Expanded Core Curriculum Considerations for Students who are Deafblind

Below are seven additional deafblind-specific areas to address alongside the ECC for Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) and ECC for students who are blind or have low vision (B/LV). These considerations are not a stand-alone assessment, but should complement and support the ECCs for DHH and B/LV.

1. Using Hearing for Orientation and Travel

- Does the student demonstrate sufficient auditory localization skills to effectively interpret environmental and speech sounds in noisy environments while traveling?
    - Does the student demonstrate the skills necessary to benefit from interpreter services during O&M? Do staff members understand how to effectively use an interpreter or intervener during travel?
    - Does the student demonstrate the skills necessary to use assistive listening devices effectively for travel? Does the student independently advocate for appropriate programming of listening devices? Does the staff understand how and when to use the assistive listening device?
    - Would staff members benefit from training in creating motivation for movement despite the student's potential lack of motivating sound sources?
    - Does the student experience sound distortion, which may impact locating sounds such as traffic proximity, due to sound compression from hearing aids (Bennett et al., 2022)?
- Does the student have access to sound cues in the environment?
    - Sound shadows, also called acoustic shadows - a term used to describe the perceived reduction of environmental sounds due to the presence of objects that absorb sound waves - can provide a traveler with information regarding obstacles in their path (Dufour, 2011). If the student is not currently able to access sound shadows, do they have compensatory strategies they can use instead?
    - Does the student demonstrate the skills necessary to provide oral cues to a guide dog? If not, do they have compensatory skills to cue the dog using a different communication mode?

2. Self-Determination and Advocacy

- Are current medical diagnoses understood by the student and family? Is the student proficient at explaining the implications of these diagnoses?
- Does the student demonstrate self-awareness and self-knowledge, and value who they are? Does the student share information about themselves and their values with others?
- Have the student and family been provided with information about the differences between interpreting services, Support Service Providers (SSP)/Co-Navigator (CN) services, and intervener services?
    - Do the student and family accurately determine which provider is needed in particular settings?
    - Do the student and family request sign language accommodations as needed?
    - Do the student and family demonstrate understanding of the differences between interpreter services in schools and community services under the same name?
- Does the student demonstrate the skills necessary to connect and communicate with others who are beyond their immediate physical reach?
- Does the student self-advocate for access by explaining their access needs (for an Interpreter, SSP/CN, technology, website accessibility, etc.)?
- Do the student and family have the information needed to make connections with deafblind advocacy and family organizations?
- Do the student and family have the information needed to access deafblind resources and make connections with other families?
- Does the student self-advocate and explain the need for appropriate programming of hearing technology for use in different environments?
- When the student does not have full access to visual and environmental cues, do they immediately explain their needs by communicating directly with staff members?
- If the topic of conversation shifts due to visual or auditory stimulus, does the student have sufficient visual or auditory access to determine what the new topic is, or currently demonstrate the advocacy skills to request that information be provided in a format that is fully accessible (Bennett et al., 2022)?

3. Stress Management and the Effects of Stress

- Do the student, staff, and family understand the consequences of long-term stress (toxic stress) on the body and nervous system, and how to recognize and prevent the negative effects of stress? Toxic stress refers to the prolonged activation of the body's stress response system without adequate support or coping mechanisms, which can have harmful effects on an individual's physical and mental well-being (Center on the Developing Child, 2019)
- How does the student express when they are feeling dysregulated, frustrated, left-out, or misunderstood?
- What stress management strategies does the student currently use?
- Are stress or adjustment disorders common symptoms of the student's diagnoses (Bennett et al., 2022)?
- Does the student currently demonstrate the self-awareness necessary to identify and explain stressors related to being deafblind?

4. Communication and Language

- If the student is working on spoken language development, what deafblind-specific strategies are being used to ensure access to language models and instruction?
    - What compensatory strategies does the student use to access and develop speech?
    - Does the student benefit from the use of Tadoma? Tadoma is a tactile form of speech reading and spoken language skill development that involves placement of the student's hand on the speaker's face and neck. It is not widely used, however it is still used by some individuals who are deafblind.
- What accommodations are needed for the student to access sign language?
    - Does the student benefit from modifications to the signing speed or signing space?
    - Does the student benefit from the use of hand tracking or tactile sign?
    - Does the student benefit from accommodations for access to touch cues, facial expressions, and/or gestures?

