

# 2021 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education



Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 1 The hand of a child rests on the hand of an adult.

## Teacher of Students who are Deafblind: Navigating a New World

Providing appropriate instruction for any student who is deafblind is challenging since each student's access needs are truly unique. The 2021 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education dives deep to examine why it is so critical that students in Texas have access to trained teachers of students who are deafblind and interveners. Our sessions explore the issues and answers to providing quality programming and support for individuals who are deafblind, their families and educational team members.

## An International Collaboration

COVID forced us to make this event "virtual", and that allowed us to partner with Deafblind International (DbI) Network of the Americas and the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB). It has given us the opportunity to include the National Center on Deaf-Blindness, Canadian Deafblind Association National, Perkins International, and other organizations from various places in the Western Hemisphere to make this an international event. This collaboration made the 2021 Texas Symposium a truly spectacular event.

As Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

## Our Partners

### Deafblind International Network of the Americas



**Deafblind International**  
Network of the Americas

Figure 1 Hands hold the Earth showing the American continents with the words, "Deafblind International Network of the Americas" below.

Register to join Deafblind International for free at <https://www.deafblindinternational.org/about-us/become-a-member/individual-members/>.

Register to join the Network of the Americas at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeyEaClzhXIEpmARaAiuRycLUmwM6WpAQKymUy1qFgJbD3wqw/viewform>.



## National Family Association for Deaf-Blind



Figure 2 A hand in the shape of the I Love You sign is stylized to make the fingers look like people; NFADB runs vertically beside them.

Register to become a member of NFADB on their website at <https://www.nfadb.org/join-us>.

## Our Co-Sponsors

### Texas Sensory Support Network, Region 11 Education Service Center



Figure 3 Texas Sensory Support Network appears to the right of a stylized shape of Texas with a star at the center

### Canadian Deafblind Association National



Figure 4 A stylized person stands in front of the words, "Canadian Deafblind Association National" and a maple leaf swirls above.

### Perkins School for the Blind International



Figure 5 Perkins School for the Blind International – Educational Leadership Program – 100 years appears in print and braille.

### Grupo Brazil



Figure 1 Grupo Brasil De Apoio ao Surdocego e ao Múltiplo Deficiente Sensorial logo surrounds a image of two hands touching fingertips.



## Additional Support

### Texas Deafblind Organizations

We are fortunate to have many organizations active at both the state and national levels on issues important to our deafblind community. The Texas Deafblind Project thanks them for their collective efforts with all the innovative and important opportunities available for individuals who are deafblind and their families. As part of their leadership, we are grateful for all they do to help our Project on a daily basis. As always, they play an instrumental part in the Symposium.

#### *DeafBlind Camp of Texas*



DBCTX

Figure 6 An armadillo wearing a cowboy hat and painted red and blue like the Texas flag with a white star; the letters DBCTX appear below.

#### *Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT)*



Figure 7 The stylized initials of "DBMAT" form a triangle with the words, "Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas" wrapping around the shape.

#### *Texas Chargers, Inc.*

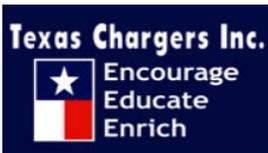


Figure 8 The Texas flag on a navy blue background with the words, Texas Chargers, Inc. Encourage, Educate, Enrich".

#### *Texas Hands & Voices*



Figure 9 Outline of the state of Texas with a sprig of bluebonnets and a hand inside the image; the words, "Texas Hands & Voices" appear.



## NCDB, Other State Projects, and Schools

We appreciate the support received from these members of the deafblind network. Their support helped families and educators attend the Symposium, ensured accessibility, and sponsored or provided presentations.

- National Center on Deaf-Blindness
- Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services
- California Deaf-Blind Services
- Canadian Deaf-Blind Association – British Columbia
- Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project
- Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project
- Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

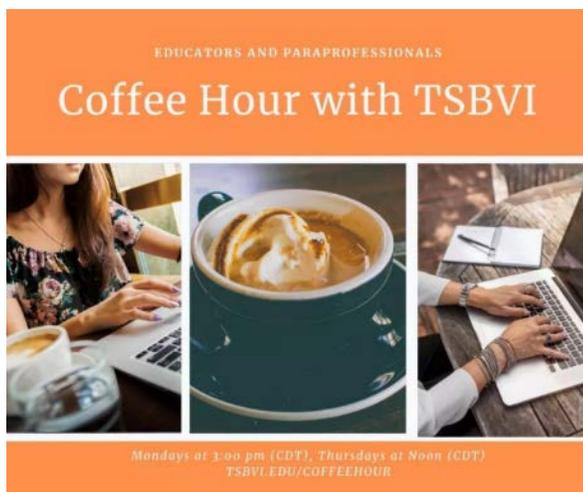
---

## Texas Families Together



Families with children who are visually impaired or deafblind, let's gather during this COVID-19 time! Join for an hour of sharing, connecting, and encouraging as only families can do with each other. This is YOUR time, so settle your kiddos in an activity where they can be safely entertained, grab a snack and a drink, and give yourself this hour!

Find Texas Families Together Session Information here <https://www.tsbvi.edu/tx-families-together>



## TSBVI Outreach Coffee Hour

Our popular Coffee Hour presentations continue on Zoom in 2021. These webinars are free and include a variety of topics.

Find information about the TSBVI Coffee Hour these sessions and links to webinar transcripts, videos, presentations, and resources.

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour>



## Texas Deafblind Project

Hats off to the Texas Deafblind Project staff and the Media Team who worked together to make this Symposium a reality:

Kate Borg, Outreach Director

Lowell Bartholomee, Media Team Staff

Suzanne Becker, Archivist

Edgenie Bellah, Family Engagement Coordinator

Kaycee Bennett, Deafblind Education Consultant

Kendra Dorty, Media Team Manager

Adam Graves, Deafblind Education Consultant

Kate Moss Hurst, Outreach Consultant

Cyral Miller, Outreach Consultant

Chris Montgomery, Deafblind Education Consultant

Deanna Peterson, Deafblind Early Childhood Consultant

Cecilia Robinson, Technology Consultant

Brian Sobek, Registration Support

Chris Tabb, Orientation and Mobility Consultant

Suzanne Slade, Administrative Assistant

Andy Weir, Captioning and Accessibility

Nathan Widener, Media Team Staff

David Wiley, Transition Consultant



Figure 14 Screenshot of the Texas Deafblind Project website shows a young woman who is deafblind smiling and resting her hand on the hand of her intervener.

We invite you to visit the new Texas Deafblind Project website at [www.txdeafblindproject.org](http://www.txdeafblindproject.org)!

Our new website provides a wealth of information about educating students who are deafblind and includes microsites on Communication, Interaction, Teacher of Students Who Are Deafblind, Texas Deafblind Project publications, and much more.



## **Main Symposium Speakers**

### **Nilam Agrawal, Parent and NFADB Board Member and Outreach Committee Co-Chair, Little Elm, TX**

Nilam lives in Little Elm, Texas with her husband and two children who are diagnosed as deafblind. She has an MBA in finance and marketing, and she worked in the field of business development, client management, and recruitment. She has been associated with nonprofit organizations since 2008 and has served as the co-leader for the Tar-Heel chapter of UMDP. She brings her experience in the field of children and parent advocacy, fundraising, social media networking, family engagement events, and community outreach programs to her work with NFADB. Nilam draws her passion and strength from her children, and is determined to be a change agent to drive awareness to the unique challenges of the deafblind community, and improve opportunities for them.

