



Communication Portfolios

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Every person who interacts with a person who is deafblind is a communication partner. Competent communication partners are essential for the development of a deafblind person's ability to communicate and build meaningful relationships (Miles & Riggio, 1999; Nafstad & Rodbroe, 1999). Communication portfolios that give in-depth information about a deafblind individual's abilities, needs, and most effective methods of communication can greatly support this partnership.

A communication portfolio consists of a combination of photographs, videos, and text designed to share information among a learner's educational team members, which includes his or her family and other communication partners. The portfolio gives a holistic view of a learner—communication abilities, learning style, family, culture, cognitive style, and vision and hearing abilities—while providing a visual display of the learner's abilities across all environments (school, home, and community). It illustrates his or her interests, effective interactive strategies to enhance communication, and techniques for accessing and commenting on people, events, and things in the environment as topics of conversation. Portfolios help a learner tell all about him- or herself in a user-friendly way. For example, a portfolio cover might have a picture of the learner and the words:

Hi, I'm Michael! I love to be with people. Touch my hand so that I know you are there. Let's read this book to learn about me. Tell me who you are.

Portfolios also include family members' pictures and their perceptions of their children's abilities.

The portfolio is written in the words a learner might use if he or she were speaking to the reader. For example, in one student's portfolio there is a photograph of him standing at his object calendar with his teacher. The teacher is showing him an object that represents his next activity while demonstrating the sign for the activity at the same time. The caption says:

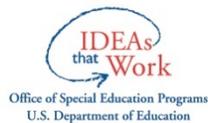
Please use objects and let me feel your signs. I will put my hands on top of yours to feel the signs.

Portfolios should be tools that evolve and are continually updated with new photographs, videos, and text. It is helpful to include photographs and videos from a variety of environments and provide dates for each to document a learner's progress.

REFERENCES

Miles, B., & Riggio, M. (1999). *Remarkable conversations: A guide to developing meaningful communication with children and young adults who are deafblind*. Watertown, MA: Perkins School for the Blind.

Nafstad, A., & Rodbroe, I. (1999). *Co-creating communication: Perspectives on diagnostic education for individuals who are congenitally deafblind and individuals whose impairments may have similar effects*. Dronninglund, Denmark: Forlaget Nord-Press.



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