

# The Educator



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## LAW AND POLICY in Education of Persons with Visual Impairment



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The International Council for Education of  
People with Visual Impairment

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## CONTENTS

1. Message from the President	02
2. Message from the Guest Editor	03
3. ICEVI at a Glance	04
4. Needs of Students with Visual Impairments in Rural Settings within the United States - Danene K. Fast & Ann Allen	07
5. 3 <sup>rd</sup> International Congress of University and Disability	14
6. Appropriate Education for Children with Visual Impairment in the Netherlands - Maartje Dierick & Madelon Janssen	15
7. Educational Policies for People with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities in the Province of Córdoba, Argentina: Some Considerations from a Capabilities Perspective - Alvaro Díaz & Paula Rubiolo	17
8. Equal Educational Opportunity for Students with Disabilities: Looking Behind the Curtain at the US Supreme Court and Public School Administrators - Todd Reeves & Robert S.K. Smith, Jr.,	24
9. Training Course of Interpreters and Specialized Teachers for the Roles of Educational Guide-Interpreters and Interveners - Shirley Rodrigues Maia, Dalva Rosa Watanabe, Vula Maria Ikonomidis, Claudia Sofia Indalecio Pereira & Susana Maria Mana Araújo	32
10. ICEVI Start-up Teacher Preparation Curriculum	38
11. Congratulations Ana and Betty	48

## Our International Partners



## Message from The President



Dear Friends and Colleagues

Welcome to the first issue of *The Educator* for 2018. As I write this message, preparations are underway for the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of ICEVI. This meeting will include a review of our progress to date in achieving the strategic goals and related activities for the 2017-2020 ICEVI quadrennium. Another significant event that is currently taking place is the third anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were set by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. Importantly, the Sustainable Development Goals include commitments to education of persons with disabilities, and ICEVI has aligned its mission with the UN's aspirational vision to leave no one behind.

The theme of this issue of *The Educator* is Law and Policy in Education of Persons with Visual Impairment. This theme highlights UNESCO's position that realising the human right to quality education cannot be achieved without strong legal and policy frameworks that lay the foundation and conditions for education delivery and sustainability. ICEVI and our partner organisations are committed to supporting the efforts of national governments and key stakeholders to implement inclusive and equitable quality education for all children and young people with visual impairment. We support the development and implementation of national education laws and policies that respect, protect and fulfil the right to education for all children, including children with disabilities. At the global level, we promote disability-inclusive education through collaboration with the United Nations agencies, the Global Campaign for Education, the International Disability and Development Consortium, the World Blind Union and other agencies.

I wish to acknowledge with thanks our Editor, Marianne Riggio of Perkins School for the Blind, and Associate Editor, M.N.G. Mani. I also welcome Todd Reeves to the role of Guest Editor. Todd brings to this issue his professional background in law and educational leadership, together with his experiences as CEO and Executive Director of the Overbrook School for the Blind.

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F. Gentle".

**Frances Gentle**

## Message from The Guest Editor



Dear Readers,

On behalf of the ICEVI community, I present to you the latest edition of the *The Educator*, with profound appreciation for those individuals who submitted papers, and especially for colleagues who have patiently waited for this publication, originally slated for July.

The protracted time frame for this publication was at my behest, in hopes more submissions would be gathered. The outcome might well reflect that it is easier to talk about law and policy than to write about it. I would say my own career parallels that in many respects. In the twenty years since graduating from the School of Law and the College of Education at the University of Washington (USA), where I studied alternative dispute resolution and educational leadership, I spent the formative years of my administrative career resolving special education disputes before they manifested in formal disputes at the state administrative hearing level and beyond, in the federal courts. It's nearly impossible to capture the essence of a parent's concerns about the education of their child who has a sensory disability, against the backdrop of sobering labor statistics on the unemployment and under-employment of people with blindness and visual impairment. It's no less difficult to convey the efforts of special education professionals who work with parents to place "hope" and "confidence" where "fear" and "distrust" once resided.

The linkages and relationships between those we serve and the spectrum of law and educational policy that influences them seem distant, but they are there. My hope is that this edition encourages you to consider how the spectrum of law and educational policy influences all that you do for your students, and inspires hope and confidence for those individuals who are blind or visually impaired in your region and the world. I want to thank both Mani, M.N.G. (Chief Executive Officer) and Marianne Riggio, Editor, who have been gracious with their time and expertise and who no doubt deserve all the confidence of the ICEVI community.

With kind regards,

**Todd Reeves, JD / MS**  
*Guest Editor*





Founded in 1952, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is an international non-government organization of individuals and agencies that are concerned with equity of access to appropriate education for children and young people with visual impairment, including those with deafblindness or additional/multiple disabilities.

ICEVI members include some of the world's leaders and decision-makers in education for children with visual impairment. ICEVI works closely with UN member agencies and international, government and civil society organizations that are concerned with education, as well as organizations of parents and persons with disabilities. ICEVI's organizational structure facilitates advocacy, networking and information sharing at the global level and within the seven regions of ICEVI, in accordance with identified national and community needs and priorities.

### **The Facts**

- 285 million people are estimated to be visually impaired worldwide: 39 million are blind and 246 million have low vision.
- About 90% of the world's population with visually impairment live in low-income settings.
- Less than half of the children with visual impairment in low-income countries are receiving an education.
- The girl child with visual impairment receives less attention and is doubly discriminated against.
- The growing number of children with visual impairment and additional disabilities or deafblindness are marginalized from educational services.

### **Our Mission**

In recognition of the continuing global challenges in achieving access to quality education for the millions of out-of-school children with blindness and partial sight, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is a membership organisation with a mission to promote access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all people with visual impairment.

## **Our Vision and Values**

We believe that all children and young people with visual impairment and their families have the right to:

- Equitable access and participation in the full range of educational services and programs on the basis of equal opportunity;
- Receive early intervention and early childhood care and development services, and pre-primary education;
- Support by teachers and other professionals who possess knowledge and skills in education of children and young people with visual impairment;
- Educational materials, teaching methods and programs that are of a high standard, conform to best practices, and address each child's learning needs; and
- Live in communities that are free of barriers and discrimination, where all people are valued and lead productive lives, in accordance with their personal aspirations and capabilities.

## **Our Goals**

Goal 1 : Promoting access to quality education for people with visual impairment including those with blindness, partial sight, deafblindness and additional disabilities.

Goal 2 : Influencing governments' and relevant stakeholders' implementation of the SDGs and UNCRPD in the area of education of people with visual impairment.

Goal 3 : Improving networking, information sharing and collaboration at national, regional and global levels.

## **Publications**

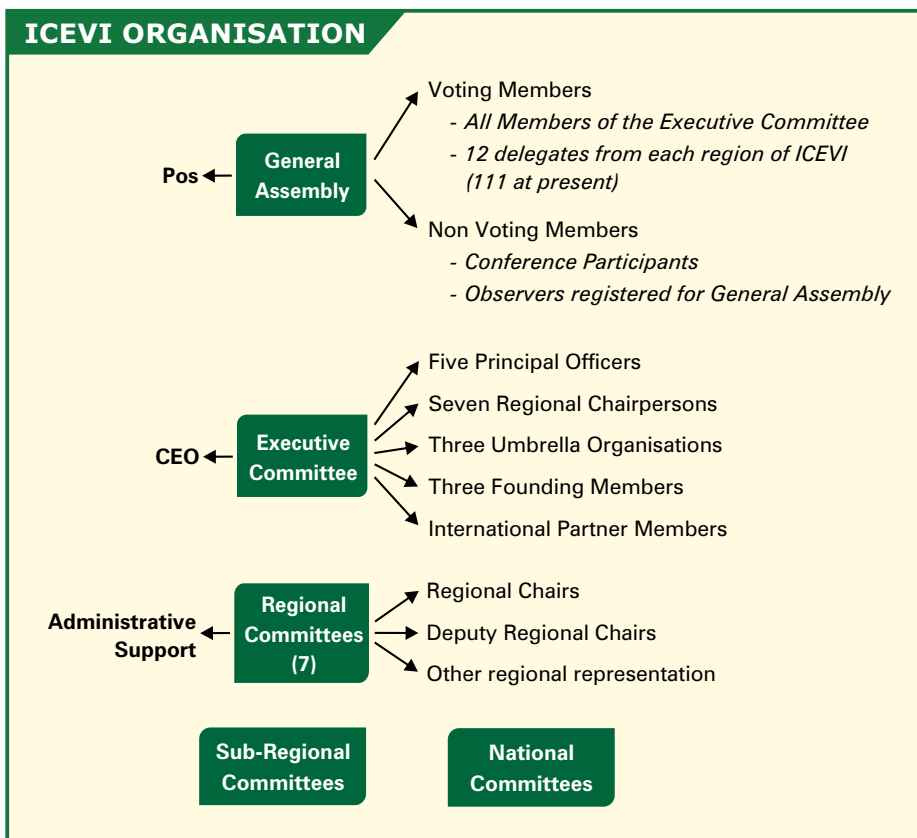
Our biannual magazine, The Educator, is published in English and Spanish and is available for free download from the ICEVI website, [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org). We also publish a biannual electronic newsletter that is distributed to 4000 individuals and organizations. New subscribers to the newsletter are welcome. Please contact Dr Mani, CEO of ICEVI, email [sgicevi@vsnl.net](mailto:sgicevi@vsnl.net).