### **Kittrell R. Antalan, M.Ed., Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Katy ISD, Katy, TX**

Mrs. Kittrell Antalan has worked twenty-one years in Special Education as a Special Education Classroom Teacher, Special Education Case Manager, Special Education Department Chair, and Itinerant Certified Visually Impaired Teacher. She earned her Master's Degree in Special Education from Alabama State University and received her certifications for Individuals with Visual Impairments and Orientation and Mobility from Stephen F. Austin University. Prior to attending graduate school, Kittrell was employed for ten years as an Electroencephalographic Technologist (EEG) and Respiratory Therapist Technician in the healthcare field, conducting seizure and sleep studies and providing respiratory care. She earned a B.S. Degree in Organizational Management and Health Science from the University of Mobile. Currently, she works as an itinerant Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist for Katy ISD.

### **Maurice Belote, Project Coordinator of California Deaf-Blind Services, San Francisco, CA**

Maurice Belote is a graduate of the federally funded teacher-training program in deafblindness at San Francisco State University and has worked exclusively in the field of deafblindness for 38 years. Maurice has served as Project Coordinator for California Deafblind Services since 1992. Maurice provides technical assistance and training throughout California and can tell you where to find the best tacos most anywhere along California's north/south highways. His passions are ensuring that students leave school with functional, well-documented communication systems, and are fully prepared to have the same kinds of wonderful lives that any of us would wish for ourselves. Prior to joining the state TA and training project, he served for ten years as a teacher of deafblind for young adults at the California School for the Blind, where he developed a competitive employment training program and rehabilitated a vacant apartment complex to open an independent living training program for transition-age students. Maurice is a frequent presenter at state, national, and international conferences and has written extensively on educational issues specific to children and youth with deafblindness. He represents students with deafblindness on numerous state and national groups and organizations, including working as the specialist in deafblindness for the California Transcribers and Educators of the Blind and Visually Impaired. He also serves as Co-Chair of the National Coalition on Deafblindness, which has advocated for federal recognition of interveners in IDEA. Maurice's favorite quote is from



renowned implementation scientist Dean Fixsen: “Students cannot benefit from interventions they do not experience.”

### **Edgenie Bellah, Family Engagement Coordinator, Texas Deafblind Project, Austin, TX**

Edgenie has been the Family Engagement Coordinator for the Project since 2002 when she left her role as Blind Children's Vocational Discovery & Development Program Consultant with what was then the Texas Commission for the Blind. Edgenie holds a Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Services and a Master of Education in Special Education, Specialization in Early Childhood. She is also a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Edgenie has been instrumental in creating and leading such training initiatives as Texas Parent to Parent: Through Your Child's Eyes, Family Engagement Series, and the Family Systems Change Training Series since joining the Project. She has also been involved with the National Center on Deafblindness Family Engagement Initiatives, Open Hands, Open Access Deaf-Blind Intervener Learning Modules, and serves on the Board of the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind. Edgenie works closely with our state family organizations including DBMAT, Texas Chargers and Deaf-Blind Camp of Texas, and Texas Hands and Voices. Edgenie has also worked with O&M Consultant, Chris Tabb, to create *Sound Travels: Evaluation, Collaboration, and Development Tools for Individuals who are DeafBlind*, a collection of documents designed to aid in evaluating the unique environmental needs of travelers who are deafblind.

### **Kaycee Bennett, Deafblind Education Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Austin, TX**

Kaycee joined the Project in 2020 after working with Northwest ISD in Ft. Worth as an auditory impairment specialist where she worked with teachers and their students who are deafblind on a regular basis. Her passion is creating better programming access and communication for these students and the staff supporting them. Kaycee is a certified Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and has a graduate certificate and master's degree in deafblind education from Texas Tech University. She worked as a classroom teacher and an itinerant teacher for 10 years before joining TSBVI Outreach. Kaycee received the Marty Murrell Excellence in Education Award for her work teaching and assisting deafblind students and their teachers, representing the top honor in her profession in the region in 2019. Currently Kaycee is involved in developing training to improve instruction for students who are deafblind and considered proficient communicators.

### **Robbie Blaha, Deafblind Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Austin, TX**

Robbie has been a part of the Texas Deafblind Project for more than 35 years. Initially trained as a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, she acquired her certificate as Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments in order to serve a classroom of students who are deafblind. She has continued in this field and become a leader in advocating for services and systems change impacting individuals who are deafblind. Robbie has worked on many national initiatives regarding Interveners, Teachers of Students who are Deafblind, and most recently focuses on the growing number of deafblind individuals who are proficient communicators to ensure they have adequate support in their educational settings. Robbie has presented throughout the United States and in other countries. Her passion remains working with individual students and the teachers and family members surrounding each child.

**Hayley Broadway, ProTactile Consultant, Austin, TX**

Hayley Broadway (Foster) is a ProTactile consultant and trainer who resides in Austin, Texas with her two children. She is a graduate of Texas State University and holds a bachelor's degree in special education, magna cum laude. She completed training at Tactile Communications (TC) in Seattle, Washington, a DeafBlind training center founded by one of the leading DeafBlind specialists. She was a part of the TC curriculum development team, and she is currently one of the trainers for TC. Identifying as DeafBlind, she is a very passionate advocate for the DeafBlind community, and educates on topics covering DeafBlind, DeafBlind Interpreting, and ProTactile. Hayley has given ProTactile Workshops and trainings in various locations, locally and out-of-state. She has been working with Travis County Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to develop and implement a Support Services Provider Program (SSP). She serves as one of the SSP coordinators at DeafBlind Service Center of Austin. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Sign Language Education (MA-SLED) at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., while teaching in an adjunct position at Austin Community College.

**David Brown, Freelance Education Consultant, San Francisco, CA**

Since entering the specialist area of deafblindness in 1983, David Brown has become a leading and well-published practitioner in the field. In his roles as Head of the Family Education and Advisory Service of SENSE (the National Deafblind Association) in the UK (1983-2000), and as Educational Specialist for California Deaf-Blind Services (since August 2000), he has worked with over 500 children and young people with deaf-blindness. For 25 years, David has been writing training manuals for universities and other training organizations, and publishing articles on a variety of topics in journals and magazines. David has contributed to staff training courses in the UK, USA, Canada, Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Portugal, Greece, Germany, India, Australia, and New Zealand. He is in constant demand as a conference speaker. Since 2000, he has presented at CHARGE Syndrome Conferences around the world and worked as a consultant with the state deaf-blind projects. David has a credential in the Education of Students with Multi-Sensory Impairments from the University of Birmingham, an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Central Michigan University for his research work with children with deaf-blindness, and was recently awarded the Deafblind International 'Lifetime Achievement Award' for "innovative and visionary work with people with deafblindness".

