

Commission of Deaf, Deafblind, & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans: Improving outcomes for Children Summit

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Pequot Lakes, Minnesota (November 2, 2017) -- The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans is hosting its 3rd annual Collaborative Experience Conference starting today, November 2, 2017 at Breezy Point Resort, in Pequot Lakes, MN. The Conference will continue til Saturday, November 4th.

Over 360 professionals and parents who are raising or educating students who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing will have the opportunity to attend over 30 workshops and obtain information about the most recent research and practices for students, birth to 21. Gallaudet University's Dr. Bobbi Cordano will open the conference. Two national experts are the keynote speakers: Dr. Laurene Simms, a professor at Gallaudet University, will present on teaching students with diverse backgrounds and what it takes to have successful learning. On Saturday, November 4th, she will be giving a cutting-edge all-day workshop that will teach participants how to assess visual communication and sign language (VCSL) fluency in children ages 0-5. It is the first time the state has held training for teachers to assess visual language acquisition in babies and children. Dr. Elizabeth Walker, an assistant professor at the University of Iowa, will present on how to maximize outcomes for children with mild to severe hearing loss.

The Collaborative Plan, is a network of agencies and organizations who work together to create positive, systematic changes, achieve better education and career outcomes for students who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing. The Commission is the host of the Collaborative Plan, but all of the agencies and

organizations are equal partners in this collaborative effort. It is the only conference in the country that works with state agencies and non-profits to improve outcomes for kids.

Led by Anna Paulson, Coordinator of Educational Advancement & Partnerships at the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, the conference was organized by the following committee members:

Bren Ackerson, Rural Administrator

Mary Cashman-Bakken, Minnesota Department of Education

Diane Dohnalik, Urban Public Schools

Jay Fehrman, Intermediate District Administrator

Deb Golos, University of Minnesota

Danelle Gournaris, Deaf Family Mentor Program

Michelle Isham, Rural Itinerant Teacher

Katy Kelley, State Services for the Blind

Elise Knopf, Vocational Rehabilitation

Susan Lane-Outlaw, Bilingual-Bicultural

Candace Lindow-Davies, Minnesota Hands & Voices

Ann Mayes, Itinerant Teacher, and Professional Development

Chelsea Paulson, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Role Model Program

Deanna Rothbauer, DeafBlind Project

Terry Wilding, Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf and Blind Schools

Jason Valentine, Commission Chair believes hosting the conference is essential. "We need a place to come together as a community and work together to improve outcomes for children who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. This conference is a truly collaborative effort. Each child is unique, and this conference offers parents and teachers the opportunity to learn from national and state experts and each other."

About the Commission

The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans is a Governor-appointed Commission that advocates for communication access and equal opportunity with the 20% of Minnesotans who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. For more information about the Commission, visit our website at www.mncdhh.org or join us on Facebook and Twitter. You can also reach us by calling 651-968-9709 or via email; Mary.Hartnett@state.mn.us