



A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS
THE MARYLAND BRIDGES
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER
SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

2024 MARYLAND REHABILITATION CONFERENCE

SHERATON BALTIMORE NORTH, TOWSON, MARYLAND

MAY 16, 2024

PRESENTERS

Carlton Anne Cook Walker, JD, MBA, MEd

- Director of the Maryland Bridges Technical Assistance Center
- Certified Teacher of Students with Blindness/Low Vision; Attorney at Law; Parent of young blind adult

Chris Nusbaum

- Project Coordinator for the Maryland Bridges Technical Assistance Center
- Alumnus of the Carroll County Public School District
- In college, was a Bridges Helpdesk stakeholder

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe service methods used by the Bridges Technical Assistance and the benefits and limitations of each
- Describe at least three areas in which the Bridges Helpdesk provides information and support
- Identify at least three types of resources available in the Bridges Resource Library

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

Kermit the Frog's iconic song

- About the loneliness of being different and feeling overlooked
- Individuals of all ages need to be treated like full and valued members of their communities.
- As Kermit tell us, that's not always easy.

School-age students with the sensory impairment of blindness/low-vision

- Even in the world of “special education,” blind/low vision students are a significant minority
- For every 1,000 U.S. students with IEPs, fewer than four will have an IEP with “visual impairment, including blindness” (VIB) as the primary disability
- Only 262 of Maryland's 100,413 students with IEPs (0.26%) had VIB as their primary disability.

COMMON REASONS FOR AVOIDING BLINDNESS/LOW VISION SKILLS

Fear of “standing out”

Fear of “being a burden”

Time away from core content instruction

Listening is “good enough”

Relying on “mental math”

Limiting learning music to “by ear”

NON-VISUAL SKILLS AND TOOLS

BENEFITS

- Access
- Sustainability
- Maximization of individual potential

BARRIERS

- Lack of familiarity with options
- Lack of understanding of impact
- Lack of peer/mentor support
- Lack of instructional support

DISCREPANCY IN ACHIEVEMENT

High school completion/graduation

Bachelor's degree completion

Employment

- Attainment
- Maintenance

PRE- VS. POST-SECONDARY

Purpose of an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- Provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Preparation for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living

Post-secondary realities

- “Modifications” not required
- “Reasonable accommodations” available if requested

Vocational Rehabilitation support is available

POST-SECONDARY BARRIERS

Blind/low vision students face “a host of disablers, including

- (1) negative attitudes,
- (2) absence of inclusive education policy,
- (3) inaccessible learning environment and learning materials,
- (4) exclusive pedagogy, and
- (5) limited orientation and mobility”

- (Simui, et al, 2018)

POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS

Blind/low vision students need

- “a balance of skills training and self-efficacy building practices”
 - (Goodwyn, et al, n.d.).
- “Inclusive education policies and practices”
- “Key enablers to academic success” include “a positive attitude, self-advocacy, and innovativeness”
 - (Simui, et al, 2018).

SOLUTIONS: SUPPORT

Educators

Blind/low-vision:

- Role models
- Mentors
- Peer support

Parental expectations and engagement



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT

Intensive, Sustained

Universal, General

Targeted, Specialized



INTENSIVE, SUSTAINED TA

What is it?

- Require a stable, ongoing relationship between the TA Center staff and the TA recipient.
- TA services are defined as negotiated series of activities designed to reach a valued outcome.

Bridges Intensive, Sustained Technical Assistance

- Bridges Helpdesk

UNIVERSAL, GENERAL TA

What is it?

- Passive technical assistance (TA) and information provided to independent users through their own initiative.
- Includes information or products, such as newsletters, guidebooks, or research syntheses, downloaded from the TA Center's website by independent users.

Bridges Universal, General Technical Assistance

- Bridges Resource Library
- Bridges Transition Tip Tuesdays/Bridges Blog

TARGETED, SPECIALIZED TA

What is it?

- Technical assistance (TA) service developed based on needs common to multiple recipients and not extensively individualized.

Maryland Bridges Targeted, Specialized Technical Assistance

- Bridges Educator Community of Practice
- Bridges Maryland Blind/Low-vision Steering Committee
- Administrative Support

BRIDGES HELPDESK

Ready access to blindness experts

- When in crisis, might have difficulty finding what you need (or even knowing what is available)
- Give a fish AND teach how to fish

Individualized, confidential support

Information and relevant resources

Thorough research services

BRIDGES HELPDESK IN ACTION

TOP TOPICS

- Advocacy
- Accessibility of technology
- Acquiring technology
- Financial information
 - Social Security benefits
 - Social Security work incentives
 - ABLE accounts

MEANS OF CONTACT

- Telephone
- Zoom meetings
- In-person contact
- Follow up with documentation
 - Emails
 - Flyers
 - References to information sources

EXAMPLES OF HELPDESK INQUIRIES

PARENTS & STUDENTS

- Social Security & ABLE accounts
- Self-advocacy
- Obtaining accessible technology
- Post-secondary needs

EDUCATORS

- Changes in District IT policy
- Technology for home use
- Accessibility of assessments
- Accessible instructional ideas

BRIDGES ONLINE RESOURCES

Bridges Resource Library (online)

- Thoroughly-researched and updated regularly
- Accessible and searchable
- Secondary Transition In the Field Reading Room

Bridges Transition Tip Tuesday/Bridges Blog

- Shared on social media every week
- Often theme-based

EXAMPLES OF BRIDGES RESOURCE LIBRARY ENTRIES

Accessible Technology

Health and Wellness

Advocacy

Orientation & Mobility

Education

Transportation

Employment

Recreation and Leisure

Financial Information

And so much MORE!

BRIDGES EDUCATOR SUPPORT

Bridges Educator Community of Practice

- Spill The Tea Tuesdays
- Private Facebook Group
- GROUPS.IO Listserv

Bridges Maryland Blind/Low-vision Steering Committee Administrative Support

REFERENCES

Disability Statistics. (n.d.). <https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/acs/9>.

Goodwyn, Bell & Singletary. (n.d.). Factors that Contribute to the Success of Blind Adults (Success Factors from Focus Groups).

<https://www.pdrib.com/downloads/Factors%20that%20Contribute%20to%20the%20Success%20of%20Blind%20Adults.doc>.

Simui, F., Kasonde-Ngandu, S., Cheyeka, A. M., Simwinga, J., & Ndhlovu, D. (2018). Enablers and disablers to academic success of students with visual impairment: A 10-year literature disclosure, 2007–2017. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 36(2), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0264619617739932>.

United States Census Bureau. (n.d.).

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/all?q=college&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S1501&hidePreview=false>.

QUESTIONS?

[Accessible Web request form](#) (bit.ly/304EzDs)

Bridges Email: Helpdesk@IMAGEmd.org

Text or Voice mail: **(410) 357-1546**

- Leave a detailed message and we will return your call.

Send us a message through our [Facebook page](#)