**Kate Borg, Outreach Programs Director and Texas Deafblind Project Coordinator, Austin, TX**

Kate Borg is the Director of Outreach Programs at TSBVI and the Texas Deafblind Project Coordinator. Kate joined TSBVI in 2019 after working at the Utah School for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) and in Prince William County, Virginia. Kate has been an administrator, instructional coach, classroom teacher, and itinerant TVI working with students who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind. In addition to leading TSBVI's Outreach mission, Kate has leadership roles within the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI) and sits on research grant committees to improve instruction for students with sensory impairment.



### **Dr. Judy Cameron, Professor of Psychiatry and Clinical Translation Science, Institute, University of Pittsburgh**

Dr. Cameron was a member of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Early Experience and Brain Development and she is currently a member of the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child and the Scientific Council of the Child Mind Institute. Research areas in Dr. Cameron's lab include the interaction between genetic factors and early life experiences on shaping behavioral development, identification of factors that lead to stress sensitivity versus stress resilience, and the interactions between physical health and mental health. Dr. Cameron's newest research initiative is Working for Kids: Building Skills™ ([www.workingforkids.com](http://www.workingforkids.com)), which is a novel community-based program that teaches the fundamentals of brain development to those who work with children at a community level. This initiative includes games such as The First Pathways Game ([www.firstpathwaysgame.com](http://www.firstpathwaysgame.com)) which is freely available and provides activities that parents and children can play together to strengthen brain development. This initiative provides a community training program and is evaluating the effect of this intervention on child development as well as health. Working for Kids has won several innovation awards in Pittsburgh, as well as from the National Science Foundation.

### **Alex Chandy, Parent, Texas**

Alex Chandy and Sandra Felefli are parents to three wonderful children, the oldest of whom has multiple disabilities including severe hearing and visual impairments. They decided from day one to adopt a positive attitude and to tackle the challenges they faced as new parents head-on. Today their daughter is a happy and productive 18-year-old who has continued to amaze all who know her with her determination, achievements and love of life.

### **Suzanne Chen, Family Engagement and Outreach Coordinator, New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative, Queens, NY**

Suzanne Chen is the Family Engagement and Outreach Coordinator for the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative. She is also a parent of a child who is deaf-blind from CHARGE Syndrome. Through her family experience, she has advocated for her son and has been a part of the special needs community for over 10 years. She currently serves as the President of the New York Parent Association for Deaf-Blind, NYPADB (an affiliate of the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind, NFADB). Suzanne also is state liaison for New York for the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation. She oversees and coordinates a bi weekly ZOOM meeting where parents "meet" online to share experiences, support, and services. She is also on the Family Advisory Council for the Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and works one day a week as a Family Mentoring Partner in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit. Suzanne is an Ambassador Mom with the March of Dimes. She also serves as Co-Vice President on the Board of Trustees for the Lexington School and Center for the Deaf in Queens, NY.

### **Rachel Collins, TDHH, TVI, TDB, Round Rock, TX**

Rachel began her career in the Austin Independent School District, as a teacher of deaf and hard of hearing. She soon discovered her love of working with students who are deafblind and quickly jumped into the world of deafblind education at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Rachel has received a teaching endorsement in visual impairment and a graduate certificate in dual sensory impairment. She has been working with students who are



deaf, blind, and deafblind for over 20 years. Rachel currently works for the Round Rock Independent School District as a Deafblind Specialist.

**Charlotte Cushman, Consultant for TSBVI Outreach and Perkins School for the Blind, Oracle, AZ**

Charlotte is the manager of Paths to Literacy <https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/> and the Active Learning Space <https://activelearningspace.org/> websites, both of which are collaborations between TSBVI and Perkins. She has been in the field for 40 years and holds M.Ed. and MLS degrees. She has worked as a classroom teacher at Perkins, an Education Consultant for New England Center Deafblind Project, and a consultant for Perkins International.

**Sandra Felefli, Parent, Texas**

Sandra Felefli and Alex Chandy are parents to three wonderful children, the oldest of whom has multiple disabilities including severe hearing and visual impairments. They decided from day one to adopt a positive attitude and to tackle the challenges they faced as new parents head-on. Today their daughter is a happy and productive 18-year-old who has continued to amaze all who know her with her determination, achievements and love of life.

**Adam Graves, Deafblind Education Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Austin, TX**

Adam joined the Project in 2014 and prior to that was a classroom teacher for seven years at TSBVI working primarily with students who are blind with additional disabilities including those who are deafblind. Adam serves on the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Board of Directors-Division on Visual Impairments and DeafBlindness (DVIDB) and on the Interdivisional Council (IDC) Committee on Maltreatment. Adam has collaborated with TSBVI, Perkins School for the Blind and various state deafblind projects in the development and field testing of Informal Functional Hearing Evaluation (IFHE); an assessment tool to document auditory needs of non-verbal students who are deafblind. He has been involved in the review and revision of the Council for Exceptional Children's knowledge and skills competencies for Teachers of Students with DeafBlindness. Among other activities, he has been a lead in a 2-year pilot project designed to help establish and promote a scope and sequence for training individuals in the state of Texas to serve as Teachers of students who are Deafblind (TDB) on IEP teams. Additionally he has created a series of webinars that explore and address hearing issues for students who are DeafBlind.

**Diana Griffen, Parent and NFADB Board Member, Exton, PA**

Diana resides in Pennsylvania and is guardian to her sister Sara, who is deafblind from Congenital Rubella Syndrome. Sara resides in a group home in New Jersey. Diana is married to Charlie, mother to three adult children, and is a registered nurse. She has been a member of the Board of NFADB since 2014.

**Mary Gyori, Parent and NFADB Board Member and Development Committee Chair, Townsend, VT**

Mary resides in Vermont and is a parent and guardian of her 40-year-old son, Sasha, who is deaf-blind and intellectually impaired as a result of oxygen deprivation after his premature birth. Her background in education, special education and language acquisition became a solid base for the collaborative advocacy skills she has needed for Sasha's success as an adult. Mary was appointed to a term on the Vermont Council for Families of Children with Exceptional Health



Needs and served on the Vermont Deaf-Blind Advisory Council for fifteen years. She currently serves on the board of NFADB.

### **Dr. Paul Hart, Head of Research and Practice, Sense Scotland**

Paul has worked for Sense Scotland since 1987, starting as a support worker two years after completing a Bachelor of Music degree. In the past twenty-five years, he has held a number of posts with Sense, including support worker, manager of residential services, manager of day services, Principal Officer (Practice Development) and now as Head of Research and Practice. He spends much of his time developing resources around assessment, communication, activity design and support planning. He is a member of Sense Scotland's Leadership Team. Paul speaks regularly at conferences and seminars, including Deafblind International (DbI) World and European conferences, on the themes of assessment, communication, staff development and sex education. In 1994, Paul gained his teaching qualification (PGCE – Primary) and in 2002, he completed a Master's Degree in Education, where much of the focus was on communication with people who are deafblind and implications for staff development. In 2010, he completed his PhD at Dundee University, with a research focus on communication and language development for congenitally deafblind people. Paul is currently a member of the DbI Communication Network and the Tactile Communication Network and in these capacities, he lectures at a number of universities, including the Masters in Communication and Congenital Deafblindness course at Groningen University in The Netherlands. He has written some influential articles and books in the field such as "Using Imitation with Congenitally DeafBlind Adults; establishing meaningful communication partners", "Dialogicality in Culture: response from the perspective of congenital DeafBlindness", and "Moving beyond the common touchpoint – discovering language with congenitally deafblind people". He will be sharing his expertise with us on these topics, and more!

