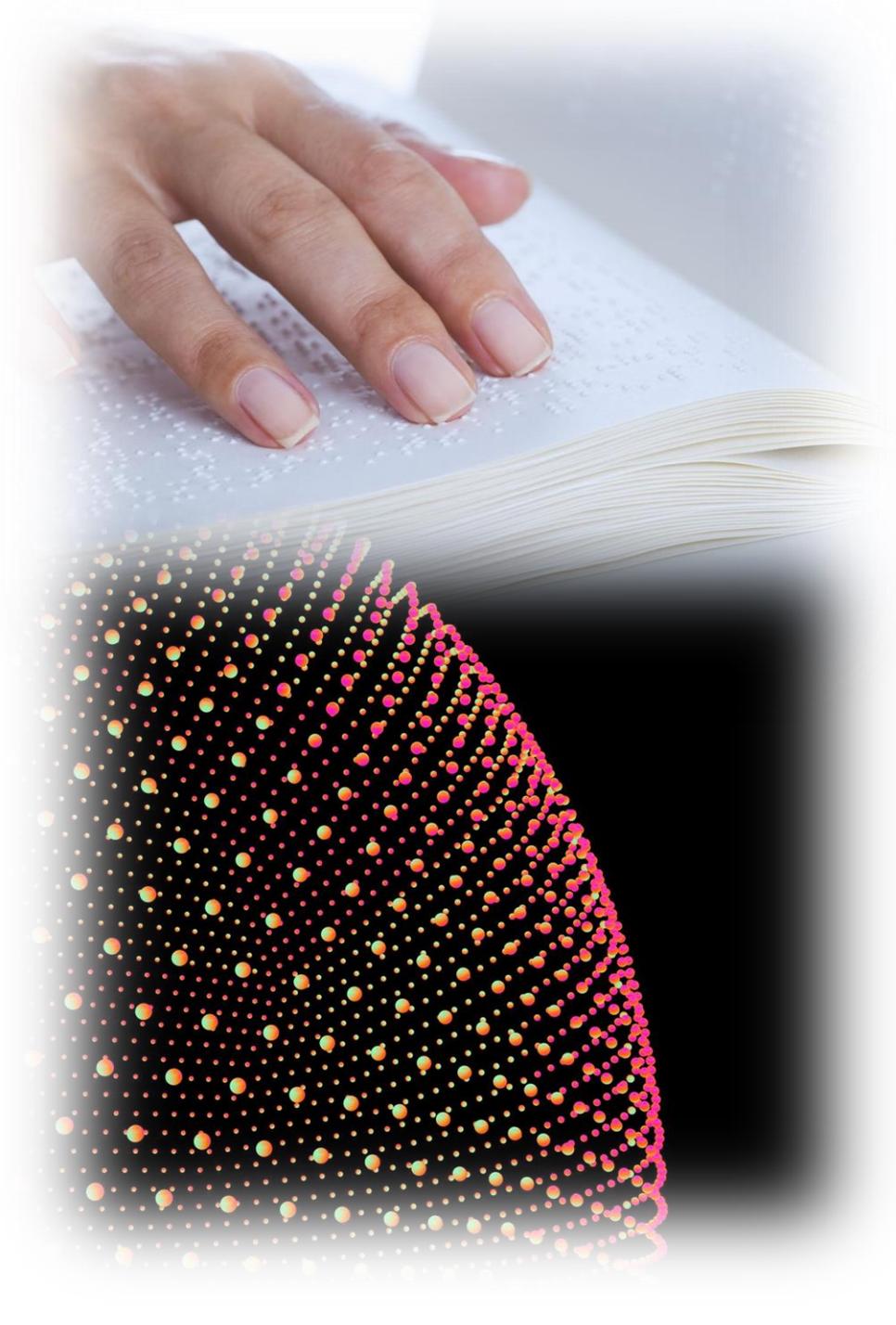


The Bumpy Road to Literacy

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What is literacy?

