

# ODYSSEY

## The Power and Potential of Collaboration



# ODYSSEY



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**On the cover:** *Building collaborations at the state and district levels helps to support the successful transition of deaf and hard of hearing students from secondary education to postsecondary options such as college or employment.*

*We would like to thank all of our student and teacher models from the Clerc Center for their assistance in illustrating this issue and pepnet 2 for allowing us to use images from their 2016 Summit.*





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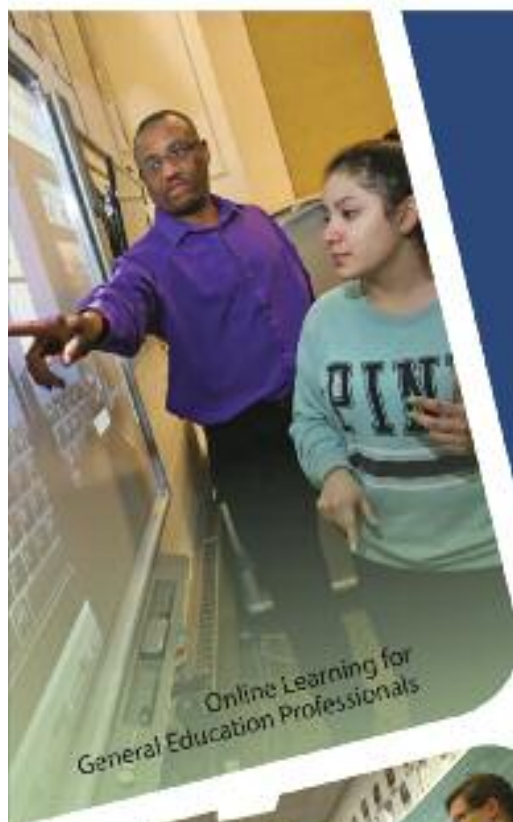
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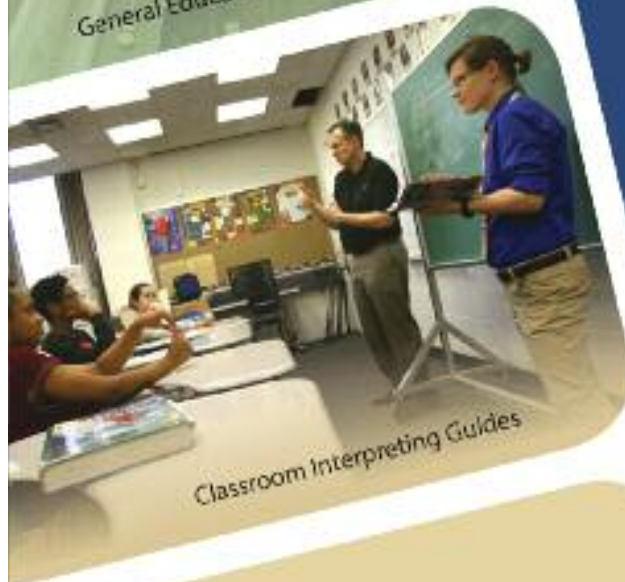
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Educational Planning Guidelines for  
Students with Cochlear Implants



## LETTER FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

“The whole is greater  
than the sum of its parts.”

~ Aristotle



The best kind of mathematics tells us that two plus two equals five. We know this as synergy, the result of fruitful collaboration and the ambition of any partnership in education among teachers, staff, parents, curriculum developers, school districts, and community organizations.

We know collaboration to be fundamental to success, and have so from the days of Aristotle, whose elegant quote on synergy has stood the test of time and translations. Perhaps more so than fundamental, collaboration can be said to be natural. For example, we observe interdependence in sequoia trees that interweave their roots, and as a result they tower tall and mighty.

In my almost eight years as vice president of the Clerc Center, we have made collaboration the heart of our work. As part of our first strategic plan we partnered with a number of organizations and individuals, including: Boston Children’s Hospital’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program in the creation of two resources for professionals, the California School for the Deaf in the ongoing work of development of K-12 content standards for American Sign Language, Dr. Brenda Schick in developing a series of guides that take on questions related to the role of the interpreter in the classroom (compiled from information from a website on which she collaborated with the Center for Childhood Deafness at Boys Town National Research Hospital), and Gallaudet University’s National Science Foundation Science of Learning Center for Visual Language and Visual Learning and others in the production of webinars.

In 2013, we invited 26 stakeholders to participate in our priority-setting process, a critical component of our second strategic plan development process. This current strategic plan has led to additional partnerships and further success on the horizon, and everyone in deaf education stands to benefit.

The educational landscape is changing daily, and if we are to continue to ensure the best possible outcome for the students and families we serve, collaboration must be central to our work. Too often deaf and hard of hearing children and families encounter a fragmented system, broken down further by battles rooted in ideology and philosophy rather than guided by biology and scientific findings about how the brain works and learns language. It is time to bring together the knowledge, experiences, research, and expertise in a collaborative approach to ensure success for all deaf and hard of hearing students and their families.

This issue of *Odyssey* also embodies that spirit in that it is the result of a collaboration with pepnet 2, a federally funded project with the goal “to improve postsecondary outcomes for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, including those with co-occurring disabilities.” I am sure you will find the articles presented here immensely useful as you set forth to explore resources, examine the ways in which you can tap into them and the networks available out there, and strengthen those resources and networks with your contributions. Your comments are welcome at [Odyssey@gallaudet.edu](mailto:Odyssey@gallaudet.edu).

I have accepted a position elsewhere, and this will be my last *Odyssey* introduction. Already I enthusiastically await the day I will receive *Odyssey* as a subscriber, and I hope for opportunities to contribute articles. I remain an ally in the field of deaf education and, however shape it may take, I look forward to our continued collaboration.

—Edward Bosso  
Past Vice President  
Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center  
Gallaudet University

**Mary Ann Kinsella-Meier,**

AuD, project manager at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University, manages development of products focusing on innovative curricula and instructional technologies and strategies. Kinsella-Meier recently managed the collaborative partnership between the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program of Boston Children's Hospital and the Clerc Center. Previously, she coordinated the expansion of educational services to students with cochlear implants at the Maryland School for the Deaf. She also co-authored a book on sign language for audiologists and speech-language specialists and is a contributing author for a book on aural rehabilitation and communication therapy for culturally deaf consumers.

# Collaboration: Definitions and Explorations of an Essential Partnership

*By Mary Ann Kinsella-Meier and Nicholas M. Gala*

In today's world collaborating is critical, and collaborations, while always essential, are not always easy. It may be important to focus on exactly what this term means. What we have found is that what is often labeled *collaboration* may instead be simply a partnership or one of several levels of a working relationship in which different parties invest different degrees of involvement and time (Montiel-Overall, 2005). This article discusses a variety of partnerships, each defined by a particular level of involvement; it notes the characteristics of collaborations and the process involved in maintaining these collaborations.

As partnering with others, as well as collaborating in the full sense of the word, is critical for the Clerc Center, this article discusses the nature of involvement when professionals from different organizations collaborate, each defined by a particular level of involvement; it notes the characteristics of collaborations and the process involved in maintaining those collaborations.

The level of involvement guides the type of partnership needed for a project. Level of involvement includes the amount of autonomy individual partners require, the amount of time they work together, and their degree of interdependency. When the variables of involvement and time are combined, partnerships form. A review of the literature suggests there are four levels of partnership, with specific characteristics associated with each level (Hailman & Soforenko, 2008; Montiel-Overall, 2005; Berrigan & Meynardie, 2013). (See Figure 1.) These levels are:

*Photos courtesy of Ben Hoshina*



**Nicholas M. Gala,** MA, MS, is in his fourth year of the clinical psychology program at Gallaudet University. A graduate research assistant for the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Gala focuses on psychosocial and educational development of students who are deaf or hard of hearing as well as on parent advocacy processes. His professional interests include forensic neuropsychology, affective neuroscience, and emotional display rules. Gala, whose clinical experience includes working as a behavioral analyst providing school and home-based intervention, helped to establish school-wide programs and parent/teacher trainings addressing behavioral intervention and treatment plans at the Princeton House Charter School in Orlando, Florida.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at *MaryAnn.Kinsella-Meier@gallaudet.edu* and *Nicholas.Gala@gallaudet.edu*.

**1. COMMUNICATION**—The most basic partnership forms when two or more individuals share information. This occurs during meetings and conferences. The work of each partner is independent and the partnership is brief.

**2. COORDINATION**—When individuals within two or more agencies communicate to share resources and coordinate work, often to avoid duplication, involvement deepens. This work requires more time than communication but commitments remain relatively short term.

**3. COOPERATION**—When individuals from multiple agencies communicate to support a

common goal and use this goal to coordinate and focus their work, coordination becomes cooperation. The goals may still be short term and individuals exercise some autonomy.

**4. COLLABORATION**—Interactions deepen and become more complex when individuals within two or more agencies communicate to achieve common goals that are interdependent, long term, and complex. These goals often involve the development of a new service or resource that pulls together expertise across agencies; this is when less elaborate partnerships become collaborations.



**Figure 1:** A visual representation of the four levels of partnership; each level requires increased involvement and investment of time.

Collaborations develop when two or more people work together on long-term projects to achieve complex goals. These people share responsibilities, work toward the same goal, and produce a sustainable, continuous outcome (Berrigan & Meynardie, 2013; Christakis & Bausch, 2006; Jones & Harris, 2014; Van den Bossche, Gijssels, Segers, & Kirschner, 2006).

Collaboration is so critical to the work at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center that our mission statement includes a reference to it:

*The Clerc Center, a federally funded national deaf education center, ensures that the diverse population of deaf and hard of hearing students (birth through age 21) in the nation are educated and empowered and have the linguistic competence to maximize their potential as productive and contributing members of society. This is accomplished through early access to and acquisition of language, excellence in teaching, family involvement, research, identification and implementation of best practices, collaboration, and information sharing among schools and programs across the nation. (Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, n.d.)*

### Why Collaborate?

Research suggests that collaborations facilitate overall agency performance and support those involved in tackling complex social issues. In addition,

collaboration encourages the establishment of long-term relationships through the opportunity for greater engagement among participants. Collaborations can result in greater innovation while conserving resources to reach shared goals (Woodland & Hutton, 2012).

Collaboration results in the ability to create something new and stronger than any individual or agency could accomplish alone or through a less complex form of partnership. It is anchored in a shared understanding of a target goal (Jones & Harris, 2014; Montiel-Overall, 2005). In turn, collaboration includes both shared processes and resources, which culminate in an opportunity for professional growth. Jones & Harris (2014) define *social capital* as the trust, understanding, and investment in shared values that result from mutual professional growth for those involved in a collaboration.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), recognizing the value of collaboration, includes it as a key attribute for those who receive the Early Career Special Education Administrator Award. CASE suggests:

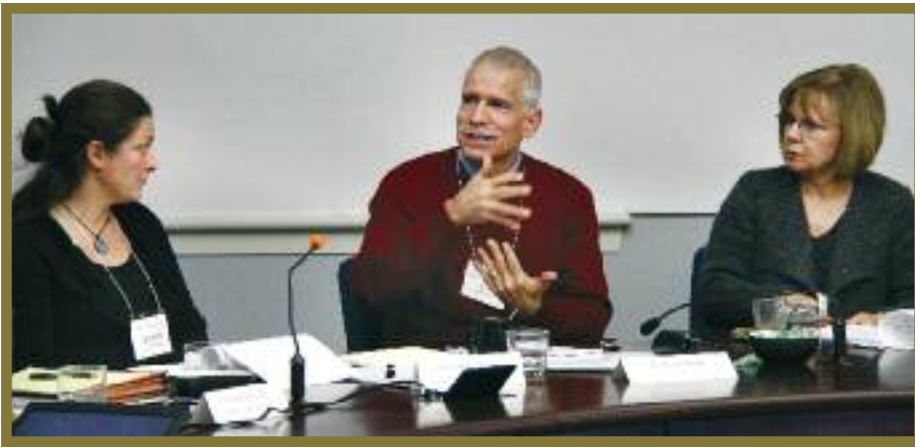
*Always use a collaborative approach; Listen first. Empathize and seek to fully understand alternative opinions and perspectives, then partner in developing and agreeing on solutions. Find and work from common ground. Strive to clarify concerns and expectations; respect other people's differences and utilize each other's strengths and expertise; seek out alternative ideas or perspectives. Work together to find the best possible solution. (Council of Administrators of Special Education, n.d.)*

### The Collaborative Mindset

A collaborative mindset includes a willingness to discuss, compromise, and engage in a mutually dependent partnership for the purpose of accomplishing larger and more complex







## Themes of Collaboration

Collaboration has common similarities and challenges. Those involved in collaborative work in business, education, or the health industries may be more successful if they recognize the underlying similarities across successful collaborations.

### Similarities include that collaboration:

- is not spontaneous. It requires a thought-out plan, open communication, trust, mutual respect and equal partnership, no hierarchy, and continuous re-evaluation (San Martín-Rodríguez, Beaulieu, D'Amour, D., & Ferrada-Videla, 2005; Reback et al., 2002).
- works best when there is no obvious solution.
- requires creativity; thinking creatively needs to be encouraged.
- requires time; time needs to be devoted to the collaboration process.
- requires trust; an interpersonal process requires trust among partners.

goals. The underpinning of what constitutes a collaborative mindset is an understanding of the culture and the management for each of the individuals from the participating agencies (Balthazard, Cooke, & Potter, 2006). In order to build a collaborative mindset within the collaborating group, those involved must remember to diffuse any hierarchical behavior and support each group member. The comments and suggestions of parents and young adults are given the same consideration as the comments and suggestions of researchers and administrators; each member of the group is recognized as important for success.

Reback, Cohen, Freese, and Shoptaw (2002) call the processes that result from equal membership and involvement “non-hierarchical collaboration.” An example of this non-hierarchical collaboration starts with meetings to establish a clear understanding of the goal or mission of the work that needs to

be done by giving each party an equal say in his or her understanding of the goal. After establishing the role of each agency and individual in the collaborative undertaking, the number of meetings will decrease substantially in order to ensure autonomy and equality for those involved. This type of collaborative process occurs within and between agencies as well as at the individual, team, and organizational level.

Once a non-hierarchical structure is established and individual members feel equally secure

within the group, each member's autonomy and involvement should be encouraged through feedback and involvement in planning and developing the project or product. Ultimately, the target outcomes of a non-hierarchical process ensure free-flowing communication and the sharing of information and progress of everyone involved.

Recognition of the achievements, products, and advancements toward goals occurs through the success of the collaboration and the achievement of goals.

It is critical to ensure participants in the collaborative effort develop a shared understanding of the goals and purposes of the collaboration as well as their own roles and responsibilities within the collaborating group. It is critical to spend time to establish a shared language, shared goals, shared processes, and shared expectations for outcomes (Woodland & Hutton, 2012). It is essential to frequently debrief following both successes and struggles throughout the collaborative work (Montiel-Overall, 2005).

In *How People Harness Their Collective Wisdom and Power to Construct the Future in Co-Laboratories of Democracy*, Christakis and Bausch (2006) outline a process designed to promote consensus building among participating stakeholders with

**A collaborative mindset includes a willingness to discuss, compromise, and engage in a mutually dependent partnership for the purposes of accomplishing larger and more complex goals.**

different perspectives; this process is based on the following principles:

- identifying the group's purpose;
- adopting a conceptual action plan;
- developing teams to carry out the plan;
- developing bonds of respect, trust, and cooperation; and
- supporting autonomy and open discussion (each individual within the team should feel respected, included, and valued).

## How to Identify and Maintain Successful Collaborations

Gratton and Erickson (2007) with Reback et al. (2002) identified six questions that should be addressed throughout the collaborative process:

1. Was there an equal partnership among the collaborators?
2. Was communication open and clear?
3. Was a common goal clearly defined and broken down to smaller parts?
4. Was open communication established between collaborators?
5. Was each member able to use the other's language and

knowledge effectively?

6. Were roles clearly identified and tasks and responsibilities stated?

Responding honestly to these questions provides feedback and allows review of the progress made at the agency level. This agency-level review reflects similar processes for each individual and team involved in the collaboration. Thus using these questions for feedback and review maintains the non-hierarchical collaboration and ensures overall progress toward accomplishing a goal that any one individual would not be able to accomplish alone.

Working together, whether in the classroom, with a team, in an office, or across agencies and institutions, is something individuals do every day. Working together involves various amounts of interdependency and various levels of partnerships. These interdependencies and partnerships provide value in achieving goals and advancing work. Collaboration, one of the most complex and intense forms of partnerships, is pursued daily at the Clerc Center. Working with individuals from other agencies and from other areas of the country, we are able to pursue and attain goals together that no agency could attain on its own.

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# Clerc Center—

## PURSUING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

By Mary Ann Kinsella-Meier and Nicholas M. Gala

The Clerc Center has pursued multiple partnerships with individuals, schools, organizations, agencies, and programs throughout the country. These partnerships have been on various levels—from simple partnerships to elaborate collaborations. Here is a look at two of them.

### National Priority Setting Meeting

#### A Cooperative Partnership

The Clerc Center hosted a National Priority Setting Meeting in February 2013, bringing together a wide range of individuals involved in deaf education. For two days, these individuals, a diverse group of professionals and parents who represented various ethnic groups, educational settings, and language and communication modalities, discussed issues in accordance with a consensus-building model developed by Alexander N. Christakis with Kenneth C. Bausch in their book *How People Harness Their Collective Wisdom and Power to Construct the Future in Co-Laboratories of Democracy* (2006). Using principles from this book, we had action-oriented democratic meetings in which participants from divergent perspectives participated equally, with each of the many perspectives recognized and respected.

This event met the terms of a *cooperative partnership* because it:

- **was short term.** The work occurred over two days.
- **pursued a common goal.** A clear guiding statement issued at the start kept everyone on topic.
- **established equality among participants.** A software program, CogniScope, guided the group through a structured process and helped equalize opinions. Each person was provided the same amount of time to speak. Goals were selected by voting. The framework was highly structured; however, each person involved within the framework had autonomy and shared equally his or her opinions, beliefs, concerns, and goals.

### Guidelines for Cochlear Implant Planning

#### A Collaborative Partnership

As a result of national input and action plan committee work, the Clerc Center identified an original resource developed by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program of Boston Children's Hospital for children with cochlear implants that contained guidelines the Clerc Center believed were important to expand upon and to share with those involved in deaf education throughout the country. A collaboration was proposed. The Clerc Center and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program of Boston Children's Hospital brought together authors of divergent backgrounds to work on expanding those guidelines.

Various professionals from the fields of audiology, speech-language, education, and psychology as well as school administrators, representing hospitals, agencies, schools, and private practices were invited to join in this collaborative effort. By 2012, an agreement was reached and our collaboration commenced. Over 40 professionals participated (30 of them original authors). Authors were sent a survey to ensure their thoughts and viewpoints were considered and included in the content development and revisions leading to the final product design.

Additionally, a survey was sent to obtain feedback from a variety of representative constituents who would be the potential users of this downloadable resource. These constituents—including audiologists, educators for the deaf, special education administrators, speech-language providers, parents, and caregivers—provided information that was included in the final product design. Feedback from authors also helped with a second component of the work, which was the refinement and expansion of the appendices to support classroom access and learning for students with cochlear implants.

In 2015, this new and expanded resource, *Children with Cochlear Implants: Guidelines for Educational Program Planning*, was published. The involvement preceding this publication met the terms of a *collaborative partnership* because it:

- **established a shared goal for both institutions.** The parameters and goals were clarified at the beginning of the collaboration.
- **focused on and revisited the goal throughout the work.** Surveys were distributed to key stakeholders prior to the initiation of the work and at the end of the work to ensure the effective pursuit of goals.
- **established equality among participants.** Surveys completed by authors ensured each author was equally represented in his or her feedback in the construction of this resource.
- **was long term.** The effort continued for four years.
- **involved complex work.** Individuals worked within clearly defined structures and had levels of responsibilities between two large and culturally different institutions.
- **depended on mutual interest.** The resource developed was viewed as a top priority by both the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program of Boston Children's Hospital and the Clerc Center.



**Marcia Kolvitz,** PhD, is a program specialist with pepnet 2, working from Indianapolis, Indiana. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in communicative disorders from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and a doctorate in human resource development from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Prior to her work with federal projects, Kolvitz was a counselor in educational programs in northern Illinois. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at *Marcia.Kolvitz@pepnet.org*.

# Pepnet 2:

## Developing Collaborative Relationships for Effective Transition Services

*By Marcia Kolvitz*

The foundation for pepnet 2 began in the late 1960s when the U.S. Department of Education provided funding to establish four programs for the deaf at postsecondary institutions across the country. As an increasing number of deaf and hard of hearing students began enrolling in mainstreamed colleges throughout the country, the focus of federal funding shifted in 1996 from direct services for students to technical assistance for postsecondary education institutions serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The four regional technical assistance centers were known collectively as the Postsecondary Educational Programs Network (PEPNet). The currently funded project, pepnet 2, was established in 2011 when the structure changed from four regional centers to one national center. Pepnet 2 builds on the rich history and strong reputation from its three previous funding cycles while simultaneously reflecting the new model of a national center.

From the beginning the organization has focused on collaboration—getting individuals from different agencies centered on the shared goal. At pepnet 2, our goal is to improve postsecondary outcomes for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, including those with co-occurring disabilities. There are numerous ways to address this—by working with individual educators and service providers, by developing resources and training materials that support the transition from high school to postsecondary opportunities, or by focusing on the systems that support the programs and services.

*Photos courtesy of pepnet 2*

One of our challenges has been getting the components that comprise the education of deaf and hard of hearing students and services for deaf and hard of hearing adults to work together more effectively. We have focused on collaboration as a tool to construct and strengthen the cooperation among people and agencies that are active in promoting the transition of students from secondary education to the workplace. In an effort to address issues with systems and support collaboration among organizations and agencies, pepnet 2 initiated the Building State Capacity Summit.

We use the term *Summit* when referring to two different initiatives. In 2005, a group of concerned professionals in the field of deaf education convened the State Leaders' Summit to learn about and plan for system change. Initiated as a way to stimulate change in how educational programming was provided to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, this effort resulted in a series of national meetings from 2005-2011 that included teams of state representatives. The meetings provided an opportunity for state teams to use current research and effective strategies as they made decisions for improvement and accountability in educational programs. State teams included educators, administrators, parents, and other interested stakeholders. These teams had a tremendous task in considering the entire range of educational programs and services, prioritizing what needed to be done in their states, and then determining the best course of action.

Although the State Leaders' Summit began as an effort to involve individuals in schools and classrooms, the planning team expanded to include educational administrators, parents, technical assistance providers, and a representative from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Working with teams from each state toward a common purpose was proving successful, and the State Leaders' Summit served as the forerunner for the second Summit, the Building State Capacity Summit, initiated by pepnet 2.



