

Facilitating and Supporting the Social-Emotional Development of Learners Who Experience Deafblindness – Part I

Alaska Deafblind Project
Special Education Service Agency (SESA)
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Presented by: Dr. Susan M. Bashinski

Who is Here?

I would appreciate it if you would, please, type your first name in the chat and include your primary role / interest in learners who experience deaf-blindness.

EXAMPLE: Megan – mom

Kat – speech pathologist

Tomas – special ed teacher

THANK YOU!

Supplementary Materials

You should have access to two electronic files in addition to a copy of this slide deck I'll use in the presentation.

I'll refer to each of these handouts as we discuss the pertinent content this evening.

- ▶ Action Plan
- ▶ National Joint Committee Bill of Rights

Action Plan

Please record some thoughts, on the action planning sheet, how you *might* incorporate information from this session in your family life / daily practice.

Thank you!

Learning Targets

Through-lines of both today's and tomorrow's presentation:

- Social skills development—the important role social skills play in school and post-school success
- Emotional development—the interconnectedness between social and emotional domains
- Legal considerations
- Communication development—foundational to **both** social and emotional development

Today, we'll focus on foundational information re: the domains of social and emotional development, as well as the **criticality of trust** to development in these areas (OHOA)



**Unique Characteristics and
Challenges of
Learners Who Experience DB,
as Related to Social-Emotional
Development**

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Learners with DB Almost Always Experience

- the need for lengthier periods of time to learn to **trust** others / the world
- feelings of **vulnerability**
- more security / feelings of safety in a **seated** position
- demonstrate increased **tactile sensitivity**, particularly around the face
- a very different perception of **time** (i.e., tendency to interact / move more slowly)

Learners with DB Often Demonstrate

Difficulty...

- Communicating with people in a conventional or meaningful way
- Interacting with things in the environment in a meaningful way
- Establishing inter-personal relationships
- Maintaining inter-personal relationships

ALL of which interfere with social-emotional development

Learners with DB Often Demonstrate

Difficulty...

- Generalizing or transferring information from one context to another
- Benefiting from group instruction, alone, because the learner cannot learn by watching / listening to others
- Maintaining stamina / endurance for the same length of time as peers

ALL of which *might* interfere with social-emotional development—because others misinterpret the learner's behavior as boredom, disinterest, lack of concern, disregard, etc.

An Examination of Social-Emotional Development

Why is Social – Emotional Development Important?

- Social and emotional development are interconnected!
- These influence one another—either positively or negatively
- Both social and emotional skills can be learned through...
 - strong social connections w/ family, friends, community
 - positivity (i.e., a “can do” mindset)
 - healthy habits, including health, diet, sleep
 - problem-solving skills

Why is Social – Emotional Development Important?

- **Positive Self-Image** – closely related to *both* social and emotional development. (OHOA Module)
 - Social development focuses on **relationships with others**—which is significantly impacted by how the learner feels about herself
 - Emotional development involves **developing an awareness of one's own feelings**—and learning to **manage those feelings**
- Ways in which a learner is **supported emotionally** by care providers *and* peers directly **affects self-worth**

Key Aspects of Social Development

- **Social Skills** – learning ways to recognize how others receive one's communications *and* developing the abilities for getting along with others (OHOHA Module)
- **Self-Awareness** - understanding one's own feelings, thoughts, **and** how these influence one's behavior
- **Empathy** – developing skills for understanding—and sharing—another person's feelings

Key Aspects of Emotional Development

- **Emotional Awareness** – recognizing and understanding one's own emotions and those of others
- **Emotional Expression** – communicating feelings in ways acceptable to one's society / culture
- **Emotional Regulation** – managing and controlling one's emotional responses to other people & events
- **Resilience** – developing the capacity to find a way to move past stress, trauma, and / or adversity through adaptation

Other Key Aspects of Affective Development

- **Empathy** – understanding and / or sharing the feelings of others
- **Formation of Values and Attitudes** – perspective and ability to respond to emotional cues provided in the world
- Positive **Self-Talk** – facilitates self-awareness and provides benefits of using affirmations
- **Overall well-being** - crucial for navigating interactions (of all types) and for building relationships

SUMMARY:

Social – Emotional Development

- Contributes to an individual's overall well-being and overall growth
- Guides and impacts an individual's relationships
- Influences an individual's motivation to learn
- Facilitates positive—and reasonable—goal-setting
- Impacts cognitive development

As you can well imagine, EACH of these makes an important contribution to the learner's success—both in school and in post-school life.

