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JANUARY 2018

Inclusion in Home, School and Communities



A Publication of



The International Council for Education of
People with Visual Impairment

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Our International Partners



Message from The President



Dear Reader

At the outset, I wish to recognise our Editors, Editorial Committee, and authors for their work in ensuring the quality and scholarship of the articles and reports featured in this January 2018 volume. The importance of the journal's theme of *Inclusion in Home, School and Communities* is underscored by global estimates of vision impairment and out of school children in low and middle income countries. The International Agency for Prevention of Blindness Low Vision Expert Group (2015) estimated there were 36 million people with blindness, 217 million people with moderate to severe vision impairment, and 253 million people with mild vision impairment. The 2014 joint publication of the Global Campaign for Education and Handicap International reported that one billion people live with a disability, including 93 million children aged under 14 years who have a moderate to severe disability. The 2014 report highlighted that children with disabilities were more likely to be out of school than any other group of children, had low rates of initial school enrolment, and high rates of school drop-out and non-completion.

The acquisition of education, learning, and skills was identified in the World Bank's 2018 *World Development Report* as essential in building human capital and national prosperity, and in enriching the lives of individuals by raising aspirations and promoting employment, earnings and health. ICEVI is contributing to the work of the United Nations agencies, civil society organisations, and the global education community in supporting national governments to develop disability-inclusive education policies together with sufficient financial and human resources for implementation at local community levels.

Through the work of members and partners, ICEVI's Mission and strategic goals are realised. The Regional Committees in ICEVI's seven global regions develop quadrennial action plans that address the strategic goals for the quadrennium and are responsive to local priorities and needs. You will find a summary of recent regional activities in the pages that follow. This volume also includes information about the ICEVI East Asia Conference that will take place in Manila, Philippines, in October 2018. We encourage you to deliver a presentation or join us as a conference delegate. For information about the ICEVI East Asia Conference and the activities of the Regional Committees, please visit the ICEVI website, www.icevi.org, and the websites of each region.

In conclusion, I draw your attention to the article by M.N.G. Mani, CEO of ICEVI, in which he recalls the 40 year contribution of Larry Campbell to the field of education for children with vision impairment. Larry was awarded the 2018 Migel Medal by the American Foundation for the Blind, in recognition of his significant work in enabling and empowering people with vision loss to "thrive in the classroom, the workplace, and in their daily lives". Larry continues to be a valuable member of ICEVI, and together with Mani, directs the ICEVI-Nippon Foundation higher education and employment initiative.



Frances Gentle
President, ICEVI



Larry Campbell: An important Chapter in the history of ICEVI

M.N.G. Mani, CEO, ICEVI

ICEVI congratulates Larry Campbell, President Emeritus on his conferment of the Migel Medal from the American Foundation for the Blind. In a packed ceremony on 7 April 2018 in Washington, he was given this award by Kirk Adams, President, American Foundation for the Blind in front of professionals who worked with him and young ones who consider him as a source of inspiration.



ICEVI takes pride that the American Foundation for the Blind has honoured him and in recognition of his yeomen services, the ICEVI constituency is congratulating Larry for this recognition and wishes him a prosperous future. ICEVI through this article and in my personal capacity as the CEO of the organisation offer tribute to his guidance in the growth of the organisation.

ICEVI was formed in 1952 and it is 66 years old now. Very few persons had involved continuously with the organisation for more than 40 years and Larry is an important person among this unique group.

I met Larry briefly for the first time in Nairobi in 1982 when both of us attended the ICEVI Quinquennial conference. ICEVI was disappointed that the Nairobi conference had to be abandoned due to Military Coup in Kenya just a day prior to the formal inauguration. Though the conference started after a day of the coup, it had to be cancelled due to security issues. Perhaps Larry and I are the only two people within ICEVI circle who had the privilege of attending that abandoned conference.

The Nairobi meeting was followed by our interaction at the Wurzburg conference in 1987 where the participants of the Nairobi conference were recognised on a special evening. I was asked to take over as the Regional chair of the Asia region in 1990 (mid-Quinquennium) when the then Regional Chair Mr. P.G. Michael stepped down. What a coincidence! Larry also took over as the President of ICEVI in the mid Quinquennium in 2000 when Dr. Coen de Jong, the then President of ICEVI stepped down.

I continued as the Regional Chairperson of ICEVI Asia until 2002 when we had many occasions to work together but the real opportunity to know him well was from 2002 when I took over as the CEO of ICEVI and Larry became the President of the organisation. The first milestone event under his Presidency was the launching of the EFA-VI Global Campaign in 2006 at the international conference of ICEVI in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Prior to this event, many of the current international partner members of ICEVI met in Pontevedro, Spain in November 2005 at the invitation of ONCE and stressed the need to use ICEVI as a “catalyst” and a “convening platform” to raise global concerns about education of visually impaired children through empirical evidences. This approach resulted in the implementation of the Global Campaign on Education for All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) acting in partnership with the World Blind Union (WBU) and a Global Task Force consisting of the International Partner Members was also in place to guide the campaign activities. Thanks to the visionary leadership of Larry which resulted in the enrolment of more than 110,000 children with visual impairment in mainstream programs.



Though CBM and Sightsavers were the first two International Partner Members of ICEVI, the number increased gradually with the membership drive initiated by Larry and today, ICEVI has 9 International Partners, namely, CBM, Light for the World, Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABPS), Organización Nacional de Ciegos

Espanoles (ONCE), Perkins School for the Blind, Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Sightsavers and the Royal Dutch Visio.

Larry's reputation at The Nippon Foundation helped ICEVI to commence the higher education project for blind and low vision students in the East Asia region and also in the development of Mathematics packages for training of teachers. The higher education project has so far assisted over 2200 students with visual impairment and Mathematics learning packages are also getting ready, which will be released soon.

Larry along with Maryanne Diamond, the then President of the WBU were instrumental in initiating the idea of conducting joint General Assemblies of the ICEVI and the World Blind Union. The first joint Assembly was organised in Bangkok in 2012, second in Orlando in 2016 and will continue in 2020 too.

In summary, ICEVI with Larry's leadership has witnessed an evolution from being a "forum to organise conferences" to a "platform to raise global issues" pertaining to education of children with visual impairment and also a "networking body to synergise the efforts of international organisations, parents' bodies and professionals." Larry has become an important Chapter of ICEVI and his vision of the past will facilitate the better shaping of the future of the organisation. In recognition of his outstanding services to the ICEVI, the organisation conferred him the title "President Emeritus" and Larry continues to guide the organisation whenever required.

I have learnt a lot from Larry's democratic leadership, concern for others and his broad vision of the services for persons with visual impairment, particularly in the developing world. He is a friend of visually impaired persons all over the world and a fine human being.

Long live Larry!!!





**EAST ASIA
REGIONAL
CONFERENCE**



Theme:
**Rights-Based Education and Sustainable
Development Goals for
Persons with Visual Impairment**

**16-18 October 2018
NOVOTEL Manila Araneta Center,
Philippines**

**Register at
ICEVI-EA-Manila@blind.org.ph**

ICEVI

International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is a global association of individuals and organizations that promotes equal access to appropriate education for all visually impaired children and youth so that they may achieve their full potential. For more information on ICEVI, visit the website at www.icevi.org

East Asia Regional Conference

Keeping in view the global agenda of "Education For All" children, ICEVI East Asia region is attempting to deliberate on the issue of treating education of children with visual impairment as their fundamental human right and ensuring that the global campaign 2030 addresses the Sustainable Development Goals in the vast Asia region, which is reported to have the largest number of visually impaired persons of the world.

Theme

Rights-based Education and Sustainable Goals for Persons with Visual Impairment

The conference theme will be discussed in the light of global perspectives on education for all, Sustainable Development Goals, Legislations, curricular strategies, human resource development, technology and higher education and the plenary sessions will focus on the following main topics.

- * **UNCRPD and the Incheon Strategies in the Light of SDGs in the ASEAN Perspective**
- * **Inclusion, Assistance and Support Services: Progress and Prospects Human Resource and Development Program for Competence and**
- * **Transition Approaches Leading to Career Development in Higher, Technical and Vocational Education**
- * **Appropriate and Effective Assistive Devices for the Education of Persons with Visual Impairment and Multi-handicapping Conditions**

- Audio-visual aids such as TV, LCD projector, Slide Projector, OHP, Flip-charts, etc., will be available for the sessions.
- Poster presentations can also be made by the participants in the designated exhibition area.
- The conference official language is English; however interpretation to other language maybe considered provided there are adequate number of specific language participants.

The abstracts of conference papers not exceeding 200 words as per the enclosed "**Abstract Form**" should reach the Programme Committee Secretariat: on or before **June 29, 2018**. Abstracts can also be sent by email to Dr. Yolanda S. Quijano, (Chair – Scientific Program committee) through ICEVI-EA-Manila@blind.org.ph with a copy to the CEO, ICEVI Dr. M.N.G. Mani (officevi@gmail.com)

Regional Organizing Committee

The Regional Organising Committee of the conference is chaired by Aria Indrawati, Chairperson, ICEVI East Asia Region with Amy Mojica, Executive Director, RBI as the Vice-Chairperson. Other members include Dr. Yolanda S. Quijano, Consultant ECCD Council, Ms. Carmen Zubiaga, OIC, National Council of Disability Affairs, Mrs. Marie Alonzo PAVIC, and Dr. M.N.G. Mani, CEO. The Regional Organising Committee will be responsible for the overall policy decisions pertaining to the conference.

Host Committee

The ICEVI Host Committee is headed by Amy Mojica, Executive Director, RBI with Ms. Carmen Zubiaga, OIC, National Council of Disability Affairs (NCDA) as Co-Chair. The members include Dr. Yolanda S. Quijano, ECCD Council, Mr. Mateo Lee, NCDA, Marie Alonzo, PAVIC, Mr. Jose Rañola, Philippine Blind Union, Mr. Edgardo F. Garcia, Deafblind Support Philippines, Dr. Divina Pasumbal, Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP).

The host-committee will form sub-committees based on needs. Dr. Frances Gentle, President ICEVI, Aria Indrawati, Regional Chairperson, East Asia region and Dr. M.N.G. Mani will serve as ex-officio members of the Host Committee.

Programme Committee

The Programme Committee is chaired by Dr. Yolanda S. Quijano together from the Philippines which includes Aria Indrawati Chairperson, ICEVI East Asia Region, Amy Mojica, and M.N.G. Mani (ICEVI) as members and Dr. Frances Gentle will also serve as an ex-officio member of the Program Committee.

Registration Details

The Registration Fee (in US Dollars) for the conference will have 3 categories.

