



Oregon Deafblind Project



Building Effective Programs

Lyn Ayer, Project Director • Summer 2014

May 2014



Hello everyone!

There will be two newsletters this summer — one more to follow this one—early July. Everyone is gearing up for vacation time — and looking forward to some of that great Oregon sunshine :-)

While considering “tools” we use in the field of deafblindness, we often have to borrow from other related areas—such as visual impairment, deafness, autism, orthopedic impairment and so on. In the last issue, we considered the Communication Matrix. In this one — here is an even older tool (truly old is gold in this case!) - The Learning Media Assessment. All teachers of the visually impaired use this with the children they serve — to assist with functional assessment for children who have visual impairments. There are aspects of this tool that could be very useful to us in the area of deafblindness as well — but that are often overlooked. The tool is actually relatively simple to use — and, if you are not a teacher of the visually impaired, you could always get input from the TVI in your area.

The book being considered is written by a Professor of religious studies—but most of it is relevant to our field of deafblindness, and to disability in general. There are incredibly valuable snippets of information in this book, things that we probably never thought of before, and wonderful examples of how to turn disability into ability. We talk about that — but the book is a practical demonstration of how one person did this.

Happy summer vacation!

Lyn



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“Keep your face to the sun and you will never see the shadows.”
(Helen Keller)

THE TOOLBOX



Learning Media Assessment

Why was the LMA created?

- To provide a formal tool to select appropriate literacy media for students with visual impairments;
- To be able to make decisions about literacy media for students who needed additional consideration; (The first edition of 1992 did not give sufficient thought to students with multiple disabilities, but the 2nd edition does.)
- To provide "common ground" for all teachers of the visually impaired (and others) to make determinations about their students, and to be able to communicate with each other about these decisions;
- To provide practical, user-friendly procedures, checklists, forms—and examples—so that persons using the tool are not intimidated by it; and ultimately —
- To ensure students have the best possible chance to succeed in literacy efforts.

Two statements from the book are worth quoting as *GUIDELINES* for use:

"As you use this resource guide, let common sense and professional judgment guide your professional practice."



"We adhere to the belief that best practices—not minimal compliance—must guide our work with students with visual impairments."

Where can you find a copy?

The publication can be obtained directly from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Title: Learning Media Assessment: A resource guide for teachers. 2nd ed. 1995.

Authors: Alan J. Koenig and M. Cay Holbrook

Cost: \$30.00

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/curriculum-a-publications/3/1037-learning-media-assessment-a-resource-guide-for-teachers-2nd-ed>

What does the LMA look like?

There are 6 chapters and 8 appendices.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the book and the tool, stressing that the purpose is to "move students along in progressive steps to living as independently and productively as possible." Pages 8 & 9 have flowcharts—one for students in conventional literacy programs, and the other for students for whom functional literacy makes more sense. These flowcharts provide an summary of what chapters are relevant and which forms to use.

Here's how the two programs are defined:

"A **CONVENTIONAL** literacy program is an instructional program of reading and writing in print or Braille that generally begins in kindergarten and continues throughout the school years."



"A **FUNCTIONAL** literacy program is an instructional program that focuses on survival reading and writing skills needed for increased independence in daily life."

THE TOOLBOX



The LMA is not a one-time assessment tool, but is to be used in **DIAGNOSTIC teaching**—i.e., a process where instruction and assessment go hand-in-hand, looking at students as individuals, gathering information on an on-going basis, and using the whole process to problem-solve in a systematic manner. Diagnostic teaching also considers the **CONTEXT**—the educational and social environment in which the student is living and learning. **Appendix H** is a quick reference guide that fits well with chapter one. It outlines which form to use for which students, and gives a brief outline of the purpose, procedures, and interpretations.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the **USE OF SENSORY CHANNELS**. Using observations in a variety of situations and settings, (structured/unstructured, familiar/unfamiliar, indoor/outdoor) and Form 2, the observer sets the stage for determining a student's primary and secondary sensory preferences. It is suggested that observers should include parents and other team members who have been trained to use the form.

