



The Arizona Deafblind Project

NEWSLETTER

April 24, 2020



Image: a field of native yellow wildflowers in the foreground, Flagstaff mountains in the background against the sky

Educating Learners with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss during COVID-19

The field of deafblind education places a high value on interaction, closeness and hands-on learning. During a time of school closures, distance and virtual learning can seem like a mismatch for our unique and diverse group of learners.

The Arizona Deafblind Project acknowledges

- Most of us are dealing with an overwhelming amount of incoming information
- New formats for learning will take time and patience
- We can try and do a little when we feel ready

Tip of the Week **Proficient Communicators and Advocacy**

The Arizona Deafblind Project receives a lot of feedback from both families and service providers that often goes something like this:

“What about my child/student who has language?”

Children and youth who fluently use American Sign Language, spoken language, or an Augmentative-Alternative Communication (AAC) system with robust vocabulary are often referred to as “Proficient Communicators.” These students may use print and/or braille as their primary literacy forms. Even though these individuals communicate using more formal modes, we know the impact of their combined vision and hearing loss still impacts all areas of their life.



[Robbie Blaha and Matt Schultz list these 12 critical considerations for Proficient Communicators when programming for their educational needs.](#)

This list is worthwhile for both family members as well as service providers. [Image: Hands reading a calendar labeled in print and braille]

WrightsLaw is a gigantic, family-friendly resource for all things disability-law. They do a wonderful job [describing best practices in Self-Advocacy](#).

[Image: A square green post-it note with the text “Self-Advocacy: Know Yourself, Know What you Need. Know How to Get it.”]

Self-Advocacy:
Know Yourself,
Know What You
Need, Know How
to Get It



The [law](#) protects every student with a disability's right to access their education.

Unfortunately not every space is initially set up this way for children and youth with combined vision and hearing loss. This means self-advocacy is an important skill for proficient communicators to have in their toolboxes. The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) defines Self-Advocacy as “**when you take charge of your own life and speak up for yourself**” and offers this [Deafblind Perspective on Advocacy](#). [Image: YouTube Screenshot of a person signing]

In other News...

If your child is enrolled in DDD, [find out if a family member qualifies to get paid](#) as a Direct Care Worker.

The Helen Keller National Center is offering **Peer Learning groups for Transition-Age youth** with combined vision and hearing loss. [Check out their schedule of topics](#).

Families, TVIs, and O&M Instructors - You have the chance to give your input about what's working and not working during COVID-19 for students with Visual Impairment or who are Deafblind. [This survey](#) is available in both English and Spanish.

The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services **Assistive Technology** (AT) team is starting a [virtual meetup every Friday](#), starting 4/21. For information on how to register or to see more about AT in Arizona, [Click here](#). ADE also offers [Special Education guidance during COVID-19](#).

Our friends at the **Maryland and DC Deafblind Project** are offering a series of **Spring 2020 webinars**. [Click here](#) for a listing of recorded and upcoming topics.

Thank you to all who attended our April 23rd Drop-In Zoom for Families. Couldn't make it this time? Fill out this [Doodle Poll](#) to let us know the best time to schedule our next Drop-In. We had several themes that resonated during the Zoom. This one really stood out:



“My take-away from this time together is I feel more hopeful. I don't feel so alone.”

If you have needs the newsletter does not address, Deafblind Project Specialists can be available by phone or through video conference during school closures in Arizona.

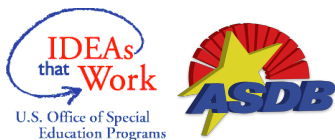
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