Type of Registration	Participants from countries other than Philippines	Participants from Philippines
Early Bird Registration (before May 31, 2018)	US \$ 300	US \$ 200
Regular Registration (after May 31, 2018)	US \$ 350	US \$ 250
Accompanying Person	US \$ 200	US \$ 200

This fee includes the following: the entire programme, lunches, drinks during morning and afternoon, conference bag, opening reception, closing dinner, and the proceedings on USB.

Hotel Term & Conditions

The Conference Hotel is NOVOTEL HOTELS & RESORTS, MANILA ARANETA CENTER. Participants are expected to stay at this hotel by indicating their preference through the registration form, **because we get a special rate for the participants.** There are some other hotels in the vicinity which can be opted by the participants.

The official check-in time is 14.00 hours and check-out time is 12.00 hours. Early check-in before 10 a.m. or late check-out beyond 2 p.m. will be charged as one additional night's stay. The tariff details are given below:

Hotel	Rate	Complimentary Inclusion
Novotel Manila Araneta Center, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City	Single/Double Occupancy US\$96.00/night/room Triple Occupancy US\$132.00/night/room <i>Inclusive of service charge and VAT</i>	Buffet Breakfast Wifi in rooms Use of Fitness Center Use of swimming pool
Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel, P. Tuazon Blvd, Araneta Shopping Center, Quezon City	One Bedroom Suite Standard US\$83.00 /night/room Good for 2 pax Two Bedroom Suite US\$95.00/night/room Good for 4 pax <i>Inclusive of service charge and VAT</i>	Free buffet breakfast for 2 persons, additional Php350.00 in excess per person

Bank Details

Overseas Bank Name : United Coconut Planters Bank
 Account Name : Resources for the Blind, Inc.
 Account Number : 0111-8300-1235
 Overseas Bank Swift Code : UCPBPHMM

Registration Process

1. Please complete the registration form by indicating the type of hotel preferred and the nature of registration fee applicable.
2. Make an electronic transfer to the Bank Account of the Conference and send the registration form with the transfer details.
3. Upon receipt of your payment, along the registration form (by e-mail or surface mail), the host committee will send you an official invitation letter via e-mail or fax, which will serve as proof of your registration and also for obtaining visa. A reference number will be indicated in the invitation letter which should be quoted in all your correspondence in the future.

(Please note that online payment through credit card is not possible and therefore participants are requested to use the mode of bank transfer or send the fee through a Demand Draft to the host committee).

Registration Form for the Conference should be sent to the Chairperson, Host Committee, on or before June 30, 2018.

Contact information:
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 Resources for the Blind, Inc. 4th Flr. COTI Bldg. 623 EDSA Cubao, Quezon City
 Tel. No.: 63-2-726-3021; Email: ICEVI-EA-Manila@blind.org.ph



**International Council for Education of
People with Visual Impairment
EAST ASIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

**Novotel Manila Araneta Center
16-18 October 2018**

*“Rights-Based Education and Sustainable Development Goals for
Persons with Visual Impairment”*

Secretariat:

Resources for the Blind, Inc., 4th Flr. COTI Bldg. 623 EDSA Cubao, Quezon City, The Philippines
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OFFICIAL ABSTRACT FORM

Full Name :
 Position :
 Address :
 City/Town :
 State/Region :
 Country :
 Postal / Zip Code :
 Telephone : Home : Work :
 Fax : E-mail:

1. My preferred presentation format is

- Lecture with power point presentation
 CD Rom/Video (20 minutes)

2. The topic of the presentation is (Please tick the appropriate category)

a	UNCRPD and the Incheon Strategies in the Light of SDGs in the ASEAN Perspective	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Inclusion, Assistance and Support Services: Progress and Prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	EFA: Strategies to serve learners with low vision and multi-handicapping conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	Human Resource and Development Program for Competence and Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>
e	Transition Approaches Leading to Career Development in Higher, Technical and Vocational Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
f	Appropriate and Effective Assistive Devices for the Education of Persons with Visual Impairment and Multi-handicapping Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. **Preferred presentation language is English. However, if other languages are used the presenter will bring his/her own interpreter or translator.**
4. **Title for Presentation** (*not more than 25 words*)
5. **Abstract** (*Not more than 200 words in English, Verdana font 11, double space, MS Word*)

Suggested format:

Title

Author/Co-Authors
Designation and Institution

Block format, Left Margin – 1.5 inches; Right Margin – 1 inch justify

References: APA Format

6. **Date of Submission for the Abstract on or before **June 29, 2018** to the Conference Secretariat**
7. **Acceptance of Paper presentation is on or before **July 9, 2018****
8. **Date of Submission for the power point presentation is on **August 31, 2018** to the Conference Secretariat**

Please send the abstract form to the Programme Committee Secretariat Dr. Yolanda S. Quijano through ICEVI-EA-Manila@blind.org.ph with a copy to ICEVI Secretariat oficevi@gmail.com

Amy Mojica, Chairperson, Host Committee
Resources for the Blind, Inc., 4th Flr. COTI Bldg. 623 EDSA Cubao, Quezon City
THE PHILIPPINES
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Tamil Nadu, **INDIA**
E-mail : oficevi@gmail.com



**International Council for Education of
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EAST ASIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

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16-18 October 2018**

***“Rights-Based Education and Sustainable Development Goals for
Persons with Visual Impairment”***

Secretariat: Resources for the Blind, Inc., 4th Flr. COTI Bldg. 623 EDSA, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel. No.: 63-2-726-3021 Email: ICEVI-EA-Manila@blind.org.ph

PARTICIPANT’S REGISTRATION FORM

(Please make copies of this form, if needed. *Separate registration form needs to be submitted for accompanying person.*)

1. Surname :
2. Given Name :
3. Nationality :
4. Sex : Male Female
5. Title : Mr. Mrs. Ms. Dr. Prof.
6. Designation :
7. Address of the Organization/Agency :
8. Country :
9. Telephone (Office) :
10. Telephone (Personal / Mobile) :
11. Email :
12. Material Preference : Standard Print Braille
 Large Print electronic file
13. Diet Preference : Vegetarian Non-Vegetarian Halal
14. Are you a Person with Visual Impairment? : Yes No
15. If **YES**, are you travelling alone? : Yes No
16. If travelling with Escort, name of Escort :
17. Do you present paper? : Yes No

If yes, tick the topic of your choice:

a	UNCRPD and the Incheon Strategies in the Light of SDGs in the ASEAN Perspective	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Inclusion, Assistance and Support Services: Progress and Prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	EFA: Strategies to serve learners with low vision and multi-handicapping conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>

d	Human Resource and Development Program for Competence and Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>
e	Transition Approaches Leading to Career Development in Higher, Technical and Vocational Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
f	Appropriate and Effective Assistive Devices for the Education of Persons with Visual Impairment and Multi-handicapping Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>

The conference official language is English; however interpretation to other language maybe considered provided there are adequate number of specific language participants.

18. Registration Categories: (Please **check** the appropriate category)

#	Type of Registration	Participants from countries other than Philippines	Check your choice	Participants from the Philippines	Check if appropriate
1	Early Bird Registration (before May 31, 2018)	US \$ 300	<input type="checkbox"/>	US \$ 200	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Regular Registration (after May 31, 2018)	US \$ 350	<input type="checkbox"/>	US \$ 250	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Accompanying Person	US \$ 200	<input type="checkbox"/>	US \$ 200	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hotel Preference (Please refer to the details in the brochure)

Hotel	Rate	Complimentary Inclusion
Novotel Manila Araneta Center, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City	Single/Double Occupancy US\$96.00/night/room Triple Occupancy US\$132.00/night/room <i>Inclusive of service charge and VAT</i>	Buffet Breakfast Wifi in rooms Use of Fitness Center Use of swimming pool
Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel, P. Tuazon Blvd, Araneta Shopping Center, Quezon City	One Bedroom Suite Standard US\$83.00 /night/room Good for 2 pax Two Bedroom Suite US\$95.00/night/room Good for 4 pax <i>Inclusive of service charge and VAT</i>	Free buffet breakfast for 2 persons, additional Php350.00 in excess per person

19. Bank Details for Transfer:

Overseas Bank Name : **United Coconut Planters Bank**
 Account Name : **Resources for the Blind, Inc.**
 Account Number : **0111-8300-1235**
 Overseas Bank Swift Code : **UCBPHMM**

Please indicate the date of transfer and reference number

To register send this completed form with details of payment to:

Amy Mojica, Chairperson, Host Committee

Resources for the Blind, Inc.,

4th Flr. COTI Bldg. 623 EDSA, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines

Tel. No.: 63-2-726-3021 Email: ICEVI-EA-Manila@blind.org.ph

ICEVI Regional Activities

ICEVI Regions continue to make impact on policies and programs pertaining to education and other related services to persons with visual impairment. Following sections provide brief summaries of the activities undertaken by ICEVI's 7 regions and recognition for their key officers. More information about regional activities can be found from the regional pages of the ICEVI website www.icevi.org

Africa region

- **Promotion of Braille Usage:** Between the months of July and September 2017, ICEVI Africa worked with the organizers of the national Digital Essay Competition in Kenya to include learners with visual impairments in the competition.
- **Engagement with the African Union:** In November 2017, ICEVI Africa participated at the meeting of the African Union Special Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs where the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa was considered and endorsed.
- **Campaign for the Ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty:** Between July and December 2017, The AFUB-ICEVI Africa Marrakesh Treaty Resource Team delivered trainings on the Marrakesh Treaty in Mauritania and Tanzania; and to members of the AFUB Southern African region during their regional conference held in Namibia in October 2017, which was attended by members from six countries.
- In November 2017, Martin Keiti, the ICEVI Africa Deputy Regional Chairperson attended the 41st Session of the Administrative Council and the 16th Session of the Council of Ministers of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation (ARIPO), both held in Malawi where he delivered speeches at the opening sessions of both meetings on the Marrakesh Treaty.
- **Influencing Policy at National Level:** In Kenya, ICEVI Africa has been involved in a number of engagements with the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education for learners with visual impairments. These included the development of a national inclusive education program for learners with visual impairments and the costing for free primary and secondary education for learners with disabilities.
- **Raising the Profile of ICEVI Africa and its Work:** In collaboration with Sightsavers, the Chairperson of ICEVI Africa exploited a number of opportunities to raise the profile of ICEVI Africa and talk about its work. The Deputy Regional Chairperson also participated in the national

celebrations of the World Disability Day in Kenya and had the opportunity to speak about ICEVI Africa.

