

# AMESVIEW

website: [www.amesvi.org](http://www.amesvi.org)

NEWS AND PERSPECTIVES IN MASSACHUSETTS  
VISION AND MOBILITY SERVICES

Microsoft Office User

# 2017 ISSUE

## **MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT**

Dear Amesvi Members,

Happy Spring! Spring has sprung and along with the daffodils comes many activities and professional events to take advantage of. I hope you were able to attend the AMESVI conference on Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup> in Marlborough. The Board conference committee created quite an exciting workshop entitled, Connections and Collaboration, Increase Knowledge, Enhance Teaching and Improve Outcomes.

This topic was chosen since there was a flurry of activity after just one post from one of our members regarding vision therapy and what is our role and responsibilities as TVI's and teachers of the deafblind to support the families of children with this diagnosis. This conference proved to be an excellent opportunity filled with ideas and of course collegial support!

The AMESVI listserve continues to provide resources and to support you in your work at local schools throughout Massachusetts and New England. AMESVI is a one of a kind association that recently became certified as a 5013c non-profit which will allow us more opportunities to partner and work towards the goal and vision of the association. This Association was formed in order to address the expressed needs of teachers and mobility instructors of students with visual impairments in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We serve a low-incidence population and frequently work in relative isolation from others in our profession. The need for organization has long been felt as a means to provide both a voice in policy making and a network of support to members of our profession in the Commonwealth. We can be and do more with your help. Won't you consider joining our wonderful Board and making our organization even stronger to meet the growing challenges we all face providing services to children and young adults who are blind and visually impaired including those with multiple disabilities.

It is my honor to serve as your president of the board and welcome all ideas and suggestions about how to make our newsletter and organization stronger and supportive to you, our students, their families and communities.

Kind regards,  
Lisa A. Jacobs

**The AMESVI 2016-2017 Board Members**

## The 2016-2017 Board Members are:

-  
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Past President: Meg Robertson |  
[pastpresident@amesvi.org](mailto:pastpresident@amesvi.org)

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## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

*Regional Representatives serve a two-year term on July 1st (fiscal year). Number of meetings, location, and topics are determined by the regional rep and their members. \*Note: all **Amesvi** members are welcomed to attend any of the regional meetings. Check with the reps for schedules and topics.*

### **Northeast:**

No activity since last Board meeting due to the holidays

### **Western**

There was no formal meeting in December

- a. Members got together for annual Adopt-A-Family event including shopping, gift wrapping, eating and merry making.
- b. Next month Bill Hersh, MCB Assistive Technology Specialist, will speak at the regional meeting

### **Central**

A tentative date has been set in April for regional members to meet with MCB to exchange information and ask questions.

- c. Kristen hopes to put together a similar meeting with Worcester Regional Transit Authority
- d. Kristen wondered about some of the towns in the Central region. Consult the website to see all the towns in each region.

### **Boston**

The region has not had a meeting yet.

- e. Missy is planning to connect with the new rep (Aaron).
- f. Missy is hoping to have a regional meeting before the conference in April and also meet up at the conference

### **South Shore**

In the Spring of 2016 we hosted TVIs and families from the region to meet with Commissioner Paul Saner of the Mass. Commission for the Blind as well as several of his staff from the New Bedford Regional office to discuss various programs and opportunities for students and families in our region. It was a great opportunity to meet, ask questions and share concerns.

Several TVI's from the Cape had an opportunity to meet Dahlia James in November. This person will be working in our region with our students as they transition from school. We had some informal discussions about some possible recreational opportunities that would be beneficial to our students if they were available more regionally.

Also in Nov. we had a regional gathering at Plymouth North High School to look at some technology apps that are being used with students to access the curriculum across all settings and ages. Kristin Cannistraro, TVI, COMS in Barnstable presented this for us. This was a very useful presentation with great resources.

The South Shore Regional Rep. position will be open for 2017 to 2019. It is a great opportunity to organize some professional workshops/trainings and or some informal gatherings around topics of interest. It can take on many forms. I encourage those who have not had this opportunity to give it a try- it is a great way to see past our own day to day experiences and share ideas with professionals in a broader environment. Meetings can be many or few.

