Letter from the Editor

I welcome you to the comeback of CollAERborations newsletter. It is the hope for this newsletter to have recurring columns, such as ECC spotlight, Technology Corner, and Parent Resources. Each issue will focus on a different area of the ECC…this one focuses on Compensatory Skills. Other recurring columns are also being explored such as Ask an Expert and sample IEP goals. Enjoy this newsletter and please give some reader feedback to help steer future issues to be more tailored to reader interests. Please send feedback to me at eleagan@gmail.com.

Happy reading!
Liz Eagan

Division Roundup

Division 3: Multiple Disabilities/Deafblindness
News for the Chair: Olaya Landa-Vialard
(oalanda@ilstu.edu)

Division 3 has been working on building up the information on our website. The website now has lots of great information and resources to help practitioners and researchers alike when working with students with multiple disabilities/deafblindness. Please visit our website at: http://mddb.aerbvi.org/index.htm to take advantage of the valuable information that awaits you. Please contact me if you have other information that our division can share on our website. I look forward to hearing from you.
Division 8: Infants and Preschool
News from the Chair: Karen Frank (karenf@mdschblind.org)

Working with families and the youngest of children is both exciting and challenging! The Infant and Preschool Division is here to help providers with this unique population. Most of us were not trained to work with parents and family members in our vision or O&M programs. The focus was on the child or client only. Now, you may be experiencing that this “one” child or student, actually represents several extended family members, a day care provider, multitude of therapists, the preschool teacher, and of course the parents. They all want your time, assistance, and expertise. Well, don’t pout or cry like a baby! Join our division, Infants and Preschool, to share resources, experiences, and successes. Let us know how we can help you. Our division is very good at sharing!

Division 10: Education Curriculum
News from the Chair: Rachel Schles (raschles@gmail.com)

Greetings Readers! Here at Division 10/Education Curriculum we are very excited to be a part of the revitalization of the CollAERborations Newsletter. Our mission is to promote quality educational services for all students with visual impairments, by providing resources and collaborative professional development opportunities to TVIs and other professionals. We support the development and adaptation of appropriate instruction and curricular materials in the expanded core curriculum (ECC) and access to the general curriculum.

Practically speaking, we want to provide our members with resources and meaningful professional development opportunities, through tradition and innovative channels. The CollAERborations Newsletter is part of this push, and look out for our new division website, hosted on AER’s website, with even more resources coming soon.

If you have questions, suggestions, or want to get involved please feel free to contact us—we look forward to hearing from you!

Division 16: Itinerant Division
News from the Chair: Jill Brown (jillbrown1@mac.com)

Welcome to our newsletter combining all the Instructional Divisions. I am excited to see our four divisions come together for a common theme “ECC – Compensatory Access”, with each division focusing on their area of interest. A huge thank-you to Liz Eagan for putting all these diverse articles together for you to read.

The Itinerant Division has been discussing putting on a webinar. While we are only in the beginning stages, we are excited to bring you up-to-date information. We are also in the beginning stages of creating another position paper. This one will focus on children who have cortical visual impairments. Your Itinerant board is committed to serving your needs in the field. We would love to hear from you. We hope you enjoy this collaborative effort.
ECC Spotlight

Expanded Core Curriculum: Compensatory Skills—Itinerant Style

As part of our jobs to deliver our services to students we must include in our assessments the Expanded Core Curriculum. A matter of fact, in some states it is the law. In each of these joint division newsletters we would like to include parts of the ECC to show you how it looks from each division’s perspective. In this issue we are focusing on Compensatory Skills. These are the skills needed for our students to be able to access all areas of the core curriculum. This could mean teaching tactile skills, Braille, Nemeth, or music codes. It could be listening skills to access textbooks or functional skills for our student with more involved impairments. It even means teaching those critical optical devices to our low vision students.

A day in the life of an itinerant may look like working with a 3-year old on concepts such as same/different to working with an elementary student on keyboarding to working with a functional skills student on object schedules to working with a high school student on the use of varied optical devices to meet a variety of needs. It could look like working with an infant to use their hands to touch and explore, teaching listening skills or how to read tactile graphics to students or using an auditory screen reader to teach internet exploration.

