Using the Intervener Model with Students who are Deafblind in the General Education Setting

Presented by

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Proficient Communicators

For decades, the needs of emerging communicators have driven the information, strategies, and resources developed for use with congenitally Deafblind students.

Currently, we are seeing an increase in congenitally deafblind students who are proficient communicators.

# Who are Proficient Communicators?

* Accessing the general education curriculum rather than an alternative curriculum,
* Taking the regular state test with or without accommodations and/or
* Using formal language (e.g. English, Spanish, sign language) rather than the communication modes effective with emerging communicators (e.g. object cues, tactile symbols, touch cues, pictures).

Proficient Communicators

* Are faced with some of the same underlying problems as Emerging Communicators.
* Problems with gathering important incidental information that can lead to missing or incorrect key concepts as they grow up.
* Additional time is required to gather information, process and respond.

# Gathering Common Needs

Over time and across multiple on sites, our Project compiled a list of 12 specific recurring needs.

See attached document titled IEP Checklist Proficient Communicators.

Proficient Communicators with DeafBlindness IEP Checklist

1. Address *Requisite Concept* (foundational concept) Development through assessment and instruction.

DeafBlindness results in gaps in foundational information that are essential for concept development. Identifying and remediating these gaps is necessary for progress in the general curriculum. Requisite concept development is an area that must be systematically evaluated.

1. Modify the curricular content; Develop standards based IEP in core subjects.

For students with DeafBlindness, gathering information takes much longer than typical learners so the pace of instruction should be much slower. Sensory loss limits or prohibits incidental learning throughout the student’s life. This results in the child having significantly less essential background information in comparison to his peers. The scope of the information in a general education classroom can be overwhelming. Modifying the curricular content prioritizes the curriculum so it is both manageable and instructive.

1. Define comprehension check and include an individualized description in the student’s accommodations.

Regular comprehension checks are an important tool in checking for understanding. Many of the academic students with DeafBlindness will reply “Yes” when asked if they understand. Instead of asking students if they understand the material, it is better to ask them if they can explain it.

1. Build time into the day to intervene; add an elective or time in a resource classroom.

Students with DeafBlindness need additional instruction to master essential concepts. They also require instruction in expanded core curriculum for both vision loss and deafness. There is often not adequate time in the current schedule to provide appropriate instruction in these three areas.

1. Apply adaptations and modifications to homework assignments; shorten, provide additional time, allow oral responses. Consider assigning alternative projects, and/or reducing or eliminating homework.

Students with DeafBlindness have to work much harder than their peers to gather information and often experience fatigue. Strategies to reduce or eliminate homework may be necessary for some students. Providing alternative assignments that allow the student to apply knowledge that will help with concept development and understanding.

1. Consider student’s technology needs. Develop a technology plan in the ARD minutes or deliberations.

Students with DeafBlindness often require technology to compensate for the combined vision and hearing loss. They often acquire, and may be responsible for, many more devices than other students in special education.

1. Monitor indications of stress. Consider counseling to support the student with stress management.

Many students with DeafBlindness put forth a great deal of energy and effort over the course of a school day. They have to work harder than their peers to keep up with real time instruction. This can result in extremely high levels of stress as well as feelings of inadequacy and failure.

1. Consider the impact of DeafBlindness on behavioral issues.

For students with DeafBlindness, issues of challenging behavior are usually closely tied to sensory access and communication. Behavior is often the result of coping with situations that seem confusing or threatening due to lack of information available from others or from the environment. It can also be the result of frustration about being ineffective in communicating about important topics in more socially acceptable ways. The student’s difficulty in recognizing, trusting, and bonding with others can have an impact on behavior.

1. Consider the unique social skills needed for a student with DeafBlindness, include these in the IEP and provide direct instruction.

DeafBlindness impacts the ability to form relationships and respond to interactions with others in typical ways. For example, a lack of environmental information makes it difficult to identify people, locate them, know what they are doing, or understand what they want. Many ordinary interactions may seem threatening, negative, or confusing to the student. In turn, the student’s need to gather information by close viewing and/or touch can offend others. It is not unusual to see withdrawal and problems with bonding. It is important to consider that social problems for a student with DeafBlindness are often the result of an on-going lack of essential information.