The Building State Capacity Summit resulted from an expectation by OSEP for pepnet 2 to host a national systems change Summit. As part of its funding, OSEP mandated that pepnet 2 provide:

*... a forum for the exchange of information on establishing and implementing strategies to improve educational programs and services for postsecondary students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and to increase the number and proportion of these students who persist in and complete college or other postsecondary education and training.*

~ U.S. Department of Education (2011)



In addition, pepnet 2 was expected to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation to “address identified needs of postsecondary institutions in the state related to enrolling, retaining, instructing, and graduating students who are deaf or hard of hearing” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), and as a result, the idea for the Building State Capacity Summit series emerged. During these meetings, from 2012 through 2016, individuals would not only offer and receive information that enhances change, but they would have an opportunity to implement and demonstrate change in areas such as service delivery, policy development and implementation, and cross-systems coordination.

The focus of the Building State Capacity Summit was much narrower than its predecessor in that it focused specifically on services to transition-age students and youth. Consequently, the composition of state teams changed. Along with educators and parents, pepnet 2 asked state teams to include vocational rehabilitation staff as part of the core team and encouraged teams to include representatives from transition services, postsecondary programs, community agencies, independent living centers, or deaf education personnel preparation programs. While teams were urged to develop a strong network within their state to develop and implement their plans, participation in the annual national Summit meeting was limited to five team members. Some states already had strong networks among service providers, so team members may have had

previously established working relationships. However, many newly formed teams included members who had the additional challenge of getting to know and trust the other members in a relatively short period of time.

Collaboration within each team and across the agencies and organizations they represent has been a key part of the Summit. Teams were challenged to look beyond the roles of individual professionals or agencies and begin working toward a common goal. What could they—educators, parents, service providers, community agencies—do together to have an impact on student outcomes? To support their efforts, pepnet 2 provided several tools, including assistance with conceptualization plans and working plans, and guidance about using the goal attainment scaling process to measure their accomplishments.

Collaboration can be complicated. Each team member likely had specific goals in mind when joining the team, and members would be expected to support the goals of their agency or organization. Although successful transition of our students from high school was a common goal, how each team member viewed his or her contributions might have been slightly different, especially at the onset of the meetings. The terminology used by groups within a team also sometimes differed, so teams had to come to a common understanding





about what they wanted and how they'd get there.

It wasn't always easy. Breaking down the monumental task of enhancing outcomes was difficult, and losing track of the shared goal was always a real possibility. We encouraged teams to take time to clearly conceptualize and articulate what they wanted to accomplish. Time—so essential to each team's work—was provided through the Summit meetings, which also included opportunities for participants to learn new information in plenary and small group presentations and discuss critical issues with colleagues across state team lines.

Immediately after the Summit most team members reported that they were energized, but then they quickly slipped back into their everyday roles. Taking time to continue collaborating with their fellow team members was a challenge that had to be added into the mix of everyday work responsibilities. In addition, most states faced fiscal restraints and did not have funds available for new initiatives. To address those issues, pepnet 2 offered \$5,000 in support of plans developed by each team and assigned each team a "champion"—pepnet 2 staff members and consultants—to serve as a point of contact, provide encouragement, and help teams navigate any uncertainties as members worked toward implementing their plan.

Throughout the work, teams were challenged to think outside their own part of the student's transition process and consider the *whole*—all of the systems in place and their role in the student's transition. What kind of impact did they want? What type of system change was needed? In some states, the plans built on previous successful practices. In other states, where the relationships among team members and their respective agencies were still forming, the goals were more modest and served to establish a foundation for future planning. Within pepnet 2, we recognized that each state had a unique history and starting point; each would build from its own starting point towards accomplishing goals. To help teams assess their progress, we encouraged the use of goal attainment scaling, which provided a mechanism for recognizing accomplishments even if targets were not reached.

When we consider the impact of all of the Summit activities on deaf education and transition services, we're hopeful that the *parts* that we helped establish and nurture have an impact on the whole. If a state team collaborates on a project and sees positive results, then that should mean easier and more effective transition experiences for students and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing. Of course, like each part, the *whole* of deaf education and transition will continue to evolve—and this presents additional questions and needs for planning.

If a state team collaborates on a project and sees positive results, what happens next? What resources are needed to sustain the work and scale it up to another level? Does a positive experience expand the foundation for more collaborative work in the future? And what happens as team members retire or move on to different roles and new members join the state teams? How do we continue to tap into the



synergy of a successful team and use it to further our efforts toward improving services for students and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Ultimately, parents, educators, service providers, students, and pepnet 2 staff members have the same goal. As we strive toward enhancing positive post-high school outcomes, we need to avoid working in isolation and reach out to colleagues who have similar goals. Within our own agencies and organizations, we need to communicate the value of listening to other perspectives and develop an understanding of what options and opportunities need to be available for students and youth as they move toward adulthood. As we continue to deal with limited resources, initiatives such as pepnet 2 and the Summits seem to be a viable way of supporting necessary changes in the systems engaged in education and service delivery.

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### Resource

For more information about *The National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students*, refer to [www.ndepnow.org/pdfs/national\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.ndepnow.org/pdfs/national_agenda.pdf).

# Transition Through Teamwork: Professionals Address Student Access

**Sue Ann Bube,**

EdD, is the director for the Center for Change in Transition Services, a state project focused on improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Bube, a mathematics and special education teacher, has 20 years of experience in the classroom. She is a national board-certified teacher and has her doctorate in educational leadership with a specialization in educational administration.

**Carol Carrothers,**

MS, is the director of the Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss K-12 Outreach Team as well as deaf and hard of hearing service coordinator for Washington Sensory Disability Services. For 35 years, Carrothers has worked as an interpreter, a teacher of the deaf, and a university professor.

*By Sue Ann Bube, Carol Carrothers, and Cinda Johnson*

In 2013, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing State Transition Team formed in Washington State to evaluate the data for deaf and hard of hearing students as they left public school programming. Our goal: to create a systematic plan to assist students and their families with students' postsecondary education, training, and employment.

Prior to 2013, there was no collaboration around the transition services for deaf and hard of hearing students in Washington State. Washington had numerous agencies providing excellent support, but those agencies were not working together. It was not until January 29, 2013, when pepnet 2 hosted the Building State Capacity to Address Critical Issues in Deaf Education: Transition from Secondary Education to Postsecondary Options conference in Austin, Texas, that we realized the importance of collaborating for the good of our students. Five of us from Washington found ourselves in small groups talking with individuals from other states about what they were doing collaboratively, and we realized that we needed to step up ... and quickly!

Pepnet 2 opened the eyes of those of us working at the state level. Following the conference, we started gathering folks with a like-minded focus. The first year we met three times in different locations throughout Washington. Travel wasn't new to us, but we quickly realized just how large the state of Washington really is. It takes seven to eight hours of driving just to cross the state east to west. Getting our various agencies together from across the state would prove to be a challenge. The second challenge was that most agencies were feeling effective in their individual transition work and activities with youth. Moving toward collaboration was another effort for those individuals. It didn't take long, however, for everyone to realize the benefits.

Fast forward to 2015. Our team has evolved and we now have established a Deaf and Hard of Hearing State Transition Team that meets quarterly. Our team includes representatives from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Center for Change in Transition Services, the Washington School for the Deaf, Able

*Photo courtesy of pepnet 2*



## **Cinda Johnson,**

EdD, is an associate professor and the director of the graduate special education program at Seattle University. She is the principal investigator for the Center for Change in Transition Services, a state project focused on improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities, and a national leader in the area of transition from high school to post-high school for young people with disabilities.

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Opportunities (a vendor for DVR), the Washington Career Academy for the Deaf, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, and the Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss. What have we learned by meeting together? Plenty! Separately each agency had connections to youth, schools, and regional educational service districts. Now we share our connections and work with a common purpose to improve outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing youth.

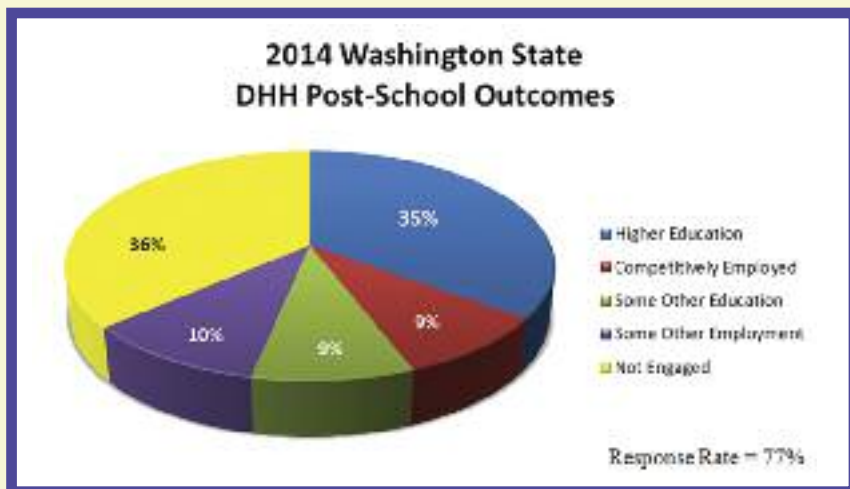
Although Washington State has been collecting post-school data since 2000, our team began with the data from the past three years. We found that 100 deaf and hard of hearing students had graduated, dropped out, or aged out during the 2012-2013 school year. Of those, 84 percent had earned a diploma—a figure that was 5 percent higher than that of other youth with disabilities. Approximately 33 percent reported attending a two-year or four-year college and successfully completing their first term. An additional 9 percent were attending a

certificate program such as welding, food handling, or forklift operating—6 percent higher than for all youth with disabilities. An additional 9 percent were working for pay at or above the minimum wage in a setting with nondisabled co-workers—environments we called “competitive”—and 10 percent had worked at least 90 days in less competitive work environments. These numbers were three times higher than those posted for students with other disabilities.

Digging deeper, we saw that responses varied by degree of hearing loss. Those students who were hard of hearing were employed at double the rate of students who were deaf. Students who were deaf were engaged in additional education at eight times the rate of students who were hard of hearing. In fact, students who were deaf had an overall engagement rate in higher education that was 5 percent higher than students who were hard of hearing. The survey yielded one troubling statistic: 36 percent of deaf and hard of hearing youth were neither



**Table 1:**



**Higher Education:** Former students have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis in a community college (two-year program) or college/university (four-year or more program) for at least one complete term at any time in the first year since leaving high school.

**Competitive Employment:** Former students have worked for pay at or above the minimum wage in a setting with others who are nondisabled for a period of 20 hours a week or more for at least 90 days at any time in the year since leaving high school. This includes military employment.

**Some Other Education:** Former students have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis for at least one complete term at any time in the first year since leaving high school in an education or training program (e.g., Job Corps, adult education, workforce development program, or vocational technical school, which is less than a two-year program).

**Some Other Employment:** Former students have worked for pay or been self-employed for a period of at least 90 days at any time in the first year since leaving high school. This includes working in a family business (e.g., farm, store, fishing, ranching, catering services).

PHOTO CREDIT: 2014 WASHINGTON STATE DHH POST-SCHOOL MINI-REPORT BY THE CENTER FOR CHANGE IN TRANSITION SERVICES (2015). REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.

Feeling that it was important for parents, teachers, and professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students to find and use relevant materials and resources, the team noted that materials and information were located on multiple websites and that the sites, having little to no organization, were difficult to navigate.

We identified agencies that worked with deaf and hard of hearing students at the middle and high school levels in order to create a conceptual map of the kinds of materials that would be most beneficial to helping students make the successful leap from high school to higher education, training, and employment. In collaboration with individuals from our collaborating agencies, we were able to identify relevant transition information and begin the long process of creating a web environment for dissemination of transition information to everyone involved.

Our second year began with another review of data and Kohler's Taxonomy, and a decision—after much debate—that our new goal would be to improve the involvement of families in the lives of our students. Although we did not have data, anecdotal information provided by team members indicated a lack of family involvement both in developing students' Individualized Education Programs and in planning for students' transition. We wanted to increase access to information so deaf and hard of hearing students and their families could make more informed decisions. To accomplish this, the team decided to work on several objectives simultaneously:

- to complete the website, making sure the information provided was student friendly;
- to create local transition fairs across the state that would bring together employers, service providers, students, and students' families to explore post-graduation options;

working nor in school.

The team also completed a literature review on the predictors of positive transition outcomes for students with disabilities, looking specifically at studies that included deaf and hard of hearing youth. We found that research supports our work with increasing agency connections as well as pre-employment work experiences (Test et al., 2009). Using this information and Kohler's (1996) Taxonomy for Transition Planning, a model for planning, organizing, and evaluating transition education, services, and programs, our

team decided that the first year's goal should be to expand awareness of each other's scope of work. To do this, the team returned to Kohler's Taxonomy and focused on the Interagency Collaboration Service Delivery Model which specified:

- reduction of system barriers to collaboration;
- information disseminated among cooperating agencies; and
- coordinated requests for information with schools, families, and agencies.

- to survey families to find out what information would be most useful; and
- to create a listserve and an e-newsletter to disseminate information.

Today much of our work is underway. We are planning a statewide transition fair for deaf and hard of hearing students that will incorporate a popular field trip to Junior Achievement's Biztown and Finance Park. This field trip, which brings together over 200 deaf and hard of hearing students from across the state, focuses on transition skills within the community. This year it will also include deaf and hard of hearing adult role models, information sessions for parents, and the presence of representatives from local agencies for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Adding a transition fair to this already popular activity allows our team to

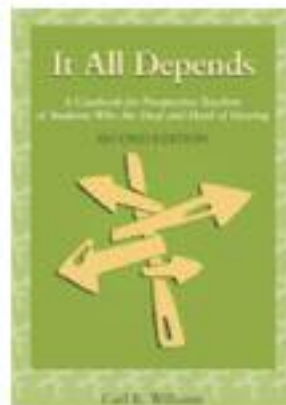
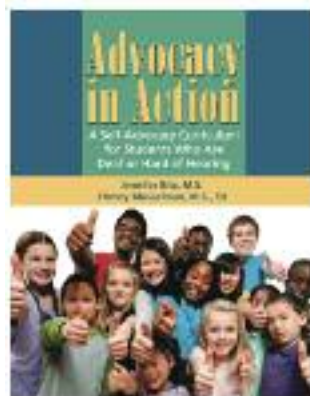
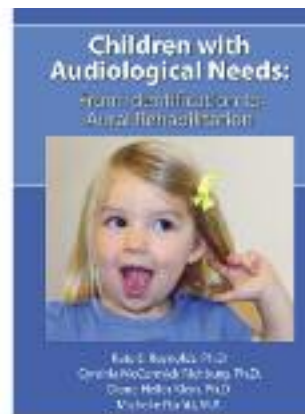
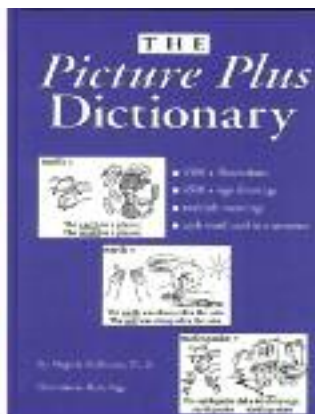
bring services and information to students in an efficient and effective manner.

Further, our goal of surveying parents is underway. We reviewed parent surveys from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition and adapted many of the suggested questions to develop our survey. Now ready for dissemination, the survey will enable our team, which has relied primarily on experiences of team members, to hear directly from parents.

Working as a team has enabled professionals involved with the lives of deaf and hard of hearing students in Washington State to gather information, create and disseminate meaningful and target resources, and create meaningful research-based activities that will assist our deaf and hard of hearing youth to engage successfully in the full range of college and career options available to them.

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**Ann Flannery**, MA, CSC, serves as a post-secondary transition specialist for the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind, supporting youth 14 to 26 years of age. With a master's degree in counseling from the University of Cincinnati, Flannery has experience in administration at residential schools for the deaf and in higher education, directing support for students with disabilities.

**Paula Mason**, MS, is director of outreach for the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind (IESDB), supporting students throughout the state of Idaho. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in education of the hearing impaired, both from Idaho State University. Currently working on her education specialist degree in educational leadership at the University of Idaho, Mason worked for 10 years as the IESDB post-secondary transition specialist and three years as a classroom teacher at the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind.

# Building and Maintaining Connection: Supporting Transition in a Rural State

*By Ann Flannery, Paula Mason, and Janna Dunagan*

Deaf and hard of hearing students at Rocky Mountain High School (RMHS), a public school in Meridian, Idaho—and other deaf and hard of hearing students throughout our state—needed skills for the workplace. The demand was critical, and we knew change was needed. Co-authors Janna Dunagan, who teaches deaf and hard of hearing students, and Paula Mason, then the post-secondary transition specialist for the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind (IESDB), itinerant transition specialist, got together and brainstormed; we were soon joined by co-author Ann Flannery, who was at that time working with the Network Interpreting Service.

We settled on a six-week program that would bring in community members, cover a myriad of topics, and end with the school year—just in time for our students to move into summer employment. The timing was ideal; the information would be fresh and students would have confidence to secure employment and work more independently. Multiple partnerships were required; providers and teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students would have to work together.

First we formed a team, reaching out to a variety of individuals who care about deaf and hard of hearing students. The teacher of the deaf at RMHS and the support of her administration was a must. Parents were critical, and so were the individuals who would provide evening transportation for students who would need a way to get home from each workshop. We would also ask the companies who handle services—Sorenson Communications, the Network Interpreting Service, and Hamilton Video Relay—to participate. In addition, we invited the Idaho Department of Labor to

*Photos courtesy of Ann Flannery, Paula Mason, and Janna Dunagan*





partner with IESDB, a particularly fruitful connection as it led to additional connections.

Our team began to work together. No duties were formally assigned. Team members turned to each other for support and networking. As we planned and collaborated, someone would bring up an idea, someone else would volunteer to take on the task, and still another person would follow up. If a team member had an idea, we discussed it and the team member would work on it, bringing it back to the team to finalize details. This approach was successful because we were all equally invested in ensuring our students had great outcomes. We had a lot of trust in our team and its goals.

Once we established a schedule and settled on topics, we asked the Idaho Department of Labor to help us identify and secure presenters. Flannery and Mason contacted employers and

**Clockwise from left:** Outreach staff identify the services and partnerships in IESDB's public school transition supports; a self-advocacy workshop at the Department of Labor; students take part in a career chat at the Ready, Set, Go to Work summer camp.

businesses that they knew through previous experiences. Already supporting deaf and hard of hearing graduates in the workforce, Mason asked some of them to become mentors for our event. These deaf adults would share their rich experiences and wealth of personal stories with our students. Dunagan turned to her district and arranged the location and interpreters.

Once a commitment from selected partners had been secured, we developed a program. For six weeks, the students would remain after school once a week for three-hour sessions. A guest speaker would address a topic, and we would

## Janna Dunagan,

MS, works with deaf and hard of hearing students in Meridian, Idaho. She earned her bachelor's degree in American Sign Language/English interpreting from Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Oregon, and her master's degree in deaf education from Texas Woman's University in Fort Worth, Texas. For five years she taught at the high school level with a strong emphasis in transition planning. Now teaching in the Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind preschool program, Dunagan has had experience in both the Listening and Spoken Language classroom and the Total Communication Program.

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reinforce the speaker's message by engaging students in a teaching and learning activity. The hands-on experience following each presentation would allow students to take ownership of the information while putting it into practice. We came up with topics that ranged from services to be expected at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, to interviewing "dos and don'ts," to the importance of self-advocacy for students on the job.

Earlier collaborations had made finding excellent partners possible. Flannery, as IESDB's post-secondary transition specialist, had served on our Idaho State Department of Education's Interagency Council on Secondary Transition. This council, with the mission of promoting a framework that leads to quality opportunities for youth with disabilities, brings together individuals from agencies across our state. Having a seat at this table was a gift. It allowed Flannery to meet and work with partners who were knowledgeable, easy to approach, and quick to commit.

An agreement with the high school made possible access to a computer lab,

where our students could access and create profiles on the Idaho Department of Labor's job search website for immediate and future use. Partnership with Sorenson Communications resulted in the donation of a videophone, and Sorenson representatives joined our presenters to explain how current technology affects our lives.

Further, the Idaho Department of Labor was ready with funding to support youth in paid temporary positions. In fact, this department agreed to pay our youth for 40 hours a week for the eight weeks during the summer. The placements would be in community nonprofit organizations where employers were more than willing to provide positions for our students.

### **A Program Unfurls Teamwork Pays off**

So successful was the multifold collaboration that our "no frills" vision morphed into an elaborate success. When word got out, enrollment increased. One young person traveled from more than 100 miles east of Boise to join our group. Our partners were providing all that was needed.

That summer, we placed students in museums, libraries, Idaho Department of Labor offices, the Idaho Tax Commission, the Idaho Youth Ranch Distribution Center, the City of Boise Parks, and some local school districts. However, placements were not the end of our work. Cooperation with participating employers remained critical. The RMHS teacher and transition specialist from IESDB provided employers with hands-on support, and our post-secondary transition specialist educated employers about hiring and working with deaf and hard of hearing employees while our interpreters worked as job coaches. To ensure optimal outcomes with each placement, both the Idaho Department of Labor and our post-secondary transition specialist followed up with each student and his or her immediate supervisors to ensure both—employer and student-employee—were learning and growing throughout their work experience. In addition, our transition team checked in on the students as they worked.

This involvement proved crucial as issues arose that had not been addressed. For example, a student placed in the museum did not understand the importance of personal hygiene and clean clothes. After one-on-one direct instruction about this critical soft skill,





the situation resolved and the job experience proved to be a great success. After the program was completed, three of our students were offered full-time, permanent employment with the agency for which each had worked in the summer: two with the Federal Tax Commission and one with the Technology Department with the Idaho Department of Labor.

### Reflections from a Rural State Cooperation Continues

Our project reflected the fact that in a rural state, extra work is required—and partnerships are critical. The distance between students, partners, and sponsored events can mean hours by car. Overnight with friends or late and early morning drives eat away at time and funding; it requires energy to keep the stamina and commitment. We face the challenges of families and agencies that manage daily without high speed Internet, making connection a constant challenge. At the same time, bare-bones school budgets make partnering and creativity even more valuable. Often it is the same group of six to 10 “get ‘er done” professionals who step up to ensure partnerships are maintained, tasks completed, and projects launched.

At the conclusion of this project, our partners—educators, deaf adults, agency representatives, interpreters—reported they had learned so much about

each other and the work of the Outreach Post-Secondary Transition Program. Students reported feeling more prepared to enter employment. They were ready to use the infrastructure that is there to assist them and to find individuals who could become their team to help them locate, interview for, and maintain employment, all while moving ever closer to living and working independently from their families.

The ramifications of this program continue. This summer we will have a Summer Work Readiness Camp at the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind with many of our same partners. Further, one of our partners, the Idaho Department of Labor, used our program as a stimulus to create “chat camps,” mini-workshops focused on work readiness skills for students with disabilities.



Those who invest in the transition of our students and their families must remain passionate and be willing to help each other with projects to ensure partners stay involved. We must continue to make the sacrifices of time, energy, miles, and resources that our families and students need. A well-developed sensitivity and willingness to aid our partners in the pursuit of their agendas while meeting the expectations demanded by our shared project is what brings us to success. We support our partners while being supported, and we serve as we are served. Such rural reciprocation is essential in supporting our deaf and hard of hearing students as they transition from school to higher education, postsecondary education, or the workplace.