We use a variety of tools for assessment and curriculum. Check out the following website for information:

- http://www.tsbvi.edu/130-publications/1030-evals-evaluating-visually-impaired-students
- http://www.pathstoliteracy.org
- http://www.perkins.org/elearning
- http://www.aph.org
- http://www.vicurriculum.org/expanded-core-curriculum/compensatory.html
- http://www.wati.org/?pageLoad=content/supports/free/index.php
- http://vitechshare.blogspot.com

Find what works for you

And from the Education Curriculum Division...

Compensatory and access skills were first framed by Dr. Phil Hatlen in 1995 as the compensatory and functional academics component of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). Since then The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairment, Including those with Multiple Disabilities (National Agenda) revised the content area as compensatory access skills. The shift to the common core curriculum state standards (CCCSS) transitioned us away from the terminology of functional academics to a more focused view of access skills. Today, compensatory and access skills range from braille, communication skills including alternative or augmentative communication methods, organizational skills, and or any other skills needed for students to access their classroom curriculum.

Both the Elementary Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that all students have access to the general curriculum. Consequently, this is typically a significant instructional focus for teachers of students with
visual impairments (TVIs). Every year brings new adventures to provide compensatory access skills; students may need instruction in the use of talking graphing calculators one year and training to access and navigate digital textbooks the next. For students using alternative communication methods, TVIs collaborate with school staff to help ensure appropriate communication systems are in place, and that students’ vocabulary continues to expand.

TVIs use our functional vision assessment and learning media assessment data to determine data-driven accommodations that allow students to access the visual environment. Our challenge is to provide the instruction and supports necessary for every child to successfully access the general curriculum.

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**Junk in my trunk**

*By Jill Brown*

1. Use of a Rolling Cart sold by most office supply stores. It easily folds up for storage and opens up to hold many items. When opened, they hold several bags of toys, or 8 large print books, or a braillewriter with room for other things. I like to put each child’s activities into bags, that way I just grab and go. A rolling cart can hold 2-3 bags in each. You can get at least 2-3 carts into the back of an SUV. I am sure trunks can hold two.

2. I like to keep a notebook in my car with essential information. I keep a copy of each child’s class schedule and an IEP data sheet. I also like to keep a list of all my school’s contact information. This would include address and phone number.

3. I use re-usable bags to help keep me organize throughout the day. I have a pencil box” bag. In this I keep not only pens (black and blue) but pencils, grease pencils, bold line pens, markers, crayons, stapler and tape, Velcro, wipes, stickers tissues and even headphones with a splitter jack. I am ready for ANYTHING!!!!

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**Vocational Access Service Providers (VASPs)**

*for Youth and Adults with Deafblindness*

*by Olaya Landa-Vialard*

While at AER International this summer in San Antonio, TX, I was approached by a member of Division 3-Multiple Disabilities/Deafblindness. Our colleague asked me about information pertaining to transition for individuals with multiple disabilities/deafblindness. Here is some information regarding Vocational Access Service Providers (VASPs). The information provided came from a presentation given by Veramarie Baldoza, Michelle Clyne, and Ingrid Halvorsen at the Illinois AERBVI Conference in February of 2015.

VASPs work with youth and adults to help them achieve their employment outcomes. They convey and describe visual and environmental information to the person who is
deafblind which provides them resources and opportunity to make independent decisions in support of their Vocational Rehabilitation Employment goal. The VASP provides information to the individual so they are able to consider their options, but at no point shall the VASP make choices and decisions for the person who is deafblind.

VASPs serve two important functions: 1.) provide access to the community by making transportation available and serves as a human guide; 2.) relay visual and environmental information that may not be heard or seen by the person who is deafblind in the person’s preferred language and mode of communication.

VASP training is currently informal, often taught in a hands-on workshop format or through life experiences working individually with a person who is deafblind. Unfortunately, there are currently no state or national certifications or licensures for VASPs.

For more information about VASPs please go to the Division 3 website at http://mddb.aerbvi.org/index.htm and click on the link for the PowerPoint Presentation titled: “Intervener, SSP, and VASP: Alike and Different to Support Individuals with Deafblindness.”