Legal Considerations related to Social and Emotional Development

Communication Bill of Rights

In 2016, the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities published an essential white paper. This document unconditionally stated that:

“All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence.”

“Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be **ensured in all daily interactions and interventions** involving persons” who experience any sort of severe disability.

Communication Bill of Rights (NJC)

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National Joint Committee for the
Communication Needs of Persons
With Severe Disabilities (NJC)

COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights:

1. The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships
2. The right to request desired objects, actions, events, and people
3. The right to refuse or reject undesired objects, actions, events, or choices
4. The right to express personal preferences and feelings
5. The right to make choices from meaningful alternatives
6. The right to make comments and share opinions
7. The right to ask for and give information, including information about changes in routine and environment
8. The right to be informed about people and events in one's life
9. The right to access interventions and supports that improve communication
10. The right to have communication acts acknowledged and responded to even when the desired outcome cannot be realized
11. The right to have access to functioning AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
12. The right to access environmental contexts, interactions, and opportunities that promote participation as full communication partners with other people, including peers
13. The right to be treated with dignity and addressed with respect and courtesy
14. The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
15. The right to have clear, meaningful, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications

For more information, go to the NJC website at: www.asha.org/njc

Brady, N. C., Bruce, S., Goldman, A., Erickson, K., Mineo, B., Ogletree, B. T., Paul, D., Romski, M., Sevcik, R., Siegel, E., Schoonover, J., Snell, M., Sylvester, L., & Wilkinson, K. (2016). Communication services and supports for individuals with severe disabilities: Guidance for assessment and intervention. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 121*(2), 121-138.

Communication Rights

The NJC Communication Bill of Rights includes numerous tenets which, at their heart, focus on the fact that ALL partners of a learner who experiences DB are obligated to do their best to...

understand the learner's way of communicating!

By understanding the learner's communication modes and style, **we build trust with that learner!**

This translates to the fact that no matter how a learner's "voice" looks or sounds, it is important **and is to be respected**, thereby creating

- ▶ more engagement
- ▶ stronger, more varied relationships
- ▶ better access to learning.

What questions do you have?





Partnering with a Learner Who Experiences Deafblindness

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Partnering / Teaching a Learner with DB

The single most essential grounding principle, in every interaction, is to build a relationship with the learner that is grounded in TRUST.

Building a trusting relationship with a learner is central to her progress, especially in the earliest stages of (communication) development.

Partnering / Teaching a Learner with DB

How can partners build TRUST with a learner who experiences DB?

- Be in close **proximity** to her (yet respectful)
- Show the learner respect—*always!*
- Provide **choices**, in order to allow her some control
- **Wait** for her to respond
- Keep the learner feeling **safe & supported**, both physically and emotionally



Partnering / Teaching a Learner with DB

To achieve maximum benefits of instruction and / or interaction with a learner who experiences DB...

- Provide an **enhanced environmental context**, in order for the learner to know what is going on around him
- Feature materials / activities **preferred by the learner**
- Incorporate **movement, touch** (remember personal respect!), **and multi-sensory** experiences

Who is (SHOULD BE) a Partner?

- **Peers**
- Parents / Family members
- Professionals...

...can and *SHOULD* be taught to be partners for a learner who experiences deaf-blindness and communicates through unconventional modes

Familiarity

Typically, **familiar** people and environments (i.e., places, activities, settings) facilitate more and more effective communication from a learner with DB because he will likely:

1. be less anxious / nervous
2. feel less stress, due to *unfamiliarity*
3. be more comfortable asking to “take a break” (i.e, fatigue, stamina)



When You Come into the Space of a Learner Who Experiences DB

Let her know...

- **when you enter her personal space**
- **who you are**
- **when you are—and most importantly, when you are *NOT*—available to her**
- **when you leave the room**

Describe things that are happening, or are about to happen

When You Interact with a Learner Who Experiences DB

Describe...

- things that are happening
- things that are about to happen (to help build anticipation and predictability)
- Who is available to her in the space
- Who else is in the shared space—but *not* currently available for interaction
- **Remember that partner behaviors affect attitudes!**
- **Never, never, never act on a learner's body without first providing her with NOTICE!!!**

Communication Development

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“Give-and-Take” Process of Communication

- Communication is a two-way, **reciprocal** process
- Communication is, by very definition, a **mutual** activity between *at least* two persons
- The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) defines “communication” as the “**active process of exchanging information and ideas**” with another person

“Give-and-Take” Process of Communication



Goals for Learners for Learners Related to Communication Development

Goals might be targeted for a learner to demonstrate an more frequent, and / or more independent, communicative behaviors.