**Left to right:** Youth employment outcomes happen readily when partnerships lead to job shadow experiences that grow into the needed hard and soft skills.



**Theresa Johnson,**

MEd, is an outreach specialist at the Educational Resource Center on Deafness and director of Summer Programs at the Texas School for the Deaf in Austin. Johnson earned her graduate degree in education from the University of Georgia in Athens.

# Working Together for Transition in Texas

*By Theresa Johnson and John A. Serrano*

Perhaps it was when a philosophical shift at the state level resulted in a loss of direct funding for the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students that collaboration—always important—became critical. With the reallocation of funds, our students became part of a general network that addressed the needs of all Texas students. Unfortunately, no one within the network had experience working with deaf or hard of hearing students, and the needs of those students became almost lost in the daily transition shuffle.

Parents and professionals concerned with deaf and hard of hearing students responded. Representatives of the regional day programs, the school for the deaf, deaf and hard of hearing consumers, higher education deaf and hard of hearing services, and others formed a statewide transition committee. This committee, a small group with neither funding nor officially allotted time, began to try to address the transition needs for deaf and hard of hearing students throughout the state.

Fortunately, pepnet 2, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, was able to assist. With financial support from pepnet 2 and the assistance of pepnet 2 staff, the committee created a rudimentary website to assist students and their families in the transition planning process. The committee also provided assistance to programs for planning transition fairs for deaf and hard of hearing students in different locations across the state. In addition, the committee gave a presentation at the Texas Transition Conference on deaf and hard of hearing issues and offered training to parents and students statewide.

It wasn't easy. The committee faced an extreme lack of resources, experienced a high turnover of participating individuals, and found it difficult to maintain enthusiasm; still, a small group with understanding of the importance of the goals continued working together.

*Photos courtesy of pepnet 2*

*Illustration courtesy of Theresa Johnson*



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Transitioning from high school is always critical, perhaps especially for deaf and hard of hearing students and perhaps especially in Texas. In our state, each teen in transition faces numerous complex options, resources, and decisions—a process made more complex by the layers of supports needed and the specialized services required from an array of agencies and community programs.

Of the 7,306 deaf and hard of hearing students who are served within the K-12 special education system, 2,309 are at the age of transition and an unknown additional number of students are benefiting from 504 services. Further, the Texas Education Agency suspects up to an additional 4,000 students with some degree of hearing loss remain unidentified.

For students who are identified, options include 53 regional day school programs for the deaf, one state school, several private schools,

faith-based and charter schools, and, of course, home schooling. Those choices include a continuum of philosophies, communication modes, curricula, support services, and transition strategies. The Texas Education Agency provides funding and guidance to the regional day programs as well as to 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) across the state. Within each of these ESCs, at least one staff member is considered the “deaf/hard of hearing contact” who responds to questions from schools, families, and students and assists in providing resources, training, workshops, and other activities, and one representative is responsible for the transition of students with disabilities across the state. At the state school for deaf students, a large career and transition center, a program designed for individuals who are over 18 years old, and a science-technology-engineering-and-math (STEM) program are

available; further, the school sponsors an annual transition fair and hosts the Educational Resource Center on Deafness, which provides a long menu of outreach services, including transition-related trainings, workshops, projects, and student activities.

However, there is more. State vocational rehabilitation plays a large and complex role in the transition of Texas youth. With 250 general transition counselors employed and housed within schools, 63 rehabilitation counselors for the deaf, and 34 resource specialists for deaf or hard of hearing people housed in offices across the state, there is an effort to provide additional transition support.

## A Shift in Deaf/Hard of Hearing Transition

Pepnet 2 hosted its first Transition Summit in Austin, Texas, in January 2013, and this became the first of five Summits. Prior to the first Summit, each state was asked by the pepnet 2 leadership team to identify no more than five people to represent the transitional needs for the deaf and hard of hearing students. For Texas, this meant an extremely limited number of people to represent the variety of roles, geographic areas, and systems across our enormous state. When asked for a plan on how we would address the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students in Texas, the new team faced enormous challenges. How do five people determine priorities for transition services for deaf and hard of hearing students throughout a state the size of Texas? How do five people—professionals but not those in top leadership positions—influence systems and create resources? How do we get all of those individuals who need to work together to do so?

The team spent several weeks in discussion. We quickly learned that our attempts at communication via phone or Internet would not be as successful as face-to-face meetings; those were much more effective. Further, we needed to designate a note taker to stay on track.



**Left to right:** Texas team members Theresa Johnson, K-Leigh Villanueva, John Serrano, Anne Hoscheit, and Ava Robinson.

Ultimately, we decided to keep our goals simple. We would:

- re-design the transition website and add an identical version of the site in Spanish,
- host a statewide meeting to which interested individuals from across the state would come and get to know each other and perhaps develop partnerships or collaborative relationships, and
- develop a directory of representatives and programs for future reference.

While our goals were limited, we felt they were important. We also felt it was important to involve more representatives with the work of our small team. We went back to the original transition committee and explained the new course we were taking in response to the pepnet 2 initiative. We asked members if they wanted to continue on the larger transition committee, noting that their participation would require an increased commitment. Some people chose to withdraw and others wanted to remain. We identified some additional people to serve on the committee and, once we felt

we had a complete group, we called a meeting so everyone could become acquainted. This was a very successful meeting; members of the pepnet 2 team were grateful for the support of this larger group, and it gave us renewed enthusiasm for the work.

## Getting the Work Done

The larger transition committee, very supportive of the team's desire to renovate the website and add a Spanish component, made many suggestions for improvements and strategized on how to promote this website across the state. Together, we designed materials and disseminated information statewide.

Last April as we planned for a statewide stakeholders meeting, we created a survey that was disseminated prior to the meeting in which we hoped to identify:

- barriers that had been experienced by our students;
- contributions that people had made as individuals; and
- agencies, positions, and people who were already successfully in place.

The results of the survey were used to determine the agenda for the face-to-face



meeting, which was held at the Texas School for the Deaf. After much discussion in small and large groups, priorities were identified and work groups were established to determine how to proceed. Through this process, stakeholders began to know each other and understand the role each person plays in the big picture of transition for deaf and hard of hearing students in Texas. Strategies of how the work would be done were developed and, after a full day of very focused work, everyone left hopeful and enthusiastic.

### Still Ahead: Much Work, Much Hope

There is clearly a lot of work to be done in Texas. We plan to hold a follow-up meeting to review where we are in our progress and determine what to tackle next.

Some work has already been done. As a direct result of the stakeholders' meeting, a directory of key people involved in the transition planning process was developed and disseminated across the state. The website is constantly a work in progress with updates, additions of information, and revisions. The state is slowly beginning to recognize the value of some of the activities designed for deaf and hard of hearing students, which were discontinued when changes occurred a few years ago. Recent discussions about how we might bring some of the activities back have occurred, and we have even agreed to discuss some reallocation of funds. Additional projects are in progress, such as the development of training materials for educators and rehabilitation staff; the coordination of transition fairs; and several presentations at statewide conferences for

educators, rehabilitation staff, and families.

Have all of our efforts made big systemic changes within our state? No. But we have cultivated important relationships and created helpful resources. We have brought parents and professionals, who play important roles across the state, together for a shared

cause. Collaboration was strong and meaningful from the very beginning, and it promises to continue during the work ahead. As we watch deaf and hard of hearing students transition more effectively from school to the workplace or to postsecondary education or training, we know that it has been worth the commitment.



# Transition in Texas: Survey Specifies Needs

By Theresa Johnson and John A. Serrano

The following shows the questions and responses to a survey sent to parents, teachers, vocational rehabilitation staff, administrators, higher education professionals, community representatives, and service providers who are concerned with the transition of Texas students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The survey was sent out prior to a pepnet 2 Summit meeting held in April 2014, and it provided a basis for discussion at the meeting. Results exceeded 100 percent because respondents were invited to offer up to three responses. Only the most frequently selected responses are reflected below.

## How do you positively impact the transition process?

- 63 percent through *student advocacy* (i.e., direct assistance to students, including instruction, coaching, goal setting, assistance with employment or admission to college, self-advocacy, responsibility, and independence)
- 50 percent through *parent advocacy* (i.e., direct assistance to parents and families; through training, provision of resources, and other support)
- 42 percent through *school personnel services* (i.e., direct services to educators and counselors; through training, provision of resources, and other support)
- 42 percent through *liaison services* (i.e., working with employers, colleges, and technical schools on behalf of students to facilitate access to higher education, training, and employment)

## What transition strategies, resources, and/or experiences are most impactful with regard to student success?

- 42 percent *experiencing experiential learning* (i.e., from fairs, expos, and field trips to colleges and the workplace)
- 29 percent *experiencing one-on-one guidance* (i.e., from counselors, specialists who provide appropriate evaluation and transition guidance, and from those in vocational rehabilitation and the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services)
- 29 percent *gaining early work experience* (i.e., from internships and high school job experiences in order that students develop realistic expectations and gain a sense of belonging on work site)
- 29 percent *learning self-advocacy skills* (i.e., teaching students to speak up for themselves and their needs)
- 21 percent *learning job acquisition skills* (i.e., through vocational education, learning how to write resumes and interview)
- 21 percent *family support* (i.e., through parental and family involvement, advocacy, and experiences in the “independent living skills” building)

## What are the most effective transition partnerships (collaborations) already in place?

- Those from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services.

- Those from Texas School for the Deaf Programs and Grants.
- Those from the Educational Resource Center on Deafness.

## What is the biggest barrier to the successful transition of students from high school to college or employment?

- 29 percent *lack of parental involvement*—Parents do not have sufficient access to information.
- 25 percent *insufficiently prepared and fearful employers*—Employers lack knowledge about deaf and hard of hearing individuals and resources for accommodation.
- 21 percent *inadequate joint efforts between resources and school*—Communication and coordination of service delivery starts too late, delivering too little.
- 17 percent *insufficient essential life skills*—Students lack skills with regard to self-advocacy, independence, self-confidence.

## What do we need to do to make people more aware of available transition resources?

- 42 percent *increase school outreach*—Equip school personnel with information; improve information through meetings during the admission, review, and dismissal process and during the Individualized Education Program; focus on strategies for reaching parents without Internet access.
- 29 percent *spread the word*—Develop and implement a public relations and marketing initiative; target consistent messages via the press, television, philanthropic, and other agency sites; effectively utilize technology, including Facebook and other social media.
- 25 percent *centralize information*—Create a centralized, master resource list.
- 25 percent *provide staff development*—Develop and host transition training for special education teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and other professionals involved with students’ transition. Use on-site facilities as well as webinars.

## What additional transition partnerships (collaborations) should we establish?

- Build partnerships with employers.
- Strengthen collaboration between vocational rehabilitation and schools.



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**Pam Smith**, MEd, is the coordinator of Adult Outreach Services at the North Dakota School for the Deaf/Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and she chairs pepnet 2's "Team North Dakota." With more than 20 years in education, she has taught high school psychology in New Mexico, worked with students who were deaf in rural communities, and taught high school social studies for 10 years at the North Dakota School for the Deaf. Smith earned her bachelor's degrees in deaf education and secondary education and her master's degrees in educational leadership/administration and gerontology.

## SMALL NUMBERS AND BIG SPACES CALL FOR A

# Team Approach in North Dakota

*By Pam Smith and Bambi Lambert*

*Preparing deaf and hard of hearing students for transition is a unique challenge in North Dakota, a rural state in which the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has identified only 32 transition-age students as "deaf" or "hearing impaired." Additional students who are deaf or hard of hearing may be being served via 504 plans in the schools, but there is no data available which indicates this. Collaboration among schools, the school system, and various state agencies is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Services for deaf and hard of hearing students may be limited, or unavailable, as indicated by parents and educators across North Dakota.*

In the face of these challenges—low numbers, limited services, and a rural environment—North Dakota educators and the pepnet 2 team were determined to find ways to ensure and assist with the successful transitions of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The team began by developing a survey. The survey was disseminated to more than 500 agencies and providers across the state and garnered a 23 percent response rate; it gauged the needs that service agencies experience and asked respondents to identify problems in helping deaf and hard of hearing individuals transition from school to postsecondary education or the workplace.

Respondents indicated that providers' experience with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing was infrequent, and that they felt somewhat ill-prepared to provide services due to the fact that they were unable to communicate fully and effectively. The greatest need for deaf and hard of hearing students, as stated by providers, was the lack of or inability to schedule certified interpreters. More than 80 percent of respondents reported lack of interpreter services as their number one concern. At present, only 17 interpreters are certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in our entire state, and 12 of those interpreters work in classrooms.

*Photos courtesy of Pam Smith and Bambi Lambert*



**Clockwise from above left:** Lambert in the classroom; the pepnet 2 North Dakota team; entertainer Keith Wann with students at the transition Summit.

The second biggest problem, as indicated by our survey results, was lack of information about the needs of those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

After an analysis of this survey, our North Dakota team developed a plan to address the needs of providers across the state while maintaining a focus and emphasis on the transition of youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.

### Planning for a Summit

Key state and national agencies were identified and invited to participate in planning and presentation at a two-day transition Summit. Invitations were extended to the members of the state Transition Communities of Practice, to supporting agencies and programs, and to the president of the North Dakota Association of the Deaf and others active in the Deaf community. The Summit was an event with keynote speakers and breakout sessions designed for students, parents, professionals, and interpreters. Topics addressed included advocacy, the Individualized Education

Program (IEP), employment, agency/community supports, legal rights/responsibilities, and audiological trends. Participants left with a portfolio of helpful transition resources to take back to their homes and schools.

We were fortunate that our team members worked so well together. Each of us was determined to create the best experience possible, and all of us had the support of our home agencies and schools. We figured out who would organize which events and which organizations would foot the bills. We collaborated to provide food, transportation, and lodging for student workshop attendees and their families in addition to the speaker fees. Even though we were spread across the state, our team met weekly at times to ensure planning and implementation continued smoothly. We set goals and did whatever we needed to do to achieve those goals. Working hard and consistently was key to our success.

The transition-aged students who attended the Summit were given a pre-test at the start of the Summit and a post-test three months later.

### Bambi Lambert,

MEd, is a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing for the Fargo (North Dakota) Public Schools, and she provides academic support and instruction in transition skills for secondary deaf and hard of hearing students. She maintains her certification as an American Sign Language interpreter through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and has worked in new teacher and interpreter training/mentorship, educational interpreting, and at an independent living center. On the North Dakota pepnet 2 team since 2013, Lambert earned her master's degree in deaf/hard of hearing education from the University of Minnesota.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at [Pam.Smith@k12.nd.us](mailto:Pam.Smith@k12.nd.us) and [lambertb@fargo.k12.nd.us](mailto:lambertb@fargo.k12.nd.us).

Results indicated that the attending students initially had limited knowledge of the components of the IEP itself as well as limited understanding of the IEP process. Following the Summit, their knowledge had increased: students were able to identify their disability and needed accommodations, and they demonstrated greater knowledge of the IEP and confidence in the transition process.

The Summit was not all work. With the support of pepnet 2 and our sponsoring agencies and in support of Deaf Awareness Week, Keith Wann, a hearing son of deaf parents and a comedian who entertains internationally in American Sign Language, performed for more than 200 enthusiastic community members. Wann's performance created a rare opportunity for adults who are deaf to get together with each other and deaf and hard of hearing students and their families for an evening of fun, camaraderie, and outstanding entertainment—and for us to attract more individuals to our event.

Following the Summit, the North Dakota team developed a presentation focusing on the transition needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in North Dakota. The presentation included audiological considerations, educational considerations and assessments, vocational rehabilitation information, pertinent assistive technology considerations, communication access, and relevant services available statewide. This presentation has been shared virtually via videoconferencing to statewide agencies and in person at statewide conferences.

Responding to the feedback from the survey and Summit, the team compiled a portfolio of informational resources to address the transition needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The portfolios were then hand-delivered across the state to case managers of each student identified as having a primary or secondary disability of hearing loss as

well as to other case managers who were referred to our team as serving individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The portfolio included all aspects of transition, from information about postsecondary programs, to training programs, to employment, to independent living options, to social security and vocational rehabilitation services; it was intended to inform and educate not only the case managers but students and their parents as well.

From working as a team as we developed, disseminated, and evaluated

an assessment of needs and resources in our state, to collaborating as we planned and structured a statewide conference and subsequent presentations, joining forces through pepnet 2 has been critical. Through working together as a team, and with individuals throughout the state, we are more effectively meeting the needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing throughout North Dakota as they transition to postsecondary programs or the workplace.

## Collaboration Calculations: Lessons from North Dakota

*By Pam Smith and Bambi Lambert*

The following strategies proved helpful in enabling deaf and hard of hearing students to use the resources available to effectively transition from school to postsecondary study or the workplace.

- **Identify** the roles and responsibilities of each team member involved in the student's transition—whether educational, training, or workplace—as well as independent living.
- **Empower** students to take ownership of their goals:
  - o Always involve students in the IEP process.
  - o Gradually release responsibility to the student through activities that require self-disclosure and self-advocacy.
  - o Regularly share the student's progress with the rest of the team.
- **Engage** local, regional, and state agencies:
  - o Educate agencies and providers of the service needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
  - o Provide professional resources.
- **Encourage** students to self-advocate and communicate with their support network throughout the transition process and into postsecondary, employment, and independent living options.
- **Establish** and maintain meaningful connections on the national, state, and local levels with agencies, providers, parents, schools, and other entities. This enables enhanced postsecondary outcomes for all students in North Dakota who are deaf or hard of hearing.

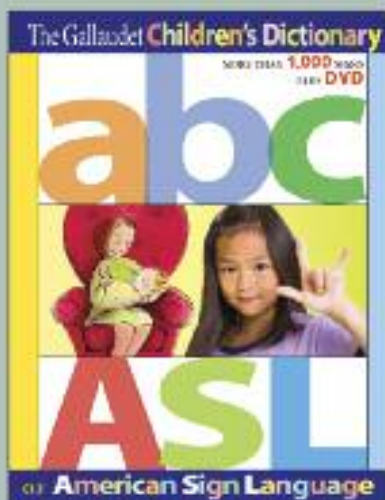




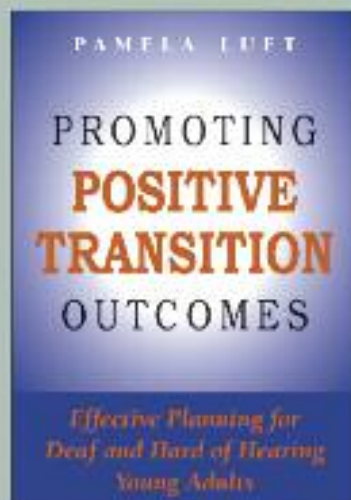
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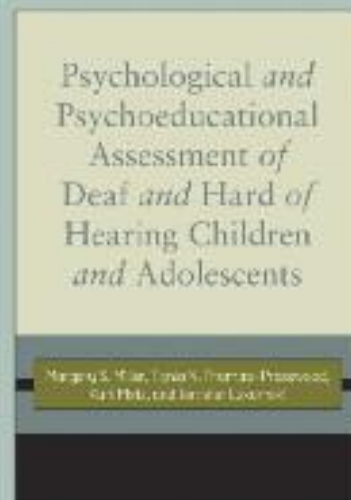
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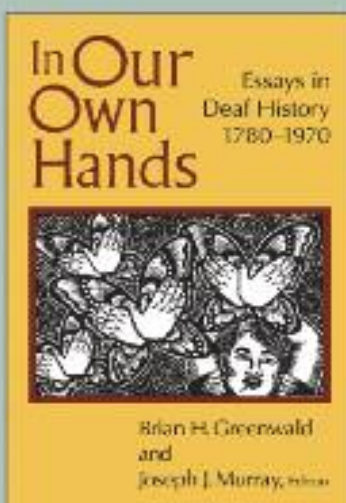
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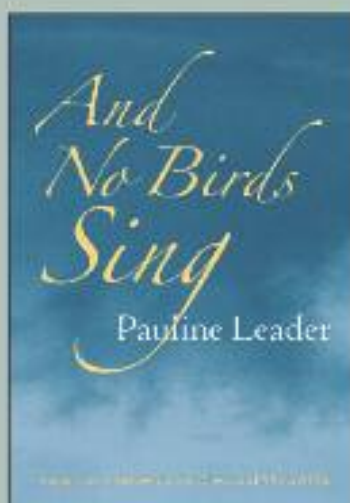
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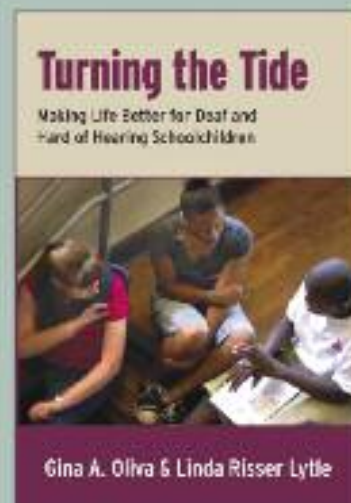
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# Partnering, Collaborating, and Moving Ahead:

## TRANSITION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS IN MINNESOTA

*By Elise Knopf and Mary Cashman-Bakken*

**Elise Knopf, MA,** has been the state coordinator for deaf services in the Department of Employment and Economic Development, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, in St. Paul, Minnesota, since May 2012. Prior to holding this position, Knopf worked for pepnet, first as the Midwest director and then as one of the Leadership Team members under the grant funded by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Minnesota leaders have worked hard to provide educational opportunities and employment services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The timely formation of pepnet 2 helped shape Minnesota's State Transition Team to "better prepare teachers, families, and students for transition from high school to independent living, employment, and/or postsecondary education."

Professionals from many different service agencies participated in this work, including the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and its many school districts; the Department of Employment and Economic Development; Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS); the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans; and the University of Minnesota.

Each agency was working individually, but when we were provided time during a pepnet 2 Summit conference, we identified areas in which we could collaborate—and we started collaborating.

In 2008, the focus within MDE's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee shifted to transition, and the team looked for additional leadership from agencies such as VRS in the area of transition. In 2009, the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans

*Photos courtesy of Elise Knopf, Mary Cashman-Bakken, and pepnet 2*



**Mary Cashman-Bakken**, MA, JD, is state specialist for the deaf and hard of hearing for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). An itinerant deaf and hard of hearing teacher for 10 years, she has worked at MDE for 22 years.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at [elise.knopf@state.mn.us](mailto:elise.knopf@state.mn.us) and [mary.cashman-bakken@state.mn.us](mailto:mary.cashman-bakken@state.mn.us).

**Above and at left:** The *Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing* includes information and resources on self-advocacy and hearing loss, employment, postsecondary education and training, independent living, a transition timeline, records to keep, and additional considerations.

successfully lobbied for passage of legislation requiring data to identify schools and regions meeting state performance standards to determine gaps and achievements. In 2013-2014, Minnesota passed "Planning for Students' Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education and Employment; Personal Learning Plans." This legislation requires school districts to assist all students by grade nine in exploring educational, college, and career interests, aptitudes, and aspirations and in developing a plan for successful



transition to postsecondary education and employment. With nine individual components and a mandate that general and special educators work together, the plan was a huge leap for transition services in our state and helping students move from high school to postsecondary training, university, or the workplace.

