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Consortium for the Educational Advancement of Travel Instruction (CEATI)

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CHAIRPERSON MESSAGE

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We are well on our way into the New Year and Old Man Winter isn't letting us forget that this is the season for cold temperatures, ice, snow and blowing winter winds!

Much of our country is experiencing the beauty and the challenge of these winter "outbursts" of nature and while it can be a great time to enjoy winter sports and activities, it is also a time when extra precautions need to be taken before and during travel at this time of year.

Travel Instructors are well aware of how the seasons impact the daily routine of carrying out their lessons. Students and caregivers, however, are not always prepared for unexpected circumstances that may occur during weather extremes. So, this becomes the time of year when travel instructors, caregivers, teachers, transit providers, and other adult supporters become involved in structuring instructional segments around the appropriate ways to plan for weather extremes, interruptions, and travel contingencies. This time of year can be exciting and beautiful but it can also become dangerous and disruptive. Proper planning by the client and family can ward off worries and concerns when contingencies are considered and backup plans become a natural part of the travel program.

In this edition of the CEATI E-Newsletter, we have two articles composed by family members who provide a description of how Travel Instruction has changed the lives and futures of their family members. These parents have provided an excellent look into the concerns, struggles and triumphs of working alongside their family members as they prepare for adulthood and independence. As in any parenting situation, each young adult is their own unique person, with individual strengths and needs. The preparation for transition from school to work and career is challenging for every parent and student; it is especially so when a student has a disability. There is a heightened concern when a family needs to consider transportation and commuting from home to work and for leisure in order to maintain independence. We want to thank these two parents for giving others a glimpse into the experience with travel instruction and a view as to how it impacted their loved one and the entire family.

This issue also contains an interesting article on how one Travel Instructor worked with an entire school to set up a simulated street-crossing intersection for use by classroom teachers to present simulated street-crossing experiences for their students. This is one example of a really creative collaboration among classroom teachers and the Travel Instructor that impacts many students, beyond those that receive individual instruction from the Travel Instructor.

In future issues of the CEATI E-Newsletter, we will provide updates on some of the data-gathering activities with which our organization is involved. Stay tuned for more news and resources. On behalf of our Board Members, we wish you a safe and enjoyable winter season. When you are not out in the cold with clients, we hope you have a chance to warm your feet by the fire and enjoy a nice cup of cocoa (or whatever warms your heart)!

Sincerely,

Bonnie Minick, Ph.D.
 Chairperson, CEATI

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JAKE'S TRAVELS

This article was submitted by a parent whose son received travel instruction from a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). The instructor has extensive experience in working with individuals with multiple disabilities, including those without visual impairments. She also enhanced her knowledge by attending CEATI conferences and through mentoring with other travel instructors. The article mentions a position paper adopted by the O&M Division of the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) titled Orientation and Mobility Specialists and the Provision of Travel Instruction to Individuals with Nonvisual Disabilities. This paper can be

downloaded from:

<http://oandm.aerbvi.org/documents/OMSpecialistsProvoftTravelInstSept2013.pdf>

"Jake's independence would increase if he learned to walk around town and ride the public bus to stores and work. You should talk to his team about including Travel Instruction in his IEP," the orientation mobility instructor spoke quickly and continued.

"The AER has recently taken the position that we are highly qualified to teach mobility skills to children and adults with nonvisual disabilities and Jake fits nicely into that category." My first thought was "Are you joking? My son with autism who basically has an adult with him at all times, wandering around town by himself, crossing busy roads, and riding a public bus full of strangers?" However, I bit my lip, gulped down the stomach flip flops and said, "Well, he is nineteen and he is in one of his last years of high school, so I guess it would be a good idea. I will talk to the IEP team." Our school district had never given formalized mobility instruction to a sighted student, but several meetings later, the Director of Special Education gave her approval. And so began my son's travel instruction; four hours a week for six months he was with his mobility teacher. Little did we know, this would be one of the most important, practical, and life changing interventions that Jake and our family had experienced to date.

Despite his disability, Jake understood the value of learning how to move around the city. "This will help me so that I do not have to rely on my mother for transportation forever," he would often remark with a big grin and sideways glance at me. I would chuckle as I realized that his motivation and enthusiasm added to his ability to learn the skills that his very patient and adept instructor needed to teach him. As a baseline, my son could only cross simple, low traffic roads with stop signs or no traffic control by himself. I was amazed as his instructor used street models, broke down large processes into small steps, patiently answered repetitive questions, and in the process completed over 200 street crossings and 20 bus rides. By the end of training, Jake could safely cross even complicated intersections with traffic signals and ride the public bus to a destination of his choice! Interwoven into these milestones, were "cross over" therapies. Phone calls, Internet searches, trip planning, personal organization, consumer skills, and people skills were all included as part of the instruction. All of these things had always been taught to Jake, but because of the real life, out in the world training, the skills seemed to embed easier which added to the overall importance and success of his program.

The process was not without setbacks. Amongst other things, Jake left his belongings on the bus, and had behaviors related to anxiety about being in these new situations. In addition, I worried about him coming in contact with unscrupulous strangers. However, the instructor calmly addressed these problems: a fanny pack for the bus ride, relaxation techniques, positive talk and preparedness to reduce anxiety, and a well executed and totally planned stranger approach. An adult unknown to Jake, asked my son for directions, personal information, and tried to offer him a ride. Guess what! Jake firmly said "NO" and passed that test with flying colors.

