

Modules Addressing Special Education and Teacher Education  
(MAST)

Facilitator's Guide

**Students with Deafblindness: Interactions with Objects**



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## **Facilitator's Guide**

### **Deaf Blind: Interactions with Objects**

This Facilitator's Guide is designed to provide additional information and extension activities that may be helpful to people involved in course instruction or professional development related to the education of students receiving special education supports.

This guide is based on the accompanying module available at <http://mast.ecu.edu>. All or parts of the module can be used to supplement a course, workshop, or presentation. Information provided in this guide is designed to support you as the facilitator of a one-hour session. It stresses important points made in the module as well as provides questions/activities to extend thinking and application of the topics. Each facilitator's guide includes:

- ❖ Preparation Suggestions and Materials
- ❖ Session Agenda
- ❖ Session Guide and Key Talking Points
- ❖ Focus and Reflection Questions
- ❖ Application and Extension Activities
- ❖ Self-Assessment
- ❖ Session Evaluation Form
- ❖ References and Resources
- ❖ Web Resources

#### ❖ **Preparation Suggestions and Materials**

- ▶ Participant Handouts
  - ◆ Power Point presentation slides
  - ◆ Session Evaluation
- ▶ Supplies
  - ◆ Power Point presentation slides
- ▶ Technology
  - ◆ Computer, LCD or overhead projector, screen
  - ◆ Microphone and speakers (depending on size of the group)
  - ◆ High speed internet access (URLs for specific content and activities are included in this guide)

## ❖ Session Agenda

- ▶ Introduction (5 minutes)
- ▶ Session Goals and Objectives (3 minutes)
- ▶ Communication Representation-Receptive and Expressive (12 minutes)
- ▶ Selecting Objects- Learner Considerations (4 minutes)
- ▶ Selecting Objects- Object Considerations (6 minutes)
- ▶ Selecting Objects- Further Considerations (5 minutes)
- ▶ Functions of Objects (4 minutes)
- ▶ Steps in Developing Interactions (7 minutes)
- ▶ Objects in Routines (7 minutes)
- ▶ Summary (4 minutes)
- ▶ Evaluation (3 minutes)

The suggested time allotments for the session's agenda items are estimates of the minimal time required to present the content. Group discussion and the suggested activities will likely require additional time. Facilitators are encouraged to consider the needs of their particular audience as they plan the delivery and schedule for the lesson.

In addition to the agenda items, this Facilitator's Guide includes optional Focus and Reflection Questions, as well as a link to an online Self-Assessment. As time allows, these additional resources may be incorporated into the session.

## ❖ Session Guide and Key Talking Points

- ▶ **Introduction (5 minutes)**
  - ◆ **Presentation Guide**

Welcome to our session on interactions with objects for learners with deafblindness. This session is designed to provide us a common understanding of how to create a meaningful and motivating system through which a learner experiencing deafblindness can interact with others and her environment via objects.

As we listen to this audio narrative, imagine that these are the thoughts of one of your learners. You have observed her enjoying the exploration of objects, both those familiar and those not. You also know that objects can serve as a way to complement speech and manually signed communication to anticipate events, express likes and dislikes, make comparisons or connect to past events (Chen & Downing, 2006). But what else about your learner do you need to take into account? What should the objects look like and with which ones do you begin? When and how will your learner

use them? With these reflections in mind, you begin your endeavor to create a more meaningful and communicative life for your learner.

- ◆ **Activity Guide**

Play the audio at [http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db\\_2/lib/media/photo01-video.html](http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/photo01-video.html) .

Ask participants to consider the questions posed above and respond with their initial thoughts about the selection and use of objects by learners with deafblindness.

- ▶ **Session Goals and Objectives (3 minutes)**

- ◆ **Presentation Guide**

The goal of this module is to gain the necessary information to create a meaningful and motivating system through which a learner experiencing deafblindness can interact with others and her environment via objects. It will explain the continuum of communicative representation, considerations when selecting objects, and why and how objects might be used by a learner throughout her day.

