



The Path to Opportunity: A Study of Disability Rights in Postwar America

Curriculum Unit 06.03.07

by Joanne R. Pompano

"Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come." ¹The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Introduction

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a wide-ranging civil rights law protecting the rights of the more than 54 million people with disabilities in the United States. ² This landmark legislation, that guarantees nondiscrimination and equal opportunities in school, work and community settings, became law in 1990 but only after a lengthy, challenging struggle.

This curriculum will provide a brief history of the Disability Rights movement in America by examining the major stages and events that occurred as advocates worked to gain rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. Using this brief history as a background, the unit will concentrate on the political, legal and social activism following World War II because this post-war period was an especially active and important time in Disability Rights history. During this era, there was an enormous influx of disabled soldiers returning to America and they demanded action from their government and their community. Former soldiers were vocal in their demands for equality and organized in their approach to attaining entitlements. Because of their action, there was a dramatic change in the treatment of disabled Americans.

During this period, numerous organizations were founded that helped veterans and their families. Congress and state governments passed important legislation to assist people with disabilities. Medical discoveries and new rehabilitation treatments and devices provided hope for individuals with a variety of conditions and disorders. So much seemed to be happening and at such a quick pace. Yet, it took nearly five decades for the American with Disabilities Act to become law.

Rationale

"Every seven minutes, someone in America becomes blind or visually impaired." ³ There are approximately 10 million visually handicapped people ⁴ currently in the United States including 93,600 school-age children. ⁵ At some time in their lives, any one of these individuals is likely to encounter people or situations that will attempt to deny or restrict their rights and opportunities. Disabled individuals many also have to deal with peers, employers and other community members who simply may be unfamiliar with the needs or rights of disabled individuals. The consequence of this ignorance is that the disabled person may face uncomfortable, awkward, or discriminatory situations. Disabled students must learn how to handle these situations while maintaining their dignity and protecting their rights.

The first step persons with a disability should take in protecting their rights is to learn about the entitlements that are available to protect them and understand the remedies available when denied their rights. Another important aspect of protecting their rights is to understand and appreciate the difficulties and hardships faced by disabled individuals who, in the not so distance past, fought for the rights of disabled persons.

When researching this topic, students will find that disabled individuals had to deal with their disabilities with little support, understanding or assistance from the community and without laws to ensure their rights. Students will discover the difficulties and hardships faced by disabled individuals who fought for accessibility and equality. They will uncover the struggles that waged to get laws and attitudes changed in our society. They also can reflect on the humiliation and anger of those who had no access to public buildings or facilities. In their research, they will find pioneers like Edward V. Roberts, the first severely handicapped student to attend Berkeley in 1979.

The Curriculum

Developed for use with students in grades 9-12, this curriculum unit will allow students to understand the complex issues faced by individuals with disabilities as they fought to secure their civil rights in America.

The issues covered in this curriculum unit include issues that are very important to people who are disabled. This unit, designed for students who are visually impaired or legally blind, will become part of a course called "Life Skills for Blind and Partially Sighted." This unit will be used the summer school program and in the Extended Day Academy for visually impaired students. The unit, however, should be of interest not only to visually impaired students but also to students with other special needs as well as their non-disabled peers. Teachers in elementary and middle school can also modify it for use in their classrooms.

This curriculum will assist students in understanding the problems faced by disabled persons throughout history by providing a timeline of events and milestones highlighting the appalling treatment of people with disabilities as well as the support and aid that helped foster change. The students will expand their understanding of the problems faced by persons with disabilities before the American with Disabilities Act became law. The knowledge gained will help them to appreciate and demand their own rights or the rights of others.

This curriculum will allow students to explore the court cases and disability right movements that sought to end the discrimination and prejudice that trapped millions of disabled Americans in poverty, confined them to nursing homes, and prevented them from enjoying all freedoms and participation in society fully.

