

An Inside Look: New Perspectives Regarding Reading and Writing and Implications for Instruction and Testing

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by: Dr. Noel Gregg

Distinguished Research Professor, Director of the University of Georgia Regents
Center for Learning Disorders
Director of the University of Georgia Learning Disabilities Center

Moderator: **Katherine Bruni, GA/FL Outreach Site Coordinator, PEPNet-South**

Co-moderator: **Cindy Camp, Jacksonville State University**

>> Katherine Bruni. This is PEPNet-South's fifth teletraining, and today we'll be talking about new prospective regarding reading and writing and implications for instruction and testing. We have two hundred and seventy participants from throughout the United States that have registered for today's teletraining. And in these final seconds we'll be giving the final stragglers the chance to sign in to the tele-training and we'll try to get started promptly at two o'clock. And the clock just turned over to two o'clock so we're going to begin PEPNet-South's fifth tele-training. Welcome today to an inside look at new perspectives regarding reading and writing and implications for instruction and testing with Dr. Noel Gregg. I'd like to welcome all of you from throughout the United States. We have two hundred and seventy participants who have registered for today's teletraining. I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Katherine Bruni. I will be your moderator today and I coordinate PEPNet activities for the states of Georgia and Florida. I would also like to introduce my Co-Moderator Cindy Camp, who comes to us from Jacksonville State University in Alabama. Cindy will be co-moderating with me today, and she'll be receiving your instant messages and your emails with questions that will be delivered live to Dr. Noel Gregg. We'll be breaking into our teletraining experience three times during this next sixty minute teletraining to receive your questions. So we want to thank Cindy for helping us with that. Just as with any training we have a few house keeping details to take care of. So I want you to perk your ears if you have pre-registered for RID or BEICEU. Once again, those of you who have pre-registered for RID and BEICEU please pick up your pens or your pencils and get ready to take down some information, most importantly the verification code. So RID and BEICEU people who have pre-registered, as well as those who have pre-registered for the certificate of participation. Please get ready to take down the first verification code and that code is a series of letters. RANDW again, RANDW for reading and writing. Five letters RANDW. That is the code for RID and BEICEU recipients who pre-registered, and also for people who pre-registered to get a certificate of completion. Now you will get a second verification code at some point later in today's training. Once again, that code is RANDW. So at just two minutes after two I want you to record that first verification code. And I would like to remind you

that your required CEU participation verification form must be completed and returned to Jenny Bougwa [assumed spelling] no later than September 26. You must have pre-registered for your CEUs or for your certificate of participation. And you must make note to yourselves that the audio version of this teletraining, which will be archived and available later, does not make you available for CEU. It will not meet the requirement for your CEUs. You will not be eligible by just listening to the archived audio version. So please get your verification forms in by 26 of September. Instructions for completing your participation verification form for a certificate of completion and for your CEUs can be found on your form. So take a look at that form for the explicit instructions. That form should have already been delivered to you with your registration confirmation email. You must also complete the evaluation survey to receive your CEUs. Now we encourage everybody to do that. We want everybody to complete the evaluation of this teletraining at some point after the teletraining. An email will be sent to you with a link to this evaluation survey. So we would like to encourage everyone to complete that survey. But for CEUs, you must have completed that evaluation survey. So you will receive that in the mail at some point after the teletraining. I'd like to remind you that a PowerPoint to this presentation is available to you and it was sent to you as an attachment in your registration confirmation email. But I'd like to caution you that that PowerPoint is simply a list of the questions for you to follow and anticipate the questions. It is not intended to be material delivered to you about the information that Dr. Gregg will be sharing with us today. I want to also remind you that live questions can be sent in during this sixty minute teletraining via AOL instant messaging. And I'm about to give you the screen name for that AOL Instant Messaging. So if you'd like to send us an instant message that Cindy Camp will receive and then deliver to us. The screen name is PEPNet-south. And that is P as in Paul, EP, N as in Nancy, et south, south. Pepnetsouth, pepnetsouth. That's all one word. That is the screen name. To send an email with your live questions you send that email to pepnet.south@gmail.com. And that information was also included in your registration and confirmation email. I want to extend a very special welcome to any participant who is deaf or hard of hearing, and they are gaining access to this teletraining via video relay service providers of their choice, and or through the relay conferencing captioning and all of that information about how to access this email if you were deaf or hard of hearing or how to access this tele-training if you were deaf or hard of hearing, was sent to you in your registration confirmation email. So many big welcomes to people who are deaf and hard of hearing who are connecting with our teletraining today. And it is time to get started. I am so excited to give everyone the opportunity today to be challenged by Dr. Noel Gregg. Dr. Gregg is a distinguished research professor. She is the Director of the University of Georgia's Regents Center for Learning Disorder. She is the head of research at the Alternative Media Access Center, otherwise known as MACK [assumed spelling]. And she's going to challenge us with her experiences, her expertise, from the field, particularly of learning disorders. And I think it's as we get started I think it's important to mention today that today's sixty minute training is not intended to discuss curriculum specific strategies in the classroom about how to teach reading and writing to people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Rather it is our hope that you will be challenged to consider a new paradigm really, a new way of thinking about reading and writing and English with regard to