Upon completion of the module, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the levels of communicative representation on a continuum.
2. Identify considerations when selecting objects for communication.
3. Compare the possible communicative functions of objects.
4. Identify sequential steps in developing communicative interactions using objects.
5. Identify examples of daily routines for a learner which meaningfully infuse the use of objects.

- ▶ **Communication Representation-Receptive and Expressive (12 minutes)**

- ◆ **Presentation Guide**

With any learner with deafblindness, communication (i.e. receiving and sending messages) is critically important. These individuals may have residual (remaining) vision and/or hearing; however, the blend of this dual sensory impairment hinders the degree to which they acquire information about objects at a distance by just seeing and hearing (Kelso, 2003). Because of this learner's unique learning style and what can facilitate it, viewing a communication map may be helpful in understanding how receptive communication, or the receiving of and comprehension of messages, is made possible. Please note that these communication forms move from a basic to a more complex level of representation.

♦ **Activity Suggestion**

Look at the slides and listen to the accompanying narratives about Receptive Communication at [http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db\\_2/lib/media/slides01.html](http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/slides01.html) and Expressive Communication at [http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db\\_2/lib/media/slides02.html](http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/slides02.html) .

Divide participants into groups, and assign half to focus on the Receptive Communication Map and half to the Expressive Communication Map. Consider one communicative function (such as requesting a story or informing about wanting to go to bed). Give examples of a technique at each stage of the map, moving from basic to more complex, consistent with function.

Remind participants that a learner may need a variety of communication forms within and between both maps. Depending upon abilities and needs, the learner might receive messages from sign language and pictures because her vision allows such; however, messages might be sent by pointing to pictures rather than sign language because of motor issues.

► **Selection of Objects- Learner Considerations (4 minutes)**

♦ **Presentation Guide**

After reviewing the communication maps, you believe that the learner is a candidate for use of three dimensional items or objects versus two dimensional items such as photos or drawings. When selecting objects as a means of interacting, communicating and engaging, certain characteristics must be taken into consideration in order for success.

The type of object selected should be influenced by the learner's hearing, visual, motor, and cognitive abilities. Input from family and various professionals can help answer questions as to what objects might work best for the learner. By responding to these questions as a team, a more complete picture of the learner and the learner's needs can be determined.

- Is the learner totally deaf? Is there usable hearing? Is the learner totally blind? Is there usable vision? The visual and hearing abilities of the learner may help establish the size of an object, whether it ought to have auditory feedback or what its color and contrast should be as compared to the surrounding environment. How cues are presented must also be based on the learner's visual and auditory abilities. For example, if a learner's peripheral vision is

compromised, objects need to be presented directly in front of the learner at a distance appropriate to abilities.

- What is the best position for a learner with deafblindness and motor disabilities to respond to, access and utilize objects? For example, the motor abilities of a learner may determine if an object needs to be placed in the hands or if it is expected that the learner will reach and grasp for the object. Additionally, motor skills may influence whether a pointing response, eye gaze, or touching is an effective means to access and respond to an object.
- What are the cognitive abilities of the learner? Is interest shown in objects? Is there reaction to certain objects? To use objects as a method of interacting, the learner must be able to associate a meaning to the object (Wilson, 2009). You may want to begin with an object that is very concrete to the learner, perhaps even used within a routine. The less a symbol resembles what it stands for, the more abstract that symbol is. Just remember, when determining how closely a symbol represents an activity, place, person or action, that it is crucial to reflect on how the learner perceives that activity, place, person or action and not how it is perceived by you. For instance, you may think that a piece of sandpaper can signify a woodshop class because you have seen sandpaper used in a woodshop class. But if a learner never uses sandpaper within the class, it will not have much meaning in representing that activity (Durkel, 2002). This goes back to the comprehension abilities of the learner as different objects can mean different things to different people.

- ♦ **Activity suggestion**

In small groups, ask participants to develop a descriptive profile of a learner with deafblindness. This profile can be based on a real person with whom the participants are already familiar or can be fabricated. The profile should include specifics about the extent of learner's sensory impairment and cognitive abilities.

This learner profile will be used in future activities.