### The Teacher's Resource Guide

We—those of us on the MDE Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee—felt that the teachers in Minnesota could benefit from a standardized transition guide. After discussion, we launched an extensive literature review of existing guides. We looked at a variety of materials and settled on the format of a checklist; we believed a checklist would be most beneficial for busy itinerant teachers who have to serve students from birth through age 21.

We also wanted everything to be in one place so teachers would have an easier time finding what they needed. Workgroups focused on writing with teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students and representatives from agencies such as VRS were held for a year. The biggest struggle was making sure the document was accessible for people in large print. In 2012, we were able to issue the *Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing* as a pilot.

Teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students used the guide and provided written feedback. The MDE Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee reviewed and incorporated the feedback, revising the document before distribution. Team members worked with teachers at the district, regional, and state levels, helping them to implement the guide into their work. Near the end of the writing of the final document, the team composition changed. Instead of mostly educators, a

variety of professionals from pepnet 2 and representatives of diverse communities and agencies became involved. Together we expanded the guide to include companion webinars with continuing education credits. The team strengthened its ties with the University of Minnesota, and the university's website became the platform where the guide and accompanying webinars would be posted. Some of the webinars include student stories, which are powerful and show the level of commitment of all the involved professionals in our students' success.

At the 2013 Summit, the team presented the pilot guide to participants from 25 states. The response was overwhelming and positive, with educators from many states requesting the



**Above:** Minnesota Transition Team: (back row, left to right) Elise Knopf from VRS, Mary Cashman-Bakken from MDE, and Cheryl DeConde Johnson (pepnet 2 champion); (front row, left to right): Jay Fehrman and Greta Palmberg from the independent school districts, and Anna Paulson from the Commission Serving Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans.

link. The group realized it had something important on its hands and agreed to go back to Minnesota and continue its work to expand the guide.

### Reaching Out Goals of the Transition Team

At the Summit, the Minnesota Transition Team—Mary Cashman-Bakken from MDE; Dr. Sue Rose from the University of Minnesota; Greta Palmberg and Jay Fehrman, each from a Minnesota school district; and Elise Knopf from VRS—established three goals. We discussed the projects we were

working on and agreed to move ahead with our work. While agreement was almost immediate, it did require thought and discussion as we respected the individuals and agencies involved. The goals we formed were:

1. *We would train teachers.* We wanted teachers to be able to use the guide more effectively. We also wanted information about transition to be given to students directly through their teachers.
2. *We would reach out to parents.* We wanted to make sure parents and families were aware of the importance of transition and the structures and agencies that are available to help their children.
3. *We would work on assembling and understanding data.* MDE conducts statewide assessments on all students beginning in third grade, showing how deaf and hard of hearing students compare in reading and math to their peers who are hearing and their peers who have other disabilities. MDE reports general demographic data as well, including numbers, gender, race, and postsecondary outcomes for each child.

## Reaching Out Pursuing Goals

To reach out to teachers, we began a series of webinars. To reach out to parents, we headed to Mankato, Minnesota, to do the first of what we hoped would be a series of intimate conversations with parents and families of deaf and hard of hearing students about transition.

MDE presented at a regional parent meeting designed by teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. The individuals involved in organizing the event worked all year to get donations and support. Families were invited to a kick-off event; the following day, a variety of age-appropriate activities, staffed by teachers, occurred. The parents were expected to participate in carefully designed workshops to increase their understanding of transition planning.

We talked to about 30 parents—and we were surprised to find that some career expectations for their children were so low. In fact, some parents stated that they expected their children to become janitors or dishwashers. The team stressed understanding the importance of having access to quality education and parents being diligent at home about checking their child's comprehension of the world around them. The *Transition Skills Guidelines*, developed by the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University, was distributed, and many parents were surprised at how much was expected of them.

We shared that the *Minnesota Transition Guide* was being developed and explained where to look for the site once it was completed. Several parents remarked that they appreciated this information and changes would be made in their homes. The team divided parents into groups by the ages of their children,

discussed appropriate transition activities, and answered questions. A deaf individual presented, and parents had many questions for the deaf presenter about how she grew up (e.g., her struggles and joys); several parents remain in contact with the speaker today. Partly as a result of our meeting, parents developed their own independent support group and they continue to meet independently.

We also pursued our goal of looking more closely at data. The MDE's transition specialist assisted us in understanding the ramifications of the Post-Secondary Outcome Survey for Minnesota. For example, it took us time to realize that data for what is known as Indicator 14 in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is not really helpful to us due to its small sample size. In fact, the state asks only one-fifth of the districts in any given year to survey students who graduated and determine if those former students are working part time, full time, or continuing their education. For students who are deaf or hard of hearing—and for other students whose status is classified as “low incidence”—the numbers are too small to be able to generalize or make inferences for the rest of the population.

MDE asked VRS to share its data on transition-aged students, and we realized that these two agencies aggregate data differently. While VRS data covered students who were 16 to 24 years old, MDE data covered students who were 14 to 21 years old. Further, differences in terminology and categories needed to be clarified.

Using VR data, both VRS and MDE noted a geographical area in which only a few students were receiving VR services. The result was an educational workshop held by both MDE and VRS for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and VR counselors. The goal of the workshop: to establish communications and build relationships. The data showed which school districts had students identified as deaf or hard of hearing and allowed us to connect professionals from classrooms, schools, and the VR office and encourage them to dialogue about service needs for our students.

## A Newly Designed Survey The Work Continues

The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 was conducted beginning in 2000 and completed in 2009 for all students with disabilities. Pepnet 2 did a secondary analysis on students with hearing loss, and results showed that students with hearing loss had more chance for success if parents had high expectations for education and had postsecondary experience themselves. That was vital for us, and we wanted to see where Minnesota stood, but there was no research. We would have to do it ourselves.

We began in the summer of 2015. After working together to produce the guide, we found ourselves working on a different level; we had earned each other's trust, relationships had developed, and communication flowed. We applied for and were awarded “state exemplar status” from pepnet 2 to receive



technical assistance with data collection. Technical assistance was provided to redesign an existing MDE transition survey for a pilot survey of the deaf and hard of hearing population.

This survey is now underway. A back-to-school letter from MDE informed teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students about the survey in the fall of 2015. The Minnesota Transition Team attended the pepnet 2 Summit in Atlanta in February 2016, and dissemination of the survey began in March. Results of the survey will be collected in May and included in the 2016 *MDE Legislative Report* in June.

Working together has led to deeper relationships, a greater understanding of our respective agency goals, better communication, and finding common ties. The Minnesota Transition Team still has much to do. We are determined to find the best ways to assist deaf and hard of hearing students in their transition from high school to independent living, employment, and/or postsecondary education. We are grateful for the assistance of pepnet 2 in being able to do that with increasing effectiveness, and we are grateful for each other. None of us could have accomplished this alone.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The following websites provide more information about transition in Minnesota.

**Minnesota's early transition mandates—**  
[www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=125A.63](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=125A.63)

**Minnesota's more recent legislation, marking a “huge leap” for transition training—**  
<https://revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=120B.125>

**The National Longitudinal Transition Survey-2 (2000-2009)—**[www.nlts2.org/fact\\_sheets/nlts2\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2011\\_02.pdf](http://www.nlts2.org/fact_sheets/nlts2_fact_sheet_2011_02.pdf)

**Pepnet 2's secondary analysis of NLTS2 and parental expectations—**[www.pepnet.org/resources/effects-parent-expectations-and-parent-involvement-postschool-outcomes-individuals-who-are](http://www.pepnet.org/resources/effects-parent-expectations-and-parent-involvement-postschool-outcomes-individuals-who-are)

**Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing—**[www.cebd.umn.edu/DHH-Resources/Transition-Guide/default.html](http://www.cebd.umn.edu/DHH-Resources/Transition-Guide/default.html)

**Transition Skills Guidelines—**This document has been posted on various websites on the Internet. It may be downloaded free from the Clerc Center's website at <http://clerccenter2.gallaudet.edu/products/?id=216>.





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*Through partnerships with Gallaudet University Regional Centers' (GURCs) host institutions, the regional centers share Gallaudet's undergraduate and graduate programs and Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's resources and expertise through training programs, workshops and conferences, youth programs, technical assistance and consultation.*

**Roslyn (Roz)**

**Rosen**, PhD, is currently on the core team of the national LEAD-K advocacy coalition, an expert consultant on education for the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), and a board member of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. She was previously the director of the National Center on Deafness at the California State University, Northridge; the principal investigator for the Postsecondary Educational Programs Network (pepnet 2); and vice president of academic affairs, dean, and a faculty member at Gallaudet University. Rosen has served as a board member and/or officer with the NAD, the WFD, and the American Society for Deaf Children. She is author of numerous articles and presentations on leadership, human rights, bilingualism, and educational issues. Rosen welcomes questions and comments about this article at [rozrosen@gmail.com](mailto:rozrosen@gmail.com).

# The Power and Promise of a Handshake: Milestones in Collaboration

*By Roslyn Rosen*

## **1816—Clerc and Gallaudet** **The Handshake that Launched 1,000 Programs**

In 1816, when Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher of deaf students from France, met the Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a hearing preacher from the United States, one of the world's most important partnerships began. Gallaudet had visited England and then come to France in search of a pedagogy to teach deaf children. His quest was initiated by Alice Cogswell's father, Mason; Gallaudet had worked with Alice, a young deaf girl from his hometown of Hartford, Connecticut, and he knew that there were many other uneducated deaf children like Alice throughout the United States.

In Paris, Gallaudet observed classes in France's national school for deaf students where he met Clerc. Gallaudet *knew* that Clerc had the knowledge and experience to create relevant, deaf-centric, and successful educational programs for deaf children. *Gallaudet needed Clerc.* He implored Clerc to return to the United States with him. Clerc accepted the challenge. He shook hands with Gallaudet, thus forming a formidable team and setting a new precedent.

Their collaboration began immediately. They used their journey home—nearly two months at sea—to their mutual benefit. Gallaudet taught Clerc English, and Clerc taught Gallaudet sign language. Again the men had a mutual goal, and again collaboration was needed to reach it.

The Clerc/Gallaudet collaboration would lead to the introduction of bilingual educational programs in the United States, where students and teachers used sign language and deaf teachers were revered in classrooms. The deaf/hearing partnership set a principle that would result in the education of thousands of deaf and hard of

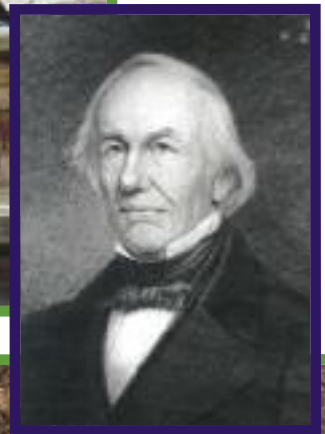
*Photos courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives*

*Illustrations courtesy of the California State University, Northridge and LEAD-K*





**Clockwise from left:** Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet; DPN rally at the U.S. Capitol; Laurent Clerc; DPN protesters march through the streets of Washington, D.C.



hearing children, the founding of the world's only university specifically for deaf and hard of hearing students, and the United States becoming a beacon of light for deaf and hard of hearing people around the world.

### **1988—Students and Community Collaborations Led to a Deaf University President**

Another American milestone illustrating the power and promise of deaf/hearing collaborations was the Deaf President Now (DPN) movement at Gallaudet University. DPN coalesced as a protest in 1988 when the University's Board of Trustees failed to choose a deaf individual to become University president. Learning that the new president would be hearing, the students, faculty, alumni, Deaf community, and interpreters rallied together and formed a position statement: It was time for a university serving primarily deaf students to have a deaf president.

Collaboration was essential. The protesting individuals had divergent ideas related to processes and strategies, and even the individual who should be the deaf president, but all agreed on overarching principles. They agreed to support the student leaders elected to serve as the face of the

movement as well as the DPN Council representing the faculty, staff, alumni, families, and community.

As the protest gathered strength, it garnered the support of other minority



communities. The media showed up with its spotlight, and the country was captivated. Letters and calls from supporters and families flooded the halls of Congress, prompting key legislative leaders to ask the board to reconsider. Reconsider the board did. The result: Gallaudet got its first deaf president in its 124 years of existence.

The ramifications were profound. Not only did the nation's university for deaf students get a deaf president, but it also got a Board of Trustees with its first deaf chair and a majority of deaf members. Further, the relationships and awareness resulting from DPN contributed to the development and



support of the Americans with Disabilities Act passed by Congress in 1990 and to the large number of deaf administrators in schools and programs serving deaf populations.

Collaboration moved events forward positively, forcefully, and successfully. Success was made possible by individuals who committed to the goal, agreed to trust their elected representatives, and worked together on various tasks until the goal was achieved. Collaborative synergy means  $1 + 1 = 3!$

## Collaboration Today

### It Takes a Village to Collaborate

Community schools operate on the principle that it takes a village to educate a child. By collaborating with families, state and local agencies, alumni, public schools and colleges, policy makers, and employers or business owners, a school multiplies its effects manifold. By reaching beyond its borders and working with the community, providing continuing education and other opportunities, greater awareness, enthusiasm, and opportunities become possible.

The West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (WVSDB) provide an example of successful collaborative planning. Teachers and residential life counselors jointly work on individual student plans and enrichment opportunities. WVSDB partners with the state division of vocational rehabilitation on career and life planning for its teenagers. Students are given the opportunity to serve as legislative pages for a day, helping to educate policy-makers about the capacities of people who are deaf and who are blind. Career education programs are enriched through liaisons to technical and community colleges as well as some businesses. Master teachers work with new teachers, creating professional learning communities and discussing both areas of innovation and those needing improvement. In addition to students served on site, 600 deaf children and families are served externally through outreach programs and on-campus short courses. Through collaboration and teamwork, WVSDB maximizes capacity as a learning and living environment, as a demonstration school,

and as a valued state resource.

The California State University, Northridge (CSUN) is nationally recognized for its leadership in effective education and human development for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students and professionals through successful collaborations. CSUN programs include Deaf Education, Deaf Studies, the National Center on Deafness, and the federally funded Postsecondary Educational Programs Network (pepnet 2). In 2009, with a grant from the California Department of Education (CDE), deaf and hearing professionals from these programs joined hands with parent representatives and deaf students and developed *Through Your Child's Eyes: American Sign Language*, a video that encourages bilingual educational approaches for young deaf children. Presented in American Sign Language (ASL), English, and Spanish, it became an overnight sensation, with at least 35,000 hits from the United States and 30 other countries posted within the first two months. The collaboration, visibility, and trust that resulted from this video project strengthened relations between the CDE and the Deaf community and became a building block for subsequent legislative action supporting bilingual opportunities for deaf babies.

The Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, the American Foundation for the Blind, and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) joined forces to strengthen the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Together, these organizations sponsored HR 3535, known as the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act (2015), which if passed, would:

- ensure linguistic readiness and appropriate services for deaf, blind, and deafblind children;
- require that professionals serving these children be qualified; and
- hold agencies accountable for results of state programs.

The California Association of the Deaf (CAD) and the Northern California (NorCal) Services for Deaf and Hard of

Hearing (along with its eight sister agencies) provided another example of successful collaboration when, in 2010, a coalition of private Options schools got an assemblyman to introduce legislation that would have provided a brochure at no cost to parents of newly identified deaf babies. The brochure, while professing to give families unbiased information on communication options, actually focused on oral communication and summarily dismissed ASL in two sentences. Moreover, no recognition was given to the importance of language acquisition or the vital role of language, as opposed to mechanical communication methodologies, in



developing fundamental skills for cognition, critical thinking, and connections needed to succeed in education and life.

Individuals from various agencies sprang into action to amend the new proposal and to require the development of a brochure that would include both languages, ASL and English, as vital for a deaf child's cognitive and linguistic development. When they finished, the proponents of the original bill now opposed the bill and, in the confusion, the governor vetoed it. The assemblyman, who had good intentions, encouraged CAD, NorCal, and the Options schools to collaborate. The meeting took place with a mediator to go over the principles, criteria, and processes for the next steps. Mutual agreement was achieved. The bill went forward, and a balanced family resource manual is now a reality and available online for family use and reference (CDE, 2013). Without deaf people at the table, the results would have been neither authentic nor appropriate.

Shortly afterwards, NorCal, with executive director Sheri Farinha, and CAD, with president Julie Rems Smario, launched a workgroup of diverse representatives from California, a few other interested states, and the NAD. The goal: legislative and mobilization strategies to ensure deaf children have language to be kindergarten-ready. This new coalition became known as the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids—Kindergarten Ready (or LEAD-K for short). The LEAD-K website ([www.asl4deafkids.org](http://www.asl4deafkids.org)) includes information, resources, and photos regarding a deaf child's right to ASL and English and to be kindergarten-ready.

The California SB210 bill focused on state accountability for systemic changes and early language benchmarks for families, and it stipulated that early education professionals be capable of assessing whether deaf babies met those benchmarks for acquiring language proficiency in ASL and/or English in order to be ready for kindergarten. It also indicated that the U.S. Department of Education, rather than the U.S. Department of Health, become responsible for this aspect of the early identification and intervention program.

The LEAD-K team drafted a model bill, and then Farinha and Rems Smario submitted the bill to the California legislative body. They also collaborated with Options schools on the bill and the lobbying for it. The bill passed both houses unanimously and won approval from the governor in October 2015. Funding to implement timely assessments and prevent language deprivation begins in 2017. In addition to the powerful impact that this legislation will have on the youngest deaf children, the collaboration required to draft and pass it raised the awareness of state legislators about the essence of involving deaf people in processes and decisions about them, enhanced the role of state schools for the deaf, and enabled families to easily procure resources to prevent language deprivation in their deaf children. Several states are currently developing their own versions of this legislation.



## Collaborating for Success Points

The LEAD-K movement includes all aspects of successful agreements on the following:

- *Establishing a clear goal.* The deaf child will be ready for kindergarten. This is the prize; keep eyes on it.
- *Articulating overarching principles.* The principles are non-negotiable, centering on the deaf child's right to language—ASL and/or English—and full access to education. Parents need to have language benchmarks starting at their child's birth. The state, which is mandated to provide early intervention programs, needs to be held accountable for outcomes.
- *Sharing essential information.* Dismal data exists on the high percentage of deaf and hard of hearing children who, through language deprivation, are not ready for kindergarten. This data was shared with various legislators and constituencies to get them engaged.
- *Ensuring diverse stakeholders are at the table.* Varying perspectives and experiences strengthen the outcomes. Innovations “for a specific group” often have great cross-sectional benefits for society at large; curb cuts and captions, for example, benefit more than just the intended groups (Rosen, 2012).
- *Collaborating across various aisles.* Relationships, collaborations, and networking with various organizations and legislative bodies can lead to positive results. The bill focused on language proficiency—ASL and/or English—and thus got support from both sides to ensure deaf children would be on target linguistically in ASL and/or English. Families would be informed about benchmarks and strategies for meeting them in one or both languages.

# Key Steps for Successful Collaboration

By Roslyn Rosen

A snowflake by itself is fragile. Together, snowflakes contribute to formidable glaciers that have been known to move mountains. Successful collaborations—the synergy of people tackling what can seem to be a mountain of challenge—have also transformed landscapes.

Key steps include:

- **Ensuring diverse stakeholders are at the table.** Not only does each stakeholder bring vital perspectives, but the involvement of individuals representing diverse perspectives helps to increase trust in the process and outcome within each constituent group. For example, cuts in curbsides, which originally required the retraining of seeing eye dogs for the safety of their owners, have had great benefits for society at large, including bikers, skaters, stroller pushers, and wagon pullers. Closed captioning, originally and primarily begun for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, has resulted in customers in noisy venues such as bars and airports being able to understand TV programming and second language users garnering assistance with English language learning. (Rosen, 2012)
- **Recognizing different talents and strengths within a group.** At the dawn of civilization, the cooperation of hunters and gatherers demonstrated how various talents helped the tribe to survive and thrive. This early example of teamwork—different people having varying abilities and/or interests—enabled our species to thrive. Members of a group need to be willing to keep an open mind, modify views as needed, and step out of their comfort zone to take on new assignments as needed to accomplish the agreed-upon goal.
- **Trusting the group and the process.** To succeed, the group must visualize its goal and articulate the overarching principles to inform the process, communication, and outcomes. Individuals need to be willing to set aside their own personal agenda for the benefit of the team. Adjustments can be made regarding the process and product based on group determinations.



The focus shifted from mechanical communications skills to language proficiency and safeguards.

- *Ensuring deaf leaders are involved and that goals and processes are deaf-centric.* This ensures the outcome will be authentic as well as culturally and pedagogically appropriate for deaf children, leading to success in school and life.

Since Clerc and Gallaudet shook each other's hand two centuries ago on another continent, the leadership of deaf people and the collaboration among deaf and hearing individuals, families, state agencies, interpreters, schools, and communities have been essential to the success of deaf and hard of hearing students. Adherence to overarching principles has defined successful collaborations and continues to do so today.

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**Luanne Barron,** MEd, the assistant superintendent at the Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD), has spent 29 years in deaf education. She was a classroom teacher until coming to KSD, where she has held a variety of administrative positions. Today she coordinates KSD's instructional and boarding programs from early childhood throughout post-high school. A former member of the Special Education Advisory Council, Barron is on the boards of both the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf and the Deaf Cultural Center.

**Stephanie Ray-Oyler,** MEd, is the College and Career Readiness coordinator at Elgin Independent School, where she leads programs and services that ensure all graduates have the means, opportunity, and preparation to succeed after they leave high school. Previously, she worked for the Transition Coalition at

# Using Data to Set Goals:

## Collaborating for Success

*By Luanne Barron, Stephanie Ray-Oyler, and Dana Lattin*

*I would like to address the gap by creating a better communication tool for students and their parents for that next connecting agency. I am still working on what that tool will look like.*

~ Transition facilitator and a parent,  
Kansas School for the Deaf, in response to the QI-2

Representatives from the Kansas State Department of Education; the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; the University of Kansas Transition Coalition; and the transition coordinator, parents, Independent Living Center, and administrators from the Kansas School for the Deaf formed a team to establish quality transition services and resources for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and assistance to their parents, educators, agencies, and independent living center staff, especially in rural areas. Our team, a result of the Summits sponsored by the federally supported pepnet 2, wanted deaf and hard of hearing students to be empowered to experience life as self-sufficient and contributing citizens. To do this, we needed a statewide plan.

The Kansas team got together and deliberated. We were aware of multiple and varied needs, but we had a difficult time prioritizing. What should be the focus? At first, we thought that the focus should be program structure, but there was inadequate

*Photo courtesy of pepnet 2*

*Illustrations courtesy of Luanne Barron, Stephanie Ray-Oyler, and Dana Lattin*



the University of Kansas, coordinating professional development in the areas of secondary transition and dropout prevention for Kansas schools in partnership with the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network. Ray-Oyler welcomes questions and comments about this article at [Stephanie.Oyler@elginisd.net](mailto:Stephanie.Oyler@elginisd.net).

