



Gathered and edited by Mary Nelle McLennan

A crumpled note scrawled on a scrap of bold-line paper sits untidily in my desk's pencil drawer, but it still does its job. Wesley, the note's author, was a scamp of a student who slipped this handwritten message into my hand one afternoon as he and my other fourth-grade students were leaving for the day. Apparently, I had unwittingly done something worthy of praise, at least in Wesley's estimation, and in response, he had written, "Miss Mac, we love you, you beautiful angle." What a hoot! I had seldom been called an *angel* and certainly never an *angle*, but I took it as a gift! That ragged little note stayed with me during the rest of my years at the Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB) and has traveled with me as I moved to Louisville and later to Pittsburgh. I cherish Wesley's simple note, which reminds me of the often unanticipated ways that lives touch lives.

As I compiled and edited this edition of *Springboard*, I came across Wesley's tattered note. His simple message, with its sincere expression of appreciation, offers an appropriate sentiment that I would like to extend to the scores of generous and ingenious professionals who have shared their "beautiful angles" through this column and this journal. In my first commentary, which introduced the concept behind *Springboard*, I wrote that through this column I would "gather ideas from your creative minds as you probe for new and better 'angles.' . . . We will share ideas that can serve as springboards for others working in our field. . . . We hope these springboards will vault, launch, and propel us in directions we could not go without the boost." I believed then and still believe that a notion shared can ignite insights and produce other good ideas. With your help, we have done just that, and we have made differences that we may not see or realize, but ones that nevertheless are noteworthy. Thank you, all you "beautiful angles."



A Tip Worth Its Salt

Before I move on to this issue's submissions from our colleagues, I want to share a tip that I learned when I had dinner recently with Judy Dawson, one of my former TSB students who happened to be visiting Pittsburgh on business. When the waiter brought our drinks, he set them on small cocktail napkins. Judy, who has always been a clever sort, immediately asked if there was a salt shaker nearby. I located one and passed it to her. She picked up her glass and sprinkled a wee bit of salt on the napkin and then sat the glass back down. Anticipating my question, she merely said, "Salt keeps the napkin from sticking to the damp glass when I pick it up. This way, I don't have to worry about having a napkin dangle from my drink or drop into my food." Pretty smart cookie, that Judy!



Leave it to Gayle Aquino of Pennsylvania to find a fun way to help young students grasp the concept and master the skill of staying in step when using touch technique with a cane. Her rhythm-based strategy is effective for the little ones—and it is "so Gayle!"

Steps in Time

The concept of staying in step when using a cane can be difficult for young children who are visually impaired. I taught my students to choose a phrase that fits with the left-right-left pattern so that each syllable corresponds with a step and to repeat it quietly to themselves as they travel. One student chose the phrase *robot fish*, another chose *purple frog*, and a third chose *pork and beans*. They would say their chosen phrases and step in time with each syllable while tapping their canes appropriately. It was silly, but the children liked it, and best of all, it worked! Now, 10 years later, some former students come to visit me and say that that technique was the one that helped them stay in step.

Gayle D. Aquino, M.Ed, TVI/COMS
Pottstown, PA
dot5m@comcast.net



Anna Swenson was a charter contributor in the first *Springboard* column in 1992. She has been a most faithful and prolific contributor over the 16 years of this column. Although Anna designed this strategy for a second-grade student, it is a practical idea that could work for a cane traveler of any age. Thanks, Anna, for sharing a whole passel of your great ideas!

Reserved Parking for Canes

One of my students, a second grader, “parks” her cane during the day in several places in her classroom and throughout the school building. Often, people would bump into the cane and knock it over. To remedy this situation, we attached an adhesive strip of Velcro around the cane, just below the grip, and placed a matching piece at each parking place. Now the cane always sticks where it belongs and is ready to go at a moment’s notice.

*Anna Swenson, TVI
3310 Willow Glen Drive
Herndon, VA 22071
annaswenson@cs.com*



Lee Speer of South Carolina first contributed his techie talents through *Springboard* in 1999. For seven issues of our journal, he has been a regularly featured contributor. We appreciate his sharing his common-sense expertise on a quarterly basis.

Speer Tip No. 7: Going to L Without a Hand Basket

First-letter navigation can help a computer user move efficiently through a tree- or list-view of programs or files. Position your cursor in the listing and type the first letter of the name of the file or program that you wish to find. This step will take you to the next instance of a program or file that begins with the letter you entered. Press that letter again, and that step will move you to the next item that begins with that letter.

