



Oregon Deafblind Project



Building Effective Programs

Lyn Ayer, Project Director • June 2015

Hello everyone!



I hope you are all enjoying the weather—and the flowers—and the plentiful sunshine. Stay cool though! I hope you are having a good vacation — maybe out of town, maybe at home splashing in a pool or just running through sprinklers.

These past few months, I have been hosting the OHOA modules. This has been an adventure — and, hopefully, just step one in the process of learning a whole lot more about deafblindness. I never cease to be amazed at all that I DON'T know, even after being in the field for many years — and how much I can learn from parents and colleagues in the field. I have to thank Malina Lindell from Region 1 for helping me in this process. She not only pushed herself to complete all eight available OHOA modules in the span of one college semester — but also helped push me along too!

In doing the modules, I not only gained in content knowledge, and new ideas, but also spent time thinking about how to use the modules differently with various teams and/or individuals who registered for cohort 1. For example, for one team who were struggling with finding the time to do the modules, but who were interested in learning more about deafblindness, we organized a follow-up workshop. Another example — one person who registered as an individual is offering her knowledge and insights to her team through the one-on-one work she does— to enhance the program of the student with whom she works. I notice that face-to-face helped with follow-up — and think that then perhaps the team can get together to view specific modules that will help everyone—including parents.

If anyone in cohort one has ideas, please share them with me. And if anyone wants to learn from the first 8 modules (and additional new ones to be made available by fall!), please see page two—and get in touch with me via e-mail: ayerl@wou.edu Thanks!

Lyn



CONTENTS

Director's note	1
Update: Online Training— OHOA modules	2
Family page	3
News from the field Intervenors	4
Book Nook	5
Oregon Deafblind Workgroup Oregon Deafblind Project info	7

"Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature.... Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."

Helen Keller, The Open Door (1957)

UPDATE: ONLINE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY!

UPDATE on Online Training through the OPEN HANDS OPEN ACCESS Modules

How did the modules come about?

A few years ago the National Center on Deafblindness conducted several surveys on the subject of interveners. Some of you may remember these surveys. They went into quite a lot of detail and it took time for each of us to fill it out. But that was STEP ONE towards the creation of a system to prepare interveners to work with children who are deafblind. The surveys were analyzed and studied and NCDB then created a report. You can read this report, "Recommendations for Improving Intervener Services" at: <http://interveners.nationaldb.org/> Look under Goal 2.

Working on the modules themselves has been a complex and daunting task, but NCDB and the "field" have managed to produce them. They were produced in small batches. Eight are available to use right now, and another 17 or more are either being field tested or are in draft form. They are all on a "fast track" - so all of them will become available in a year or so.

How was the content determined?

At first, it was just what seemed like an endless list of topics and skills that the advisory board and others thought interveners should know and be able to do in practice. This was correlated with the CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) competencies for interveners and so, team leaders and teams gradually sifted through these. They also requested and received contributions in the forms of videos and other materials from across all the states and elsewhere. Topics and themes fell into place. They were arranged in a certain sequence. Then each of them was field-tested.

Are the modules a "curriculum"?

The short answer is "No". But much of the ground work has been done so that they can be forged into a curriculum and coursework for interveners. Their main focus is the training of INTERVENERS. Other uses:

- They can be used for inservice training for anyone who wants more knowledge in the area of deafblindness.
- Participants work independently and at times they choose. They are not in "real" time .
- They can be used with teams, or with individuals.
- They are in Moodle — and many people are already familiar with this.
- Each module states its objectives, has content in a variety of media, assignments, discussion areas—and a system where assignments can be graded.
- Each module also has a system of self-evaluation.
- The modules can be accessed "hosted" or "unhosted".

How is Oregon using the modules?

