



AMESVIEW

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The AMESVI board members for the 2009-2010 year are:

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South Shore/Cape:

Beth Martin

BMTaunton@aol.com

April 2010

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear AMESVI members:

“April showers bring May flowers”

Small animals that hibernate are usually coming out of their burrows in April. The birds fly back northward or they settle down to have their families. The bees and butterflies begin to gather nectar from the first flowers of the season.

In some parts of the world, it's planting time. In other parts, it's the harvest season. The Red Sox begin their season in April! Then the amateur athletes begin to go outside in the warm weather. Spring cleaning starts and people start mowing their yards again.

This is true with AMESVI too. As we all have been hibernating indoors and behind our computer screens for the winter it is now time to get out and get moving. Please join us for our Spring Conference on May 8, 2010 at the Worcester Crowne Plaza. This will be the perfect opportunity to dust off your cobwebs and socialize with friends and colleagues.

As we head into the home stretch of the 2009-2010 school year use our listserv as a source of information, inspiration, and connection when an issue is affecting you. I have enjoyed the vibrant and valuable conversations that appear in my inbox. It is comforting to know someone's advice is just an email away.

AMESVI is changing, growing, and seeking to provide increasing value to our membership, and I invite you to continue sharing your concerns, questions, comments, and suggestions. With this in mind, please remember that our elections will be held this spring. There are many ways to be involved, and leadership at the Board level is just one of them. We are still seeking nominees for the position of President-Elect. Please consider giving back to AMESVI and getting involved with our board.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Spring Conference,

Jessica Erlich

President

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much” – Helen Keller



Calling All Nominees!!!

It is that time of year again ... time to refresh the AMESVI Board. Here's your opportunity to join the AMESVI board. The following positions are open for the upcoming 2010-2011 school year:

- President-elect
- Central Ma Representative
- Northeast Representative
- Greater Boston Area Representative
- Corresponding Secretary

Which position fits your interests best? The board meets face-to-face four times a year, via conference call another four times a year, and communicates regularly via e-mail. Please consider running.

To get on the 2010 ballot, contact Karen Ross at Karen.Ross@carroll.org

Emergency Election Update!!!

For the first time in our history we do not have a nominee for the position of President-Elect and only one candidate for each of the other positions. The board has delayed voting in hopes that someone will volunteer. Please consider running for the board. It is very rewarding!

REGIONAL UPDATES

GREATER BOSTON REGIONAL REPORT

Eleven members of the AMESVI Greater Boston Region met on Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010 at the home of Paula Bress in Newton, MA. The agenda for the meeting was open and several attendees had the opportunity to contribute information and ideas with the group concerning both issues related to the Greater Boston Region and AMESVI as a whole.

After introductions, several topics were discussed including:

- Suggestions were made in regard to potential topics for AMESVI Spring Conference workshops. Suggested topics included: itinerant teaching (organizational skills and time management), mastering the audio component of Bookshare, a workshop centered on gathering information to discern areas of professional interests and need from the AMESVI membership, CVI, and topics surrounding transition (ages 14—22) for students with visual impairments in Massachusetts.
- The need to provide more professional development and formal education within Massachusetts in relation to educating students with visual impairments and multiple disabilities;
- Incorporating on-line surveys onto the AMESVI web site in order to gather information from the membership that could be utilized for both project development and a feedback tool;
- A potential partnership between the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and AMESVI, specifically The Division on Visual Impairments (DVI), a special interest division within the CEC that focuses on educating students with visual impairments.
- The possibility of AMESVI developing a position on Vision Therapy and the need to develop language differentiating the difference between a Vision Therapist and a TVI.
- AMESVI's need to develop a framework that would describe a broad spectrum of educational services to students with visual impairments in Massachusetts, and which would serve as a resource for LEA's and Special Education Administrators;
- The meeting concluded with information about CarrollKids summer programs at the Carroll Center, as well as the distribution of new informational materials regarding Perkins weekends, extended year programs and a new brochure for the Low Vision Clinic. Cheryl Cumings also shared some information about Our Space Our Place, an afterschool program for students with visual impairments who live in Boston and surrounding communities.