- How are student-generated expressions of language demonstrated?
    - How is the student using gestures, Bodily Emotional Traces, and tactile-bodily language?
    - Does the educational team understand the student's self-generated expressions of language? Would team members benefit from additional training in identifying these language forms and responding in a shared communication mode?
    - How are student-generated language expressions being used to support further communication and conventional language development?
- Does the student have visual access for speech reading?
    - Would the student benefit from access to explicit instruction in the use of Tadoma (tactile speech reading with fingers on the speaker's lips and jawline)?
- Which literacy instructional approach(es) does the student benefit from (e.g., oral language based phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and phonics instruction, visual phonics, or another research-based alternative approach to reading instruction)?
- Does the student benefit from the use of uncontracted braille for an extended period prior to the introduction of contracted braille (Blaha and Carlson, 2007)?
- What is the student's primary/home language?
    - If the student is a multilingual learner? What additional supports might the student need in order to access English language and literacy instruction (Bennett et al., 2022)?

5. Planning for the Future

- Have the student and family developed a person-centered career plan?
- What pre-work skills does the student demonstrate? Would the student benefit from explicit instruction to develop soft skills, or skills needed to work well with others?
    - Pre-work skills may include:
        - Following single-step directions
        - Following multi-step, sequential directions
        - Following multi-step, non-sequential directions

        - Awareness of a variety of employment opportunities

- Is the student aware of the differences between school and community services?
    - Do the student and family currently understand the difference between a Co-Navigator and Intervener services?
    - Does the student currently obtain school and community services independently?
    - Do the student and family know how to utilize the supports available to them, such as Deafblind Multiple Disabilities Medicaid Waiver (DBMD waiver) and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) supports?
    - Do the student and family know the roles of a Support Service Provider (SSP)/Co-Navigator (CN), Deafblind Intervener, and/or interpreter in work/community support?
- Has the student participated in experiential job exploration?
    - Would the student benefit from hands-on experiences in a variety of job settings prior to entering the workforce (Bennett et al., 2022)?

6. Concept Development

- Does the student have access to environmental information that provides context in conversations?
    - Would the student benefit from tactual presentation of environmental information (e.g., a hand on the shoulder meaning someone is attending to them)?
- How are gaps in the student's concept development being addressed?
    - Would the student benefit from intensive direct instruction in concept development?
- How is the student currently learning concrete and abstract concepts beyond arm's reach, or outside of their sphere of tactile experience?
    - Would the student benefit from intensive direct instruction in these concepts?
- Would the student benefit from the use of concrete objects or full scale models for instruction?
- Would the student benefit from auditory or tactile description to be an active spectator of games or sports?

- Would the student benefit from direct instruction for participation in games, sports, and the social aspects of these events (Bennett et al., 2022)?

7. Access

- What access strategies and accommodations is the student currently using?
- Is the student currently using the hand-under-hand technique?
    - Is the student's educational team familiar with this strategy or would they benefit from additional training?
- Is the student currently using tactile cues?
    - What cues are unique to this student?
    - Is the student's educational team familiar with the meaning of these tactile cues or would they benefit from additional training to understand the student's unique cues?
- Is the student currently using tactile components in a calendar system?
    - Is the student's calendar fully accessible to them?
- Is the student currently using technology effectively?
    - Does the student have a plan to maintain and transport their assistive technology?
    - Is the student able to identify the most effective technology to use for each task?
    - Does the student's assistive technology include a text-to-speech feature that is fully accessible to the student?
    - Does the student use captioning? Are captions fully accessible to the student in terms of font size?
    - Would the student benefit from direct instruction in how to work effectively with interpreters online?
    - Does the student adjust their HAT (switch channels) to improve auditory input in different environments?
- Tactile cognition, the ability to gain information and develop concepts through touch, may be a strength for some deafblind individuals, while others may require additional support to develop this skill set. What strategies is the student currently using to build tactile cognition (Nicholas, 2010)?
    - Would the student benefit from explicit instruction in tactile strategies to support tactile cognition?

- Does the student understand that conversations are taking place between other individuals and groups in their environment?
    - Would the student benefit from models of tactual social interactions and conversations?
    - Would the student benefit from models for one-to-one (1:1) and group conversations, including greetings?
- What strategies does the student use to identify people who are near them?
- How does the student gain the attention of others (Bennett et al., 2022)?

ECC Considerations for Students who are Deafblind

The following chart offers a visual overview of each DB ECC consideration focus area, along with supporting team members, instructional and evaluation resources, and connections to the B/LV and DHH ECCs. It serves as a quick-reference resource for condensed information on the DB ECC considerations. The authors recommend creating a separate section for the DB ECC consideration results. However, if that is not possible, combine the B/LV and DHH area columns, ensuring all relevant information from the DB ECC consideration areas isincluded.