East Asia region

- The Philippines in the East Asia region has the commitment to build strong foundation for developing math, science and computer technology skills for blind people. It has proven that this effort has profound impact on the quality of education of blind people in The Philippines, especially the ones who have the interest in developing career in the area of math, science, as well as information technology. The Resources for the Blind, Philippines conducted a series of programs during the second half of 2017 to promote Mathematics.
- The ICEVI and the Overbrook Nippon Network on Educational Technology (ONNET) organised a workshop on Mathematics in collaboration with the Mithra Netra in December 2017 to promote mathematics instruction and also develop Math software in Indonesia.
- After conducting regional meeting to promote Marrakesh treaty in Singapore for South East Asia countries in November 2017, the WIPO provided capacity building training and grant for organizations in South East Asia who participated in Singapore meeting. Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia got the approval to obtain the capacity building grant
- The regional chair of the East Asia region made an effort to connect the country champions program of ICEVI, which was pioneered by the Higher Education project with WBU Asia Pacific Youth committee. The connection would be started in Indonesia in 2018.
- The ICEVI East Asia regional conference planning meetings were conducted in the region during the said period.

Europe region

- The 9th ICEVI European Conference: “Empowered by Dialogue” was organised on 2nd – 7th July 2017 in Bruges, Belgium. The conference was organized in cooperation with the Belgian Organizing Committee, BLL (Blindenzorg licht en liefde), Spermalie and Centrum Ganspoel.
- Meetings of the ICEVI-Europe Professional Interest Groups were held on Tuesday, 4th July 2017, during the 9th ICEVI European Conference in Bruges. The meetings, which were well linked to the title and theme of the conference were interactive and allowed for interesting discussions.
- During the General Assembly in Bruges, the presentation of the ICEVI-European Awards 2017 took place. The Board of ICEVI-Europe proudly decided to continue the tradition of presenting awards to individuals and organizations that have made a significant improvement in the quality

of life of people with visual impairment. ICEVI-European Award 2017 Recipients were:

1. Late Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou
 2. Perkins International
 3. Elizabeth (Kate) Chapman
- The ICEVI Europe Board Meeting took place for the first time in Finland on 16th and 17th of November 2017. The meeting was organized in Helsinki in close cooperation with the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired and Valteri Center for Learning and Consulting Onerva Finland.
 - VAU, the Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities, arranged the 2017 IBSA (International Blind Sports Federation) Goalball A-Division European Championships on 15th – 23rd September 2017 in the Pajulahti Sports Institute, Lahti, Finland. The ten best teams from the continent, both men and women, played in the tournament.
 - The school in Bydgoszcz celebrated its 145th anniversary this year. A conference entitled “From a white cane to audio description” was organized on 23rd November 2017.
 - Welsh education is currently in the process of becoming more distinct from that of other UK countries and is set to change further with the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation programme. The introduction of the ALN and Education Tribunal Bill 2015

over the coming years will reform the way the education and health sectors provide for children and young people (CYP) with ALN and support them in achieving their full potential.

- ICEVI Europe had the opportunity to be one of the members of the European project entitled “Bridging the Gap between Museums and Individuals with Visual Impairments – BaGMIVI”. The project consortium consisted of universities, museums and art galleries, schools and association for and of people with visual impairments from Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania and also included the European Blind Union. The project was coordinated by the University in Thessaly, Volos, Greece. The central aim of the project was to develop networking between universities, museums, schools for the blind and associations for and of people with visual impairments.

Latin America region

- A teleconference was organised in July 2017 for the follow up of the Memorandum of Understanding between ICEVI Latin America and ULAC (Latin American Union of the Blind). A task group was formed with two members from each organization to analyse the Braille presses in the region.
- The Regional Chair of ICEVI Latin America and the Coordinator of the Sub-region Central America and

Caribbean visited Guatemala in August 2017 to disseminate the work of ICEVI Latin America and to encourage the affiliation of new members through meetings with local organizations.

- The Regional Chair of ICEVI Latin America attended the Meeting Of Women organized by the Argentinean Federation of Organizations of the Blind (FAICA in Spanish) in September 2017 and delivered a lecture on the topic "Women and Disability."
- Two webinars on Inclusive Education and 2030 Agenda were held during the month of September 2017 which was organized by ICEVI Latin America, RIADIS, ULAC and WBU.
- The Regional Chair of ICEVI Latin America attended a Course on Disability at a University in Uruguay in October 2017 and coordinated a panel discussion. The course was organized by FOAL and AECID.
- The Regional Chair of ICEVI Latin America attended a Regional Meeting in November 2017 about public access to ICTs for users with disabilities in Ecuador. The meeting was attended by representatives of UNESCO and the Pan-American Health Organization (*OPS in Spanish*).
- The Regional Chair of ICEVI Latin America attended the 43rd meeting of FOAL's Partners in Spain during December 2017 and also attended meetings for the follow up of the MoU

between FOAL and ICEVI Latin America.

North America and Pacific region

- Dr. Kay Ferrell headed the ICEVI team in developing a Start-up curriculum for teachers, which is available on the ICEVI website.
- Dr. Ferrell is also working on country assessment tools as a part of national assessment of services for persons with visual impairment as recommended by the ICEVI Strategy Review meeting held in February 2017.
- Dr. Ferrell attended a meeting at UNICEF, New York along with the President and CEO of ICEVI in December 2017 to discuss the possibilities of collaborative activities between ICEVI and the UNICEF.
- The North America and Caribbean region is planning parent organisation activities in the Caribbean and Mrs. Susan LaVenture, President of the International Association of Parents of Visually Impaired Children will assist this activity.

Pacific region

- Mr. Ben Clare, Regional Chair, Pacific region visited Kiribati and assisted with the enrolment of students with vision impairment into college courses.
- The first ever blind person commenced full-time employment at the ANZ Bank and 3 more will be starting at other

Kiribati organisations over the coming months.

- Conference call were organised with the member countries.

West Asia region

- ICEVI Principal Officers Meeting was hosted by ICEVI West Asia on 7th December 2017.
- ICEVI Country Championship Program was organised at Ahmedabad during 6th – 7th December 2017.
- ICEVI West Asia and Sense India National Conference was held at Ahmedabad during 8th - 10th December 2017.
- Workshop on Early Intervention for Teachers in India was conducted by Dr. Frances Gentle, President, ICEVI on 11th December 2017.
- Mr. Bhushan Punani, Regional Chair, ICEVI West Asia has been appointed as Member of “Cross Disabilities Committee” of Secondary Education Movement of the Government of Gujarat.
- Mrs. Nandini Rawal Treasurer, ICEVI has been appointed as member of the Expert Resource Committee of Deepak Foundation which is developing Model School for the Blind at Vadodara.
- Mr. Bhushan Punani, Regional Chair, ICEVI West Asia was conferred with Life Time Achievement Award by Sarthak Education Trust in Delhi on 7th November 2017.
- Mr. Bhushan Punani, Regional Chair, ICEVI West Asia presented a paper on inclusive education at National Workshop organized by National University of Education Planning and Administration (NEUPA) in New Delhi on 9th - 10th November 2017.
- Mr. Kuenga Chhoegyel, Member of ICEVI West Asia from Bhutan participated in the Capacity Development of Leaders with Disabilities for UNCRPD during 27th September to 9th November, 2017 at JICA in Tokyo, Japan.

Successful Inclusion Practices in Guatemala

Carmen Lucía Guerrero de Prado, FUNDAL, Guatemala
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It is utopian to think about inclusion in a country that is multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural, where individual differences and inequity among its population are the prevailing realities.

However, when we work to create an inclusive environment, we all share the same space, and we use every tool in our hands, and we make this a world where all participate. When we work together, what we once considered a utopian idea is today the beginning of a reality.

FUNDAL works with students who are deafblind. We have created a systematic process for their inclusion in education. We consider and respect the characteristics of each student, family, school, and community of Guatemala.

In this inclusion process, we emphasise students' individual educational plans, which must be aligned with the National Base Curriculum. We take into consideration the quality-of-life skills according to the COACH approach (Giangreco, et al, 1998), the Bear/Star Process (Perreault and Bove, unpublished), and Person-Centered Planning (O'Brien, 2010).

This inclusion process has many stakeholders and contributors:

- In the Ministry of Education: educational authorities, supervisors, and pedagogical advisers;
- In the school: headmasters, teachers, classmates, and parents;
- Within the family: parents, siblings, other relatives, and tutors.

Working with these stakeholders has led to changes within the educational system in Guatemala, making it more equitable for all. The biggest obstacle for people with disabilities is not the condition in itself, but an unaccommodating environment.

The international concept of *inclusion* has evolved in recent years, and has had an influence of the educational policies of many countries. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization defines inclusion as follows: "Inclusion is the process by which the diversity of needs of the students within regular educational systems are taken care of, using all available resources efficiently and effectively, creating a variety of learning opportunities to prepare children for an active social and economic life, in a changing and culturally diverse world." (UNESCO, 2009)

UNESCO is guided by these objectives:

- Promote human rights and social justice through education.
- Respect the human rights of all children to free and compulsory education, at least within basic level.
- Promote quality in teaching and learning.
- Promote quality of life for oneself and for others.

Further, UNESCO (2009) identifies the following values and goals, which are of great importance for inclusive educational environments and communities:

- We can all learn.
- We are all different.
- Society creates both similarities and differences.
- Diversity can and should be valued in education and in society.
- We all have the right to education.
- We all belong to a society and we have roles to fulfill in it.

FUNDAL has drawn upon its experience, and added the following goals to the UNESCO values and guidelines:

- Include students with deafblindness and/or other sensory impairments.
- Promote educational, cultural, and social inclusion into Guatemalan society for people with deafblindness and/or other sensory impairments, and their families.
- Provide training to the educational sector on responsible inclusion for the

population with deafblindness and/or other sensory impairments.

FUNDAL creates an inclusive education plan for each student. Prior to entering regular school, the family and staff of FUNDAL Educational Center collaborate, guided by the instruments laid out in O'Brien's Person-Centered Planning work, Perrault and Bove's Oso/Estrella approach, Giangreco, et al's *COACH*, and Rowland's *Communication Matrix* (1996). This is integrated with Guatemala's National Base Curriculum and its outline for annual planning, with curricular adaptations. This process is carried out with all the students of FUNDAL.

The goal is to place the student successfully at the community school. We talk with the family about inclusion plans for their child. Experience has taught us that families have a lot of fear and insecurity about this change. Their children had a good experience in the FUNDAL environment, and the parents want them to remain there for many years. However, after a process of accompaniment prior to inclusion in the school, we reassure the parents, and they ultimately agree.

For a family whose child has deafblindness or another sensory impairment, the first contact with the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) is through the Department of Special Education. The personnel of the Special Education Department guide in selecting the community school that can meet the requirements for responsible inclusion. This requires that the school

authorities believe in the inclusion process, the teacher is willing to carry out the necessary curricular adjustments, and the classmates are ready to support the process. In order to become independent when attending school, the student's schedule must allow him or her to go to FUNDAL for support and compensatory skills required by the physical disability.