Submitted by:

Joshua Shea and Paula Bress

Greater Boston Regional Representative

South Shore/ Cape Regional Report

Double Take on Vision Therapy

By Beth Martin, South Shore/Cape Regional Representative

Dr. Cathy Stern made a second trip to meet with about 10 South Shore AMESVI members on September 23, 2009 at Bridgewater State College. Dr. Stern is a Vision Therapist based in Canton, MA. She first presented to South Shore members in May of 2009 to give us the basics on Vision Therapy. Her second visit focused on aids and activities. She did not endorse TVI's doing Vision Therapy, but just showed us some activities she uses and left us to decide if and how they might be useful to any students on our caseloads.

Dr. Stern began by urging us to find out as much as we can about our students' vision. Some questions to ask would be: What is his near and far acuity? Was a Snellen Chart, Preferential Looking, or LEA Cards used to determine acuity? She cautioned to keep in mind that isolated letter viewing is different than reading connected text. When should a child be wearing glasses? Are glasses for near or far away? Does the child have a central or peripheral field loss? Dr. Stern explained that large print is often needed with field loss so the brain can fill in the missing letters. She also explained how she teaches eccentric viewing by having the patient look ahead of where they want to see. One should find out the student's optimal print size, spacing, font style, and lighting needs. Does the student have a color deficit? This information is useful when choosing computer color options and for color coded tasks. She recommended a booklet entitled "Color Vision Made Easy."

Eye patching was a topic that Dr. Stern seemed to feel strongly about. She said that patching should not be taking place in school. She feels that blocking an eye does not teach the eyes to work together. She says that patches, filters or foils that change the acuity to slightly less than the weaker eye works well. She also feels that a few hours of patching a day is as good as all day **IF** the child is active while patched. This is a time when video game playing is actually a good thing to do. Her recommendation for further reading on this subject is the book "Fixing My Gaze" by Sue Barry.

When discussing vision aids, Dr. Stern said that she does not favor white boards due to glare, reflection and marker fade out. She does favor felt tip markers for writing, slant boards (check out the one she recommended at www.visualedgesb.com), task lighting, color overlays, typoscopes, bar magnifiers with a color line in them, and accessibility options on the computer.

Finally we got down to some vision activities. How we use them is left to our discretion.

Activity 1: Make a sheet of 10 rows of letters, 10 letters in each row. Have the child read left to right Row 1, then Row 10; Row 2 then Row 9; Row 3 then Row 8, etc.

Activity 2: Make 2 vertical strips of 10 different letters. Put one on each side of a door frame so child must look back and forth reading a letter from each side.

Activity 3: Make a wall and a hand-held 10 x 10 letter chart. The student must alternate reading one letter from the wall chart, one letter from the hand-held chart. This gives board copying practice.

Activity 4: Make a five pointed star. Put the numbers 1-5 one each on a post-it note. In random order, put a number at each of the points of the star. The child must point to the number you say. This helps with use of peripheral vision.

Activity 5: Print a word, for example "bucket", on an index card and tape to the wall. Put each of the letters in "bucket" on a post-it note and arrange in random order around the index card. The child must point to the post-it note letters in order to spell out the word "bucket".

Activity 6: Make a sheet of several rows of arrows pointing left, right, up and down in random order. The child must go along the rows and swing his arms/hands in the direction the arrows indicate.

Activity 7: Fixation Baseball can be played "flat" or 3-dimensional. Flat is numbers put in random order on a poster board in the shape of a baseball field. In the 3-dimensional version put numbers on

paper “tents” (folded index cards) on the floor. In either version, the child must look at the number you say. Looking at the wrong number is an “out”.

Activity 8: Make a sheet of random numbers and have the child circle them in order.

Activity 9: Throw out jacks, cubes, etc. and have the child try to say how many are there without counting. This is called subitizing—seeing things as a group.

Activity 10: Roll a marble around an aluminum pie pan 5x in each direction. Repeat not looking at the pan, but looking at the instructor. Good for tracking.

Activity 11: Cover one eye, follow thumb. Repeat with other eye.

Activity 12: Put a ball on top of a tube (empty paper towel tube). Bring hand across midline to take the tube in the other hand.

Activity 13: Pass a bean bag from hand to hand saying the alphabet starting at different starting points.

