**Module 1 Lesson 2 Part 3 Descriptive Video Transcript**

**Narrator:** Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators

Module 1: The Impact of Deafblindness on Learning and Development

Lesson 2: Preparing for Learning Part 3: Preparing the Learning Environment

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - A young man who is deafblind reclines on a chair. He is holding a square piece of carpet containing tactile communication symbols. A teenage girl sits at a school desk working on a science assignment using a small weighing scale. A girl with glasses lies on her back in a small space. Items that she can touch are hanging from the top of the space.

**Narrator:** As we saw in Part 2, learning as much as you can about a child’s needs, abilities, and preferences can help you better prepare for learning activities. But what can be done to prepare the environment to effectively support learning?

The learning environment can enhance a child’s access to information, their attention and engagement, and their social interactions with others. The information you gathered about the child from observations and assessments also informs how you design and organize their learning spaces.

**[Visual Description]** An intervener works with a boy. They are using an electronic tablet, and they zoom in to make text larger.

One thing to keep in mind: Just like many of the choices we make when working with a child who is deafblind, the decisions made about the learning environment must be individualized based on the specific child’s needs, abilities, and preferences. You’ll want to collaborate with other specialists (and the family) to determine what amplification, magnification, adaptive positioning, and other types of devices and support will be needed.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images-A boy with hearing aids and glasses sits at a table with a brailler. The same boy sits at a desk with a video screen that shows his teacher.

To begin, a child who is deafblind should have a primary workspace to call their own. If appropriate, other workspaces they might visit during the day should be prepared, such as in the school media center. When deciding where to position a workspace, consider how to best accommodate the child’s usable vision, hearing, and other disabilities as well as their preferences. If the child is sensitive to certain noises or sounds, position the workspace in a quieter area.

**[Visual Description]** A boy with hearing aids and glasses sits at a desk close to the front of the classroom. His teacher stands in front of him while he reads on an electronic tablet.

Consider, too, whether the child should be close to the front of the classroom or farther back, based on their specific type of vision loss and the recommendations of their functional vision assessment. Regardless of location, many children who are deafblind use assistive technologies, so make sure there’s access to power close by. And note whether adequate space will be available for team members, such as an intervener and other specialists, who may need to be close to the child to assist.

Once you’ve decided on placement, make sure to mark the workspace with a tactile and/or visual identifier, such as a small object or a braille label of the student’s name, that the child can recognize and understand as a cue for their assigned space. The work area or desk itself should be clear of clutter and well-organized. Keeping items in predictable places will help the student know where to expect things to be--and that should help lessen their anxiety.

In deciding where to place things, review what you learned about the child’s usable vision and available reach. Make sure to position items appropriately, as this will help promote active engagement. Carefully consider how the lighting will support the child’s available vision and other sensory and assistive technology needs. Some children will need additional illumination, such as from above or from the side. But be careful--Too much light can be as big a problem as too little, depending on the child’s unique learning needs. For example, being next to a window might produce too much glare.

**[Visual Description]** A boy sits at a desk in a room with low light. In front of him are an electronic tablet and glow-in-the-dark green letters on dark pieces of paper.

Some children will need a solid-colored background or screen that blocks movement and visual clutter. This will provide contrast so they can better distinguish individual objects and materials.

A good rule of thumb is to use dark backgrounds to emphasize light objects and light backgrounds to emphasize dark objects.

**[Visual Description]** A boy with hearing aids and glasses reads a book with a magnifying device.

Note that some children who are deafblind use iPads, screen magnifiers, and other assistive visual devices to help maximize their vision.

Next, think about the sounds in the area of the child’s workspace.

**[Visual Description]** A teacher sits on the floor and signs to young children around her. There is a girl who is deafblind sitting in a chair next to her

Audio: A noisy classroom

Teacher: It was supposed to be 55 right? So 54, a lot better than yesterday right? We improved.

**Narrator:** If you are not deaf or hard of hearing, you might have been able to pick out certain sounds and even isolate some, like the teacher’s voice. But many children who are deaf and hard of hearing or have auditory sensory issues cannot. In fact, an environment like this, with multiple sources of sound at different levels, can be overwhelming.

**[Visual Description]** A girl in a wheelchair sits at a desk that has two screens with large print.

With the child’s specific needs in mind, consider how you can lessen the sounds and ambient noises near their workspace. For example, consider placing items in the environment, such as pillows, curtains, acoustic tiles, and fabric room dividers, to reduce noise. Note that vibrations caused by sound traveling to the floor, chair, and table can be distracting, even for children who are profoundly deaf.