Over the years, Oregon went from "intervener training" to "team training", finding that training a child's team had far more benefits than training just one person. So —Oregon is used to a system where teams are trained, rather than just interveners (usually the Instructional Aides in the classrooms). We have also not trained just the person(s) assigned to work one-on-one with a child who is deafblind. In several schools, we have trained all the IAs in a room, in addition to the classroom Special Education teacher, therapists, nurses and others. Parents are always invited and can choose to participate. This has worked well, especially in larger districts where IAs are moved around frequently, or leave. So, even if a child has an assigned one-on-one person working with him/her, there is always another person in the classroom who can take the place of the one-on-one at short notice.

In Oregon, we are testing the system to see how to continue to train teams and additional paraprofessionals. That is the reason why cohort one has three such teams. The other reason why persons other than the child's one-on-one are included is because the materials are useful for other children as well—and, more often than not, "deafblind" techniques work for others too.

We were able to coordinate with Silver Lake College in Wisconsin to allow one person to obtain graduate credits for the first eight modules. Congratulations Malina Lindell for completing this task!



How do I join a cohort?

If you are interested, I will need the following information to provide to NCDB so that they can register you and give you access:

Name (first and last), your **e-mail address** (in lower case), the **town/city** you are from, **your title** (e.g. Special Ed teacher, Vision specialist, etc), and **your team** (name of the school where you work).

If you are already registered in cohort 1, all 8 modules are now accessible to you. At some point in time, I will be in touch with individuals and/or teams to talk about using the strategies shared in the modules.



Cohort 1 participants — NEWS! The first EIGHT modules are now open for you to take a look at.

It would be really useful if, as a team, we could use an assignment—or two— as a "working tool" for a specific student. For example — using the modules directly relating to communication—we could determine a communication plan for a child, how to go about it, and how to be consistent in using the plan.

THANK YOU to all of you who are in cohort one — for participating, and for your feedback.

FAMILY NEWS

Parents will be meeting for the annual Parent Learning Weekend — at Bend this year (July 31 through August 2). We have two specialists who will be our guest presenters—

- Mary Tellefson, O&M instructor "extraordinaire", who has a ton of insights into children who are in wheelchairs and/or may have additional challenges to moving.
- Emily Taylor-Snell, the Coordinator of the Florida DB Project, who is a national expert on the topic of transition—but who will talk about other related topics as well.

Anne Olson-Murphy from WESD, and Terry Cadigan from LBLED will once again join us to facilitate sessions, answer questions, and share in the camaraderie of the event.

We will have some feedback for you in our next newsletter. And watch the project's facebook page for an animoto slide show.



In the meanwhile — also watch your e-mail/mail— and the next newsletter, for information about a Fall "Family Day" (half-day). We are planning on having parents meet each other's families — so siblings can also get together. It has been a while since we attempted this — but the last time we all had so much fun together that our Parent Leaders thought we should organize another one.



The Western States continue to plan phone/adobe trainings for parents— always in the evenings (usually 6:30-8:00 p.m.). The group is going through the topics you selected when you filled out the survey at the beginning of this grant cycle — and finding expert presenters for each topic.



Finally (for now!) - don't forget that we are planning on updating the Western States family-to-family directory. SO, if you are not in the first edition, don't feel "left out"! Send me an e-mail, and I will send out the forms you will need to fill out. Remember, the directory enables you to make direct contact with other families in the Western States that are part of this group (AZ, CO, OR, NM, NV, UT, WA, WY).



We've talked about Staycations in the past. Here's a blog that might give you some ideas: <http://www.sheknows.com/living/articles/828921/how-to-plan-a-kid-friendly-summer-staycation>

I like the part where the author suggests making a list and then giving the kids choices.

Crafts for kids — during vacation time? Take a look at this website:

<http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/familyvacationstravelscraftsideasdecoration-skids.html>

Perhaps your child who is deafblind can pair with a sibling—or a friend —to make some of these things. For example, there is a travel journal (for those of you who are traveling) - with items glued into the pages that are meaningful for your child who is deaf-blind.