Each student is matched with a tutor, a classmate who guides the student through the educational process. This includes simple information, such as locations within the campus, schedules, as well as recreational activities, school activities, and recess games.

At the beginning, the student's educational materials are provided by FUNDAL. Little by little, as the teacher become more familiar with the student's needs, the teacher is encouraged to make the necessary adaptations on his or her own.

A successful inclusive educational placement requires a willingness on the part of the school personnel to accept the student, and strong support of the teachers and advisors from the Department of Education. The Department provides training in inclusion for students with deafblindness or multiple disabilities.

There are many benefits and achievements that arise from a successful inclusive educational placement:

- The student is happy and confident. The student has a longer attention span, shows more independence, has a larger number of friends, and

improves skills in interpersonal relationships.

- The school personnel becomes more committed to the inclusion process for students with disabilities when they see the student's motivation and great improvements.
- The family is happy to see their child in the same school as the rest of the community.

We sometimes encounter difficulties. They are usually caused by the teachers' lack of knowledge about inclusion of students with disabilities. At FUNDAL, we work with these teachers, addressing their questions and providing the necessary tools.

Patricia Guox, inclusion teacher from FUNDAL, describes her experiences with one of the students:

The smile of a new beginning is what characterises Diana, an 11-year-old girl who is very awake, attentive, and eager for new information. She was born in Guatemala City, and was received with love and dedication by parents who try hard every day to give her a better life. With a diagnosis of deep deafness in the right ear and deep hearing loss in the left ear, this has not been an obstacle in her communication.

In order to provide the necessary care, her parents sought support in various institutions until they came to the Guatemalan Foundation for Children with Deafblindness (FUNDAL) in 2012. There, Diana

was made part of the preschool classroom, where she developed a communication system (sign language) that allowed her to communicate with everyone. During the time she was at there, she managed to develop skills for an independent way of working in everyday aspects.

In 2014, the process of inclusion began in a school near her home. It was adapted successfully to the educational system. Her classmates and teacher received her in a friendly way. She made new friends, her vocabulary increased, and she was able to express herself with sign language. As for the academic area, she follows the class pace, works without supervision, follows instructions, has mathematical and problem solving skills, and manages to follow the National Base Curriculum.

She is currently in her fifth basic school year in a public rural school, where she begins with a new process of adaptation and is successfully completing it. She has new friends and is able to communicate with them.

Diana has developed the ability to express her needs in such a complete language that she can give a meaning to every gesture and action.

Patricia also describes the experience of another of her students:

With a surprising charisma, extremely inquisitive, hard-working, persevering, with a pure and transparent soul, Esthevan is a six-year-old boy who enjoys observing everything around him. He is cheerful, restless, and spontaneous. He gives value to all experiences of his daily life, and enjoys to the maximum his academic and recreational activities, which include sounds, movement, and vibrant colours.

He was born in the town of Mixco (on the western edge of the capital city) in 2010. An only child, surrounded by a family that believes in his abilities and reinforces his potential, he was diagnosed with bilateral deafblindness (vision and hearing loss). Parents sought help in various institutions that could give them answers in how to establish communication with their child. In this search, they found the Guatemalan Foundation for Children with Deafblindness (FUNDAL).

At the age of 11 months he was accepted in FUNDAL. Still a baby, he was welcomed into the children's classroom, where each activity (based on meaningful experiences) gave him the opportunity to discover and

develop to the fullest his capacity. During his stay in the preschool classroom his level of independence improved. He achieved the goals established at the beginning of the year. Each day he needed to have new activities that would give him different experiences. At the end of the school year he underwent an evaluation to be part of the programme of educational inclusion. His parents were reluctant because they were afraid that Esthevan would be discriminated against. After an orientation process, they agreed to the new proposal and sought a school near their home.

Since the first week it was a complete success. He made an affectionate bond with his teacher and classmates. He adapted to the learning processes and was included in all the curricular and extracurricular activities of the educational center.

Esthevan began his educational process with curiosity, enthusiasm, and the desire to continue learning from all these experiences that educational community can give him.

At the age of seven, he has proven to be an independent student, with a surprising ability to follow routines and sequences of school work, organise objects of interest, imitate models, and communicate

his needs and frustrations through images (pictograms) and objects of reference.

He successfully finished his school year, proudly wearing the cap and gown of the Lincoln School, obtaining his pre-primary diploma. Esthevan is an example that there are no limits to achieving what you want, and that you can overcome any challenge with faith, confidence, and perseverance.

The process of inclusion in Guatemala provides us with many satisfactions, teaches us important lessons, and results in great achievements. We believe that we are building a more humane world, full of opportunities for all, where each one of us has a place which is respected, admired, and recognised.

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Evaluating and Improving Processes for Inclusion within the School

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Introduction

The present article is part of a study done for the Catholic University of Córdoba, Argentina, as part of the graduate programme in Educational Inclusion Specialist.

This work is part of a project to create tools to index and evaluate inclusion practices. The goal is to improve the quality and diversity of teaching in for students with special needs in state schools.

We focused on a 6th-grade classroom in a state school. The pupils include those without disabilities, those with a disability status, and pupils with behavioral problems.

For evaluation purposes, we applied the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), which calls for a process of self-evaluation for schools within three areas: culture, policies, and inclusive education practices. The research and evaluation is based on a detailed set of indicators and questions, which must be analysed in depth. This process identifies the school's current situation and its ability to move toward greater inclusion.

We collected data through surveys that were given to students, parents, teachers,

teachers' support personnel, and management. We evaluated the data and created an intervention project to improve the teaching processes where needed, and to generate a significant shift towards more inclusive educational processes. This project has the support of the educational community that we worked with.

The data collected not only helped the particular school we focused on, but will also benefit other schools, as the University's inclusion research project findings are shared more widely.

We found that the personnel and families in a school tend to focus on perceived barriers to full educational equality. This has a significant impact on motivation and cooperation, and it's important to recognise that this resistance exists before undertaking inclusive educational practices.

One of the issues we wrestled with: We have a team with the ethical commitment to ensuring inclusive education for all with justice, equity and quality. Can that team generate support and impetus for such an enormous change?

The Context of the Study

It is important to contextualise the

environment and the processes of this inclusive education study.

In 2014, Argentina signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). The government thereby commits to promoting and supporting inclusion, and encouraging the participation of all people in education and society. However, the regulations of the Federal Council of Education and the Provincial Ministries of Education are still at odds with the Convention. These agencies require the individual to accept and adapt to unaccommodating environments. This has a direct impact on institutions, teachers, and students. It is a confusing and contradictory message, and reinforces certain barriers in education for people with disabilities.

Because of this contradictory situation, it is essential to identify the barriers to inclusion as we begin to work on this goal. This requires recognising a community's identity and uniqueness as we work with them toward the creation of a welcoming environment for all. The ultimate aim is to build communities that support all students in striving for high levels of achievement.

For this work, we were guided by *Index for Inclusion*, developed by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This publication includes a set of materials designed to support schools in the process of moving towards inclusive education. The materials encourage teachers and other school

professionals to share and build new initiatives, helping them to assess in detail the barriers and the real possibilities. Based on existing knowledge, and guided by inclusive goals, they create an environment that supports learning and participation for all students.

The School and the Study

For this study, we focused on the 6th-grade class in the chosen school. We distributed Questionnaire Number 6 of the *Index for Inclusion* to the students, whose average age is 12 years. Our analysis focused on only on the student responses.

The questionnaire consists of 20 questions, and there are four possible options for answers:

1. I agree completely;
2. I more or less agree;
3. I disagree; and
4. I do not know.

A respondent may also decline to answer a question. The allotted time to answer the survey is 30 minutes

The questionnaire gave us the students' perspective about their school. Following is what they expressed in the survey.

88% of the students “completely agreed” that they sometimes worked with a partner, and 76% agreed that students sometimes worked in groups. This measures the priority placed on working with others, which can create an environment for supporting the roles, opinions, and self-organising of the participants, and their ability to develop inclusive practices together.

Another question asked if the students' work is displayed on the classroom walls. 71% of students fully agreed that their work is selected for display, but 23% said they disagreed. From this, we can deduce that displaying students' work is not a common practice of teachers, or that some students' work is not selected.

100% of the students agreed, either completely or more or less, that the teacher listened to his or her ideas. These practices encourage students to do good work, and encourage teachers to internalise the interests of students.

When asked about whether the student's family thinks the school is good, 70% fully agreed, and 23% more or less agreed. This marks a need to work with families, raising awareness of the projects carried out, and generating proposals to encourage support for the school.

When students were asked whether they understood what was expected of them when given homework assignments, 47% replied that they fully understood. However, 52% replied they understood only more or less.

This is a common problem of schools where homework is assigned as a reinforcement of the lessons, or an opportunity to advance into new territory. In this approach, parents or guardians are responsible for explaining and the lesson, without any guidance or assistance from teachers. This gives the children and their families the responsibility to learn and advance on their own. The family

broadens its participation, finding the most appropriate channels to improve the learning process of the student. However, it is necessary to know about and use community resources.

From the responses received, it follows that teachers' practices are in part a response to watching classroom collaboration, and alternative teaching can arise from that observation. However, some teaching practices which actually hinder the learning process still persist, creating an environment of unequal participation. A clear example is in the responses of students regarding homework. Many of them do not understand what to do, and that creates a barrier for students who do not have the support of adults to guide the completion of the task.

The survey also provides a space where students can express what they and do not like about school.

They like activities in open spaces, in the outdoors, and with peers.

They do not like the use of nicknames and insults among peers, nor shouting by the teacher. They expressed their displeasure over the poor state of school infrastructure in general, marked-up walls and tables, classrooms in poor repair, and bathrooms and classrooms with poor hygiene and maintenance.

Finally, using direct observation, we found that teachers were working individually, without collaboration with other teachers. Classroom subjects tended to be

segmented and disconnected from other subjects, with an emphasis on memorisation by the students.

The surveys gave us the information about what to address, and we moved forward with appropriate actions. We presented the survey result to the school's teachers and administrators, who agreed to begin a process of change.

We began by defining the barriers to inclusion, as identified in the survey. Among the barriers revealed in the survey were:

- Lack of teamwork;
- Structured and rigid school dynamics;
- Teaching practices that correspond to a traditional foreign school model;
- Poor teacher training;
- Classroom segregation;
- Lack of motivation for generating new ideas and projects;
- Little family involvement as active members of the educational community;
- Lack of motivation for implementing new methodologies;
- Lack of motivation for creating a new educational scenario;
- Scarce resources and poor distribution of them.

