandra, as well as experience in working with other federally-funded projects. Nancy Cornelius has re-joined the project, also as a part-time Family Specialist in San Diego County. Nancy served as the central California CDBS Family Specialist for many years. For a complete staff listing, see the back page of this newsletter.

### **Positions Available!**

Part-time Family Specialists in Southern California.

CDBS is currently recruiting three Family Specialists-for the counties of Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino. A CDBS Family Specialist must be the parent of a child who has both hearing and vision problems. Work load averages six days per month. Bi-lingual applicants are especially encouraged to apply. For more information about these positions, contact Maurice Belote at (800) 822-7884 ext. 23 Voice/TTY.

### **Save the Date!**

Fall 1998 Satellite Training

Topic: Transition from School to Work

Date: Thursday, October 29, 1998  
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