1. Consider the unique skills needed in self-advocacy for a student with DeafBlindness, include these in the IEP and provide direct instruction.

Being an effective self- advocate about communication and access to information is essential for success in higher education, employment, and other community settings.

1. Consider the unique transition needs of a student with DeafBlindness and include these in the IEP.

As a student enters the teen years and nears graduation, there are considerations for both educational programming and community services. The need for experientially based vocational assessment and instruction in real-world environments is heightened when sensory issues affect access to environmental information and practical experience. Additionally, referrals to community services designed for people with DeafBlindness lead to better adult outcomes (e.g. community intervener, support service provider, interpreter, specialized residential & vocational support).

1. The discussion for supplemental needs and services considers the need for additional resources, training and/or staff to provide in-class support (Intervener, additional interpreter etc)

Certain related services and supports are designed for students with sensory impairments, and should be considered for all students with DeafBlindness. For example, an intervener is a paraprofessional with special skills and training who is designated to work individually with a student who is deafblind. Sign language interpretation and O&M are also examples of specialized services. Additionally, the effects of DeafBlindness should be taken into account in assessments, evaluations and delivery of all related services provided to the student.

Item Number 12

The discussion for supplemental needs and services considers the need for additional resources, training and/or staff to provide in-class support (Intervener, additional interpreter etc)

# [What is an Intervener](http://documents.nationaldb.org/NCDB_Intervener_Services_Definition_2019_a.pdf)?

Interveners, through the provision of intervener services, provide access to information and communication and facilitate the development of social and emotional well-being for children who are DeafBlind. In educational environments, intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a para-educator, who has received specialized training in DeafBlindness and the process of intervention.

Primary Roles of an Intervener

## Working under the guidance and direction of a student’s classroom teacher, an intervener’s primary roles are to:

1. Provide consistent access to instruction and environmental information usually gained by typical students through vision and hearing, but unavailable or incomplete to an individual who is deafblind
2. Facilitate concept development
3. Provide access to and/or assist in the development and use of receptive and expressive communication skills
4. Facilitate the development and maintenance of trusting, interactive relationships that promote social and emotional well-being
5. Provide support to form relationships with others and increase social connections and participation in activities

Based on: Alsop, L., Blaha, R., & Kloos, E. (2000). *The Intervener in early intervention and educational settings for children and youth with deafblindness*. Monmouth, OR: Western Oregon University, Teaching Research, National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind.

# The Goal of an Intervener

To insure that the student who is deafblind is an **active participant** and **informed learner** in all activities.

Additional Roles of Intervener and Content Area Teachers as Created by an Individual Team

## Intervener

* Provide additional instruction when Cole appears confused or stuck.
* Repeat directions as necessary (during real time instruction).
* Repeat key points as necessary (during real time instruction).
* Helped Cole prioritize his attention.
* Help Cole use and manage his technology (Tablet, Visio Book, Spot Light, Dry Erase Board, Notability app, file scan app, creation and maintenance of his class files).
* Check for comprehension (open-ended), provide additional information or clarification when necessary.
* Pre-teach and Re-teach core subject content during downtime and individual work time.
* Collect content materials from Reg. Ed. teachers. Scan and make accessible on Cole’s tablet.
* Use planning period to prepare materials and review content for future classes.

Content area teachers

* Provided copies of printed and written materials to Ms. Lerma prior to lesson.
* Built in opportunities for pre-teaching and re-teaching into the lessons.
* Used the FM mic effectively to provide auditory access.
* Used preferential seating to assure optimal visual access to projected content.
* Participate in the planning and implementation of the effective use of technology to meet two needs:
* Sensory access to course materials and
* The development and maintenance of a digital organization system of core subject materials, notes and homework assignments.