- Definitions:

- The condition or quality of being literate, especially the ability to read and write.

Tactile literacy – the ability to read and write using the sense of touch

- The condition or quality of being knowledgeable in a particular subject or field.

e.g., computer literacy,
cultural literacy, ...

What makes the road bumpy?

- Some bumps lie within the individual and their individual circumstances.
- Some bumps are created by our expectations.
- Some bumps are created because of a mismatch between the reading program and the reader.
- Some bumps are created by lack of knowledge or experience on the part of teachers.



For whom
the road
is bumpy

- Children who are born with a severe visual impairment, or who have additional disabilities, including ELL
 - Children and teenagers who lose vision due to trauma or a degenerative eye condition during their school years
 - Adults who lose vision at any stage in their adult life
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Children – with or without additional disabilities – Early Literacy

- Bumps in the early literacy experience.
 - Expectations (Parents and teachers)
 - Will this child be a reader?
 - Print or braille?
 - Learning about your world through language and communication
 - Concrete experiences
 - Range and variety of experiences
 - Learning by doing
 - Lowenfeld, (1969, 1973).

Children – with or without additional disabilities – Early Literacy (cont.)

Early Literacy Activities

- Environment contains symbols and tools for reading and writing braille – print/braille books, brailers
- Environment provides models of reading and writing.
- Preschool teachers who know braille and have experience with early literacy activities and needs including assessments.

Children – with or without additional disabilities - Early Literacy (cont.)

- Multiple disabilities contribute to more bumps – making it more difficult to have positive expectations, include the child in learning language and communication, and in interacting with the environment.
- Learning English as a Second Language
- Deafblindness – creates the most bumps of all

Children – with or without additional disabilities (cont.) Elementary Years

- Attitudes towards braille
- Expectations of parents and teachers
- Teachers who: are experienced with teaching braille literacy
- understand braille and the unique requirements of tactile readers
- know how to teach reading and writing and make it interesting and engaging.
- advocate for the use of access technology

Middle School and High School

- Continued work with expanding vocabulary, to include vocabulary from English language arts, and other subjects such as history, social studies, science and developing fluency.
- Learning how to access materials in braille and interfacing with technology.
- Use of Audio learning without letting it become the literacy medium.
- Continuing to provide instruction to students with additional disabilities at their Instructional level.



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Older Elementary Age Students and Teenagers

- Success in reading to this point in instruction.
 - Chall's stages of learning to read – Learning to read/reading to learn
- Student motivation and engagement.
- Relevance of instruction
- Time for instruction
- How to infuse braille reading with what is going on in the regular classroom.
- Use of technology
- Reliance on audio reading
- Knowledgeable teachers
- Expectations



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Adults who lose vision

- Getting them into the system – rehab vs education
- Expectations - adult and teacher and family
- Adult needs and desires related to reading
- Prior reading level
- Materials for teaching reading/writing braille to adults.
- Native language
- Tactile sensitivity
- Use of technology
- Work situation



Some bumps are created by our expectations as teachers

- Teach with an eye towards literacy.
- If we don't expect that our students will attain literacy, we won't do the things that will help them attain it.
- Knowing braille – the code – is necessary but not sufficient for teaching braille to our various groups of individuals. We need to understand how people learn to read.

Some bumps are created because of a mismatch between the reading program and the learner

- Beginning reading programs not designed for those who are older.
- Children with additional disabilities need programs that mesh with their needs and abilities
- Few approaches for teaching older readers - teachers should become familiar what is available.
- Focus on what adults have as goals for themselves as readers.
- If one approach isn't working, don't give up. Try another.

Some bumps are created by lack of knowledge or experience on the part of teachers.

- Novice teachers have difficulty gaining the amount of experience necessary to become an expert with a diverse population
- Novice teachers of braille reading and writing need access to expert teachers for longer periods of time
- We need to be able to provide access to experts for our novice teachers
- We should work together to define “expert teacher of braille literacy” and seek to find ways to identify and utilize their expertise.

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