**Dana Lattin, MS, Ed,** is research project director at the Transition Coalition ([www.transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org)), part of the Beach Center on Disability, at the University of Kansas, where she directs a variety of projects focusing on improving outcomes for youth with disabilities and provides comprehensive professional development and resources to transition practitioners through a variety of online and face-to-face formats. Please direct questions regarding the needs assessment instrument discussed in this article to her at [dlattin@ku.edu](mailto:dlattin@ku.edu).

data on the status of transition for deaf and hard of hearing students in our state. We needed data to pursue a systematic approach and make purposeful and effective decisions—and we needed to include other people who were involved with and cared about the transition process for deaf and hard of hearing young people.

A needs assessment was in order. A representative from pepnet 2, the federal initiative to increase the lifetime choices of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, suggested that the team reach out to the Transition Coalition, a research unit at the University of Kansas that provides information, training, and resources for effective transition for students with disabilities. The Transition Coalition in partnership with the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network, a branch of the Kansas State Department of Education, provides technical assistance to support school districts' systematic implementation of evidence-based practices.

The Transition Coalition recommended that we administer its Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs Needs Assessment-2 (QI-2) developed by Morningstar, Gaumer Erickson, Lattin, and Lee (2012) at the University of Kansas. The QI-2 is a cost-effective needs

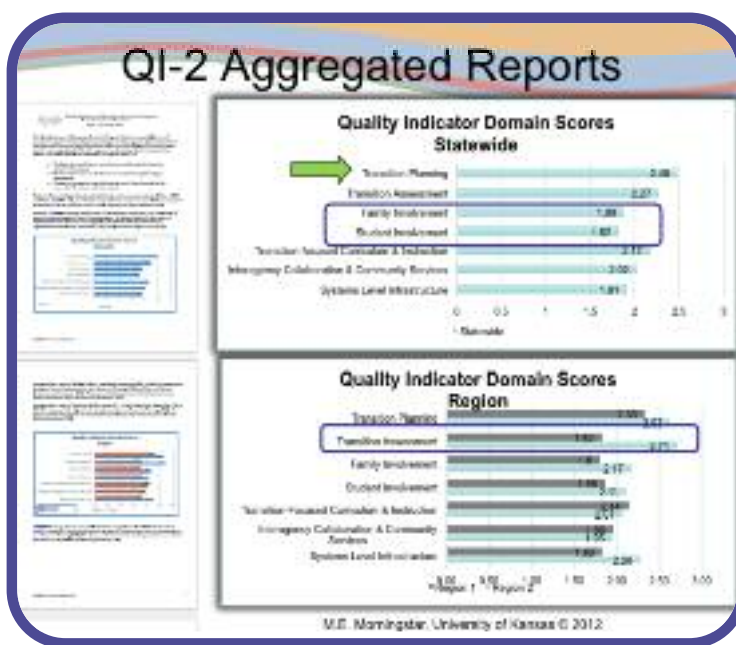
assessment tool that helps educators collect data on the effectiveness of local transition programs and practices. It may be found online at [www.transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org).

A valid and reliable instrument (Morningstar, Lee, Lattin, & Murray, 2015), the QI-2 survey has been used by multiple states and districts to help identify priorities for planning, professional development, and program enhancement. Designed to assist programs, schools, and districts as they prioritize the most critical needs of transition programs, the QI-2 generates an evaluation for each individual who takes it, producing a profile that comprises 47 indicators across seven domains. These domains are:

1. transition planning
2. transition assessment
3. family involvement
4. student involvement
5. transition-focused curriculum and instruction
6. interagency collaboration
7. system-level infrastructure

We administered the QI-2 statewide between August 1, 2014, and June 15, 2015, contacting individuals involved in deaf education and transition via e-mail. A total of 89 individuals





responded, including parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, young deaf and hard of hearing adults, and those who work directly with deaf or hard of hearing students.

## What the Data Said

*We have recognized ... {that we} are not well prepared to accommodate the anticipated growth/influx of D/HH students into the system ... I have been able to use the data to create pressure onto the system as State is preparing for changes as a result of {the Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act}.*

~ Executive director, Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, in response to the QI-2

The results, compiled in a report, were sent to everyone, and we gathered together to discuss them. Face-to-face discussion was essential. Everyone was able to share his or her thoughts and concerns. We were able to problem solve as a group.

The data indicated that transition planning had a high level of implementation across the state. Planning for transition began early in students' education and continued as they went through school. Students were assisted in developing goals, addressed both in academics and through their transition needs.

However, the results showed areas of concern as well. Respondents indicated that more support is needed in facilitating student involvement in their transition, and more collaboration is needed among agencies and community services. Students needed to be supported and involved in their own transition planning, which meant a need for teaching decision-making and goal-setting skills. In addition, support was needed to develop meaningful, collaborative partnerships among schools and community agencies.

Data from rural areas was particularly problematic, showing

significant gaps within programs and inadequate collaboration among agencies. Further, students and families needed to increase their involvement in transition planning.

## The Challenges to Collaboration

*There is no formal ... data on how a particular population of Deaf/HH students is functioning in regards to transition planning within the state of Kansas.* ~ Kansas State Department of Education in response to the QI-2

The team faced some challenges throughout the process. State agencies underwent administrative changes, and one of the largest districts made changes just at the time the survey was administered. Our team experienced the loss of two members. The original response rate was unsatisfactorily low. As a team we expressed our concern and strategized how to increase the responses. We decided to tap personally those whom we knew in the organizations we represented and participated in; we sent information out through listservs, and we sent informational e-mail to school districts throughout the state. The result was a slight but significant increase in the number of responses—and this provided us with sufficient data for goal development.

It was also a challenge for us to locate all of the students, ages 14-21, who are deaf or hard of hearing within the state. Attendance at all of the Special Education Association regional meetings and the Annual Special Education Leadership conference gave us the opportunity to make an announcement about the survey.

Results from the QI-2 will help schools and districts determine the most critical needs within their transition programs. Short- and long-term statewide goals will be developed based on the unmet transition needs of students.

## QI-2 Aggregated Reports

Quality Indicators Report

Transition Planning	Statewide N = 145	Region 1 N = 35	Region 2 N = 11
Transition Planning Process	3.44	3.11	3.63
1. Transition planning begins early, is a student's educational experience, and is not just for the end of high school.	3.33	3.17	3.73
2. Transition planning involves student participation and input.	3.38	3.14	3.73
3. Transition planning involves student involvement in all aspects of the transition process.	3.33	3.17	3.73
4. Transition planning involves student involvement in setting, monitoring, and evaluating transition goals.	3.38	3.14	3.73
5. Transition planning involves student involvement in setting transition goals.	3.49	3.23	3.82
6. Transition planning involves student involvement in setting transition goals.	3.48	3.22	3.75
7. Transition planning involves student involvement in setting transition goals.	3.41	3.17	3.78

Transition Assessment	Statewide N = 145	Region 1 N = 35	Region 2 N = 11
Transition Assessment Process	3.27	3.03	3.73
8. A wide variety of formal and informal transition assessments are available to all students.	3.38	3.14	3.73
9. Assessments for each student problem specific, individualized, and appropriate.	3.33	3.17	3.73
10. Transition assessment process is ongoing throughout the year.	3.23	3.17	3.73
11. Transition assessment results are shared with students, families, and staff as a teaming effort.	3.38	3.14	3.73
12. Transition assessment results are shared with students, families, and staff as a teaming effort.	3.28	3.14	3.73
13. Transition assessment results are shared with students, families, and staff as a teaming effort.	3.40	3.17	3.73

M.E. Morningstar, University of Kansas © 2012

Today the Kansas pepnet 2 team has identified the unmet needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, and we hope to use this data to enable school districts to better prepare teachers, parents, and students for transition from high school to postsecondary education or the workplace. Whether students should move on to independent living, employment or postsecondary education, or both, the data we have at our fingertips should facilitate the process. Partnering with other agencies in administering and analyzing the QI-2 will make the delivery of transition services to the deaf and hard of hearing youth of Kansas more effective.

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## QI-2 ADMINISTRATION AND BENEFITS

### Using Data for Effective Planning

By Luanne Barron, Stephanie Ray-Oyler, and Dana Lattin

The process that we followed in our transition planning proved to be effective. The steps below may be helpful to others who wish to use data for planning transition in their area. To pursue effective transition planning through collaboration, we:

1. Administered a statewide and district-level needs assessment evaluation.
2. Compiled the data in partnership with the Transition Coalition at the University of Kansas.
3. Analyzed the data to develop results-based outcomes for students, family members, and professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing students.
4. Developed a short- and long-term plan to effectively execute the statewide transition planning using the data to determine trends.
5. Assessed the state of the transition program infrastructure at the state level for deaf and hard of hearing students ages 14-21.
6. Identified and used district, state, and national resources.

Our evaluation instrument, the QI-2, developed by the Transition Coalition at the University of Kansas, allowed us to:

- Identify regions in the state with the most needs.
- See results for each domain—student involvement, transition planning, transition assessment—as well as results for indicators within each of those areas.
- Distinguish the different needs experienced in rural, urban, and suburban schools.
- Identify and implement interagency strategies to address specific needs.
- Develop a shared action plan for which we could work together to improve the transition outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Administering the QI-2 had the additional benefit of engaging those who developed, administered, and took it in collaboration. The relationships that resulted from the collaboration continued after the evaluation was completed, allowing for communication among agencies to flow more easily, for higher levels of cooperation, and for increased benefit for deaf and hard of hearing students.

**Michele Chaplen,** PsyD, MEd, is program director of the New Hampshire Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Initiative, funded by the New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education. A teacher of the deaf since 1992, Chaplen received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Smith College. After working as a middle and high school teacher at the Willie Ross School for the Deaf until 2008, she became the assistant director of Student Disability Services and adjunct faculty in the Communications Department of Western New England University. In 2011, Chaplen completed her doctorate in clinical psychology at Antioch University and relocated to New Hampshire.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE:

# Collaboration Works for Professionals— and Students

*By Michele Chaplen and Kelly Fleese*

In response to the unique needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education has funded the Deaf Education Initiative which supports New Hampshire's schools and families in improving the educational outcomes of the state's children and youth with hearing loss. The initiative provides training and current information about educating those students and is a resource for schools, families, and the community. The work of this initiative aligns with other state innovations designed to enhance successful postsecondary education and employment transition outcomes for students leaving high school. We are aligned ... and ready to collaborate!

The pepnet 2 New Hampshire team has partnered with the Bureau and associated state-level agencies to support postsecondary transition. The team embraced collaboration as a primary agent of change and joined with the Bureau's multi-year Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs), credit-bearing, competency-based learning experiences that happen outside the traditional classroom through federal Next Steps funding. The ELOs became the mechanism for collaborative change and a keystone in the sustainability of New Hampshire services to support postsecondary success.

The initiative incorporated Next Steps' efforts in ELO professional development and implementation of pepnet 2's national effort to support transition from secondary education to postsecondary options. The alliance we formed became an example of collaboration at the state level and signifies a cultural shift from the pursuit of individual achievement to valuing collective accomplishments. When an allied community uses a collaborative approach to change, the work and the community thrive.

As members of the New Hampshire State Transition Team, we thrive in a genuinely collaborative community. The team includes a vocational rehabilitation counselor, a teacher of the deaf, a parent of a deaf child, a teacher of the deaf working in districts

*Photos courtesy of pepnet 2, Michele Chaplen, and Kelly Fleese*





throughout the state, a licensed social worker, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Initiative project director, and the Department of Education liaison to the project.

When the team united with Next Steps New Hampshire and transition specialists, we experienced a heightened level of shared leadership and reflective cooperation that transformed our team's approach. We embraced collaborating by redirecting our efforts from specific task completion to relationship building. Redefining our process from an individual to a collective effort was a cultural change that revitalized our team. Team members reported improved working alliances and an increase in multidisciplinary service provision. Our team harnessed New Hampshire's unique collaborative networks to build and sustain an ELO dedicated to transition skill acquisition for students with hearing loss.

Given that ELOs are student-driven and individually designed, the curriculum can be

tailored to the specific needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This high degree of specialization will benefit our population by reinforcing the acquisition and retention of transition skills. Moreover, an ELO will be accessible to students throughout the state

and can be adapted to each individual's skill level and communication modality. We conducted an interview with Amy Aiello, the coordinator for Next Steps New Hampshire, to learn more about the ELO development process, discussing the following areas:



- background and reasoning for the state to support and improve transition services;
- Aiello's specific role in transition service provision and ELOs;
- the role of collaboration in future planning; and
- the challenge implicit in collaborative relationships and how it affects ELO development and sustainability.

**Kelly Fleese, MS**, is a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor at the New Hampshire Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. She received her bachelor's degree from Springfield College in New Hampshire and her master's degree from Assumption College in Massachusetts. For over a decade, Fleese has been assisting deaf and hard of hearing individuals as they prepare for training, begin employment, and develop their careers. She provides VR services that help individuals achieve their career goals and find suitable employment.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at [mchaplen@ndbhs.org](mailto:mchaplen@ndbhs.org) and [kelly.fleese@doe.nh.gov](mailto:kelly.fleese@doe.nh.gov). Questions regarding the New Hampshire Deaf and Hard of Hearing Initiative as funded by the Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, should be directed to Mary Lane at [mary.lane@doe.nh.gov](mailto:mary.lane@doe.nh.gov).



transition work. The Working Together Conference functioned as a springboard, propelling our team's collaborative approach toward system change.

## STAGE TWO Needs Assessment

As members of our New Hampshire Transition Community of Practice armed with our collaborative change model, the team talked with service providers and families to identify the most common barriers to postsecondary success. The team's interagency networks and professional development meetings and events, such as the Working Together Conference, the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual New Hampshire Transition Summit, and Transition Community of Practice monthly meetings, provided the opportunity to categorize commonly

recognized barriers. The Summit is the only statewide conference for training, collaboration, networking, and information focused on postsecondary outcomes. The Summit focused on "Tips, Tools, and Strategies for Successful Transition Planning" and included a presentation by Michele Chaplen and Tom Downes on the implementation of ELOs as a tool for students with hearing loss. The Summit is hosted by the aforementioned New Hampshire Transition Community of Practice, a group of people who share a passion for transition service and interact regularly to promote successful postsecondary transition for New Hampshire students. The information and resources provided by these statewide events and allied communities generated the results which informed our classification of barriers.

The results clustered around three main challenges:

- **New Hampshire's rural geography**—From the seacoast, to the city, to the north country, the state's changing landscape encompasses great variability in demographics and terrain. Meeting such diverse needs is further challenged by periods of inclement weather and limited access to technology. When travel is impeded and service

The team continues to learn about collaboration through our collaborative relationships, as exemplified by our work with Next Steps. We embrace the importance of modeling the philosophies we use, as emphasized by Aiello: "Collaboration is not just talk; you have to walk the walk." Our goal is to offer statewide transition readiness ELOs designed for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and connect our efforts with the Next Steps New Hampshire project by sharing those resources on the project websites for others to access. To actualize this vision, we launched a five-stage plan that demonstrates our collaborative approach toward system change. These stages include:

1. Literature review of best practices for transition skill acquisition and retention
2. Gathering quantitative and qualitative data on current transition services and future needs
3. Consulting with existing state networks to promote collaboration and build capacity
4. Developing and implementing an ELO
5. Promoting sustainability through continuing collaboration with state-level agencies

## STAGE ONE Review the Literature—and Partner Up!

Contemporary research reflects the trend toward collaboration as an effective strategy in getting work done. Collaborating provides more efficient use of resources, helps alleviate critical shortages, and expedites change. The team actively gathered information on the use of collaborative change models from the literature and current New Hampshire transition specialists. To identify those transition specialists and promote an open dialogue, the team partnered with Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services to host the annual Working Together Conference, which showcased state- and national-level



discontinuous, it is difficult to attract employees, resulting in critical shortages in countryside districts.

- **Deafness as a low-incidence event**—“Low incidence” translates to relatively low numbers of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including those still in school. The fewer the individuals that are in need of services, the fewer the services that are extended. As a low-incidence event, deafness does not garner the attention and resources that are deserved.
- **Variability of communication**—Some deaf individuals communicate through signing, some through voice and lipreading, and some through the use of real-time captioning. The team promotes equal acceptance of individual communication and philosophies; the variability in the communication of our students means that we must be flexible.

The results indicated that the ELO we constructed must take into account the comparatively low number of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the geographic distances between students, and the variability in communication modality. Our learning opportunity would have to be custom-built to overcome geography, population size, and diverse communication requisites.

### STAGE THREE

#### Infrastructure—Curriculum in Three Modules

After intensive consultation with our pepnet 2 state champion, Dr. Della Thomas, we identified technology-based platforms as the most effective way to address the needs of our students. An online ELO supported collaboratively by New Hampshire's Department of Education and the Next Steps New Hampshire project would reflect the collective knowledge of and be fully accessible to the community. It would help students experience a previously unavailable range of opportunities to develop individually based postsecondary transition skills. Inspired by our conviction that an ELO will build the capacity and sustainability of transition skill acquisition, the team examined evidence-based practices and curricula designed for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

We are fortunate to have three certified teachers of the deaf on our team. We decided that the content for the ELO would be created collaboratively, combining a Map It curriculum—a research-based, best-practice transition curriculum—with deaf education's recognized best practices. To provide the technical assistance and professional development necessary for this endeavor, the Department of Education and pepnet 2 will host a two-day Map It conference in early September 2016. Our goal is to educate ourselves on the implementation and maintenance of Map It and then adapt those courses to the specific needs of New

Hampshire.

As we continue to work with collaborative partners, we reflect on the need for flexibility and patience since the program's logistics must accommodate spontaneous contributions from collaborators as well as evolving insight from team members. Embracing the process is time intensive, but it guarantees more reliable and consistent results. We look forward to launching the ELO and continuing to customize the curriculum in response to the individual needs of New Hampshire's children and youth.



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**ELO**—The Next Steps New Hampshire State Personnel Development Grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provides ELO professional development training to select high schools that help students with disabilities and at-risk students prepare for college, a career, and adult life. The [www.NextSteps-nh.org](http://www.NextSteps-nh.org) and [www.BeyondClassroom.org](http://www.BeyondClassroom.org) websites support the work of the project and host various tools and resources related to ELOs.

**Map It conference**—“Map It: What Comes Next” is a free, online, interactive training for transition-aged students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Included are video vignettes in American Sign Language with spoken English and written transcription, self-assessments, and a series of interactive questions to guide students as they develop their goals as well as strategies to achieve those goals. Learn more at [www.pepnet.org/eneus/092014](http://www.pepnet.org/eneus/092014).





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# Collaboration and System Change: Pepnet 2 and the Road to New Opportunities

*By Pauline Annarino*

*Alone, we can do so little. Together, we can do so much.*  
~ Helen Keller

For more than a century, we—professionals, parents, deaf individuals, and students—who are involved in education have discussed the question: “How should deaf education change?” Today this question continues to dazzle and frustrate us. We want deaf and hard of hearing students to have higher achievement across academic areas and to fully participate in the world around them. Yet too often test scores remain unacceptably low, and our students are not empowered to take advantage of the resources that would allow them to participate fully in the world around them.

Change must occur. In order to create different outcomes and for change to be successful, we must embrace two fundamental tenets:

1. The change must be system-wide.
2. Collaboration is essential.

## **System Change: What is It and How Do We Do It?**

System change is an event, or process of events, in which the usual and accepted way of doing things is replaced and a new way becomes the usual and accepted way of doing things. A system change can impact the world, a field, an organization, a classroom, or even one's family.

No doubt changing a system can feel overwhelming. It takes time, a coordinated effort by more than one individual, and the belief that change is both necessary and possible. A successful system change often requires a change in the knowledge, attitude, behavior, and skill of all those who have a stake in the system. Those changes—in knowledge, attitude, behavior, and skills—are recognized as so essential that educators often refer to them by the acronym “KABS.”

*Photos courtesy of pepnet 2*



**At left and below:**  
The power of collaboration—  
Summit participants  
put their talents  
together for success  
in this team-building  
activity.



## Change and Pepnet 2

As part of pepnet 2's five-year Summit initiative, individuals on 50 state teams representing agencies throughout the country committed to effecting change in their state as it related to student transition from high school to postsecondary education or the workplace. Each team comprised five individuals, representing teaching personnel, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and parents. Team members developed goals that meant changes for their states. The anticipated changes varied depending on individual state needs. For some states, the changes meant opening up the lines of communication and working together in consistent ways. For other states, the changes involved new legislation, and for still other states, the most important changes provided tools to empower parents. In every state, change meant individuals working together in a committed collaboration.

After four years, these pepnet 2 teams offer these lessons learned:

- **Be visible to all.** Everyone—those who effect the change within the system, those who endure it, and those who hold authority over it—must be aware of the change underway. One Summit state team printed T-shirts and business cards advertising the collaborative process underway, sharing both with parents, teachers, administrators, and politicians.
- **Be passionate.** Care about what you do. Participate in what you care about.
- **Share your passion.** Use every opportunity. If you have a captive audience, grab the opportunity and say, “Hey, have I shared with you what we’re doing? Would you be interested in collaborating?”
- **Keep your eyes on the goal.** Keep your spirits high. Appreciate small successes. Know that small successes can result in big gains. Don’t give up!

## Collaboration: What is It—and How and Why Do We Do It?

Simply stated, collaboration is an event, or process of events, that brings people with unique strengths and opportunities together to enhance efficiency and accomplish something that none of them could do alone. A successful collaboration achieves its goals and outcomes, maintains long-term impact, and creates long-lasting relationships.

Collaboration is an idea that resonates with funders and change agents, and for larger projects, it is often the only way to effectively make pronounced changes in a community. As dedicated professionals, we share the common goal of enhancing student success. When we seek a collaboration, we are eager to begin and motivated to achieve the intended outcomes.

Sometimes individuals refer to collaborating as “playing well in the sandbox.” A blog focused on the subject maintains that collaboration is “simply put ... a mindset: the rest follows in terms of culture, process, and technology



in that order” (Dominguez, 2011). Those of us who regularly engage in collaborations know that collaboration requires roots deeper than a sandbox permits—and we only wish it were as easy as play!

Type “definition of collaboration” in a search engine and you confront 190 million possible links. It is no wonder

that getting everyone on the same collaboration page is challenging. Asked what they believed collaboration meant, Dominguez (2011) gathered the following replies:

- *Collaboration is binding different attitudes and thoughts to form a new rigid approach.*

- *Collaboration is an act where people come together to discover new approaches to old ways.*
- *Collaboration can be challenging but also invigorating.*
- *Just so long as nobody mistakes good collaboration for decision by committee, which is a bad thing and dilutes creativity!*
- *With collaboration we can solve any big work easily.*
- *Collaboration is being an active member of a group that works together to achieve a common goal. Being an active member means you not only participate in conversations, meetings, and interactions passively (i.e., only listening and learning) but you add your piece of contribution to the group.*

We may not know how these individuals will operate behaviorally or the skills they bring to the collaboration table, but their choice of words gives us some insight about their knowledge and attitudes.