# Intervener Roles defined by a student and his team

1. Intervener would help move student’ rolling desk from class to class.
2. As a team, intervener would plug in wires as student would set up AT equipment.
3. Intervener was note taker.
4. At first, intervener would email HS teachers for assignments and then student took over this task.
5. Same for handing in homework assignments.
6. Intervener would try to have HS teachers send assignment and homework in advance in order to scan into Kurzweil. Student eventually took over this task.
7. Intervener would make sure of the scanning, modifications and accommodations for computer needs.
   * 1. There was built in time for student and his intervener to have one on one time for her to: Teach these skills to student.
     2. Pre-teach and
     3. Reteach.
8. Pre-teach and re-teach would consist both of reviewing the day before homework and/or notes and again the same would apply in the afternoon. Student was allowed to “check in” with his homeroom and then would be with the intervener before the day started and then in the afternoon daily.
9. Student’s afternoon schedule typically would consist of the TODHH, TVI, COMS and the intervener would be there.
10. \*It was important every year for his schedule to have most of the “harder” academics scheduled in the morning before visual fatigue would set in.
11. Intervener worked the team to go over “what to do” during fire alarms and emergency situations.
12. Student for the most part was independent from the intervener during lunch-his choice. Also, during swimming which he did all through high school as a member of the swim team and for his PE credits. Again, support in the beginning and a classmate in the pool would make sure he was hearing the instructions or he would just get out the pool to hear the teacher/coach.

Tips from a TDB

* Wait for natural breaks to provide explanation. Avoid interrupting student when she is working.
* When possible, allow student to finish her work before moving on to the next task. If she is unable to finish her work in the allotted time, communicate to her when she will have time to finish her work. This will reduce anxiety.
* Prioritize the most important points of the lesson. Too many details can become distracting, confusing, and overwhelming.
* Incorporate student’s interests and experiences to relate new content (when possible) and build new concepts.

References and Resources

AT device and ownership log-Patti McGowan (see next page)

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness, Intervener Services and Interveners in Educational Settings: [Definition](https://www.nationaldb.org/national-initiatives/iqp/intervener-definition/)

[Richard Ryan and Edward L.Deci at the Universtiy of Rochester: a theory of human motivation](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/).

[Let’s Talk Elgibility](https://www.tsbvi.edu/5378-let-s-talk-deafblind-eligibility-frequently-asked-questions): Frequently asked Questions, Chris Montgomery, TSBVI

Alsop, L., Blaha, R., & Kloos, E. (2000). *The Intervener in early intervention and educational settings for children and youth with deafblindness*. Monmouth, OR: Western Oregon University, Teaching Research, National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind.

[Texas Deafblind Project](http://www.txdeafblindproject.org/)

[Intervener as Instructional Coach: For Students Who are Deafblind in General Education Settings](https://txdeafblindproject.org/about-our-project/tx-db-project-products/video-materials/)

**AT Device and Ownership Log**

Student Name: Date:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AT Device | Who owns It? | How was it paid for? | Age of device | Likely to be replaced? | Can the device transfer to new environment? | Will the current provider change? | Who pays for this device/service at present? | Will access to this funding source continue? | Are there new finding sources to explore? |
| CCTV | Intermediate Unit | Intermediate Unit property – long-term loan | Fall 2004 | No | No | Yes | All CCTVs are owned by the IU for use in K-12 settings | No | Vocational Rehab |
| Makrolux Lighted Dome Magnifier | Student | Rotary Club Grant | Spring 2006 |  | Yes | n/a | n/a | No |  |
| Cane | Student | Intermediate Unit | A new one is provided annually until graduation | Yes | If appropriate size | Yes |  |  |  |
| Talking Calculator | 12th Grade Classroom teacher | Personal purchase | Fall 2009 |  | Yes | Yes – teacher has agreed to let student keep it | n/a |  |  |
| The AMIGO Desktop Portable Magnifier | Student | Long-term loan from state DOE | Spring 2006 | No, this device was loaned in “as-is” condition | No | No | SEA requires the device to stay in the possession of the LEA | No | College Disability office is initiating a purchase |