Activity 14: Make a maze on paper and put a paper clip on it. Use a magnet from underneath to move the paper clip through the maze.

Activity 15: Put rows of P d b 9 on a sheet. Imagine your body is the stem of the letter/number. The student would raise a hand or swing out a foot to indicate where the “bubble” of the letter/number is located. Raise right hand for P because the bubble is located on the top, right of the stem; left foot for d because the bubble is on the bottom, left of the stem; right foot for b because the bubble is located on the bottom, right; and left arm for 9 (nine) because the bubble is located on the top, left of the stem.

Happy experimenting AMESVI members!

Western Massachusetts Regional Report

Western Massachusetts AMESVI met at Barnes and Noble in Holyoke in early February. Members learned of the upcoming AMESVI conference in Worcester this spring. In addition, a discussion was held regarding a member who was interested in finding out-of-district placement options for students with profound multiple impairments and visual impairment in areas throughout Western Massachusetts. Members were asked to keep in mind any students on their caseloads who may benefit from such placements, and to identify any programs that seemed to fit this need. A member also discussed the idea of building a relationship between AMESVI and the DESE liaison working on Visual Impairment.

Amy Mason, Western Ma. Regional Representative

Northeast Region

On Wednesday, March 24, the Northeast Region met at Peabody High School. Since several of us had taken the Access to Print class that was offered last summer through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, so we updated and shared information from that class. There was a demonstration of a Book Sense, and a discussion of how it compares with the Victor Reader Stream. There was also a discussion of near/distance video magnifiers, including the Zoom Twix. Lastly, there was sharing about record keeping, consult and report writing.

Diane Bleier, Northeast Regional Representative

Let's Go Technology Wows South Shore

By Beth Martin, South Shore/Cape Regional Representative

There's a new technology vender on the block and its' name is Let's Go Technology. By now you've probably all received a mailing or call from Zoe Nikolova introducing Enhanced Vision, but on April 14, 2010 the South Shore AMESVI group got a first -hand look at the product line. Scott Krug of Let's Go Technology, is the regional provider for Enhanced Vision. When he pulled up to the meeting site at Bridgewater State College, he announced, "I brought the store." He wasn't kidding. Scott unpacked a Merlin, an Acrobat and a Flipper, all CCTVs. He also had portable magnifiers called Pebble, Amigo and Nemo and a headset magnification system called Jordy.

The Merlin is the desk top version of the CCTV. It has an impressive pivoting monitor that can be adjusted for various viewing positions. It is dependable, stable, a work horse, but not portable. The Acrobat has a camera that can be pointed at objects both near and far. You can point it at the worksheet on the desk, or the material being presented on the board. There are short-arm and long-arm versions of the camera depending on one's needs. Scott called the Acrobat "transferrable" rather than portable. It does come with a carry case, but it does take some disassembly if a student were to bring it from room to room. The Flipper is truly portable. It has a rotating camera and a 12 inch battery operated viewing screen. All the CCTVs had color monitors with incredible clarity and very little blurring when material was moved under the camera. AMESVI member, Beth Eaton, had some experience with the Acrobat. One had been purchased for a former student and she reported that the student had had a very positive experience with it.

The viewing screens of the portable magnifiers also had incredible clarity and color. The Pebble has a multi-position handle, while the Amigo has a base stand. Both have a freeze image feature that lets you take a picture of the item viewed and then lets you increase the magnification if necessary. The Amigo can connect to a TV for increased magnification.

Jordy is a headset magnification system that the literature says can be worn "like a pair of glasses". It is definitely larger than a pair of glasses and all members agreed that it would probably take a pretty self-assured teenager to wear it. However, it is very sci-fi looking and depending on the future of gaming technology, it could actually become the "in" thing. It does appear to be the answer to magnification at any distance. It has auto focus so you can look up at your professor lecturing and then look down and take notes. It can also be placed in an optional stand and become a desktop CCTV.

Scott also let us in on a new product that will make its debut in about 2 months. It's called the Transformer. As Scott said, "Everyone wants a product that is wireless and weightless." The Transformer is it. It is a battery operated, near/far magnifier that can connect to a laptop computer, a portable viewing screen or a TV, and it folds up to the size of about a one liter plastic bottle. He did not have the actual product, but he passed around a copy of the literature that will accompany it and it looked very impressive.