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**Is the Technology that my Students use ready for UEB? Are my Students Ready?**

Robert G Taylor, Ed.S
Educational consultant-technologist
Kansas State School for the Blind

The UEB code was established as a new standard by the International Council on English Braille. This Braille code has been adopted by Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) are preparing for these changes in many ways by attending workshops, webcasts, and researching the internet. But the question that many of these teachers are asking themselves, “is the technology that my students use ready for UEB?” “Are they ready?” ”How can I make the transition easier for them?”

A quick reference for TVIs to get the technology ready is provided by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA). Start with the “Tips and Resources for Learning More about Unified English Braille” at: http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/tips-resources.html

This resources describes “step by step” how to make changes to Braille notetakers, screen readers, tablets (iPad and Android), and Braille translation software such as Duxbury.

TVIs can help get their students ready by using apps both on tablets such as the iPad and online that provides them with practice using UEB. See figure 1.0 below.
A Guide to Teaching Teachers Hand-Under-Hand
By Education Curriculum Division

Often students with visual impairments, especially those with multiple disabilities or deaf-blindness, are hesitant to tactually explore their environment. The hand under hand teaching technique allows students to be introduced to and gently explore an object with the expectation that they will only tactually engage when they are ready.

It can be vital for a TVI to meet with their student(s) classroom teachers and other IEP team members to teach them hand under hand at the start of the school year. Make it a fun and informal, but informative, meeting to give school staff important information about the students’ visual impairment and educational implications. Allow them to practice hand under hand teaching by role playing as both student and teacher, perhaps while wearing blindfolds or visual impairment simulator goggles.

Key Points to mention in your session include:

- Children who are blind, especially those with additional disabilities, frequently develop tactile aversions and will refuse to touch anything unknown.
- Unlike children who can see, children with visual impairments do not know what to expect when initially asked or directed to participate in an activity.
- Hand-Under-Hand teaching allows the students to learn to trust you, observe, join in, or take control, of the activity teachers would like students to participate in.

Key Resources for TVIs and Classroom Teachers:
- National Center for Deaf-Blindness, https://nationaldb.org/

### Useful Instructional Apps that support UEB Braille

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<th>iPad</th>
<th>Android</th>
<th>Online</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Braille Tutor</strong> - Braille Tutor is an iPad application designed to help people learn and practice UEB (Unified English Braille). It provides an interactive learning experience using onscreen keys or home keys on an actual keyboard.</td>
<td><strong>Braille Guide</strong> - Simple utility for people who want to learn English Braille. Reference tool only that includes UEB Braille. Not compatible with screen readers.</td>
<td><strong>UEB Online</strong> - UEB Online is a training program for sighted people to learn Unified English Braille (UEB). This program is the first online UEB training tool. The program is suitable for classroom and specialist teachers, parents, teacher aids, and other professionals supporting children and adults with visual impairment. <a href="http://uebonline.org">http://uebonline.org</a></td>
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<td>Built-in verbal instructions, and is VoiceOver compatible.</td>
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<td><strong>Braille Pad (Student and Pro Versions)</strong> - Braille Pad Student is a word processor for Braille. It can handle Unified English Braille (UEB or UEBc), Grade 1 (contracted) and Grade 2 (contracted) Braille. Best used with low vision students, not compatible with VoiceOver.</td>
<td><strong>Hadley School for the Blind Braille courses</strong> have online Braille practice features in many of the lessons. Some are free while others have a fee. All these courses include UEB Braille.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hadley.edu/braillecourses.asp">http://www.hadley.edu/braillecourses.asp</a></td>
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<td><strong>Braille Sonic Pro</strong> - App is fully accessible with VoiceOver and is more of a resource than tutorial.</td>
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- Your state’s resources for individuals with visual impairments or deaf-blindness

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**Teaching Hand-under-Hand to Parents**

by Karen Frank

Parents are the first and best teachers of their young child with visual impairments. It is their job to introduce the child to the world by bringing objects to them, providing wonderful tactile experiences and actions, and helping them move through the environment. It is critical that parents understand that their child will learn best if they have even partial control over these experiences. The child maintains control by deciding what they will touch, how long they touch, or if they will move their hands by rubbing or patting, or fingering. Helping a parent understand and appreciate this begins with respecting the communication and work of the hands.

