Deafblind Focus

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Project News and Notes . . .

Partners in Policymaking Program 1999-2000

The Partners in Policymaking Program is currently accepting applications for 1999-2000. This program provides the opportunity for persons who have disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities, to interact and learn from nationally and state known experts on different issues. The information provided can lead families to become even stronger advocates for their child, as well as influence change in public policy and the way services are provided. Session topics may include:

Education - Understanding the Progress and Needs of Special Education, including the Development of Inclusive Education,
Supported Living, Personal Futures Planning, Family Supports, and the Best Practices in Employment
Federal Policy and Legislative Issues
State and Local Policy

Participants attend two-day training sessions, eight times a year. Partners also are expected to complete assignments between sessions and to commit to one major assignment in their home town. The program is sponsored by the COVOH Foundation and funded through the Indiana Governor's Planning Council for People with Disabilities.

A number of Indiana families who have children with deafblindness have participated in this training and found it to be worthwhile. If this training program is of interest to you, please contact: COVOH, 445 N. Pennsylvania Street, Suite 804, Indianapolis, IN 46204, 1-800-262-8630, Voice/TDD - (317) 262-8642, FAX - (317) 262-0685.

Under the Magnifying Glass: Building Educational Networks

Applying Knowledge and Skills Toward Successful Student Outcomes

An inservice training model was developed as a part of a systems change effort through the Building Educational Networks (BENs) Project. The BENs Project was funded by the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Special Education, from 1996-1998 through the Blumberg Center at Indiana State University. The Project's activities were conducted in collaboration with the Indiana Deafblind Services Project.

What is the BENs Training Model?

The BENs Training Model was designed to train teams who work with students who are deafblind. The BENs Model has five components:

- Teams learn specific content information.
- Teams are taught specific techniques to organize information.
- Content information is used to develop educational programs and strategies for specific students.
- A product is generated which compiles the information and follows the student from one educational setting to another.
- Team members are taught to generalize the content information and process for use with other students and in other settings.

How Was the BENs Training Designed?

Planning inservice training involves making choices concerning factors such as teaching techniques, length, and format. Research shows that for inservice training to be effective it must combine theory, modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching. However, many professionals report that their experience with inservice training is primarily passive training (lectures, handouts, and lists of references) with minimal

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follow-up support. In trying to balance passive and active participation, the BENs model combined content information, applied the information to specific students during and between trainings, and obtained feedback during group discussions.

Each team also received follow-up support in the form of an onsite technical assistance visit during the training year. One of the BEN's trainers and the director of the Indiana Deafblind Services Project made each visit. The technical assistance visits provided an opportunity for team members to ask specific, contextual questions and receive helpful suggestions for programming.

The actual training consisted of five full training days spread across the school year. Teams, including the student, family members, teachers, and other service providers, were invited to participate. Team members were asked to commit to attend each training session. Approximately 50 to 60 participants attended.

During each of the five training days, a consultant with expertise in different areas of deafblindness (e.g., overview of deafblindness, vision and hearing, communication) presented during the morning session. In the afternoon, teams met and used the content information from the morning session as it applied to their particular student.

Facilitators trained in creative problem solving techniques structured the discussions within each team. They helped the teams use the morning content information, as well as promoting the building of the team. During these team meetings, as well as between trainings, team members used "process techniques" to organize information about their particular student into a notebook for use in the classroom and in future settings.

What are Process Techniques?

In developing the model, it was evident that organizing the vast amount of information generated by each team would be difficult. This prompted numerous questions. Was there a way to create an album, a roadmap, a composite snapshot of important information about the student? Could the training information be retained and used by teams in other settings? Could team members, after receiving training in specific techniques, identify, develop and share information about deafblindness and their specific student, with others in the educational setting (e.g., build capacity, serve as field-based consultants)?

In response to these questions, "Process Techniques" were developed as tools to organize and apply the training content information. A 2-3 page handout was provided to participants about each technique. Each handout contained a description of the technique, a vignette of a student identified as deafblind, step-by-step directions on how to apply the technique, an example, and references for additional information. These techniques include:

- collage,
- computer software programs,
- structured notetaking,
- mapping,
- checklists,
- scales,
- journaling,
- matrices, and
- "wild cards."

Many of the process techniques reflect current best practices (e.g., mapping, matrices). A variety of techniques were taught with the idea that individuals learn and remember things in different ways and, therefore, would choose different methods to process and record information. The process techniques were designed to be user-friendly, visual, and applicable to culturally diverse populations.

In addition to the specific techniques provided, team members were invited to develop their own methods of organizing and displaying student information. These "wild cards" were often highly imaginative and creative (e.g., weaving, videotape, games, quilts). A sample of the "collage" process technique follows.

Conclusion

Building Educational Networks was a two year training project. During that time, eleven teams of 7-10 people were trained. The completed notebooks have been used in a variety of ways, including at case conferences, to advocate for additional support at the state level, at transition planning meetings, and for families to share with relatives.

Through using the BENs Model, team members became active training participants. Many participants indicated that the application of the training information made it easier to understand. This resulted in long-term learning. Even three years after the training, it is common to hear team members say, "Remember, we learned at BENs about . . ."

