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CPD LEGACY STORY: KAREN BORG

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This CPD Legacy Story was written by Karen Borg, a trainee in the Multi-University Consortium for Teacher Training in Sensory Impairments (VISEP). This project is a cooperative effort between the Special Education Departments of the University of Utah and Utah State University that provides vision-impairment certification training.

As special educators we encourage parents not to be too rigid in their expectations. We worry that they might underestimate the potential of their children. "It's way too soon," we say, "to try to predict your child's future abilities today. Let's work hard, keep talking to each other and not pigeon-hole him just yet." This is surely a message of hope, but it is a realistic one.

Those of us that work with young children, particularly, can attest to the sudden and remarkable progress which can occur when we find the right gateways to access children's potential. I wonder if sometimes we underestimate our own potential, too.

Fifteen years ago I was working as a signing aide in a preschool classroom for the hearing impaired in Logan, Utah. Steve Noyce, now the superintendent of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, came into the class and, for some reason known only to him, saw the potential for more in me. He encouraged me to contact the Multi-University Consortium Sensory Impairment Education Program (VISEP) at the Center for Persons with Disabilities.

Because of Mr. Noyce's willingness to encourage a stranger and his commitment to the development of potential at every level, I made that phone call and was introduced to many, many people who were equally committed to the development of potential: Cyndi Rowland, then head of CECSEP (currently the Early Childhood Alternative Teacher Preparation Program, EC-ATP), Marlene Deer, currently the head of EC-ATP, Jan Wiggins and Marilyn Madsen, Sensory Impairment faculty at the University of Utah. These remarkable people's vision for children included finding and "growing" the best educators they could.

VISEP's flexibility in working with adult learners' needs and responsibilities facilitated not only my being the first person in my family to go to college, but also the first to graduate. The compassion and tractability of the teaching staff at USU and the cyclical structure of the course offerings at both the U and USU allowed me to succeed at both the undergraduate and graduate levels despite my daughter's multiple, serious surgeries and caring for ailing and elderly relatives.

Dr. Judith Holt, Director of VISEP, and her "eye on the target" mentality helped to keep me focused on my goals and pushing forward to complete, not only my Bachelor's, but a Master's degree, also!! This was almost unthinkable when I began!

Words can't properly express the impact that the CPD programs have had on my life. Nor can they express appropriately my appreciation for all that I have learned, and the opportunity it has given me to share with others and nurture their potential for growth and progress. I am profoundly grateful.

Karen Borg, Director

Parent Infant Program for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind