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National Consortium  
on Deaf-Blindness

# Strategies for Inclusion of Children with Multiple Disabilities, including Deaf-Blindness

*The National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute*

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Outcome: Participants will be aware of a conceptual framework and strategies for including children with multiple disabilities, including deaf-blindness in community preschool and child care programs.

Objectives:

- Awareness of the learning challenges related to combined vision and hearing loss
- Awareness of strategies that facilitate inclusion and emergent literacy based on defining features of access, participation and supports
- Awareness of resources available related to supporting children with deaf-blindness

# Children Who Are Deaf-blind

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- Deaf-blindness is a condition in which the child experiences a **combination** of hearing and vision losses
- The range of sensory impairments included in the term "deaf-blindness" is great
- More than 90% of children who are deaf-blind have one or more additional disabilities or health problems.



## **Reported Vision Loss in Children Identified as Deaf-blind**

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- 17% - totally blind or light perception only
- 24% - legally blind
- 21% - low vision
- 17% - cortical vision impairment
- 21% - other

## **Reported Vision Loss in Children Identified as Deaf-blind**

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- 39% - severe to profound
- 13% - moderate
- 14% - mild
- 6% - central auditory processing disorder

## **Additional Disabilities in Children with Deaf-Blindness**

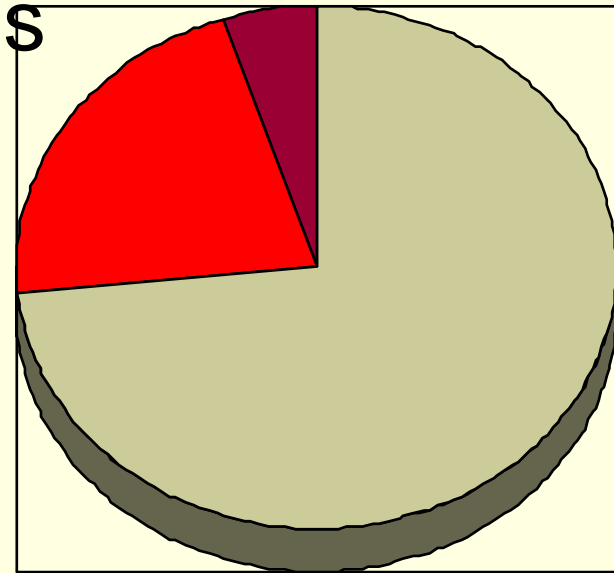
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- 66% - cognitive disabilities
- 57% - physical disabilities
- 38% - complex health care needs
- 9% - behavior challenges

# Educational Settings for Preschool

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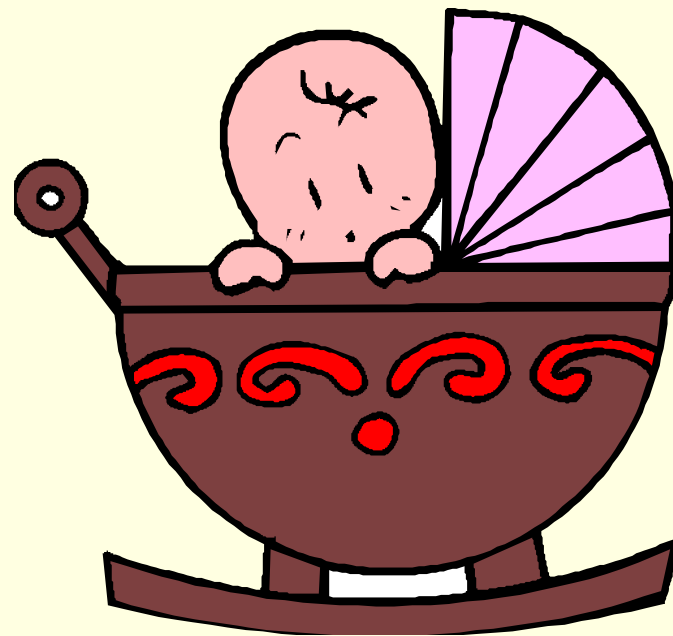
- 72% - special education classrooms, separate schools or residential facilities
- 20% - inclusive settings
- 5% - home



# Early childhood learning

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Watching and listening to what's going on around them





# Early childhood learning

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Touching, tasting, smelling,  
reaching, moving, climbing,  
singing, dancing, yelling



# Early childhood learning

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Being surrounded by people who provide a safe place to learn