instruction, accommodation, provision, and perhaps even testing. And that you will return to your classrooms or your institutions or your agencies with kind of a new vision, and a creative insight into the possible implication for the future for us in the field of work with the deaf and hard of hearing. So on that note, I would really like to introduce Dr. Noel Gregg and ask you Noel, could you please just show a little bit more about yourself? Explain what your filters are regarding English access, and test equity, and the people who are deaf and hard of hearing. What is the population that you have worked with that will serve as a filter to challenge us in the field of work with deaf and hard of hearing.

>> Dr. Noel Gregg. Sure. Thanks Katherine so much for that introduction and I thank PEPNet for allowing me to be here today to have a dialogue with all of you. I thank all of you who are signing on. I think my best filter would say that I've been in the field of disabilities for close to thirty years. I've been a clinician, a teacher, a researcher, and I consider myself a piece of all three of those. Most of my research and interests have been in the area of reading and writing disorders, across disabilities, but in particular for adolescence and adults with learning disabilities and ADHD. But I would say my passion, and hopefully that you would hear this today is to work with individuals, and this has been my passion all my career in finding alternative pathways to access knowledge. Whether that's through accommodation. Whether that's through alternative media. And in the future there are going to be all sorts of ways that we haven't even thought of. And that's what I'd like to focus somewhat on today. And in the area of learning disabilities where a lot of my work has been. Learning disabilities is also a communication disorder. A different one than individuals with deaf and hard of hearing face, but have some similarities to some of the difficulties accessing reading and producing writing. So through these filters, I hopefully will be able to let you feel some of that passion.

>> Katherine. I've heard you speak about the power of language and it really hit me because of my field in work with deaf and hard of hearing, so could you discuss that from your prospective? The power of language, and redefining this issue of literacy from the prospective of reading and writing?

>> Dr. Noel Gregg. Sure. And language is essential and there are so many different types of language. Today we're talking more about the influence of verbal language through reading and writing. But theirs certainly the language of motor and the language of art. So the language today we're talking about is verbal language. And it is an extraordinary power tool. I think we all saw this as an example a few years ago when the Supreme Court was investigating these cases relating to affirmative action. There was lots of discussion on what people meant by merit, by quality, by discrimination. Well all the words that you and I deal with on a daily basis can also be loaded and interpreted in different ways. When you say intelligence, when you say ability. Different people have different interpretation of those words that sometimes put a barrier to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing or learning disabled. In particularly the words reading and writing. It is time for us to take that language and redefine it. What has been defined as reading, and what has been defined as writing

is changing on a daily basis for all individuals. With the ability to use ipods and electronic text or e-text. All of this is beginning to change what we think about, when we say someone can read or someone can write or someone who has difficulty with that. Unfortunately, as we are seeing this change of these words reading and writing, the field of education and testing is a little behind where our next generation is with these words. And I hope today we can begin to think about reading and writing in a different way and define it a little differently than the rigidity that has been surrounding you over the last few years.

>> Cindy Camp. Katherine and Noel let me interrupt really quickly. We've had several messages come in that participants are having a hard time hearing Noel. If you wouldn't mind either speaking up or perhaps moving the phone a little closer to your mouth. I'm not sure what the problem is but apparently the sound is not loud enough. Thank you.