Seven months after his instruction ended, the skills that he has learned have altered our lives in sensible ways. What a stress reliever for our family when my husband and I no longer have to rush from our work place to Jake's to drop or pick him up, but instead he hops on the public bus or walks. He is adept at using a combination of bus routes and walking to reach a destination. He is still traveling on his own to the grocery store or Walmart to purchase items that he needs. Sometimes, on a slow day, he decides to go to the shopping plaza to window shop. Jake has gone from total dependence on others for transportation to a self sufficient and confident traveler. We are ever grateful to his instructor for teaching Jake the useful, relevant and life enhancing skill of travel.

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WHAT IS TRAVEL TRAINING?

by Larry Pantuso

Our special needs son Philip received travel training a few years ago when he was in high school.

As he was seen from time to time in the community with his instructor my wife or I would often be asked "what is travel training" from friends and neighbors. I suppose the technical answer is that travel training teaches people how to get safely from point A to point B. But in reality that answer is not really what travel training is. The answer is so much more. For my son and our family travel training means our son can independently and safely take public transportation to and from his place of employment enabling him to be gainfully employed anywhere that is served by public transportation. He can enjoy sporting events, shopping, dining or visit a friend for lunch like any other person because he knows how to safely navigate the mass transit system independently. Travel training is assurance because we know that he has been properly instructed and tested regarding what to do if he ever becomes lost, takes the wrong

connection, the bus does not show up or he is approached by a stranger. It is probably most importantly a piece of mind for caregivers knowing that you are not the sole source of transportation and therefore the only connection to a larger world for a person with special needs.

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SUNRISE SCHOOL INTERSECTION

The CEATI has permission to use/reprint the article from the Transition Times about the street crossing simulation developed by G. Michael Beigay at the Sunrise School. Walt Zofcin was the author of the article in Transition Times, a publication of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU), a Regional Education Service Agency located in Homestead, Pennsylvania.

At the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) Sunrise School in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, like many suburban schools, the students do not have neighborhood intersections nearby with sidewalks and crosswalks. But that does not stop G. Michael Beigay, AIU Travel Instructor, in introducing and helping students develop safe pedestrian skills.

Using his imagination, creativity, and a few rolls of duct tape, he designed an intersection in one of the school's busy hallways. Employing the colors of yellow, white and red, the same as one would find at a community intersection, he skillfully placed the tape and computer generated signage. At this mock intersection students can safely be introduced to and begin to develop many travel related skills. Skills such as keeping your head up and eyes forward, looking for directional signage, stopping at the appropriate location, staying on the right side, scanning in all directions, following verbal instructions of the teacher, and crossing when it's safe. All these concepts and more can be introduced, practiced and reinforced within the safe school setting. Teachers and student don't need to take a school bus, worry about weather conditions, or be fearful of reckless drivers in this controlled yet functional environment. Students who show the appropriate levels of awareness and demonstrate competencies can then later progress to instruction at real community locations when classes take their Community Based Instruction trips. Hats off to Mr. Beigay, as well as the administration and staff of Sunrise School, for thinking of an innovative way to bring community related skills into the school building.



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INSIGHTS INTO MASS TRANSIT

by Jay Furlong

As a Travel Instructor or COMS there is a need to stay current with professional developments within your field. Since our lessons may involve using the transit system, it is also pertinent to be attuned to advancements in the field of mass transit as well as pedestrian and highway safety issues.

Listed below are just some of the newsletters and websites that you may find enlightening.

Transportation Research Board (TRB)

From amongst the vast amount of information produced by this organization there is a weekly newsletter that covers a myriad of topics on all things involving the movement of vehicles from airplanes to taxis. In addition to notices of upcoming conferences and

webinars is a listing of recent publications. Information for purchase is provided, though many of these can be downloaded for free. To view the material go to their website and subscribe: www.trb.org

U.S. Department of Transportation

This site provides information on Federally sponsored programs, grants and general information on all modes of transportation. Their website has featured resources and then a section to click on for your specific area of interest. www.dot.gov

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Along with issues involving the transit and trucking industries this government website provides good information on pedestrian and bike safety issues. Go to their website at www.fhwa.dot.gov/

Transit Intelligence

This e-newsletter is produced at intervals throughout the week. It contains newspaper articles from around the nation that are pertinent to the mass transit industry. They also provide an extensive array of classified ads and requests for proposals. Their site has included job postings for Travel Instructors. Go to their website and scroll to the listing for the Free E-Newsletter to subscribe. www.transitallent.com

Community Transit Association of America (CTAA)

This organization provides training as well as a plethora of other resources geared towards the transit industry. They are a very good resource, in particular, for the para transit industry. They also hold an annual Community Transportation EXPO. Go to their website and sign up for their bi-monthly newsletter "Fast Mail". <http://web1.ctaa.org>

Global Travel Training Community

This listserv is provided by Easter Seals Project Action. It provides announcements of upcoming training opportunities as well as a dialogue between practitioners. www.projectaction.org/OutreachCommunity/OnlineCommunities/GTTC

United We Ride

This is an initiative of the Federal government to improve the efficiency and quality of transit service to persons with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. <http://www.unitedweride.gov>

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