EXAMPLES:

- increase the **number of partners** with whom the learner meaningfully interacts
- increase the **variety of partners** with whom the learner meaningfully interacts
- **initiate** a particular communicative behavior (with a **reduced** number of **prompts**); do more than “respond!”
- broaden the physical **environments** and **routines** in which the learner meaningfully participates

What questions do you have?



Social Development

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Criticality of Social Development

The ONLY prerequisite to communication is

PARTICIPATION

(i.e., social interaction)!!!

Intricate Relationship between Social Development & Communication

Remember: Communication is a social process!

A partner's respectful use of touch and gradual, measured presentation of objects (during interactions) builds **trust** with a learner.

**Does a Learner's Behavior Constitute
"Communication," "Social
Participation,"—OR BOTH???**



Communication Prerequisites

**“Without participation,
there is no one to talk to,
nothing to talk about, and
no reason to communicate.”**

(Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013)

Please answer the following:

1. Is requesting a favorite snack (i.e., M & M's), using a **LITTLEmack switch**, “social participation” or “communication?”
 - a. Communication
 - b. Social Participation
 - c. Don't have sufficient information to answer

Please answer the following:

2. Is using a **Step-by-Step switch**, to recite Mom's shopping list for Target, "social participation" or "communication?"
 - a. Communication
 - b. Social Participation
 - c. Don't have sufficient information to answer

Please answer the following:

3. Is singing “Happy Birthday” at a relative’s birthday party, using a **BIGmack switch**, “social participation” or “communication?”
 - a. Communication
 - b. Social Participation
 - c. Don’t have sufficient information to answer

“Communication” and “Social Participation”

Regardless of the answers to the previous three questions, it is readily apparent that engineering the environment and instructional context to **more actively involve the learner who experiences deaf-blindness**, definitely **impacts others’ perceptions** of her—and her ability!



Goals for Learners Related to Social Development

Goals might be targeted for a learner to demonstrate **increased tolerance of / engagement** with other people

EXAMPLES:

- orient **to various partners'** physical presence / voices
- demonstrate increased tolerance **of touch** (i.e., for a longer **duration** and / or range of **touch-types**)
- demonstrate **interest** in activity / material introduced **by a partner**

Augmented Input Dictionary

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Augmented Input Dictionaries

Overall purposes of an augmented input dictionary are to...

- enhance meaning for the learner
- make (abstract) communication more concrete
- facilitate retention by the learner
- scaffold communication forms with a variety of unconventional modes—and communicating meaning with *more than spoken words and manual signs*
- **try to ensure the learner has experiences to support his comprehension!**

Some Essential Elements of an Augmented Input Dictionary

All interactions specified in such a dictionary should involve:

- ▶ interaction in the **natural context**
- ▶ performance at a meaningful, **authentic time**
- ▶ **reciprocal roles**
- ▶ **turn-taking**
- ▶ concrete cues (i.e., **touch cues** and **object cues**) re: the content of the communication

Explanation of (some) Elements of an Augmented Input Dictionary

Touch Cues and Object Cues

- ▶ The **primary purpose** is to communicate a variety of the partner's intents (e.g., request information, praise, provide a greeting)
- ▶ Serve to **reduce a learner's startle and / or challenging behaviors** by helping him anticipate what is going to occur next. (i.e., reduces stress)
- ▶ Provide **concrete support** for conversational, social interactions

Augmented Input Dictionary

(Learner's Receptive Dictionary)

TOUCH or OBJECT Cue	It is used to communicate this MEANING....	_____ partner will DO / SAY this...	What is EXPECTED from the learner
Touch to L <u>upper arm</u> (1x), through her <u>clothing</u> [Learner doesn't like to be touched on her bare arms] (TOUCH CUE)	"I'm here to do some work with you"	Approach slowly, <u>directly from front</u> (not side); pause, provide touch cue. <u>SAY</u> or <u>SIGN</u> "Hi, it's time to work."	Remain seated (or standing in same position); orient (with body or eye contact) to partner as indication of readiness
Place a remnant of nylon fabric in learner's <u>right hand</u> [similar to her own jacket] (OBJECT CUE)	"We're going outside now" (Learner loves to be outside)	Begin routine for partial participation in putting on jacket; <u>SAY</u> "Coat on, so we can go out"	Demonstrate excitement, through stereotypy or beginning to move toward door, as to indicate comprehension.

