Howe’s Now is a quarterly publication of the Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB) that recognizes Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe. Samuel Howe was the first Director of the Perkins School for the Blind in 1833. His ongoing efforts, as an advocate for public school programs for the blind, were instrumental in establishing a full-continuum of placements options and services for the blind and visually impaired.

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On the Front Page: Fruit Medley was painted by a student at the Louisiana School for the Deaf and the Blind. The artwork was submitted by Anna Gayle.

On the Back Page: A student from the Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind is fondly greeted by a guide dog. Paws for the Cause 4H club brought guide dog puppies in training and provided information about raising and training guide dogs for the blind. Paws for the Cause 4H club brought guide dog puppies in training and provided information about raising and training guide dogs for the blind.
A Message from the President
Nancy Niebrugge, Braille Institute, COSB President

Our new website should be live, or if not, will be very soon---so check it out! We’ve got a whole new look and feel, including a brand new logo that we believe better reflects what we’re all about -- services for the kids!

Thanks truly go to several dedicated folks: Pete Dally and his webmaster Chuck Buggs who did the backend work to build a new site, Linda Lyle and her school’s graphic designer Joanna Bradley who developed all our logo options and a ‘toolkit’ for us to follow when using our new design, committee members Collette Bauman and myself, and of course, our new ED, Joy Harris. Major kudos to Joy for all her work developing the new layout, working with the Board to add new sections and adding the finishing touch by researching additional content to include.

I’m sure she’ll share more about her plans for future iterations, but we are so thrilled to be launching it and looking for your comments for making it even better. Along with Howe’s Now, we believe this will become one of our main tools for keeping in touch, sharing stories and best practices, and communicating to others how our schools and services make an impact for children who are visually impaired.

I’m also pleased to welcome our newest member BLIND, Inc. and their CEO Dan Wenzel. They are based in Minneapolis, MN, and provide independent living and employment programs for adults, summer sessions for children and career training for teens.

A final note on some changes to our Board. Sadly we must say good-bye to two cherished members: Linda Lyle from New Mexico, and Bobby Simpson from Louisiana. Both have made substantial contributions to the success of COSB and will be dearly missed. But Spring is also a time of renewal, and as this season unfolds we welcome our new COSB Board Secretary, David Feinhals from New Jersey. We are thrilled to add his new energy and ideas and thank him for accepting the role mid-term.
Howe’s Now Executive Director’s Message
Joyelle Harris, PhD, COSB Executive Director

I am ever so excited about the launch of our new website! Each point of entry to the site highlights a different aspect of how COSB members advance the field of educating students who are blind or visually impaired. At this point, we have great content, and I need your help to fully maximize the potential for each section:

Parents, Caregivers, and Family
The goals of this section are to educate and inspire those who love and care for children who are blind or visually impaired. Send me interesting stories about your students and any resources that you find helpful for parents/caregivers. I’ll share your content with the world.

Professionals
Our page for professionals serves two purposes: First, COSB members can share with each other multiple tools, models, programs, and best practices for educating our students. Second, we can share this content with other professionals in our field. Therefore, please send me everything you have that will help other professionals.

Howe’s Now
We now have a cloud based archive for all our wonderful editions of Howe’s Now.

Training
Our member organizations offer a plethora of resources that are helpful to the membership and the field of education as a whole. In this section, we highlight upcoming conferences and workshops to train educators who work in our field. We also showcase members’ programs and initiatives that are useful to those who serve our students. Let me know about your conferences, workshops, training programs, and any other initiatives that are useful to COSB members and relevant organizations.

Membership
Here we outline the benefits of being a COSB member and invite other organizations with our mission to join us.

Careers
In this section, we post our job openings. This page will serve as a recruiting tool for our respective institutions as well as a repository for multiple position descriptions. Send me all your job postings so that we can bring others into this dynamic and rewarding field.

I hope the website meets your needs, and I look forward to showcasing the amazing activities, initiatives, and programs of COSB.

Website link:
Governor Morehead Students Showcase Academic and ECC Skills at NC Conferences

The students at the Governor Morehead School (GMS) participated in two conferences this winter. The students applied what they have learned from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and Expanded Core Curriculum and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study to demonstrate their abilities to be capable, connected, and independent learners. They spent many hours preparing for their participation by researching topics, developing presentations, practicing public speaking, and working as collaborative teams.

