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Quarterly Newsletter

January 2023

"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together".

Vesta M. Kelly



RESOURCES

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Letter From the Editor

Happy 2023 from the Alaska Deafblind Project! We are excited as we begin this new year for all the possibilities that lie ahead for the students, families, teams and communities that have the privilege of knowing, loving, and/or working with a deafblind student.

“Snowflakes are one of nature’s most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together” - Vesta M. Kelly. As you know, we are all like snowflakes, each different in our own special way. Sticking and working together is what we do best when it comes to our students!

Winter is full of beauty, fun, and adventure, but it can also be dangerous and difficult for individuals with deafblindness. For a minute, close your eyes and imagine how winter affects these individuals and their ability to navigate the snowy environment they are in. Many typical environmental markers used for orientation may be buried under several feet of snow. Also, snow acts like acoustic tiles, absorbing the sound and leading to quieter surroundings. The deeper the snow, the greater absorption of typical outdoor sounds. As the snow changes over time, becoming more compact, smoother, and harder, all the sounds change too. This quarter's newsletter provides some considerations as you navigate the next few months of winter.

Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS

Alaska Deafblind Project Director

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Winter Gear

Obviously, we recommend proper winter gear (I realize this goes without saying in Alaska!)

- **Brightly colored, good, waterproof coat**
- **Layered clothing**
- **Snow pants**
- **Heavy, well-fitted sock**
- **Warm, waterproof boots, no heels and traction soles**
- **Mittens/Gloves**
- **Hat/Beanies**
- **Hand and toe warmers**

However, when you add all the winter gear, there are a few things to remember:

- **When you wear something over your ears, sounds may be harder to pick up than usual.**
- **If your child or student has some existing vision, wearing a hood may block some or all of their peripheral vision.**
- **Also, the glare from the beautiful, bright, white snow on a gorgeous, sunny day can be especially problematic and sometimes even painful.**
- **Gloves and mittens though important can impede your child or student’s sense of touch, which is vital to their understanding of the environment.**

Walk Like A Penguin!

One fun and important skill to teach students is to Walk Like a Penguin!!

Does it look silly to waddle down the street? Maybe . . . but who cares if it keeps our students safer! Penguins, after all, have a decent amount of experience holding their own on ice and might have a thing or two to teach us.



Extend arms to the side to help keep your balance: Keeping knees loose, extend arms to the side to keep your balance and lower your gravity center. Teach students to try and keep their hands out of their pockets so that in case they begin to fall, they can break the fall with their hands. Teach them to spread their feet out slightly— like a penguin— while walking on ice; this will increase stability.

Keep your center of gravity on one leg: When we walk, our legs' ability to support our weight is split mid-stride. To walk on ice, teach students to keep their center of gravity over their front leg. Take short steps or shuffle for stability.

If you fall backward, tuck your chin: In case of a backward fall, teach students to try and make an effort to tuck their chin, so their head won't hit the ground. Also, to try and form a ball and relax the muscles. You will injure yourself less if you are relaxed. Also, wearing a heavy, bulky, warm coat will act like a cushion if someone should fail.

Deafblind and Print Disabilities

by Luke Martin, Program Coordinator, Alaska Center for Accessible Materials

Winter and the sensory inputs that come along with it can be difficult for our students who are deafblind. How can we ensure that our student's literacy skills continue to progress during this time? When a student cannot access printed material due to blindness, visual impairment, reading disability, or other physical disability, they are eligible for a Print Disability classification. So, for students who are Deafblind, this automatically allows them the potential to receive print disability services. States are federally required to provide these services to students who qualify and here in Alaska, you can request these services through the [Alaska Center for Accessible Materials \(AKCAM\)](#). Some of these services include:

- Assistive technology resources and training
- Student and resource consultations
- Accessibility training for your student's needs

Here are some activities and resources you and your team can check out today:

[Tactile activities for children with combined vision and hearing loss](#)

[Teaching Literacy and Math Skills Through Cooking](#)

Adapting Games, Sports, and Recreation for Children and Adults who are Deaf-Blind

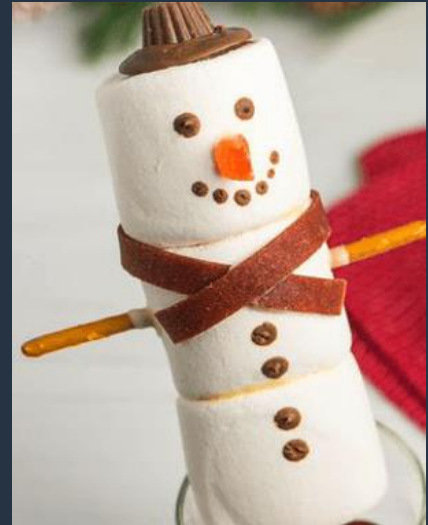
For more information on AKCAM resources, consultations, and training, please visit us at www.akcam.org or call 907-334-1320

Winter Themed Activities

by Abby Steer, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist

A great way for a student to learn is through hands-on activities. Hands-on activities can include things like: art, doing the dishes, brushing teeth, or gardening.

For students with deafblindness, this is even more accurate because the sense of touch is how they get most of their sensory input. Making the activity fun and interesting keeps students engaged and willing to participate. Deafblind students miss out on many experiences and the learning opportunities that go with them because of the lack of sensory input. Providing accessible activities allows these students to experience things they otherwise wouldn't.



Winter Tactile Experience Book

Sensory Snow Dough

Safe and eco-friendly!

You will need:

- 2- 1/4 cups of baking soda
- 5 tablespoons of ice water



Directions

1. The day before you will need to place the baking soda in the freezer.
2. Once the baking soda is frozen, pour it into a large container.
3. Next add the ice water.
4. Add less or more of ingredients as needed to get the consistency.
5. Optional-add food coloring for color!

Free Webinar Training!

Please join us this Spring for **FREE Webinar Training**. Registration details for the training topics listed below will be coming soon!

February 28, 2023

Instructional Strategies and Resources for Deafblind Students

Presented by Dr. Amy Parker from Portland State University

March 28, 2023

CVI and Deafblindness

Presented by Perkins School for the Blind

April 25, 2023

Educational Implications of Hearing Loss and Deafblindness

Presented by Dr. Julia Swayne, Audiologist from Northern Hearing Services



Our Office has Moved!

Our New Address:
2600 Denali Street, Suite 200.
Anchorage AK 99503