Use the ideas—like making a "beautiful places" key-chain. It can be a keychain representing a walk you take, or a day at the beach — or anything:

<http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/kidscraftsactivitiesblog/2012/01/how-to-make-a-beautiful-places-key-chain/>

Or — take a look at the "Crafts by theme" page. There are plenty of ideas you can pick from there: <http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/craftsbytheme.html>

If that is too complicated—look at the "Crafts by item" page. On here you will find ideas with buttons, cardboard tubes, bandanas, CD cases, clothespins — and so on. I loved the simple ideas with buttons!

I also love their page on "Beach craft": <http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/beach-craftsactivitiesideaskids.html>

I especially love the re-purposed old pair of shorts — to make a beach carry-all bag. Too cool!

Here's another site — for craft at the beach:

<http://www.tipjunkie.com/post/beach-crafts/>

Take a look at the sand handprint.

Recycle an old cookie sheet into an activity tray to take on your travels — or just to use in your backyard, sitting on the lawn, or at a picnic:

<http://familycrafts.about.com/od/vacationtheme/a/activitytray.htm>



NEW in Intervener info

- “Intervener Services and Interveners in Education Settings: Definitions” : <https://nationaldb.org/library/page/2266>

A segment from the expanded definition:

“Interveners, through the provision of intervener services, provide access to information and communication and facilitate the development of social and emotional well-being for children who are deaf-blind. In educational environments, intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deaf-blindness and the process of intervention. An intervener provides consistent one-to-one support to a student who is deaf-blind (age 3 through 21) throughout the instructional day.”

- If you scroll to the end of the page: <https://nationaldb.org/pages/show/intervener-services-initiative?cms=true> , under “Current Projects” you will see that the National Center on Deaf-Blindness is working on a new publication to help your IEP team determine whether or not a child who is deafblind needs an intervener. It is being “piloted” right now—and an edited version will be provided to everyone when this process is done.
- On the following page you can update yourself on what modules have been completed and are open to users, ones that are being field tested and will soon be available, and others that are still under development. You will see that there are a total of 26 proposed modules. They cover a lot of ground: <https://nationaldb.org/wiki/page/9/325>



INTERVENER & OTHER COURSEWORK UPDATE for SUMMER/FALL 2015

Who is running the coursework?
Utah State University & Hadley School

- Take the coursework for **undergraduate or graduate credit**
- Or, for a reduced rate, take the non-transcript option — same coursework, reduced tuition. **NOTE:** Only 10 non-transcript students are accepted per semester — so if you want this option — hurry! For the non-transcript option, contact Fran Payne, (435) 797-5591, fran.payne@usu.edu
- Interested in coursework as part of an Associate’s Degree in General Studies with a Focus in Deafblindness? Contact Linda Alsop at the SKI-HI Institute, (435) 797-5598, linda.alsop@usu.edu
- To obtain the **National Intervener Credential**—take 3 courses (10 credits):
 - Intro to Deafblindness (4 credits)
 - Vision and Hearing Loss (4 credits)
 - Practicum Work Study (2 credits)

Read what some credentialed interveners have to say about how rewarding it is to be an intervener!

<http://intervener.org/our-credentialed-interveners/>

And look at all the job-openings available nationwide:

<http://intervener.org/jobs-for-interveners/>

- “LIKE” the Interveners and Deafblindness facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Interveners-and-Deafblindness/147628748651025?ref=br_tf
- Use this link to find flyers or to register: <http://intervener.org/online-summer-courses/>



Independent Movement and Travel in Blind Children: A Promotion Model

Here's a book that is well worth reading – no, studying! The book is not new, but the ideas are classic, the philosophy makes sense. The author means to stimulate readers to think and re-think aspects of movement and what they may have believed or been taught. So prepare to be challenged, surprised at why you did not think that way before, and to incorporate information into what you know about deaf-blindness.