The first conference was the Model United Nations at Chapel Hill (MUNCH XVII). The four-day conference was hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill’s Carolina International Relations Association and took place on Thursday, February 23 – Sunday, February 26.

Four GMS students were selected to attend this conference which simulates the United Nations. Two students served as the Vietnam delegate and were assigned to the UNESCO (United Nations Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organization) Committee. The other two students represented Vietnam and served on the United Nations Women’s Committee. The committee assignments immersed students in discussions and debates about complex global issues. Through participation in MUNCH XVII students developed their research, problem-solving, collaboration, public speaking, and diplomacy skills. On Thursday, March 2, seven GMS students presented during the Student Showcase at the North Carolina Technology in Education Society (NCTIES) Conference in Raleigh, NC. NCTIES is North Carolina’s premier ed tech conference and exposition. The GMS students’ session was entitled, "Technology: The Road to Equal Access and Success in Education."

The GMS students showcased how they use low- and hi-tech assistive technology to access digital resources and applications. They shared how technology helps to increase their independence and provides choices and opportunities for success. They highlighted the use of braille displays, screen readers, and magnification devices for effectively navigating the cloud, creating documents, participating in online course material, accessing online books, taking online assessments, and traveling safely around the city. Following a discussion of each technology, the students invited the audience to participate in hands-on demonstrations.

While at the NCTIES conference, the students also attended other conference sessions and visited vendor booths. GMS is looking forward to having students participate in both conferences in 2018!

GMS students proudly display their conference materials at the MUNCH XVII in Chapel Hill, NC.
GMS students share how they use their braille displays to access digital resources during the NCTIES conference in Raleigh, NC.

The Paddle Wheel was drawn by an student at the Louisiana School for the Deaf and the Blind.
ARIZONA - The Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) hosted their annual Arizona Regional Braille Challenge on February 13th, 2017. The competition was held at the ASDB Tucson Campus with 50 student participants from across the state. This year also included a special family event on Sunday February 12th with a catered dinner and a trip to the local Harkins Theaters for an audio described viewing of The LEGO Batman Movie. For many this was their first experience with audio description. The family event was huge success with over 68 people in attendance.

While students competed, ASDB provided activities throughout the day for visiting teachers and parents to enjoy. The activities included sessions on the importance of Braille, independence and self-advocacy, an overview of Vocational Rehabilitation and a hands-on session with vision simulation goggles. Parents and teachers were asked to perform a variety of tasks such as cutting an apple, playing a game of Jenga or reading a book while wearing goggles that simulated various eye conditions.

After the Braille Challenge testing was completed, students joined their parents and teachers in additional activities. Exploration of emergency vehicles and safety booths by the Tucson Police Department and Tucson Fire Department, exploring bomb squad robotics, police surveillance and crime scene investigation equipment, and emergency vehicles were present for viewing. The ASDB Orientation and Mobility staff provided students and parents the opportunity to compete against each other in “minute to win it” like activities in the Wacky Olympics. Paws for the Cause 4H club brought guide dog puppies in training and provided information about raising and training guide dogs for the blind. Rounding out the afternoon activities was a music and movement session, “Get Moovy Get Groovy.” — Lisa Yencarelli (Lisa.Yencarelli@asdb.gov)

CALIFORNIA—The Braille Institute—Ranchero Mirage Center recently held a Saturday Youth Program. The children covered balloons with paper mache to create and decorate “hot air balloons”, Then put their ECC skills to work cleaning up their workspace. Meanwhile, parents and siblings were engaged in learning how to use the clock face method to communicate the position of food on the plate.
— Nancy Niebrugge (NNNiebrugge@brailleinstitute.org)
The Junior Blind of America recently held the Junior Blind Olympics where hundreds of young athletes who have visual, physical, developmental and emotional challenges from California, Arizona and Utah competed in twelve adapted sporting events, including the 50-yard dash, long jump, rock wall climbing, tandem cycling and kayaking.

The event was a special treat for students of Junior Blind’s Special Education School (SES), who have moderate-to-severe disabilities and require more involved assistance. Their dedicated teachers and aides turned out to help them fully participate in the competitions and cheer them on along the way. The Junior Blind Olympics offers athletes the opportunity to defy expectations and experience a true sense of achievement, which is especially meaningful for our SES students who have such significant special needs.