## **Key Activities**

- Global Campaign on Education for All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI), in partnership with the World Blind Union
- Project to promote higher education of students with visual impairment in the East Asia region, in partnership with The Nippon Foundation

- Development of a series of free, online video packages to facilitate the effective teaching of mathematics to students with visual impairment (first group of videos will be launched in early 2019)
- Development of an teacher preparation curriculum for teachers with limited access to professional training in vision impairment (available for free download from ICEVI website to computer or mobile phone)
- Country champion programs, supporting young people with visual impairment to become leaders, role models and mentors
- Mapping of national educational services for children with visual impairment
- Education capacity building programs
- Research and documentation

## ICEVI Organizational Structure





# Needs of Students with Visual Impairments in Rural Settings within the United States

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Danene K. Fast & Ann Allen, Ohio State University, USA

## Introduction:

Rural schools within the United States experience challenges resulting from the nature of the communities in which they reside. One specific challenge within rural areas is a lack of educational services for children with special needs. This research report highlights basic special education law within the United States, and the challenges of meeting the requirement of the law when working with student with low-incidence disabilities, specifically children with visual impairments. It highlights factors that influence service delivery models for these students, and concludes by looking toward the future, with a number of proposed options to meet the educational needs of students with vision loss in rural areas of America. *Key Words:* Special Education, Rural, Blindness and Visual Impairment, Services, Challenges

## Needs of Students with Visual Impairments in Rural Settings within the United States

Schools in rural areas constitute a large percentage of the public schools within the United States. These districts serve large areas and must educate many students (Kamrath & Cryss Brunner, 2014). McLaughlin, Huberman, and Hawkins (1997) note that in 1993-94, nearly half of

the regular public school districts in the United States were rural, and about 8,000 of the nation's 84,000 public schools were classified as both small and rural. These schools experience benefits that tend to be framed by the experiences of the rural communities in which they reside – including cooperative learning opportunities, individualised instruction, strong relationships, community ties, and high levels of staff commitment (DeYoung, 1987; Kamrath & Cryss Brunner, 2014).

Rural schools also experience challenges that arise from the nature of their communities. One specific challenge within these areas is a lack of educational services for children with special needs. Although federal law and state education standards dictate the requirements of special education programming, there are significant differences in special education programmes among city, suburban, small-town, and rural schools.

## Basic Special Education Law

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (2004), disability is identified as “a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society”. Improving educational results for children

with disabilities is an element of national policy that ensures equality of opportunity for individuals with disabilities. Any state or local educational agency, including one within rural settings, that receives assistance under this subchapter (IDEA, Title 20 – Education) shall “establish and maintain procedures to ensure that children with disabilities are identified and guaranteed procedural safeguards with respect to the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE)” (IDEA, 2004).

Before the enactment of the IDEA by Congress, the educational needs of millions of children with disabilities were unmet because of exclusion, undiagnosed disabilities, and lack of adequate resources within the public school system. Since the enactment and implementation of IDEA, children with disabilities, and the families of these children, are guaranteed access to FAPE, and address the individualised needs of the child through the establishment of an Individualised Educational Plan (IEP). While this law has been established and implemented in many areas, there are still challenges in meeting its requirements, particularly in rural areas.

### **Challenges with Meeting the Requirements of the Law**

One of the biggest challenges to meeting the requirements of the IDEA is a shortage of special education teachers (Billingsley, 2002; Carlson, 2001; Rude, et. al, 2005). According to research by Rude and colleagues (2005), since 1980 the field of special education within the United States

has grown exponentially, causing an increased need for additional teachers trained to work with children who have special needs. In the results of a study of personnel needs in special education conducted by Rude and colleagues (2005), school administrators report that there were openings for almost 70,000 special educators in the 1999-2000 school year, with over 12,000 of these positions going unfilled due to a lack of qualified candidates. Within rural school districts, these ratios are higher (Russell, Gold, & Williams, 1992), indicating that the challenges of filling teacher positions are especially critical in these areas.

In addition to teacher shortages, another challenge for rural schools in meeting the requirements of IDEA is recruiting and retaining special education personnel, especially for low-incidence populations. According to Russell, Gold, & Williams (1992), within the United States there is a 20% annual attrition rate for special education teachers. In rural areas, that attrition rate can range as high as 30% to 60%, especially for itinerant personnel who may experience a sense of isolation when serving students geographically dispersed across a large school district (Ludlow, Conner, & Schechter, 2005; Westling & Whitten, 1996). With specific regard to teachers who serve children with visual impairments, often times there may be only one specialist within several isolated areas. In many states, educators who are hired into these types of positions in rural areas will leave to work in districts with greater resources and stability (Boe,

Bobbit, & Cook, 1997; Rude, et. al., 2005; Rude, 2001).

### **Low-incidence Populations**

The federal definition of the term “low-incidence disability” within special education includes three parts. These parts include:

- A visual impairment, hearing impairment, or simultaneous visual and hearing impairments;
- A significant cognitive impairment; or
- Any impairment requiring a small number of personnel with highly specialised skills and knowledge in order for these students to receive early intervention services or a free appropriate public education (IDEA, 2004).

None of the disabilities listed within the category of low-incidence disabilities generally exceed 1% of the school-aged population at any given time (West, 2015).

While the total numbers of students with low-incidence disabilities are a small percentage of the school-aged population, the right to have a free, appropriate education under the law of IDEA remains unchanged for students diagnosed with these disabilities. Studies to support students diagnosed with low-incidence disabilities, as well as an awareness of the needs of these learners and the educational practices that meet these needs, is an area that receives little attention within research literature (Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Lytle & Rovins, 1997; Rude, et. al., 2005). Research on the

education of students who are blind or visually impaired is especially limited. In an effort to improve services for students with visual impairments in rural areas, existing knowledge must be shared and more research must be completed to advocate for the unique needs of these learners.

### **Specialised Needs of Students with Visual Impairments**

Students with visual impairments have unique needs that stretch beyond those of other low- incidence populations, including competency skills that go beyond common core materials developed for all students within general education settings. Under the law, IDEA mandates that functional outcomes, as well as academic outcomes, must be addressed in every individualised education programme (IEP) for students categorised within special education. In addition to addressing the demands of a “typical” educational curriculum, administrators and IEP team members serving students with visual impairments must also consider accommodations that address access to the expanded core curriculum (ECC).

The ECC is a set of specialised skills designed for students with visual impairments. Because students who are blind are unable to learn through visual observations of non-verbal behaviors, the ECC was designed to teach students with visual impairments about incidental learning. The ECC goes beyond the core components of math, reading, writing, and science. It addresses the unique needs and experiences of students with visual impairments (Lohmeier, Blankenship, &

Hatlen, 2009; Pugh & Erin, 1999), and outlines functional outcomes of their educational programme.

There are nine skill sets identified in the ECC:

- Compensatory (or access) skills;
- Social Interaction skills;
- Recreational and Leisure skills;
- Orientation and Mobility (O&M) skills;
- Independent Living skills;
- Assistive Technology skills;
- Career Education skills;
- Sensory Efficiency skills; and
- Self-determination skills.

Some of these areas are self-explanatory. However, the areas of Compensatory, O&M, and Sensory Efficiency skills may require clarification. Parents, teachers, and administrators need to understand enough to ensure that the individualised needs of students with visual impairments are being met according to the law.

Compensatory skills refer to the use of strategies, techniques, and adapted materials that students with visual impairments need to access the general education curriculum. This may include reading and writing methods using braille, regular print with optical devices, large print, and/or voice output technology. Orientation and Mobility (O&M) focuses on two components: knowing one's position, including how position changes with movement, and the physical act of traveling from one place to another. Through these concepts, individuals who are visually impaired learn to travel safely,

efficiently, independently, and gracefully as possible (Hill & Ponder, 1976; Jacobson, 2013; LaGrow & Long, 2011). Often addressed through O&M lessons, Sensory Efficiency addresses the use of residual vision, hearing, and other senses to enable or enhance environmental access.

### **Factors that Influence Service Delivery for Students with Visual Impairments**

Although children who have visual impairments may have little to no opportunity to learn ECC skills through visual observations, they can acquire these skills through systematic instruction (Lohmeier, Blankenship, & Hatlen, 2009). Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists are licensed professionals trained to provide these disability-specific needs, as part of the IEP. Without these services, students with visual impairments are at a disadvantage, as functional outcomes specific to blindness and visual impairment are not being addressed by licensed and specialised professionals.

The American Council on Rural Special Education (2012) found that rural schools often experience significant difficulty in complying with IDEA regulations. Current federal policies and practices place rural students with disabilities -- and the schools that serve them -- at risk. With specific regard to visual impairments, children whose eyesight negatively affects their educational performance may go unnoticed or undiagnosed due to poor access to health care and a lack of special education professionals within rural areas

(Mohammad, 2007). In order to effectively serve students with vision loss, early identification of a visual impairment is crucial so their needs can be addressed. If trained professionals – including TVIs and O&M instructors, are not available in rural schools, identification of these children and their unique needs is impacted.