- ▶ **Selection of Objects – Object Considerations (6 minutes)**

- ♦ **Presentation Guide**

Along with characteristics of learners, you must also consider the characteristics of the object which is being considered for use. Is the object **meaningful** to the student? Objects can be presented as a whole or partially or in a more abstract form as you will see in the following examples. Some learners require a whole object versus parts of objects in order to gain an understanding. For instance, a learner recognizes that a jumprope represents recess but a piece of the rope or the handle attached to a card

might be confusing for this same learner. When reviewing the following object characteristics, be aware of how the child perceives them and what meaning is being drawing from them.

Real life objects that are used within an activity can certainly be used as a reference to a daily routine.



**For picture on left:** *Jon enjoys walking to a local convenience store to get a smoothie. The object used to signal that activity is his refillable plastic sports bottle which he will actually use for this pastime.*

Objects not used within the activity would be another option.



**For picture on left:** *Jason enjoys physical education class. He has a whistle mounted on a piece of card that indicates 'p.e. class'. The whistle stays on the card and Jason does not actually use it during the class period.*



*Caution must be taken to make the distinction between the object symbol and the actual referent. For instance, a portion of a Styrofoam swim flotation aid can be attached to a contrasting cardboard backing or a piece of plexiglass to distinguish it from the actual flotation aid that is used in a water aerobics class.*

This would be a step in distancing the object from the actual activity, thus, making it more abstract in nature (Rowland & Schweigert, 2000). Another case would be selecting a rubber handle of a bike to symbolize a tandem bike riding activity or part of a straw attached to a background to represent a drink. When utilizing parts of objects as cues, we need to guarantee that they are something the learner sees or feels or hears as part of the activity. If they are not experienced by the learner, the objects will be more difficult to understand.



Miniature objects have been used as symbols in the form of doll house furniture or charms designed for key chains.



However, the learner must have the visual and cognitive abilities necessary to comprehend their meaning. Disadvantages to using miniature objects would be:

1. Never use miniatures with a learner who is blind. Learners without sight or poor residual vision may not be able to recognize the correlation between a miniature and the object that it looks like. Using a plastic bathtub made for a dollhouse has no similarity to the sensations that a learner receives while bathing.
2. Even if a learner has good vision, there is still need to possess fairly sophisticated cognitive skills to recognize the relationship between a miniature and actual object, especially if the difference in size is vast (Rowland & Schweigert, 2000).

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Abstract objects can be used as references as well.



*A wristband attached to a board next to the door might represent an outdoor activity. When the learner wants to engage in that activity, the learner can go to the door, retrieve the wristband, and hand it to a caregiver who responds accordingly. It is abstract in that the wristband is not actually used in any outdoor activity and is not necessarily related to any outdoor activity but still represents the out of doors (Park, 2003).*



► **Selection of Objects – Further Considerations (5 minutes)**

◆ **Presentation Guide**

While selection for type of object referent depends on a learner's visual, hearing, motor, and cognitive abilities and meaningfulness, it is also important to keep **motivational** issues such as one's **preferences** in mind (Rowland & Stremel-Campbell, 1987). Using objects to communicate back and forth about things in which we are interested is much more motivating than such activities as toileting or dressing (Park, 2003). Objects used should reflect a learner's preferred colors, textures, and sounds (Kelso, 2003). For instance, if the learner experiences a type of cortical vision

impairment, it should be determined if black and white or colors such as red and yellow allow for better vision use. The age of the learner should factor into the appropriateness of object selection and use. Using a rattle to indicate recreational/leisure time is not appropriate for a learner in high school. A more suitable object to represent it could be puzzle pieces mounted to a piece of board or a computer mouse or a music compact disk. Each of these can represent a favored spare time activity.

In addition, objects should be **easy** to tactually discriminate; that is, they are different enough from one another that the learner can tell them apart. Objects should be **convenient** to use in terms of portability and **accessible** so that learners can respond to them via touching, pointing, picking up or eye gaze. Responding to an object should be by a means with which the learner is most capable and is most understood by others. Obviously, looking at or pointing to an object is easily understood as a response by a partner. As always, the object should be perceived as **pleasant** by the learner (Demchak, 2004).