One parent remarked, through her tears of joy, “I didn’t think it possible for my child to ride a bike, climb a rock wall or run a course.” — Donald A. Ouimet [douimet@juniorblind.org]
IDAHO — Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind’s Director of Outreach, Paula Mason, launched a distant learning pilot for two students in Region 2 at Webster Elementary located in Lewiston with the goal of decreasing the amount of traveling time to get students needing direct braille instruction and meeting IEP service time commitment. Tina Johnson, Educational Specialist for Region 1, and temporarily for Region 2, fulfills IEP service time of three-hours a week for two students via Zoom. Monthly, this saves approximately forty-four hours in traveling time! With the assistance from braille specialists, Christine Jorgens and Sonya Preussler at Webster Elementary, these two students receive real-time instruction, reading practice, and feedback from Tina. The students independently adjust monitors during instructional time with minimal help needed from the braille specialists. Randy Bow, IESDB IT Specialist and the IT personnel at Webster Elementary teamed up to make internet available for the laptops used for the class. Glitches do occur but Tina uses her hotspot via phone to make the lesson work. She has been creative and developed a good rapport with a neighboring school district so that she can use a private space in the school library to meet with the students.

This has been extremely convenient as she can keep multiple direct service times in place with other students without having to travel back to her office. To keep it real, Tina does meet face-to-face with students one time a month. — Tina Johnson (tina.johnson@iedsdb.org)

COLORADO — the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Bulldog Band was invited to perform for his fellow state senators by Senator Michael Merrifield. On March 22, 2017, the Bulldog Band, a musical ensemble of 10 students from CSDB, made the journey to Denver to perform three songs in the senate chambers. The students were very excited to have an opportunity to perform in the Capitol building. Afterward, they met several of the senators representing our district who wanted to share their appreciation of the performance. With recent performances at the Colorado Association of School Boards’ annual convention and in the Canon City School District, the Capitol performance seemed like the perfect finale for the Bulldog Band's banner year.

In other school activity, CSDB had the distinction of having a sophomore travel to Germany with the Paralympic Judo team who won silver and a bronze medal. Freshman students participated in Freshman Job Shadow Day by going to iHeartRadio (106.3FM) with written commercials. Their work was aired on March 21st. In closing out the year, former students of CSDB who are employees with the Independence Center are leading mini-seminars with the juniors and seniors. Session titles include “Knowing Yourself,” “How Does Your Visual Impairment Affect You?” and “Advocacy.” — Jacky Skinner (jskinner@CSDB.org)
IOWA — Iowa School for the Blind has a robotics team dubbed “The Dark Side” made up of visually impaired students from all areas of the state of Iowa. The team participated in the IOWA Regional FIRST robotics competition along with fifty-four teams from across the Midwest held in the UNI Dome at the University of Northern Iowa. The team was the ‘brain-child’ of student from Iowa City West who had attended a summer camp program at IESBVI math consultant, Sara Larkin. The student’s excitement prompted her to write and receive a grant from the Iowa governor’s STEM advisory council which funded a team to compete in high school level robotics. To receive money to purchase tools to build a robot, IESBVI STEM consultant, Jennifer Bliss wrote/received a Rookie Grant from FIRST. The student from Iowa City West convinced his science teacher, Maureen Head to be the coach.

Students gained knowledge in designing, building, programming skills, as well as, meal preparation, mobility in crowds, videoconferencing, interviewing with judges, and group texting to keep up with each other at the event.

Being an international event, students learned to interact with students and professors from Iran, Japan, Australia, and Bosnia. “Having vision is just one thing. It is one part of your body. But it doesn’t mean it can stop you from doing everything you set your mind on. You just see it with your heart,” says the young man who saw the potential for his peers to participate in something formerly unimagined. — Jennifer Bliss (j.bliss@iowa-braille.k12.ia.us)
LOUISIANA — The Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired math and science students joined together to use the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) approach to learn about flight in space. Robin Vidrine, the math teacher and her pre-calculus class wanted to calculate how high a rocket would go, the time it takes to hit maximum height, its velocity, and the time it took for it to fall.

Her students worked as a team with one being responsible for counting, measuring, and diagramming the parts, one to assemble, and one to figure cost analysis for the construction. Their rocket was dubbed ZAMBAM. Bryan Gueltig, the science teacher and his physical science class was studying Newton’s third law—action/reaction—with their PS101. Students were to build, paint, and add the motor to prepare for launch. On April 19th, the classes went to the launch pad (football field). Mrs. Vidrine’s class wanted to create a parabola and set their rocket at a seventy degree angle. Mr. Gueltig’s students wanted to measure distance on a vertical line.