**[Visual Description]** A girl, who is deafblind, stands at a countertop in the kitchen with her sister. She is putting cupcake liners into a baking pan.

Many of the best environments for learning are natural ones, such as kitchens and bathrooms. If the child is able, take advantage of these spaces and the real objects within them. Working in natural environments will help the student learn to use skills in multiple settings and situations.

**[Visual Description]** An infant girl who is deafblind is being bathed in a sink. An adult is spraying the infant with a gentle stream of water.

Authentic learning like this is business as usual for early interventionists, who work mostly in the child’s home and so have a wealth of real-life learning opportunities.

Even so, you’ll want to carefully consider how to prepare the home environment to maximize a child’s usable vision and hearing.

**[Visual Description]** A woman sits on the floor behind an infant girl. The girl holds on to the woman’s fingers as the woman moves her hands up and down.

Preparing the learning environment to support a child’s needs also involves planning how to position both yourself and the child. If you’re working one-to-one with the child, position yourself according to their preferences, such as to the side, behind them, or in front. Likewise, consider what supports may be needed to make the child feel secure.

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

**Maurice Belote:** So you are a classroom teacher you've got a great activity planned everything set up the materials are all laid out, but if the child is sitting there and they are feeling out of balance, they're feeling like they're about to fall over, they're not feeling postural secure, then they're not really ready for learning, they're not, they're not able to be actively engaged at that moment. So you might want to turn to an OT or a PT on your team to get ideas about how you can make sure that the child is as posturally secure as possible, so that they really are ready for learning.

**[Visual Description]** A young boy walks down an empty school hallway with a white cane. A young man stands in a school hallway holding a white cane.

**Narrator:** Some children will move throughout the classroom, school, or home to different work/play areas, such as the media center, cafeteria, and rest rooms. You’ll want to pay particular attention to the pathways and routes between these areas.

Here are some guidelines to consider:

* Make sure that pathways within and between learning areas are free of clutter.
* Mark any steps or changes in the walking surface in a way the child can recognize, such as by different textured or colored mats or carpeting.
* Mark any landmarks along the way that the child can recognize, such as doors or windows they’ll pass.
* Place identifier cues the child can recognize at entrances to all learning spaces.

You’ll also want to practice navigating routes with the student until they become routine.

**[Visual Description]** An orientation and mobility specialist helps a young boy enter the doorway to a school and then use a wall railing to navigate to his classroom door.

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

**Maurice Belote:** So it's important that the environment be predictable for a child, but that doesn't mean that it always stays the same. It's okay to adjust the environment and pathways as time goes on, as things change as a child meets goals. The most important thing to remember, I think, is including the child in the changes that you're making. If you have a fabric marker outside of your classroom to mark your classroom for the child and you want to add

the Braille number, your classroom number, underneath that, have the child participate in that, have them get out the brailler and braille the number. Cut it out. Tape it to the wall outside the classroom. So that when you make these changes, the child is an active participant in making those changes.

**Narrator:** Let’s take a break and check what you know.

Suppose a student who is deafblind has been added to your class or caseload. What are some ways you might individualize a child’s environment after considering their needs, abilities, and preferences? Pause the video here if you need time.

There are a lot of ways to do this. For example, you could consider and make preparations regarding:

* Workspace placement
* Organization of materials
* Lighting and sound
* Use of authentic environments and objects
* Positioning of you and the child
* Use of identifier cues
* Navigable pathways

Now, let’s take a look at the pre-lesson questions:

1. Because children who are deafblind have specific learning goals, it’s important to never stray from your planned learning activities and lessons.

False! Always be flexible when working with a child who is deafblind, and be ready for “teachable moments” even when they aren’t part of your plans.

1. You should consider the child’s preferences for materials and activities when making decisions about their learning.

True! Preparing an environment for a child who is deafblind must be highly individualized and based on a thorough assessment of the child’s unique sensory, cognitive, and physical needs as well as their preferences for materials and activities.

1. The best place to position the primary workspace of a child who is deafblind is in the front of the classroom close to the teacher.

False! Decisions about where to place a child’s workspace are highly individualized and based on an assessment of the child’s unique sensory, cognitive, and physical needs. Some children may need to be positioned up close but others further toward the back of the room.

This is the end of Module 1 Lesson 2. In the next lesson, we’ll examine effective teaching strategies you can implement right away to support the learning of children who are deafblind.

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