### **ELECTIONS: ARE COMING**

It's time for elections. Time for you not just to vote but to stand up and represent AMESVI on the Board or regionally.

Available positions: President Elect, Conference Committee Chairs, South Shore Reps, Recording Secretary, Greater Boston, Treasurer

### **AMESVI 2017 Spring Conference**

We hope you had an opportunity to attend the AMESVI Spring Conference. The conference offered a unique opportunity to learn more about behavioral optometry and the role we as vision professionals can play in collaborating both with behavioral optometrists and occupational therapists. As a provider to students on the autism spectrum, I for one was amazed to hear the statistics on students with ADD/ADHD and the role which behavioral optometry might play in their lives. Research quoted seems to give greater validation to the efficacy of behavioral optometry and student outcomes. Building partnerships and

collaborations with behavioral optometrists and occupational therapists would seem to be important to extend our joint understanding and ways we can support one another in our efforts.

Additional sessions looked at the need to take into account the social emotional and cognitive skills of the students we instruct in orientation and mobility, collaborations with adaptive physical education providers, and the “must haves” for an effective orientation and mobility toolbox.

Thank you to the conference committee, all our presenters and participants for an excellent conference.

## **UPCOMING CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY**

### **VISIONS OF COLLABORATION: IMPROVING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MCB, TVIS, AND COMS**

Event to be held at the following time, date, and location:

Thursday, June 8, 2017 from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM (EDT)

**Holiday Inn Marlborough** 265 Lakeside Avenue Marlborough, MA 01752

#### **An Update on the Implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB) in Massachusetts**

Submitted by the UEB Committee of the Massachusetts Braille Literacy Advisory Council

Wendy Buckley, Kim Charlson and Jaclyn Sheridan

The Braille Literacy Advisory Council (BriAC) of Massachusetts developed and submitted a plan for the state transition to Unified English Braille (UEB). This plan recommends that all school-aged students for whom braille is appropriate in Massachusetts as determined by the educational team will be fully transitioned into the use of UEB for all subjects by the end of the 2019-20 school year. The plan was initially approved by DESE on July 28, 2015 and updated on July 11, 2016 to reflect the schedule for transitioning statewide assessments to UEB.

The full text of the Massachusetts UEB State Implementation Plan can be found on the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=23936>. The plan is also posted on the website of the Braille Authority of North America at

<http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html> along with the plans from a number of other states.

The AIM Library provided UEB textbooks, technical and non-technical, K-3 in school year 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. The AIM Library is already receiving UEB requests, technical and non-technical, for next school year 2017-2018. Many TVIs and related personnel have received training in UEB through the 2014, 2015, and 2016 DESE Summer Institutes with UMass Boston and trainings held at Perkins School for the Blind. Additional training resources, UEB reference materials, and example documents can also be found on the BANA website.

**Thank you to Josee Klentak for sharing the following story. If you have similar stories or creative ideas you wish to share in future newsletters please forward them to Tom Miller at [tmiller.nsedu.org](mailto:tmiller.nsedu.org)**

### **Cute Story - Kindergartners**

My two students were in the same kindergarten class. Both students were learning to read and write with braille and print. Their teacher was wonderful with using the needed accommodations for the kids. She always pulled out the paper that was best for them to use for writing, always had their easels and VisioBooks ready, and made sure they sat right in front of her for circle and story time. She gave them time to look at the pictures in the books before she read them to the class and held each picture in front of each of their faces before turning the page when reading to the group. And she encouraged them to approach any displays in order to see them as best they could. When they were learning to write their letters, she understood why the line in the lower case letter “a” might not touch the circle or might end up a little inside the circle. But, she was quite confused, as she showed me both of their papers with the lower case letter “l”. Both had written the letter “l” not with a vertical line, but with three dots placed vertically!!