### **Vivecca Hartman, Parent and Co-Founder of Touch Base Center for the Deafblind, Spring Branch, TX**

Vivecca is the parent of a 23 year old with Leber's Congenital Amaurosis (LCA) causing his deaf-blindness as a result of a recessive genetic mutation, and a daughter who is 28 years old, married and gave Vivecca and her husband, Chris, their first grandbaby in 2020! Vivecca has a Bachelor of Sciences degree in Accounting from San Diego State University, in San Diego, California, graduating Cum Laude and Sigma Iota Epsilon. A licensed CPA for almost 20 years, she also completed a graduate program at Rice University, in Houston, Texas, to be a Certified Financial Planner. Vivecca is Principal and Controller at Favez Sarofim & Co, in Houston, Texas. Vivecca has attended 22 years' worth of Deaf-Blind Training offered by NFADB, Texas Deafblind Project and Region 4 Education Service Center. Vivecca enjoys volunteering on non-profit boards and committees including her local PTA, Spring Branch Special Education Advisory Committee and Long-Range Planning Committee, and the Board and Finance Committee for the Houston Lighthouse. She has served as treasurer and vice president and currently serves as president of the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas. Vivecca is a Lifetime member of the National Family Association of Deaf-Blind (NFADB) and a member of the National Deaf Blind Intervener Initiative (NDBII), which published a booklet about how to advocate as a parent for an intervener for your deafblind child. Vivecca serves as treasurer and co-founder of Touch Base Center for the Deafblind, a day-habilitation center in Houston, Texas. She is passionately devoted to the development of the Intervener program in the United States.



Vivecca states, “My family and I have had a life changing experience of having a Canadian Intervener impact the life of my son when he was 10 years old. We know the potential of positive impact that a well-trained Intervener can have in the life of a deaf-blind person. The potential of that impact for other deaf blind people is what drives me to help in any way possible with the development of the Intervener role.” She is passionate about helping families and doing what she can to help improve the lives of people who are deafblind.

**Heather Hickman, Specialist Teacher of the Deafblind and Educational Coordinator of Deafblind Resource Services and Outreach Programs with the Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada.**

Heather has taught students who are deafblind for 14 years, has been the Vice Principal of the Deafblind School at W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind, and an Educational Consultant in Deafblind Resource Services. She has been involved in the design and implementation of the Additional Qualification Course for teachers -Teaching Students Who Are Deafblind, Part1 and Specialist. Designed by teachers for teachers, Additional Qualification courses (AQs) reflect the experience and pedagogy of the teaching profession. Heather is passionate about sensory processing disorders in children who are deafblind and gaining knowledge in strategies and techniques that help them with co- and self-regulation so they can be in an optimum level of arousal for successful learning to take place. She is researching and implementing curriculums for students who are deafblind with multiple needs who are medically fragile in order to develop skills that enhance the qualities of lives of learners with the most significant challenges. Her philosophy of education is rooted in the notion that the child is at the center of all we do and all else flows outward from them.

**Jacqueline Izaguirre, Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair and Policy, Information, and Education Committee Co-Chair for NFADB, Harker Heights, TX**

Jacqueline and her husband live in Texas and have three adult children. Their middle child, Patsy, is deafblind due to a Ciliopathy. In addition to NFADB, she is a founding board member and President of DeafBlind Camp of Texas. Jacqueline also works as her daughter's Intervener and she loves to spend time with her grandbabies!

**Melanie Knapp, NFADB Secretary and Policy, Information, and Education Committee Co-Chair, Sugarland, TX**

Melanie lives in Texas with her husband, Gary. They had two sons, Christian and Landon. Christian was a preemie who, as a result of many complications, was diagnosed with deafblindness. He was known as “The Great Motivator” to all who knew him. Christian died suddenly in 2005 at the age of 25. The Knapp family have continued their involvement and advocacy for all children and adults who are deafblind in Texas and the US. Melanie was on the Board of DBMAT – The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas – for 14 years, the last 4 years as President. Today she is honored to continue her journey with the NFADB.

**Jennifer Magee, M.S., Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Educational Diagnostician, Katy ISD, Katy TX**

Mrs. Magee has worked twenty-seven years in Special Education, including twenty-three years in Deaf Education as a Parent-Infant Advisor, Deaf Education Classroom Teacher, Educational Diagnostician, and Itinerant Teacher. Currently, she works as an Itinerant Teacher. Mrs. Magee has her Master’s Degree in Deaf Education from Lamar University and her Bachelor’s Degree in



Education from Southwestern University. She has her Educational Diagnostician certificate from the University of St. Thomas and is completing her DeafBlind certificate from Texas Tech University this semester. She has worked in Fort Bend ISD and currently works in Katy ISD.

**Linda Mamer, Deafblind Consultant, and Secretary/Treasurer, Canadian Deaf-Blind Association – B.C. Chapter, Vancouver, BC**

Linda has worked at the Provincial Outreach Program for Deafblindness (POPDB) for over 20 years. She currently sees students in Vancouver and North Vancouver as a Resource Consultant, traveling throughout the province consulting with schools that have students with deaf-blindness. In addition, she consults with Supported Independent Living Residences for adults with congenital deaf-blindness. Linda has been on the CDBA-BC board since her arrival in BC from Ontario, where she was at the W. Ross Macdonald School, Brantford for students with visual impairments and deafblindness for 19 years. A member of CDBA since 1979, she started teaching and was on the Ontario Board of CDBA and the National Board of Directors as the National President for nine years.

**Diana Martinez Oveido, Parent, Katy, TX**

Diana Karen Martinez Oviedo is the mother of three children, including Oliver, who is Deafblind. Oliver is a busy three year old in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). The Martinez Oviedo family is from Monterey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico and currently lives in Katy, Texas. Diana is the heart of Oliver's team!

**Patti McGowan, President, Adult Life Committee Chair, and Membership Committee Chair, National Family Association for Deaf-Blind, Pittsburg, PA**

Patti McGowan is the parent of a young adult who is deaf-blind. She and her family live in North Huntingdon, PA. As a parent of a son who is deaf-blind, she is skilled in supporting other parents and families who are facing challenges. Patti is the moderator of the Pennsylvania Family Listserv, which is used across the commonwealth to network, share resources, and educate families and interested professionals. Patti has been a family consultant for the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project since 2005. Currently, she holds the position of President to the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB) and general board member to the State Affiliate to NFADB known as PPDB, Pennsylvania Partnership for Deafblind. In 2020, she became a member of the Community Advisory Council of The Global Foundation for Peroxisomal Disorders (GFPD). Patti had the opportunity to be a regular contributor to the Paths to Transition site through Perkins School for the Blind. She blogs about family-related issues and provides consultation about the parent perspective. In addition, Patti took part in the writing team for the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) Open Hands, Open Access: Deaf-Blind Intervener Modules as a module creator, contributing concepts, ideas, resources, and videos to sculpt the open-access modules. Patti has worked as a consultant assisting the NCDB in the development of content for a national website on advocacy and leadership for families. She has had years of experience in training parents and families in all aspects of advocacy and leadership.