Creating an action plan called for a comprehensive plan for addressing the entire school, generating new relationship configurations, and providing necessary support. The action plan called for:

1. Proceeding in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, integrating the needs of the entire school.

2. Implementing modifications and simple variants for specific methodologies. We took care to listen to the concerns and needs of the teachers themselves when seeking solutions.
3. Training, retraining and empowerment of teachers.
4. Introduction of Universal Design for Learning (DUA), which accommodates the learning styles of multiple modes of intelligence.
5. Interaction of different curricular areas, with planned and implemented joint projects, and the integration of the conceptual elements of all participants' curricular subjects.
6. Encouraging teachers to undertake projects on their personal interests. This includes bringing their personal experiences, tastes, knowledge, and personal motivations to the work.
7. Creating and applying settings support.
8. Encouraging greater interaction with families and between institutions.

The educational community discussed and analysed the action plan, integrating various activities within the comprehensive project. The personnel engaged in a critical analysis of the school's situation, and worked together to build a different reality. Together, they crafted a plan that addressed each of the barriers identified in the institution. This joint commitment has been one of the most important steps taken by the institution as it moves toward inclusive education.

Conclusion

Committing to inclusive education calls for restructuring the neighborhood school.

Personnel must be trained in accommodating students' diverse skills, genders, socio-cultural characteristics, cognitive abilities, etc. It calls for the transformation of the education system as a whole, creating an environment where people with and without disabilities can learn together (Yadarola, 2013).

Escobedo Peiro, Sales Ciges, and Ferrández Berruenco (2012) say that cultural change involves the internalisation of new values and norms. This means developing new skills, abilities, commitments, motivations, and beliefs as the engine of that change.

An educational institution that undertakes to change its culture must create collaboration between the faculty and the community. This transformation must accommodate the diversity of its students, foster a positive learning environment, and promote a sense of belonging and affection. It is essential to create an atmosphere of positive relationship between teachers, and good levels of communication. Management must support the staff and foster a proactive and participative inclusive philosophy (Escobedo Peiro, Sales Ciges, and Ferrández Berruenco, 2012).

This valuable experience calls for identifying systematic and structural barriers to teaching and learning. They must be recognised and overcome through new educational practices that

redefine the role of school and teachers, constructing a new inclusive culture that serves all students.

This experience called for collaborating on institutional improvement. It is important to realise that accommodating diversity is seen by some as an obstacle. However, that resistance makes us reflect on the practices and responsibilities called for to build an inclusive culture. Mindfully and respectfully proceeding in this work allows us to ensure an organised and thoughtful process and outcome.

School inclusion builds through small daily actions, beginning with welcoming students with disabilities without questioning their right to education. It begins when a family is willing to walk the walk, despite the barriers; when the management of an institution opens the doors of the school to all students. It begins with a teacher who accepts the challenge of classroom inclusion, and is successful in a school that supports the educational and community networks, while advising and accompanying the student, family, and teacher in the process.

Finally, it becomes a reality when society accepts that we are each and every one important members of our communities.

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Recognising ten years of English-Spanish translation

On behalf of the ICEVI Executive Committee, we extend our sincere appreciation to **Ms Judith Varsavsky** and **Ms Gimena Blesa** for completing the English to Spanish translation of the July 2008 to July 2017 Volumes of ICEVI's Journal, *The Educator*. The accurate translation of each volume required great attention to detail, editing and proofreading. Judith and Gimena's substantive contribution was undertaken without remuneration and has enabled Spanish readers around the world to access ten years of *The Educator* via the ICEVI website.



Gimena Blesa and Cristina Sanz



Judith Varsavsky and Cristina Sanz

Building Systems: Supporting Inclusion of *All* Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

Marianne Riggio and **Barbara A.B. McLetchie**

For far too many children with disabilities, the opportunity to participate simply does not exist. Far too often, children with disabilities are among the last in line for resources and services, especially where these are scarce to begin with. Far too regularly, they are the objects of pity, or worse, discrimination or abuse.

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF

The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities, Foreword

Background and Statement of Needs

The movement toward an inclusive system of education was grounded in the philosophy that the whole child should be embraced as a participating member of the family, the school, and the community. Inclusion refers to *all* children. Several United Nations organisations and others have advocated for the inclusion of children with disabilities. For example, the United Nations' (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) reaffirms the right of all children to receive education without discrimination on any grounds (Article 13). The UNCRPD was preceded by the United Nations' (1990) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC is the first legally binding international instrument that incorporates the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, and social. The UNCRC “spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to

develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life” (United Nations, 1990).

In support of the UN Millennium Development Goals of achieving primary education for all children, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, and fostering global partnerships in development, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Disabilities spearheaded the Education for All Children with Visual Impairment initiative. They did so in partnership with the World Blind Union and other international nongovernmental organisations to work with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Bank to ensure that girls and boys with blindness and low vision enjoy the right to education.

However, the inclusion of people with disabilities cannot be limited to the confines of the school setting, but includes the right to be a fully participating member of society. Therefore, in response to a number of worldwide initiatives, Perkins International sponsored a symposium in July 2012 to share global perspectives on the topic of building systems that support the inclusion of *all* children who are blind and visually impaired—at home, in school, and in the community. The symposium was attended by a group of international leaders, families, and teacher trainers, all of whom had both expertise and experience in the education of children who are blind or visually impaired with additional disabilities. They represented both developing and developed countries, including Ghana, Thailand, Kenya, Hungary, Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, China, India, Philippines, and the United States.

From open discussions and work sessions emerged this guidance document that families, educators, service providers, and governments can use to build systems that support inclusive education for *all* students who are blind and visually impaired, in school, at home, and in the community.

Defining the Population

Symposium attendees came to consensus on a practical definition of learners who have MDVI (multiple disabilities and visual impairment). The following definition can be used in different countries to inform governments:

They are those students who are visually impaired (i.e., blindness or low vision) with

additional disabilities that may include autism, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairment or deafness, physical, health, communication challenges, or other disabilities or combinations of two or more additional disabilities. MDVI impacts the ability of the students to build family and other social relationships, access community life, and to access the general education curriculum.

Children and young adults with MDVI require specialised supports in order to achieve equal access to the education and quality of life afforded those students without disabilities.

The Challenge

There are many barriers in providing education for children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities. Too often they do not have access to education because of poverty, negative societal attitudes toward people with multiple disabilities, little or no support to families, transportation challenges, lack of trained teachers, and inadequate learning materials.

The symposium began in the context of the need for systems change at the local and other governmental levels. Given the critical challenge of including those students with visual impairment and the most significant additional disabilities including deafblindness, systems should be put into place to enable each student to reach his or her full potential.

Clearly, the inclusion of children with visual impairment is a worldwide challenge. The inclusion of children who have additional disabilities is a further,

highly complex challenge. Children with additional disabilities are most often identified with other, more obvious disabilities such as physical or intellectual disabilities, while their sensory impairments are not adequately considered. This results in placement in inappropriate programmes or no programme at all. In many countries, there is either a prevalent belief that children with multiple disabilities cannot be educated, or they are at the bottom of the list of priorities because of their perceived lesser value in society.

In low- and middle-income countries there are an estimated 9 million children who are blind or visually impaired. Batshaw (2002) estimates that:

the incidence of blindness in children with multiple disabilities is more than 200 times that found in the general population; one-third of children with partial sight and two-thirds of children with blindness have other developmental disabilities. The high documented prevalence of children with multiple disabilities in the population warranted the symposium's attention to those students with MDVI. In the United States, where there is a national census of children who are deafblind, it is estimated that two-thirds of these children have additional disabilities (Killoran, 2007).

Symposium Process and Outcomes

Given the international initiatives, symposium participants shared position papers and case studies from around the world. The key themes of the symposium were children and young adults with MDVI as valued members of their families and communities, personnel training, and

programme development. The position papers and case studies stimulated active discussion and problem solving, and resulted in recommendations for achieving positive outcomes in homes and schools and strategies to influence public policy.

Although diverse discussions with varying themes took place, the following common set of core beliefs emerged:

- All children and young adults with visual impairments/blindness should have the right to education despite the severity or complexity of their additional disabilities.
- All children should have early identification, linking with meaningful early intervention and educational services.
- Local schools and communities should have information and action plans that lead to community awareness of all disabilities, including MDVI.
- All children and young adults should have the right to a quality education that meets individual needs and promotes their full development as members of an inclusive society.
- All children should have access to adequately trained teachers and other personnel to meet their unique assessment, educational, and healthcare needs.
- All children and young adults should have access to materials and equipment in media that is appropriate for their individual needs (from low tech to high tech).
- All children and young adults should have decisions made through a

team/collaborative process that assures that family, social, health, and educational needs are met.

- All children and young adults should have opportunities to participate and enjoy family and community life from birth through adulthood.
- All children and young adults should have opportunities to form relationships and have friends through effective communication and participation with friends, families.
- All children and young adults should have opportunities to contribute and feel valued by their families and communities.
- Schools and communities should have the goal of equal access for all of their members (e.g., universal design for learning).
- Families and professionals should be involved in collaborating and advocating for the development of public policy.
- Families, health, education, and social service and other governmental agencies should develop collaborative structures and processes to develop policies that promote an inclusive society.

Any effort to effect broad systems change must begin with a thorough examination of core beliefs and values that will ground all actions. Beliefs are the catalysts for actions and outcomes that lead to systemic changes at all levels—home, school, community, country, and worldwide. Beliefs can guide government policies that become the foundation for systems change. The implementation of such

policies results in the creation of services that enable all children to be included in their families, schools, and communities and contributing members of society.

The three sections that follow provide a summary of issues, challenges, and beliefs that relate to family and community life, personnel training, and programme development that can support the inclusion of children and young adults with MDVI.

INCLUSION IN THE FAMILY AND IN COMMUNITY LIFE

Introduction

Inclusion begins at home for all children. Families play a critical role in each child's development. Through family support and partnerships, adults can find joy and pride in being parents of a child with MDVI. With support, families can develop positive expectations for their children, and they can change societal attitudes that influence how they are viewed by others.

Children who are born with vision impairments and additional disabilities have difficulty learning concepts and skills that other children learn very naturally in their homes. For example, children learn about cooking by watching parents cooking and helping as they are able. They also learn about self-care skills by imitating what they have seen others do during their daily routines. Most children are not systematically taught to speak because it isn't necessary; they are able to attend to and participate in conversations that occur in their homes. Children without disabilities come to school with a wealth of

concepts, skills, and communication abilities that provide the foundation for accessing an academic curriculum. Children who are visually impaired and have additional disabilities do not have access to these natural learning opportunities.