One of the very important points to remember is that “the specific cue that is used is not critical. However, the consistency of a cue across person, time and settings is critical if the learner is to derive meaning from those cues and demonstrate appropriate responses” (Rowland & Stremel-Campbell, 1987, p. 65). For example, the cue used to specify exercise time at the fitness center should be the same whether used at home or at the high school the learner attends. If the learner uses a locker key at home to signify the fitness center and a membership card at school to represent the fitness center, even though both objects are good choices, the learner could have difficulty deriving meaning because of the lack of consistency. Collaboration and co-planning amongst all team members including family, can help to insure that the type of object, what it will represent and how and when it is presented are steadfast for the learner’s sake. In addition, activities should be **frequent** enough to provide many opportunities to utilize the object as a manner of interacting with others. Going to the fitness center may occur three times a week whereas a ski trip may happen only once a year and so having a cue is not as necessary (Park, 2003).

- ◆ **Activity suggestion**

Assign small groups of participants one or two activities or tasks a learner with deafblindness may be expected to do or participate in (such as riding in the car to the store or having snack in the classroom). Using the learner profiled in the previous activity, the group is to brainstorm ideas of objects and use of the objects to cue the activities or tasks. The group is to report why those objects were selected and how they meet the considerations discussed, such as learner preference, ease of discrimination, convenience, etc.

► **Communicative Functions of Objects (4 Minutes)**

◆ **Presentation Guide**

Just as words, signs and symbols can be used to communicate about activities, events, people, and ideas, so can objects in both a receptive and expressive fashion. However, it is necessary to contemplate on why a learner at the object level would be using those items. What are the receptive reasons for making use of concrete items? Objects can serve as a bridge to more abstract modes of communication such as a photograph, line drawing, or word. As a learner understands that a piece of chain represents a swing at recess time, it may then be time to progress to using a photograph of a swing which is more abstract. Objects can assist in developing an awareness and comprehension of surroundings by signaling what is about to happen. When shown a coin purse, a learner can realize that this is an opportunity to go make a purchase from the concession stand. Objects can serve as an aid to memory or a means of sequencing the events of the day or week. Having an actual object makes less of a demand on memory and recall. It is much like you looking at your calendar notes to remember what is coming up in your day or week (Park, 2003).

As Rowland and Stremel-Campbell (1987) have observed, objects that were originally used as receptive cues can eventually be used in an expressive way, thus continuing the shared experience. The understanding and responsiveness to objects can allow, for example, the expressive functions of protesting, requesting and attracting attention (Rowland & Stremel-Campbell). For instance, looking away from an activity cue may indicate that the learner does not want to participate in it. Extending an object may be a learner is asking for more of that activity or wanting to comment on it. Self-determination can be realized when choices are offered in the form of objects (Park, 2003). For a teen hanging out with friends, it is important that the learner has a choice to go to the mall (object cue= purse) or rent a movie (object cue=DVD movie case).

Some learners with severe vision and hearing loss find it difficult to attend to objects. This is where joint attention and joint action with teachers and caregivers is paramount in facilitating their understanding of objects and the beginnings of social interactions. Perhaps there is touching of the object while talking about it or passing it back and forth. For instance, having the items needed to take a bath such as the washcloth, bubble bath or soap, and toys can provide a rich exchange, not to mention the fact that they are items used during the bathing routine. With consistency, these items begin to take on meaning. The learner is more apt to attend to the object because it serves a functional purpose within routine activities. Because the items (i.e.

cloth, soap, toy) now have meaning and there is anticipation of what is needed for a routine, it is more probable that joint attention to the object or with a partner can occur via a joint action such as bath time.

As the learner begins to understand asking for “more” of an activity (i.e., playing tactile dominoes), the learner should be encouraged to manipulate, not the partner (i.e., taking the partner to the game shelf), but rather the object itself (i.e., handing a domino attached to a cardboard backing to a potential partner). The object itself becomes the tool to affect the environment rather than the partner (Rowland & Stremel-Campbell, 1987). And so, the concept of joint attention and action involving an object can progress into a learner utilizing that object to communicate a request, comment, choice, etc.