Another factor that affects service delivery for students with visual impairments in rural schools is limited knowledge of blindness and low vision among school administrators and the local teachers who serve these children. With limited research in the field of visual impairments, administrators are not always aware of the needs of students with visual impairments housed in their districts. Even when specialised professionals are available to assist in creating IEPs for students with vision loss, rural areas that lack funding can cause districts to cut these services specific to learners with low-incidence disabilities (Helge, 1986; Huebner, 1985; Jager, 1999).

### Looking Towards the Future

How can the educational needs of students with vision loss be addressed within rural communities? There are certainly no simple solutions; however, there is a range of options that can be considered.

Up-to-date research regarding rural services is beneficial in determining next steps. National research conducted within the U.S. Office of Special Education in 1983 revealed that funding inadequacies, negative attitudes towards students with disabilities, recruiting and retention of

qualified staff, distance between schools, transportation inadequacies, resistance to change, provision of support services, and professional isolation are all problems in serving students with special needs in rural areas (Russell, Gold, & Williams, 1992). The reasons cited within this article are still prevalent more than 30 years later; new research to confirm that continued change is still needed to serve students with visual impairments in rural districts is necessary to accurately identify the needs of students today.

Specialised services can only be provided for students who are visually impaired if these students are first identified as eligible under the IDEA. While research indicates that children who are blind may be under-identified within rural communities that have poor access to health, education, and rehabilitation services, an additional layer to this concern is that child count efforts supported through the US Department of Education are inaccurate. Children identified as having a disability can only be counted in *one category*, regardless of the number of disabilities they experience, leading to an underestimate of the number of children with visual impairments in all areas (American Foundation for the Blind, 2009). Support of legislative efforts that promote access to health, education, and rehabilitation services in rural areas -- as well as multiple labels for students with more than one impairment -- will assist in improvement of services.

Quality university training programmes that include courses and practical experiences to address certification and



licensure for *each* low-incidence disability, including visual impairments, must be supported. This is necessary to increase the numbers of professionals in the field and reduce shortages of special education personnel across the country, including personnel in rural areas. These programmes should not be a generalised overview of all low-incidence disabilities, rather they should remain as individualised programmes that focus on the specific needs of children within each low-incidence category – including students with visual impairments, students with hearing loss, students who are deafblind, and students with severe to profound disabilities. The IDEA protects all students with disabilities, including those with low-incidence disabilities. Under the IDEA, all have a right to FAPE. For students with visual impairments, FAPE includes having educational needs addressed by specialists certified in the education of students with visual impairments. This includes a mastery of vision-specific standards for TVIs, as outlined through the Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (2016).

Nationwide efforts to support the hiring of graduates from these training programmes within high need areas should be implemented to ensure that all students within rural areas have access to services. Finally, administrators within rural districts must be informed of the specialised needs of students with visual impairments, so that they can advocate for and support the hiring of licensed professionals to work with these students.

While there are no easy answers, exposing and recognising the issues that affect services for students with visual impairments in rural areas is a first step in addressing their needs. Next steps include acknowledging that there is a need for advocacy – including a system that informs district administrators of the need to appropriately serve students with vision loss, further research on addressing shortages, and support of legislation to address equal access for all students, regardless of disability and location.

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## 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of University and Disability

The Third International Congress University and Disability will be held at the Cultural Sports Complex ONCE - Paseo de la Habana, 208, 28016 Madrid, during **15 and 18 November 2018**.



### The General Objective of the Congress:

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Last Date for Registration : **31<sup>st</sup> October 2018**.

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# Appropriate Education for Children with Visual Impairment in the Netherlands

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In the Netherlands, the “appropriate education” law was introduced in August, 2014. Appropriate education imposes a duty of care upon schools. This means that schools are responsible for providing accommodation for all pupils who need extra educational support. Regular and special schools work together in regional partnerships for this outcome.

For school-aged children with a visual impairment, this means that they are included in regular education wherever possible. The schools receive financial resources for supporting these pupils from the educational institutions of VIVIS Education. (Previously this was done by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science). VIVIS Education is a partnership of Royal Visio and Bartiméus, organisations that provide education and care for people with low vision and blindness.

After the registration of a student with a visual impairment at VIVIS, the student proceeds through a number of steps, beginning with an intake interview. The student is then assessed by a Commission of Research, consisting of an ophthalmologist, a behavioral scientist, the intake officer, and a school leader. The

student undergoes an ophthalmological or orthoptic examination, then a psychological evaluation, and finally, an educational assessment.

The Commission of Research then reviews the examination findings, and determines the student's severity classification, called an “arrangement”. The arrangement, and its allocation of financial resources, depends on the following:

- Ophthalmological criteria
- Educational restrictions and educational needs
- Capacity for action/questions from school
- Questions from parents

There are four arrangements for students who are blind or visually impaired:

Arrangement	Acuity or visual field
Light	Visual acuity distance $>0.3 - \leq 0.5$
Standard	Visual acuity distance $>0.1 - \leq 0.3$ And/or visual acuity near $\leq 0.25$
Intensive	Visual acuity distance $>0.05 - \leq 0.1$
Very intensive	Visual acuity distance $\leq 0.05$ and/or Visual field $\leq 10^\circ$

A financial amount per school year is allocated for each arrangement. The

school must spend the money on behalf of the student concerned, such as the purchase of extra instruction or educational materials. When deploying extra guidance, for example, pre-teaching or learning of viewing strategies should be considered. But a course in social skills or resistance training can also be useful for a student with low vision or blindness.

Educational materials may cover a broad range of subjects. Schools may purchase gym class equipment such as a clink ball or a fluorescent vest. In addition, students can obtain classroom materials to promote fine motor skills, such as insertion mosaics or small beads for stringing. Sometimes environmental accommodations are needed on the campus or in the classroom, such as sun or glare protection, or high-contrast markings on the stairs.

Sometimes a student needs more expensive equipment, such as a laptop with tactile braille display, or a magnifying glass with a board camera. For such a student in an inclusive education environment, the school can submit an application to the Employee Insurance

Agency, the national body that supports participation in education and work situations on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

In addition, pupils in the general education setting are entitled to outpatient educational support from Visio or Bartiméus. The number of hours of counseling depends on the severity of the visual impairment. With this support, children with low vision or blindness can succeed in a (primary) school in the neighborhood. They can enjoy the natural school environment, develop a growing circle of friends close to their homes, and gradually learn to attend school independently.

The starting point is the general education classroom where possible and especially whenever it is necessary.

Website Sources:

[www.visio.org](http://www.visio.org)

[www.eduvip.nl](http://www.eduvip.nl)

[www.passendonderwijs.nl](http://www.passendonderwijs.nl)

Article:

Indicatiecriteria extra middelen cluster 1 (Indication criteria extra resources).

# Educational Policies for People with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities in the Province of Córdoba, Argentina: Some Considerations from a Capabilities Perspective

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## The Legal Framework for Education in Argentina

In Argentina, two national laws constitute the main normative framework for people with disability: Law 22,431 (1981) and Law 24,901 (1997). Other laws and regulations have also been issued, but an exhaustive analysis of them exceeds the purpose of this article.

Law 22,431 establishes a system of "integral" protection and provides comprehensive integration of policies, and institutional and economic resources for people with disabilities. The law defines its beneficiaries as "any person who has a permanent or prolonged functional impairment, physical or mental, which in relation to their age and social environment may imply considerable disadvantages for their familial, social, educational or work integration" (Art. 2).

People with deafblindness (DB) and/or with multiple disabilities (MD) are not specifically mentioned, neither in this law nor in any other law or regulation. In 2016, after several years of work, a coalition of parents, professionals, and Perkins International staff submitted a law project

to the National Congress. The project defines and describes DB and MD as unique conditions with specific requirements. The project was approved in August of 2017 by the Senate, and is currently waiting to be addressed by the Chamber of Deputies, as is the congressional procedure.

The Argentinian educational system is regulated by the National Education Law No. 26,206 (2006), which establishes that education is mainly a non-delegatable responsibility of the national and provincial states. These entities must provide a comprehensive and permanent quality education for all inhabitants of the nation. It also guarantees equality, gratuity, and equity in the exercise of this right. The system has a unified structure that is organised by levels (initial, primary, secondary, superior/university) and modalities (technical-professional, artistic, special, continuous, rural, intercultural bilingual, home and hospital, and education in contexts of confinement).

In this article we focus on the modality of Special Education, which is assigned by the law with the responsibility "to ensure



the right to education of people with disabilities, either temporary or permanent through all levels and modalities of the Educational System" (Law No. 26,206, Art. 42). Additionally, article 44 contains provisions that ensure the right to education, school integration, and social inclusion, enabling a comprehensive educational trajectory that supports access to knowledge. In this legislative framework, public policies related to education aim to "build and sustain scenarios that guarantee equal opportunities by allowing each and every student – depending on their potential, styles and learning rhythms, to reach the goals planned for all" (Government of Córdoba, 2014, p. 1). In the Province of Córdoba, curricular designs and propositions for the different levels and modalities are based on the capabilities and "potentialities of the subjects, whose development allows them to face reality in more favorable conditions" (Government of Córdoba, 2014, p.2). The capabilities are associated with social, affective, and cognitive processes that are fundamental for the development of the person. They are manifested through educative content, constituting the basis for the development of new knowledge, so each field of knowledge and curricular space contributes to their development (Government of Córdoba, 2014). Thus, the school as an institution supports all students in the acquisition and development of the proficiencies that allow them to master critical skills and knowledge.

