

E-CONNECTOR

News from Colorado Parents of Blind Children (CO-POBC)

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BRaille, LARGE PRINT... OR BOTH?

This subject seems to come up frequently in the E-Connector because it's a question that's on so many minds. The statistics show that only 10% of children with measured legal blindness are being taught Braille. That means 90% are relying on enlarged print, recorded material, readers and computers to gain access to print. If your child is one of the 90% using print, do any of these statements ring true?

*My child hates to read.

*My child reads with his or her nose on the page.

*My child frequently loses his place when reading.

* My child complains of eye strain, headaches and fatigue when doing school work.

*My child is not keeping up with classmates.

By second grade the average student is reading 70 to 100 words per minute. By grade 5 students generally read between 160 and 210 words per minute. Can your print reading low-vision kid keep up the pace?

Did you know that Braille readers have the potential to achieve reading speeds of over 200 words per minute?

Adding Braille instruction to your child's IEP may be the way to go, giving the child the freedom to choose which mode of reading and writing works best. Sometimes print... Sometimes Braille... The best of both worlds!

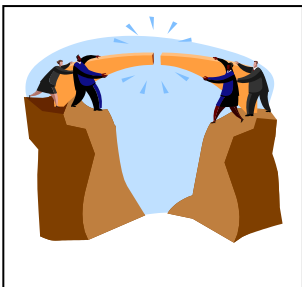
If you believe that a combination of print and Braille is the right thing for your child, don't take "no" for an answer. The law says that any child certified as legally blind shall be provided Braille instruction unless it is demonstrated through an evaluation process that Braille is not appropriate (IDEA Section 614 9d)93)b)(iii). Keep in mind that print gets

Editor's Note: Please feel free to contact us if you have an announcement you would like included in the newsletter or if you would like to add a friend or family member to the e-mail list. Direct all communications to: copobc@gmail.com, attention Julie Hunter, editor.

smaller, reading assignments get longer and vision sometimes gets worse as the years go by.

For further information on this topic, read the article "The Braille Literacy Crisis in America: Facing the Truth, Reversing the Trend, Empowering the Blind" A Report to the Nation by the National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute, March 26, 2009 by [clicking here](#).

For assistance with an IEP call the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado: 303-778-1130 or 1-800-401-4632.

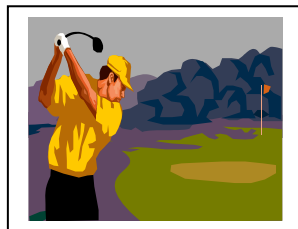


BRIDGING THE GAP WITH BRAILLE

There is a terrific book available for parents and teachers interested in incorporating Braille into school and home life. The Bridge to Braille by Carol Castellano and Dawn Kosman, is a practical, step-by-step guide that shows parents and teachers how to help blind children progress from early literacy experiences all the way to full participation in the classroom. The authors answer the basic questions--"How can I teach my preschooler the

alphabet?" and "How do I show my child how to write 2+2"--as well as questions that come up further down the road--"How does a blind student take notes for a science report?" and "When should my child get a talking computer?" This book demystifies the education of blind children and enables parents and teachers to give ordinary help with spelling, homework, reports, and projects to children who happen to be blind. Topics included in the book: Setting the State for Success, Adapting Materials, A Quick Braille Lesson, Beginning Braille Reading, Braille Reading Skills for School, About Braille Books, Writing in Braille, Braille Writing in the Classroom. Doing Math in Braille, Independence in the Classroom, Using Technology, and Resources.

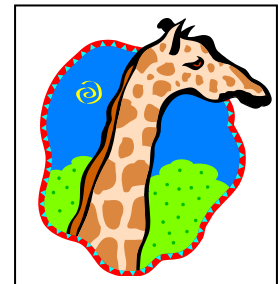
The Bridge to Braille is available from the Independence Market of the National Federation of the Blind. The cost is \$12 plus shipping and handling. Phone 410-659-9314, ext. 2216; email IndependenceMarket@nfb.org.



BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT

"FOR A CHILD'S SAKE BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT" is being held August 11-13 at the

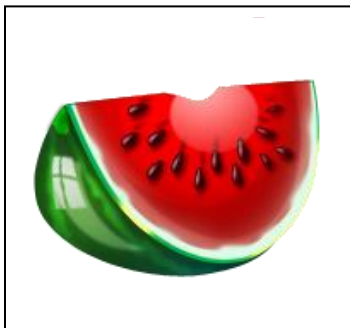
Heritage Golf Course at Westmoor in Westminster, Colorado. The Colorado Center for the Blind is one of the beneficiaries. ESPN will be broadcasting the tournament live on August 12. For tickets or information contact Dave Cohen at 800-243-1997 or dave@specialtye.com



CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: LEARNING ABOUT ANIMALS

Summer is a great time to go to the zoo. Unfortunately for kids who are visually impaired the experience can be less than satisfying since the animals are often too far away to be seen clearly. We might say, the giraffe is very tall and has a very long neck, but that is probably not enough information to paint a mental picture. If we say he has hoofs like a cow and a tail like a cow, it won't help much if the child has never seen a cow. But it is possible for kids to touch a cow! To help kids understand what the giraffe looks like, it will help if they have had some experiences with domesticated animals that we can compare to. Take advantage of petting zoos or take a trip to a farm to touch and talk about variations

in animal characteristics. With the farmer's help a "hands-on" exploration of farm animals can be possible and will give the child a conceptual reference point. The hoofs, legs and tail might be compared to a cow, the long neck might be better understood after checking out the neck of a llama. The natural history museum and taxidermists often have a collection of animal models (the stuffed variety) that can be touched. Giving a visually impaired child hands-on experiences with a wide variety of animals will provide the analogies you'll need the next time you have to describe a kangaroo!



ACTIVITIES FOR NATIONAL WATERMELON DAY!

Did you know that Saturday, August 3, is National Watermelon Day? In honor of Watermelon Day, here are some fun activities for a hot summer day:

FOR BABIES AND YOUNG TODDLERS:

Watermelon Finger Paint: Mix Watermelon Kool Aid with plain

yogurt. This is great for squishing and mixing on the high chair tray and it smells like watermelon! Safe to eat, but not appealing, as it will be quite tart. (Other flavors of Kool Aid, like orange and lime, can be used to create different colors).

FOR BIGGER KIDS:

Watermelon Building Blocks: Cut watermelon into one inch slices. Provide kids with cookie cutters, plastic knives, wooden skewers and toothpicks and let them build and design with their watermelon building blocks.

Watermelon Popsicles: Put seedless watermelon in a blender. Pour liquefied mixture into popsicle molds, or use small paper cups and insert a plastic spoon for a handle once the contents have begun to freeze. Mini chocolate chips can be added to simulate watermelon seeds.

Watermelon Seed Rain Stick/Rattle: Rinse watermelon seeds and allow to dry on paper towels. Decorate the outside of a cardboard tube (from empty paper towel or toilet paper rolls) with markers, or glue on bits of colored paper, yarn, sequins, buttons, or other tactile embellishments. Use masking tape or duct tape to cover one end of the tube. Put a handful of watermelon seeds in the tube and close the remaining open end with tape. Shake, rattle and roll!

AND

The number one activity for National Watermelon Day: EAT LOTS OF COOL, SWEET, DRIPPY WATERMELON!



August is a quiet month for Colorado Parents of Blind Children and the Colorado Center for the Blind. It's a time to take a breath before the new school year begins. So, here are some things you need to do in August--

Run through the sprinklers.

Blow bubbles.

Swing and slide at the playground.

Go swimming.

Go fishing.

Play in a sandbox.

Read, read, read!

ENJOY THE REST OF SUMMER!