At lift-off, it was calculated ZAMBAM reached a height of 210 feet with PS101 reaching an altitude of between 600-700 feet. As it returned to land, it was noted that pressure within it had popped the nose off exposing a parachute to aid in its landing. — Anna Gayle (agayle@lsdvi.org)

MARYLAND — Maryland School for the Blind has worked diligently to re-establish its academic diploma program, which had not been offered for many years. The gap between the state requirements and the school program provided a clear roadmap for curricular improvement. In recent years we have worked towards our goal of offering an academic diploma by recruiting appropriately certified staff, incorporating more rigorous high school level courses into the curriculum, and providing staff training and development. As a result, we have received notification from the Maryland Department of Education that we may once again confer state diplomas. This validates the dedication and effort of our administrative team and instructional staff towards improving the quality of our educational services at the Maryland School for the Blind. —Rob Hair (robh@mdschblind.org)

NEBRASKA — Nebraska Education Center for Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired — Outlook Nebraska, Inc.’s (ONI,) mission is to positively impact everyone who is blind or visually impaired. The vision of ONI is to be the premier provider of choice for exceptional employment training and experiences that allow the blind and visually impaired to realize their personal and career goals. Located in Omaha, ONI is an operation that supplies a full line of 100 percent recycled fiber content tissue and towel products to the U.S. Government and other customers. It is the largest employer of the blind and visually impaired in Nebraska. While its primary service is employment, they also offer services for the community, including social activities, education, technology and adaptive aids training, and wellness programs.

Transition students from NCECBVI had the opportunity to tour the facility and experience a day in the life of an Outlook Nebraska employee. Students began with a lesson on how toilet paper and other paper products are made and packaged. The students found it very interesting that everyone entering the factory area had to wear safety equipment such as eye protectors. They also learned there are many loud noises, beepers, and other sound-signals used within the factory workspace to keep them safe. Everyone was impressed by the pathways lined with metal strips to keep cane users away from moving machinery as they walked to their work stations. After the tour, students were given the opportunity to work along the assembly and packaging line.

This was a great lesson on what is expected at a paid job. Students also had a good laugh at the toilet paper that ended up on the floor and didn’t make it into the shipping boxes. Everyone received a sample to take with them. — Mary Farris (mfarris@esu4.net)
NEW MEXICO — New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired’ — Alamogordo campus hosted STEM Fest 2017 which proved to be a great success as students with visual impairments from around New Mexico gathered together for a weekend of engaging STEM activities.

The students participated in events such as, an egg drop competition, building marshmallow and spaghetti towers, constructing their own zip line gondolas to transport an object down a zip line in as close to four seconds as they could, racing boats of their design and construction in our version of a Rain Gutter Regatta, and playing a game of STEM Jenga. Each activity presented unique challenges that tested each student as they needed to think in ways that they were unaccustomed to. The task for each activity was presented and then the teams of two were left to their own imaginations as they gathered items they wished to use from a stock room full of a wide variety of common materials.

The early stages of the weekend were initially filled with expressions of “I don’t know how...,” or “…what should I make?” as they queried their teachers for help. The only intervention provided was to encourage them to think through the tasks and problem solve on their own. This resulted in a gradual move toward student collaboration as they noticed each other’s solutions and shared information. The result was a weekend that gave each student the confidence of knowing that nothing is impossible when minds and imagination combine to meet life’s challenges. –Jeff Killebrew (jkillebrew@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us)

NEW YORK— New York Institute for Special Education (NYISE) partnered with Helen Keller Services for the Blind to introduce a new program, Youth Employment Strategies (YES). The purpose of the YES program is to fully engage participants in identifying realistic prospects for summer employment and to teach them the necessary methods and skills to secure a job. Ideally, the YES program wants to challenge and empower high school students to plan for their future.

In the past, they may have relied on their counselors or agencies to start the job search, however, the YES program encourages them to pursue their interests, initiate potential contacts, and practice interview skills. This pilot program currently has six students, aged 16 to 21, with strong academic skills, who commit to 100% attendance for ten sessions. Functional computer skills are also required because technology is an integral part of the job search. Helen Keller Services for the Blind provides an excellent team of two vocational trainers and an assistive technology specialist in coordination with Ms. Mary Catechis, the Transition/Vocation Specialist at the Institute. Now as the school year and YES program quickly draw to a close, we hope to hear good news about our students entering the workplace for successful summer employment.