Fundamental capabilities considered are:

- Orality, reading and writing. (For example, organising communication; intervening in formal and informal communicative exchanges such as ideas, opinions, and proposals; generating and organising written ideas, etc.)
- Approach and resolution of problematic situations. (For example, selecting the procedures for the resolution of a problematic situation, progressively integrating Information and Communication Technology [ICT], etc.)
- Critical and creative thinking. (For example, posing questions and problems; using the communicative potential of ICTs to express positions; constructing proposals; carrying out interventions, etc.)
- Collaborative work to learn how to relate and interact. (For example, trusting others as a starting point for interpersonal relationships; sharing decision making, and assuming consequences; making individual contributions to the development of group work, etc.)

In summary, the main objective is to strengthen educational supports for the acquisition and development of fundamental capabilities, so that all students can fully develop their potential, participation in society, and social inclusion.

### **Capabilities and Public Policy**

When thinking about capabilities, one can't help but consider where the concept



originated and what meaning it has in other contexts. The term Capabilities Approach (CA) was coined and developed by economist Amartya Sen in development studies. It has been broadly used, particularly by international organisations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD). The CA views life “as a combination of various ‘doings and beings’” (Sen, 1993, p. 31). The approach emphasises two main concepts:

- Functionings: the “doings and beings” that people use to actually live; and
- Capabilities: the set of alternative functionings from which a person can select an option, or a kind of substantive “freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or [...] lifestyles)” (Sen, 1999, p. 75).

For Sen and the UNPD, “development can be seen ... as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 1999, p. 3; UNPD, 1990; 2011; 2013), and understanding freedom as “*a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something*” (Sen, 2004, p. 587). This expansion of freedom is both the primary end and the principal means of development (Sen, 1999; UNPD, 2011; 2016) and, therefore, of public policy (Ruger, 2009). It is then a matter of expanding the options available to people (UNPD, 2011). Referring to education, the 2013 UNPD report indicates that, “[i]nvesting in people's capabilities — through health, education and other public services — is not an appendage of the

growth process but an integral part of it” (UNPD, 2013, p. 4).

Under these premises, the state, as producer and manager of public action and social policy (Mathos Bazó, 2005) and acting through public policies, “has the obligation to face the obstacles created socially, in order to promote and guarantee full respect for the dignity and equal rights of all people” (Astorga Gatjens, 2007, p. 37; UNPD, 2013). So for the Capabilities Approach, it is necessary to evaluate public policies that have impact on social arrangements in terms of the life that people live (Sen, 2009).

It is possible to understand public policies from the CA perspective because policies are government actions with specific goals (Naveda, 2013). Policies are socially constructed (Weldes, 2006) and can have multiple meanings (Ricoeur, 1986; 2006). In this sense, public policies are seen as an interpretation of the public interest in promoting the development of people – in our case, people with disabilities – to enable them to realise improved functionings and capabilities.

From the Capabilities Approach perspective, then, public policy should create social opportunities by expanding capabilities as its means and end goal (Sen, 1992; Ruger, 2009). Thus, to effectively improve people's lives, a policy's underlying intentions must enhance justice as per the CA (Ruger & Mitra, 2015). That is, education policies are particularly effective when they help children develop their valued functionings

and capabilities for the objectives of Freedom (real opportunities to choose and achieve) and Achievement (skills a person actually acquires or performs). Also important are the objectives of Well-being – as in, “wellness’ of the person’s state of being” (Sen 1993, p. 36) and Agency – defined as “what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goal or values he or she regards as important” (Sen, 1985, 203).

Therefore, education policies must be recognised as effective instruments to develop people’s capabilities (freedoms and functionings) so that what people effectively do is self-determined. In particular, this becomes important in serving people with disabilities that limit their activities and restrict social participation, potentially decreasing what they can really do and be (understood in the terms described above). The Capabilities Approach has significant strengths to address disability (Qizilbash, 2006; Mitra, 2006; Trani and Bakhshi, 2009), since it brings a multi-dimensional perspective when analysing human life and its heterogeneities (Sen, 1992) – including impairments, which can produce a range of advantages or disadvantages.

### **A Glance at the Educational Policy in Córdoba with a Capabilities Approach Perspective**

A Capabilities Approach-based plan for education, as considered for all students in the province of Córdoba, is extremely interesting. As Okkolin et al (2018)

indicate, “educational systems and arrangements from macro- to micro-levels should warrant and advance the ‘capability to be educated’ for every person” (p. 2). However, when creating an CA-based education programme that considers the individual needs of all children and young people, we must understand that there are challenges in increasing opportunities for children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.

So, several questions are worth asking:

- Do these fundamental capabilities truly promote the potential of individuals to face reality?
- How can this approach be actually implemented in daily practice?
- Are school teachers and technical professionals prepared to promote these capabilities in students who require complex pedagogical approaches, including those with deafblindness and multiple disabilities?
- What specific preparation and disposition do professionals need to meet these challenges?
- What supports help professionals develop expertise in serving this particular group of people?
- Are the abilities of students with DB and MD considered, to maximise the meaning and relevance of the instructional content in daily practice?
- Do teaching strategies make it possible for students to understand, implement, and transfer previous theoretical or experiential knowledge?

Let's examine some specific issues that may arise from implementation of these norms. For instance, regarding the Orality, Reading and Writing capability:

- Are there strategies and plans that support the need of a student with DB and MD to organise their communication (for example, supported with Alternative and Augmentative Communication)?
- If these supports are not available or accessible, how would it be possible for these students to intervene in formal and informal communicative exchanges by contributing their ideas and opinions?
- If students demonstrate the capability to address problematic situations by using Information and Communication Technology, for instance, are those materials and resources available in the classrooms and in the common-use areas of the institutions (dining room, bathroom, patio)? This accessibility is necessary to allow students with DB and MD to solve daily challenges autonomously.
- Are their individual and specific needs and characteristics actually considered?

Regarding the Critical Thinking objective:

- Are the voices of these students considered?
- Are teachers and technical professionals attentive to the individual ways students express their own ideas and thoughts?

When considering the capability to work collaboratively on a team:

- Do educational professionals encourage students with DB and MD to interact with their peers (with or without disabilities) in various school and community settings?
- Do educational institutions promote the educational, social, and labor inclusion of these students?
- Is their inclusion a concrete reality?

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this quick glance at the public policy for education of people with disabilities in Córdoba, we have observed several new challenges. A Capabilities Approach perspective to education requires intention and commitment, but this intention must be transformed into real opportunities. Thus, professionals must have access to functional means in order to develop capabilities. Specifically, appropriate means are necessary to meet the particular needs of students with DB and MD, in the classroom, in their homes, and in any other context in which they participate or desire to participate. Formative decisions are made that affect the personal development of students, and they can only be made within the context of the political, social, and cultural demands promoted by the educational system (Coll & Martín, 2006, in Government of Córdoba, 2014). That is to say, the development of capabilities must pervade the whole lives of students, not just inside the classroom.

To achieve this objective, we must consider:

- Strengthening teachers and school teams, fostering an inclusive perspective;
- Putting strategies into practice that develop the capabilities of these students;
- Strengthening families as they assert themselves in their fight for their rights;
- Building community awareness to support processes of social, recreational, and labor inclusion; and
- Assuring rights by laws or norms to effectively address the needs of students with DB and MD.

We must remember that, in fact, “rights are not fully secured unless the related capabilities are actually present: otherwise rights are mere words on the paper” (Nussbaum & Dixon, 2012, p. 561, cited in Bonvin & Stoecklin, 2014, p. 1). Certainly, supporting the development of all students' capabilities requires means, intention, and commitment, put to work for the benefit of students, families, and society.

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# Equal Educational Opportunity for Students with Disabilities: Looking Behind the Curtain at the US Supreme Court and Public School Administrators

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On March 22, 2017, the United States Supreme Court proclaimed a new legal standard for the provision of a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE). The Court's unanimous decision in the case of *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School Dist.* (2017) affects the services that school districts must provide students with disabilities. In order to remain in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school districts must offer a programme to special education students that provides sufficient progress.

Previously, school districts could provide programmes to special education students that afforded just more than minimal educational progress. Under this Supreme Court ruling, this is no longer permitted. To comply with the IDEA and a free appropriate public education (FAPE), a school district must offer programmes to all students that provide sufficient progress in light of the students' circumstances.

The Court's unanimity and Chief Justice John G. Roberts's opinion received instant acclaim from various advocacy groups.

However, the *Endrew F.* decision's lasting impact on the achievements and educational placements available for students with sensory disabilities—particularly those who are blind, visually impaired or living with multiple disabilities—is decidedly less clear.

Endrew F. is a student with autism whose parents enrolled him in a specialised school. There he made substantially greater progress than at his previous placement in the local public school. The school district rejected the parents' request for tuition reimbursement, because the district argued that it had offered Endrew an educational programme that offered just “more than minimal” educational benefit. This level of educational programming was permissible in the jurisdiction of 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, where Endrew and his family resided.

The *Endrew F.* decision is particularly relevant for parents of children who are blind or visually impaired. Many such parents also encounter minimal standards in public schools, and seek enrolment in



specialised schools, where they believe their children can take advantage of better resources and therefore make greater progress. However, the Supreme Court's decision does not guarantee that students who are blind or visually impaired may attend whatever school maximises their potential.

