

# Special Programs Unit

## Deaf-Blind Project

### Services for the Visually Impaired

## Do Not Let This Opportunity Pass You By!

### Western Regional Conference: Strategies for working with students who are Visually Impaired, Hard of Hearing / Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Multi-Impaired

The Wyoming Department of Education and the Deaf-Blind Project are pleased to announce the Western Regional Conference. This conference is geared for teachers, therapists, educators, early interventionists, and public health nurses who work with students who are visually impaired, blind, hard of hearing, deaf, deaf-blind or multi-disabled.

Wyoming has partnered with the Western Regional States: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah, to host a fantastic conference! The caliber of the presenters are phenomenal! I hope to see you there!

The conference will be held on: **April 23–25, 2009** in Colorado Springs at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort.

To register go to [www.csdb.org](http://www.csdb.org) and click on Conferences.

**Keynote Speaker: Patsy Pierce, Ph.D., CCC-SLP**, of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill residential facilities. She specializes in children with severe, complex communication needs. In 1990, Dr. Pierce helped to create the

Carolina Literacy Center, now the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies (CLDS) which focuses on research and practice to assist persons with all types of disabilities at any age to develop their literacy abilities.

Patsy will provide insight and ideas on how to bring literacy and language into the lives of students with significant and severe disabilities. She will introduce participants to the wonders of Dollar Store teaching materials and adaptations, Squishy books using hair gel and other interesting materials, "juicy words", power messages, to facilitate meaningful conversation, the Hourglass model and other easy ways to adapt literacy activities.

#### Friday Sessions:

- A Special Education Symphony: A Historical Perspective On The Education Of Children With Hearing Loss in Four Movements
- Getting To Know You: Supporting Social Cognitive Development In Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children
- Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment 2: Pulling Together The Pieces
- Reach Out And Touch...An OT Perspective On Sensory Play And Motor Performance

- E-X-P-A-N-D - Practical Tools for Literacy Expansion Activities

#### Saturday Sessions

- The Early Years Program: Team Approach Connecting Families, Parents, Professionals & Community
- Tips, Tools and the Timeline of Sign Language Development
- Eating Upside Down: Feeding Strategies For Visually Impaired Infants"
- Identification and Management of Infants And Young Children with Auditory Neuropathy
- Child-guided Assessment Of Children With Severe Multiple Disabilities: The van Dijk Framework
- A Tool For Assessing Infant Speech Perception: VRISD
- Play-Based Auditory Intervention
- Books and Beyond: Accessing Literacy
- Family Partnerships: Beginning With The End In Mind

And Much More! See you there!

Wyoming Department of Education,  
Deaf-Blind Project  
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#### Special points of Interest:

Just Do It: Looking at keeping our students who are visually Impaired fit

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If you are interested in a specific topic / strategy that you would like to see an article on, please contact: Joanne Whitson, 877-875-9467

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# Expanded Wyoming First Step Diagnostic Clinic A More Comprehensive Approach

April 3, 2009 —Reserve your Spot Now!

The Clinic has expanded! In addition to the current assessments, the clinic now offers Learning Media Assessments (LMA).

The LMA is conducted to determine the learning mode of a student who is visually impaired. It is "an objective process of systematically selecting *learning* and *literacy media*" (Koenig and Holbrook). This includes the total range of instructional media, which may be needed to facilitate learning, and is understandably different for each student. "It consists of *general learning media* (instructional materials and methods) and *literacy media* (the tools for reading and writing)" (Lavigne and Adkins).

The LMA will be conducted by one of our WEIAT members working with the IFSP / IEP team.

In addition, the clinic has partnered with WATR/ WIND Assistive Technology Resources to provide a

certified assistive technology professional, who will join the evaluation team and provide a variety of devices and software for team members to use during individual evaluation sessions. Initiated in October 2005, WATR is Wyoming's Assistive Technology



project. "WATR's aim is to increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology." The Wyoming First Step Diagnostic

Clinic is a comprehensive approach to assessing the needs of students birth through 21 years of age with any disability. The clinic incorporates the transdisciplinary model for conducting assessments of attending students.



The clinic offers: assessments, recommendations on interventions and research based best practices, and medical information. This information can be used to determine new goals for the IEP/IFSP, offer recommendations on existing goals, validate current programming and assist with the three year evaluation.

For more information on the Clinic go to [www.k12.wy.us/svi/index.html](http://www.k12.wy.us/svi/index.html) or contact Joanne Whitson, toll free at 877-875-9467

## Picture Students Learning to Ski for the First Time—Now Picture Those Same Students as Being Visually Impaired. Well The Wyoming Rendezvous was Just That!

The Rendezvous is an opportunity for students who are visually impaired to meet other students with the same disability and participate in activities that encourage learning new skills, being physically active and building trust. It is also an opportunity for teachers who serve this population to brain storm and interact.

The Rendezvous was held on Casper Mountain January 22, 2009 with 25 students of all ages and all abilities attending.



Friends getting ready to ski!