On a similar note of pride and accomplishment, our school principal, Mr. Joseph Catavero, has announced that all seventeen students in this year’s high school graduating class will be receiving high school diplomas. Fifteen of those students will be attending either a two or four- year college with eight of those students receiving NYS Regents Diplomas. — Albina Gaudino (agaudino@nyise.org)

NORTH DAKOTA — North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB) staff is excited to be planning for summer camp events after a long winter. Teen and elementary camps are offered. Teen camp will be held in June. Last year, the teens traveled to beautiful Medora in western North Dakota; this year they will be camping closer to home. An escape room, a treasure hunt on the nearby University of North Dakota campus, and job shadowing will be activities as part of “Clues to Your Future.”

In early August, the elementary summer camp will be held which helps the students get back on track and reinforces what may have been forgotten over the summer vacation. With a strong focus on literacy, the theme is the same as the national summer reading program “Build a Better World.” Plans to get creative with recyclables, robots, and, of course, reading will ‘build’ up the fun!
Speaking of reading, NDVS/SB is pleased to announce that a book about two of our programming students was recently published. A fifth grader’s story “Nothing I Can’t Do” and the 7th grader’s story “Not Like Anyone Else,” along with curriculum ideas for teachers, come together to form this book. It was distributed to TVIs, families with children who are low vision or blind, and school libraries across the state of North Dakota. We hope it will help more North Dakotans understand what goes on at NDVS/SB during programming weeks, as well as provide a glimpse of what living with low vision or blindness is like, through the eyes of those two students. The NDSB Foundation generously supported this project, helping with both the printing and distribution costs. — Emily Stemberg (estenber@nd.gov)

PENNSYLVANIA — Overbrook School for the Blind students, staff, and Board of Trustees were joined by Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney for the official groundbreaking ceremony for the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center on April 21st. The planned 1,780 square-foot adaptive and accessible greenhouse will be built on the north side of campus between the Rotunda Building and Lions Hall, and will house OSB’s award-winning Farm to Table program and horticulture therapy activities. “Overbrook School for the Blind has always looked to both preserve the historic features of our campus and innovative, when possible, with new construction,” says Gerald Kitzhoffer, OSB Executive Director and CEO. “It is fitting that we break ground for this new facility as we celebrate our 185th anniversary. We have a long history of developing educational models that enhance the options available for students with visual impairments, and we are thrilled that our tradition of innovation and education for those with special needs continues.” The Horticulture Center was made possible by a generous contribution by current OSB Board of Trustees Member, Sid Rosenblatt, in memory of his wife, named for M. Christine Murphy, a former OSB Trustee who was a board member, neighbor, and longtime friend of Overbrook School for the Blind.
— Gloria Pfeiffer (Gloria@obs.org)

TEXAS — The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired offered a three-day program held over a weekend entitled In the Driver’s Seat: Introduction to Safe Driving with Low Vision to students and their parents from across the state. The program’s intention is to help students in grades 9-12 develop skills and learn about choices related to being a driver with low vision. Students must meet the vision-related eligibility requirements for drivers required by Texas law in order to attend. The main goals of the program are for students to learn about the steps to develop pre-driver awareness skills; tools helpful for managing safe travel such as bioptics, GPS and auxiliary mirrors; the legal requirements to qualify as a driver; the process of getting a driver’s license; and alternative forms of transportation for non-drivers.

The program has sessions for both parents and students, separately and together. Experts in low vision, orientation and mobility, as well as drivers, who have low vision, are able to help participants navigate through the often complicated and emotional issue of whether or not driving is an appropriate choice. Peer-to-peer discussions among students have proven to be very useful in getting students to reflect openly and honestly about choosing or not choosing to pursue driving. For more information on this program, contact Sara Merritt, Principal of Short Term Programs at merritts@tsbvi.edu. — Bill Daughtery (daughteryb@tsbvi.edu)
**WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA** — *Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children (WPSBC)* is 130 years old! To celebrate, WPSBC is planning a family weekend for July 16. Prior to that event, on Saturday, July 15th we will host the *Envisioning the Future: New Paths to Success* conference for parents and providers. This conference is geared to our enrolling students and those who may be considering placement at WPSBC. The school is excited to feature speakers on literacy, cortical visual impairment, ECC, technologies for children with visual impairments, orientation and mobility and more.