While the Court abolished the “more than minimal” standard, it did not rule specifically that Andrew should remain in his private school setting. Rather, the lower court is charged with determining if the local school district is able to provide an educational programme that offers progress in light of Andrew's circumstances.

Moreover, the Court did not disturb the IDEA's requirement to educate students to the maximum extent possible with nondisabled peers, commonly referred to as the least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE requirement provided further justification to the school district's ongoing denial of placement in the private school.

Less well defined is how this decision will affect access to private school placements. Organisations representing local and regional public school administrators strongly opposed increasing the just “more than minimal” standard. Their opposition to a heightened standard belies certain public statements by their own member organisations in support of students maximising their educational potential. Given that school districts must approve a private placement if they cannot offer an appropriately challenging

educational programme to a student with visual impairment, their opposition to placement is likely if it might approach a “close question”.

The public school educational community is adverse to the costs of private school placement. This opposition works in concert with two elements of this decision: its lack of clarity about the abolishment of the just “more than minimal” standard; and the continued mandate to educate students in the “least restrictive environment”, alongside non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. This leaves unresolved the the prospects for students who are blind or visually impaired to access private specialised schools for the blind and visually impaired.

### **Setting the Stage for *Andrew F.***

At the heart of the *Andrew F.* case was the level of educational progress that should be afforded students with disabilities. The progress level ranges from just more than *de minimis*, to educational benefit that nearly maximises each student's potential. In addition to obligating school districts to educate students with disabilities, the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act (EAHCA) of 1975 required school districts to provide each child with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), without specifically defining the progress that would be considered “appropriate”.

The first Supreme Court decision interpreting the FAPE standard was *Board of Educ. v. Rowley* (1982). The Court determined the school district was

providing a FAPE to Amy Rowley, a five-year-old Deaf student, because Amy was making educational progress and advancing from grade to grade, despite being denied a sign language interpreter. The Court held that a school district was in compliance with the FAPE requirement and the procedural requirements of the EAHCA when it merely offered an individualised educational programme reasonably calculated to provide *some* educational benefit (emphasis added). The Court further stated that even though students with special education needs warrant a programme that provides some educational benefit, they have no right to an equal educational opportunity (*Board of Educ. v. Rowley*, 1982).

Since the *Rowley* decision, lower courts have differed in their interpretations of the educational progress that constitutes “*some* educational benefit”. The differing interpretations are critical, because the definitions of breadth and quality of educational services varies. Some lower courts held that educational services providing “reasonable benefit” satisfied the standard, while other lower courts determined that any educational benefit more than *de minimis* met the standard.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, wherein Andrew F. resided, adopted the latter position (*Urban v. Jefferson Cty. Sch. Dist.*, 1996).

### **The Choices Before the Supreme Court**

After the Supreme Court announced that it would hear Andrew’s parents’ appeal of

the school district’s denial of reimbursement for a private school placement by the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit, the School Superintendents Association (AASA) submitted an *amici curiae* brief to the Court. AASA was joined by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs), the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS), and the National Rural Education Association (NREA). An *amici* brief can be submitted by a group of individuals or organisations who aren’t parties to the litigation but have an interest in the outcome. In its brief, the AASA advocated upholding the lower court ruling that “more than *de minimis*” or “more than minimal” educational progress satisfies the “some benefit” language of the FAPE standard announced in *Rowley*. Nonetheless, the *amici* brief maintained that school districts and their teaching staffs routinely exceed the more than *de minimis* standard (*Brief of AASA*, 2017).

As appellants, Andrew’s parents believed that for a student to achieve “some benefit” as required by *Rowley*, the Court should require school districts to ensure each student with special education needs receive a “substantially equal educational opportunity” as their non-disabled peers. If adopted, a “substantially equal educational opportunity” standard would require

school districts to spend considerably more for certain students to achieve close to their potential, including students with low-incidence disabilities such as blindness and visual impairment.

Andrew's legal team specifically requested the Supreme Court to adopt the standard of "substantially equal educational opportunity" rather than "equal educational opportunity" out of respect for the doctrine of *stare decisis*. The doctrine of *stare decisis* strongly favors courts honouring the holdings of previous cases in the same jurisdiction. In the earlier *Rowley* decision, the Court specifically rejected the U.S. Department of Education's support of providing students an "equal educational opportunity". Andrew's legal team knew the Court would similarly reject this standard as it had in *Rowley*, and hoped "substantially equal educational opportunity" would be acceptable. This was based on Justice Blackmun's concurring opinion in *Rowley*, which contended the statute required *substantially* equal educational opportunity. In his view, the school district did provide a *substantially* equal educational opportunity to student Amy Rowley (*Board of Educ. v. Rowley*, 1982).

In its preparation for deciding the *Andrew F.* case, the Court asked the U.S. Department of Education to submit an *amicus* brief, stating the level of benefit a student should receive to satisfy the FAPE standard. Despite advocating for the provision of "equal educational opportunity" in the earlier *Rowley* case, the Department of Education made a

substantive shift in the *Andrew F.* case, by recommending an educational programme that provides "significant educational progress in light of the student's educational capabilities and potential" (*Andrew F. v. Douglas County School Dist.*, 2017). This middle-ground standard rises above "more than minimal" but falls short of "substantially equal educational opportunity".

### **Hiding the Ball: The Professional Educational Organisations and Their Commitment to Equity**

The *amici* brief submitted by the AASA (with support from other professional education organisations), contradicted certain public statements supporting the provision of educational services that allow all students to meet their potential. It is customary for the authors of an *amicus* brief to introduce each joining organisation and concisely describe their mission. However, in the *amicus* brief at the center of the *Andrew F.* case, the organisations do not disclose their fundamental tenets in support of providing all students with an education to meet their potential. Doing so would have effectively argued against their own legal position in this case, in which they are arguing to settle for a "more than minimal benefit" standard.

For example, a "Belief Statement" on CASE's website reads, "All students have a right to a quality education which will enable them to develop to their maximum potential" (CASE, 2018). Likewise, the AESA states that one of its "Values and Beliefs" is a commitment to "...achieving

equity in learning by actively working to eliminate disparities and inequities" (AESA, 2018).

The omission of these—and similar statements—in the *amici* brief was strategic, as such statements are in alignment with the “substantially equal educational opportunity” standard the *amici* brief itself opposed.

### What Happened?

The Court proclaimed that the “some benefit” standard espoused in the earlier *Rowley* decision is satisfied when a school district crafts an Individualised Education Programme (IEP) reasonably calculated to provide educational benefit consistent with the child's circumstances. Thus, the Court adopted the position supported by U.S. Department of Education (*Brief for the United States*, 2017). The AASA viewed this as a welcome outcome, and one which most school districts currently satisfy. Reinforcing the line-in-the-sand the AASA drew between their interests and those of students with disabilities, a blog posting entitled, “AASA Analysis of Endrew Ruling” concludes, “... this is a ruling that both the disability and education community [sic] can accept as it does not dramatically change the district process or undermine Congressional intent” (Pudelski, 2017).

The statement merits pause on two fronts: first, it implies the interests of the disability and education communities are separate; and second, the basis cited for common ground arguably favors only the education community. This is supported by Dr. Perry

Zirkel, professor emeritus of education and law at Lehigh University, in his analysis of 49 hearing officer decisions in which a judge cited the *Endrew F.* decision. Dr. Zirkel found that 90% of those decisions were upheld in favor of school districts (Perkes, 2018).

### **Endrew F., Inclusion, and the Student Who is Blind or Visually Impaired**

The IDEA has long favored educating disabled and nondisabled children together in an inclusive setting. However, neither Congress nor the Courts have ensured that children with disabilities are provided an educational opportunity equal to that of their nondisabled peers. The IDEA obligates school districts to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, which allows for maximum interaction with nondisabled peers, with appropriate supplemental aides and services. For most students with special education needs, the LRE issue is linked to the amount of time they receive special education and related services in their regular education classroom (full inclusion), as opposed to the amount of time they are in some other environment within their local school. Students with speech or language impairments and specific learning disabilities constitute approximately 56% of the total special education population in the United States, and spend the vast majority of their day in the regular education classroom. Only 3.8% and 2% of these students, respectively, are enrolled in specialised schools (Office of Special Education Programs, 2017). Thus, the LRE

requirement is relatively non-controversial for the majority of students with special education needs.

By contrast, children with sensory disabilities require highly specialised services and careful consideration of the educational setting most appropriate to their needs, such as specialised schools. The wider range of possible placement options reflects the difficulty of securing the services of highly trained staff across large geographic areas to serve a population of students comprising a fraction (0.4%) of the special education population. In 2017, over 21% of students who were blind or visually impaired spent less than 40% of their time in the regular education classroom, or were enrolled full-time in specialised schools (Office of Special Education Programs, 2017). This percentage rises significantly for students who are blind or visually impaired with additional disabilities. This category of students has a higher rate of enrolment in specialised schools.