The presence of MDVI has a dramatic impact on a child's social and communicative connections and on all aspects of personal development. Unless partnerships are forged with families from the earliest age possible, children with visual impairment and additional disabilities are at very high risk for failure in school. Schools must respect that families know the most about their children and are critical partners in the inclusion process. They also need support to create opportunities that will promote their child's development and inclusion in the flow of daily life.

In countries that have comprehensive special education laws, family members have been the primary advocates for systems change.

Beliefs

- Families should be valued as the most vital contributors to the child's education.
- Families should have the same access to services (e.g., education, places to go in the community) for their children as accorded to nondisabled children, regardless of their economic status or the severity of their child's disability.
- Families should have input into the choice of services that their child

receives and be informed of the benefits of inclusive education.

- Families should have opportunities to learn skills that will promote their child's development and inclusion at home, in school, and in the community.
- Families should be encouraged to find joy and pride in having a child with a disability.
- Families should be given support for including their child in the daily flow of family life.
- Families should have access to the resources and services (e.g., education, health care, respite care, family networks, and organisations for persons with disabilities) necessary to achieve as normalised a quality of life as possible.
- Family members should have opportunities to interact with family organisations and networks where issues of common concern are addressed.
- Families of children with disabilities and families of children without disabilities should have opportunities to share what their children have in common to promote educational and social inclusion.
- Families are the best advocates for their child's rights to access early intervention, education, and adult services to promote quality of life.

PERSONNEL TRAINING

Personnel training encompasses preservice training (e.g., university/teacher training programmes) as well as in-service training (e.g., workshops and consultation)

conducted by qualified professionals in the field. It is important when addressing this topic to keep in mind that systems must think about all types of training. All levels of training should address the specific needs of persons who provide care and education for learners with MDVI.

A major challenge in inclusive education is assuring that each child receives an education from teachers who are able to meet that child's unique needs. Traditional educational methods utilise the senses of vision and hearing as the primary avenues for instruction and learning. It is important therefore that every educational team serving students who are blind and visually impaired have access to personnel with specialised knowledge and skills to access and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of students with MDVI.

Worldwide, there is a tremendous shortage of trained personnel in visual impairments and an even greater shortage of teachers who understand the complex needs of students with visual impairment and additional disabilities. Higher education has a crucial role in developing awareness, changing attitudes, and building the knowledge and skills of all future teachers.

Teachers in regular classrooms need specialised support and training to effectively include all children. They must begin by changing attitudes toward students with disabilities.

As the needs of children within the educational system change, teachers and others who provide care and education

need opportunities for ongoing training and support to stay current with the best practices in the field.

Beliefs:

- Teacher training programmes should provide regular and special education teachers with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to more easily adapt their strategies and learning environments for a diverse group of learners.
- All teacher training programmes, general and special education, should include the basic knowledge and skills of inclusion and disabilities, including VI and MDVI, in their coursework.
- All teachers should have ongoing training and practice to remain current in research and best practices in special education and general education.
- In-service/ongoing training that relates to the needs of individual learners should be available to members of the student's educational team, including family members.
- Practical experiences are essential to preservice and in-service training in order to blend theoretical knowledge with practical skills.
- Staff and nondisabled students in schools should have awareness and skills training that will promote the participation of the student with MDVI in the life of the school.
- Instructors of university courses, workshops and seminars should have experience in effective inclusion of students with MDVI in regular schools.

- All persons involved in the care of persons with vision impairment and multiple disabilities should have opportunities for ongoing training to remain updated with current best practices and the changing needs of the population.
- Government education agencies should have school inspectors who are trained to evaluate the quality of services for students with MDVI in inclusive settings.
- Children and young adults with MDVI should have at least one team member who has expertise in their disability.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Government agencies are central in making inclusion work for all students. Government officials and administrators play critical roles in developing policy and putting into place the systems to support inclusive education for all students. They are challenged in meeting the needs of children with low-incidence disabilities such as visual impairment and multiple disabilities, due in part to the scarcity of trained professionals and systems that can provide the supports that individual children need. Most countries have some specialised services for students who are visually impaired that can be expanded to facilitate the access of needed specialised services and materials within inclusive educational settings.

One of the primary structures that must be considered is the collection of demographic data necessary for the development of appropriate educational service systems. Government agencies

should encourage the development of model programmes that can become centers of excellence and resources that can improve services, ranging from evaluation of students to providing needed materials for learning.

The greatest challenge in inclusive settings for children with MDVI is access to the national curriculum and social relationships. Curriculum, in simple terms, is what is taught, why it is taught, how it is taught, and what the children learn. All children have the right to fully participate in a curriculum that is appropriate and meets their educational and lifelong needs.

Beliefs

- Services should commence early in life to ensure that children are able to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to access the school curriculum.
- All children with MDVI should go to school.
- Curriculum must meet the unique educational needs of each student and be tied to future, meaningful goals for a happy and productive life.
- Principles of Universal Design for Learning should be utilised to ensure access to the curriculum and the life of the school.
- Children with MDVI should have meaningful transition plans and programmes, from early childhood through adulthood.
- Children with MDVI should have multiple opportunities to interact in meaningful ways with their non-disabled peers. Interactions should

- occur naturally within the programme, including informal social interactions.
- The curriculum should be meaningful, with age-appropriate materials and activities.
- An effective process for developing individualised education programmes (IEPs) should be in place that include socialisation and other expanded core curriculum areas necessary for students who are visually impaired.
- All stakeholders (including government officials, school teachers, parents, children, etc.) should participate in curriculum development and adaptation at all levels.
- Curriculum developed by the team should be age-appropriate and include activities and materials that engage and motivate learners.
- Children’s goals, objectives, and activities should be aligned with the national curriculum.

PATHWAYS TO CHANGE

During this symposium, participants shared the evolution of services in their countries and strategies to reach their goals. It was clear that all successful efforts began at the grassroots level. Parents started networking together, often in collaboration with professionals from nongovernmental organisations, then partnered with governments, leading to policy change.

The pathways to creating a fully inclusive system differ from country to country. The following recommended outcomes and examples of strategies are to be analysed

within the context of individual country systems and cultures and may be used as a foundation for planning services for the education of all children, including those with MDVI.

“Governments” refers to local and national governments, including ministries of education and social welfare. These entities should work in partnership with professionals, family organisations, disabled persons organisations (DPOs), and other nongovernmental organisations that can support the mission of the inclusion of children with VI and MDVI in their homes, schools, and communities.

Governments, in collaboration with families, educators, and related professionals, will develop a definition of the learner who is MDVI.

Sample Strategies:

- Use a consensus-building process that includes families, disabled persons organisations, special educators, and other knowledgeable members (e.g., health workers, community-based rehabilitation (CBR) coordinators) to develop a definition for the country.
- Offer the definition of MDVI in this document as an option.
- Set a reasonable timeline for a practical and clear definition and government approval.
- Use the definition for dissemination and to promote awareness of MDVI at all levels.

Governments will identify children with visual impairments and their placements

(schools, locality in the country) to develop an ongoing census.

Sample Strategies:

- A committee of multiple stakeholders will develop a screening procedure for visual impairments including MDVI and follow up with referrals to appropriate services.
- Departments of public health and medical professionals will collaborate with programmes, local governments, and school administrators to identify children with MDVI.
- A government-designated agency or agencies with expertise regarding VI and MDVI will set priorities and establish appropriate screening and monitoring processes of referrals and develop and maintain data.
- CBR workers will gain skills in screening, as children with disabilities in rural areas and those with who are living in poverty are at high risk for not receiving adequate services—or, most often, any services.

Governments will pass and implement legislation that guarantees the family's right to have input and authority in developing their child's IEP.

Sample Strategies:

- Family organisations advocate for the family's right to be valued and legal members of their child's team.
- Families are given support as needed to understand and actively participate in the IEP process (e.g., explanation of the child's proposed programme in clear, simple terms for families who do

not read; transportation to the team meeting).

Communities will respect the rights of persons with disabilities as equal members of society, with the same rights and privileges as all citizens.

Sample Strategies:

- National and local awareness campaigns are developed about the population of children with MDVI, including dissemination of basic information and lists of resources.
- Recreational and public areas in the community are made accessible to people with and without disabilities.
- Community planners are given information that demonstrates that accessibility also benefits nondisabled people (universal design).

Public health systems are required to identify children with MDVI early in life and refer them to appropriate early intervention/educational services.

Sample strategies:

- Ministries of education and public health work together to develop interagency agreements to provide follow-up with children who are identified as having a disability (including those with MDVI) or who are at risk for disability.
- Registries are developed that track students identified with MDVI and the services they receive.

Government education agencies (GEAs) will approve of adapted and alternate curricula that are aligned with the

national curriculum to address the unique needs of each learner.

Sample strategies:

- Government-endorsed committees that develop curriculum standards are created.
- In-service training and workshops are developed for current teachers and government inspectors on strategies to adapt and align the alternate curriculum with the national curriculum.
- Governments, through qualified professionals, monitor the child's progress and his or her current and future needs for adaptations or alternate curriculum.

Teams are legally required to develop individualised education programmes (IEPs) with goals and objectives that are aligned with the regular curriculum and necessary additional educational curriculum areas (e.g., communication/social relationships, independent living skills, self-care skills, vocational skills).

Sample strategies:

- A forum is created with specialists in the field of education to consider unique accommodations and adaptations necessary for each child to access the curriculum.
- Teachers and school administrators receive training in functional and meaningful curriculum that addresses major national curriculum areas (e.g., math, language, social studies, science).

Teams are required to develop and implement an individualised transition programme (ITP) for each student's transition from early intervention to school and from school to adult life to promote the learner's participation in the next learning environment.

Sample strategies:

- Ministry of education will develop guidelines for programmes and families to use in the transition from early intervention to school and from school to adult life.
- Vocational services collaborate with families, local communities, educators, programmes, organisations, and private businesses to consider possibilities for future job opportunities and activities that will promote quality of life for adults with VI.

GEAs provide additional and specialised supports needed to effectively include each learner who has MDVI (e.g., supports needed to address unique forms of literacy, orientation and mobility, an interpreter, etc.).

Sample strategies:

- Development of a low-incidence disabilities committee to develop models to effectively and efficiently meet the specialised learning needs of students with MDVI and other low-incidence disabilities.
- GEAs identify, utilise, and expand specialised schools or programmes as resource centers that can support the unique needs of learners who are MDVI and their inclusion in homes, schools,

and local communities. They can provide:

1. Information and support for families and professionals;
2. Identification and evaluation;
3. Staff training;
4. Ongoing consultation to inclusive schools and participation on the educational teams of learners with MDVI;
5. Collaboration with teacher training colleges for observation, practical experience, collegial sharing of information, and problem solving for effective inclusive practices;
6. Ongoing advancement in innovative educational practices in the field of education of learners with MDVI;
7. Access to research and resources for dissemination of best practices in the education of learners who are MDVI in any educational setting;
8. Access to specialised learning materials, technology, and tools for literacy.