This curriculum will allow visually impaired students the opportunity to:

- understand the issues in the Disability Rights Movement
- discuss issues of importance to individuals with disabilities
- provide background information on the history of disability movement
- familiarize students with the protection provided by laws such as ADA and the penalties and remedies for violations
- promote self-advocacy by providing students with a solid understanding of their rights as spelled out in the ADA
- examine court cases that dealt with issues on disability rights
- learns about the pioneers that helped gain access and equality for disabled people
- gain information on famous people with disabilities and learn how they dealt with the challenges they faced
- to learn about the advances in post-war medical and rehabilitation treatment
- study the history of how society treated handicapped individuals

Students will be encouraged to use a variety of resources to conduct research on disability issues including books, Internet websites, journals, newspaper, and magazine articles, and interviews. However, in order for this unit to have a personal influence on students, it will emphasize the use of narratives, essays, and journal writings by disabled persons sharing their stories of living with a disability before the American with Disabilities Act became law.

Students will work together to develop a news magazine that will focus on the topics they selected. This news magazine will include reviews of books and journals, interviews with disabled individuals in the community, articles on historical issues and current topics, etc.

This unit will utilize skills from a wide variety of disciplines including reading, writing, editing, listening, speaking, note taking, interviewing, word processing, researching, working cooperatively, and use of the Internet.

This curriculum will begin with a short overview of the treatment of persons with disabilities by society. A short

narrative of this history accompanied by a timeline will allow students an understanding of the basic facts and highlights on this subject. The history will concentrate on the post-World War II period but will also include information on the America to the passage of the ADA in 1990.

II. A Brief History of People with Disabilities

The Disability Rights Movement asserts that people with disabilities have the same rights as every citizen. However, throughout history most individuals with disabilities enjoyed few rights or opportunities. Society viewed disabled people with pity and fear or treated with cruelty and ridicule. Discrimination and prejudice trapped countless disabled individuals in poverty, confined them to institutions, and prevented them from enjoying all the freedoms and participating fully in society.

In pre-industrial times, people with disabilities were dependent on others and were often objects of pity. They were dependent to others for all their needs and decisions about their life. Their families, doctors or social workers would speak for them, label them, and take care of them. Often they were unable to support themselves or their families and became recipients of charity. Society denied their rights, equality, and the possibility of integration.

In medieval Europe, disabled people were associated with evil, witchcraft, and the Devil and so were often victims of religious superstition and persecution. In this period, people believed that a child born with disabilities was the result of a mother who supported satanic beliefs. Fueled by hearsay, tales, and superstitions these notions often were examples used by those in power. In fact, in the Bible, the authorities declare that the blind man who comes to Jesus has been born blind because of the sins of his parents.

The beliefs and practices toward people with disabilities that were prevalent in Europe followed settlers to the New World when they migrated to find freedom. In the early years of the United States, society isolated persons with disabilities from society and they often lived their entire lives in hospitals or hidden away by their families at home. At the time, there was a paternalistic view toward people with disabilities. The family and doctors were the primary decision-makers while the person with the disability had little input into his or her own life and destiny.

After the Civil War, there were large numbers of disabled veterans. Because of poor sanitation and primitive medical practices many soldiers lost limbs. Others who witnessed this long, brutal war were discharged but with unresolved mental health problems. Society was not prepared for the number and seriousness of the casualties. During this period, the rate of institutionalization increased because there were no treatments available.

In fact, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there developed a large-scale segregation of disabled people away from society into institutional settings such as asylums, hospitals, workhouses and prisons. Often these settings included conditions of intense abuse. Often they were the life-long homes for disabled persons.

In the late nineteenth century, there was a huge growth of heavy industries such as iron, steel and the railways. These workplaces required employees with a higher level of physical fitness and dexterity as a prerequisite for employment. In addition, the age of industrialization brought with it the rise of the factory system and waged labor. It was necessary for workers to complete tasks according to specific standards and

within time limits. Anyone who could not meet the required standards because of a disability was unemployable even though they might have contributed previously under other work conditions. Disabled individuals, excluded from the work force, had few other options. The result was that there was again a large increase of those unable to work and again an increase in those institutionalized.

The rise of social Darwinism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also played an important role in the oppression of disabled people. Charles Darwin published *Origin of the Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* in 1871. In this text, Darwin talks about how civilized men "build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick" while the medical field "exert their utmost to save the life of everyone to the last moment." He concludes: "Thus the weak members of society propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man." ⁶ Such discussion encouraged society to see the birth of disabled children as a threat to preserving the purity of the species.

