

Information about Your Child's Education

Children who are called deaf-blind are singled out educationally because the combined impairments of sight and hearing require thoughtful and unique educational approaches to ensure that children with this disability have the opportunity to reach their full potential. The good news is, there are many teaching strategies that have proven to be effective when teaching a student who is deaf-blind. Your state deaf-blind project can help you and your child's educational team decide which practices to use.

Challenges your child may have in educational and other settings

- Difficulty with communication: Students difficulty to communicate with others and others difficulty to communicate with the student.
- Distorted perceptions: Difficulty in grasping the whole picture or relating one element to the whole.
- Lack of anticipation: Difficulty in knowing what is going to happen next because they may not 'overhear' or observe information and these cues are often missed or distorted.
- Lack of motivation: Things that might motivate the student or are going unseen or unheard, or may be missing from the situation.
- Lack of incidental learning: Difficulty in grasping information when participating through observation or group experiences because they don't see or hear what is happening around them. Hands-on, individualized experiences are a much more effective way for someone who is deaf-blind to learn.

Effective teaching strategies and techniques

- Help the student communicate and understand communication of many types.
- Make use of the student's usable hearing and vision. Know what the student can and cannot hear or see and how that changes in different environments.
- Consider the use all any of the five senses to help the student learn.
- Respect the student's use of touch as his hands may be the link to everything and everybody.
- Allow plenty of time for reactions and decisions. Since understanding the whole picture is difficult, it may take longer to 'put the pieces together.'
- Develop positive self-esteem by giving the student opportunities to make choices.
- Give immediate feedback to the student's actions and attempts to communicate, including reinforcing success and giving strategies to make them more successful.
- Plan experiences so that problem solving is required and then give the student the time necessary to work it out.
- Use practical activities that can be learned in the natural routines of the day.
- Plan activities and experiences so the student is involved from start to finish of an activity. Too often, people and objects appear and disappear as if by magic.
- Include communication in all aspects of the IEP.

Educational Assessment Strategies

The assessment of children who are deaf-blind is challenging. Their intelligence is often underestimated. No standardized tests are available which accurately assess the intelligence of any individual who is deaf-blind. However, there is a comprehensive approach to assessment known as authentic assessment, which can be used with children who are deaf-blind or have multiple disabilities. Authentic assessment involves obtaining information about children in their everyday environments during normal activities. It provides a way to learn what children know and can do, as well as the types of situations and settings that encourage them to learn. It emphasizes identifying a child's strengths, which serve as building blocks for further development and skill acquisition. A listing of assessment materials is available on [DB-LINK Info Services](#) under the category of Assessment Overview.

Key Points of Assessment:

- Assessment is the starting point of a child's education.
- Family involvement in the assessment process is essential.
- Information should be gathered using a combination of techniques including interviews with people who know a child well, informal and structured observations, and evaluations by specialists.
- Assessment of children who are deaf-blind must go far beyond the use of assessment instruments.
- Standardized tests may be necessary to qualify a child for services but are inappropriate as tools to guide educational planning.

Your Child's School Team

Students who are deaf-blind often need instruction and services from large, diverse group of people. The average size of a deaf-blind student's school team is 13 people. This includes teachers, instructional assistants, therapist and you, the parent. Very few teachers or team members have specific training in working with students who are deaf-blind. This means that the team members need to work together and learn from each other. The best results are obtained when the team meets face-to-face on a regular basis to talk with each other, do observations, interventions and/or help the other members of the team understand the impact of the sensory losses on all aspects of school work.

Keys to an effective team:

- Team has shared values and goals
- Team members are committed and accountable to the team
- Team members respect the knowledge, skills and experience of each member and let go of "turf" issues
- Team holds regular face to face meetings that build positive relationships
- Team has agreed upon ways to make decisions, solve problems and resolve conflicts
- Team regularly checks progress and celebrates successes.

Interveners

Some students who are deaf-blind may have an Intervener as part of their educational team. Interveners are individuals who provide one-on-one assistance and help to provide access to visual and auditory information for individuals with deaf-blindness. Interveners typically have specialized training.

Taken from

Minnesota Deaf-Blind Project - <http://www.dbproject.mn.org/education.html>

Authentic Assessment Practice Perspectives -

<http://www.nationaldb.org/NCDBProducts.php?prodID=123>

NTAC OPI's - <http://www.nationaldb.org/documents/products/OPIs12-08.pdf>