Just because you do not have the mobility to stand on skis doesn't mean there aren't

other opportunities to learn new skills and practice old ones.



Instruction on how to get started—learning new skills

On the trails having fun



Tuckered out from a long day of sledding! Mike had a great time.



The group getting ready to go out for one last time!

Join us next year at the Wyoming Rendezvous—call your local consultant for information.

## Save the Date! Northern Rockies AER Conference

The Northern Rockies Chapter of the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) will meet at the Bozeman Holiday Inn in Bozeman, MT, on October 14 - 16, 2009. It attracts professionals in the field of blindness from Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Consumers, teachers, parents and other professionals working with blind and visu-

ally impaired are very welcome to attend. This year's convention will feature programs on cortical visual impairment, Braille instruction for teachers and para-professionals, GPS/Trekker Breeze for the orientation and mobility specialist, deaf blindness, depression, Vocational and Educational Services Panel and computer instruction at the Bozeman College of Technology. There

are a substantial number of scholarships available for those who would like to attend but cannot afford it or have no financial support from an agency. These scholarships should be applied for as soon as possible by contacting Kerri Norick, Chapter president, at 406-539-7346 or e-mail [knorick@msdb.mt.gov](mailto:knorick@msdb.mt.gov).

### Update on the Distance Education Opportunity for Wyoming Teachers / Therapists

To assist Wyoming Districts comply with the IDEA regulations of "highly qualified teacher" WDE obtained a distance education grant through the Texas Tech University College of Education, Virginia Murray Sowell Center for Research to assist teachers and therapists attain their Masters or Certification in Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI), Orientation and

Mobility Instructor (O&M), Deaf-Blind Educator and Teacher for the Hearing Impaired / Deaf.

The Wyoming Department of Education applauds those who have applied and been accepted for this program! At this time, we have twelve participants in this program: 4 in TVI, 3 in O&M, 2 in Deaf-Blind Educator, and 3 in Teacher

for the Deaf / Hard of Hearing.

If your district is fortunate enough to have one of these participants, it is WDE's hope that you will incorporate their new skill sets to assist your district or child development center.

If you are interested in applying for the next session, contact Joanne Whitson, 877-875-9467.

### Just Do IT! Movement and Exercise

We hear all the time how America is becoming out of shape and overweight...

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 16 percent of children (over 9 million) 6-19 years old are overweight or obese -- a number that has tripled since 1980. In addition to the 16 percent of children and teens ages 6 to 19 who were overweight in 1999-2002, another 15 percent were considered at risk of becoming overweight. " (Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999-2002"; Oct. 6, 2004). The reasons for this can include eating habits, caloric intake and the amount of exercise the student participates in.

Students who are visually impaired/blind or deaf-blind have less incentive to participate in activities and movement for several reasons:

- Do not "see" the activities
- Are not exposed to different sports
- Do not have the social skills required

- Misconception of the adults believing that the student should not participate due to the visual impairment.

Our visually impaired students **can** and **should** participate in physical activities and be exposed to as many different types of activities as possible. This will encourage them to be more self-motivated to participate in physical tasks, stay healthy and build self-esteem.

Adapting activities for the visually impaired is not difficult— here are some suggestions:

Taking care of the family's animals is a big one—just getting outside and working with the horses, taking the dog for a walk etc., cannot only motivate the student into movement but build independence. Other ideas include:

- Riding horses side-by-side with another person or incorporating the



use of hand held radios.

- Riding Bikes—same as above or using tandem or Surrey bikes.
- Swimming—if you use lane markers the person will know where they are in the water.
- Hiking/camping with friends and family.
- Playing basketball/ beeper ball/ softball—all of these can be adapted for the visually impaired.

There are so many activities that a student who is visually impaired can participate in, it is just a matter of getting out and doing it.

**Wyoming Department of  
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**Finding Answers Together**

For information on  
Positive Behavior Supports  
And  
Literacy Strategies  
April 23–25, 2009  
Western Regional Early  
Intervention Conference!

**Wyoming Dual Sensory Census!**

It is that time of year again, I will be sending out the forms for the annual census of students who are visually impaired/blind and hard of hearing / deaf.

**What is the profile of this student?**

- The child may have one sense more impaired than the other.
- One sense is usually a relative strength in comparison to the other.
- The child may have additional impairments that could include health impairments; cognitive impairment; physical/orthopedic impairments; as well as speech, communication, and/or language impairments
- On the WDE-425 December 1 child count, the child is often reported as multiple impaired.

**Why Identify Children as Having Impairments in Both Vision and Hearing?**

- Appropriate identification of sensory impairments can assist educational professionals in appropriately planning to meet the child's educational needs.
- Vision and hearing are the two primary senses by which we learn.
- Specially designed instruction might benefit the child.
- Adapted materials might be needed.
- Corrective lenses and/or hearing aids might be needed.
- Related/supplemental services might be beneficial (e.g., orientation & mobility, vision support services, hearing support services).

For more information on the census—contact Joanne Whitson toll free 877-875-9467.

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