**Module 1 Lesson 1 Part 2 Descriptive Video Transcript**

**Narrator:** Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators  
Module 1: The Impact of Deafblindness on Learning and Development   
Lesson 1: An Introduction to Deafblindness Part 2: The Impact of Deafblindness on Learning

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - A boy who has CHARGE syndrome runs his fingers through tall plant leaves, gathering the leaves together in his hands. A young girl who is deafblind holds a frog in her hands.

How does being deafblind affect a child’s learning? At its most basic, deafblindness is a disability of access. That is, it limits a person’s access to information that’s needed for learning, communication, and development. If you are not visually impaired or deaf or hard of hearing, most of what you know is learned visually and to a lesser extent, auditorily. So, if you’re completely deaf and blind, you are missing nearly all of the ways hearing-sighted people learn! You’re left with a sliver of information that comes from your other senses, such as through taste, smell, and touch.

**[Visual Description]** Two young boys lean on a kitchen counter and watch as coffee drips from a filter into a pot. A boy pours coffee. His parents stand behind him watching.

Much of what hearing-sighted people learn comes from “incidental learning.” That’s information that no one taught them but that they casually overhear or observe.

**[On-Screen Text]** Michelle Clyne, Coordinator, Project Reach Illinois DeafBlind Services

**Michelle Clyne:** So as a child is growing up with vision and hearing, they learn a lot of things just by what's going on around them. Let's say they're going with mom and dad to the laundromat. And they're seeing and hearing things going on, they're watching laundry go in and out of the washer and dryer, they’re seeing things get wet and then get dry. They're watching things that were dirty become clean. They're even hearing language about these experiences that mom and dad are exchanging. This is all coming in through their hearing and their vision and they're not working at getting it -- it just happens. But for the child who doesn't have vision or hearing, they're missing all of that -- incidental learning just is not occurring.

**[On-Screen Text]** Maurice Belote, Former Project Coordinator, California Deafblind Services

**Maurice Belote:** Children who are deafblind do something that we call parts to whole. So, they might experience an environment or an activity in little bits or parts, and then in their mind, they have to take all those parts and construct a whole. And what we discover is that often this, this concept of the whole thing that they’ve constructed is pretty far removed from reality.

**[On-Screen text]** Michelle Clyne, Coordinator, Project Reach Illinois Deadblind Services

**Michelle Clyne:** So, because children have a lack of incidental learning when they're young they're missing out on building concepts. They're missing out on building language. And all those little pieces that are part of development are what are the foundational pieces that teachers expect children to have when they come into school. Those are the foundational pieces that we build curriculum around and learning standards around. And if those are missing as children continue to grow older, they're missing all those foundational pieces that bigger ideas that are taught in school are connected to and so without that foundation those bigger ideas are just harder to be taught and for children to learn.

**[Visual Description]** A series of videos - A boy sliding down a playground slide. He raises his hands in the air when he reaches the bottom. A boy cranks a handle on a Play-Doh toy and feels the Play-Doh coming out of the toy.

**Narrator:** One thing that will impact a child’s gaps in learning is whether their deafblindness is congenital or acquired. For example, when a child has vision and then loses their sight, they will likely learn some concepts differently from their peers who were born blind.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images and videos - A boy stands in a backyard staring up to the sky. A boy plays with a paper airplane.

Here’s how that might work: Say a 5-year-old child loses his sight. He might remember looking at the sky and seeing clouds. Having this “visual memory” would allow him to more quickly grasp the concept of “the sky” and better understand, for example, what a paper airplane is or a drone, and how they float or maneuver in the air.

**[Visual Description]** A boy wearing sunglasses and a hat stands in a field of flowers under a cloudy sky.

However, if a child is born blind, they will need to be specifically taught--using a variety of strategies--the pieces of the bigger picture: what the sky is, what clouds are, and indeed the whole concept of what it means to “fly” or “float.”

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - A boy with glasses and hearing aids uses a magnifying lense to read a book. A boy playing with the wheels on a toy he holds in his lap. A toddler with a cochlear implant plays with blocks.

Children who are deafblind have varying degrees of vision and hearing loss, and the type and severity differ from child to child. Some children who are deafblind have cortical visual impairment (often called cerebral visual impairment or CVI) that can complicate learning. CVI is the leading cause of vision loss among children in the U.S. and involves damage to the visual pathways in the brain, which impacts visual processing. A child with CVI may be able to “see” something but have difficulty with visual attention and visual recognition.