For those who like to buy American, Enhanced Vision is an American company based in Huntington Beach, CA. Scott said that their products have a less than 1% repair rate. On that rare occasion that it might need repair, there is a company called Video Electronics in North Reading, MA that is equipped to do repairs on their products. Actually, make a note of this company if you have any old CCTVs that need repair. Their website is www.videoelectronics.tv. Let's Go Technology, provider of Enhanced Vision products is located in Worcester, MA. Its website is www.letsготechnology.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AMESVI Spring Conference

Best Practices for the Provision of Educational Services for Students with Visual Impairments, including those with Multiple Disabilities

Special Guest: Dr. Susan Jay Spungin

Teacher, Author, Researcher, Consultant

AMESVI Board is excited to bring to Massachusetts a national leader in our field. Dr. Spungin is the author of numerous publications including *Reach Out and Teach* (with Dr. Kay Ferrell), *Braille Literacy: Issues for Blind Persons, Families, Professionals and Producers of Braille*, and *Competency Based Curriculum for Teachers of the Visually Handicapped: A National Study*.

Dr. Spungin is an active member of several international organizations, including CEC-DVI, Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), the International Council for Education of the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICEVI) and the World Blind Union. Dr. Spungin's leadership and devotion to individuals who are blind and their families, and the professionals who work with them, throughout the world, is truly exemplary.

Dr. Spungin will discuss how theory and practice, related to the education of children with visual impairments, has changed over the years through a variety of evolving service delivery models, teacher competencies and student needs.

The afternoon session will feature a panel of AMESVI "mentor teachers" to guide the audience in identifying the barriers and solutions unique to the challenges we face in our day-to-day work: organization, record-keeping/report-writing, communication with schools/families, student advocacy, time management, stress management and O&M services.

When: Saturday May 8, 2010

9 am - 3 pm

Where: Crowne Plaza Hotel

10 Lincoln Square,

Worcester, MA 01608

(508) 791-1600

Continental breakfast and buffet lunch will be provided

Certificates of attendance will be given at the end of the conference

Parking will be validated upon departure from conference

If you are interested in staying over the night before, on Friday, May 7, 2010 at the Crowne Plaza the group rate is \$99 + tax. Just call the Crowne Plaza and tell them you are with the AMESVI group for this excellent rate.

Carroll Center Summer Program Dates

Carroll Kids/Teens--one and 2 weeks sessions during July 6 to August 13

For information contact: Karen Ross, Education Director
617-969-6200, ext 237, karen.ross@carroll.org

Youth In Transition--July 19 to August 20

Real World of Work--July 5 to August 6

Transition to College--June 21 to July 30

Computing for College--(2 week sessions): July 6 to July 17 or August 9 to August 20

For information contact: Laurie Gaines, Rehabilitation Admissions Coordinator 617-969-6200 or 800-852-3131 ext. 216, laurie.gaines@carroll.org

Perkins School for the Blind

www.perkins.org

May 15, 2010 W atertow n, M A

Sensory Integration This workshop will be conducted by Julie Telep, OTR/L and Fran Honan, OTR/L and present an overview of Sensory Integration theories, strategies and techniques. Sensory diets and activities for the classroom will be discussed. Active participation in a variety of sensory awareness activities will be included in this workshop for vision educators.

June 5, 2010

W atertow n, M A

Creating Classroom Activities to Support Occupational Therapy Treatment Plans for Students with Visual Impairment

The workshop will focus on how Occupational Therapists assess school aged children with visual impairments based on clinical observations and how that information is used to develop treatment plans. Workshop will include hands on materials and interactive activities that teachers may incorporate into their classrooms to address areas such as fine motor, perceptual, organizational and daily living skills. Sue Shannon and Sarah Monahan, from the Perkins School for the Blind Secondary Program will conduct this interactive workshop.