♦ **Activity suggestion**

Play the audio about the communicative function of objects at [http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db\\_2/lib/media/photo01a-video.html](http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/lib/media/photo01a-video.html) .

Using their learner and the objects and activities identified in earlier activities, ask small groups to discuss what communicative function might be achieved. Participants should consider with whom the communication might occur and how the identified objects can be used in receptive and expressive communication modes.

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► **Steps in Developing Interactions (7 minutes)**

◆ **Presentation Guide**

Once it has been determined that a learner is indeed a candidate for using objects to communicate, how would you sequentially develop strategies in order to expand a learner's abilities to receive and share concepts, thoughts and ideas? Let's look at those steps now.

1. The learner needs to display recognition of some objects as an indicator of what is going to happen in the daily routine. For instance, when Jill is given her backpack, she stands up and moves toward the door. After being handed her special blanket, she heads to her bedroom. Perhaps she fusses when the pill bottle is shaken because she does not like to take medicine. Her sunglasses bring a smile to her face because she loves the outdoors.
2. When the learner shows understanding that an object represents an activity, the learner is ready to have a calendar box, in a set location, that contains an object related to an activity. When beginning to use a calendar box, it is advisable to use an object that is a part of the activity. Before engaging in the activity, the learner goes to the object, takes it to the activity and returns it afterwards to a different container to signify "finished." Remember to talk and sign about the object and activity so that the interaction becomes social in nature and not an isolated situation. It is not necessary to have an object cover every activity; rather, start with a few and be consistent in their use to facilitate comprehension.
3. More objects can be added gradually with some that are more symbolic than being an actual part of the activity. It will still be important to keep some connection that the learner can perceive. These might include a paintbrush for art class, bells for music time, or a bow for birthday parties.
4. As the learner grows in awareness, a series of boxes can be arranged with the day's objects in order of occurrence. Again, the learner and partner can go to the boxes, look at and talk about the object which represents the next event. Following the activity, the learner can go back to the object and place it in the "finished" box. By keeping the calendar box an interaction between the learner and partner, it remains a shared experience.
5. In due time, the learner may understand the calendar concept enough to start the day by talking about all of the objects in sequence. When doing so, it

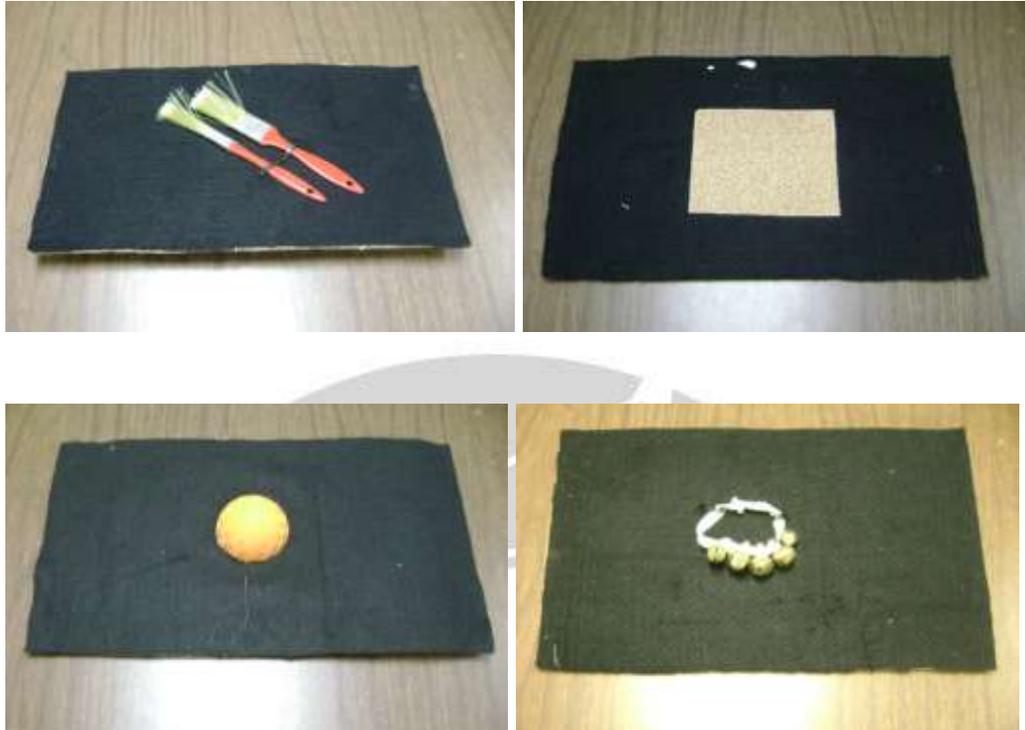
challenges the learner to use basic time concepts such as anticipating beyond the present moment, to acquire the notion of later, and to be able to look forward to the activities enjoyed most.