The *Andrew F.* decision, coupled with the LRE requirement, together act as a two-pronged justification for denying enrolment of students who are blind or visually impaired in private specialised schools at school district expense. So long as a school district provides enough educational progress consistent with the student's circumstances, any consideration of LRE is effectively unnecessary for the student who is requesting a specialised school placement. If a school district isn't entirely confident it can meet the FAPE standard in *Andrew F.*,

it can still base its denial on LRE considerations, pointing to the lack of opportunity for interaction with nondisabled children at the specialised school. It is often beyond the capacity of specialised schools to ensure access to peers without disabilities for substantial amounts of time, though specialised schools may provide a greater depth and breadth of services that elevate the student's achievement.

### **Is Inclusion Without Equal Educational Opportunity a Satisfactory Form of Social Justice?**

One reading of the *Andrew F.* decision is that, in effect, the United States favors integrated but unequal educational opportunity for students with special needs. This interpretation leads to a broader set of questions, for one: If the standard of a "substantially equal educational opportunity" is a bridge too far for students with special needs, then how can the educational settings that meet LRE requirements be considered truly inclusive?

Further, did professional education organisations signing onto the *amici* brief in the *Andrew F.* case suppress their public positions and values regarding equity in education? Did they act to avoid the increased costs for a small percentage of the special education population that may require specialised settings and high tuition costs? If so, then what determines the ceiling of their long-term achievement? Is it determined by the ceiling of their own potential, or the ceiling of a school district's budgetary forecast?



The underlying context of the *Endrew F.* decision (and the related *amici* briefs), creates an educational environment in which children with blindness and visual impairment are not afforded a “substantially equal educational opportunity” in the United States. However, they are protected in the workplace by equal employment opportunity (Civic Impulse, 2018). With unemployment and under-employment of people with sensory disabilities consistently hovering around 70%, (Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader, 2017) it stands to reason that if children are deprived of a substantially equal *educational* opportunity, they can hardly be expected to fully enjoy equal *employment* opportunity (emphasis added).

### Conclusion

Children with sensory disabilities, with or without additional disabilities, often require substantially more services by several highly trained professionals to promote a positive transition to adult life. However, school districts are not obligated to meet their students' educational potential, and their resistance to placing children in specialised schools is supported by the LRE provisions of the IDEA. This brings to the forefront fundamental conflicts in the American identity.

Americans speak of the transparency of government and the legal process, but it was necessary to pull away the veneer of a little-known *amici* brief to expose several

professional education organisations' limited commitment to maximising the achievements of students who are blind or visually impaired. It therefore leaves little room for wonder why parents often distrust our educational institutions, that promote lofty platitudes in public but intentionally advocate for precisely the opposite at the highest levels of the judiciary.

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# Training Course of Interpreters and Specialized Teachers for the Roles of Educational Guide-Interpreters and Interveners

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## Introduction

This paper reports the experiences in the professional training courses for Guide-Interpreters and Interveners, offered by the Bridges and Crossings Project of the Grupo Brasil of Support to the Deafblind, and Ahimsa Educational Association for Multiple Disability. The courses were held between May 2009 and June 2018. One of the most important results of our evaluation is that we can identify the profile of the professionals who are well suited to become Guide-Interpreters and Interveners. Another important outcome was the code of ethics for the exercise of these professional roles. The training of educational Guide-Interpreter professionals and Interveners are promoting greater efficiency in the inclusion of these people in school and in the community in general.

*Keywords:* Guide-Interpreter, Interveners, Continuing Education, Assistive Technology.

## Grupo Brasil's Services to People with Deafblindness

Grupo Brasil is a non-governmental

organization (NGO) founded in 1999. It is a network of institutions that serve people with deafblindness and multiple sensory disabilities, as well as their families. Grupo Brasil disseminates information and advocates for public policies that support the education, leisure, culture, access to health care, and continuing education of people with deafblindness, their families, and the professionals who support them.

In conjunction with Ahimsa Educational Association for Multiple Disability, Grupo Brasil offers: training courses, specialized education, specialized educational services, evaluation, and social inclusion services.

## Training Courses for Interpreters and Interveners

In this article we present the experiences in the professional training courses for Guide-Interpreters, who work with people with acquired deafblindness, and for Interveners, who work with people who have multiple sensory disabilities or congenital deafblindness.

The target audience for the Guide-Interpreter trainings were teachers of people with deafness, sign language interpreters, and special education teachers who work in resource rooms. The Interveners course was designed for: caregivers, education assistants, special education teachers who work in resource rooms, teachers of people with visual impairment and deafness, and teachers of the municipal and state public schooling systems of education and pedagogy trainees.

These training courses are part of the Bridges and Crossings Programme, offered by Grupo Brasil of Support for Deafblindness and the Multiple Sensory Disabilities, and Ahimsa Educational Association for Multiple Disability. The courses were initially held in three states: São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Bahia. Other versions were carried out in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Paraná, São Paulo, Rondônia and Santa Catarina.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

When Helen Keller visited Brasil during the 1960s, she met Nice Tonhosi Saraiva, who was delighted to realize that a person with deafblindness could be fully included in society. This so inspired Ms. Tonhosi Sariva that she founded the first school for people with deafblindness in Latin America. Unfortunately, the struggle of deafblind people for education and full inclusion in society has not ended.

Currently, there is a worldwide movement for the inclusion of people with disabilities in education and in society, and Brasil is no

exception. But for responsible school inclusion to succeed, students with disabilities need support appropriate to their needs. They need access and permanence in the school community. Among students with disabilities, those with deafblindness and multiple disabilities are most likely to encounter difficulty in getting access and permanence, because most regular school educators don't know how to meet their educational needs.

“Support for a responsible inclusion” includes access to assistive technology. According to the Technical Assistance Committee: “Assistive Technology is an area of knowledge, with an interdisciplinary characteristic that encompasses products, resources, methodologies, strategies, practices and services that aim to promote functionality related to the activity and participation of people with disabilities, incapacity or reduced mobility, aiming at their autonomy, independence, quality of life and social inclusion” (CAT/SEDH, 2007.).

In the case of education for persons with acquired deafblindness, the main support for a responsible inclusion is the professional Guide-Interpreter, whose assistance is a necessary service as described in the Assistive Technology definition above. The Guide-Interpreter provides support in work and social activities, and is the bridge to information and mobility for people with deafblindness. The Guide-Interpreter facilitates active participation in the areas of education, work, and society.

According to the definition of the Grupo Brasil (2005), the Guide-Interpreter has three main responsibilities:

- To transmit messages in the form of communication used by the person with acquired deafblindness;
- To provide visual, auditory and tactile descriptions of people, environments and objects, and;
- To guide using appropriate sighted-guide techniques.

The Intervener meets support needs for students with congenital deafblindness or with multiple disabilities. The assistance of the Intervener is also a service as described in the Assistive Technology definition. According to Maia, et al (2008, page 15),

The Intervener should provide access to information, environments, and materials, guided by the school staff and teacher, so that he or she can tailor and/or adapt educational content according to the student's individual educational plan and needs.... [H]e or she is aware of an alternative system and of individual forms of the student's communication that encompass receptive and expressive communication, provides conceptual and additional information about what takes place around the student for their full understanding. His or her

function is to always be with the student in all the places that he or she attends and if necessary prepare and adapt materials so that he or she can understand and participate in the activities, especially the school ones.

### **Objectives**

In view of the support needs of people with acquired deafblindness, congenital deafblindness, and multiple disabilities, Grupo Brasil has developed the training courses for Guide-Interpreters and Interveners with the following objectives:

- To conduct continuing education in the area of guide-interpreting to support inclusion programmes;
- To promote the development of professional skills in guide-interpretation for people with acquired deafblindness; and,
- To develop the professional's competencies to perform as Intervener for people with multiple disabilities and/or congenital deafblindness.

### **Method**

The first version of the course was conducted in two sections. The first section provided a total of eighty 80 hours of in-person instruction, comprised of theoretical and practical classes. This was accompanied by 80 hours of practical internship.

Participants were initially selected from states that have a representative in the Grupo Brasil, such as Mato Grosso do Sul, São Paulo, Paraná, Bahia, Santa Catarina,

Sergipe, Minas Gerais, Ceara and Rondônia. In total, we trained 75 professionals for the role of Guide-Interpreter and 66 professionals for the role of Intervener.

After our initial experience, we reorganized the course to include face-to-face classes, internships, and online classes. The online classes were made possible with the support of the Lutheran University of Brazil - Campus Ji-Paraná (ULBRA-CEULJI). The reorganized course consisted of 32 to 40 hours of practical and theoretical classes; 148 hours online at the ULBRA-CEULJI platform; and 80 hours of practical training.

For the Guide-Interpreter training, the second version of the formation course included professionals from different municipalities of the State of Paraná, who participated in the training held in Maringá, in partnership with the State University of Maringá. For the training held in São Paulo, the participants were professionals from the city of Angra dos Reis, students of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, and professionals of the states of São Paulo, Mato Grosso, Ceará, Minas Gerais.

For the Intervener training, the second version of the formation course included professionals of the Municipal Secretary of Education of Ji-Paraná of the State of Rondônia, professionals of the Municipal Secretary of São Bernardo do Campo, and professionals of the State Secretariat of Education of São Paulo.

A total of 127 professionals in the role of Guide-Interpreter and 155 professionals in

the role of Intervener were trained using the second version.

In 2016 and 2017 Guide-Interpreter courses were conducted for various professionals from the States of: São Paulo, Paraná, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Pernambuco, Ceara and Minas Gerais. Courses were offered for the Intervener professionals from Mato Grosso, Espírito Santo, Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo.