IMPORTANT to note:

- Observation of continuous behaviors are included in the procedures
- In interpreting the data, there are steps to take if a consistent sensory pattern has not been noted.
- If a child excludes a sensory channel, and before drawing conclusions, it is important to find out if the child had "adequate opportunity and encouragement to use that sensory channel".

Chapter 3 takes into consideration all the learning media that exist in a child's environment and that they may (or may not) use. Information is based on the results obtained from form 2—primary and secondary sensory channels. Form 3 has lists of both learning materials (left column) and teaching methods (right column). The sensory channels (V=visual; T=tactile; A=auditory) are circled against what a child uses and how a child is taught. Also documented are what happens from a distance, and what happens close to a child. The case study (Mary) that follows shows a child who uses auditory and tactile senses, but not vision. The second case study (Tom) shows a very different child who uses all three sensory channels, but for different reasons and for different things.

Important to note:

"The media listed on this checklist are suggestions and should not be considered inclusive."

Chapters 4 & 5 look at the selecting of literacy media — from an initial decision-making process to determine readiness (form 4), through choosing the media (form 5), and on-going assessment (form 6) to gauge success. There are useful **Decision-Making Guides** on pages 49-53 and 74-79 in an "If" - "Then" format that are helpful and easy to follow.

Chapter 6 — The final chapter of the guide considers students who have additional disabilities. I like that the chapter states:

- Keep all options open ..avoid assumptions ... preconceived ideas about ability
- Identify unique needs, skills
- Some students may need functional reading, others may not
- Context is important



THE TOOLBOX



Appendix G contains all the blank forms that are used in the LMA.

Appendix C is about print media for children who have low vision, including forms.

How are some ways you could apply the ideas from the LMA to children who are deafblind?

- Make use of the information in **chapter 6**.
- Use **form 2** that documents use of sensory channels. We could always use this information with our children. We could also add the other sensory channels of smell, taste, proprioception, vestibular to the list and see what useful information emerges.
- Use the information from a filled out form 2 to help determine a child's communication modes and program.
- Look at the LMA information in the light of the expanded definitions and intents of the Common Core Curriculum; e.g., knowing the beginning, middle, end of a story.
- Use the "illustration" on pages 14 & 15 to garner some ideas of things to take note of. Examples —Book position (flat on table, tilted slightly, to one side of the child), lighting (how bright or dull, from where should the light shine), picture complexity (simple one-object pictures to complex overlays), scanning skills (lateral, horizontal, near-far)—and combinations of these (e.g. book position + lighting; complexity + scanning skills.)
- Learn from the process—e.g., change only one factor at a time. Don't rush it so you don't miss something important!

- When children have Usher Syndrome or similar conditions, the LMA will assist in determining when and if a child should abandon print for Braille.
- Don't forget, since the LMA was published, there are a lot of technological advancements that also need to be considered. For example, if a child is to use refreshable Braille, is his/her sense of touch adequate?



Connecting to other related information:

The ultimate goal of the LMA is to provide children with what they need to access their world and connect to it in the give-and-take of daily life.

- Link what you have learned of the LMA to other tools and techniques — such as use of the Communication Matrix (see Spring 2014 newsletter), or Tangible Symbol Systems. Go to: <http://designtolearn.com/>
- Look at the materials and information on the national Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) site: <http://aim.cast.org/>
- And here's our state page on AIM: http://aim.cast.org/learn/policy/state/oregon#.U36cRz_b6U0
- The Oregon Technology Access Program (OTAP) also has a page dedicated to AIM: <http://www.otap-oregon.org/Pages/AIM.aspx>
- Here's a helpful flowchart to determine the need for accessible materials: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/groups/supportstaff/specializedservices/regional/aimprocessflowchart.pdf>



BOOK NOOK



Read any good books lately? Barbara Miles suggested I read this one — and it is truly an inspiration and very thought-provoking. So thank you, Barbara! It made me think a lot about things I thought I knew!

The book is autobiographical. The author, John M. Hull, is Emeritus Professor of Religious Education at the University of Birmingham, and Honorary Professor in the Queens Foundation.