## Factors that Support Collaborative Success

Collaborative	Participant Experience
Has direction	A goal and an understanding of how to achieve it
Is provided with nurturing	A feeling that somebody wants him or her to work together and to help him or her succeed
Is engaged with the participating organization(s)	Active involvement
Is connected to the participating organization(s)	Connectivity to the work he or she is doing
Is valued by the participating organization(s)	Individual skills, talents, abilities, and experiences are recognized; participant has opportunities to contribute and to feel his or her contributions are appreciated

*\*Adapted by Annarino from Six Success Factors (The RP Group, 2014).*

### Taking Time to Collaborate

Collaboration takes time. It requires letting go of ego and the needs of the individual or organization and working toward the goals that are part of the larger agenda of the collaborative. To achieve a good collaborative outcome requires a good process. A good process requires the same five fundamental elements that promote healthy, mutually beneficial relationships. These elements, at once publically present and individually internalized, enhance a positive outcome. They include:

- mutual acknowledgement of a shared goal;
- a shared sense of equality;
- respect for the role, responsibilities, and capabilities of each party;
- demonstrated integrity, honesty, and, ultimately, trust; and
- clear and regular communication.



# Is Your Institution Ready for Collaboration?

*By Pauline Annarino*

Members of institutions engaging in collaboration should have clear answers to a myriad of questions, including the following:

- Do we in our institution operate within a culture that is conducive to collaboration?
  - What do we understand about collaboration and what it means to collaborate?
  - Are we willing to assure our partners that our commitment to a collaborative project will be binding and reciprocal?
  - Do we view our work, materials, and tools as proprietary? What information are we willing to share with our partners?
- Do staff and leadership agree on the goals of the collaboration?
  - Is the leadership comfortable releasing time for staff to engage in activities not directly under the purview of the leadership?
  - Is the leadership comfortable respecting time commitments made by staff to the collaborative even if those commitments create hardship on the organization?
- What do we know about our collaborators and other groups or organizations that provide similar services?
  - Do we view them as sister agencies, competitors, or both?
  - Do we currently have a collegial relationship with them?
  - Do any of those potential collaborators receive support from the same funding source? And from what other sources? Would collaboration create greater funding opportunities for all agencies involved?
- What are the tangible benefits we might experience if we consider collaboration?
- In considering a particular collaboration:
  - Do our missions and goals align?
  - Will it create staff hardship?
  - What are the tangible benefits we will experience as a result of the collaboration?
  - What are the odds of successful outcomes and future collaborations?

Working in a postsecondary setting, I am surrounded by a culture driven by the aspiration for student achievement. Recently, I was reminded that students are more likely to achieve their goals when certain factors are present—the same factors that are necessary for collaborative success. These factors include the feeling of having a clear direction and being nurtured and connected as they—individual students and participants in collaborative endeavors—work to achieve their goals. (See Table: Factors that Support Collaborative Success.)

Collaboration is part of the culture of today's professionals. Educators engage in it with each other and with parents. Some collaborations grow organically while other collaborations are the products of grants, politics, and administrative mandates. Most agree that collaborating for change and improvements in systems and in learning is important and that changes effected through collaborations tend to evolve with more strength than those that occur through the dictates of single individuals.

## **Maintaining the Collaborative Passion**

Collaborations created for the right reasons and with all members holding a personal belief in the collaboration's goals create synergy and a sense of excitement. The juggling of other equally important work with the passion of the new collaborative can be a challenge. The pepnet 2 state Summit teams are consistent in their "keep the passion" message. The teams suggest that all those working in collaborations:

- set clear intermediate milestones that demonstrate forward movement

toward the goal;

- define recognizable signs that will reinforce that the team is on the right track and making a difference;
- find value in all sizes of success and reward team members for smaller jobs well done; and
- meet regularly with a clear, set agenda.

### Why Some Collaborations Struggle Overcoming the Barriers

The other day, I found myself in the role of collaboration broker, that is I was

bringing individuals together from two independent entities to consider a first-time collaboration. While discussing the collaboration at hand, one of the parties noted that an unrelated collaboration was hitting roadblocks because the stated goal—a joint effort to create a new degree program between two colleges—was perceived by a member of the collaboration team to be one college simply seeking more students to strengthen an existing program. I suspect this collaboration did not start out deceptively but rather this impression resulted from unintended missteps. A clearly delineated agreement

**In order to achieve long-term change, it is imperative that we work together. This work is hard. It takes courage to stretch and grow.**

~ Summit state team member

## What Does Collaboration Mean for the Process of Transition?

Transition is the process all students go through as they move from a high school setting to what lies beyond. Transition programs assist students and their parents as they prepare for life after high school in a proactive and coordinated way. An effective transition program provides students with the tools and the confidence to assume responsibility for their educational and employment decisions as they move into adulthood.

Data tell us that a strong transition plan is the result of a team process that engages all who have a stake in the success of the student; the stakeholders include the student, his or her teachers, parents or guardians, and other service providers. When a person is involved in the identification and decision making of an activity, goal, or plan, the person has a greater stake in the outcome, and working towards the outcome is more likely to be successful.

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, however, who often do not experience ready access to incidental learning, student involvement in transition planning is critical. Students need to learn what their strengths and needs are, understand their hearing loss and/or other disabilities, and note how these affect them in different settings. They also need to explore what they want to do after they complete their high school education. Their opinions, wants, and desires need to be taken into consideration if transition goals are to be on target.

While it is so important that the student contribute, participate, and practice important transition skills, the role of the family in transition planning cannot be underestimated. They are able to contribute information that the school does not have about the student's life and the student's support systems outside of school. When parents understand the transition plan and its importance to their child's success, there is a greater prospect for their commitment and contribution to the plan—and for their child's long-term success.

and revisiting the agreement periodically may have avoided this collaborative “bump in the road.”

As we know, not all collaborations are voluntary. Outside forces often drive a new collaboration. These collaborations can be more difficult. In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team Summarized for Busy People*, Lencioni (2013) notes that teams or collaborations can fall apart when one or more of the following conditions are present and participants and their leaders do not know how to address and reverse them:

- fear of conflict,
- lack of commitment,
- absence of trust,
- avoidance of accountability, and/or
- inattention to results.

When participating in a collaboration, keep an ongoing sense of the internal culture of the collaborative to ensure the dysfunctions described by Lencioni do not unintentionally infiltrate the group.

Authors Trusko, Pexton, Harrington, and Gupta (2007) believe eight barriers to change are likely to occur. Having an eye on these potential “bumps” in the road and addressing them before they become roadblocks goes a long way in moving collaboration forward to a

positive outcome. These barriers include:

1. Cultural complacency, resistance, or skepticism
2. Lack of communication
3. Lack of alignment and accountability
4. Passive or absent leadership support
5. Micromanagement
6. Overloaded workforce
7. Inadequate systems and structures
8. Lack of control plans to measure and sustain results

**Respect each  
other's time and be  
honest. If you can't  
do the task or give  
100 percent focus ...  
say so.**

~ Summit state team member

## Maintaining Change

As professionals, we know that once it occurs, change is hard to sustain. One state team, talking about the importance of change sustainability, noted, "We all want system change, and we want long-term commitment to making change, but in order to stay committed, we learned the importance of creating a sustainability plan [that went beyond the creation of the change]." Change is fluid, and it must be tended to if it is to continue and maintain the impact we seek. This team was wise to recognize the importance of identifying the sustainability tools needed to shore up outcomes.

The Forum for the Future

([www.forumforthefuture.org](http://www.forumforthefuture.org)), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping businesses make the world's systems more sustainable, recognizes that change is difficult and promotes a six-step process toward achieving and maintaining change. The steps begin with understanding the need for change and end with ensuring change is maintained. Here are the steps:

1. Understand the need for change.
2. Diagnose the system.
3. Create pioneering practices.
4. Enable the change to take place.
5. Sustain the transition.
6. Set new rules for the mainstream.

In deaf education, individuals at all levels—in state agencies, classrooms, and living rooms—report experiencing the need for change. Our commitment to our students and the passion for what we do is undeniable; our desire to change the status quo of deaf education is real and necessary. We know that collaboration can be hard, but when executed well, it can be so very rich in process and in outcome.

For the past four years, individuals who are members of the Summit teams of pepnet 2 have demonstrated that we

## Six Steps to Significant Change

1. Understand the need for change.
2. Diagnose the system.
3. Create pioneering practices.
4. Enable the change to take place.
5. Sustain the transition.
6. Set new rules for the mainstream.

~ Forum for the Future

don't need "Jupiter to align with Mars" to make collaboration work. We need individual expertise and collective knowledge peppered with commitment, patience, and respect. However, if Jupiter aligning with Mars can contribute to change that results in better academic outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students, they are welcome to join my collaboration team any day!

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# A State Reports: Collaborating to Reach a Summit

*By Mary Held and Cindy Lawrence*

**Mary Held**, PhD, CRC, is project coordinator at the Center on Community Living and Careers, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University Bloomington. Held's interests include teacher education, transition from school to adult life, self-determination, and curriculum development. Her responsibilities include research, training, technical assistance in education, and training for professionals and staff working in schools and adult services. With 30 years of experience in the disability field, Held has served as a high school special educator, a certified rehabilitation counselor, and a service coordinator in addition to supporting employment providers who worked with students. She has authored several articles and book chapters as well as done numerous state and national trainings.

Indiana will have its first statewide transition conference for deaf and hard of hearing students this spring. It is our goal that the conference becomes an effective vehicle to help professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing students. We are planning for teachers, parents, and service providers to get together to discuss topics such as: understanding laws and rights, self-advocacy, self-assessments to help with career exploration, and responsibility and independent living. Students will also have opportunities to meet deaf and hard of hearing adults who have a variety of jobs and careers.

As everyone knows, conference planning is not easy. Funds for the conference were provided by pepnet 2, but it has been up to us to organize, form a team, and plan and implement this event. When we began, Indiana was one of the states without a coordinator for deaf education so nominations for the team were submitted by the coordinator for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention and the superintendent of the Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD). The Indiana team—six members who came from different cultures and provided different viewpoints—would ultimately include:

- a deaf educator from a public school district,
- a representative from the Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center,
- the director of instruction for ISD,
- the outreach director at ISD, and
- two parents (one deaf and one hearing).

At the same time, new legislation created the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education (CDHHE) in 2012 and required the new CDHHE and other state agencies to share data. The CDHHE's duties include "acting as a liaison with

*Photos courtesy of Mary Held and Cindy Lawrence*



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all state agencies that provide services to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, including the Department of Education, the state Department of Health, the family and social services administration, and the Indiana School for the Deaf" (Education, 2015).

Over the last four years, three of the six original members have been consistently involved in transition work for our students. Ongoing discussions resulted in a decision to find the agencies and organizations that were doing the work of transition so that goals could be accomplished more quickly by using existing structures and resources. We also felt that it was important to bring individual representatives of interested groups into our discussion; the manager of deaf and hard of hearing services at the Indiana Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, for example, joined us two years ago.

Our team used a conceptualization process which helped us make a plan that recognized the importance of interagency collaboration and the many organizations that we could include

in order to improve outcomes for students. The team developed the mission statement and goals and then began work.

Our core team invited individuals from other organizations we thought would support our mission. Designed to improve outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students in Indiana, the new larger group became the Indiana Deaf and Hard of Hearing Transition Alliance. The expanded group broadened the discussions and pulled everyone together around our common goals. Meetings averaged about 50 percent attendance, with between 12 to 20 people at each meeting, and we continued to find other individuals to replace or add to our team.

The Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center (INSTRC), funded by the Indiana Department of Education, has been a valuable partner. The INSTRC work has focused on professional development related to transition and writing quality Individualized Education Programs. INSTRC has a website that sparked our team's desire to develop a set of resources

specifically related to the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students, and we developed a manual, the *Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Manual for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students*, that is now posted on the INSTRC and CDHHE websites. This manual can be downloaded in PDF format at [www.cdbbe.isdb.in.gov](http://www.cdbbe.isdb.in.gov).

The team was further inspired by information received at the Building State Capacity to Address Critical Issues in Deaf Education: Transition from Secondary Education to

## Outcome Statements

By Mary Held and Cindy Lawrence

Indiana is expecting to accomplish the following:

- By April 2016, Indiana will have a transition conference including at least 50 deaf and hard of hearing students and their families for the purpose of providing information about available resources and services, learning how to advocate while developing a plan, and providing career exploration opportunities and assessments. Participants will also learn about education and training and post-high school opportunities. The conference will be held during school days. Pre- and post-surveys will show the increased knowledge of students.
- The resource manual with information and resources specific to transition for deaf and hard of hearing students will be posted on a dedicated website that provides additional parent resources and information.
- The Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education (CDHHE) will identify data points, in collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation and the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) regarding indicators that can help track children through school exit. The information shared between IDOE and CDHHE will be analyzed to determine further needs in our state.
- The Indiana Deaf and Hard of Hearing Transition Alliance will be restructured for the purpose of taking previous activities and outputs and scaling up efforts. More information and resources will be made available to Indiana deaf and hard of hearing students and families.

~ From the 2015 Conceptualization Plan submitted to pepnet 2 by the Indiana team

Postsecondary Options Summit held in February 2016 in Washington, D.C., and material entitled *Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement* (Cashman, Linehan, Purcell, Rosse, Schultz, Skalski, 2014). We were working hard to form an effective alliance, and the information gave us tools to use for that purpose.

After reading these materials and listening to individuals report from other states, our team agreed to restructure. Our core team would meet frequently while the Indiana Transition Alliance would act in an advisory role. We also established subcommittees consisting of at least one core member and Alliance members. For example, the media subcommittee has Alliance members who are developing videos for the website along with the resource manual.

Getting together remains a logistical struggle; we meet both face to face and through electronic communication. FaceTime, conference calls via cell phones, and Zoom, a new Internet tool, have helped subcommittees meet with participants in various locations, saving travel time and allowing us to actively include our participants according to their communication needs. The meetings have spurred individual connections, and we see additional “meetings after the meetings” with further connections being made.

Kim Kause, the director of instruction for ISD, stated, “Now we have VR, ISD, public schools, and parents all working together for our common goal of improving outcomes for all students. Before we were separate entities working on our own.”

We are looking forward to our first state conference and hoping that conference participants will experience a wealth of challenging information and inspiring connections, that they will enjoy the entertainment provided by an accomplished deaf performer—and that students will leave inspired to pursue their dreams and see possibilities they may not have before realized.

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**You already make a difference with  
deaf and hard of hearing individuals.**



**Let's do more together.**



For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, it's about achieving their goals. For the professionals, it's about providing services that remove barriers to education, training, and employment. For pepnet 2, it's about delivering evidence-based solutions and resources.

- **QuickClasses** covering a wide range of topics
- **eLearning** modules for self-paced learning activities
- **Free pn2 resources** available 24/7 from our website
- **Communities of Practice** to connect people who have similar interest
- **Connect directly** with our staff by emailing [help@pepnet.org](mailto:help@pepnet.org)
- **Map it: What Comes Next!** An online student transition training



**Connect with us at  
[www.pepnet.org](http://www.pepnet.org)**

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# Evaluative Thinking: Using Results-Oriented Reasoning to Strengthen Collaboration

*By Courtney L. Malloy, Janet S. Lee, and Stephanie W. Cawthon*

In today's world, much of what used to be individual work has become collaborative. Moreover, complex change initiatives often require individuals within and across organizations to team up to set and achieve meaningful goals. Our role as researchers and evaluators is to offer support that can be used to strengthen the work of organizations and interdisciplinary teams. We focus on four broad categories:

1. identifying existing evidence in the field that can be used to inform the quality of a project,
2. gathering information from stakeholders to identify key needs in the field,
3. conducting formative and summative evaluation for programs and initiatives, and
4. offering technical assistance support regarding how to use data.

Our work with pepnet 2, in particular, has afforded us several lessons regarding the significance of evaluative thinking to collaborative endeavors. Evaluative

*Photos courtesy of pepnet 2*



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thinking—a process that involves systematic results-oriented reasoning—is essential for collaborations to be successful. Evaluative thinking focuses individuals and their discussion on the outcomes that are expected from an endeavor, how those outcomes might be achieved, the research and/or evidence that informs results, and ongoing examination and reflection on data regarding the progress of the collaboration. (Patton, 2014).

When infused into the culture and activities of a collaboration, evaluative thinking propels individuals forward in the same direction and increases the likelihood of success down the road.

## Lesson 1—Collaboration Alone is Insufficient

With terms like *cross-sectoral*, *public-private partnership*, *professional learning community*, *social network*, *interdisciplinary*, *multi-disciplinary*, *alliance*, *consortium*, and

*collaborative* increasingly widespread, it may be tempting to view endeavors undertaken through group cooperation as a panacea, the single way to effect complex change. Certainly, many of the persistent and intractable social problems are more likely to be solved by the collective action of key individuals with diverse perspectives.

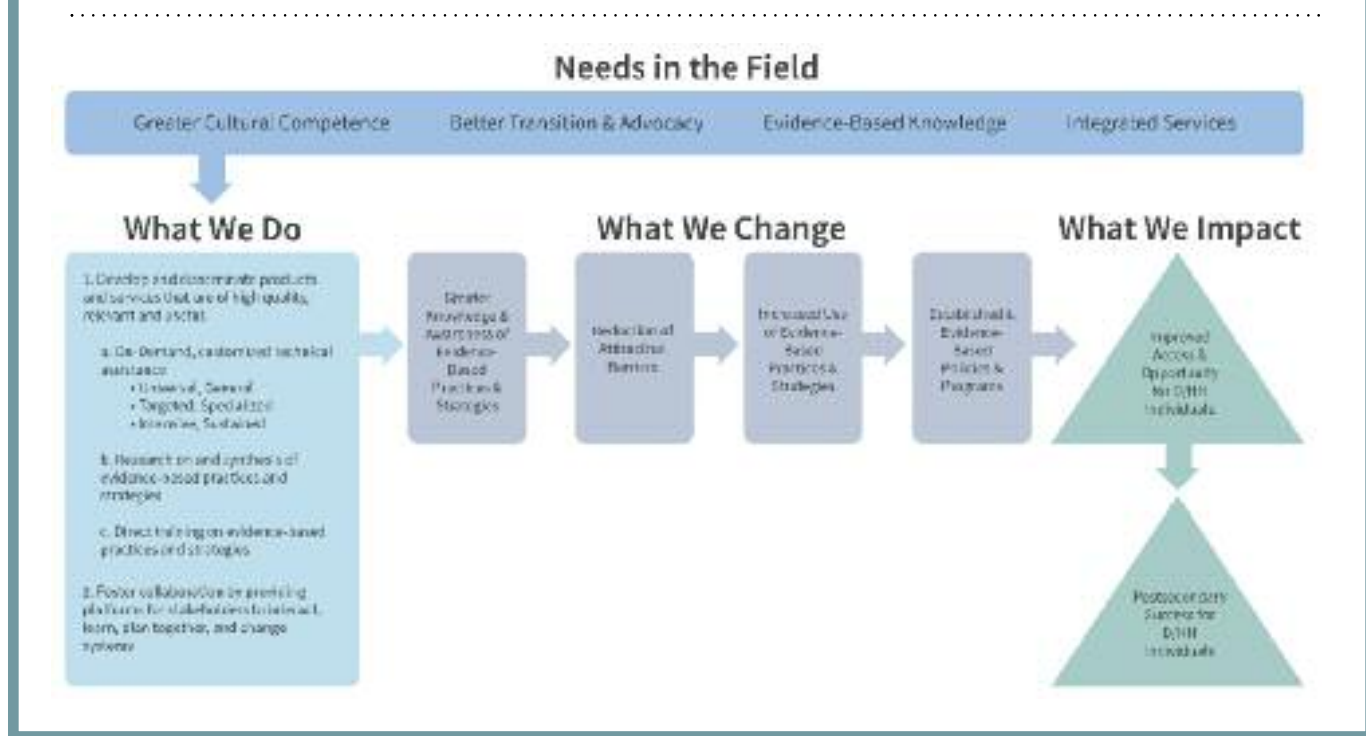
Collaboration, however, is a means to an end, not the end itself. Simply bringing together people with common interests to work on a challenging initiative is not a failsafe approach. In fact, it is insufficient. Collaboration is more likely to be fruitful when team members are able to exercise evaluative thinking systematically about the change they want to achieve and properly ground efforts in evidence.

In our work, we have seen the benefits of evaluative thinking as a catalyst for progress towards complex problem solving. As teams begin to think analytically



**Figure 1: Pepnet 2 Theory of Change**

Below is an overview of the theory of change that underlies the work of pepnet 2.



through their purpose and arrive at common goals, they generate momentum, enthusiasm, and greater commitment to work. Moreover, when teams have a plan that is rooted in evidence and includes indicators to monitor progress, they can begin the meaningful work that is required for change. By contrast, when teams fail to craft a coherent plan for moving forward that is grounded in systematic, results-oriented evaluative thinking, they often struggle to move beyond convening and toward collective action.

## Lesson 2—Begin with a Theory of Change

A theory of change provides a useful starting point for effective collaboration. It explains the principles underlying an initiative and outlines how desired outcomes will be produced. This theory can come in various shapes and sizes, but it generally has three main components

(Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004):

1. **Long-term and short-term outcomes**—The long-term goal for pepnet 2 is to improve access, opportunity, and postsecondary success for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In order for these long-term changes to occur, short-term changes requiring new evidence-based practices, policies, and programs are required. (See Figure 1.)
2. **Strategies**—In order to accomplish these short-term outcomes, pepnet 2 engages in several strategies and activities, including technical assistance, training, research, and convening.
3. **Explicit assumptions**—Assumptions about why strategies will work should be explicit. The assumption underlying the work of

pepnet 2 is that numerous needs in the field should be addressed in order to achieve greater postsecondary success for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including stronger evidence-based knowledge and tools, greater cultural competence, better transition and advocacy, and integrated services.

By focusing on select strategies that are driven by needs in the field, our assumption is that short-term outcomes (i.e., greater knowledge regarding effective transition) will lead to long-term outcomes (i.e., deaf students' success in the postsecondary environment).

Stakeholders who are engaged in collaborative change efforts often can identify the various strategies and activities that they hope to implement. However, without a theory of change,

the desired outcomes and assumptions underlying those strategies are not made explicit, and the connection between strategies and outcomes remains unclear. Taking the time to generate a theory of change ensures a chain of reasoning grounding the new initiative and promotes a shared understanding of how to move forward. Moreover, the theory can be used to explain to others what the collaboration is about and provide the foundation to determine how to measure its progress.