Governments will require that all teacher training programmes include a blend of regular education, special education, and early intervention for all aspiring teachers that will give them basic knowledge and skills in MDVI.

Sample strategy:

- Governments support model schools serving children with MDVI to train instructors from university or teacher training institutions in regular and special education about the unique learning needs of children with MDVI.

- Programmes that train regular education and special education teachers collaborate to develop basic written competencies for teachers in the areas of visual impairment, MDVI, and deafblindness.

Countries will have universities that provide advanced training in visual impairment and MDVI.

Sample strategies:

- Governments create incentive grants for universities to develop specialised training programmes in visual impairment and MDVI.
- Universities establish model practicum sites to assure practical application of theory to effective practice.
- Government recognised teacher training colleges and universities collaborate with knowledgeable and skilled teachers to conduct field based/practical research.
- Universities will have access to information from other countries where teacher competencies, knowledge, and skills, have been used effectively.

Government education agencies will monitor and evaluate inclusive schools utilising tools that consider the unique learning needs of students with MDVI and effective inclusion practices.

Sample strategy:

- Specialists in MDVI provide consultation, training, and support to ministries of education to help build understanding about the educational needs of this group of students.

- Personnel from ministries of education will develop/adapt school monitoring tools to assure that education programmes are meeting the unique learning needs of students with MDVI.

Government policies will provide necessary supports in home environments and alternative living environments, such as group homes, for children and adults with MDVI.

Sample strategies:

- Ministries of social welfare and education collaborate with special educators and families to assess and plan for needed respite and long-term care options for persons with MDVI .
- Ministries of social welfare and education support programme development for respite and long-term care.

CONCLUSION

The international symposium began with a world view of the issue, and reports on individual country initiatives tracing the successes and challenges of including children and young adults with visual impairments and blindness. Of the approximately 160 million blind or low-vision persons worldwide, 80 percent live in developing countries, and only one in ten have access to education or rehabilitation. Ninety percent of blind or low-vision children do not attend school (Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2011).

Children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities (e.g., communication challenges, deafblindness, autism,

intellectual disabilities) are at extremely high risk for having inadequate education or no education all. They are too often the last priority for receiving services. Community awareness and acceptance of children with MDVI too many times is nonexistent in both developing and developed countries. Therefore, symposium attendees focused upon children with MDVI. Three themes emerged—families, personnel training, and programme development.

Families

Families need information, support and respect, from early identification through transition to adulthood. Families should be valued by their child's early intervention and educational service teams as full legal members. As equal partners, they can create many meaningful educational and social experiences for children with MDVI that will result in mutually enriching lives for *all* people.

Families who network with disability groups gain important information, become empowered, and create positive systems change. People involved in these networks earn respect and legal rights, and become the most effective life-long advocates for themselves and their children.

Personnel Training

Teacher training programmes, for both regular and special educators, advance the development of a high quality educational services system for all children. Through workshops and in-service training in best practices and research, teachers master inclusive educational practices, and can become powerful change agents. Training

also must be delivered to all who interact with the student. Families, caregivers, teaching assistants, and administrators can benefit from both formal and ongoing informal training.

Programme Development

A quality programme emanates from the beliefs that children with disabilities, despite their complexity and severity, can learn and have their individualised needs addressed in a programme that promotes inclusion in school, at home, and in the community. Identification as early in life as possible, along with referrals to appropriate family-focused early intervention or educational services, will maximise a child's potential for development and can create awareness and acceptance by the extended family and the community.

As team members gain competence, meaningful programmes will emerge. Support from existing resources within a country, such as schools for the blind, should be explored. Quality programmes should be monitored by government-appointed officials with knowledge of inclusion and MDVI.

Systems change will require a commitment to a true, open communication and collaboration among multiple private and public organisations. When we improve education for learners who have complex needs, we improve education for all.

Somewhere, a child is being told he cannot play because he cannot walk or another that she cannot learn because

she cannot see. That boy deserves a chance to play. And we all benefit when that girl and all children, can read, learn and contribute.

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF

The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities,
Foreword, p.iii

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Slow Reading Speed: A Reading Problem, Not a Braille Problem

Sheena Manuel

Reprinted and updated from the blog of the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness at Louisiana Tech University, blog.pdrib.com.

From the Editor: When a student who uses Braille encounters reading problems, teachers often assume that Braille is the source of the trouble. Such assumptions may cause teachers to overlook issues common among beginning readers regardless of the reading medium. In this article, Sheena Manuel describes her work with a blind student who struggled with slow reading speed. Sheena Manuel works as the outreach specialist for the Institute on Blindness at Louisiana Tech University, teaching Braille and cane travel as a contractor for several school systems in northern Louisiana.



My student, Allonah, learned the Braille code in one year. By the time she entered second grade she loved to share Braille with her classmates. However, her reading fluency did not match that of her sighted peers. She would try to guess at words after looking at the first couple of letters, and she didn't enjoy reading. My co-teacher Leesa Wallace and I knew she had the cognitive ability to be at the same reading level as her sighted peers, but she wasn't getting there. Her reading speed and fluency just stayed at the same place.

We gave Allonah easy books to read and presented her with opportunities to read outside of school. She read in her free time

at the library, and her mom even sent videos of her reading Braille at home. But her reading wasn't picking up as we expected, even though she practiced and used the two-handed reading technique. She was reading and reading and reading. What else was there for us to look at?

We discovered something profoundly simple. This was not a Braille problem; it was a reading problem.

I went to the 2015 Council for Exceptional Children Super Conference in Lafayette, Louisiana, looking for ideas for my student. Sandra Strong, an educational consultant and retired teacher, presented on the Read Naturally Strategy www.readnaturally.com

This program was originally intended to improve the reading fluency of sighted children through the combination of teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. However, I saw that it easily could be adapted for blind children. I happened to win the door prize and had the opportunity to get the full Read Naturally program for any grade level. Winning this door prize and knowing that this new strategy was what we needed made it even more exciting!

The kit came with all the books and materials, CDs, and a guide for determining the student's correct instructional level. After determining Allonah's placement in the program, we transcribed the materials into Braille for her to read. The CDs also had audio files of key words and reading passages, which are accessible for blind children and children with low vision. Allonah used the CDs to study the passages and key words independently as she read along in Braille. The repetition of reading the passages along with a teacher, followed by her reading alone, improved her reading comprehension and speed. However, she still needed more work with spelling and phonics.

Dr. Libby Manning's literacy course at Louisiana Tech University uses the Words Their Way Series <https://www.pearsonhighered.com/series/words-their-way-series/2281883.html>. This program determines the student's spelling level and includes many games and activities to address the identified problem areas. I realized that my student

was missing basic literacy skills, such as knowing short and long vowel sounds. After the teacher uses the Words Their Way Series evaluation to determine her spelling stage, the student sorts words that are like one another by sound or pattern. The student then reflects on what is similar about the words, allowing her to discover the spelling pattern or rule herself. This method reminds me of the structured discovery strategies that I use with my students when I teach cane travel. My students discover the characteristics and similarities of an environment on their own, without me having to explain it to them.

The Words Their Way Series contains lots of activities and games to reinforce skills. My student might search in her Braille book for words with the same vowel sound or pattern, write sentences using certain words, and even create her own games. She completed a daily "word study contract" to earn points; normally she earned forty points per reading session (four days a week), and she needed three hundred points to win a prize. Prizes have been a big motivator for Allonah, as they are for any child. You can give her a whistle, a pair of princess wings, or even a dollar, and she is on top of the world!

Once we began using the Words Their Way Series and the Read Naturally Strategy, Allonah's overall reading skills noticeably improved! After using the Read Naturally Strategy for four weeks and working on phonics with the Words Their Way Series for about three weeks, she began to love reading as never before. Her

regular education teachers saw a difference in how hard she worked to read accurately and to participate in class.

I didn't come up with all of these solutions myself. I had the insights and expertise of my co-teacher and other colleagues to help identify my student's struggles and to reinforce her literacy skills. I wish that we had caught the problem earlier, but I am very glad we didn't go another year wondering what the problem was. We are pretty certain that we found the solution to this student's slow reading speed. It was not a Braille problem, but a reading problem.

During Allonah's third grade year, we continued to use these strategies. In addition, we brought in the response-to-intervention specialist (RTI). This additional support provided my student with a variety of interventions five days a week, for at least thirty minutes per session. The RTI specialist used fluency strips and passages to help increase Allonah's fluency and stamina. With these programs in place, she was able to read books such as *Because of Winn-Dixie* and *The Stories Julian Tells* side-by-side with her peers.

After learning about some of the strategies that exist for children with reading problems, I decided to further my learning and add "become a reading specialist" to my professional growth plan. During the past few quarters, I have learned that reading is a complex set of skills. During the reading process, children sample either by letter, word chunks, or phrases. Next, they predict what the word may be.

Then they use a cueing system to check their prediction, and finally they confirm what the word is by using a different cueing system. We use cueing systems even as adults. As we read, we think, *did that make sense? Did it sound right? Did it look right?* It's important that we teach children to use all cueing systems while they read. Most importantly, we should MODEL, MODEL, MODEL what good readers do and what good readers sound like. Dr. Carrice Cummins, a professor of education at Louisiana Tech, has us recite in each course why read alouds are important. "Read alouds are the most influential way to help a student become a proficient reader."

During the spring and summer quarters, I added read alouds to my lesson plans. Allonah enjoys sitting on the floor or standing around listening to me read to her. I get to see her excitement while she listens, and she's interested in what will happen next once I stop reading. This strategy helps her hear how good reading sounds, motivates her to read, enhances her vocabulary, and just lets her relax and enjoy. Read alouds can be more than just listening and reading; reading aloud can be interactive.

After taking Dr. Cummins' reading courses at Louisiana Tech, I have learned that we, as teachers of blind/visually impaired students, must become knowledgeable in reading techniques and strategies on a deeper level. We must understand that fluency is more than just getting a child to read at a faster rate. Fluency is about

reading accurately, rapidly, with expression, and for deep understanding.

Some strategies teachers can use are:

- Read alouds
- Choral reading
- Partner reading
- Tape-assisted reading
- Reader's theater
- Fluency development lessons.

For more information on reading strategies check out my WIX READ 536 tab at <<http://snm063.wix.com/reading>>.