First of all – I love the dedication. It speaks volumes. It is addressed to *“My daughter, Melissa Cutter Who inspired me to understand the needs of all children, by filling my life with love, joy, and respect for how children learn. And Blind Children – Who taught me, guided me, and trusted my involvement with them. May this book facilitate their journey toward independence.”* In the acknowledgments, Cutter says he was taught by “experts” – blind children, their parents, and blind adults – and states that they were his “positive role models” and “mentors”.

The Preface poses several straightforward and seemingly simple questions, beginning with, “What do we know about blindness?” The book targets a wide range of persons. From the list -- I really like this question: *“What happens to the belief system in blind children, in their ability to move and travel independently when we teach them that someone else will take responsibility for their movement by guiding them in a manner that is not age/stage (developmentally) appropriate?”* We know in the field of deafblindness, we like to discourage “doing FOR” – but before hearing Joe Cutter present, I had not thought more globally about what it might do to their attitude, their psyche, or what they know and believe of the world around them.

Many of us know of and use Active Learning with children who are deafblind. We already know how powerful this can be. This book is also about active learning – rather than how blindness impacts movement. Cutter intertwines the work of Lilli Neilsen in his work with children, often using equipment from Lilliworks:

<http://www.lilliworks.com/>

We talk about how we must look to a child who is deaf-blind to give us leads – and to follow their lead. Cutter's expresses this in a similar concept as being “true to the child”. So, the “promotional” model of this book has goals that look at a child-centered developmental approach, working with adults in the child's life to gain confidence in the child's abilities (the “hand's off” of the Nielsen

approach), and working with a child to help promote positive views about how he moves and how it affects his world and himself. A child's learning depends on his curiosity – “need to know”, and his motivation – “drive to move”. No surprise there! But do we actually allow for this to the maximum extent possible?

In the first chapter, Cutter talks about O & M being “a way of life” for children who are blind, and for their parents. “It is a way of knowing and a way of moving, a process of interaction motivated by a wish to know, a drive to ‘be there’ or go ‘out there’ to the world instead of being separate from it.” Inclusion is embedded in what he writes about – and it is a “given”, not something to aim towards. It just IS. Cutter emphasizes the natural role of parents in this process and a “CAN DO” attitude. He stresses the importance of the integrating role of touch, how extensive it is, and states “The blind child is a *sensation of information.*”

In the same chapter, he talks about the eye not being able to “think” for itself – and that alternative non-visual skills and tools help the brain move towards the same goals – *“functionality, enjoyment, having a life”*. When a crawling blind baby slaps his hands on the kitchen floor, he is not just playing, but teaching his brain to react to the sound – Cutter says he is “looking to hear”. For the same reason, he puts a mini cane in the hand of a child who is in a Little Room. While a sighted baby will use vision and touch, a blind baby will use hearing and touch. Our young children who are deafblind will use all their residual senses – and the same philosophy applies.

Chapter one also explains the “Promotional Model”. The role of parents is central to this since they are their child's first teachers of O&M. To this end, it is critical that *“the parent's role must be respected and nurtured by professional service providers”*. Fundamental to all human beings, it is important that a child who is blind experiences the freedom:

- To move
- To be self-amused (and therefore occupy himself)
- To experience the joy of movement

Building Blocks of the Promotional Model

1. The Philosophy is based on the fact that “child development is built on gain and not loss”
2. A bottom-up approach – “out of the experience comes the concept” and this should be age/stage appropriate
3. Differences aren't deficits – we often say this and want this, but don't follow through in what we actually do.
4. The responsibility for travel is the child's – in other words, allow this to happen!

BOOK NOOK



Cutter talks about professionals offering “informed choice” – indicating they respect blindness, the skills of blindness, and the parents. He strongly stresses a really EARLY start to cane travel, rather than what many O&M professionals do -- waiting for children to be “ready” for the cane. He talks about “sighted bias” to conventional approaches to O&M, and the non-visual skills a sighted person does not routinely use to orient himself.