### **Resources**

**The following list of resources and organizations ran in a prior newsletter, but seemed worth repeating as we look for opportunities for professional development and programmatic resources for our students.**

*Overview of Organizations. Please check the websites for more detailed information.*

#### **Elementary and Secondary Education**

<http://www.doe.mass.edu>

Special Education, Educator Evaluation, Licensure, MCAS, PARCC

#### **Perkins**

<http://www.perkins.org>

## I. Perkins Libraries

Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL) catalog:

<https://webopac.klas.com/ma1aopac> Samuel P. Hayes Research Library Catalog

<http://dbhost01.inmagic.com/dbtw-wpd/perkins/index.htm> II. Perkins eLearning

<http://www.perkinselearning.org>

Tutorials, Webinars, Webcasts. Perkins Training Center, Perkins Scout, Teaching Resources III. Perkins Products

<http://www.perkins.org/products>

IV. Low Vision Clinic (New England Eye Low Vision Clinic)

<http://www.perkins.org/school/community-programs/low-vision-clinic>

## **The Carroll Center for the Blind**

<http://carroll.org>

I. Education and Youth Programs

II. Technology Services

III. Low Vision Assessments These organizations offer newsletters IV. Online Learning, Video Tutorials

## **AIM (Accessible Instructional Materials) Library**

<http://www.aimlibrary.org>

The Massachusetts **AIM Library** acquires, maintains and distributes specialized instructional materials, coordinates textbooks in Braille and Large Print, to assist school districts and educators to provide blind and visually impaired students with an appropriate education and equal access to the core curriculum.

# **RESOURCES**

*Amesview 2014, p. 4*

## **CAST: Center for Applied Special Technology**

[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

40 Harvard Mill Square # 3,

Wakefield, MA 01880

(781) 245-2212

Opportunities for individuals with disabilities through the development of and innovative uses of technology.

## **TSBVI (Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired)**

<http://tsbvi.edu/>

I. Expanded Core Curriculum II. On-The-Go-Learning

III. Guidelines

IV. Orientation & Mobility

V. Assessments

VI. Technology

VII. Instructional Strategies

## **APH (American Printing House for the Blind)**

<http://www.aph.org>

I. APH Catalog <http://www.aph.org/catalogs/>

II. Louis Database <http://louis.aph.org/catalog/CategoryInfo.aspx?cid=152>

III CVI Resources <http://tech.aph.org/cvi>

IV. Orientation & Mobility

## **NERCVE (Northeast Regional Center for Vision Education) Improving Education for Individuals with Visual Impairments**

. <http://www.nercve.org/professional-resources>

I. University of Massachusetts Graduate School of Education-Teacher Prep for  
TVIs and Coms

II. Online Courses

III. Multi-Media Presentations IV. Braille Proficiency

Just say "YES" I can do that..... by Jane Kronheim

Over the years I have written and illustrated numerous books, stories and poetry for young children. These forms of literacy have emerged in surprising ways. Ways in which the average group of teachers would not have imagined. First there were the multi-sensory **Learning Pillows** that I developed in the early 80's for the preschool children at the newly formed preschool at Perkins School for the Blind. I decided, upon developing each pillow with its own story, that several of the stories would also be recorded. In those days I used recording booths at MAB, while doing all voices, sound effects and production. I used to say: "I can do that." And so, I did it. Everything. I had no idea how involved that recording experience was, but I forged ahead to develop several very acceptable cassettes that were packaged along with each **Learning Pillow**. Zooming forward many years, in the year 2000, as I worked with low vision students who had difficulties with attention and keeping track of where their hands were placed on the materials, I pondered this eye-hand difficulty and challenged myself to come up with a simple but compelling item for the kids to be engaged with. Once again I said, "I can create that." And so I did. I invented the early version of **Rolling Right Along** (which became **Rolling Into Place**, an APH product, 2003). This product was field tested throughout the United States and now, 13 years later, **Rolling Into Place** is helping many blind and visually impaired children. I am proud that I had the courage to move it forward. More recently I created a new business venture in New Hampshire, called Voices of Xperience LLC, an audio production studio located in my home, out in the woods and far away from the road. Upon developing this new business, I required the expertise of an audio engineer who I had known in my Boston days. I invited him, a totally blind audio engineer and broadcast expert to join me in this new adventure. We have been working with many projects, over 150 to date. Some of the most noteworthy involved helping the AFB Helen Keller archives to digitize numerous old reels, records and cassettes that contained information either about Helen Keller or about the times in which she lived. It was an amazing experience that brought us very close to Helen's voice and her 40 years of work with the American Foundation for the Blind. But more about that in another article. Possibly the most daunting project we worked on so far involved a book called **Sebastian's Tale: A Skunk Tales Trilogy** by Dylan Weiss. The author, who lives in