You can also enter two or three letters in a sequence, which will take you to the next instance of a file or program that begins with those letters. For example, you have three files that begin with the letter *l*—Lace, Lima, and LummoX—and you want to move to the file named *LummoX*. Entering the letter *l* will take you

directly to *Lace*, the first file that begins with the letter *l*. Entering the letters *lu* will bypass the other files and take you directly to *LummoX*. And there you are!

Lee Speer
Access Technology Specialist; Teacher of the Visually Impaired
South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind
355 Cedar Springs Road
Spartanburg, SC 29302
E-mail: lspeer@scsdb.org



Diane Moshenrose of Long Beach, CA, has a “letter perfect” practice for connecting students to their teachers at the beginning of each school year. In addition to helping the teachers understand their students, her system provides students an opportunity to hone their self-advocacy skills.

These Letters Are a Capital Idea

At the beginning of each school year, I have my students write a letter to their regular class teachers in which they explain the cause of their vision loss and the adaptations that they need. Instead of my providing the teachers with this information, I chose to have the students explain their situations so that they would begin to learn how to be their own advocates.

I usually start this practice with fourth-grade students. I plan this exercise in the spring for students who are writing these letters for the first time because the beginning of the school year is hectic. I have my continuing students revise last year’s letters in the fall before giving them to teachers at the start of the school year.

Some high school students do not want to share their vision information with their teachers. One boy told me that he had put the letters in his teachers’ mailboxes, but really he had destroyed them. I monitor the arrival of the letters to the regular teachers, but generally this idea has worked out well.

Figure 1 shows two examples of letters written by my students.

Diane Moshenrose, TV
Long Beach Unified School District,
Long Beach, California
dmoshenrose@lbusd.k12.ca.us

September 6, 2007

Dear _____,

I am in your _____ class, Period _____. I have a vision problem called optic nerve hypoplasia. I need to wear my glasses all the time. My glasses help me see a little better, but still not as others see. I need to sit up front. I can't see the overhead or white board. I'll need a desk copy of this distant work or I'll use my monocular. I also need a magnifier for near work. I can't see small print (smaller than 14–16 point) for over about one minute. I prefer worksheets and textbooks in large print. In addition, I also cannot see well in bright sunlight or in glare through windows. I often take longer to do my work because of my visual impairment; according to my IEP, I should be allowed extra time, if necessary. If you have questions about my vision, ask me after class. My teacher of the visually impaired will see me 2 times a week. Her card is attached.

Sincerely,
R. C.



September 7, 2007

Dear _____,

I have low vision due to retinopathy of prematurity. I must wear my glasses all the time. I see mostly out of my right eye and only light out of my left eye. I need to sit in the middle or front of the room. I may need to get closer to the board at times. Sometimes I have to use my monocular to see print and other objects that are far away. I might need a desk copy of the overhead material. My vision teacher, Diane Moshenrose, sees me once a week at tutorial. If you have questions or concerns, ask me privately or my teacher of the visually impaired.

Sincerely,
A. S.

FIGURE 1. Two examples of students' letters to their teachers explaining the causes of their vision losses and the adaptations they need.



There was nothing half-baked about the work of two exemplary Wisconsin professionals who combined their education and rehabilitation forces

to provide meal-planning and food-preparation experiences for visually impaired students of Milwaukee's Solomon Juneau Business Charter High School. Julie Hapeman and Jennifer Ottowitz found the right ingredients for an effective collaboration between the school's staff and the staff of the Badger Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired, a community rehabilitation agency. The following article tells about the program that they cooked up for the students.

Recipe for Success: Education and Rehabilitation Work Together to Provide Cooking Experiences for Visually Impaired Students

Although the education system, through the expanded core curriculum, addresses the development of life skills for students who are blind and visually impaired, budget cuts and changes in curricula often result in the elimination of daily living skills classes. A collaborative partnership with a community agency can be an effective way to provide the necessary training.

Milwaukee's Solomon Juneau Business Charter High School, in which the high school vision resource program was located, did not offer cooking and food preparation classes in the general curriculum. In 2005 and 2006, however, a unique collaboration with the Badger Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Badger Association) in Milwaukee made cooking instruction available to students in the high school vision resource program. This instruction took place during the school's 6-week intersession, when students took only three 2-hr classes per day. The classes offered were supplementary to the general curriculum.

The Badger Association is a private, nonprofit agency that provides rehabilitation training and other services to adults who are blind or visually impaired. The high school and the Badger Association were located 1 mile apart; qualified staff were available; scheduling the class was not a problem, and administrators from both organizations supported this collaboration.

The program attracted both boys and girls: 10 students in 2005 and 9 students in 2006. Several students participated in both years. The students ranged in age from 14 to 21 years. In 2006, 1 participant was a 12-year-old middle school student. The visual acuities of the participants ranged from 20/70 to no light perception. Many students had additional disabilities, including mild cognitive or physical disabilities, attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder, learning disability, mild autism, and short-term memory loss.