The Principles of the model

1. Observation is what is essential – and “*what is essential is not visible to the eye*”; what the child can feel and how they interpret their own movement. Remember “*The eyes may see but they do not think. Our brains think, interpret sensory information and cognitively plan a response.*”
2. Vision is not a requirement for independent movement and travel; It is not a requirement for life
3. Preview is important. This helps a child not be surprised by something, and lead to safe, confident and effective movement. (Note: In the field of deafblindness we talk a lot about how important anticipation is)
4. All children need information and have a drive to move
5. Blindness is not a cognitive disability. “*Blind children are unique in how they think or how they process information*”
6. The goal is ACTIVE MOVEMENT
7. Age/Stage-appropriate behavior is possible. The missing component(s) of movement causes a delay in motor development
8. Tool usage sets the stage for independence

Under a section titled “Developmental perspectives”, Cutter emphasizes the use of “normal” child development as a guide. He highlights touch as the “integrating” sense, beginning this section with a cryptic statement: “*The brain does not discriminate against how it receives information. It just needs input*”. And he ends the section with advice in using all the sensory systems: “*Let the child’s brain decide what it needs or doesn’t need. It is an equal opportunity employer.*” Who can argue with that! The rest of chapter one discusses a variety of strategies and techniques that read like a wonderful “to do” list.

In chapter 2, Cutter talks about child development and skillfully connects this to Orientation and Mobility concept and skill development. It ends with a section on echolocation – something that children who are sighted may not develop enough.

Chapter 3’s title is a tongue-in-cheek “Early Intervention, not early interference”. The chapter has loads of valuable insights in what one can do. There is an extended section on what Active Learning and the Promotional Model have in common, how Orientation and Mobility programming can make use of Active Learning principles, and how to incorporate Active Learning/Promotional model in an educational environment.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to Cane travel – from the bottom up! The section on the functions of the cane will help clarify why EARLIEST possible is better. The TEACHING CANE is a very important feature of what Cutter says about the cane and cane travel. Even though O&M instructors and other professionals will recognize the skills being taught – it is good to read slowly and carefully because the philosophy changes what one needs to do as an instructor.

Chapter 5 is a pictorial guide – and you will see many pieces of equipment that you may recognize from Lilli-Works and Active Learning (e.g., Resonance Board, HOPSA dress, Support Bench, Multi-Functional-Activities Table). There is a description below each photograph that gives clear explanation of what you are looking at. For instance, there are a few photographs of a baby in an inner tube – how this keeps the baby feeling secure, helps with midline exercises, provides a circular boundary that can be safely explored, and so on.

Active Learning and the Promotional Model: BOTH emphasize what and how the child is learning, and how the child is being taught. They both teach facilitation rather than isolating one-on-one instruction time.

They both use the GAIN approach
Both use touch extensively, and self-initiated movement

“Hands off” is encouraged rather than “Hands on” – and permission from the child must be sought if “hands on” is to occur

The child’s entire range of skills is considered – i.e., all aspects of “functional” – and not just functional vision.

Both agree that vision stimulation and training may push a child with residual vision to “*the point of inefficiency*”.

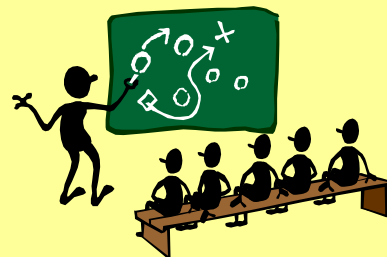
Independent Movement and Travel in Blind Children: A Promotion Model

Author: Joseph Cutter

Published by: Information Age Publishing (2007)

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WEB INFORMATION:

The Oregon Deafblind Project Website: www.oregondb.org

The home page has our newsletters, both current and archived.

Also get frequent information from our Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Oregon-Deafblind-Project/132672043449117>

and our Pinterest page: www.pinterest.com/lynbayer

We also have our newsletters and other information on our web-page with our partner organization, the Oregon Department of Education:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=185>



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