Touching the Rock describes his journey from being someone who had vision, to a person who has no light sensation. The decline in vision happened over time — and Dr. Hull documented his thoughts and experiences as he encountered various changes to his world.

The book is so filled with incredible passages that it is difficult to pick out just a few. My favorite is perhaps his journal entry about RAIN. He says that "rain has a way of bringing out the contours of everything". He describes how it patters, drips, splashes, drums — and how the differences paint an acoustic picture for him of the terrain. He says that he knows the route from his front door to the road — via memory. Without rain, each thing he encounters — steps, path, etc. "give no immediate evidence of their presence, I know them in the form of prediction". However, when it rains, it "presents the fullness of an entire situation all at once, not merely remembered, not in anticipation, but actually and now. The rain gives a sense of perspective and of the actual relationships of one part of the world to another." I had never thought of rain in those terms — but the last few times it rained, I closed my eyes to experience some of what he describes. It is so true! With wry humor, he says, "If only rain could fall inside a room, it would

help me to understand where things are in the room, to give a sense of being in the room, instead of just sitting on a chair".

Professor Hull describes the changes to him in what a smile is and how it has become "more or less a conscious effort" for him. He concludes that this is probably because there is no reinforcement because he no longer knows if his smile is being reciprocated. He says, "For me, it is like sending off dead letters. Have they been received or acknowledged? Was I even smiling in the right direction?.....You can smile with your voice, but you have to find something to say".

In learning to move around independently, Dr. Hull describes what is known as "facial vision". He describes this in terms of "absence" and "presence". He knows when he comes to the end of a block that there is a change of some sort. "Is it the movement of the air.....or the reverse of the experience of presence? Have I, without realizing it, been aware of the presence of the walls and fences, suddenly encountering an absence when they end?" In one area, he walks beside a metal fence which gives way to a wall—and he can detect the wall because, "There is, somehow, a sense of a more massive presence". He is telling us that the denseness of the wall can actually be felt! While training to be an Orientation and Mobility instructor, I remember it was only three months or so from first traveling blindfolded that I experienced any type of "facial vision" and was able to stop instead of banging into the wall ahead. I have never before thought of variations in "facial vision" - from open space, the semi-open fencing, to a wall with no openings.... although I do know that doorways become more obvious over time. It also depends on the sensitivity of the individual. I remember one teenager who was deafblind who could detect the metal poles holding up

BOOK NOOK (contd.)



the swings in a very open playground space. He had amazing facial vision. As I read the information in the book, I thought how this ability must differ between individuals—and how I have never really given much thought to this fact!

He reminisces about the sensation of hunger and how closely it is tied to the visual — which provides anticipation—and allows “desire to become specific” to what one sees. He says the smell of food is important, but more generalized — and that it is important to realize that “sight is the foundation upon which other senses build”. He states that “blindness dislocates the primordial union of desire and image” and may reduce interest in food. Again — this is such an individualized viewpoint. However, it is important to glean this — vision provides anticipation (we KNOW this!) and, in the case of food, and depending on how much a child can or cannot see—we might consider the value to attempting to provide some anticipatory sensory clues to connect with that “internal sensation of hunger”.

Ordinary things become more meaningful. Take Dr. Hull’s section about the Underground. He knew, between stations, there was nothing to see outside the windows — so he was missing nothing. But he paid attention to the wind and movement of air—and the sounds produced. “As the trains come in and out, currents of air are pushed along the platforms, up the stairways and along the tunnels...The sound of the wind when you are approaching a platform is quite different from when you are leaving it.” He says the place is “full of the fragrance of newspaper, metals and oils, together with traces of cigar smoke, food and people’s clothes”. He notices the “background noise of the station which comes

flooding into the compartment each time the doors are opened”.

These are just a few entries— there are so many, and so worthwhile — and I hope you will read the book. When you read the book, worthy of notice are his positive attitude, his way of facing changes in his social world, the way he looks at movement—in his world, and in himself—and also at stillness, and how meaning changes; e.g., when others were pre-occupied with the visual of a beautiful little church at a wedding, it was the sound of the bells that held his attention.