- The course content for the Guide-Interpreter covered the following topics:
- General Aspects of Deafblindness;
- Interpretation Techniques;
- Communication Systems;
- Orientation and Mobility;
- Emotional Aspects;
- Legal Aspects and Code of Ethics; and,
- Braille System.

The practical activities were organized with training in:

- Orientation and Mobility;
- Communication Systems and Interpretation Techniques; and,
- Audio Description.

The course for Interveners included:

- General Aspects of Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness;
- Hearing Impairment/Deafness;
- Global Developmental Disorders;
- Intellectual Disability;
- Physical Impairment and Visual Impairment;



- Motor Development and Positioning and Orientation and Mobility Issues;
- Literacy;
- Communication Resources;
- Records;
- Educational Plan;
- Daily Life Activity and Evaluation;
- Legal Aspects; and
- Legislation and Ethics.

## Results

Generating a profile of the professionals who are trained to act as Guide-Interpreters and Interveners was one of the most important outcomes following completion of the courses and the evaluation of participants. This profile was developed using several criteria.

First, we observed the trainees' participation during practical activities with people with deafblindness. We focused on observing them while interacting with people with deafblindness:

- Using the preferred forms of communication of the people with whom they interacted;
- Using their interpretation techniques; and
- Using their sighted-guide techniques.

Second, we analysed the answers to the evaluation form completed by the students at the end of the course. We gave strong consideration to the questions about:

- The application of the knowledge and techniques learned in the course in their daily work;

- The projection of the intervention in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

Finally, we analysed the traineeship reports required for curricular completion of the course. The reports focused on the activities that the students proposed for people with deafblindness, and the quality of their participation and interactions.

Another important observation that arose out of our evaluation was the need to have a clear code of ethics, both for the professionals and for the people who will use the services of these professionals. We also recognized the critical importance of good training to assist the professional in using the communication system most appropriate for the person with deafblindness.

An important outcome of this was improvement in the quality of life for the people with deafblindness who participated in the internships. Approximately 200 people with deafblindness and/or with multiple disabilities benefited from these formation courses. Their inclusion was not only educational in nature, but included social, cultural, and leisure benefits. Participants with deafblindness started getting involved with the disability rights movement, and having influence on public policies. For instance, they participated in the State Municipal Councils of Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and submitted suggestions for the national conferences.



## Conclusion

The formation of Guide-Interpreter and Intervener training is necessary for the responsible inclusion of people with deafblindness and multiple sensory disabilities. Teacher training for the role of educational Guide-Interpreter promotes greater efficiency and success in the inclusion of children, young adults, and adults with deafblindness and multiple sensory disabilities in school and in the community in general.

We also note that the course trainees developed different leisure activities for participants with deafblindness and multiple sensory disabilities. Many had never experienced these activities, so the experience created a greater quality of life. Thus, these professionals emerged from this training programme prepared not only to support the inclusion of people with deafblindness and multiple disabilities in the educational arena, but also in all societal domains, and in enhancing their quality of life.

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# ICEVI Start-up Teacher Preparation Curriculum

The ICEVI Executive Committee (EXCO), at its annual meeting in Pretoria in February, 2017, established a working group to address one of its priority goals for the quadrennium:

**Promoting access to quality education for people with visual impairment including those with blindness, low vision, deafblindness, and additional disabilities.** The EXCO determined that the first step would be to develop a teacher training curriculum that would assist countries to train teachers of students with visual impairment. This activity supports the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal #4 Education:

*By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes*

And specifically, the target to support SDG4,

*By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states*

- **Assumptions**
- **Teacher Training Programs and Policies in Developed Countries**
- **Consensus Curriculum Topics Recommended for Developing Countries**
- **The Startup Mobile Phone Curriculum**
- **Best Practices**
- **The Committee**

## Assumptions

Our goal is to support the enrollment of children who are blind and visually impaired (BVI) in the existing educational system of countries that do not yet educate children with disabilities, or who do so without a supporting system of teacher training.

If our work were to be a model, it needed to imagine a simple course in a developing country as well as a complex course in developed countries. Our focus shifted to developing countries with limited resources, with referrals to existing complex coursework already accessible online, with a curriculum accessible by mobile phone.

This work does not supplant the work accomplished by faculty in institutions of higher education around the world. For those countries with the resources to do so, existing curricula found in developed countries can serve as models to create new or improved degree programs that embrace inclusive education.

Many of ICEVI's partners already conduct short- and long-term trainings designed to meet the needs of individual communities. This project is meant to complement the vital and ongoing work that our partners already do.

We determined that there were three types of teachers that we were interested in training: Teachers of students with visual impairments for specialized schools; teachers of students with visual impairments for inclusive schools; and classroom teachers in inclusive schools. Part of our task thus came to be to identify the training components for these different types of teachers.

Part of our concern was that general education teachers and ministers of education have little experience with children who are BVI and have low expectations for them. We wanted to change that perception.

## Teacher Training Programs and Policies in Developed Countries

Several countries and professional organizations already have standards for preparing teachers of students with visual impairments. When a country has the resources and infrastructure to develop degree programs for training teachers, we suggest consulting these websites.

### AUSTRALIA

<http://www.spevi.net/standards-elaborations/>

<http://www.spevi.net/spevi-principles-and-practice/>

### ENGLAND

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mandatory-qualifications-specialist-teachers>, in particular, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/458649/VI\\_MQ\\_spec\\_Aug\\_2015\\_revised\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/458649/VI_MQ_spec_Aug_2015_revised_FINAL.pdf) [The standards themselves are in the appendix.]

### University of Birmingham:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/distance/edu/vision-impairments.aspx>

### EUROPEAN UNION

Empowering Teachers To Promote Inclusive Education: <https://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/empowering-teachers-to-promote-inclusive-education>

Further Educational Courses for Teachers Including Visually impaired Pupils:  
<http://www.sfs-schleswig.de/fluss/> [in four languages]

Profile of Inclusive Teachers:<https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Profile-of-Inclusive-Teachers.pdf>

Teacher Education for Inclusion Across Europe—Challenges and Opportunities:  
<https://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/te4i-challenges-and-opportunities/te4i-challenges-and-opportunities> [multiple languages available]

Teacher Education for Inclusion: Key policy messages: <https://www.european-agency.org/publications/flyers/teacher-education-for-inclusion-key-policy-messages>

Teacher Education for Inclusion: International Literature Review:  
[https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/te4i-international-literature-review\\_TE4I-Literature-Review.pdf](https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/te4i-international-literature-review_TE4I-Literature-Review.pdf)

## INDIA

The Rehabilitation Council of India ([www.rehabcouncil.nic.in](http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in)) is the Statutory Body for developing curricula for training of teachers, granting recognition to the training institutes and Universities that wish to run such training courses, and enrolling Special Educators on the Register for Rehabilitation Professionals. In India, it is mandatory for all training institutes, colleges and Universities to run only recognized courses, provide degrees with standard nomenclature, and to seek RCI approval before starting such training. The RCI has also introduced the system of running “Continuing Rehabilitation Education” courses for upgrading knowledge of special educators and other rehabilitation professionals. Some useful sites for training teachers of students with visual impairments in India are:

Approved University Distance Education Courses:  
<http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/forms/SubLINK2.aspx?lid=844>

Approved University Regular Training Courses:  
<http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/forms/SubLINK2.aspx?lid=847>

Continuing Rehabilitation Education in deafblindness  
<http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/Topics%20on%20Deafblindness.pdf>

Course content for Diploma in Special Education (Visual Impairment):  
[http://rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/D\\_Ed\\_Spl\\_Ed\\_\\_VI%202014.pdf](http://rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/D_Ed_Spl_Ed__VI%202014.pdf)

Course content for B Ed Special Education:  
[http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/B\\_Ed\\_Spl\\_Ed\(2\)\(1\).pdf](http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/B_Ed_Spl_Ed(2)(1).pdf)

Course content for Diploma in Special Education (deafblindness):

<http://rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/deddb.pdf>

Course content for M Ed Special Education:

[http://rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/M\\_Ed\\_Spl\\_Ed.pdf](http://rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/M_Ed_Spl_Ed.pdf)

### **The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness**

Low Vision Module for Ophthalmology Curriculum

Low Vision Module for Optometry Curriculum

Low Vision Curriculum for Teachers

Low Vision Curriculum for CBR workers

Low Vision Curriculum for Refractionist Training

### **SCOTLAND**

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2007/01/29163203/1> Part 1 [cover letter]

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2007/01/29163203/2> Part 2 [purpose and principles]

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2007/01/29163203/3> Part 3 [competences]

### **UNITED STATES**

Each state in the United States adopts its own standards for preparing teachers, and most of those can be accessed through the state's department of education and/or teacher licensing websites. Texas (below) is one such example. In addition, two professional organizations, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Council for Exceptional Children, have developed their own standards. There is remarkable similarity among all of these standards.

#### **Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)**

AER's University Review Program evaluates universities on how well it addresses professional preparation standards for orientation and mobility specialists, teachers, and vision rehabilitation specialists:

<https://aerbvi.org/resources/career-center/university-review-program/>

#### **Council for Exceptional Children**

The Council for Exceptional Children is the largest organization of special educators in the United States. Its teacher standards are the foundation of university accreditation.

