

**It Takes a Village: Team Collaboration for Students who are Deafblind**  
**Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education 2025**  
Kaycee Bennett, Deafblind Education Consultant  
Kate Borg, School Principal

Who is the School Sensory Team?

- The sensory team typically includes:
  - Teacher of Students who are Deafblind (if you have one)
  - Teacher of Students who are Visually Impaired,
  - Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing,
  - Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist

What Is The Role of the School Sensory Team?

- Provide sensory-specific information to the rest of the team; they are the experts in the senses!
- Provide supports to the intervener and teacher to implement deafblind strategies
- Conduct assessments to determine how the student's senses and other conditions impact their ability to gather information and to communicate

Models of Disability

- Medical Model
- Social Model
- Human Rights Model

When do we need collaboration?

- Collaboration isn't just for evaluation/assessment. For students who are deafblind, we have to collaborate for everything!

When do I do all of this???

- Consult time
- Google Drive
- Shared Pinterest pages
- Regular team meetings
- All disciplines can decide how they will support lessons, activities, or skills
- It's not all on you! Be creative and work as a team. The more people, the more ideas!

The TDB Primary Roles

- Provide information on the impact of being deafblind on students' access to instruction
- Collaborate in assessment & IEP development
- Provide orientation, supervision, & instructional support to the Intervener
- Coordinate educational planning & communication among team members
- Provide information on the sensory needs for the core team and support the team in preparing instructional accommodations and materials
- Provide information on students' eligibility for the Deafblind Child Count

### The TSVI's Primary Roles

- Interpreting the student's specific eye condition and educational implications of the visual impairment
- Completes functional vision and learning media assessments
- Understands the unique educational needs and learning characteristics of visually impaired students
- Assures that appropriate materials and equipment are available for the student (large print/braille, APH Materials, etc.)

### The TDHH's Primary Roles

- Review and explain diagnostic information from the Otologist (if available) and Audiologist related to hearing levels, age of onset, age of intervention, age of initiation of communication, and rate of progress on listening skills.
- Administer assessments related to DHH: English Language Arts, American Sign Language, academic skills or progress, functional listening, and personal/social behavioral skills
- Monitor and ensure the appropriate use of Assistive Technology (ex: DM, soundfield system, closed captioning) and record data

### The Intervener's Primary Roles

- Works one-on-one with a student who is deafblind
- Receives specialized training in deafblind education
- Acts as the eyes and ears and provides a bridge to the world
- Assists the student in gathering information to develop concepts, skills, communication, language, and relationships leading to greater independence.
- Acts as a support person who does WITH not FOR.

### The Family Member's Primary Roles

- Attends team meetings and participates in developing the IEP as an equal member of the team
- Contributes information such as medical history, family life and other observations for assessment and programming
- Provides information about the student's communication needs and functional skills

### The Student's Primary Roles

- Participates in discussions with the IEP team in ways that are meaningful
- Provides information to the team on which strategies are effective and which are not
- Shares personal goals and plans for their future

### The Administrator's Primary Roles

- Establishing policies & procedures
- Ensuring access to applicable professional development for team members
- Attend the IEP meeting and ensure policies and procedures are followed.

- Allowing time for planning and meetings

#### The O&M Specialist's Primary Roles

- Advise or consult with the student and team
- Conducts O&M Assessments with input from team, including parent(s) and other team members
- Makes sure team understands assessment findings and recommendations
- Works with the student, intervener, family and rest of the educational team to develop IEP goals and objectives
- Teaches the O&M skills and concepts
- Assists the intervener in reinforcing O&M skills and concepts through activities and routines

How might this be different on teams that don't have TDBs (yet!)

- Collaboration is key! While a TSVI and a TDHH don't equal a TDB, the collaboration between the two must be strong and additional supports will likely be needed. Your state deafblind project is a great place to start!

#### Collaborate

- What modifications or accommodations does the student need?
  - What are available materials and resources?
  - What needs to be provided?
  - Who will provide what?
- When and how often will consultation visits happen?
  - Who will attend?
  - What topics will be covered?
  - How will consistent educational programming be implemented across environments to ensure provision of adapted materials, appropriate use of AT, promotion of independence, and support the mastery of IEP goals?
- What coaching or in-service training needs to be provided to:
  - Families
  - Paraeducators
  - Classroom teachers
  - Other related service providers

#### Role Release

**“Exemplified when individuals on the team utilize strategies and techniques from other disciplines without on-hand support facilitated by the shared learning and role expansion.”**

Why is role release so challenging?

- We love to facilitate learning and interact with our deafblind students.
- We have worked hard to gain knowledge and expertise in our field.
- We aren't able to easily trust that others can do what we do.

So then why do we role release and co-teach?

- We promote human rights and disability justice through expectation and engagement with educational teams.
- We want student success to be a shared project.
- We are finite beings living on a blue marble with only 24 hours per day.
- We don't want to be mistaken for the IT support person.

Resources

- Unique Roles and Responsibilities of the Teacher of Students who are Deafblind
  - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CNiaUH3zOiyB9JiyhjFrNDNo64WP7NJm/view?usp=sharing>
- Models of Disability
  - <https://subjectguides.lib.neu.edu/disability/models>
  - <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/disability-models>
  - <https://participation.cbm.org/why/disability-participation/models-of-disability/>
  - <https://participation.cbm.org/why/disability-participation/models-of-disability/>