When this calendar routine is established, it could be made more interesting by beginning the day with all of the objects on a tray. As each object is talked about, the learner can place it sequentially in the appropriate box. At the end of the day, objects that are in the finished box could be commented on together. Yet again, the interaction becomes social and communicative in nature and not in seclusion. (Crook, Miles, & Riggio, 1999).

Here are some examples of how objects can be displayed and organized per learner's abilities and needs:



*This learner's schedule is displayed on her desk. Her visual and motoric skills do not allow for her to physically access the objects herself. As she moves through her day, objects are taken off of her desk and handed to her so that she can be cued as to what is next in her schedule. As she finishes each activity, the object is placed in the "finished" basket. The communication partner both speaks and gestures to the learner as her day is talked about.*



*This learner's vision ability requires objects to be presented on a contrasting background. As he moves through his day's agenda, he is presented with the cues for art, woodshop, physical education, and music classes. These are all objects that are similar to the ones he uses within each of these activities.*

Objects that are infused into a learner's day serve as focal points for interaction and develop into channels for receptive and expressive functions of communication. Remember to use verbal and nonverbal input (i.e. facial expression, body position, etc.) along with the object referent.

♦ **Activity Suggestion**

Developing an Object Calendar- Being able to anticipate what is going on in our lives and what will be happening in our lives is important for all of us. Reflect on how many times you refer to your watch or calendars in order to prepare yourself for the next event in your day, week, month. This allows us to reduce anxiety, prepare for activities, anticipate enjoyable events and converse with others about what is going on in our lives. Remind participants that it is critical when developing an object calendar to remain consistent in the selection of and use of objects representing activities, people and places. Both home and school should use the same objects to

refer to the same activities to avoid confusion in the learner who experiences deafblindness or severe multiple disabilities.

Ask participants to create an object calendar for a schedule of activities at school or in the community. Examples of how objects can be infused to represent the learner’s activities can be found at <http://www.unr.edu/educ/ndsip/tipsheets/objectcalendar.pdf>

► **Use of Objects in a Daily Routine (7 minutes)**

◆ **Presentation Guide**

Following are instances of how and why a learner’s day might incorporate objects to facilitate interactions and engagement with others. Note the functions identified for each object and its relationship to the scheduled activity.

Writing the intended communication on each object referent will allow all partners to know what the learner is trying to understand or express.

Partial Daily Schedule of Zoe, a kindergartener		
Time	Activity	Object referent and function
8:00 a.m.	Morning circle time	Piece of carpet – acts as a <i>bridge</i> between concrete cue (i.e. the entire carpet square) to a more abstract cue such as a piece of carpet
9:00 a.m.	Art class	Art apron – serves as a <i>reminder</i> to learner that she needs to put it on for class
10:00 a.m.	Sharing/show and tell	Name necklace – learner holds this up to attract teacher’s <i>attention</i> when she is ready to share
11:00 a.m.	Preparing to go home	Seat belt buckle – acts as a more abstract <i>signal</i> to let the learner know to gather her things before getting on the bus

Partial Daily Schedule for Raylynn, high school junior		
Time	Activity	Object referent and function
4:00 p.m.	Walking the family dog	Leash – acts as a <i>signal</i> to learner about her responsibility
5:00 p.m.	Pre-meal chores	Placemat or wooden spoon – offers <i>choice</i> to learner for setting the table or mixing the drink for the meal
7:00 p.m.	Recreation/leisure	Headphones – learner hands these to caregiver to <i>request</i> assistance with CD player and disk
9:00 p.m.	Hygiene time	Piece of a towel – acts as a <i>bridge</i> between concrete cues (i.e. bar of soap or hairbrush) to a more abstract cue such as the piece of towel

◆ **Activity Suggestion**

Create a daily schedule- Ask participants to develop a partial daily schedule for a learner with whom they are familiar or for the learner they profiled in the earlier activities. Each schedule should include at least four activities and at least one object referent and function for each activity.