When crafting a theory of change, it is often useful to begin with all stakeholders at the table and address the following questions: *What is the group's desired long-term change? What will look different after the group's strategies have been implemented?* After addressing these questions, teams should work to identify the short-term changes required to accomplish the long-term goal. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2004), an organization dedicated to helping disadvantaged children in the United States, provides a practical guide for structuring theories of change and suggests three main types of outcomes:

**Taking the time to generate a theory of change ensures a chain of reasoning grounding the new initiative and promotes a shared understanding of how to move forward.**

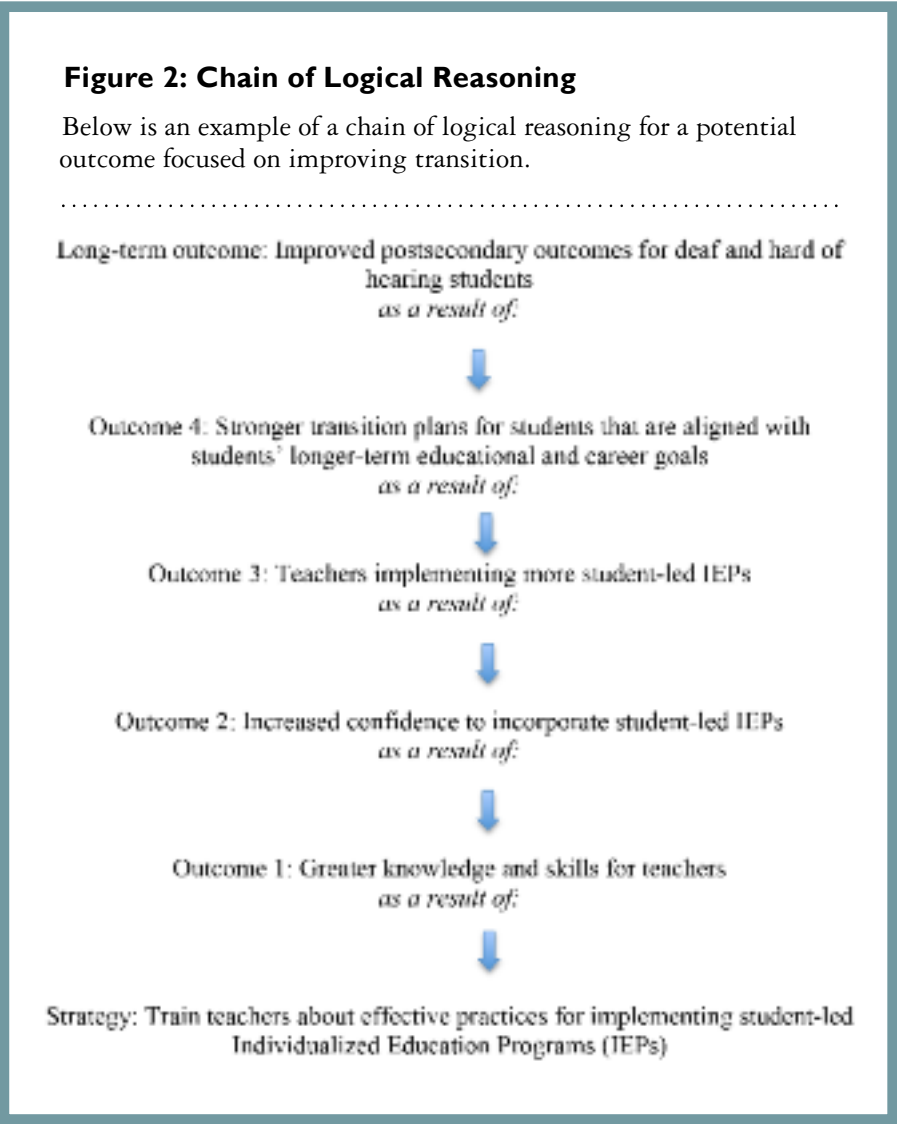
- 1. **Impact**—Changes in people's lives, including knowledge, skills, behaviors, health, or conditions for communities.
- 2. **Influence**—Changes in institutions, service systems, community norms, partnerships, policies, or regulations.
- 3. **Leverage**—Changes in public or private funding and resource allocation.

Once the short- and long-term outcomes are mapped out, strategies and activities can be generated that are likely to lead to the change envisioned. As

strategies are clarified and connected to outcomes, a chain of logical reasoning should begin to emerge. (See Figure 2.)

**Lesson 3—Ground Discussion in Research and Evidence**

Ideally, a theory of change includes a clear articulation of assumptions about why the proposed activities will lead to the desired short- and long-term outcomes. Without a critical look at the available research and evidence base, decisions about planned strategies and activities may be based on intuition and individual experiences or even on political demands. Furthermore,



collaborative teams may be drawing individual knowledge from different perspectives, with resulting divergent assumptions about why particular strategies may or may not be effective. Looking to the available research and evidence is thus an important component in developing a shared understanding of the rationale for choosing activities.

The first step to reviewing the existing literature is to identify the evidence that supports the needs of the project. There are many different kinds of evidence that may be integrated into a rationale that explains why proposed strategies and activities will lead to anticipated short- and long-term outcomes. When developing pepnet 2's theory of change, our goal was to provide both theoretical perspectives and data. We drew from theoretical perspectives in the fields of human development, cultural psychology, and deaf education. We asked what factors were important in understanding potential barriers or supports for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in achieving their educational, work, and personal goals. Data and empirical evidence were important. In our pepnet 2 work, we synthesized existing literature on key topics, such as the effectiveness of accommodations, and we gathered information from the field to answer questions that the extant research literature could not provide.

From a theoretical perspective, the pepnet 2 Research and Evidence Synthesis team felt it was important to include cultural competency frameworks in considering access and options for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. This perspective focuses attention on building the skills and attitudes of professionals that serve individuals who are deaf or hard of



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hearing, and cultural competency is a part of creating an open and positive learning or work environment. Synthesis of current data was important in laying the foundation for decisions about future activities or programs. More specifically, we drew upon the current demographic data available about current high school completion, college enrollment, postsecondary persistence, and employment for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Significant demographic shifts over the last 10 years have occurred, and updating was essential.

A second example of where evidence played a role in the development of the theory of change was in the articulation of the potential short-term outcomes that would result from the proposed activities. For example, research shows that self-determination is predictive of stronger postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities (Konrad & Test, 2004). Although this research was not conducted with deaf or hard of hearing students, pepnet 2 made the

assumption that fostering students to lead IEPs might have similar results for our students. When requested, pepnet 2's Research and Evidence Synthesis team provided this kind of information to collaborative teams throughout the organization.

#### **Lesson 4—Monitor the Progress**

Ongoing reflection is critical. This allows collaborators to refine strategies and to measure outcomes to determine effectiveness. A well-defined theory of change should suggest key indicators that can be used for monitoring and evaluating the collaboration.

For example, if teachers are trained to effectively implement student-led IEPs, then it follows that the two primary indicators of progress might be the number of trainings conducted and the number of teachers trained. If there is an insufficient number of trainings or if attendance at trainings is low, it is unlikely that the changes articulated in the theory would occur. However, if those indicators were measured frequently and reviewed, stakeholders could examine the data and intervene appropriately before the end of the initiative.

It is not sufficient to only examine data related to the strategies and activities in an initiative; an



examination of the outcomes is also warranted to determine whether the collaborative endeavor has produced the intended changes. Potential indicators in the example above might include pre- and post-measures of the following outcomes: knowledge about and confidence in the IEP process of students and teachers, the number of student-led IEPs that are taking place, and the number of IEPs with transition plans that are aligned to students' longer-term educational and career goals.

### Putting It Together

Taken together, these lessons illustrate how transparency in planning activities, naming assumptions behind their effectiveness, and monitoring outcomes can assist collaborative teams in the development and implementation of activities. Preparing individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing for future education and work opportunities often involves the collaboration of people or

agencies with multiple perspectives, diverse training, and a broad range of experiences. A collaborative model in effective program and service development therefore requires an anchor that represents the shared beliefs and assumptions about what is being done, why, and to what end. This is the

purpose of devising or adopting an underlying theory of change and combining it with evaluative thinking for the collaboration. Our work with pepnet 2 represents an evolving model that can provide a platform for those seeking to engage in meaningful discussion and collaborative activities.

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## Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants, Toddlers and Their Families: Collaboration and Leadership Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate



The Infants, Toddlers and Their Families certificate program is an 18-credit program with courses offered primarily online. This program provides professionals from a wide range of disciplines with current evidence-based knowledge and skills for working with families and their very young children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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Co-directors of this program are Beth Benedict ([Beth.Benedict@gallaudet.edu](mailto:Beth.Benedict@gallaudet.edu)) and Marilyn Sass-Lehrer ([Marilyn.Sass-Lehrer@gallaudet.edu](mailto:Marilyn.Sass-Lehrer@gallaudet.edu)).

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## DARE TO DIALOGUE:

# Engaging Parents in System Change

*By Patrick Graham, Sara Kennedy, and Johanna Lynch*

### **Patrick Graham,**

PhD, coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Program at Western Oregon University (WOU), received his doctorate in early childhood education from the University of Georgia. He teaches in the American Sign Language Studies and Early Childhood programs at WOU. Graham is deaf and the father of two boys, one of whom is deaf and has a high functioning variety of autism.

### **Sara Kennedy,**

an occupational therapist by training, is director of the Colorado chapter of Hands & Voices, a nonprofit organization with 45 chapters in the United States that networks with professionals and offers support to parents of deaf and hard of hearing children. She is the editor of the quarterly newspaper, *The Hands & Voices Communicator*, and coauthor of the manual *Bridge to Preschool: Navigating a Successful Transition*. Kennedy is the mother of four children, including a high school-aged daughter who is deaf.

As professionals, we are satisfied when we know our clients and students derive benefit from our expertise, our concern, and often our love. Nevertheless, these benefits cannot begin to equal the power of determined parents whose love for their child causes them to be powerful advocates at all levels of our society. Parents can move mountains for their child ... and they often do. They are frequently instruments of change in programs—for the better (DesGeorges, Kennedy, & Opsahl, 2010).

When parents and professionals have high expectations for their students and work together to create opportunities for them, children are “more likely to achieve more, to have higher levels of self-esteem, and thrive” (Szarkowski & Fournier Eng, 2014). State teams that actively collaborate with parents gain new perspectives, ideas, and energy.

Our own statewide transition planning teams have welcomed the authors—three parents who are also professionals active in the deaf educational community—into their discussions and planning. These teams—part of pepnet 2, the federally funded project with the mission to increase the education, career, and lifetime choices available to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing—are located in our home states of Oregon, Colorado, and North Carolina. When we meet with pepnet 2 team members, representatives from vocational rehabilitation offices, state education agencies, local education agencies, schools for the deaf, and deaf adults, we experience teams that are nearly ideal.

An ideal team is one in which parents collaborate freely with professionals with no question off limits; it has clear objectives, norms, standards of practice, and history available to all. These ideal teams include stakeholders mirroring our community’s wide continuum of language, cultural diversity, and experience. Representatives come from state education agencies; vocational rehabilitation; local districts; and public, charter, and schools for the deaf. Parents of current or recent students from a variety of backgrounds and geographical areas and the students themselves also participate, adding immeasurably to the 360° view of transition planning.

*Photos courtesy of Patrick Graham, Sara Kennedy, and Johanna Lynch*



**Clockwise from top left:** Oregon team members (from left to right) Eleni Boston, Camille Atkinson, Patrick Graham, Miranda Featherstone, Becky Emmert, Katie Heise, and Kathy Eckert-Mason; Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf students Darian Smith (left) and Elijah Jones considering postsecondary options; North Carolina team members share ideas.

**Johanna Lynch** is a parent educator with BEGINNINGS for Parents of Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in North Carolina, and she participates in state councils and committees to improve the lives of deaf children. A mother to two teenagers, Lynch became interested in learning about deaf education and helping other families when her son was identified with a hearing loss at 2 years old.

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For teams involving the education of deaf and hard of hearing students, communication—how we handle signing and speaking—remains a frequent discussion, not just a discussion that occurs at the beginning of a series of meetings. Everyone is involved as we discuss specifics. For teams, specifics include questions such as: *Where are the gaps? What alterations in professional preparation, parent and student training, or transition activity alignment with post-school goals do we need?* These are amazing discussions!

### Barriers to Parental Engagement in Meaningful Collaboration

Parent participation is often a requirement for state teams to convene or receive funding, and, too often, parents find their names listed among the collaborators and feel that they are not expected to participate meaningfully or make a substantive contribution. More than a few professionals have indicated that they find it difficult to engage parents; they say that

engaged parents are rare exceptions. We submit that parents sometimes require understanding to engage in a meaningful way; advocates are nurtured, not born. Enabling parents to connect with each other can revolutionize the dynamics in a classroom or in a district. Connecting parents enables modeling and mentoring. Observing another parent solidly fill a stakeholder role empowers the new, unfamiliar parent.

While engaged parents can ensure a healthy team perspective, professionals and parents will want to be mindful of potential pitfalls. As in teams composed of only professionals, teams in which parents participate may experience personality clashes, cultural conflicts, or the dominance of unrelated individual agendas. Designating one team member as facilitator at the beginning of meetings can help keep the focus on the goals of the team at large. We have learned that checking in with each other for alignment and readjusting when necessary has led to success.



Parents respond to invitations that are tailored and specific. Compare an invitation such as: “*We need you because of your experience with dual enrollment [or other specific topic] ...*” to an invitation that simply asks for “*... help in filling the parent seat on a committee.*” Tying participation to the parent’s interest and skills is critical. So is inviting parents early, often, and at different times. Once a parent agrees to participate, welcoming him or her as a co-investor in deaf education sets the stage for ongoing engagement and alleviates the concern that he or she won’t be treated as an equal member of the team.

More often we find parents feeling their input is extraneous, neither wanted nor needed by educators or their children in the midst of transition. By the time a teen enters the tumultuous transition years, many schools have effectively trained parents to simply drop off their children and pick them up later. Further, students themselves want less parental input at this age, stretching their wings to make their own choices. However, this is a time when children and schools still benefit from parental engagement, and children still need the practical support and occasional coaching that can only be provided by their parents.

Parents tend to travel to professional locations instead of a mutually agreed upon spot despite the fact that they face logistical challenges participating in task forces that conflict with work or caregiving hours. Some districts make this natural challenge even more difficult. For example, one of our districts begins its high school accountability meeting at 7 a.m. but does not allow students to come until 7:45 a.m. While this may make it easier for professionals, it adds to the coordination demands for many parents who are often already overburdened. These individuals bear financial burdens for missing work, and they must compensate for travel expenses and child care during times when others on the team are likely on “work time” and paid.

Even more problematic: Some

## Making It Meaningful: Bringing Parents into Collaboration

- Find parents from referrals by professionals and parent groups. People get involved because of relationships.
- Reimburse parents for travel and child care if needed.
- Plan for team building when new members join collaboratives.
- Share system vocabulary and processes with new members.
- Orient new parents to available regulations, laws, and governing systems.
- Encourage parents to use their unique skill sets to their best advantage.
- Create a team culture that welcomes questions and flexibility.

professionals question whether a parent can focus on the needs of all children rather than on those of his or her own child. All of us have stories to tell, and someone who has not felt he or she has been heard might continue to tell the same story. Just listening can make a parent finally feel understood. Further, thoughtful orientation in which parents are educated about experiences that are urban or rural, college or vocational, visual or auditory can broaden their perspective.

Professionals also worry that parents may ask charged questions, questions that professionals hesitate to address. However, these questions, sometimes involving topics considered politically incorrect, need to be addressed. In fact, these questions can lead to impassioned discussions that inspire changes in outlook or even generate system change. It may be important when a parent asks: “Why *do* we do that?” or “Why *can’t* we do that?”

Getting members to meet regularly, on schedule, and setting up a structure to ensure progress is a challenge for any team. If parents are not part of the day-

to-day work or informal gatherings of other team members, they may feel isolated. Practically speaking, parents like any other member of the team, need sufficient lead time to respond to requests or to schedule a meeting. Perception that a parent is unable to attend because of consistently short notice or, even worse, left out of a meeting altogether because other team members see each other often and informally can squelch parental enthusiasm and perhaps even cause individuals to leave the team. Clear, frequent, and open communication is the first step to building a strong team.

In Colorado, what increased our momentum was the suggestion to work from our end goal backwards. We wanted to create a system that incorporated transition goals into student-led Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). We worked backwards from the goal, designing teacher training and parent supports for this aspect of the IEP. Working backwards from the goal helped us think in a different way about the obstacles we faced. Co-author Sara Kennedy

volunteered to take notes for our pepnet 2 meetings, just as her daughter was entering the transition, believing that the experience of notetaking would help her own understanding of transition processes. Four years later, she found that writing those notes not only helped solidify her knowledge but also made her aware of what she didn't know. Now she takes a much more active role in sharing what parents are experiencing around the state, assisting teams in developing transition resources such as curricula for teacher training and materials for parents.

Defining expectations takes the guesswork out of knowing whether an individual, particularly a parent, can commit to a long-term project. Our experience has taught us that consistency in membership is important; constant member attendance affords teams the opportunity to build on a shared experience and achieve success. Thus, team members should make a strong effort to maintain membership throughout the life of a project for the benefit of the team. They can only do this if they know, in advance, what their commitment must be.

In North Carolina, co-author Johanna Lynch found her team made significant gains once members were able to move past discussion of language and modalities. Her team took another leap forward after participating in pepnet 2's first annual Summit. The time afforded by pepnet 2 allowed Lynch and her team to retreat from daily responsibilities and address an agenda that centered on the transition of our students; it catapulted the group's momentum. Having dinner together every night taught team members more about each other, not just as team members but also as people. The respect team members held for each other grew exponentially. In addition, they learned they really enjoyed each other's company.

### Give Parents the Tools

Parents need the same tools as other team members:

- a working knowledge of the team's vocabulary,
- a history of team members and the organization each member represents, and
- a knowledge of the historical challenges affecting each day's work.

With those tools, parents can jump in and help the team tackle the issues at hand.

### Who is Missing?

No single parent should always represent family interests. Over-focusing on a single parent is an easy trap to fall into, especially if the parent is also a professional and can (conveniently) "wear two hats" in any situation. These individuals easily become the go-to parents. Teams may want to consider selecting parents who can represent the full spectrum of family needs and leave the professional persona and ties to a single agency out of the discussion.

Coauthor Patrick Graham's son is currently in the first grade, and Graham joined the pepnet 2 team knowing that preparing for school to higher education or workplace transition is critical throughout a child's life. When parents educate their children about different transition opportunities, the children can educate their peers and even more families benefit. During one of its state conferences, the Oregon team had a panel of students discussing their experiences with transition, and that learning was so rich that the team decided to repeat it this year.

As parents invited to participate as active and meaningful contributors, we need to continually assess whether we can represent the needs of all families, not just the families who have children like our own. This requires that we learn about the cultural and linguistic variety represented in our community. A commitment to filling our own gaps of knowledge through objective, open, and respectful participation or pulling in the experience of other parents is imperative to create an initiative that serves all

children.

Parents bring the day-to-day reality of raising a child to every meeting. They already know that transition must start sooner, activities need to be more experiential, job or volunteer experience is critical, and independence comes in steps rather than suddenly during senior year. Engaged parents know that teachers have very little preparation in the area of transition, and it doesn't take long to realize that school administrators often don't understand the unique needs of the small population of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Thus, parents and likeminded professionals are slowly driving the shift to an expanded curriculum for our children that will include tools to navigate the move from high school to college and career.

As parents, we ask professionals that they give us a chance to grow among individuals who value the parent perspective. We appreciate pepnet 2's emphasis on finding ways for parents to build ongoing capacity in transition to improve outcomes for our youth. We look forward to that shift as more active parent leaders and dedicated professionals pursue the same goal: children who become adults that are fully capable of self-determination and success both in their personal lives and in their careers.

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# Reaching the Summit:

## Deaf Adults as Essential Partners in Education

*By Bridgetta Bourne-Firl*

*It can be tough, but it is important to convince decision-making professionals who are bearing to consult with and involve deaf adults in deaf education and the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students from school into higher education, postsecondary training, or the workplace—always.*

Tibetan-born Sherpa Nawang Gombu and American Jim Whittaker reached the top of Mount Everest on May 1, 1963. As they approached the peak, each considered the honor of being the first to reach the summit. Whittaker motioned for Gombu to move ahead, but Gombu declined with a smile saying, “You first.” The two climbers decided to step to the summit at the same time (Douglas, 2011).



I would like to think that Whittaker, not native to the rugged landscape that surrounds the tallest mountain in the world, encouraged Gombu, who was native to the area, to go first because it was the right thing to do. Then it was the native Tibetan who chose to partner with the American, who did not know the terrain or how to navigate within it, in sharing the honor of reaching the summit.

How do we reach the summit in terms of supporting the best transition possible for each

*Photos courtesy of Bridgetta Bourne-Firl and Zhou Fang*

**Right:** Gombu and Whittaker, photo courtesy of [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) (Strickland, 2013).



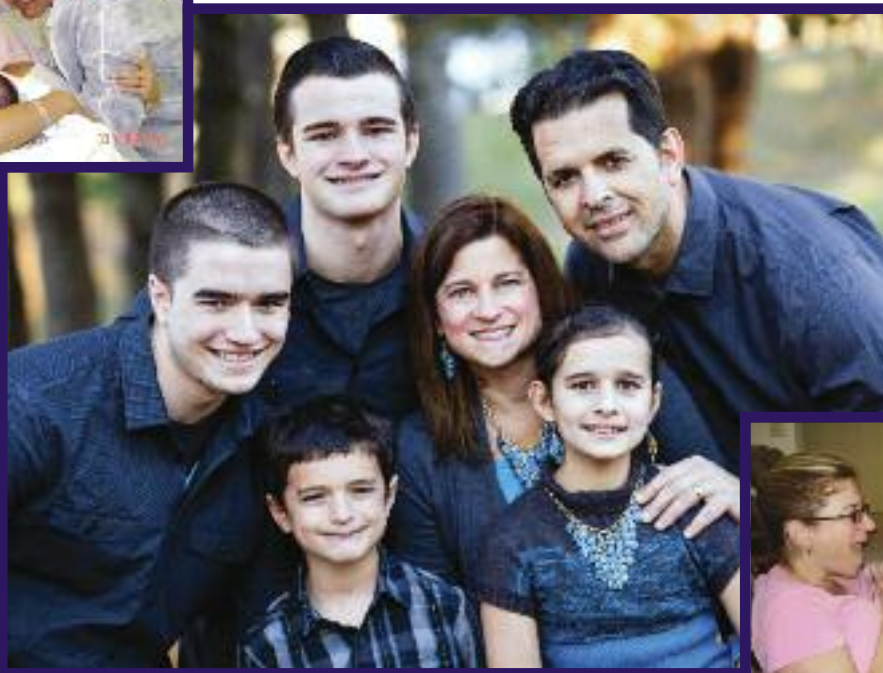


PHOTO CREDIT: BEN HOSHINA

**Left to right:** Bourne-Firl and her husband with their newborn; the author's family (clockwise from left): Jared, Gideon, Bridgetta, Leslie, Sabrina, and Elijah; Bourne-Firl and her son share a happy moment.



young deaf or hard of hearing individual in the United States? Should professionals who are hearing work alone to succeed with deaf and hard of hearing students? No matter how good the intention, if we want deaf and hard of hearing students to transition from high school to college, university, or the workplace with maximum ease, involving adults who are deaf or hard of hearing is critical.

Ideally, the partnership between deaf and hearing professionals begins at the birth of each deaf child and continues as the child moves through schooling and transitions into adulthood. The evidence for the importance of this involvement comes from many sources, including hearing parents and professionals. "I don't know how to teach my child how to be a deaf adult in this world," one hearing parent explained to me. "So the professionals who are deaf themselves teach my child how to navigate as a deaf person."

Dr. Hank Klopping, a former superintendent of a school for the deaf who retired after 38 years as one of the most respected administrators in the country, exemplifies this attitude. Deaf professionals often know best for deaf students because their perspectives are naturally enhanced by their own experiences and by the collective knowledge of what other deaf individuals have experienced. As an

administrator, Klopping embraced collaborative governance that included deaf individuals, deaf parents, and deaf professionals, and he communicated effectively with all of them. His ongoing relationships with deaf individuals ensured quality education for the deaf and hard of hearing individuals who had the good fortune to be educated while he was an administrator in their school.