**Barbara Miles, M.A, Deafblindness Consultant, Bristol, Vermont**

Barbara is a well-known author and presenter in the field of deafblind education. She has served as a Deafblindness Consultant for the Vermont I-Team and as a teacher at Perkins School for the Blind. She holds both a Master of Arts in English Language and Literature and a Master of



Education in Deafblind Education. Barbara has previously worked as an American Sign Language teacher and has extensive experience as a Communication Consultant. Barbara has extensive experience working with individuals of all ages who are deafblind in the classroom and as a consultant with Perkins International.

**Cyral Miller, Outreach Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Austin, TX**

Cyral Miller currently works as an Outreach Consultant and previously served for 28 years as Director of Outreach Programs at TSBVI, which includes the Texas Deafblind Project. Cyral is a certified Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and was a TVI in both San Antonio and Austin public schools. She has a Master's of Public Affairs from the LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin. She is the chair of the statewide Alliance of and for Texans with Visual Impairments, and a long-standing member of Texas AER..

**Carolyn Monaco, President, Canadian Deaf-Blind Association National Board of Directors, Burlington, Ontario Canada**

Carolyn Monaco is currently President of the CDBA National Board of Directors, and has worked in a variety of capacities within the field of deafblindness for the past 38 years. She teaches at George Brown College (Toronto, Ontario) in the Intervenor Program as well as providing training and consultation nationally and internationally. Carolyn is the author of chapters on deafblindness and intervention related to Concept Development, the Education of Students who are Deafblind and Strategies for Infants and Preschoolers who are Deafblind. Carolyn is also the Strategic Planning Officer and a Board Member of Deafblind International.

**Chris Montgomery, Deafblind Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Austin, TX**

Chris has worked in the field of deafblind education and visual impairment since 1996 when he was first hired as a teaching assistant at the Texas School for the Blind and visually Impaired (TSBVI). Since that time, he has had the experience of being a classroom teacher working with a wide range of students who are deafblind from children with emerging language to those transitioning to adulthood. In 2006, he began work as a Deafblind Education Consultant, for the Texas Deafblind Project at TSBVI. Chris has helped lead system change efforts to establish Teachers of Students who are Deafblind (TDB), and build community of practice for professionals in the field of deafblind education in TX. He is a nationally known speaker and presenter. Chris co-developed the Informal Functional Hearing Evaluation (IFHE), and he has authored numerous other papers and websites. Most recently, Chris is developing a microsite for the Project, "Interaction and Communication for Children who are Congenitally Deafblind". Chris presently serves on the board of Deafblind International (DbI) and the management committee for DbI-Network of the Americas. He was recently honored to receive the Everett Bryan award for his professional commitment to the field of deafblindness by the Deafblind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT).

**Stephanie Mowery, Teacher of Students who are Visually Impaired and Deafblind Specialist, Wylie ISD, Wylie, TX**

Stephanie is a certified teacher of students who are visually impaired, holds a Master in Education – Sensory Disabilities and DeafBlindness from Texas Tech University, and holds undergraduate degrees in Regular Education 1st-6th grade & Generic Special Education for



students ages 3-22. She has had the privilege to teach all over the state of Texas for 31 years. She has been a TVSI for 25 of those years and participated in the Teacher of Students Who Are Deafblind Pilot Program with the Texas Deafblind Project when she worked for Plano ISD. Stephanie has enjoyed learning from, working alongside, and being mentored by some of the GREATS, like Dr. Virginia Bishop, Donna Clopton, Millie Smith, Cyral Miller, and Robbie Blaha. She hopes and is determined to continue to learn and grow as a professional in this field to make a difference in the lives of her student's and families, as well as, help mentor new professionals who join our field.

**Dr. Jude Nicholas, Clinical Neuropsychologist and Researcher, Statped Vest Center for Special Needs Education, Bergen, Norway**

Jude Nicholas (PsyD) is a licensed clinical neuropsychologist and is employed at Statped vest center for deafblindness and at Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen, Norway. Dr. Nicholas has some 25 years of clinical and research experience working with children and adults with sensory impairment. He has a longstanding interest in genetic syndromes and neurological conditions involving sensory impairments and cognitive functions. He is the author of several articles and book chapters on these topics. His current research investigates the neuropsychological functions of tactile cognitions, particularly in persons with deafblindness. Most recently, he has co-authored Tactile Working Memory Scale – A Professional Manual with colleagues for the Nordic Welfare Centre.

**Deanna Peterson, Deafblind Early Childhood Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Austin, TX**

Deanna joined the Project in 2010 after working in Comprehensive Programs for over ten years as a classroom teacher. Recognized as one of four exemplary teachers of students who are DeafBlind in the state of Texas, she piloted a system for evaluating the classroom for children who are deafblind. Deana received the Ann Silverrain Award for an individual who has made an extraordinary commitment to improving the lives of individuals with DeafBlindness in Texas. Deanna has presented at numerous training events throughout Texas and the United States. She also participated in development of *Module 2, the Sensory System, the Brain, and Learning* for Open Hands Open Access (OHOA) organized by the National Center on DeafBlindness. Deanna provided consultative and direct services at Austin State Supported Living Center for adults who are deafblind and their teams, and she trained to serve as a coach for persons going through Utah State University Intervener Coursework. Currently Deanna is helping to develop training around a new publication, *Guidance for Behavior Intervention and Support for Children and Young Adults with DeafBlindness or Visual and Multiple Impairments*, under development by TSBVI Outreach.

**Marianne Riggio, Regional Coordinator for the Africa and Asia & Pacific Regions, Perkins' Educational Leadership Program, Watertown, MA**

Marianne Riggio earned a Master's Degree in Multi-handicapped and Deafblind Education from Boston College, as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Special and Elementary Education. Marianne Riggio is known worldwide as an expert in the field of deafblindness. She is the co-author or editor of over 15 publications focusing on the education of children with deafblindness that are used internationally as the basis of training for teachers, administrators, and parents. Marianne was named coordinator of Perkins' Educational Leadership Program in 2012. Prior to her current role, she served as an Educational Consultant for Perkins International, and as a



regional coordinator for both the Africa and Asia & Pacific regions. Over the years, she has traveled to Israel, Ukraine, Jordan, Portugal, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa, Korea, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Haiti to provide technical assistance to local partners. Before she joined the Perkins International team, Marianne was the Project Director for the National Deafblind Training Project, which developed training institutes in deafblindness for teachers and parents.

**Elaine Robertson, M.Ed., Instructional Officer for Deaf Education, Vision, and Assistive Technology, Katy ISD, Katy, TX**

Mrs. Robertson has worked in the field of deaf education for thirty years. She received her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Texas at Austin in Communication Disorders and her Master's Degree from Gallaudet University. She has served in several positions over the years, including Deaf Education Elementary Teacher, Parent-Infant Advisor, and currently Instructional Officer of Deaf Education, Vision, and Assistive Technology. In 2009, Mrs. Robertson served as the Director of Education at the Center for Hearing and Speech before returning to Katy. Mrs. Robertson serves on the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired School Board. Additionally, she is a board member for the National Visiting Committee for DeafTec. Mrs. Robertson grew up with a profoundly deaf sister who inspires her to this day.