The conference is scheduled the day before our annual Family Day, a day filled with events for our current students and their families. The celebration continues as WPSBC Outreach will host Camp SMART (Social skills, Mobility, ADLs, and Reading & Technology). The day camp is designed for students ages 11-15. As for many schools, May is a busy time with proms, finals, and graduations. At WPSBC, plans to begin construction on their long-awaited skybridge! The sky bridge will connect two campus buildings which will protect the students and staff from traffic and weather. — Beth Ramella (ramellab@wpsbc.org)

**WISCONSIN** — *The Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired* statewide outreach department recently completed their Vision Program Support Teacher (Vision PST) meetings for the 2016-2017 school year. Each year, the WCBVI Outreach hosts a large statewide meeting in the fall, followed by several smaller, regional, meetings in the spring. All teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility instructors in Wisconsin are invited to attend. This year it took place in Stevens Point, while the regional meetings brought teachers together in Baraboo, Shell Lake, Milwaukee, and Appleton throughout the month of March.

Vision PST meetings provide education and training to vision professionals about statewide initiatives from the Department of Public Instruction, as well as important information related to the vision field. By virtue of their profession teachers of the visually impaired and O & M instructors are often itinerants at a distance from one another geographically. The PST meetings offer these teachers a chance to discuss the unique challenges and experiences they encounter day to day and connect with others in their profession.

Alisha Ragainis, School-Aged Outreach Consultant and Certified Low Vision Therapist, and Kay Rhode, Orientation and Mobility Outreach Consultant and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, coordinate the WCBVI Vision PST meetings. The latest spring tour generated much discussion surrounding assessment, students with multiple disabilities, cortical visual impairment, IEP’s, 504 Plans, and literacy. Teachers who attended the spring tour were provided the book, *Reading Connections: Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments*, by Cheryl Kamei-Hannan and Leila Ansari Ricci. Questions concerning WCBVI’s PST program can contact http://www.wcbvi.k12.wi.us/outreach. — Pete Dally (Pete.Dally@wcbvi.12.wi.us)

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**A Horse of a Different Color**

*The Michigan Department of Education-Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) provides experiential opportunities for students state-wide. One of the newest innovative events was held on Saturday, May 6, 2017! Students experienced the Equine Journey and became part of the ‘herd.’ The day was spent learning about horses, meeting and greeting the animals and trainers, and literally, painting the horses. The grand finale of the day was grand march within the arena in parade-fashion. Students left with a better understanding of working together and a feeling of calmness for having been a part of the journey. — Lynn Pensari (pensaril@michigan.gov)*
Harnessing the Power of Assistive Technology: WPSBC Vision Enhancement Center Open
Submitted by Beth Ramella - adapted from "Insights" WPSBC Newsletter Winter 2017

For a child with a visual impairment, participating in everyday activities at home and at school can be a challenge. When faced with being unable to see the board in the classroom, participate in recess games or connect with friends on social media, children with visual impairments can fall behind in class, feel isolated or struggle socially. However with the effective use of assistive technology at school and in the home, the same child can experience significantly greater academic and personal success. Assistive Technology (AT) is defined as any adaptive device that increases participation, success or independence for a student with a disability. Assistive technology for individuals who are visually impaired (with and without additional disabilities) helps to increase their access to information and improve their overall academic performance.

In a time of enormous technological advancements, AT for vision has become an integral part of many students’ educational plan. Students are learning to access touch screen devices, using Bluetooth keyboards and switches, learning to access the internet with voiceover controls and even reading electronic documents with refreshable braille displays.

At the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children (WPSBC), we have a vested interest in the educational impact we can have on students with visual impairments both here at the school and in the surrounding communities. We recognize the importance and relevance of appropriate AT for our diverse body of students, which is why we have recently established the Vision Enhancement Center (VEC).

“The VEC is a collaboration of healthcare providers, educators, social workers and other specialists throughout Allegheny County,” said Director of Outreach and CVI Project Leader Beth Ramella. “Our Mission is to help maximize the potential of children with visual impairment.”