Communication and Emotional Development



Intervention Targeting Emotional Development

It is essential to strive to develop the **learner's awareness** of her own feelings—and to facilitate her learning how to:

- begin to recognize the nature of her own feelings
- **give voice** to her own feelings and label them

This type of awareness and growth contributes to a learner developing the skills to recognize—and label, so she can express to others—what she likes / dislikes



Intervention Targeting Emotional Development

Next, it is essential to strive to develop the **learner's awareness** that her behaviors **can cause other people to respond** in various ways

(i.e., “**social contingency awareness**”)



Goals for Learners Related to Emotional Development

Goals might be targeted for a learner to demonstrate increased control and / or awareness of himself and his emotional responses.

EXAMPLES:

- demonstrate improved **emotional regulation**
- self-inhibition of **challenging behaviors**
- exhibit the ability to **maintain** an appropriate level of **alertness** for learning

Critical Actions when Interacting with a Learner Who Experiences Deafblindness



General Intervention Strategies

- Encourage multiple partners to interact with the learner, *but ensure that ALL partners interact with the learner in **consistent** ways*
- Strive for consistency across **home, educational, and non-educational** environments
- Collect **data** in order to demonstrate the learner's increased awareness, social engagement, expression of emotion (positive and negative)

Intervention Strategies

Many learners who experience DB have little to no conventional communication. For these learners, **intervention strategies are ALL partner strategies!**

- Encourage the learner to initiate interactions with other people *and* with objects
- Respond to **all** behaviors that *might* be attempts to gain attention
- Acknowledge **all** of the learner's expressions of rejection / protest—even *if an expression cannot be honored!* **This shows respect for the learner's desires, as an individual.**



Essential Environmental Strategies

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Environmental Engineering: Activities

EXAMPLES:

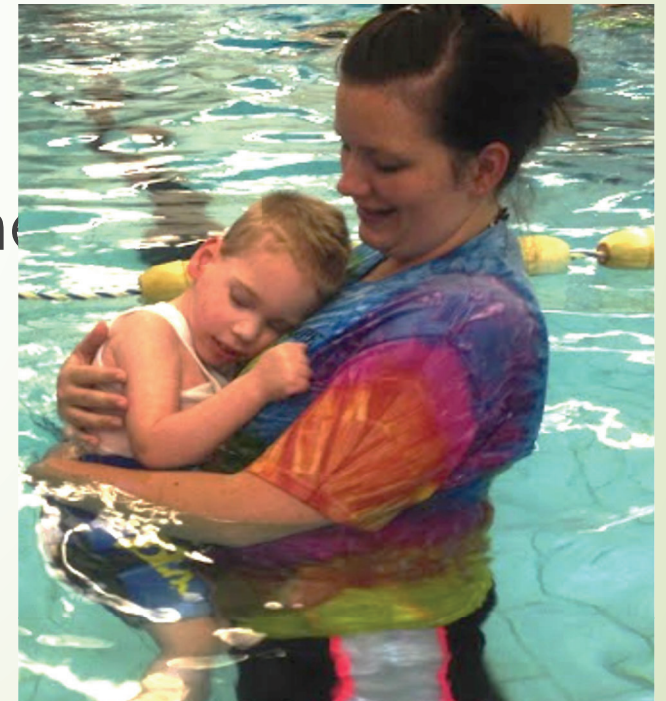
- ▶ identify a predictable, preferred activity; present all cues but do not begin
- ▶ delay start of activity and “ignore” learner until she does something to seek attention
- ▶ set up a game but don't begin
- ▶ put desired item out of learner's reach
- ▶ use expectant time delay for activity onset
- ▶ provide only a *partial* prompt
- ▶ simply wait for the learner to initiate some behavior
- ▶ interrupt a turn-taking activity and wait for learner to respond



Impact of Environmental Considerations

Familiar environments (i.e., places, activities, settings) and partners facilitate more and more effective communication because the learner will likely:

- be less anxious/nervous
- feel less stress, *due to unfamiliarity*
- be more comfortable indicating a need to take a break
- decrease challenging behaviors
- engage more readily



Thank You!



What questions do you have—either about this final section, or the entire presentation?

Thank You!

I sincerely appreciate your participation today!
I hope to see you tomorrow, for Part II.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions:

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