May 26, 2010

Custom-Made & Adapted Games

See modifications of common games like Uno, Memory, brain teasers, and miniature sports games in the Games Exchange Project area of the Assistive Device Center. Participants will have the opportunity to use TriWall® corrugated material, wood, plastic, textured fabrics, Velcro, bump-ons and other materials to begin their own creations. Adapt a commercially available game to enable students with visual, cognitive, or visual impairments to play, or design a unique game to promote spatial, matching, social, and/or motor skills.

Summer Institute

Advanced Instructional Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual and Multiple Impairments

June 28-July 3, 2010 Online Topics

July 10-12, 2010 Face to Face Sessions at Perkins School for the Blind

July 19-30, 2010 Online Topics

This year's Perkins Summer Institute is offered in collaboration with UMass Boston and will be conducted with on-line and on-site face to face sessions for graduate course credit. The on-site face to face sessions will be offered for Professional Development Points. This Institute is designed for Teachers of the Visually Impaired and other vision educators working with students with visual and multiple impairments. Participants will examine and explore the unique educational needs of children with visual and multiple disabilities as well as the skills related to teaching these children in a full array of educational settings; Pre-K through grade 12. Topics will include teaching strategies in the core and expanded core curriculum areas as well as in depth sessions on Cortical Visual Impairment.

RESOURCES

Perkins Scout – An Information Clearinghouse on Blindness and Visual Impairment

If you haven't already, be sure to check out Perkins Scout at www.perkins.org/resources/scout. This site is a searchable database of resources for anyone wanting to learn more about blindness and visual impairment. It is great resource to pass on to parents, teachers, administrators, etc. I find new information every time I visit.

Type Faster

I have used this program with some of my low vision students. I like it as an alternative to Talking Typer, by APH. This program is available free to download at www.typefasttypingtutor.com. It has a standard version and an accessible version. There is a keyboard on screen that highlights the key to press. I use it with the font enlarged which in turn makes the onscreen keyboard smaller. This way the students don't become too dependent on the keyboard for cues.

Katrena Traut-Savino

AMESVI Survey

A survey of AMESVI members was conducted in February 2010 at the request of the Board. The information derived from the association survey will be used by the AMESVI Executive Board to set goals, form committees, undertake projects and design a long range strategic plan. A summary of the survey questions and a breakdown of the responses are listed on the next page.

Thanks to those 70+ members who participated in this online survey!

AMESVI Member Survey T. Traut-Savino

To AMESVI Members: The Executive Board is requesting your feedback to be used in planning for the next 1-5 years. Results will be shared at the May, 2010 annual business meeting. Thank you for participating! PLEASE RESPOND BY FEBRUARY 26, 2010						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Rating Average	Response Count
1. AMESVI is a relevant resource to my work in the Massachusetts Vision field.	0.0% (0)	1.4% (1)	35.2% (25)	63.4% (45)	3.62	71
2. I understand the roles and duties of the AMESVI Executive Board.	1.4% (1)	18.1% (13)	51.4% (37)	29.2% (21)	3.08	72
3. The AMESVI website is meeting my information and resource needs.	0.0% (0)	12.5% (9)	69.4% (50)	18.1% (13)	3.06	72
4. I participate in AMESVI regional meetings on a regular basis.	11.8% (8)	36.8% (25)	41.2% (28)	10.3% (7)	2.50	68
5. AMESVI conference topics and speakers have been useful to me personally.	2.9% (2)	4.3% (3)	58.6% (41)	34.3% (24)	3.24	70
6. AMESVI Board should hold one conference a year to allow more time to address other issues.	1.7% (1)	20.3% (12)	45.8% (27)	32.2% (19)	3.08	59
7. AMESVI membership dues should be increased annually to help defray costs and expenses	6.1% (4)	47.0% (31)	33.3% (22)	13.6% (9)	2.55	66
8. AMESVI should limit listserv privileges to 'Regular Members' only.	8.8% (6)	14.7% (10)	47.1% (32)	29.4% (20)	2.97	68
9. I would use AMESVI endorsed position papers on topics relevant to my work to communicate with parents, teachers and administrators.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	58.6% (41)	41.4% (29)	3.41	70
10. I want advocacy with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Mass. Commission f/t Blind (MCB), and other agencies to be a priority for AMESVI.	0.0% (0)	13.0% (9)	50.7% (35)	36.2% (25)	3.23	69