Klopping, who is not deaf, is an example of a hearing individual who genuinely recognized his shared humanity and equality with deaf individuals, understood that they offered effective educational approaches, acknowledged the implicit discrimination that deaf individuals have endured historically, and worked actively to confront and counteract this. Deaf people considered him an ally, using this term to mean individuals who collaborate equally with deaf individuals in the name of a larger cause. When skilled and knowledgeable deaf individuals are unavailable, skilled and knowledgeable hearing allies can be useful.

### **Birth: The Partnering Begins**

In hospitals, newborns are tested for hearing status. The result is that often the first deaf person parents



meet is the baby in their arms. At this point, well-meaning professionals often present the parents with the information about their baby's hearing status in language and tone that are negative. For example, when I was told my child failed a hearing test, it was clear that the context was negative. My baby was not yet 48 hours old and the first evaluation I received was "failed." No wonder distress and anxiety, even alarm, result. If a deaf person or a hearing professional who partners equally and successfully with deaf people could be in the hospital corridor at that moment, parents could be assured of the positive experiences that await their child, and the professional could begin to assist parent and baby with bonding and language development.

In Maryland, an attempt has been made to address this issue through the state's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Council. This council comprises 12 individuals, including representatives from the Maryland School for the Deaf, the Maryland Association of the Deaf, the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing. Dr. Beth Benedict, herself a deaf parent and an intervention expert, was among the representatives. The council ensures further meaningful input through

requiring representation from two parents of children "with permanent hearing status that affects speech-language skills." Critical to respecting the Deaf community is the use of the words "hearing status" instead of "hearing loss," phrasing that was the contribution of deaf professionals and individuals. This is an excellent example of partnership, fostering a positive start for parents with newly identified deaf or hard of hearing babies.

### **Educational and Professional Experience: An Autobiography**

I was in school when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act passed in 1975. I experienced Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with my parents, who were adamant in advocating goals that were challenging in reading, writing, and math. They wanted me to progress just like my hearing counterparts—and they knew I could. When the teachers were unsure, my parents, who were deaf like me, insisted they have higher expectations and that those expectations be written into my IEP. When I was in high school, I participated in my youngest sister's IEP meeting as an observer, watching the interactions and explanations of teachers and my parents.

In 1996, I began working in infant

through grade 12 educational settings, first in California, then Maryland, and now in the District of Columbia. For 20 years, I have worked with deaf and hard of hearing students in educational settings and observed as other people worked with them. In a professional capacity, I had an opportunity to serve as an IEP coordinator, and some of the IEP meetings I witnessed worried me. Clearly the other professionals with so much power over the lives of young children had no idea what it was like being deaf, what it was like wearing hearing aids, what it was like to struggle understanding teachers.

Sometimes I was the only deaf professional in attendance, and I would offer my opinion from my own experience and knowledge. I was always hoping that the team would pay attention, that my words could support this student's IEP planning, and I would shake my head in silence when decisions were made with too much focus on things that I thought would not necessarily contribute to the student's academic growth. I often wished the hearing professionals would ask me, "What do you think? You are a deaf person yourself and have seen so much. Please advise." This did not always happen.

I became a parent. I would have four children—two who were hearing and two who were deaf. When I had my second deaf baby, a little girl, the professionals, administrators for our school district, asked me what I wanted in her Individualized Family Service Plan. Due to my strong emotions—I wanted so badly to invest the right way in planning for my daughter—I struggled to come up with a written statement. I consulted a professional with expertise in early childhood education for deaf children, and this individual gave me confidence as well as knowledge. When I met with the district administrators for the second time, I knew what to write: My child should be kindergarten ready by the time she is 5 years old; further, she

should have a high level of language modeling in both American Sign Language and English. As a result, my daughter had professionals—deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing—who were supportive of her progress academically and socially and, thankfully, my daughter was indeed ready when she started her wonderful kindergarten program.

During my early years as a parent, Barbara Matusky, a hearing mother of two deaf children, told me, “When it comes to our children, we are emotional beings. Period.” That’s parenthood. Whether we are deaf or hearing—or they are deaf or hearing—we love our children so much and are anxious to ensure they prosper. All parents are thankful to those who contribute to the academic growth of their children.

## Pepnet 2, Transition, and Adulthood ... and Deaf Gain

Last year, I had the privilege of serving as one of the meeting facilitators at the pepnet 2 Summit that was held in Washington, D.C. Pepnet 2, formerly PEPNet, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, has brought together professionals, parents, and deaf people from around the country in a series of meetings known as Summits to focus on statewide planning to improve the transition of young deaf and hard of hearing students into adulthood. The pepnet 2 teams have required the inclusion of parents and individuals from the Deaf community. This is an important step. Through their personal knowledge and experience, these deaf adults can contribute to the lives of deaf young adults so they become contributing citizens, whether they go directly into the workplace or enter

college, law school, or trade school and whether they are living independently or in group homes.

At the California School for the Deaf in Fremont, job coaching, by knowledgeable deaf or hearing allies working closely with deaf adult individuals, is provided for students for two years after leaving high school. Coaches work with families in their homes, with employers at job sites, and with individuals in local communities to find the resources to support young graduates.

Dr. Ben Bahan, a deaf scholar, calls the inclusion of deaf professionals in every aspect of the decision-making process as it affects deaf students *Deaf Gain*. Bahan (2015) suggests that we do not focus on the difference in deaf and hard of hearing students in a way that indicates deafness is a deficiency. He asks: *What do people gain from being deaf?* He finds that deaf professionals can nurture the positive attributes of being deaf. Deaf professionals, as they work with deaf infants, children, and young deaf adults, can illuminate the

valued and treasured aspects of being deaf and show how these are embodied in everyday life.

There is a dire need for greater partnerships between decision makers who are

hearing and professionals who are deaf on state and national levels. Deaf children, in

various stages of education, from early intervention to high school transition and graduation, can only profit from this partnership.

Deaf adults are a rich source of knowledge. They grew up being deaf or hard of hearing, sat in classrooms, learned how to read, write, and count; each confronted his or her own IEP. Every day they experience being deaf,

living in neighborhoods, working with colleagues in the workplace, attending houses of worship. They know what it is to explain and advocate for themselves. They sleep, breathe, eat, and think as deaf or hard of hearing people. Tapping into this lifetime of experience, knowledge, and expertise can ensure the next generation of deaf children achieves academically and receives greater opportunities.

The majority culture is sound-based; knowledge depends heavily on what is heard. Deaf people rely more on what they see so they can see how deaf students can navigate successfully and contribute in positive ways that are often invisible to hearing people. I, along with many deaf professionals across the country, offer experience and insights that can contribute to the next generation of deaf children. There’s so much to gain when we—parents and professionals, hearing and deaf—attain the summit together.



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## Suggested Reading

Wording for the Senate Bill 103 as it passed into approved by the governor in 2014, [http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2014RS/Chapters\\_non/CH\\_30\\_sb0103e.pdf](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2014RS/Chapters_non/CH_30_sb0103e.pdf)



## Clerc Center Research Agenda Established Through 2020



In 2015, the Clerc Center published its Research Agenda identifying priorities for research activities at the Clerc Center and partnerships with external researchers. The new Research Agenda draws from public input, identified gaps in research, and the Clerc Center's strategic plan priorities.

"It is our hope that collective efforts on the part of the Clerc Center and researchers around the country will help strengthen application of research into the day-to-day education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing," said Dr. Lori Lutz, director of Research and Evaluation at the Clerc Center.

The Research Agenda highlights three priority areas of focus: 1) family engagement, 2) educational best practices, and 3) social and emotional well-being.

"This agenda sets forth priority areas of focus for research at the Clerc Center, establishes priorities for collaborations with external researchers, and calls to attention key areas that researchers and agencies across the country should consider when identifying possible research endeavors," said Lutz. The complete text of the Research Agenda includes contextual information for each priority area of focus, along with a list of related guiding research questions.

The Research Agenda was developed using data and findings from the Clerc Center's 2013 publication entitled *Critical Needs of Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Public Input Summary* and from reviewing literature for gaps in research. (The publication is available for free

downloading in PDF format at [www.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center/our-resources/publications/pi-summary.html](http://www.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center/our-resources/publications/pi-summary.html).)

By publishing its research priorities, the Clerc Center seeks to draw attention to those gaps in research and the critical needs identified in the Public Input summary. The Research Agenda also aims to spur the translation of research into information resources and training for parents and professionals.

"The Clerc Center recognizes the importance of partnering with researchers locally and across the nation to address these priority areas," says Lutz. "Researchers interested in conducting collaborative research with the Clerc Center should refer to these priorities as a guide for research opportunities."

The Research Agenda is aligned with the Clerc Center Strategic Plan 2020, which maps out the Clerc Center's work through year 2020 and is led by Dr. Susan Jacoby, executive director of Planning, Development, and Dissemination at the Clerc Center. "This work affords the opportunity to advance research knowledge that can lead to identification of best practices that would, in turn, support the development of new resources, classroom practices, and strategies for use at home," she said.

The Clerc Center's Research Agenda can be viewed on the Clerc Center's website at <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu> as well as in Gallaudet University's 2016 *Annual Report of Achievements*. Contact [clerc.center.research@gallaudet.edu](mailto:clerc.center.research@gallaudet.edu) for inquiries or to explore research collaborations.



## It's Time to Update Your Contact Information

Do you receive our e-mail newsletter? Do you want to make sure you are subscribed to *Odyssey*?

By updating your information, you will receive free resources provided by the Clerc Center and our partners; receive links to professional articles; have opportunities to share your experiences, expertise, and resources with others; and ensure you continue to receive *Odyssey* magazine in the format you desire.

In order to confirm we have your most recent contact information, we ask that you visit <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu> and click on the Subscribe tab at the top of our webpage.

Don't miss out on new releases of information, resources, webcasts, and training. Update your contact information now!



## New Online Early Intervention Resources Available

The Clerc Center recently debuted two new early intervention resources for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to age 3 and their families.

*Setting Language in Motion: Family Supports and Early Intervention for Babies Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing* is a web-based resource that was developed in collaboration with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program of Boston Children's Hospital. The seven modules provide a wealth of information for parents and caregivers of deaf and hard of hearing children. The modules include videos and resources on topics such as: the screening and evaluation process, understanding how hearing works, amplification choices and considerations, how to promote language development and acquisition in the home, and providing tips to caregivers on how to care for a deaf or hard of hearing child. Early intervention providers can use these videos when working with families of newly identified deaf or hard of hearing children. They are available in American Sign Language, spoken English, and Spanish.

*Early Intervention Network: Supporting Linguistic Competence for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing* is designed

especially for early intervention professionals. The research-based modules are easily accessed online and are intended to provide the latest in early intervention support and services. This online network shares five evidence-based factors and supporting program components shown to be essential in the development of linguistic competence in children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Highlighted are various programs from around the country that have implemented these factors. Browse the site to learn how to: facilitate parent-child interactions to assist in language development, design individualized strategies and collaborate with parents, promote parent-child visual language development, teach troubleshooting strategies for assistive listening devices, and develop and implement systematic language planning processes.



## Students with Cochlear Implants: Guidelines for Educational Program Planning

### A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE FOR INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING

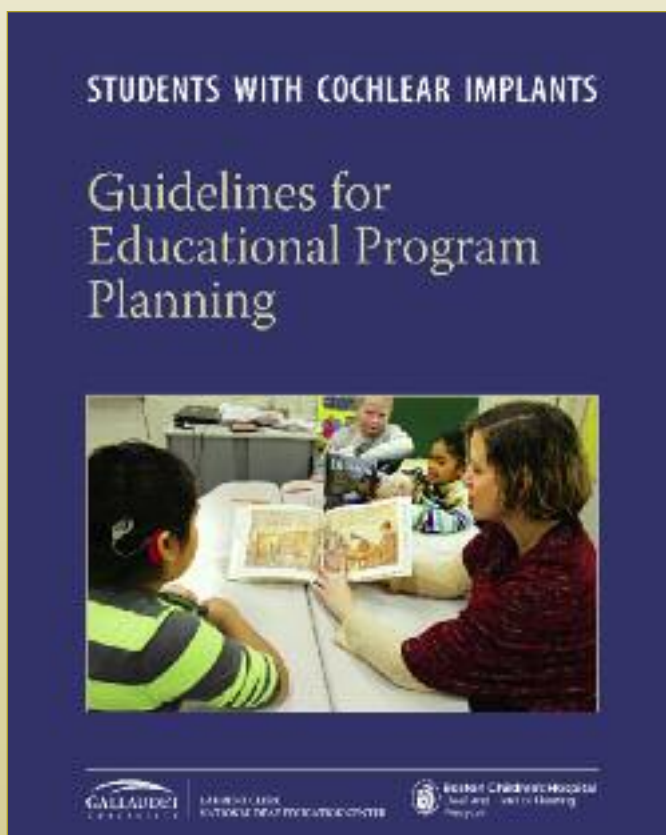
Every child with a cochlear implant is unique, as are the supports they need to both effectively access their education and participate as full members of a school community. Individualized planning is therefore essential to designing and monitoring the educational environment for each student. *Students with Cochlear Implants: Guidelines for Educational Program Planning* is a resource to guide this important planning for students in all educational settings.

Professionals and families will find this guide invaluable when

developing a student's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 plan, or any other educational planning document. Developed in partnership with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at Boston Children's Hospital with over 40 contributors, this resource provides comprehensive checklists to assess a student's ability to access the general education curriculum. Taken into consideration is the language of instruction used with each student, whether it be

American Sign Language, spoken English, spoken English with sign support, or some other type of communication such as Cued Speech or Picture Exchange.

*Students with Cochlear Implants: Guidelines for Educational Program Planning* is available online at <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu> and in print. The publication and the appendices offer reference guides for general education teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, special education teachers, and allied professionals.



**Developed in partnership with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at Boston Children's Hospital with over 40 contributors, this resource provides comprehensive checklists to assess a student's ability to access the general education curriculum.**



# Seeking Submissions for the 2017 Issue of Odyssey

## **THEME: What's Trending in Student Success**

When professionals, parents, and students are asked about goals or hopes for the future, responses often include "We want her to succeed" or "I want to be successful." But what does being successful mean? What does success look like in the classrooms, schools, and homes of children who are deaf or hard of hearing? Success can mean different things to different people. It can and should be defined differently for individual students as well as for the same student at different points throughout his or her education.

A typical definition of student success might include graduating from high school and continuing on to postsecondary education or training and then on to working in a student's chosen field. These important markers of success occur after many years in school. So what does success look like along the way toward achieving this goal? We know that the foundation for high school success can be established before a child enters kindergarten, but what does a successful foundation look like? What role does language play?

What about social-emotional and motor skills? How do professionals and parents recognize and measure success in early childhood? Then, as a child progresses,

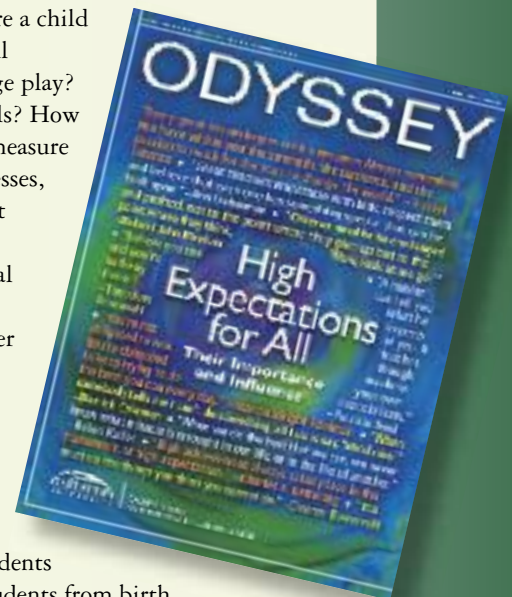
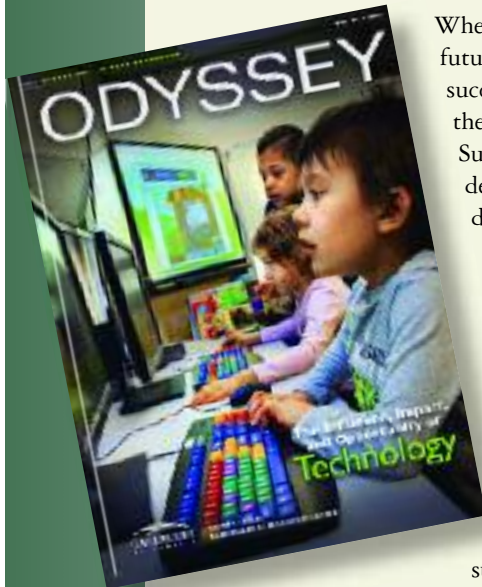
how do they redefine and note success at school and at home? Most important, how do students understand and define success for themselves?

No two students who are deaf or hard of hearing have the same educational journey. Their experiences may differ academically, communicatively, and social-emotionally. How do professionals and families acknowledge and foster success in all aspects of a deaf or hard of hearing student's life as well as for students with varying skills, abilities, needs, and goals? And how are they using tools such as a student's Individualized Education Program or 504 plan to plan for and document the knowledge and skill development students need to be successful during school and in preparation for their longer-term goals?

The 2017 issue of *Odyssey* will focus on how professionals, families, and students define, foster, measure, and document success for deaf and hard of hearing students from birth through high school. What practices are used in the classroom and throughout the school day to acknowledge and facilitate the effort, characteristics, and learning that lead to success? What are families doing to foster success at home and at school? How do students create a vision of success for themselves and then figure out how to get the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to make their vision a reality?

The Clerc Center is particularly interested in articles focused on serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing from traditionally underserved groups, including those students who are lower achieving academically, who come from families that speak a language other than English in the home, who are members of diverse racial or cultural groups, who are from rural areas, and/or who have secondary disabilities.

Please e-mail your ideas to [Odyssey@gallaudet.edu](mailto:Odyssey@gallaudet.edu). We will begin accepting submissions on June 1, 2016, and continue until October 3, 2016, or until the magazine reaches capacity. Contact us via e-mail at any time with questions or to discuss your ideas.





**Michael K. Yudin** is the assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services and in that capacity leads the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) at the U.S. Department of Education. The president nominated Yudin for that position in July 2013, and the U.S. Senate confirmed his nomination on June 2, 2015. Yudin has been with the Department of Education since 2010, serving the secretary of education in a number of capacities dedicated to improving opportunities for all students. Yudin served as acting assistant secretary of OSERS from August 2012 to February 2015, leading the office in its mission to support full integration and participation in society of people with disabilities by promoting inclusion, ensuring equity, and creating opportunities for them from cradle through career. He also served as acting assistant secretary and principal deputy assistant secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) from June 2010 to July 2012. There he helped lead the formulation and development of policy designed to promote academic excellence and ensure equitable opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students in K-12 education.

# A Shared Responsibility

*By Michael K. Yudin*

Approximately 50 years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, ensuring children from disadvantaged backgrounds had the same kinds of educational opportunities as their more affluent peers. And when he signed that law, he said he believed that no law he had signed or will ever sign will mean more to the future of America. He set full educational opportunity as our first national goal.

In 1975, Congress passed what is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), guaranteeing to all children with disabilities a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

It is clear that we have made significant progress in our efforts to advance the inclusion of children with disabilities in our schools and communities. Our nation stands on the shoulders of our teachers, our school leaders, and our families. Working together they have raised expectations, helping children with disabilities learn more and develop their skills beyond what was thought possible.

Together, both ESEA and IDEA have led to improved access, accountability, and achievement for children with disabilities. As classrooms become more inclusive, technology advances, and research tells us how to provide evidence-based instruction and interventions to support children with disabilities in the classroom, states and school districts can now focus on improving performance rather than just focusing on mere compliance with the law.

And, as a country, we've made tremendous progress over the last few years alone. Last year, we announced the highest graduation rate we've ever had as a nation—82 percent. This progress was driven in no small part by the significant reductions in the dropout rate among African American, Latino, and low-income students. We have seen a million more African American and

Latino students in college since President Obama took office. Millions more students now have access to higher education and access to high-quality preschool. And data suggests that the most recent college graduating class was not only the largest class ever but also the most diverse.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. Children with disabilities, including children who are deaf or hard of hearing, stand far behind their peers in almost every indicator of student achievement. Unfortunately, too many children with disabilities simply do not have opportunities to access and succeed in coursework necessary for college and career. Highly effective special education teachers are in short supply and high demand. And children with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than students without disabilities.

For children who are deaf or hard of hearing, this situation is compounded by the lack of attention to individual student educational and social needs within schools and districts, the high cost of linguistic and communication access, and the limited school and community resources. These children all too often sit alone in the classroom—they are not “included” in the classroom academic and social interactions. Consequently, they struggle to learn key concepts. Research has shown that students who are deaf or hard of hearing achieve lower levels of reading and leave school with a typical reading delay of at least five years. With inadequate linguistic and communication access, inadequate instruction, and low expectations by unprepared teachers and faculty, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, even with normal or above-average potential, fall far behind their hearing classmates in academic achievement at all grade levels and at the postsecondary level.

How do we close this opportunity gap in academic achievement and ensure children who are deaf or hard of hearing have the skills necessary to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge-based economy? We know from 40 years of research that



children with disabilities do better when they are held to high expectations and have access to the general education curriculum. To be clear, that curriculum is the same curriculum as for nondisabled children and is based on a state's academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. We know that children with disabilities, including those who struggle in reading and math, can successfully learn grade-level content and make significant academic progress when appropriate instruction, services, and supports are provided. Therefore, to make certain that children with disabilities are held to high expectations and have meaningful access to a state's academic content standards, the special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, and other supports in a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be designed to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum based on the state's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.

It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure all children, regardless of zip code, race or ethnicity, income status, or ability, have the opportunity to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and career. There is no single system or entity responsible for providing all of the necessary supports that children and youth need, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Strengthening linkages between general and special education, preschool and elementary education, and secondary and postsecondary education are the critical first

steps. Ultimately, cross-agency collaboration is necessary—both within and across child- and adult-service system at the federal, state, and local levels—to ensure children with disabilities receive the instruction, the special education and related services, the supplementary aids and services, and other supports necessary to meet grade-level content standards and graduate from high school college and career ready.

As you may know, President Obama recently signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, the latest reauthorization of ESEA, into law. He did so because he believes that not only does it build on the civil rights legacy of the original law but creates an opportunity for a reset in the national conversation about the future of schools and the path to educational equity and excellence for all children.

We all know it takes work—hard work—to make that opportunity real. But if you truly believe that all children deserve that kind of opportunity, then our collective work becomes extraordinarily clear. We know that when families, educators, and community leaders work together, they can unlock the “great vaults of opportunity of this nation”—to echo the words of Dr. King from his March on Washington.

More than 50 years ago, President Johnson said that “our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal.” Our work together, living up to our shared responsibility, can help us reach that goal.

**It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure all children, regardless of zip code, race or ethnicity, income status, or ability, have the opportunity to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and career.**

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