

escalator. I repeated myself several times. I became increasingly frustrated that this person was refusing to offer assistance. I continued to call out for help but to no avail. I mean after all, couldn't this person see what kind of a situation I was in?

Finally, I reached the top of the escalator. I situated both my children, put down my luggage, and took a deep breath. Then I turned in total frustration to the man standing next to my son. I wasn't sure what I was going to say to this individual. After all, he had blatantly ignored my requests for help. As I approached the man, I got the surprise of my life. The man I had been yelling at to take my son's hand to help him get on the escalator—had NO arms! Of course, with my limited vision, I was not able to see this as I was trying to get up the escalator. In return the armless man had no idea the lunatic yelling at him was deafblind. When we both realized what had happened, there was nothing left to do but laugh. In all the planning for the day's events I could never have predicted the string of events that I would be involved in for that day. I mean, how often does a deafblind guy yell at an armless man on a moving escalator.

Dr. Ronald I. Malcolm is an individual who is deaf-blind. He is the Coordinator of Low Incidence Accommodations and Alternative Assessments for the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, Nevada. He is also an Associate Professor at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

We want to thank Ronald Malcolm for submitting this wonderful article in response to our advertisement for writers in the previous issue. We are still looking for new writers and welcome submissions of articles on any subject related to deaf-blindness. We are interested in all types of articles including descriptions of personal experiences, professional articles, practical tips, and opinion pieces. —ED

The 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Part 1: Changes to Parent Participation, Evaluations and Reevaluations, and the IEP Process

John Killoran, Assistant Research Professor
Teaching Research Division
Western Oregon University

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.) amendments of 1997 bring major changes to special education. To many, these changes are as revolutionary and sweeping as the original passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. If fully embraced by those charged with their implementation, the amendments can enhance the lives and independence of all students, disabled and nondisabled alike. The 1997 amendments to the I.D.E.A. are not simply technical; indeed they have a) reconceptualized the role of parent participation in a child's special education; b) redefined the evaluation, reevaluation, and IEP team process; and c) linked the IEP to the general education curriculum. The amendments call for planning and program development that can result in greater inclusion of students into the routine of general education, and they hold the potential to provide the supports and systems change needed to make this inclusion successful for all.

A comprehensive review of the I.D.E.A. '97 and its subsequent changes is beyond the scope of this article. The discussion in the following pages is not intended to be all encompassing. Rather, it is the first of a series of articles, that will conclude with a discussion of the re-authorization's implications for children and students who are deaf-blind and their families. The intent of this first article is to summarize those changes that immediately affect students, their families, and teachers. These include parent participation; evaluation, reevaluation, and eligibility determination; and changes in the IEP process and content requirements. Other changes will be presented in future issues.

Parent Participation

Many of the changes in I.D.E.A. '97 recognize the important role parents play in the development and education of their children. In short, Congress has increased the inclusion of parents in all aspects of

Australia's First Deafblindness Winter School

Dr Mike Steer
Senior Lecturer, Vision Impairment
Royal Institute for Deaf & Blind Children

In July 1998, Renwick College, the research and teaching arm of the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, located in Sydney's northern suburbs, offered Australia's first postgraduate program to professionals working in the deafblindness field. (*Deaf-Blind Perspectives* readers will probably be aware that in the Southern hemisphere the seasons are reversed, so that June, July and August are Australia's winter months.) This "Winter School," with the title *Developing Communication Skills in Students with Sensory Disabilities*, was created after a need for more training and development programs for those serving deafblind people in Australia was identified by a 1996 survey commissioned by the National Federation of Blind Citizens of Australia (now called Blind Citizens Australia). Professionals already working in the field and those wishing to work in the field were invited to attend either for postgraduate university credit or as a professional development/continuing education program without university credit.

Among the week's offerings were sessions on the following topics:

- Critical considerations in developing communication with students who are deafblind
- Defining social interaction as the basis of communication.
- Practical steps in developing communication
- Communication and behaviour
- Communication and movement
- Communication in the early years
- Communication that supports inclusive education
- Evaluating and assessing communication program effectiveness
- Assistive technology
- Interpreter skills

The Winter School was widely deemed a remarkable success, given the size of our population (17 million) and the relatively small number of deafblind Australians. A total of 45 people from every Australian state and territory gave up their school vacations or took leave from their positions to attend. Evaluations completed by participants

were among the best the college has received for any of its offerings. It was generally thought that the event had given a significant boost to the field of deafblindness nationally.

Keynote lecturers included Dr. Deborah Chen, Professor of Special Education at California State University, Northridge, and Sharon Barrey Grassick, Senior Training Officer with the Western Australian Deaf Blind Association. The five-day program also featured sessions from Kirralee Lewis, Senior Training Officer with the Victorian Deafblind Association; Per Lundgren, from the Guide Dogs Association of NSW; Michelle Burdis, Rob Last, and Christine Muir from the Royal Institute; Dr Angela Wilson, Senior Research Officer of Foresight Foundation, an Australian community agency which focuses on meeting the residential needs of deafblind adults; and Trish James and Irene McMinn from Royal Blind Society and NSW Deafblind Association, both of whom are committee members of the Australian Deafblindness Council, our major national advocacy body.

Organization of an event of this type in a nation that is geographically as large as the continental United States was no mean feat. A great many people made its success possible: the institute staff who provided braille, large print and, in some instances, adaptive technology for participants, the skilled interpreters who ended each day exhausted, the institute's kitchen staff and particularly its Continuing Education staff and Research Librarian as well as Dr Greg Leigh, Head of Renwick College, who underwrote what turned out to be a relatively costly event that might, for one reason or another, have been poorly attended and result in a financial disaster for the college.

In July 1999, Renwick College plans to offer its second week-long Deafblindness Winter School, this time with a focus on *Curriculum* for students who are deafblind. The Asian economic crisis, with its impact on Australian currency, currently place our dollar at US \$.59, making attendance at this event an attractive proposition to postgraduate students and other interested professionals from overseas. Added to this, Australia, with its unique scenery, flora and fauna, beautiful beaches and wide-open spaces make our country an ideal holiday destination. Further information on the July 1999 Winter School is available from:

Christine Grimmer
Coordinator of Continuing Education
Renwick College
Private Bag 29
Parramatta NSW Australia 2124
ccrg@cc.newcastle.edu.au