>> Dr. Noel. Okay. I will do that. You let me know if it's not loud enough. I have it right next to my mouth now.

>> Cindy Camp. Okay great.

>> Katherine. That sounds louder to me although I was not having a difficult time hearing you but I hope everyone can hear better now. You know on that note, in terms of redefining reading and writing Noel could you discuss the accommodations? I believe you've mentioned to me that there were two particular accommodations that are used most across all disabilities at the adult level and we're talking about accommodations for reading and writing. Can you address that? What are the two most used accommodations across all disabilities at the adult level?

>> Noel. Sure. I'd like to first just for a step back and define what is an accommodation. Because sometimes again this is a word that is confused. Accommodation simply adjusts the manner in which testing or teaching situations are presented or evaluated so that a student with a disability, or an individual with a disability, can either access or demonstrate their knowledge in a fair and equitable fashion. Then accommodation does not change the content. It changes the access to that content. And that there are different types of accommodation. And as we talk about accommodating through different types of technology, we have to think of a type of accommodation we're talking about. The first accommodation that is most frequently thought about is the presentation accommodation. That is how can we help an individual access information by some alternative means. That might be a screen reader which would be a Read Aloud. It might be access assistance, like a sign language interpreter or reader. It could be alternative media. It could be language structures. It could be font. It could be instructional methodology. And then that's a presentation and a lot of focus has been on that one. We also have response accommodations. Where we help an individual accommodate how they produce the information that they might know. For instance alternative forms. Writing on a test booklet. Signing a response. Or having access assistance like scribes or assistive

technologies where it might be voice detect. And many other kinds. Then we have another accommodation which is scheduling and time accommodations where we give extended time to provide accommodation or frequent breaks. And the final accommodation that is not quite as relevant in our discussion today but they're behavioral accommodations, where you might need personal assistance or time out with some individuals. So all of those are different types of accommodations. Now the two that are most frequently used for individuals and adults with learning disabilities are extra time and Read Alouds. However the literature on deaf and hard of hearing is showing some different types of accommodations, and I would refer anybody, and I will put this up as a resource. It's a wonderful article that's recently been written by Stephanie Cawthorne [assumed spelling] and the American Educational Research Journal that looked at nationally the accommodations that are being provided to deaf and hard of hearing students through No Child Left Behind. And what they found is that the most common accommodations being offered to these individuals are test directions, interpretations, small group, and extended time. The Read Aloud although allowed on many state policies for high stakes tests was not being used as much with the deaf or hard of hearing. And I think that might be because again of how people consider and what they consider to be a print disability or the appropriateness to access alternative media. So the answer to that Kathy, is learning for the adult population with LD, extended time and Read Alouds. But for the population of deaf and hard of hearing, I think it's more in the area of extended time and then test direction interpretation.

>> Katherine. Noel what is the definition of a Read Aloud. That is not exactly a term that many of us in the field of working with deaf and hard of hearing are really familiar with. Can you kind of give us a detailed definition of what a Read Aloud is and who it is used for and how it is used and perhaps some implications for our field?

>> Noel. Sure. And I think there are a couple words that get intertwined with Read Aloud that maybe we should sort of step back and think about for a second too. And that's the term alternative media and assistive technology. Let's start there and then work toward that Read Aloud. Alternative media is the term used a lot. It's a broad term that encompasses the whole variety of formats in which we put printed text. And how that text is converted for use with access through computer technologies. Access Computer Technologies are then the hardware and the software products that are designed to increase or improve a person's ability to perform such tasks. In the past we thought of common alternative media format as things like audio tape, and large print, or brail. However, with all the advances that we are seeing in computer technologies it's given rise to new generations of access technologies that can assist individuals by providing electronic means to access text. Today alternative media comes in formats like electronic text, brail, audio file, closed captioning, tactile graphics, and the most popular and versatile of these alternative medias are electronic text or often referred to as e-text and audio files. And then their e-text includes many different formats as well and many of you are more familiar with PDFs, Microsoft Doc, or HTML. And what gets difficult as we convert text for access through using assistive technologies that depends on the format that the text is in and some people have a