Deafblind ECC Area	Team members	Instructional Resources	Evaluation Resources	B/LV Area	DHH Area
Using Hearing for Orientation and Travel	OMS, TDHH, Ed. AuD, TDB	*TAPS: (Teaching Age-Appropriate Purposeful Skills) An Orientation and Mobility Curriculum for Students with Visual Impairments* (Pogrund et al., 2012) *Sound Travels* (Texas Deafblind Project, 2021)	*Sound Travels* (Texas Deafblind Project, 2021)	Orientation & Mobility	Listening Skills Development
Self-Determination and Advocacy	TSVI, TDHH, OMS, Special Education Teacher (SPED), TDB	*EMPOWERED: An Activity-Based Self-Determination Curriculum* (Cleveland, et al., 2007)	*Explore the Expanded Core Curriculum Collapsed Framework: A 21st Century Approach to the Expanded Core Curriculum* (Clark, 2023)	Self-Determination Career Education	Social Emotional Skills Self-Determination and Advocacy Family Education Career Education

Deafblind ECC Area	Team members	Instructional Resources	Evaluation Resources	B/LV Area	DHH Area
Stress Management and the Effects of Stress	TSVI, TDHH, TDB, SPED	*The Guidance for Planning Behavior Intervention for Children and Young Adults who are Deafblind or Have Visual and Multiple Impairments* (Schultz et al., 2022) *EMPOWERED* (Cleveland, et al., 2007) *Strategies for Stress Management in Students who are Deafblind* (Bennett and Hamilton, 2025)	*The Guidance for Planning Behavior Intervention for Children and Young Adults who are Deafblind or Have Visual and Multiple Impairments* (Schultz et al., 2022)	Unique to DB ECC	Unique to DB ECC
Communication and Language	TDHH, TSVI, SLP, SPED, TDB	*Communication: A Resource Guide for Teachers of Students with Visual and Multiple Impairments* (Hagood, 1997) *Better Together: Building Relationships with People Who Have Visual Impairment & Autism Spectrum Disorder (or Atypical Social Development)* (Hagood,	*Communication Matrix* (Rowland, 2025) *Tactile Working Memory Scale* (Nicholas, 2019) *Child-Guided Strategies: The van Dijk Approach to Assessment* (Nelson et al., 2009)	Compensatory Skills	Communication

Deafblind ECC Area	Team members	Instructional Resources	Evaluation Resources	B/LV Area	DHH Area
		2008) *Calendars for Students With Multiple Impairments Including Deafblindness* (Blaha, 2001) *Remarkable Conversations: A guide to developing meaningful communication with children and young adults who are deafblind* (Miles & Riggio, 1999) *Every Move Counts* (Korsten, 2019)	*Every Move Counts* (Korsten, 2019)		
Planning for the Future	TDHH, TSVI, SPED, OMS, Transition Specialist, TDB	*Personal Futures Planning* (Helen Keller Services, 2025) *Interpreter, Intervener, Co-Navigator/Support Service Provider…What's the Difference?* (TSBVI, n.d.)	*LifeCourse Framework* (LifeCourse Nexus, 2024)	Career Education	Career Education Family Education

Deafblind ECC Area	Team members	Instructional Resources	Evaluation Resources	B/LV Area	DHH Area
Concept Development	TDHH, TSVI, SLP, SPED, OMS, TDB	*Concept Development* (National Center on Deafblindness, 2025) *Concept Development* in *Understanding deafblindness: Issues, perspectives, and strategies* (Monaco, 2002) *Developing Concepts with Students who are Deaf Blind* (Miles & McLetchie, 2008)	*The Basic Skills Infused Skills Assessment* (TSBVI, n.d.)	Compensatory Skills Recreation and Leisure	Communication
Access	TDHH, TSVI, SLP, SPED, OMS, TDB	*Active Learning Space* (Nielson, n.d.) *Foundations of Literacy Instruction for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (Hodes et al., 2019)*	*Assessment of Deafblind Access to Manual Language Systems (ADAMLS)* (Blaha & Carlson, 2007) *Informal Functional Hearing Evaluation (IFHE)* (Graves and Montgomery, 2017)	Assistive Technology Sensory Efficiency Social Interaction Compensatory Skills	Audiology Family Education Communication