Have the parent sit and watch what their child’s hands are telling them. Does the child show emotions through their hands? Can they tell when their child is listening by watching the hands? Do they use their hands as tools? What do they communicate when the hands move in a specific way? Once the adult understands that if a child’s hands are manipulated or controlled and they will not be able to notice all of this prized internal information, they usually begin to appreciate and value hand-under-hand as a great teaching approach.

To begin, parents should first tell the child what is coming (“we are going to touch the soap”). The parent or adult should first model the haptic or motor movements they want their child to imitate. This gives the adult an idea of how to explore this object or action. Then, slipping their own hand underneath the child’s hand, they can continue their movements. The child begins to experience what is happening, slightly removed from the newest of the texture or experience. If the child seems interested, the adult can slightly pull their hand from under the child’s, allowing the child direct contact. It is important to judge by facial expression and body movements when the child is ready. If the
experience is negative or the child is not ready to have direct contact, the adult can then quickly slide their hand back under the child’s again.

If the child does not allow for hand-under-hand exploration, touch the object to less sensitive parts of the child’s body, like their leg or arm. When presenting an item to their hands, touch it first to the back of the child’s hand and let them decide if they want to turn their hand over, palm up, to interact with the object. Reassure the parent that this may take many, many tries before the child is ready to touch or to try hand-under-hand experiences again.

A child who knows they have control over their own hands, knows that no one will grab or manipulate them, and trusts an adult to help them safely explore, is more confident and willing to tactually explore new objects and experiences.

Clinic Hours with…
By Guest Writer Dr. Ana M. Perez, OD, FAAO

Low Vision Rehabilitation (LVR) is a specialized area in the field of vision and eye care that deals with patients with congenital or acquired vision loss. This vision loss is one that cannot be improved with medical, surgical or conventional spectacle correction, and which interferes with the patient’s ability to perform daily living activities. A comprehensive low vision evaluation is performed by optometrists or ophthalmologist trained and experienced in low vision rehabilitation. Our goal is to maximize visual function through the integration of optical or non-optical magnification, electronic magnification or any other recommendation that can help achieve access to printed materials, success and visual independence for each patient.

It is imperative to look at each patient as an individual and address their particular visual needs. This is especially true for children. As children navigate the academic world, their visual demands expand and grow; so to should the implementation of optical or electronic devices. Our main focus during the low vision evaluation is to define the goals or needs and to provide the necessary tools and skills to help the visually impaired child grow and mature to be able to fit in and compete equally with their more visual peers. Access to the visual environment is critical.

Essential for successful implementation of devices is having a strong team which will work towards the same goals for the child. The team starts with the parent; therefore, time and cares needs to be taken to educate parents of visually impaired children. Addressing parent’s questions about ocular diagnosis, prognosis, expectations and fears is fundamental to a strong team. In addition, the TVI and COMs have vital information on what tools the child needs to access the general education and what other ECC content areas are being addressed. Our goal is to develop a strong, empowered (self-confident) and independent students. If efficient visual skills are not well developed, then the student may fall behind in his academic education or struggle. Tailoring the treatment plan to each child’s visual demands and physical capabilities is constantly evolving and should require constant communication between the child and the different team members. Low vision rehabilitation should happen as soon as possible. It provides quantifiable measures about the visual system for those professionals working on early intervention and allows parents to speak with the doctor regarding future expectations for the
child. As the child grows, the natural curiosity for exploring his/her environment is the driving force that will get them interested in using optical devices such as telescopes to see animals at the zoo or use magnifiers to inspect insects.

The bottom line:
1. Early intervention for:
   - Parental education regarding the ocular condition and future expectations
   - Child to being exploring his/her world with the integration of optical devices
2. Tools for accessing the reading world at near or distance need to be accompanied by training to ensure effective skills
3. Team approach allows for a great support system for the child but also for each member of the team
4. Ultimate goal: to empower a child with visual impairments to have a goal for education, personal success and independence.