Allonah continues to work hard to improve her reading, but sometimes she has mixed feelings about using Braille when her peers raise questions. Some of her peers don't understand that she has some vision--why

does she need to use a cane and read Braille, even though she can see them? As teachers, we continue to encourage her and work to educate her family, peers, and classroom teachers on the importance of using nonvisual techniques.

Recently we held a *Carnaval de Jeux* (Carnival of Games), geared toward sighted peers and hosted by blind role models. The games highlighted the fun we have in Braille class, building Allonah's motivation to use Braille and nonvisual techniques beside her peers. We tried to answer the questions her peers may have about how blind people live and work. We have high hopes that when Allonah begins the new school year, her peers will still have the carnival fresh in their minds and will look forward to our next one.

Accessible Voting

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[Key Note address in the State Level Workshop on Accessible Elections by the Elections Commission of India on 16th April 2018 at Jaipur, Rajasthan]

At the outset, I appreciate initiative of Election Commission of India for organizing a State Level Workshop on “**Accessible Elections**” at Jaipur. It is truly a matter of great pride that Hon’ble Election Commissioner, Mr. Sunil Arora who is known for promoting inclusive development for persons with disabilities has inaugurated the Workshop. Just to mention that he played an important role in getting the budget allocated for skill development of persons with disabilities; establishing Sector Skill Council for Skill Development of such persons and ensuring coverage of such persons in National Skill Development Council during his tenure as Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development – which truly is a bold and praise worthy initiative.

We should all rejoice in the fact that the Election Commission of the largest democracy in the world has been conscious about the electoral rights of persons with disabilities. Thanks to judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated 19th April, 2004 – Anniversary of that Landmark Judgment, the Election Commission of India has already taken a variety of measures. These measures include their identification, inclusive electoral roles, appointment of special officers, awareness, public education, involvement of NGOs,

DPOs and CSOs, sensitization and orientation of election machinery, accessible website, communication, physical access at polling booths, cooperation of political parties, priority in entering, entry of companion, Braille signage, Braille ballot papers and special care for persons with speech and hearing impairment.

Despite all these written instruction to all concerned persons, the turnout of persons with disabilities to the polling booths has not been very encouraging. All these instructions are well thought of and most appropriate, the major limitation however is their effective implementation. I urge upon each and every one connected with “Accessible Voting” to take appropriate steps to implement or the get the same implemented at polling booths. Only if we are able to implement even these guidelines, a very large number of people with disabilities shall be able to exercise their right to vote.

With the enactment of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provision of all these facilities or taking of these and all such other initiatives is no more a matter of choice. As per Section 11 of this statute, it is mandatory to make all polling booths accessible; and to provide all material of

electoral process in an accessible format. Thus it is mandatory now for the Election Commission of India to make the polling booths as well as the polling process accessible for all 21 categories of PwDs

I wish to make the following suggestions which may become subject matter of discussion in the four "Disability Specific Working Groups".

1. Universal Considerations: I request members of all the Working Groups to consider the following suggestions:

- a. Orientation of Staff:** All polling staff should be provided proper orientation and sensitization as regard limitations and specific needs of persons with disabilities. A chapter in this regard should be included in the "**Manual of Instructions**" to be provided to "Booth Officers" and other officials managing the polling process. To facilitate this process further, a designated officer should be appointed for each constituency.
- b. Human Touch:** One official on each polling booth should be assigned the responsibility of meeting, greeting and facilitating persons with disabilities, elderly and those with special needs.
- c. Walk in Voting:** Due to physical conditions and health considerations, some PwDs may find it difficult to wait. Thus a system of "Walk in Voting" should be introduced to curtail the waiting time to bare minimum.
- d. Dedicated Booth:** A separate Polling booth should be established for senior citizen, PwDs, sick persons, pregnant women such other persons in special need.
- e. Free Transport:** The services of public transport, emergency service like 108 should be made available to persons with severe disabilities, restricted mobility and such other conditions.
- f. Voting at Home:** The persons with restricted mobility should also be extended the facility of **postal ballot** or e-voting to enable them to cast their votes from their homes. The on-line voting should be made compatible with the screen reading software.
- g. Wash-room Facilities:** Each polling booth should have adequate "wash-room facilities" to enable people requiring such facility at frequent intervals to come to polling stations.
- h. Telephone & Mobile Helpline:** To enable PwDs to access information about the candidates of a selected constituency while at home such helpline for a limited period should be introduced.
- i. Scroll line on Local TV Channels and announcement on FM Radio:** Such initiative will encourage home bound PwDs and those with hearing loss to get proper information about the candidates and location of polling booths.
- j. Mandatory Mention of Disability in Election Card:** While updating the voter cards, the system of mention of disability and specific voting needs of such persons should be mentioned in

the voter identity cards. Thus voter registration and updating form should be modified accordingly. The voter slips issued to PwDs should incorporate information in accessible format about the facilities to them. Efforts should also be made on identification of PwDs who have not been enrolled on the voters' list and ensuring their listing.

- k. Services of Escorts:** All PwDs should be permitted to avail services of their escorts, companions or family members to enable them to get human support while casting their vote.
- l. Public Awareness:** The ECI should launch a public campaign with the use of electronic, print, social, mass publicity & local media for creating awareness about availability of these facilities. The awareness material should also be provided in accessible format.
- m. Earmarked Broadcast and Telecast Time:** On the lines of such time being allocated to political parties, such time should be allotted to DPOs, NGOs and POs to share availability of specific facilities and support services to PwDs at the polling booths in the polling process.
- n. PwD Volunteers:** Involve PwD as volunteers in election process so that they can motivate other PwDs to participate in the election process.
- o. Websites:** The web sites of the ECI and State Departments of Election should be made accessible, W3 compliance and with provision for

changing font size and colour contrast.

- p. Budget:** The ECI should allocate adequate budget for making electoral process, material and venue accessible and to take other appropriate measures.

2. Persons with Visual Impairment: I appreciate efforts of ECI for introducing availability of Braille ballot papers. I suggest the following further measures for such persons:

- a. Mobile App:** As persons with visual impairment are now able to use the mobile phones, a mobile App with the list of candidates for each constituency and location of polling booths should be launched for a limited period. The on-line voting should be made compatible with the screen reading software. This would encourage on-line voting and awareness about the candidate and the polling process.
- b. Audio Device:** In addition to Braille ballot paper, system of availability of audio device should be introduced to further facilitate voting by persons requiring this facility. (I have prepared a sample of such audio recording which I shall play in the Working Group).
- c. Large Print:** To facilitate voting by persons with low vision, ballot papers should also be available in large print.
- d. Proper Illumination:** The polling booth and especially the voting machine area should have adequate

and proper illumination to enable persons with low vision to cast their vote.

- e. **Toggle Keys:** The new voting machines should use toggle keys with large print on the same.

3. Persons with Locomotor & such other Disabilities: The ECI has already issued guidelines on providing ramps and such other facilities at voting booths. The following further messages should also be taken:

- a. **Quality of Ramps:** As per mandate of the RoPwD Act, 2016 each public building should be made accessible within 5 years and all new building must be accessible. As election booths are mostly established in the “public buildings” instructions should be made to make all such building accessible on permanent basis. All the ramps, permanent or temporary must be of proper quality and standard specifications.

- b. **Availability of Wheelchairs:** While instructions in this regard were also issued by the ECI but wheelchairs were not available at most polling booths in last elections. The concerned authorities must ensure that adequate numbers of wheelchairs have been arranged well in advance for this purpose and the same are available at the polling booths.

- c. **Adequate Space at Polling Booth:** The size of the polling cabin should be increased suitably so that people with wheelchair or such other

devices should have adequate space for casting their vote conveniently.

- d. **Earmarked Parking:** The tricycles, modified two-wheelers, modified four wheelchairs and vehicles being used by PwDs and elderly should be provided earmarked parking close to the entry gate.

4. Persons with Hearing Impairment: To motivate and facilitate such persons to cast their votes, the following measures should be taken:

- a. **Signage:** Appropriate and readable signage should be displayed at the venue of polling booths including room numbers, name of the wards, directions for movement, polling station etc. to facilitate such persons.
- b. **Orientation about Signs:** The person responsible for facilitating voting for PwDs should be imparted orientation in basic signs as regard important components of the voting process. Such basic signs in the form of “pictorial charts” should be displayed at the polling booths as well. I am pleased to provide a list of basic signs in this regard.

These measures will also enable, inform, facilitate and motivate elderly, illiterate and such other persons to cast their vote and participate in the voting process. If we implement all these initiatives, the voting process of the world's largest democracy shall become accessible, empowering, enabling and truly inclusive – a step towards inclusive development and protection of rights of people with disabilities.

NOTE TO AUTHORS – THE EDUCATOR, July 2018

Your contribution in authoring an article for the “**Law and Policy in Education of the Blind and Visually Impaired**” issue of The Educator is a testament to your inspired commitment to furthering the interests of those we serve worldwide. Our deep gratitude is extended to you in advance.

It comes as no surprise that laws and policies dictating the educational services to children who are blind or visually impaired differ markedly worldwide. We are often focused on the complexities of special education laws of our respective countries without knowing how other countries have addressed similar challenges. What are the laws or policies in your locale that you believe have the greatest impact on students who are blind or visually impaired? What are some of the current policy questions you are facing that impact services? How has special education law and policy changed over time for your infants, children and young adults who are blind or visually impaired? We are anxious for you to share your insight for the benefit of so many.

Please submit your article no later than July 15, 2018.

GUIDELINES

- Usually articles for The Educator are 4-6 pages in length, 2000-3000 words
- English is not the first or primary language for many readers of The Educator. Please write using plain language, avoiding jargon and colloquialisms. Acronyms, abbreviations, or technical terms should be defined when first used in the manuscript
- Your article must not have been previously published, either in print or online. If your article contains material copyrighted by others, please include a copy of the author’s permission to use the material
- If you use footnotes, please format them as endnotes
- Please use this citation style for the reference list (if any) at the end of the article

Book:

Keller, H. (1908). The world I live in. New York, NY: Century.

Article:

Fußenschmerz, G. (2012). Correlation between sore feet and shoes that pinch. Journal of International Ambulation, 101(3), 89-224.

- When referring to the work of another with the text, please use this citation style:
“Research has shown that improperly fitting shoes cause foot pain (Fußenschmerz, 2012), and thus we recommend that our subjects wear shoes that fit well.”
- When you submit your article, please include the following information:
 - Name of author
 - Mailing address
 - Telephone (please include international dialing codes)
 - Fax number
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Once again, allow us to express our sincere appreciation for your contribution to this special issue. Please let us know if we can assist you.

Todd Reeves, Editor

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