I found a copy of the book at Amazon. Here are the details:

Title: TOUCHING THE ROCK: An Experience of Blindness

Author: John M. Hull

Published in 1990

Foreword by Oliver Sacks (1991)

Comment on the cover:

“Glows with a light that enables the sighted to see a world beyond ordinary experience....We must all be grateful for the appearance of this stunning book.” (*Washington Post*)

A May 2013 edition is also available from Amazon or <http://www.spckpublishing.co.uk/shop/touching-the-rock/>

These are not John Hull’s only writings — or even his latest; and his story will be on film soon. Keep up with him by visiting his site: <http://www.johnmhull.biz/>
View a “teaser” vimeo about the film “*Into Darkness*” at <http://intodarkness.co.uk/teaser-trailer/>
His latest book, and most of his writings are related to disability theology. His most recent book, *The Tactile Heart*, is “a collection of theological essays on relating blindness and faith” and is also available from Amazon and on Kindle as well.

PARENT CORNER



Did you mark your Calendars?

We hope you received your “save the date” postcard about the Annual Parent Learning retreat. It is NOT yet time to register. You will soon receive an invitation and an RSVP card. If you are interested in attending, be sure to fill out the RSVP and return it as soon as you can. We have a limitation on the number of parents we can accommodate at this event—and we do so on a first-come-first-served basis.

NOTE: This is a PARENT ONLY event. That is one reason we send you information about the dates early on — so you can make care arrangements for your children.



Thank you Trisha and Dave McCready, and Stacey Smith for all the time spent in preparation for the weekend!

Please remember to REGISTER
Are you making plans to join us at the August 2 event—at the Portland Children’s Museum?

- Go to our website www.oregondb.org
On the home page you will see the “poster” for Friends and Family Access Nights @ the Museum.
- Click on the poster.
- Click on the orange box—it will take you to the Museum’s registration page.
- Enjoy the event!

Families—Anyone have anything to share?
For example, here’s a message from Trisha McCready to you:

“Hi there friends,
Dave and I took Caleb bowling last night and he absolutely LOVED it! I found out about this free bowling program while I was there. If you are interested, go to: www.kidsbowlfree.com

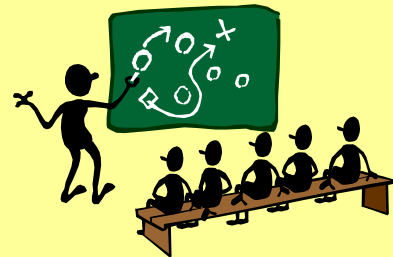
All you have to do is register your kids and every week they will send you a coupon for two free bowling games a day for every day this summer! You do have to rent their shoes, which are \$2.50. A pretty good deal, though, if your kids like to bowl!

We went to the Town and Country Bowling alley in Keizer and they do have a ramp down to the alleys.

Hope you all have a great summer with your kids! I can’t believe school is almost done for the year!” Trisha

THE OREGON DEAFBLIND WORKING GROUP

TBD — Region one, Eastern Oregon
Nancy Abbott — Region two, Central Oregon
Lynette Kleespies— Region three, Southern Oregon
Terry Cadigan — Region four, Cascade Regional
Anne Olson-Murphy — Region five, Willamette Regional
Darlene Daniels — Region six, Columbia Regional
Trish Orr — Region seven, Lane Regional
Brenda Satter, Gina Fivecoat —Region eight, Northwest Regional
Sharla Jones – Oregon School for the Deaf
Sue Mathisen — Regional Services, Management Team
Lisa Darnold, Melissa Glover — Oregon Department of Education
Kathy Eckert-Mason — Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
Lexie Majors— Oregon Commission for the Blind
Amy Parker — NCDB representative, The Teaching Research Institute, WOU
Lyn Ayer — Oregon Deafblind Project, The Teaching Research Institute, WOU



WEB INFORMATION:

The Oregon Deafblind Project Website: www.oregondb.org

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

Also get information almost daily 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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