**[On-Screen text]** Michelle Clyne, Coordinator, Project reach Illinois Deadblind Services

**Michelle Clyne:** So, some children had very specific colors that help them recognize and process visual information. So, for that child, if their educational team doesn't know that the child's color that they recognize is red, the child may not understand that this new bowl placed in front of them is a bowl he is supposed to be eating from for breakfast. If they put down a blue bowl or a green bowl instead, he's lost all concept of bowl visually instead of what he understands is being bowl, which is a red bowl.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl sits in a booster chair. She has her hands on a tray, on which there are two bells with ribbons.

**Narrator:** Children with auditory neuropathy or central auditory processing disorder have a similar issue but with their hearing. With auditory neuropathy, the inner ear successfully detects sounds but has a problem sending sound through the auditory nerve to the brain. With an auditory processing disorder, children have trouble making sense of the sounds around them.

**[Visual Description]** A boy looks at and touches a colorful screen, while his teacher watches.

Each child who is deafblind is unique. To provide appropriate instruction and support, it’s important to understand the specific nature of each child's vision and hearing.

**[On-Screen Text]** Maurice Belote, Former Project Coordinator, California Deafblind Services

**Maurice Belote:** So, imagine a child who is deaf blind is in a typical classroom and typical classrooms tend to be busy noisy interactive. That child is working so hard to stay engaged every second every minute of that school day in a way that sighted-hearing children aren’t. And so, the child may be trying to hear the teacher or hear the other students, over the noise in the classroom, whether it's pencil sharpeners or the air conditioning unit going on, or whatever it is. So, the student is trying desperately to hang on and get as much information as they can, and they are working very hard and that's one of the reasons why we say that concentrated looking and listening is very fatiguing.

**[Visual Description]** A woman sits with a girl at a table. On the table there is a document with images and large numbers. The girl looks around the room. She is not looking at the woman or the document.

**Narrator:** Not surprisingly, children with deafblindness can often experience high levels of stress, and they may not always be available for learning.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - A woman and a girl sit at a table. They look directly at each other, smiling. The girl has one of her hands on the woman’s hand. A woman and a boy sit next to each other and make eye contact. The boy has his hands on the woman's arm.

That’s one reason why it’s critical that you build a positive relationship with the child before you try to teach them anything. In other words, they have to trust you before they will be ready to learn. They have to trust That you’ll help keep them safe and comfortable, that you’ll help them access information and concepts in a way they can understand, that they have your attention and you have their best interests at heart.

**[Visual Description]** A girl sits at a desk while a woman stands next to her in front of a chart. The woman reaches out her hand to the girl and waits for her to give her a sticker for the chart. The girl shakes her head no, takes a few seconds, then hands the sticker to the woman.

Even if you’ve been able to establish a level of trust, some children who are deafblind are hard to engage--especially if they have significant medical needs. Many can become easily fatigued because of the time and energy involved in trying to access and process information.

**[Visual Description]** A baby boy with hearing aids sits on his mother’s lap. The boy's hands hold onto hers while she claps, rolls her hands, and pats his knees to play pattycake.

Consider as well that to a child who is deafblind, the world can seem a chaotic and scary place, where things and people come and go unexpectedly. Infants and children may initially resist interaction before learning to tolerate your efforts to engage them. But as the child develops and becomes more accustomed to their environment and trusting of you, they will begin to accept, then enjoy and participate in these interactions.

**[On-Screen Text]** Michelle Clyne, Coordinator, Project Reach Illinois DeafBlind Services

**Michelle Clyne:** So, I imagine that the first time that anybody has a child without vision or hearing in their classroom that they may be feeling a little anxious, a little concerned. But I'm sure that after they begin to learn some of these strategies, that there's just a lot to be hopeful for and even excited about. Strategies for the latest in deafblindness, they're not hard to learn. They're easy to learn, and they're easy to incorporate into things that you are already doing in the classroom. And I think once you do that, you'll find that you and your students will have a whole new relationship and that you'll be ready to move forward and try even more new things.

**Narrator:** Let’s take a break and check what we’ve learned. In what ways will a hearing-sighted child have access to incidental information in a classroom that a child who is deafblind might not (without support)?

The possibilities are almost endless! Here are just a few they might not have access to:

* peer conversations
* school announcements
* non-verbal communication by the teacher
* who’s getting praised by teacher and why
* and who’s getting in trouble and why
* location of friends in the classroom
* when things are starting or ending
* where people are getting supplies in the classroom
* who is coming and going and who is close by?

This ends Part 2 of Lesson 1. In Part 3, we’ll examine how deafblindness is identified as well as the importance of identifying it as early as possible in a child’s life.

**[On Screen text]** National Center on Deaf-Blindness  
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