

Installment #5: Experiences of Vision Professionals Who Participated in the *Access and Engagement Survey*, July 15, 2020

This is the last installment of the findings from the *Access and Engagement to Education Survey*. In Installment #4 we started exploring the experiences of 1,147 vision professionals. Of these, 710 worked as teachers of students with visual impairments (referred to as TSVIs for the remainder of this report) during the 2019-2020 school year. We heard from 138 vision professionals who worked only as orientation and mobility specialists (referred to as O&M specialists for the remainder of this report) during the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, there were 180 vision professionals who were dual-certified as both TSVIs and O&M specialists (referred to as dual-certified for the remainder of this report). Because dual-certified vision professionals answered both the TSVI and O&M specialist questions in the survey, their experiences are reported within both our TSVI and O&M specialist sections. Now in Installment #5 we will tell you a little about how these vision professionals adapted and provided educational services and supports to students with visual impairments, their families, and their school-based teams during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment of Professionals

During the 2019-2020 school year, TSVIs and O&M specialists, including dual-certified TSVIs-O&M specialists, were employed by:

- public-school districts (n=506, 44.1%)
- cooperative (e.g., service center, Intermediate unit, BOCES) (n=140, 12.2%)
- a school for the blind on campus (n=116, 10.1%)
- private contractor with a district (n=105, 9.2%)
- by a company as a private contractor who provides services to a school district(s) (n=83, 7.2%)
- a school for the blind in the outreach department (n=59, 5.1%)
- other (n=120, 10.5%)

Ways TSVIs Provided Services and Supports to Their Students

We have examined how TSVIs adjusted their service and supports to students/families and school personnel. The 790 TSVIs (710 TSVIs-only and

180 dual-certified professionals) were adaptable, flexible and creative in their adjustment to remote-learning models. TSVIs were asked to select all items that applied to their work to reflect the different ways they provided services to students. The top 5 ways were:

- 454 sending resources to student's family members/guardians (e.g., web sites, videos, blog posts).
- 448 calling on the telephone and speaking with family members/guardians to consult, give suggestions, etc.
- 398 texting with the family to consult, give suggestions, etc.
- meeting online with family members/guardians to consult, give suggestions, etc.
- 345 using technology (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime, Skype) to watch a student and/or family member/guardian as the student was completing a task (e.g., cutting with a knife, reviewing a tactual daily schedule, reading a passage with a video magnifier).

Additionally, 112 TSVIs shared other ways they supported their students. We created five categories for their responses: teaching ECC (expanded core curriculum) skills (n = 17); creating and adapting materials and assignments (n = 18); delivering materials (n = 4); collaborating with the team (n = 12); and unable to provide instruction (n = 12).

Ways TSVIs Collaborated and Supported Educational Teams

In Installment #4, 485 of the 790 TSVIs reported having students in general education settings. Understanding that professionals working in the role of a TSVI are both teachers and team collaborators we looked at the leading ways TSVIs were working with general education and special education school-based colleagues to facilitate the education of students with visual impairments during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. We learned that:

- 200 TSVIs reported that school-based colleagues were using online programs, web sites, or apps that were not accessible to the TSVIs' /dual-certified professionals' students.
- 91 TSVIs reported that school-based colleagues were recording videos for students to watch and these videos were not accessible to the TSVIs' /dual-certified professionals' students.

- 72 TSVIs reported that school-based colleagues were struggling to develop content for their classes and had no time to meet with the TSVI /dual-certified professional to discuss accommodations for their students.

Ways O&M Specialists Provided Services and Supports to Their Students

Similar to the TSVIs, the 318 O&M specialists (138 O&M specialists-only and 180 dual-certified professionals) adapted their instructional practice to teach their students skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. The O&M specialists were asked to select all items that applied to their work to reflect the different ways they provided services to students. The top 5 ways were:

- 132 O&M specialists reported sending resources to their student's family members/guardians (e.g., web sites, videos, blog posts).
- 118 O&M specialists reported calling on the telephone and speaking with family members/guardians to consult, give suggestions, etc.
- 108 O&M specialists reported meeting online with the family member/guardian to consult, give suggestions, etc.
- 106 O&M specialists reported texting with families to consult, give suggestions, etc.
- 79 O&M specialists reported sending family members/guardians videos to watch with their child (e.g., human guide, cane techniques).

Ways O&M Specialists Provided Services and Supports to Students Enrolled in Early Intervention or Preschool and Those with Multiple Disabilities

O&M specialists provided service to a diverse range of children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The top ways that O&M specialists remotely worked with children receiving early intervention services, enrolled in preschool, and/or those with multiple disabilities were:

- 81 O&M specialists shared techniques to encourage the child to explore the environment (e.g., place kitchen items the child can explore in a low cabinet).
- 72 O&M specialists suggested ways for family members/guardians to encourage a child's development of sound localization (e.g., crawl

towards the light-up toy, where the sound of the music is coming from in the room).

- 69 O&M specialists gave the family members/guardians ideas to encourage children to use toys to build conceptual understanding.
- 67 O&M specialists suggested ways family members/guardians could encourage a child's development of sound localization (e.g., crawl towards the light-up toy, where the sound of the music is coming from in the room).

Ways O&M Specialists Provided Services and Supports to Students Whose IEP Goals Focused on Learning to Travel in Different Environments

We asked O&M specialists how they supported their students acquisition of skills for traveling on school campus, in neighborhoods, and in small-business areas once students were no longer attending face-to-face classes in school settings.

Travel on School Campus

- 72 O&M specialists gave family members/guardians ideas of ways to practice visual concepts, body awareness concepts, etc.
- 43 O&M specialists had their students draw or create a map of the school or routes. The student or family then shared the map with the O&M specialist and they did follow-up activities with the student.

Travel in Neighborhood Areas

- 79 O&M specialists gave families ideas of how to practice concepts with the student (e.g., blocks, curbs).
- 62 O&M specialists had students draw or create maps of their home or school neighborhoods. The student or family then shared the map with the O&M specialist and they did follow-up activities with the student.

Travel in Small-Business Areas:

- 59 O&M specialists had students plan routes in future environments (e.g., college campus, places they are going on a vacation).
- 57 O&M specialists each reported having students plan routes in familiar commercial/business areas.

The five installments we have posted summarizing study findings provide a glimpse into the rich data we have gathered. Early this fall a more detailed report of study findings and recommendations will be posted at <https://www.accessengagement.com/> and www.afb.org/AccessEngagement.