► **Summary (4 minutes)**

◆ **Presentation Guide**

When looking at the continuum of communication, there are some learners with deafblindness who are at the object level of representation. Objects can be used by the learner as a receptive and expressive means of communication to receive and send information about their surroundings and activities. Either dimension provides a way to establish joint attention via objects thus providing a social and communicative interaction. It is key to take into account the learner’s visual, hearing, motor, and cognitive characteristics before selecting the type of object to be utilized. The characteristics of the object such as meaningfulness, motivation, ease of access, and others for responding are also of vital consideration. It must also be determined if the object can be incorporated into frequent, consistent routines. Once these issues are decided, objects can be selected and infused into a learner’s daily schedule, moving from the concrete to more abstract in representation if appropriate.

► **Evaluation (3 minutes)**

◆ **Presentation Guide**

Ask participants to complete an evaluation that will help us refine this training to meet your needs. Thank you.

◆ **Activity Suggestion**

Provide the evaluation developed for this module (a copy is provided at end of this guide) or an alternative evaluation.

❖ **Focus and Reflection Questions**

The following questions are suggestions a facilitator might use to help students/participants gain additional information and increase depth of understanding of this topic. As the facilitator or instructor, you will need to consider which of these would be most effective as a discussion topic, assignment or group activity.

◆ **Questions/Topics for Discussion**

What would you do to insure that objects are used with consistency across environments, people and activities? This is very important as objects, at least for a time, might very well be the “language” of learners with deafblindness and/or severe multiple disabilities. Imagine if your native language were only spoken in certain circumstances, environments, or people. This could prove to be frustrating and debilitating in developing and maintaining communication exchanges for learners.

Possible answers to this question for discussion: posting the tangible symbols list via a venue that others may easily access it such as a data notebook or near the student’s desk, filing the list within the student’s portfolio when transitioning onto another grade or agency, videotaping how the student is presented objects and how she interacts with them, in-servicing paraprofessionals in the use of objects with learners, photographing objects and writing on the back what they represent/mean/say/signify, etc.

## ❖ Application and Extension activities

### ♦ Projects or Products

1. Developing an Object Book Specific suggestions available at <http://www.unr.edu/ndsip/tipsheets/makingobjectbooks.pdf>

As with any good educational setting, students will have access to written materials. For students with deafblindness or those experiencing severe multiple disabilities, books may take on a different look but still encompass the same principles: print (written or braille), a topic and a way to gain information about that topic. The website listed provides some excellent thoughts and suggestions for developing an object book. Object books incorporate tangible items which make the experience of a topic meaningful to the learner. In addition to the ideas presented on the website, these are further suggestions regarding topics and materials needed that can apply to learners of all ages.

#### **Elementary:**

\* Social Studies – “A Trip to the Grocery Store”. Text could cover the experiences the learner has while shopping. Materials could include a wallet or coin purse with real money in it, a sale flyer, a canned good, a boxed item such as cereal or fruit snacks, etc.

#### **Middle School:**

\* Science – “Be a Paleontologist!” Text could cover what a paleontologist does and experiences while pursuing his/her career. Materials could include different fossils, digging tools, cap, sunscreen, etc.

#### **High School:**

\* Health – “Fit for Life!” Text could cover different types of fitness activities and the importance of keeping active. Materials could include a pedometer, swimming goggles, sweatband, water bottle, etc.