**Gloria Rodriguez-Gil, MEd, Latin America Regional Director, Perkins International, San Francisco, CA**

Gloria is the Director, Latin America and the Caribbean, for Perkins International. Born and educated in Costa Rica, Spain and the United States. Currently she leads Perkins International programs in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Chile, as well as a professional network of educators across the region. A leader in the field of Special Education, Gloria has more than thirty years of experience with special focus on visual impairments, deafblindness and multiple disabilities. Gloria started her career as an innovative teacher, and then went on to found and develop the First Educational Program for children who are deafblind in Central America, at the Centro Nacional de Educación Especial "Fernando Centeno Güell" in Costa Rica. Gloria was also co-creator of the First Master's Program on Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness in the prestigious University of Costa Rica, supported by the Hilton-Perkins Program. In 1991 and 1992, Gloria was recognized for her accomplishments with several study scholarships, and an internship at Gallaudet University and Perkins School from the Blind, and in 1997 based on these experiences she published "Sordoceguera: Lecturas selectas sobre educación para sordociegos." In the late 90's, she moved to California and was an Educational Specialist for California Deaf-Blind Services and the Bilingual Coordinator for the federally funded research Project SALUTE under the direction of Dr. Deborah Chen and Dr. June Downing. Gloria holds an undergraduate degree in Special Education in Visual Impairments and a graduate degree on Special Education in Multiple Disabilities from Universidad de Costa Rica and a Master's Degree in Special Education from Boston College, in Low Incidence Disabilities with Emphasis on Deafblindness, under the mentoring of program Director Dr. Barbara Mcletchie. Gloria is the author of a number of articles and an advocate and speaker for "education for all" at national, regional and global level.



**Carolyn J. Samson, M.Ed., Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Katy ISD, Katy, TX**

Carolyn Samson has worked as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired for five years in Katy ISD. She has a Master's Degree in Special Education with Visual Impairments and Orientation and Mobility from Northern Illinois University. Prior to attending graduate school, Carolyn worked for one year at the Center for Autism and Related Disorders as an Applied Behavior Analyst Specialist. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Therapeutic Recreation from Longwood University in Virginia.

**Wanda Schellenberg, Parent and Board Member for Canadian Deafblind Association (National and British Columbia), Vancouver, British Columbia**

Wanda Schellenberg lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. She and her husband have three children. Their youngest, Alynne, is a petite, sweet natured 23-year-old with 5P minus Syndrome and deafblindness. When Alynne entered school as a 6-year-old, Wanda and her family were warmly invited to educate themselves about the world of deafblindness. The school's deafblind consultant, who remarkably followed Alynne for all 13 years of her school life, encouraged Wanda to take courses about deafblind communication and attend conferences whenever possible in order to become a supportive and contributing member of 'team Alynne'. In 2015, after years of making connections with parents and educators in the deafblind world Wanda joined the Canadian Deafblind Association British Columbia and National boards. Learning to understand the philosophy, principles, and communication methods in this extremely unique field, continues to be a wonderful and fascinating journey for Wanda as she strives to better understand and thoughtfully support her daughter.

**Donia Shirley, Parent and NFADB Board Member, Miami, FL**

Donia is mom to two beautiful boys; the youngest son was born deafblind and has CHARGE Syndrome. She joined the NFADB board to give back to this amazing community that has empowered her to become a passionate advocate for not only her son but the deafblind community as a whole. In addition to being a part of the NFADB Board, Donia is the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation Co-State Liaison for the State of Florida and a F2FC Family Call Facilitator. She is also a founding member of the family run organization, Family Partners for the DeafBlind of Florida and the Virgin Islands, a NFADB Affiliate that provides support to families who have a child or loved one with deafblindness.

**Amita Srinivasan, Student at UT Austin and President of DeafBlind Citizens in Action, Austin, TX**

Amita Srinivasan is a rising junior at the University of Texas at Austin, dual majoring in Psychology and Human Dimensions of Organization. Amita is passionately interested in inclusion, empowerment and accessibility for students with disabilities. She is the current President of DeafBlind Citizens in Action, a national disability rights nonprofit organization in the USA. She joined DBCA in 2017 and became a mentor and the interim Secretary in 2018. As President, Amita has focused on the need for reliable, safe and accessible transportation as key to increasing wellbeing and participation of the deafblind community in society and in the labor force. Amita is active in the UT Student Government, currently serving as an Academic Policy Director (2019) and has also previously served as a director of the Disability and Inclusion Agency (2018). Amita works as a VSFS intern at the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and



Labor, U.S. Department of State. There she analyzes regional legal systems, specializing in South and Central Asia, in order to identify openings in the legal and policy frameworks by cataloging gaps in policy/laws and comparing them to best practices standards that uphold fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. She is also on the Disability Advisory Committee at the FCC. Amita is an author/blogger who has won awards for nature and macro photography. Some of her photographs can be seen at Ami Fine Art Photography.

**Nicholas Trotter, COMS/CTVI, Texas Sensory Support Network (TxSSN) Lead at Texas Education Agency, and Texas Deafblind Project Grant Coordinator, Austin, TX**

Nicholas Trotter is a certified teacher of students with visual impairments. He has worked as an itinerant teacher for students with visual impairments in Tennessee and taught physical education for students in grades pre-K through twelve and high school wellness at the Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB) for four years. Nicholas earned his M.Ed. in Special Education – Visual Disabilities at Vanderbilt University. Nicholas completed the certification program in Orientation and Mobility at Stephen F. Austin State University. During the summer of 2015, Nicholas worked with the Texas Department of Assistive Rehabilitative Services DREAM Program teaching Expanded Core Curriculum skills to high school students and recent graduates with visual impairments. He volunteered as a coach at Camp Abilities Long Island in 2012 and 2013. His professional interests include adapted sports, orientation and mobility, and outcomes for young braille readers in general education classrooms.

**David Wiley, Transition Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project, Austin, TX**

David joined Texas Deafblind Project in 1989 and worked in the residential program at Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired for four years prior to that time. In his thirty-plus years with the Project, David has presented numerous workshops in Texas and other parts of the United States, written numerous articles, and helped to develop online training including the OHOA modules. David has written many articles on deafblind education and transition for various publications including Texas SenseAbilities, the newsletter from TSBVI Outreach. David served as editor for this publication for many years as part of his work with the Project. David continues to serve as chair on the Texas Deaf-Blind Task Force, a multiagency organization advocating for services for individuals in Texas who are deafblind. David also shares his expertise in addressing the challenges of students who are exhibiting distressed behaviors and working with families to develop successful transitions into adult life in the community with schools, agencies and families throughout Texas.

**Heather Withrow, Parent, COMS, Austin, TX**

Heather is mother to three children one who is hearing, one who is deaf, and one who is deafblind. Heather graduated from Gallaudet University with a Bachelor's in Graphic Design, has completed a graduate degree at Texas Tech University in Deafblind Education, and is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. She worked as an art teacher at Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, as an assistant track and field coach at Texas School for the Deaf, and is currently working as a COMS. Heather is passionate about the ProTactile movement and disability advocacy.



## **Asynchronous Session Presenters**

### **Oriana Donoso Araya, Teacher of Differential Education with a major in Visual Impairments, Metropolitan University of Educational Sciences, Ñuñoa, Chile**

Oriana has an academic specialty in visual impairments and has done research in the area of education of students who are deafblind and with multiple educational needs. A professional area of interest to her is instrumental strategies of the Braille system, supervision of professional practice, alternative communication systems, and development of visual perception. She serves as the Coordinator Master in Differential Education.