Compensatory Skills

Parent / Teacher Resources

1. Oakmont Visual Aids Workshop: tactile aids books that teach basic concepts; braille; textures and positions. These books are offered free of charge http://www.teachersaidsforblindchildren.org/index.html

2. DOTS for Braille Literacy: This free on-line newsletter includes information about new braille products, strategies for teaching, and resources for teachers, parents, family member. http://www.afb.org/info/living-with-vision-loss/braille/dots-for-braille-literacy/123

3. Thematic Units and activities to teach varied areas of communication to include concepts, braille, math, writing writing listening, optical aids, and visual efficiency http://www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/communication-unit.html

4. FamilyConnect: http://www.familyconnect.org/parentsitethome.aspx FamilyConnect is an online community created by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) and the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI). n FamilyConnect you'll find videos, personal stories, events, news, and an online community that can offer tips and support from other parents of children who are blind or visually impaired.

5. The ABC’s of UEB: http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/abcs/abcs-ueb.html The purpose of this book is to alert persons presently knowledgeable in braille transcribing to the differences between English Braille American Edition (EBAE) and The Rules of Unified English Braille, June 2013 (UEB). It is not designed for those wishing to learn braille. References to UEB are given throughout. The reader is encouraged to look up the complete rules, study the many examples given in UEB, and become familiar with the vocabulary as shown in the UEB Glossary.
6. Every Kid in a Park – US Parks Service [https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/02/19/lets-get-every-kid-park] Starting in September 2015, every 4th grader in the U.S. will receive an “Every Kid in a Park” pass that’s good for free admission for them and their families to all of America’s federal lands and waters for an entire year. Take advantage of this hands-on opportunity for children to explore the great outdoors.

7. Paths to Literacy ([www.pathstoliteracy.org](http://www.pathstoliteracy.org)) is a website with numerous resources on all things literacy. This is a collaboration between Perkins School and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, with contributions from parents, teachers, and professionals from all over the country. There is a whole section on emergent literacy and beginning braille full of ideas for teaching literacy skills to our youngest learners!

8. [www.wonderbaby.org](http://www.wonderbaby.org) is from Perkins School and is focused on early learning and development for children with visual impairments. There are numerous activities that focus on various areas of compensatory skills, including listening, sensory development, development, and communication.

9. The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) has developed a great resource for families and teachers of children and youth who are deaf-blind and visually impaired with multiple disabilities and are in the beginning stages of literacy. The website *Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss* was developed by participants around the country with experience the development of emergent reading and writing with learners with sensory loss and various additional disabilities. It is dedicated to those learners who in the past may have been denied opportunities to access literacy education. This resource recognizes literacy as a right for all children, and looks at the “how” rather than the “if” or “when” of the process of reading in the many forms it may take for early emergent and emergent readers. There is a literacy skills checklist linked to the homepage that can help determine where the most beginning/emergent readers, no matter their medium, are in the reading development process.

   The website is divided into various sections, including building a foundation, early emergent literacy, emergent literacy, writing, vocabulary development, comprehension, increasing fluency, expanding literacy, and planning. Each section has a list of strategies that support that process, and each strategy is linked to a section of ideas of “What to Do” and “Things to Consider”. The “What to Do” section contains specific ideas for activities and materials. The “Things to Consider” sections have an “Always Ask Yourself” section with printable reminders of things to keep in mind during each literacy activity you do, no matter what the literacy activity is. Each of the sections also include subsections with information about related skills, examples (which may include photographs) of students in activities, videos of students in activities, articles for download, and additional resources. There is also information on adapting and modifying curricular material for the common core in several sections of the website.

   Do take the time to explore this great resource for some new ideas, or to see some familiar ideas grouped in a way that expands your thought process about literacy. The site is at [http://literacy.nationaldb.org](http://literacy.nationaldb.org). Happy surfing!
Survival Guide for TVIs - Quick tips to make your professional life a little easier
By Rachel Anne Schles

- It’s okay that you don’t have all the answers (who does?).
  - When someone asks you a question but you’re not sure of the answer, first confirm that you correctly understand their question. Then, let them know you want to give them a complete answer to their question so you will research their concern and get back to them within a reasonable amount of time.

- Take a break!
  - You’re not doing yourself, nor your students and coworkers, any favors if you skip lunch. Take that time to refuel and recharge so you’re at your best for the rest of the day. Not close to lunch time and you’re feeling overwhelmed? Take a brief bathroom break, get a drink of water, or if you’re with students, incorporate mindfulness exercises into your lesson—chances are they need a break just as much as you do.