However, the beginning of the nineteenth century also saw the organization of groups that advocated rights for the disabled and an end to oppression. In fact, there was a dramatic change in attitude toward the some disabled individuals after the 1920's. However, it was not until the late 1960's, when the movements for civil rights, gay rights, and women rights were applying collective political pressures, that disabled people began to unite on a large scale to gain their own rights.

Disability Rights in Post War America

The involvement of the United States in World War I and II had a profound affect on society's view and treatment of people with disabilities. The modern advances in pharmaceuticals and medical techniques allowed many more soldiers to survive the wounds from the war and return home.

Disabled soldiers were a difficult group to ignore. There was a desperate need for rehabilitation training, both physical and mental, to assist the amputee, blind, or shell-shocked ex-soldiers. The U.S. Congress passed the first vocational rehabilitation acts in the 1920's, to provide services to World War I veterans with disabilities. ⁷

On the other hand, many stereotypes and prejudices continued. In 1927, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Buck v. Bell* that a Virginia statue permitting the forced sterilization of disabled people was constitutional. ⁸ By 1938, 33 states allowed sterilization. There were more than 63,000 disabled people sterilized without consent between 1921 and 1964. ⁹

The influx of disabled veterans coming home from World War II brought disability rights issues to the forefront again. Further increases in pharmaceutical and medical procedures saved severely wounded soldiers. Thousands of disabled soldiers that would have died on the battlefield in past wars returned home and wanted to get treatment and rehabilitation and re-enter the work force.

There were 671,000 American soldiers wounded in World War II. ¹⁰ The returning soldiers were often hardened battlefield soldiers who had fought to guarantee rights for people in distance lands. They returned home expecting and demanding no less for themselves. They banded together and formed support groups, such as the National Paraplegia Foundation, to demand assistance and opportunities.

The pressure and persistence worked. Congress passed numerous pieces of legislation, such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments of 1943 and 1954 and Social Security Amendments in the 1950's.

The success of support groups for veterans encouraged the parents and families of disabled children to become vocal advocates. They formed organizations, such as the Association for Retarded Children and National Foundation of Cerebral Palsy. The groups, not only raised money for research and care, but also helped make others aware of the problems faced by disabled people and their loved ones.

Despite the successes, most people with disabilities continued to encounter social prejudice and sanctioned discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodation. School systems barred students from public schools and sent them to live in institutions where they learned such activities as chair caning or making brooms.

In addition, laws prohibited people with certain disabilities from marrying in most states. Moreover, depending on the type of disability, many Americans were confined, sometimes for their entire life, in state institutions and nursing homes. As recently as 1979, it was legal for some state governments to sterilize disabled persons against their will. ¹¹

The Independent Living Movement of the late 1960's was an important part of this broader movement for disability rights. This movement was based on the premise that people with severe disabilities should have the same freedom to choose living accommodations in the community as their non-disabled peers.

The Independent Living Movement fought for the adaptations and assistance that was necessary for the most severe of the disabled to live successful in the community such as

services aides to assist with homemaking tasks and personal care, job and school related issues and assistance to help individuals participate in community activities. The independent living movement also advocated for the removal of architectural and transportation barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in their community. For instance, wheelchair-lifts, ramps and curb cuts provided wheelchairs easier access in the community.

These advances were all life changing for individuals with disabilities. However, they did not gain broad civil rights until the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. The ADA guarantees that no person with a disability can be excluded, segregated or otherwise treated differently than individuals without disabilities. With this Act, Congress identified and ensured full participation, inclusion and integration of people with disabilities as a national goal.

Summary

Americans with disabilities are the largest single minority in the country. However, they are still an unrecognized minority who have not demanded their full rights or exercised their political influence. In spite of this, the disability rights movement has made great progress in bringing the needs, concerns and rights of people with disabilities to national attention.

In fact, the disability rights movement has transformed society in America. For the first time, individuals with even the most severe disabilities were guaranteed rights and the opportunity to make their own decisions. There are now more choices in education, training and employment and more opportunities for individuals to live, work, and enjoy their communities.

III. Lesson Plans

Grades: 9-12

Length of Unit: 10-12 weeks

Overview: Students will create a news magazine on disability issues

Subjects: Civil Rights, Civics, Language, Social Studies, Resource/ Disabled, English

Goal: Students will create a magazine dealing with the problems and concerns facing persons with disabilities. The articles will include current topics as well as providing a historical perspective of disability rights. In addition, the magazine will include articles on the Disability Rights Movement to assist readers in understanding the long, hard-fought battles that lead up to the passage of the American with Disabilities Act.

