



School for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Outreach Programs

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TETN #20440

Instructional Approaches for VI Students  
Under the Developmental Age of 3

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### Traits of Children

- Infants and toddlers
- Extensive physical and cognitive challenges
- Fragile health, chronic pain issues
- Limited communication skills
- Global developmental delays
- Reluctant learners (passive / distractible / difficult behaviors)
- Limited interests
- Limited experiences
- May have difficulty working or connecting with peers and/or adults
- Limited concepts
- Limited stamina
- May sleep or retreat a good portion of the day

### Learning is Activating Neurology

"We are not teaching skills; we are activating neurology." - Daniel Kish

Aristotle once said, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."

## Evidence-based Practices



Figure 1 Photo of Dr. Jan van Dijk.



Figure 2 Photo of Dr. Lilli Nielsen.



Figure 3 Photo of Barbara Miles.

### These students learn by their own self-activity

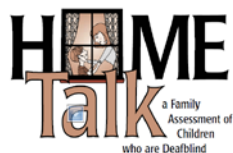
Developmentally these children will only learn by their own self-activity

- They are defining self
- They are learning to manage emotions
- They are developing foundational skills and concepts

We have to view our role in a different light!

### Strategies that work

Recognize parents as the experts when it comes to the child and utilize their expertise.



Developed by the Bringing It All Back Home Project

Figure 4 Picture of the Home Talk Cover.

<http://www.nationaldb.org/ISSelectedTopics.php?topicCatID=42>

## Strategies that work

### Conduct thorough and on-going assessment

- Formal – Functional Scheme, Every Move Counts, etc.
- Informal – Diagnostic teaching - independent and interactive sessions



Figure 5 Photo of the cover of Lilli Nielsen's Functional Scheme.

## Strategies that work

### Keep stress to a minimum

- Follow the child's lead
- Don't make too many demands
- Keep things predictable

## Strategies that work

### Pay attention to the child's emotional development

- Is the child able to alter his/her emotional state?
- How does the child contact others?

## Strategies that work

### Base instruction around THE CHILD'S preferences and interests

- What sensory learning channels are preferred?
- What intrigues or motivates the child?
- What causes an orienting reflex?

## Strategies that work

### Allow for and encourage self-directed learning

- Adapt environments so the child can access them using the skills he/she currently has
- Exploration and experimentation is essential to developing concepts and skills
- Provide time for the child to move at own pace and repeat movements

## **Strategies that work**

### **Provide appropriate interactions based on the child's level of development**

- Follow the child's lead
- Be a good "playmate"
- Use techniques of offering, imitation, interaction
- Build towards sharing the work and consequences

## **Strategies that work**

### **Develop the tactile sense**

- Hand-under-hand
- Provide tactile modeling
- Allow time for tactile exploration
- Provide materials with interesting tactile qualities

## **Strategies that work**

### **Pacing is everything --- slow it down, way down**

- Follow the child's pace
- Don't hurry!
- Response times are often very delayed

## Strategies that work

### Use a predictable schedule and routines

- Develop daily and weekly schedules and stick to them
- Be flexible with time but have a predictable sequence
- Save brain energy
- Build scaffold for future learning

## Strategies that work

### Focus on THE CHILD'S expressive communication

- Read behavior as communication
- Respond to all communication attempts
- Limit your own communication

## Summary

Children under the developmental age of 3 learn differently

- Educators must use different educational strategies with these children
- We do have evidenced-based practices that work with children functioning at this level
- If we utilize these practices that encourage a natural development of foundational skills and concepts, the child may be able to respond to more traditional educational approaches

## Summary

1. Recognize parents as the experts when it comes to the child and utilize their expertise.
2. Conduct thorough and on-going assessment
3. Keep stress to a minimum
4. Pay attention to the child's emotional development
5. Base instruction around THE CHILD'S preferences and interests
6. Allow for and encourage self-directed learning
7. Provide appropriate interactions based on the child's level of development
8. Use of touch and provide opportunities to development of the tactile senses
9. Pacing is everything --- slow it down, way down
10. Predictable schedules and routines
11. Focus on THE CHILD'S expressive communication

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## Notes

## Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Programs



Figure 6 TSBVI logo.



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Figure 7 IDEAs that Work logo and disclaimer from OSEP.