Collage

Description:

A collage is a group of pictures or drawings that, when placed together, create a single picture. Collages can be thematic and present specific information (e.g., student hobbies, the student as an athlete, musician, artist). Collages are often used to visually represent "feelings," (e.g., sadness, fear, happiness). A collage can include, but is not limited to, words or pictures from magazines, photographs, and personal drawings.

Example:

Alan is 17 and lives in rural Indiana. He was born deaf. At the age of six, Alan's parents noticed he was having trouble seeing at night and often was tripping on objects during the day. An ophthalmologist examined him and Alan was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa (RP). Further tests indicated that Alan has Type I Usher Syndrome. Usher Syndrome is hereditary and is characterized by a congenital hearing loss and a progressive visual impairment due to RP. Persons with Type I Usher, like Alan, have profound congenital deafness, RP, and balance difficulties. Visually, night blindness may be the first symptom observed. Tunnel vision occurs as the field of vision decreases.

Alan's team decided to create two collages; one to represent his narrowing field of vision and the other to share his interest in working with clay. Alan's lifelong ambition is to be a potter and sell his work at craft and art fairs. He has developed an unusual blue/green glaze which makes his work quite unique.

Alan's educational team creates the collages. . . .

Steps for creating the sample collage:

1. As a group, decide whether a collage would be a good tool to provide specific information about Alan (e.g., the team decides to illustrate the student's visual condition or to visually represent his interest in pottery).
2. Magazines, objects, markers, scissors, construction paper, tape and glue will be needed to make the collage. Personal photographs or drawings also could be part of the collage.
3. Cut or tear out pictures and arrange them on the construction paper so as to make a picture (e.g., team members cut out pictures of tunnels, cones, dark spots to represent a field loss such as with retinitis pigmentosa). There is no "right" or "wrong" way to create a collage. The pictures can be either random or structured. The guiding principle is to be creative and to communicate a message.
4. After the pictures are arranged in the desired order, glue them to the construction paper. The team may decide to create two or three separate collages. Be creative.
5. It may be helpful to caption the collage before placing it in the student's notebook, (e.g., this is a collage representing Alan's visual condition; his visual field is 30 degrees and he has night blindness).
6. Place the completed collage in Alan's notebook.

References for the Collage Process Technique

Edwards, L.E., Goehl, K.S., & Gordon, L.A. (1992). Profiles: Individuals with deaf-blindness. Terre Haute, IN: Blumberg Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Special Education.

Foster, M.T. (1992). Experiencing a "creative high." Journal of Creative Behavior, 26, (1), 20-39.

Wilt, G.I. (1994). Modified assessment for adult readers: Collage. User's Guide. Final Report.

In the Resource Spotlight

Indiana Equipment Exchange Center Opens Its Doors

There is a documented need for the reuse and recycling of durable medical equipment and non-prescription assistive technology in Indiana. The objective of the Indiana Equipment Exchange Center (IEEC) is to facilitate the low-cost transfer of this equipment to people in need. To make this project a success, it will require a great deal of collaboration among Indiana's service delivery systems.

Phase 1 of IEEC is now operating. Anyone who would like to donate/sell a piece of used technology or be on the mailing list should contact IEEC. A list of donated equipment will be compiled and people in need will then be matched with the appropriate donor.

You can help by publicizing this program and informing the IEEC of any potential technology donors. Please contact Ned Stoller at (800) 825-4264 with any information or inquiries.

Upcoming Events

Deaf Blind Together First Annual Picnic

Deaf Blind Together is sponsoring their first annual picnic on July 17, 1999. It will be held at the Broadripple Park, Indianapolis, IN from 9:00 a.m. to dusk.

This will be an old fashioned event complete with outdoor games like tug of war, relay races and three legged races. Hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, veggie burgers, some drinks, charcoal for the grill, paper plates, cups, forks and spoons will be provided. Please bring a covered dish to share, as well as your own comfy folding chair.

Please dress casually. Families are welcome, as well as persons with deafblindness from the surrounding states. It is expected to be great fun, with time to build friendships and memories.

Deaf Blind Together is a social club for adults with deafblindness. The group sponsors a newsletter and meetings/fun events once a month. In addition, members keep in touch through mail, email, and telephone.

For more information please call or write: Deaf Blind Together, Donald Aills, 5050 Bassett Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46235, TTY (317) 895-0439.

UTS Training Fall 1999 Calendar

August 6: Statewide Coordinators/Leadership Meeting, FSSA
August 10: Family Dynamics (North), INTACT
August 11: Family Dynamics (Indy), INTACT
August 12: Family Dynamics (South), INTACT
August 17: Provider Issues (North), INTACT
August 18-19: Service Coordination Level 1 (South), INTACT
August 24-25: Service Coordination Level 2 (North), INTACT
August 27, Sept. 3: Parent Liaison (North), IPIN
September 9-10: Leadership Conference for LPCC's (State), CIPYC
September 14: Day 3, Service Coordination Level I (South), INTACT
September 16: Infant Mental Health (Indy), INTACT
September 27: 3rd Parent Liaison (North), IPIN

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