Content Objectives:

- Students will be able to verbalize information on important events, court cases, and legislation in the Disability Rights Movement
- Students will be able to become familiar with issues faced by individuals with disabilities in the present and past
- Students will be able to write about a selected topic in the Disability Rights Movement.

Language Objectives:

- Students will be able to develop and use questions for interviewing
- Students will be able to write and edit articles for a news magazine on a selected topic.

Materials: Computer access with JAWS software (to verbalize text on screen), OpenBook software (to scan articles), ZoomText software (to enlarge text), Duxbury (to translate Braille), Talking Typer, NoteTakers (portable Braille notetaker), tape recorders, and magnifiers.

Procedure

The editorial staff will outline the stories and features for the each of three issues. They will assign stories to staff members and set deadlines for articles. Suggested topics will include:

1. Interviewing a person who was disabled prior to the enactment of the ADA

2. Book review on books written by or about individuals with disabilities such as *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation* by Doris Zames Fleischer and Frieda Zames
3. Community news concerning disability issues
4. Editorials on issues that need attention
5. Individuals or issues in the national or international news

Examples:

Feature Story: Students will tour their school and other places in their community to take an inventory of areas or situations that might present problems for individuals with disabilities. They will look for situations such as wheelchair accessibility, large print or Braille signs, etc.

Feature Story: Reporters will interview students, faculty, and community members that have handicapping conditions. They will investigate what problems or concerns people with disabilities encounter in the community. They will find out how the ADA helped this individual and how their life changed after passage of this act.

Evaluation / Assessment: Students will be evaluated based on participation in activities and completing their written assignments. Teachers will evaluate interviewing skills, research skills, preparation, and writing and editing skills.

IV. Addendums

A. Timeline

A TIMELINE OF DISABILITY RIGHTS

1817 - The American School for the Deaf, the first school for disabled children in the Western Hemisphere, is founded in Hartford, Connecticut

1832 - The Perkins School for the Blind opens in Boston

1841 - Dorothea Dix works on behalf of people with disabilities who are incarcerated in poorhouses and jails

1848 - The first residential institution for people with mental retardation is established at the Perkins Institution in Boston

1864 - The first college established for people with disabilities Columbia Institution for

Deaf and Blind (later re-named Gallaudet College) is authorized to confer degrees

1883 - People with disabilities are prevented from emigrating to the U.S. and from marrying and having children

1902 - Helen Keller, the first deaf-blind person to matriculate at college, publishes her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*.

1908 - Clifford Beers publishes, *A Mind That Found Itself*, an expose on the conditions in state and private mental institutions

1918 - The Smith-Sear Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation Act establishes a federal vocational rehabilitation for disabled soldiers.

1920 - The Fess-Smith Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act establishes a vocational rehabilitation program for disabled civilians

1927 - The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Buck v. Bell*, rules that the forced sterilization of people with disabilities is not a violation of their constitutional rights. By the 1970's, approximately 60,000 disabled people are sterilized without consent.

1929 - Seeing Eye establishes the first dog guide school in the United States

1932 - Disabled American Veterans is chartered by Congress to represent disabled veterans dealing with the federal government.

1933 - Franklin D. Roosevelt, the first head of state to have a major disability, is sworn into office as president of the U.S. However, he does not acknowledge he has polio.

1935 - The Social Security Act that provides benefits to the elderly and assistance to

States for assistance to blind individuals and disabled children

The League of the Physically Handicapped is formed. The group utilizes picket lines, sit-ins and demonstrations to protest discrimination against people with disabilities by federal relief programs

1936 -The Randolph Sheppard Act establishes a federal program to allow blind individuals to establish vending stands in federal office buildings

1938 - The Fair Labor Standards Act is enacted and leads to a vast increase in the number of sheltered workshops programs for blind workers. Intended to provide training and job opportunities for visually impaired workers, it actually leads to salaries below the minimum wage and to poor working conditions.

