“Communication as connection. What do we mean by communication? Our first response may be that communication is the use of words in a formal language structure. But communication is more—much, much more. It is the means by which people connect with their environment and with other people. Communication is the way we reach out to each other; it is the way we “touch” each other. Through communication, we connect in the most meaningful sense of the word. Communication is connection.”—Remarkable Conversations

There are so many ways to communicate! There are the obvious methods of communication, such as talking, signing and writing. We use these methods every day; in fact you are reading what I have written, and therefore I am communicating with you. Speaking, signing and writing/reading are very complex forms of communication that preclude your knowledge of a formal language.

Look at the “Communication Examples” in the box. What is being communicated?

What do you do when you are bored? Do you start scribbling, doodling, tapping your fingers, or playing with your hair? What about if you are frustrated or nervous? Do you bite your nails, eat more, or clench your teeth? What about if you are depressed or sad? Are you lethargic? Do you eat less, or sleep more? What about if you are mad? Would you like to punch something, or yell at someone?

Do you see communication in these actions and behaviors?

Let’s talk about our children and our students. Are our children’s actions related to what they are trying to communicate to us and to the world? If they are acting up, are they overwhelmed, tired, frustrated, or bored? When they are not eating well, are they physically sick, depressed, frustrated, or excited?

If our children don’t have much movement of their own, can you notice differences in their muscle tenseness, their eye movement, or vocalizations? They are communicating to us in ways most people overlook. They have emotions and thoughts, and they are trying to be heard. And you are hearing them.

Communication Examples
Your baby is born. You feed the baby. The baby still cries. You change the baby’s diaper. The baby settles down and goes back to sleep.

You give a lecture to a large audience. Certain members of the audience are sitting wide-eyed taking notes. Other members of the audience are yawning and falling off to sleep.

You are on your first date to the movies. As you sit in the dark you are suddenly aware that your date’s pinky finger is now touching yours. (Remember those butterflies?)
**Future Focus**

**April**

24-25: *Youth and Parent Retreat* Contact Sam Gleese with Healthy Futures at (601) 969-0601.

29-30: Second Annual *Early Intervention Conference* “Capture the Possibilities” sponsored by Southern Miss Institute for Disability Studies. Contact Sonia Carr at (888) 671-0051.

**May**
16-21: Helen Keller National Center: *Orientation and Mobility Techniques for Deaf-Blind Travelers* presented in NY. Contact Sister Bernadette Wynn at (516) 944-8900 for more information.

**June**
2-4: *Communication Strategies for Children with Severe and Multiple Disabilities Conference* in Baton Rouge, LA. Special half-day seminar for family members is offered free of charge on June 4. Presented by Philip Schweigert, M.Ed. Contact Linda McDowell at (800) 264-5135 if you are interested.

3-4: *Youth Leadership Conference* in Jackson. Contact Sam Gleese with Healthy Futures at (601) 969-0601.


**July**
8-9: The Arc of MS *Summer Conference* Contact Mary Ann Robinson at (800) 717-1180 or (601) 982-1180.

**August**
1-13: *HKNC Summer Seminar* for high school juniors and seniors with deaf-blindness. Contact Susan Lascek at (404) 766-9625.

5-7: *NTAC/NFADB Parent Workshop*.

**November**
17-20: *TASH National Convention* in Reno, Nevada.

Funding assistance available for family members by MS Deaf-Blind Project. Call (800) 264-5135 for more information.

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**Parent Focus**

Your reception of your child’s communication is good. You know when your child is hungry, happy, frustrated. There may be times when your child is trying to express something and you are not able to figure it out, but you are the one who knows your child best. How can you help other people know your child better?

- Helen Keller

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It is important to document your child’s expressive and receptive communication. This will help people in the community and school understand more about your child. It is vital that they are able to build on the foundation you and your child have built. It is also important for you to be involved and continue building your child’s communication. Talk to your service providers and make a plan on how to share this information.
What a Great (FREE) Opportunity!

**Master’s in Special Education: Multiple Disabilities with emphasis on Dual Sensory Impairment**

Are you interested in working with individuals with deafblindness? Are you interested in being capable of leading future training in services for individuals who have multiple disabilities? Are you interested in earning a Master’s for free?

The University of Southern Mississippi has been awarded a five-year low incidence personnel preparation grant to provide a master of education degree focusing on special education of individuals with multiple disabilities. This grant funding will cover the two years of a student’s tuition, books, travel, and some child care expenses.

You don’t have to move to Hattiesburg to take advantage of this opportunity! Courses will be provided in an Internet format using real and asynchronous time and include CD-ROM’s, videotapes, telephone dialogue and email communication as part of the course design. On-line courses will also have one scheduled face-to-face classroom experience between the instructor and students and at least one opportunity for Interactive Video Network (IVN) connection.

This degree will include ten courses (provided on-line by Texas Tech University, University of Southern Mississippi and T.K. Martin at Mississippi State University) and two practica (one in-state and one out-of-state).

For more information, call (800) 264-5135.

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**Support Professional Focus**

**Communication**

What opportunities can you create to expose your student to new and expanded communication? How can a child’s fascination with water or the feel of a certain type of fabric be a building block of more communication? What is your student expressing right now?

You know your student very well and want them to learn and achieve their goals. One of the goals they may work on could be conversational skills. A child can learn turn-taking and greetings at any point. Make sure the communication you use with your student is consistent and pertinent to the situation.

Remember that receptive communication must be internalized before your student can begin to express communication.
Mississippi Deaf-Blind Project

Who can request services?
Any family member or service provider of a child from birth to 22 years old with both vision and hearing losses can request services.

Services

Training and Technical Assistance
Project staff provides training on topics regarding deaf-blindness and travels on-site to offer individual technical assistance to families and service providers.

Dissemination of information on best practices related to deaf-blindness.

Maintaining a Website linking to additional resources.

Who is eligible?
Children, ages birth to 22 years old, with varying degrees of hearing and vision losses are eligible. Very few children who qualify for services are totally deaf and blind. Qualified individuals may have additional disabilities, such as cognitive or motor disabilities, and medical conditions.

Conducting an annual needs assessment in order to maintain quality services.

Resource Library with materials on a range of topics:
- Receptive/Expressive Communication
- Orientation and Mobility
- Functional/Age-appropriate Activities
- Active Engagement
- Functional Implications of Vision/Hearing Loss
- Transition Planning
- Early Identification and Assessment
- Behavior Issues
- IFSP/IEP Planning/Implementation

Need help? Contact us today!
(800) 264-5135.