The 2005 staff included a certified vision rehabilitation therapist (CVRT), certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS), a dual-certified CVRT and COMS, and an O&M intern. The second-year staff included those positions and a teacher of the visually impaired. Other staff from the school system and the Badger Association visited occasionally to assist and sample the finished products.

Students used the Badger Association's rehabilitation teaching kitchen and equipment: a work station with an electric oven, ample counter space, two accessible microwave ovens, and a kitchen table that seated 5 people. The kitchen was adjacent to a meeting room that accommodated 40 people.

We divided the students in two groups, each of which met for 2 hr once a week for 6 weeks. Students identified their cooking goals and the specific foods that they wanted to prepare. We designed the lessons to incorporate their goals and address basic cooking skills and safety concerns.

After the class developed a weekly menu, students compiled a shopping list and took turns doing the weekly grocery shopping. Some students requested a shopping assistant at the store's customer service counter. Other students were comfortable shopping on their own or with a fellow student. Funds from the school system and student-staff bake sales paid for the food and supplies.

Over the 2 years, we taught students how to open containers; measure liquid and dry ingredients; pour, mix, and drain; crack eggs; use the microwave and stovetop; bake; follow recipes; use hand and stand mixers, a blender, and an electric skillet; wash dishes; and clean work areas. We continuously stressed kitchen safety and the etiquette for working as a group in a limited space. We incorporated adaptations for vision loss and additional physical and cognitive disabilities into the instruction. We remember some small calamities—a burning spoon, burning food in the microwave, undercooked potatoes, a powdered-sugar snow storm, and double-sweet Kool-Aid. What stand out, however, are the super successes: apple pie, pancakes, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, the mentorship and camaraderie that developed among students, the progress of a newly blinded person, and the confidence gained by the students who already had some experience.

During the first year of the program, we considered showcasing all the newly learned skills by putting together a luncheon for family and friends. That event did not occur because of time constraints. Instead, we held a bake sale and used the proceeds to provide supplemental experiences, such

as an orientation and mobility lesson on the train. In the second year of the program, the idea of a luncheon became a priority. For financial reasons, the Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors had voted to close the public school that housed the vision resource program at the end of the 2005–2006 school year. To highlight the importance of the collaboration between the school and the Badger Association, in the hope that it would continue after the vision resource room was relocated, we held a luncheon for family and friends, including the school superintendent, members of the school board, the director of special education, other special education personnel, and the administrations of both the Juneau High School and the new school to which the resource program was being relocated. We also invited the president of the board of directors, the executive director, and the rehabilitation services director of the Badger Association.

For the luncheon menu, the students chose chicken, biscuits, mashed potatoes, gravy, pasta salad, and apple pie. They agreed on their dress code and assigned individuals to specific tasks on the day of the luncheon. Students wrote and delivered the invitations and rehearsed introductions. We reminded students about appropriate social skills. We made and displayed a poster of photos taken throughout the classes. Students made creative table decorations that included flower pots, silk flowers, and magnifying glasses. Students did some food preparation ahead of time (i.e., preparing and baking the apple pies, peeling potatoes, cutting vegetables, and cooking pasta).

On the day of the luncheon, some students served as greeters and escorts to the dining area or served refreshments, while others assisted with the final food preparation. When all the approximately 30 guests had arrived and introductions had been made, the students plated and served the food.

The luncheon provided an excellent opportunity for students, family, staff, and school administrators to interact. Of particular importance was the opportunity for the administration of the new school to learn about visual impairments, meet some future students, and learn about the opportunities available at the Badger Association. Perhaps the greatest result of this experience was the students' sense of pride in their accomplishment when the luncheon ended.

*Julie Hapeman, COMS, CVRT, TVI
Orientation & Mobility Specialist
Milwaukee Public Schools
Milwaukee, WI 53216
E-mail: hapemajl@milwaukee.k12.wi.us*

*Jennifer Ottowitz, CVRT
Vision Rehabilitation Therapist
Badger Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired
912 N. Hawley Rd.
Milwaukee, WI 53213
E-mail: jottowitz@badgerassoc.org*



Sincere thanks to all the clever and generous professionals who have provided a springboard for their colleagues by sharing their “beautiful angles”—their ideas and experiences and successful strategies.

*Mary Nelle McLennan
1536 Broad Hill Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
Phone: 412-367-9085
Fax: 412-366-7476
E-mail: mary.nelle@earthlink.net*

Copyright of Re:View is the property of Heldref Publications and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.