- You are not the only one.
  - As an itinerant teacher it’s easy to feel like no one understands what you’re trying to do when you show up at a school. Seek out other TVIs in your region; network via AER or social media to find likeminded TVIs. Having someone you feel comfortable talking to can make a world of difference. Don’t forget, even if they don’t know the answer to your question, two minds are better than one!

Resources for Unified English Braille
by Frances Mary D'Andrea

This is an exciting time for teachers of students with visual impairment. The United States is making the transition from English Braille American Edition (EBAE) to Unified English Braille (UEB). UEB is an international and general purpose code based on "literary" braille but expanded to include symbols not found in EBAE. The UEB project started in the United States more than 20 years ago, and became an international project in the early 1990s. At this writing there are seven other English-speaking countries that use UEB: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. UEB was designed to be more consistent, less ambiguous, more computable, and more accurate during "backtranslation" (from braille back to print) than current codes. The implementation date for the United States is January 4, 2016—just in time for Louis’ birthday. The Braille Authority of North America (BANA) is providing resources and materials to aid the transition and working with and many can be found on the BANA web site’s UEB page: http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html

Here are a number of materials that are available to help teachers learn UEB.

1. The UEB Rulebook, 2013
   First and foremost, everyone interested in braille should have a copy of the official rules regarding UEB. Here is the direct URL: http://www.iceb.org/ueb

2. Guidelines for Technical Material
Provides additional guidelines and examples for using UEB in more "technical" materials: [http://www.iceb.org/ueb](http://www.iceb.org/ueb)

3. Hadley School for the Blind
   The Hadley School has developed a course for professionals (free in 2015) who want to learn about UEB but already know EBAE: [http://hadley.edu/UEBTransition.asp](http://hadley.edu/UEBTransition.asp)

4. An Overview of Changes
   This short document simply lists and describes the basic changes that someone familiar with EBAE would find in UEB: [http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/overview_changes_ebae_ueb.html](http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/overview_changes_ebae_ueb.html)

5. The ABC's of UEB
   Provides examples and practice exercises which allow people who already know EBAE to quickly build on their knowledge of braille to understand UEB: [http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/abcs/abcs-ueb.html](http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb/abcs/abcs-ueb.html)

6. CNIB Transcriber's course
   Free materials can be downloaded and printed or embossed: [http://www.cnib.ca/en/living/braille/Pages/Transcribers-UEB-Course.aspx](http://www.cnib.ca/en/living/braille/Pages/Transcribers-UEB-Course.aspx)

Contact information for the Divisions

**Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness--Division 3**
Chair: Olaya Landa-Vialard oalanda@ilstu.edu
Chair Elect: Nicole Johnson njohnson@kutztown.edu
Past Chair: Tiffany Wild wild.13@osu.edu
Secretary/Treasurer: Kristi M. Probst jandkprobst@gmail.com

**Infants and Preschool--Division 8**
Chair: Karen Frank karenf@mdschblind.org
Chair Elect: Tanni Anthony Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
Secretary/Treasurer: Catherine Greeley-Bennett kitty.greeley@gmail.com
Past-Chair: Michelle Clyne mclyne@philprockcenter.org

**Education Curriculum--Division 10**
Chair: Rachel Schles raschles@gmail.com
Chair-elect: Mackenzie Savaiano msavaiano2@unl.edu
Secretary/Treasurer: Bridgett Schultz Bridgett.shultz@gmail.com
Past Chair: Karen Blankenship karen.blankenship@Vanderbilt.Edu
Itinerant Personnel--Division 16
Division Chair: Jill Brown jillbrown1@mac.com
Chair-Elect: Tracy Hallak hallaktracy@sfasu.edu
Past Chair: Melva Stolhand mstolhand@aol.com
Secretary-Treasurer: Kathy Michielsen Kathycmichielsen@gmail.com

Please send submission by the end of August for the fall newsletter to Liz Eagan at eleagan@gmail.com

CollAERborations
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Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
1703 N. Beauregard St., Suite 440
Alexandria, VA 22311-1744 USA