1940 -The American Federation of the Physically Handicapped, the nation's first national political organization for individuals with all types of disabilities, is founded to lobby for an end to job discrimination

1944 - The U.S. Army Air Force Convalescent Center begins a rehabilitation program

for disabled airmen and helps to establish rehabilitation medicine as a new medical

specialty

1945 - President Harry Truman signs a resolution calling for the creation of an annual National Employment of the Handicapped

The Blinded Veterans Association is formed in Avon, Connecticut.

1946 - Congress enacts the Hospital Survey and Construction Act, which provides federal grants to states for the construction of hospitals, public health center, and health facilities for rehabilitation of people with disabilities

The National Mental Health Foundation is founded to expose the abusive conditions in institutions and helps push deinstitutionalization.

1947 - Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) is founded

The Presidents Committee on National Employment of the Physically Handicapped Week is held in Washington, D.C. and utilizes radio, television, movie shorts and billboards to emphasize the competence of people with disabilities and to convince employers that its "good business to hire the handicapped."

Harold Russell wins two Academy Awards for his role in, "The Best Years of Our Lives," a movie about a disabled soldier returning from WWII

1948 - The National Paraplegia Foundation is founded by members of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and leads efforts to advocate for disability rights.

We Are Not Alone (WANA), a mental patients' self-help group, is organized

1949 The first Annual Wheelchair Basket ball Tournament is held and The National Foundation for Cerebral Palsy is chartered

1950 The Association for Retarded Children and National Foundation for Cerebral

Palsy are founded by parents

Social Security Amendments establish federal / state programs to aid permanently and very disabled individuals

1951 The Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine at New York University Medical Center

Begins work on adaptive aids for people with severe disabilities

1954 Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka rules that the practice

of having separate schools for black and white children is unequal and

unconstitutional. This decision fuels the civil right movement and becomes an

inspiration to the disability rights movement.

Congress passes the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments, authorizing

Federal grants to expand programs available to people with physical disabilities.

1956 The Social Security Amendments of 1956 creates a Social Security Disability Insurance program for disabled workers aged 50 to 64.

1958 Congress passes the Social Security Amendments of 1958 to extend Social Disability Insurance benefits to the dependents of disabled workers.

1960 - The first Paralympics Games are held in Rome, Italy.

1961 The American National Standard Institute, Inc. publishes specifications for making buildings accessible to physically handicapped individuals

1962 Edward V. Roberts becomes the first severely disabled student at the University of Berkeley.

1963 President Kennedy calls for a reduction in the number of persons and amount of time individuals are confined to institutions and calls for allowing them to return to community living aided by better health and rehabilitation services

The Rolling Quads are formed at Berkeley to advocate for greater access on Campus and in the surrounding community

1964 The Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination based on race in public accommodations and employment and in federally assisted programs. It becomes the model for subsequent disability rights legislation.

1965 The Social Security Amendments of 1965 establishes Medicare and Medicaid that provides federally subsidized health care to disabled and elderly Americans.

Covered by the Social Security program

1966 - President Johnson establishes the President's Committee on Mental Retardation.

1968 The Architectural Barriers Act is passed, mandating that federally constructed Buildings and facilities are accessible to people with physical disabilities.

1971 The U.S. District Court of Alabama rules in Wyatt v. Stickney that people in residential state schools and institutions have a constitutional right to a realistic

opportunity for treatment and can no longer is locked away without treatment or education.

1972 The Center for Independent Living, the first independent living center, is founded
In Berkeley, California leading to the worldwide independent living movement

The Social Security Amendments of 1972 creates the Supplemental Security
Income (SSI) program that relieves families of the financial responsibility of
Caring for their adult disabled children

1973 Passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act authorizes federal funds to provide for
construction of curb cuts.

1975 - The Education for All Handicapped Children Act establishes the right of children with disabilities to a
public school education in an integrated environment

The act is a cornerstone of federal disability rights legislation

The U.S. Supreme Court, in O'Connor v. Donaldson, rules that people cannot be
institutionalized against their will in a psychiatric hospital unless they are
determined to be a threat to themselves or others

The Americans with Disabilities (ADA) mandates that: 1. local, state and federal
government and programs must be accessible 2. businesses must make
"reasonable accommodations" 3. public accommodations such as stores,
theaters and restaurants must make "reasonable modifications" 4. public
transportation and communication must ensure access for disabled persons.