# Early childhood learning

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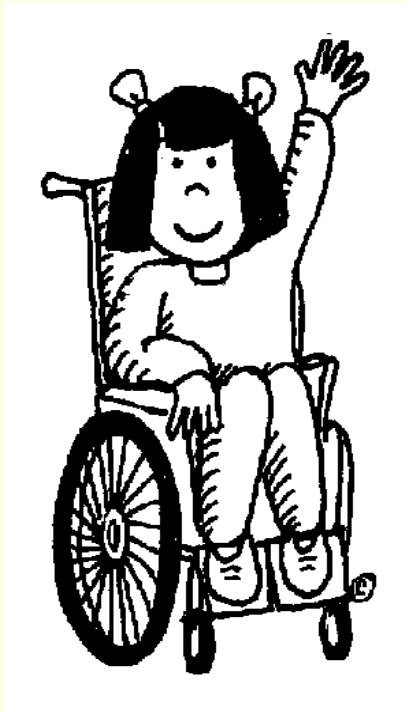
Trying things out – repeating things that worked or brought pleasure – avoiding activities that did not



# Early childhood learning

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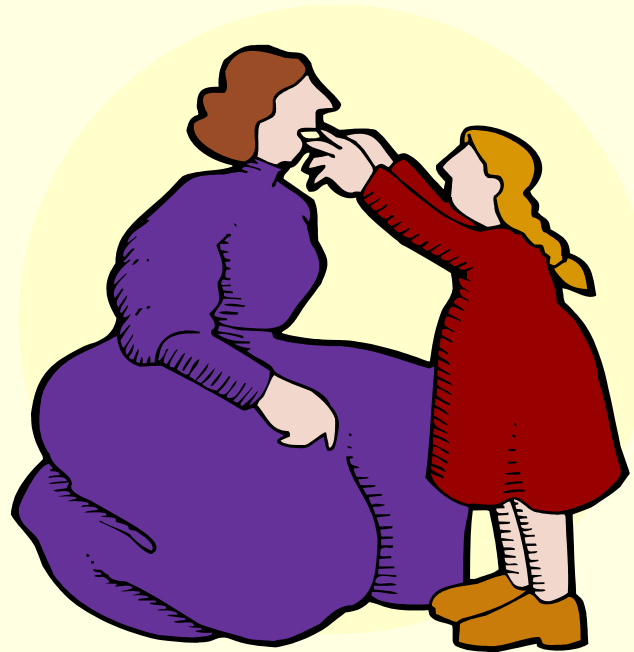
Asking lots and  
lots of questions





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**Young children who have both  
vision and hearing loss learn  
the same way . . . only different!**



# Deaf-blindness is a disability of access

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- Vision and hearing = Distance Senses
- Information and responses are absent, limited or distorted
- Multiple disabilities affect ability to seek information
- Impacts incidental learning



# Movement and Exploration

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*The world can be a scary place!*

- Body awareness
- Space awareness
- Reaching and movement
- Locomotion
- Safe, predictable, responsive environments



# Trustful Relationships

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*Success begins here!*

- Bonding
- Respect
- Security
- Consistency
- Connection to the world

# Defining Features of Inclusion

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## ■ Access

- Communication systems
- Sensory accommodations and adaptations

## ■ Participation

- Trustful relationships
- Cues and prompts
- Consistent Routines
- Calendar System

## ■ Support

- Team approach
- Training and technical assistance specific to deaf-blindness

# Factors Influencing Inclusion

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- Care and Education Providers' confidence and comfort level
- Care and Education Providers' professional development and training
- Administrator support
- Required related services
- Family concerns



# Touch Cues for Personal Identification

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- ***Unique personal cue*** to identify yourself
- ***Needed by everyone*** in regular contact with the child
- Used ***each time*** you greet and leave
- Familiar trusted individuals should introduce someone new

# Personal Identifiers

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# **Cues and Prompts**

# Tactile Cues

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- **Touch Cues-** Specific signals that are executed on the student's body
- **Object Cues-** Everyday objects that are presented to the student as cues and that may be touched on the body

# Touch Cues

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**Touch cues should reduce startling, help develop anticipatory responses and provide clearer information about your expectations**



# Touch Cues

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- Directly onto body
- Immediately precede an action/activity
- Consistent – each time, each person
- Alerts child that something will follow cue
- Leads to anticipation
- Facilitates association between a specific action and its consequence
- Can expect response from child over time

# Object Cues

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- Presented to child as cues for particular activities
- Provide information or directives
- Allows child to ready self
- Consistent and predictable
- Facilitates development of expectation and anticipation

# Types of Object Cues

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- Actual object
- Partial or associated object
- Arbitrary object

# Actual Objects

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Spoon or fork  
to indicate  
time to eat



# Partial or Associated Object Cue

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# Arbitrary Object Cue

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# **Routines and Schedules**

# Routines

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- Provide predictability, meaning, organization and security
- Opportunities for communication
- Build anticipation
- Reduce stress, increase confidence