2. Creating Conversation Boxes. Specific suggestions available at <http://www.unr.edu/ndsip/tipsheets/conversationboxes.pdf>

Conversation boxes allow our students who have limited communication skills to engage with others utilizing meaningful objects. The “topics” of conversation could include activities that the learner participates in with family or friends. The following are examples of topics that different age groups might find interesting and meaningful PROVIDED THAT THE ITEMS USED ARE ENJOYED AND EXPERIENCED BY THE LEARNER!

**Elementary:**

A camping trip with the family might be a great experience to share with others. Phrases and materials could surround s'more ingredients, sunscreen, pinecones or stones found while hiking, tree bark, backpack, etc.

**Middle School:**

A shopping trip to the mall with family or friends could provide a rich exchange with others. Phrases and materials could include jewelry, perfume, coin purse with money, nail polish, lotion, cologne, a music cd, etc.

**High School:**

A trip to the baseball park could provide a fun conversation with others. Phrases and materials could consist of a ticket stub, a baseball, popcorn, soda straw, cap, etc.

**3. Developing a Tangible Symbols Vocabulary List**

Participants will devise a template that will identify a symbol, when it will be used, what it will represent (activity, people, concepts, places) and what additional meaning or function it will possess. This can serve as a great communication tool between staff, home and school, related service personnel and others who interact with learners experiencing deafblindness and multiple disabilities.

It can be especially important when learners are transitioning between grade levels, schools, post-graduation agencies or other environments. If people “receiving” the learner have an idea of what is familiar and meaningful to her, they can follow through with these symbols without re-creating the wheel so to speak. The template might include such components as the date object symbols were added, what the symbol is and what activity, person, place or concept they represent or signify.

**❖ Self Assessment**

A self-assessment with response feedback is available at [http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db\\_2/quiz/](http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/db_2/quiz/) Participants may take this assessment online to evaluate their learning about content presented in this module.

**❖ Session Evaluation Form**

A sample session evaluation form is on the next page and may be reproduced as needed.

## Session Evaluation

### Students with Deafblindness: Interactions with Objects

Please assess your knowledge or skills to apply the goals listed below using the following rubric:

- 1 - Limited or no knowledge or skills
- 2 - Some knowledge or skills to apply in practice
- 3 - Sufficient knowledge or skills to apply in practice
- 4 - Sufficient knowledge or skills to apply in practice AND teach to others

Prior to this session, my knowledge and skills were:					Following this session, my knowledge and skills are:			
1	2	3	4	Session Goals	1	2	3	4
				Identify the levels of communicative representation on a continuum.				
				Identify considerations when selecting objects for communication.				
				Compare the possible communicative functions of objects.				
				Identify sequential steps in developing communicative interactions using objects.				
				Identify examples of daily routines for a learner which meaningfully infuse the use of objects.				

## ❖ References and Resources

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Wilson, R. M. (2009). *Receptive communication*. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/dbReceptiveCommunication.pdf>

❖ **Web Resources**

Web Sources	Description and URL
Colorado Department of Education	An assortment of fact sheets related to topics such as hand skills, creating a rich communication environment and how to create a communication dictionary are provided. <a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/db_Topics.asp">http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/db_Topics.asp</a>
East Carolina University	Mini-modules reviewing a range of material related to working with learners with deafblindness such as anatomy of the ear and eye, eye conditions and sensory integration are included. <a href="http://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/ci/sped/dbproject/Mini-Modules.cfm">http://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/ci/sped/dbproject/Mini-Modules.cfm</a>
National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness	The organization provides a list of links to resources “To learn more” about object communication. <a href="http://nationaldb.org/ISSelectedTopics.php?topicCatID=52">http://nationaldb.org/ISSelectedTopics.php?topicCatID=52</a>
Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project	This site offers a variety of tip sheets for family and professionals regarding the creating of object books, calendar boxes, conversational boxes, etc. A host of tips and facts sheets are offered for both home and school use. <a href="http://www.unr.edu/ndsip/secpagesEnglish/tips.html">http://www.unr.edu/ndsip/secpagesEnglish/tips.html</a>
Project Salute	This site provides a wealth of information on tactile strategies used with learners with deafblindness. Resources and a frequently asked questions feature are included. <a href="http://projectsalute.net/index.html">http://projectsalute.net/index.html</a>