B. Rehabilitation Legislation

The Smith-Fess Act of 1920 was the beginning of the public rehabilitation program for persons with
disabilities. Funds were provided for vocational guidance, training, occupational adjustment, prosthetics, and
placement services.

The Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936 provided the persons who were blind the opportunity to be licensed to
operate vending stands in federal buildings.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments of 1943 expanded services to include physical restoration and
persons with mental retardation and mental illness. The amendment also required states to submit a written
state plan to the federal government.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1954 made major changes to financing provisions. State

population and per capita income formulas would now determine funding for state VR agencies. Research and training grants were also added. Extension and improvement, project grants as well as research and demonstration grants were added.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1965 expanded services to reach a broader population including persons with substance abuse problems and socially handicapping conditions. Economic need no longer is a requirement.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (the name of the legislation was changed from the Vocational Rehabilitation Act to the Rehabilitation Act) A priority to serve persons with severe disabilities was mandated. Affirmative action programs were established (Title V, Sections 501, 502, 503, and 504.) The establishment of the Individual Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP) now ensured the enhanced involvement of the consumer in developing a rehabilitation plan of action.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1978 provided the establishment of independent living centers with a focus on peer counseling and guidance.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986 improved support for rehabilitation engineering and provided clear definitions for rehabilitation engineering services. Support for special projects and demonstrations in supported employment were established.

The 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act clearly outlined the intent of Congress to ensure consumer choice in career opportunities with a focus on competitive employment.

C. Standards

Considering ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students and CMT reading objectives, the following unit objectives will be used:

The students will:

- become familiar with the political, legal and social activism that fueled the Disability Rights Movement in postwar America
- review a brief history of disabled individuals
- identify an important laws and legislation affecting disabled individuals
- understand the struggles, major events and milestones of the movements
- research, write, and create a news magazine
- conduct interviews from interview questions
- summarize interviews, articles, memoirs to create articles

Skills Development

- Students will research issues, events, and people dealing with disability issues
- Students will write articles, reviews or editorials on disability topics
- Students will record articles, reviews or editorials on disability topics
- Students will interview individuals in the community or fellow students reporting on topics
- Students will interview individuals and take notes in order to summarize key concepts
- Students will summarize an article in newspaper or book
- Students will locate information appropriate to an assignment in text or reference materials
- Students will take a position and support it orally or in writing
- Students will work individually and cooperatively in groups
- Students will create a news magazine in large print or Braille
- Students will create a news magazine taped for broadcast or individual use

D. Famous People with Disabilities

Harriet Tubman - Rescuer of Slaves (1820-1913)

Harriet Tubman was a slave who became a rescuer of other slaves. She was a teenager when she was struck in the head while trying to prevent a plantation overseer from whipping a fellow slave. This blow resulted in a lifelong form of epilepsy.

Helen Keller - Deaf/Blind Activist

Helen Keller was born in 1880. She became blind and deaf at the age of nineteen months due to an illness. Her teacher Ann Sullivan taught her to speak using the Tadoma method (touching the lips and throat as others speak) combined with "fingerspelling" (forming alphabetical characters on the palm).

She learned to read in English, French, German, Latin, and Greek using the Braille code. She was the first deaf / blind person to graduate from college when, in 1904, she graduated magna cum laude from Radcliffe

College.

She spent her life traveling the world as a famous author and speaker. She was an activist for many causes but was best known as an advocate for people with handicaps.

She founded Helen Keller International, in 1915, a non-profit organization to prevent blindness.

<http://www.harriettubman.com/>

Franklin Delano Roosevelt - U.S. President (1882-1945)

Franklin Roosevelt served three terms as President of the United States. During that time, he used social programs to help the country deal with the depression and led the U.S. through World War II. FDR could not walk without assistance due to polio. Unfortunately, he felt he had to hide the disability from the American public due to how society viewed disabled persons.

Dorothea Lange - Photographer (1895-1965)

Dorothea Lange was a world famous photographer who traveled the world. She was famous for the numerous photographs she took of the disenfranchised. She developed a limp after contracting polio at the age of seven. She felt her disability was "one of the most important things that happened to me" because it helped form her way of looking at the world and understanding her humble place in that world.