Pennsylvania, selected us to record and produce her book in the audio format. Once more I pondered, "I believe we can do that". And so we did. With the skills of my audio engineer, who set up the microphones and handled all of the recording as well as hours and hours of audio editing, we were able to accomplish this feat. But what many do not know is that we took on all of the 28 different voice characters that appear in **Sebastian's Tale**. Because this book is a book for "tweens" and upwards, fascinating voices and environmental effects are a key component to the audio book's success. We donned the hat of all 28 voices and I became the narrator, Abigail, the waitress at Dell's Diner, Sabrina a skunkette (among others) and my production partner took on characters such as Sebastian (a young skunk), Willie the weasel, Dr. Murphy, General Beauregard Lee (a rather sizeable groundhog) plus several loud men on a snowy hill. We were soon to discover how challenging this experience would become. While producing **Sebastian's Tale**, I realized in a much more profound way, that the power of one's voice (a real voice, not digitally created) can have an amazing effect on the listener. After over 100 hours of production and editing, we made Dylan Weiss's book "come alive" as the author expressed with sheer glee. Just hearing the author make that comment, made all the difference. The final version of this audio book was produced on a 6 hour MP3 CD. Anyone who wants to hear a two minute sample of what the book sounds like can contact me directly. I have a strong feeling, many of the teachers and TVI's that I know, need to tap into the power of their own voices and do more story telling with the kids for the sake of literacy. If you dare to really pump up the volume on your voice characters and bring a truly enlightening audio experience to the kids you see, they will remember it forever.

My best to all of you!

Jane Kronheim TVI

Email: [jane.kronheim@gmail.com](mailto:jane.kronheim@gmail.com) or pick up the phone: 603-827-3859

## NEW ENGLAND CONSORTIUM FOR DEAFBLIND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & TRAINING



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*NEC Deafblind Registry: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*

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**What is the New England Consortium for Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training (NEC)?** The New England Consortium (NEC) is a federally-funded grant designed to improve the quality of educational services available to children and youth with combined vision and hearing loss (deafblindness), in the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts & New Hampshire. NEC consultation and training emphasizes the use of evidenced-based practices related to instruction and assessment, and targets key topics related to vision, hearing, communication, early/later transitions, and parent self-advocacy. The NEC regional office is located on the campus of Perkins School for the Blind campus in Watertown, Massachusetts.

**What is the purpose of the NEC Deafblind Registry?** NEC is responsible for compiling a variety of information on children within the state who have combined vision and hearing loss and forwarding it to the National Center on DeafBlindness (NCDB) for the federal deafblind registry.

**What is the purpose of the National Deafblind Registry?** The National Deafblind Registry is used to supplement the Office of Special Education Program's federal Child Count, which only includes children as deafblind when deafblindness is their sole disability. Since the majority of children with deafblindness do have additional disabilities, more detailed information is required. Therefore, NCDB collects additional information for all children with combined vision and hearing loss, including those with additional disabilities. The National Deafblind Registry represents the longest running, and most comprehensive registry of infants, toddlers, children, and young adults who have combined vision and hearing loss.

**Why should a child be reported to the NEC Deafblind Registry?** By reporting a child to NEC's Deafblind Registry, teachers, related service providers, the child, and his or her family are eligible for services from NEC - free of charge. Historically, Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Instructors have been instrumental in referring children to the NEC Deafblind Registry and often attend NEC trainings and networking events.

**Who should be reported to the NEC Deafblind Registry?** Any child, birth through 21 years of age, who has combined vision and hearing loss, including those with additional disabilities, should be reported.