The VEC has been made available, free-of-charge, for both enrolled and non-enrolled students to receive formal Assistive Technology evaluations with a wide range of available resources including low, mid, and high tech solutions. Coinciding with the debut of the VEC is the appointment Cecelia Manning as WPSBC’s new AT Specialist. Manning’s role is to serve as a type of Assistive Technology matchmaker. Her job is to assess our students and evaluate which type of assistive technology tool is best suited for their individual vision needs. Alongside the student’s Teacher of the Visually Impaired, her goal is to improve the student’s use of AT in the classroom in order to ensure greater access to both academic and personal materials and activities.

As a Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Manning previously worked as an instructor in WPSBC’s Outreach Department. Now she is excited to begin her new role, matching students with equipment and tools that will help them both in and out of school.

“I’m passionate about making sure that all of our students have equal access to assistive technology and finding the best solution for each child,” said Manning.

Technology will continue to evolve and provide us with ever-emerging ways to access information. By providing the right equipment to compensate for visual deficiencies, we hope to empower our students with an education that fits their individualized needs and abilities.

For more information about Assistive Technology or the Vision Enhancement Center, please contact the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children at 412-621-0100 (ext. 379) or email ramellab@wpsbc.org
South Carolina hosted its 17th Annual Vision Summit in March with a focus on deaf-blindness. The keynote presenter was Robbie Blaha, M.Ed., Texas Deaf-Blind Project consultant. Blaha spoke on “Optimizing Sensory Based Accommodations and Strategies” and “Designing Staff Greeting Rituals for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Multiple Disabilities.” Other topics included “Meet the SC Interagency Deaf-Blind Project” and “Integrating APH Products into Instruction for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Multiple Disabilities.”

The SC Vision Education Partnership includes:
University of SC Upstate
SC Department of Education
SC School for the Deaf and the Blind
SC Commission for the Blind
National Federation of the Blind of SC
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, SC Chapter
SC State University Orientation and Mobility Program
Medical University of SC, Storm Eye Clinic

**SCSDB Students and Community Leaders Create Sculptures**

Students at the SC School for the Deaf and the Blind are creating two sculptures with the help of local community leaders.

Under the direction of SC artist Bob Doster, students and local leaders traced their hands onto metal and then cut the metal into handshapes that will be included in the sculptures. The sculptures will be five-feet tall when completed and feature hands forming the “I Love You” sign.

The school’s fine arts director Josh Padgett came up with the idea for the sculpture and obtained funding for the $10,000 project. He submitted a grant request to South Carolina’s Arts in the Basic Curriculum Project and obtained additional support through the school’s

Landon Cohen, professional football player took time out to help students with the sculpture. From left are: Elijah Gregory, Azure Wilson, Brianna Shirley, and Jason Mendez.
fundraising arm, The Walker Foundation. One sculpture will be placed in Spartanburg, home of the school, and a second sculpture will be placed in another South Carolina community.

The SC School for the Deaf and the Blind is designated as an advanced school by the Arts in the Basic Curriculum (ABC) project. The ABC project provides leadership to achieve quality, comprehensive arts education (dance, music, media arts, theatre, visual arts, and creative writing) for all students in South Carolina. The project is cooperatively directed by the SC Arts Commission, the SC Department of Education, and the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Winthrop University. For more information, go to www.abcpjectsc.com.

SCSDB Students Produce Videos

Students are producing videos in their digital technology class through the Applied Academics Center at the SC School for the Deaf and the Blind. The first video was created by Chase Hanna of the School for the Blind. Chase chose the sculpture project (see article above) as his subject and did an excellent job. To see the video, go to www.scsdb.org/studentvideos.
USDB Announces the Opening of the New C. Mark Openshaw Education Center

The Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind is proud to announce the official opening of the C. Mark Openshaw Education Center in Salt Lake City. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the occasion on October 6th with members of the Utah Legislature, State Board of Education and the public in attendance.

This campus was designed by Jacoby Architects to be a one-of-a-kind educational building structured to meet the needs of blind, deaf-blind, and deaf students and includes state-of-the-art acoustics, open learning spaces, low vision and blind adaptations, a Snoezelen Room (sensory/light room), and playground built with sensory impaired children’s’ needs in mind every step of the way. The design of the campus includes an overall scheme of light colors contrasting with high contrast accents of red to help define landmarks and navigational points throughout the structure.