Judi Chamberlain - Mental Patients' Liberation Activist (1944-)

After entering a state institution due to depression, she discovered she was in a prison-like facility where she had no legal rights. She co-founded a group of psychiatric survivors called the Mental Patients Liberation Front in the 1970's. She published the book, *On Our Own: Patient-Controlled Alternatives to the Mental Health System*. She received the Distinguished Service Award of the President of the United States from the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities in 1992.

Judy Heumann - Assistant Secretary of Education (b. 1947)

She was a teacher who fought the New York City Board of Education for the right to teach. She was one of the founders of Disabled in Action, an organization that attempts to help people with disabilities gain protection from civil rights laws. She also was the Deputy Director of the Center for Independent Living. Cofounder of the World Institute on Disability, World Bank Advisor on Disability and Assistant Secretary of Education

Developing a Curriculum for Use with Visually Impaired Students

Individuals are classified as visually impaired or legally blind according to their visual acuity, that is, a person's ability to discriminate fine details. The legal definition of "visual impairment" refers to an individual with a visual acuity of 20/70 in the better eye with the best correction. The legal definition of legally blind refers to an individual with a visual acuity of 20/200 in the better eye with the best correction or a visual field of no more than 20 degrees. In both cases, vision cannot be fully corrected by prescription lenses, optical devices, surgery, or medical treatment.

Most visually impaired and blind children are mainstreamed into regular education classrooms and work along with their sighted peers with the assistance of adapted materials, such as Braille translations of printed

materials. It is the responsibility of the teacher of the blind to assist both the student and the classroom teacher in making this a full and rewarding experience. Students are not excluded from a class or activity due to their visual impairment.

There are a number of causes of visual impairments resulting in a wide variety of visual problems. Children can be born blind or become blind because of an accident, illness, or eye condition. Some individuals are very blind while others may see light, shadows, and colors and yet have no useful vision. Depending on their conditions, others may see images that appear blurry, distorted, or incomplete while others are able to read large print but have difficulty traveling without assistance. The majority of visually impaired individuals have at least some useful vision. Therefore, numerous adaptations may aid these persons. The modifications required will depend on the needs of the individual. In some cases, the person may need many accommodations and in some cases, no modifications will be necessary.

Teachers for Blind and Visually Impaired

Teachers certified to teach blind and visually impaired individuals serve as consultants to classroom teachers and help to select appropriate methods and materials. They assist classroom teachers by explaining the types of materials students are able to see and under what conditions. In addition, this specialist deal with instructional problems related to the teaching of specific lessons and concepts. Teacher of the blind also adapt materials and lessons; provide text in Braille and large print; and teach specialized skills (such as the use of computer programs that produce voice output or Braille translations of text.) Teacher of the blind also work directly with student when they teach Braille and specific skills needed by their students.

In my job as a teacher of the blind and visually impaired individuals, I work with students who have a variety of vision problems. The majority of students have significant optical difficulties including marked reduction in visual acuity, opacity of the lens, lack of pigmentation of the eyes, or restriction of the field of vision. Such problems may result in the need for corrective lenses with marked magnification or the use of large print or Braille translation of textbooks and materials. In addition, it may be necessary for the student to use special equipment such as magnifier or a cane to aid in mobility. All such things call attention to the student and may interfere with their ability to develop academically and socially along with their classmates.

Adaptations to Curriculum

Typical auxiliary aids, services or accommodations for the blind or visually impaired:

1. tape recorder or audio translations of text or materials
2. Braille, large print or audio transcripts of text
3. tactile marking on equipment
4. altering examinations, training materials, or policies
5. supplying devices and equipment including screen readers, Braille embossers, portable electric note takers, scanners, magnifiers or high intensity lamps, and close-circuit televisions (CCTV) that enlarge text

Modifications for the Visually Impaired

Individual considerations are very important when teaching a student with visual impairments. Teachers must understand that different approaches are necessary depending on such factors as partial or total loss of vision, age of onset of the impairment and ability of students to use adaptive equipment such as magnifiers. Other factors such as field of vision near and distance acuity, color vision, and ability to focus are also important considerations.

Teachers should use rich descriptive terminology that describes qualities and experiences and take into account the student's remaining senses.

By using strategies and adaptations developed for use with visually handicapped populations, teacher can successfully include students in most activities, projects, and community experiences.