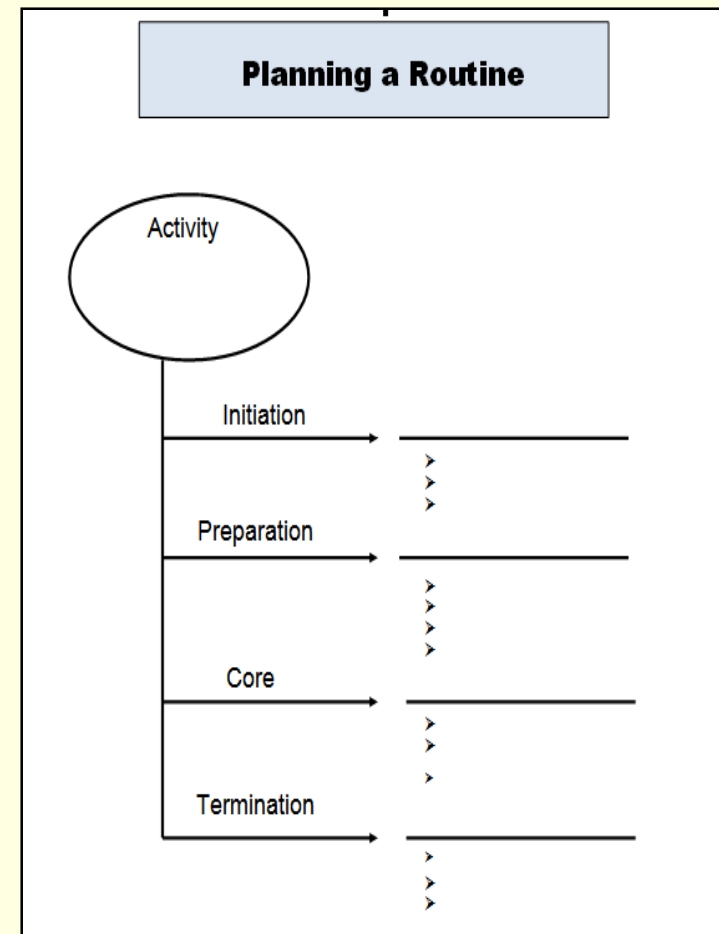
# Components of a routine

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- Clear signal activity is starting
- Each time:
  - Same place
  - Same steps
  - Same sequence
  - Same materials
  - Same person
  - Same pacing
  - Same delivery of assistance
- Clear signal activity is finished

# Routines

- **Initiation**
- **Preparation**
- **Core**
- **Termination**



# Calendar systems

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- Anticipation schedules
- Daily schedules
- Weekly, monthly, annual schedules

# Calendar Components

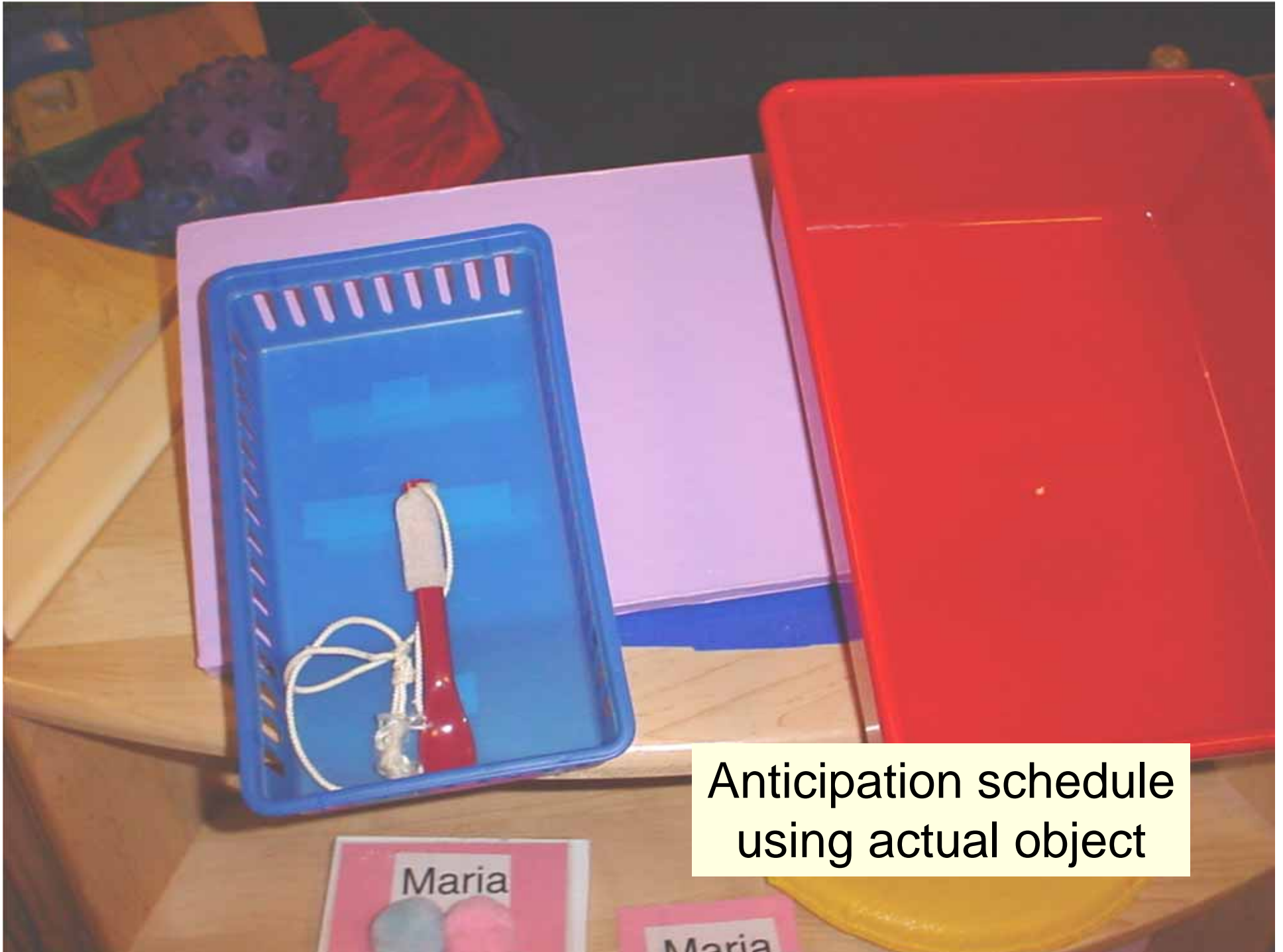
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- Set of symbols representing activities
- Format for presenting and sequencing the symbols (a calendar routine)
- Time built in for communicating about activities
- Accessible storage place for symbols