### **Dr. Eugene Bourquin, COMS / DHA, New York, NY**

Dr. Bourquin is a national and international lecturer and consultant regarding people who are blind, deaf, and deafblind, designing and administering service programs, and research related to dual sensory loss. Currently retired from Helen Keller National Center he continues to consult in New York. He developed the largest community-based service delivery system for deafblind individuals in the U.S. He is also the first individual in the United States to achieve dual certification as an orientation and mobility specialist and in English/Sign Language interpreting. He was principal investigator in a research project on driver yielding, turning vehicles, and blind pedestrian behaviors, in collaboration with Western Michigan University and Access for the Blind (2013, 2016). Co-founder of PASS, Pedestrians for Accessible and Safe Streets, advocacy coalition for accessible features at New York City streets, plazas, and intersections (2010). Co-principal investigator for a US Department of Education (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services) Steppingstones of Technology grant, Touch Graphics, Inc. Project title: "WiiCane: An accelerometer-based diagnostic and real-time feedback tool for therapeutic play in mobility training for blind and deaf-blind children." (2011)

### **Mike Fagbemi, Transition Initiative Lead, National Center on Deafblindness, HKNC, Sands Point, NY**

Michael Fagbemi has worked at HKNC for 24 years, focusing on supporting deaf-blind youth and adults. In his current role as NCDB's Transition Initiative Lead (since 2014), he has coordinated and provided a wide array of TA to stakeholders including service providers, families, and young adults. He works with partners across the nation to build services that help young adults get the right resources and supports to successfully transition to adulthood. Mike has proficient sign language skills.

### **Sue Gawne, Deafblind Consultant, Canadian Deafblind Association – BC Chapter, New Westminister, British Columbia**

As the Early Intervention Program Director, Sue coordinates services and provides hands on support to early intervention families (birth – 5 years) throughout the province of British Columbia. Since March of 2020, all of their program services and contacts have moved to many different virtual platforms to continue to provide ongoing support to families and their early intervention teams.

### **Carolina Gonzalez, COMS, Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Austin, TX**

Carolina currently serves as a COMS for the Comprehensive Programs, at TSBVI. Throughout her thirty-plus years as a COMS, she has also worked at Round Rock ISD, Texas School for the Deaf, Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center, and as a consultant for Perkins International. Much of



her work has been with individuals who are deafblind. Carolina has presented at various state and national conferences. She is a co-author of the TAPS Curriculum for Orientation and Mobility. Carolina has won numerous awards including the Principals of Schools for the Blind Outstanding Related Services Provider.

**Julianne Lemman, Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and Teacher of Students who are Deafblind, Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Austin, TX**

Julianne worked at TSBVI for seven years in a variety of roles supporting students who are Deafblind with multiple disabilities in both residential and classroom settings in the school's comprehensive programs. Julie has recently completed her M.Ed. in Special Education with a concentration in Visual Impairment and DeafBlind education; Julie has earned her TDB certificate through TTU. Currently, Julie teaches a self-contained classroom for students with multiple disabilities.

**Julie Maier, Education Consultant, California Deaf-Blind Services, San Francisco, CA**

Julie Maier has served in the role of Educational Specialist for California Deafblind Services providing technical assistance and training to families of children with deafblindness and their school teams since 2012. Julie has been involved in the field of special education since 1987, including as a faculty member in the Special Education Department at San Francisco State University since 1999 and teaches courses in deafblindness, autism spectrum disorders, inclusive education, and assessment and curricular design for learners with extensive support needs. She was the project liaison for two OSEP-funded personnel preparation projects in deafblindness at SFSU. Julie has presented at many conferences on a variety of topics related to deafblindness and effective educational practices, including the 2015 International TASH Conference, the 2015, 2107 and 2019 International CHARGE Syndrome Conferences, the 2016 German CHARGE Syndrome Conference, the 2018 CEC Conference, and multiple CTEBVI Conferences in California. She has presented on national webinars related to Deafblindness and Autism and Emergent Literacy for Students who are Deafblind. She has written or co-authored several published articles on assessment, self-determination, autism and deafblindness, social supports, emergent literacy, and collaborative teaming in inclusive settings.

**Allison Mail, Early Intervention Program Deafblind Consultant, Canadian Deaf-Blind Association – BC Chapter, New Westminister, BC**

Allison graduated from University of Western Ontario with a BA in Developmental Psychology. Her introduction to the world of deafblindness was in 1986 when she began work as an Intervenor at the W. Ross Macdonald School, Brantford, Ontario in the Deafblind Unit. In 1989, she began working as a Resource Consultant, traveling Ontario supporting students with deafblindness aged birth to 21 and their families. In 1999, she heard the call of the west coast and moved to Richmond, British Columbia to serve as the Executive Director of Deafblind Rubella Housing. In April of 2003 she started the Early Intervention Program for the Canadian Deafblind Association - British Columbia Chapter. The Early Intervention Program gives Allison the opportunity to use her many skills as an Intervenor, Resource Professional and Deafblind consultant in her work with families in the Vancouver Island Region of British Columbia.



### **Marina McCormick, Ed.D., Region 4 Regional Day School Program for the Deaf Coordinator, Houston, TX**

Marina McCormick, Ed.D., has 20 years of experience in the field of special education as both a teacher of the deaf and as a special education administrator. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Education for Persons with Hearing Loss from the Robert E. Cook Honors College of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and her Master of Education degree in Multicultural Urban Special Education from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas. She received her doctorate in Professional Leadership with a focus on Special Populations from The University of Houston. In addition, she received her principal certification as part of the Rice Education Entrepreneurship Program (REEP) at Rice University. Dr. McCormick is an adjunct faculty instructor in the Ed.D. Professional Leadership – Special Populations program at the University of Houston and the Deafblind Master’s Program at Texas Tech University.

### **Flavia Daniela dos Santos Moreira, Professor at the Benjamin Constant Institute, PhD in Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro**

Flavia is Professor at the Benjamin Constant Institute (IBC) and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. She is a member of the Research Group on Assistive Technology / Alternative Communication Laboratory (LATECA). Flavia holds a PhD in Education from the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), a Master in Special Education from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCAR) and a graduate degree in Pedagogy, with a degree in Educational Guidance from UFSCAR. Her main advanced research topics include Visual Impairment, Multiple Sensory Impairment, Alternative Tactile Communication, Tactile Symbols, Textured Symbols, and Tangible Symbols.

### **Pamela Lattapiat Navarro, Teacher of Special Education with Mention in Hearing and Language Disorders, Metropolitan University of Educational Sciences, Ñuñoa, Chile**

Pamela is a Teacher of Differential Education with a major in Hearing and Language Disorders (UMCE), Bachelor of Education UMCE, Master in Education with a mention in Differential Education (UMCE), Master of Arts with a major in Linguistics (PUC), and doctoral studies in linguistics, Université de Poitiers, France. Her areas of performance include sign language linguistics, deaf education, human communication, and docent’s practices.

