# Deafblind Association NZ seminar

## 22-25 January 2023 – University Canterbury – College House

### Update on education and deafblind tamariki, including questions and answers – 23 January 2:00-3:00pm

Saul Taylor – BLENNZ (Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ) Visual Resource Centre Coordinator

Patrick Pink – BLENNZ Team Lead at BLENNZ Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne Visual Resource Centre

**The importance of collaboration (external)**

2022 saw the following.

* Deafblind Module (20 hours / 2 credits) for Massey University post graduate vision course; networked with other post graduate courses:
	+ deaf / hard of hearing (DHH), complex educational needs (CEN), and early learning (EL) to raise awareness of dual sensory status and the availability of the deafblind module.The module contains background information about deafblindness, both globally and nationally, readings, ideas, suggestions and support to consider when participating with young people with deafblindness and their whānau.
* Refreshed connection with new lead of Ministry of Education (MOE) / Advisor on Deaf Children (AoDC)—Claire Winward.
* In-roads with connecting and increased collaboration with Ko Taku Reo (KTR) and Resource Teachers Deaf (RTD).
* Unfortunately, COVID impacted the opportunity to offer a day-long hui on deafblindness in the South Island, which corresponded with the two hui that were offered in 2020 and 2021 in Palmerston North and Auckland.Attendees included Resource Teacher Vision (RTV), RTD, AoDC, clinical (optometrist and audiologist) and classroom teachers / teacher aides. The intended 2023 date for South Island hui is pending with the hope of having the session held at Sumner, historical site of Van Asch.
	+ [Note: at time of posting this, we have held the seminar – you can find a link to it at the top of this page.]
* Contact and initial connection with leads in Deaf Aotearoa to share experiences and expertise when participating with a child whose parents have chosen New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) as their child’s first language.
* Developing shared understanding about sign language and deafblind.
* Liaising and collaboration with Blind Low Vision NZ (BLV NZ), working with Starship and the family of a young person with sudden onset of dual sensory status.
* Connection with SoundSkills, who help those auditory processing problems.
* Acceptance of a poster presentation for the 18th Deafblind International World Conference in Ottawa Canada in July 2023 – our planned attendance is sponsored by the BLENNZ Board of Trustees in committment to deafblind education, allyship and advocacy.
* Our second time sharing with and updating Deafblind Association NZ on BLENNZ’s committment to and efforts for quality education for deaflbind tamariki and rangatahi.

**The importance of collaboration (internal)**

2022 saw the following.

* Fourth year of data collection within BLENNZ and within each of the fifteen Visual Resource Centres (VRC) and BLENNZ Homai Campus.
* Increased awareness amongst the network about deafblindness and the impact on access and learning – RTV engaging collaboratively.
* The inclusion of hearing status and the influence of deafblindness within BLENNZ’s national documention for service delivery (BLAF) and the practice of obtaining audiology information from hospitals.
* The creation of a BLENNZ deafblind focus group with 25 interested RTV. This is a space to learn more about the various areas of interest in helping support children and whānau by upskilling and improving knowledge and understanding. This group meets online every term. Areas of focus in 2022 have included an in-depth look at audiological reports and understanding what they mean and how they can assist in understanding. Oriole Wilson from SoundSkills gave a presentation on auditory processing problems.

**Still ahead of us**

* Gathering whānau voices and learning from the lived experiences of children and whānau about those specific areas of access and learning that are important for development, understanding, contribution and participation in the world.
* Influencing individuals within the sensory landscape to commit and take an active role in deafblind access, education and advocacy and become true partners and allies.
* Highlighting to the MOE the diversity of deafblind young people and their unique access and learning requirements within sighted and hearing environments.
* Ongoing professional development within BLENNZ to build capability, knowledge, understanding and skills based on current research and deafblind traditions and history.
* Connection with Ministry of Health to raise awareness, understanding and skillsets for engaging with children and young people with deafblindness and their whānau.
* Gaining a comprehensive picture of the actual number of young people within Aotearoa New Zealand who are and who identify as deafblind. Currently, our data only includes young people who are enrolled in BLENNZ. It is certain that there are many more children with deafblindness who may not be on the BLENNZ roll but still experience deafblindness. Government ministries require numbers, data and statistics for funding and policy changes. Sensory educators (BLENNZ, MOE/AoDC, KTR) can assist in bringing forward a more comprehensive picture to better present people’s lived realities and highlight key areas to aid access, learning, contribution and participation in life.