The 50,000 square foot, $31.1 million facility also contains spaces for therapy, orientation and mobility, a full size gymnasium with indoor/outdoor performing arts capability, a climbing wall, ball pits, overhead balance swings, ballet bars and beams, and indoor ‘clubhouses’ containing physical and occupational therapy units. Additionally, the building is home to video conferencing rooms, roof garden, and lots of office space for itinerant teachers and staff. Classes from the Blind and Deaf Schools moved in immediately and are proud to be ‘home’ at last!

A special thank you to everyone who assisted with the project!
Orientation & Mobility for Wheelchair Users
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Web-based publication helps O&M instructors learn how to train students who are wheelchair users to travel safely and effectively.

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Established in 1885, FSDB is a fully accredited state public school and outreach center available tuition-free to eligible Pre-K and K-12 students who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired. Comprehensive educational services at FSDB are designed for the unique communication and accessibility needs of students.

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Freedom Scientific and APH have partnered to make a “JAWS and MAGic Student Edition” available to K-12 students in the U.S. using Federal Quota funds! Sold exclusively by APH.

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**HOWE’S NOW SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

*Howe’s Now* is a tri-annual newsletter of the Council of Schools for the Blind circulated to educators and vision professionals around North America. Issues are published during the Fall, Winter, and Spring. The deadline for receipt of articles and advertisements for the issues are:

- **Fall Issue** — October 31st
- **Winter Issue** — January 15th
- **Spring Issue** — March 30th

**HOWE’S NOW ARTICLES**

- Faculty, staff, students, and parents are encouraged to submit articles for publication in *Howe’s Now.*
- Some issues have specific themes, but articles for submission do not necessarily need to follow the current issue’s theme.
- Articles can run from one to five pages in length.
- Articles can include photos and graphs. *(PHOTOS AND ARTICLES HAVE TO HAVE A UNIQUE NAME AND IDENTIFYING FILE NAME! DO NOT NAME AND SUBMIT FILES [ARTICLES AND PICTURES] WITH THE FILE NAME HOWE’S NOW! Please provide your school name and a unique name on all submissions!!!)*
- Articles will be edited for length, content, and formatting.
- Articles need to be submitted electronically in MS Word Format
- Authors will be notified by email that their article has been received. If the submittor does not receive electronic confirmation, please send a follow-up email to the editor.
- The Editor has the final authority to edit the content and length of articles, as well as paragraph and page formatting.

**COSB CLIPS GUIDELINES**

- *COSB CLIPS* should be no more than 300 words, which is about a third of a page.
- *CLIPS* can be sent in the body of an email or attached as “Word” or plain text documents.
- *CLIPS* content should focus on new and innovative programming at the school, recent recognition of special staff and students, recent events/training and unique issues regarding the school (such as new construction and special occasions).
- Please limit only one *CLIPS* submission per school. When the *CLIPS* Editor receives a *CLIP*, she will email back saying it has “arrived”. If you submit a *CLIP* and do not hear from her within a few days, please resubmit it. It has probably been scanned out for some reason.
- The *CLIPS* Editor Anna Gayle has the final authority to edit the content and length of articles, as well as paragraph and page formatting. Email COSB CLIPS to Anna Gayle @ agayle@lsdvi.org

**ART WORK AND STUDENT PHOTOS**

- Art work for the issue cover or photos should be in a high resolution J-Peg format and named appropriately.
- Not all artwork submitted to *Howe’s Now* is usable because of poor picture quality or a format that doesn’t work well. The Editor will select artwork deemed most appropriate for the each issue.

**ADVERTIZING FORMAT**

Advertisements may be electronically submitted by e-mail to: bob.beadles@charter.net

- Advertisements must be submitted electronically and emailed in either JPEG or PDF format.
- Ad fees: a full-page (8.5” x 11”) is $250; a half-page is $150; and a quarter-page is $100. Payment for the ads should be made payable to Council of Schools for the Blind.

To submit articles, COSB CLIPS, artwork, photos or for additional information contact:

Robert J. Beadles, Jr., PhD  
VI RehaB Consulting  
PO Box 1909  
Auburn, Alabama 36831-1909  
Phone: 334.826.0701  
Bob.beadles@charter.net
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Preparing students to step forward with confidence and a vision of lifetime success.
Puppy Love
A student from the Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind is fondly greeted by a guide dog. Paws for the Cause 4H club brought guide dog puppies in training and provided information about raising and training guide dogs for the blind. Paws for the Cause 4H club brought guide dog puppies in training and provided information about raising and training guide dogs for the blind.