### **Gloria Rodriguez-Gil, MEd, Latin America Regional Director, Perkins International, San Francisco, CA**

Gloria is the Director, Latin America and the Caribbean, for Perkins International. Born and educated in Costa Rica, Spain and the United States, currently she leads Perkins International programs in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Chile, as well as a professional network of educators across the region. A leader in the field of Special Education, Gloria has more than thirty years of experience with special focus on visual impairments, deafblindness and multiple disabilities. Gloria started her career as an innovative teacher, then went on to found and develop the First Educational Program for children who are deafblind in Central America, at the Centro Nacional de Educación Especial “Fernando Centeno Güell” in Costa Rica. Gloria was also co-creator of the First Master’s Program on Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness in the prestigious University of Costa Rica, supported by the Hilton-Perkins Program. In 1991 and 1992, Gloria was recognized for her accomplishments with several study scholarships, and an



internship at Gallaudet University and Perkins School from the Blind, and in 1997 based on these experiences she published “Sordoceguera: Lecturas selectas sobre educación para sordociegos.” In the late 90’s, she moved to California and was an Educational Specialist for California Deaf-Blind Services and the Bilingual Coordinator for the federally funded research Project SALUTE under the direction of Dr. Deborah Chen and Dr. June Downing. Gloria holds an undergraduate degree in Special Education in Visual Impairments and a graduate degree in Special Education in Multiple Disabilities from Universidad de Costa Rica and a Master’s Degree in Special Education from Boston College, in Low Incidence Disabilities with Emphasis on Deafblindness, under the mentoring of program Director Dr. Barbara McLetchie. Gloria is the author of a number of articles and an advocate and speaker for “education for all” at national, regional and global levels.

**Sarah Steele, Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and Teachers of Students who are Deafblind, Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Austin, TX**

Sarah has worked at TSBVI for seven years in a variety of roles supporting students who are deafblind with multiple disabilities in both residential and classroom settings in the school’s Comprehensive Programs. Sarah will be completing her M.Ed. in Special Education with a concentration in Visual Impairment and DeafBlind education this year from Texas Tech University. Sarah currently teaches a self-contained classroom for students who are deafblind with multiple disabilities. One of the objectives of her instruction is to infuse self-determination skill development and social-emotional learning into many, if not all, components of instruction.

**Theresa Tancock, Family Services Coordinator, Canadian Deafblind Association – BC Chapter, Westminster, British Columbia**

As Family Services Coordinator for the Canadian Deafblind Association – BC Chapter (CDBA-BC) Theresa coordinates programs and offers support, primarily to children and youth with deafblindness and their families, throughout British Columbia.

**Maria Antonia Vasquez, Consultant, Research as a Work Strategy and Follow-up in the Development of Educational Projects in Latin America, Perkins International**

Maria is a Special Education teacher with a Master’s degree in Educational Research and a consultant for Perkins International Research Program. She serves as the coordinator and founding member of ACIPDIM (Non-Governmental Organization for the attention of deafblind and multiply handicapped people).

**Heather Withrow, Parent, COMS, Austin, TX**

Heather is mother to three children - one who is hearing, one who is deaf, and one who is deafblind. Heather is a graduate of Gallaudet University with a Bachelor’s in Graphic Design, has completed a graduate degree at Texas Tech University in Deafblind Education, and is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. She worked as an art teacher at Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, as an assistant track and field coach at Texas School for the Deaf, and is currently working as a COMS. Heather is passionate about the ProTactile movement and disability advocacy.



## Our Thanks to Playing for Change

<https://playingforchange.com/>

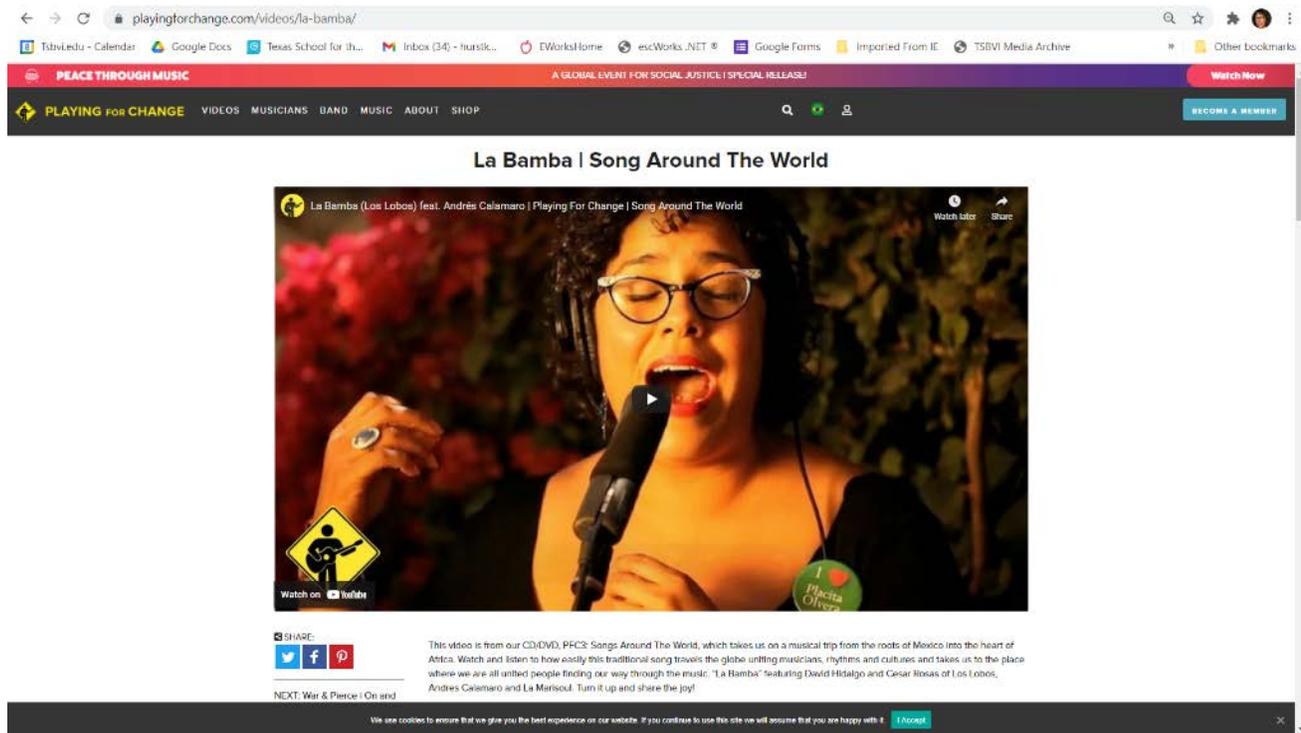


Figure 5 Screenshot of the Playing for Change website showing a female singer at a mic singing the song, La Bamba. She has dark, curly hair and wears glasses.

Playing for Change is a movement created to inspire and connect the world through music, born from the shared belief that music has the power to break down boundaries and overcome distances between people. Our primary focus is to record and film musicians performing in their natural environments and combine their talents and cultural power in innovative videos we call Songs Around the World.

We greatly appreciate their willingness to let us include a piece of their work in our Symposium presentations. We, too, hope to break down boundaries and overcome distances between people including individuals who are deafblind.



Figure 11 IDEAs that Work logo.

This project is supported by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U. S. Department of Education.