V. Reading Lists

A. Teacher

"The Americans with Disabilities Act: Making the ADA Work for You," Michael J. Lotto, with Craig Jones, and Richard Pimentel, with Louise Baker. Milt Wright and Associates, Inc., Northridge, CA, 1990, Recording for the Blind is in the process of recording this book. (Recording for the Blind, 20 Roswell Road, Princeton, NJ 08540, 609-452-0606 and 800-221-4792.

This very useful video describes how the ADA can protect blind and visually impaired individuals. This two-part video provides very useful information and suggestions. A good resource for students, parents, educators, employers, etc.

"The American with Disabilities Act: From Policy to Practice" edited by Jane West. Millbank Memorial Fund, 1 East 75th Street, New York, NY 10021, 1991. Also available from Recording for the Blind, Princeton, NJ. Helpful and informative. A great resource.

"Disability Rights Guide:" Charles Goldman. Westport Publishing, Lincoln, NB, 1991. Also available from Recording for the Blind, Princeton, NJ. This is a great reference to the rights for individuals with disabilities.

Colker, Ruth and Tucker, Bonnie Poitras, "The Law of Disability Discrimination," Anderson Publishing, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2000 Provides information that will allow individuals a greater understanding of the law that assists individuals with disabilities.

Joffe, Elga, A Practical Guide to the ADA and Visual Impairment, 1999, AFB Press, American Foundation for the Blind, New York, N.Y., 10001. This is indeed a practical guide for visually impaired who need to understand their rights under the ADA. It is clearly written and provides information that will be useful in all aspects of life. Also, useful for those who need information on the rights of persons with disabilities.

B. Student Reading

Gallagher, Hugh. FDR's Splendid Deception: The Story of Roosevelt's Massive Disability-And the Intense Efforts to Conceal It from the Public. An interesting book that will help students and teachers understand some of the issues faced by disabled

persons in real-life situations.

Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy, Sen. Rink, Klein, Kim, Josses-Bass Publishing, 2003. Written by social activist Sen. Rinku, this book provides a framework and process for creating change. Also, supplies a detailed list of organizations and networks that specialized in the tools for creating change.

New Voices: Self-Advocacy by People with Disabilities, Dybwad, , Gunner, Bersani Jr., Hank, Williams, Bob, and Bersani, Hank A., Brookline Books, Boston, MA, 1996. Provides a background of the history of the self-advocacy movement for people with disabilities. Provides a collection of original papers that provide first hand insight into this movement.

Disabled Yet Intact: Stories from a Life in Progress - Marilyn Rousso memoir

Famous People with Disabilities - www.ny.nrcs.gov/about/civil/famousdisability Quiz - Natural Resource Conservation Service

The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation by Doris Zames Fleischer and Frieda Zames This book is based on interviews with almost a hundred activists who provide a detailed history of the struggle for disability rights in the United States.

Famous People with Disabilities - www.ny.nrcs.gov/about/civil/famousdisability Quiz - Natural Resource Conservation Service. A valuable tool for finding information on famous people with disabilities.

1988 Harilyn Rousso edited the book, Disabled, Female, and Proud. Written by the former Secretary of Education, it provides an interesting insight into the world of disabled individuals.

Notes

1 Letter From The Birmingham City Jail (First Version) by Martin Luther King, JrText taken from the Public Domain publication listed at http://www.afsc.org/resources/items/birmingham_jail.htm

2 Living with Disabilities in The United States, United States: Congress House Committee on Government Reform, 2005, pg. 35.

3 American Foundation for the Blind, www.aft.org, 2006. (June 10, 2996)

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Darwin, Charles, Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, 1981, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p.168.

7 www.michigan.gov, Legislative History of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2.7/2002

8 Thomas D. Russell, American Legal History, Buck v. Bell, 274 U.S. 200 1927, 2006, University of Denver, Strum School of Law, <http://www.law.du.edu/russell/lh/alh/docs/buckvbell.html>

9 "A Historical View of Social Responsibility in Genetics. Beckwith, Jon ,Bioscience; May93, Vol. 43 Issue 5,

p327, 7p

10 <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-03.html>, (June 10, 2006)

11 Copyright (c) 2004 The Regents of the University of California, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/> by The Bancroft Library. (June 17, 2006)

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