Initial teacher preparation standards:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Standards/Professional%20Preparation%20Standards/Initial%20Preparation%20Standards%20with%20Explanation.pdf>

Initial specialty set, Blind and Visually Impaired:

[http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Standards/CEC Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets/Initial Specialty Set Blind and Visual Impairments.pdf](http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Standards/CEC%20Initial%20and%20Advanced%20Specialty%20Sets/Initial%20Specialty%20Set%20Blind%20and%20Visual%20Impairments.pdf)



Initial Specialty Set, Deafblindness:

[http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Standards/CEC Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets/Initial Specialty Set Deafblindness.pdf](http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Standards/CEC%20Initial%20and%20Advanced%20Specialty%20Sets/Initial%20Specialty%20Set%20Deafblindness.pdf)

Advanced teacher preparation standards:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Standards/Professional%20Preparation%20Standards/Advanced%20Preparation%20Standards%20with%20Explanation.pdf>

### **Perkins School for the Blind**

Professional Development tutorials: <http://www.perkinselearning.org/topics/visual-impairment-and-blindness?gclid=CNTOWc3tjNQCFYc1aQodTFYEq>

Online Classes: <http://www.perkinselearning.org/earn-credits/online-class>

Perkins International Academy: <http://www.perkins.org/international/academy>

### **Teacher Self-Assessment**

[http://www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/uploads/1/4/1/2/14122361/tvi\\_self\\_assessment.pdf](http://www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/uploads/1/4/1/2/14122361/tvi_self_assessment.pdf)

**Texas** [one state's example]:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=ireland+teacher+standards+visual+impairment&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=dortmund+teacher+standards+visual+impairment>

## **Consensus Curriculum Topics Recommended for Developing Countries**

The table below identifies the curriculum topics identified by more than half of the working group members as essential components of a training curriculum for (a) teachers of students with visual impairments in specialized schools, (b) teachers of students with visual impairments in inclusive schools, and (c) classroom/content teachers in inclusive schools. If a particular topic did not reach the more-than-half threshold, it was eliminated from this list and included in “additional topics” below.

<b>Curriculum Topics</b>	<b>BVI Teachers, Special Teachers</b>	<b>BVI Teachers, Inclusive Schools</b>	<b>Classroom Teachers, Inclusive Schools</b>
<b>Anatomy and physiology of the eye:</b>			
• Eye anatomy and physiology	X	X	
• Eye diseases and disorders	X	X	
• Common visual disorders in children	X	X	

Curriculum Topics	BVI Teachers, Special Teachers	BVI Teachers, Inclusive Schools	Classroom Teachers, Inclusive Schools
• Causes of visual impairments	X	X	
• Functional implications of visual diagnoses	X	X	
<b>Child assessment:</b>			
• Understanding individual clinical vision assessments, tests, and reports	X	X	
• Conducting functional visual assessment	X	X	
• Conducting learning media assessment	X	X	
• Understanding how visual impairment affects test performance	X	X	
<b>Principles of Optics:</b>			
• Optical devices: Types of lenses, spectacles, contact lenses, bifocals, field enhancers, etc., how used	X	X	
• Non-optical devices, how used	X	X	
• Environmental and instructional adaptations, how applied	X	X	X
<b>• Preschool and early childhood (3-5 years):</b>			
• Working with families	X	X	
• Parent expectations and support	X	X	X
• Domains affected by vision loss (motor, cognitive, social, adaptive)	X	X	X
• Visual and tactile development	X	X	
• Concept development	X	X	X
• Importance of play	X	X	X
<b>Braille:</b>			
• Tactile stimulation and development	X	X	
• Code, reading and writing	X	X	
• Preparation of learning materials	X	X	X
<b>Low vision:</b>			
• Modified print	X	X	X
• Environmental and instructional adaptations	X	X	X
• Preparation of learning materials	X	X	X

Curriculum Topics	BVI Teachers, Special Teachers	BVI Teachers, Inclusive Schools	Classroom Teachers, Inclusive Schools
<b>Instructional approaches:</b>			
• Learning to describe objects and graphics clearly and meaningfully	X	X	X
• Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: instruction, apparatus, modifications	X	X	
• Other content areas (e.g., language arts, social studies, history): instruction, learning aids, modifications	X	X	
• Physical education: instruction, modifications	X	X	
<b>Digital technology:</b>			
• Options and uses: Hardware and software	X	X	
• Use of internet	X	X	
• Sources for books	X	X	
<b>Orientation and mobility:</b>			
• Techniques: guiding, searching, use of landmarks	X	X	X
• Map preparation, instruction	X	X	
• Use of special devices (GPS, etc.)	X	X	
<b>Social skills:</b>			
• Communication, interaction, self-esteem	X	X	X
• Personal care	X	X	
<b>Career education:</b>			
• Prevocational skills	X	X	
• Work skills	X	X	
• Internships, other forms of work experience	X	X	
• Modifications to work tasks	X	X	
<b>Special topics:</b>			
• Accomplishments of blind adults/role models	X	X	
• Albinism	X	X	
• Deafblindness	X		
• Multiple disabilities and visual impairment	X	X	
• Preparation for adult roles/relationships	X	X	

## **Additional Topics:**

Additional topics were suggested by committee members, but did not reach the agreement threshold. While these topics are valuable, they might be considered as secondary topics, added to the curriculum as the training program matures, or offered as inservice training.

- Active learning
- Assessment modifications and adaptations
- Communication
- Cortical visual impairment
- Differentiated learning and instruction
- Early intervention (birth to 3 years)
- Executive function
- Expressions of feeling
- MDVI teaching strategies
- Optimize use of remaining visual function
- Physical, psychological, and sociological effects of disability
- Role of advocacy
- Sensory integration

## **The Startup Mobile Phone Curriculum for Training Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments**

The curriculum that follows is designed to jumpstart training in those countries that have not yet developed the educational infrastructure or adopted standards to prepare teachers of students with visual impairments. It is intended to be delivered by mobile phone, with each topic comprising approximately one hour of deliberation by individuals who do not have access to other modes of training, although it might also serve as refresher courses for trained professionals. The curriculum may also serve as a national government mechanism for delivering teacher training in rural and remote communities, and will be presented to UNICEF as an innovative approach to teacher training curricula for education of children with visual impairment.

The emphasis in the Startup Curriculum is less skills-based than it is attitude-based – that is, it seeks to assist persons who are new to blindness to understand the possibilities, rather than the limitations of visual impairment. As with any beginning course, it is best delivered in conjunction with someone who is knowledgeable about blindness, so that statements can be explained, unpacked and reflected on. deliberated, debated, and pondered.

This Startup Curriculum is offered by ICEVI as a service, meant to stimulate thought and prepare individuals for educating children with visual impairments. It is a living document, meant to be revised periodically to reflect current practice.

## **VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN CHILDREN**

- Functional Implications of Blindness & Low Vision
- Common Visual Disorders in Children
- Simple Visual Testing
- Functional Vision Assessment
- Correction; What Is It?
- Low Vision
- Utilizing Residual Vision
- Visual Impairment and Additional Disabilities

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Early Intervention
- The Development of Tactile Skills
- Play
- Orientation for Blind Children
- Social Skills: Communication, Self Esteem, Personal Care
- Sex and Relationships
- The Importance of Role Models

## **CURRICULUM ACCESS**

- Learning Media Assessment
- Building Literacy
- On Non-Academic Competencies
- STEM & Geography for Blind Children
- The Preparation of Learning Materials
- Accommodations and Modifications



- Description for Teachers of Blind Children
- Digital Technology for Blind Children
- Pre Vocational Skills for Blind Children
- Sources for Learning Materials

For more details of the curriculum, log on to ICEVI website [www.icevi.org](http://www.icevi.org)

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## *Congratulations Ana and Getty*



**Ana Peláez Narváez**, a member of the ICEVI EXCO representing the ONCE, Spain has been elected to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. ICEVI congratulates Ana and with this election, she will be a strong voice for ensuring the rights of women and girls with disabilities.



**Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame**, our Regional Chair of the ICEVI Africa region has been elected to the CRPD Committee of the United Nations and we congratulate Getty for this coveted position.

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The election of Ana and Getty to these important UN committees will give voice to the rights of persons with visual impairment and the opportunity to influence policies supporting disability-inclusive educational services.

## Current International Partner Members of ICEVI

(Those who pay an annual subscription of US\$ 20,000)



**CBM**  
[www.cbm.org](http://www.cbm.org)



**Light for the World**  
[www.light-for-the-world.org](http://www.light-for-the-world.org)



**ONCE**  
[www.once.es](http://www.once.es)



**Perkins School for the Blind**  
[www.perkins.org](http://www.perkins.org)



**Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children**  
**Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children**  
[www.ridbc.org.au](http://www.ridbc.org.au)



**Royal National Institute of Blind People**  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)



**Sightsavers**  
[www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)



The Norwegian Association of the  
**Blind and Partially Sighted**

**The Norwegian Association of the  
Blind and Partially Sighted**  
[www.blindeforbundet.no](http://www.blindeforbundet.no)





**EAST ASIA  
REGIONAL  
CONFERENCE**



Theme :

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

**NOVOTEL Manila Araneta Center,  
PHILIPPINES**

**16-18 October 2018**