**My student has documented hearing loss and vision loss, but both are mild and cause few concerns at this time. Should he/she be reported?** Yes. Any combination of documented hearing and vision loss, ranging from mild to severe and low vision to totally blind,

should be reported.

**My student is diagnosed with a progressive condition, which will affect vision and or hearing. Should this student be reported?** Yes. A child with a degenerative condition or progressive loss should be reported to the registry. A good example of this would be a child with Usher Syndrome who is profoundly deaf and then may experience a progressive loss of vision due to Retinitis Pigmentosa. This child at 10 years old may have little or no difficulty with vision, but by the age of 13 may experience difficulties with night and peripheral vision. Children with progressive conditions should be reported as early as possible.

**My student has multiple disabilities including vision and hearing loss or has responded inconclusively during evaluations. Should this child be reported?** Yes. A child with multiple disabilities who also has vision and hearing loss or functions as if he or she has combined vision and hearing loss should be reported.

**My student is identified on his/her IEP/IFSP under the category of multiple disabilities. Can she/he still be on the NEC Deafblind Registry?** Yes. You should count children in all of the areas for which they qualify, including: counting them as multidisabled on the school count, counting them on the deafblind registry, and counting them on the APH count as a student who is blind.

**My student can see. How can he be deafblind?** Individuals who are deafblind are often not totally blind and/or totally deaf. There is wide variability in the degrees of vision and hearing loss. Losses may range from mild to severe, may present as functional loss, or reflect a progressive condition. A person with any of these issues may be considered deafblind.

**Can I report a child to the Registry based upon an educational evaluation?** Yes. A conclusion that a student is functionally deafblind may be based upon an educational evaluation for purposes of initially reporting that student to the NEC.

**I am working with an infant or toddler who is “at risk” for combined vision and hearing loss. Should that child be reported?** Yes. He or she can be removed from the registry at any time depending on the results of future assessment.

**How can I receive NEC services?** The family, team, educator and related

service providers working with a child who has combined vision and hearing loss may receive services by contacting NEC and completing parent release forms and a Technical Assistance Request form. Vision and hearing evaluations or functional reports are also required in order to determine eligibility.

**Can I release information to NEC without express parental consent?**

Yes. When needed, NEC uses an *INITIAL Child Referral Form* – which includes ONLY the child’s initials, date of birth, etiology and degree of vision and hearing loss. Identifying information relative to the child’s full name, parent names or address is not required. Each year NEC will contact the service provider who completed the form and inquire whether a more formal referral is warranted.

**Should I use the “NEC Registration Form” to report a child with combined vision and hearing loss?** If you have the information necessary to complete the form, please report a child using the NEC Registration Form and obtain NEC parent releases. If you do not have the information necessary or do not feel comfortable providing that information to NEC, but know of a child whom you feel should be reported, please contact NEC directly. We will review strategies to support the team and family, without directly identifying the child or family (INITIAL Child Referral Form).

**How can I get more NEC Registration Forms?** Additional registration forms are posted on the NEC’s website: <http://www.nec4db.org/child-registration.html>

**What should I do if my child moves out of our district or out-of-state:?** If a child has moved or transferred to another program or district, please let us know so we can track him/her for the national Deafblind Child Count. We greatly appreciate your time in connecting children with NEC and the NEC Deafblind Registry!

NEC Regional Office, 175 North Beacon St., Watertown, MA 02472 Office: (617) 972-7517 nec@perkins.org

## GOING FORWARD

We would appreciate you sharing any thoughts about the following list or other ideas.

- Topics of interest –what do you want to read about?

- Funny itinerant stories-stories that an itinerant would love to read about? We are a special crowd, right?
- Tips from the field-things we should all know about.
- Useful Apps- ideas of apps you can't live without.
- Ask Doctor Dot....questions about teaching Braille.

Any other thoughts about how AMESVI can enhance your professional teaching experience. Please send them to [Lisa.Jacobs@Perkins.org](mailto:Lisa.Jacobs@Perkins.org) or [Tmiller@nsedu.org](mailto:Tmiller@nsedu.org)