# Anticipation schedules

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- Introduction to calendars
- Learn that activities are represented by symbols
- Time concepts - past and future
- Left to right
- Sense of security and control



Anticipation schedule using actual object

Anticipation schedule  
using tactile symbol



# Calendar Systems

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**Daily schedules**



# Daily Schedule using actual objects



Daily Schedule using  
actual objects





Daily schedule using a mix of symbols – objects, photos, line drawings





Weekly schedule using photos, line drawings and sign language pictures





Monthly schedule using tactile symbols

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# Concept Development



# Concept Development

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- Limited visual and auditory information creates challenges
- Difficult to integrate experiences and make connections
- Hands-on, holistic approach
- Multiple opportunities and repeated involvement

# Consider the child's perspective

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- Motivating and meaningful
- Involve child from beginning to end
- Multi-sensory approach
- Limit voice – but not communication
- Practice “tactile” conversations



## **Tangible Concepts affected by deaf-blindness**

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- **Objects exist**
- **Objects have permanence**
- **Objects differ**
- **Objects have names or labels**
- **Objects have characteristics**
- **Objects have functions or use**

# Concept Development

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■ What is a car?



OM2-05.mpg

■ Getting a drink  
of water



OM3-08.mpg

# Literacy Development

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## Building a foundation

- Trustful relationships
- Communication
- Preferences and interests
- Concept development
- Exposure to books, print and writing materials

# Exposure to books and writing materials









# Exposure to books and writing materials

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- Need similar experiences before jumping into formal literacy instruction
  - Opportunities to observe print and Braille
  - Opportunities to explore traditional and adapted writing materials
- Need age-appropriate materials
- Need method for accessing materials
- Need to “see” others reading and writing
- Need consistency, repetition and multiple opportunities

# Support and Resources

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- Training and Professional Development
- Ongoing support and consultation
- Deaf-Blind Network
  - Individual State Deaf-Blind Projects
  - National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness
  - National Family Association of Deafblind





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- Deaf-Blind Perspectives
- New Publications



## NCDB & State Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Network

Click on a state for more information.



**Focus on Family Stories**

# NCDB2.0 Literacy Website

<http://literacy.nationaldb.org/>

Contact Us



Literacy for Children with  
Combined Vision and Hearing Loss



Home

About the Website

Shifting the Perspective

Building a Foundation

Early Emergent Literacy

Emergent Literacy

Writing

References

Topics Under Development

Vocabulary

Fluency

Comprehension

Expanding Literacy

ALL children CAN read...let us show you how!



STRATEGIES | PRACTICAL EXAMPLES | RESOURCES

Designed to give children with deaf-blindness, multiple disabilities and complex challenges expanded learning opportunities.



LDOE  
DEAF-BLIND PROJECT



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**Thank you!**