more difficulty accessing certain types of formats. One format is not appropriate for all individuals whether they are a person with learning disabilities or a person with deaf or hard of hearing. The media formats are not accessible, but when they're used in conjunction with software like text to speech programs that makes the world a print of information accessible to those with printed related disabilities. Let me give an example. We have an adult with a learning disability in reading they can open a digital book using their drag and natural speaking or their read a write or the read please whatever assistive technology that they use to allow them to access to that e-text. So you need the alternative media which is the e-text and the assistive technology. And the one attractive feature of all of alternative medias and assistive technology is it's portability. Digital files can be delivered to you, to students, to people in the work world, via email and internet portals and used in a whole variety of electronic and different types of work environments. Now the term Read Aloud can be a technology or it is also used, Read Aloud is used when somebody will read a document to somebody. If you had an individual with a learning disability and they needed someone to read their text, the person reading it would provide that Read Aloud. The hope is that we move more toward less having a human being read it to providing the technology like a drag and dictate that will read it to that individual. Or the type of technology that would provide it for someone who could not access that print information like other individuals might be able to access it. So read aloud is both considered technology and it's also considered when a person would either sign or read something to an individual as an accommodation.

>> Katherine. Wow. That's a real eye opener and I think will be a real challenge to many in the audience. It's time now for a question from the audience. Cindy, what do you have for us?

>> Cindy. Okay, well we're gonna stick with that topic of Read Alouds then. How would a traditional Read Aloud, which is going to take a print version and turn it into an audio version, differ from a Read Aloud for someone who uses sign language? And part of that question is doesn't sign language actually change the form of the message and is that going to be a problem with getting the accommodation? Because you're not supposed to change the content.

>> Noel. Right. And I certainly am not the expert on sign language but let me answer it from the prospective of accommodation. When you have an accommodation it is to give you access. It isn't to change the content. And those questions certainly highlight that. However, you have to look at what you are measuring. If my purpose in testing an individual is to measure their understanding of a principle in algebra. Then I need to be sure that I don't change that principle that I'm testing, but how I ask them that information is the important thing that needs accommodating. So the sign language shouldn't change the question but it may change it in the way that it might be understood or read by somebody else. What is changed is how they access that information but not the question. Unfortunately, for many people who are deaf and hard of hearing and for those with learning disabilities what get's measured on a math test many times, is language rather than the math principle. And they answer a

question or they don't understand something in a classroom, because of the language barrier not because of their understanding of mathematics. So the accommodation is not to change the content by which we are measuring, but to be sure that what we are measuring is that math principle and not language.

>> Katherine. You know you keep saying Noel, and I've heard you throughout the years mention that reading equals alternative media. Can you discuss that statement and alternative media as it relates to people who are blind and people with learning disabilities? And perhaps then we can draft inferences and some implications to people who are deaf and hard of hearing. What does reading equal alternative media? What does that mean?

>> Noel. I'd love to answer it, Katherine, and I will go out on a limb and give some of my beliefs in this area as it is related to deaf and hard of hearing. So I'd love the audiences feedback on what I say. All of this gets around is what do you. Alternative media has been provided for people who they say have now print related disabilities. And most often this phrase print related disability has emerged to describe individuals, either with learning disabilities such as dyslexia or individuals with visual impairments. But there are other individuals that cannot access print. People with motor disabilities. Somebody with Lou Gehrig's Disease, very easily can not turn the pages and so that becomes a print related disability by which they need access to text in a different way than other individuals. But the definitions of print disabilities are so outdated even though their just being developed. For instance the Daisy Consortium, which is a group promoting the digital accessible information system. Some of you may have hard for accessible print. Defines a print disability as the inability to access print due to a visual, a perceptual, or a physical disability. And they provide examples of individuals who are blind, learning disabled, or unable to hold a book. But in their definition they have that word perceptual, which seems to me to open the door to deaf and hard of hearing. The alternative media leader book share, for instance is where we get a lot of some books that are e-text. They define print disability as including visual impairment and blind, reading disabilities, and physical impairments, and leave out any idea of other disabilities that might need alternative media. How I personally would define print disability is the inability to access standard print independently. And because of deficits and the ability to take in, to process, to retain, or to manipulate printed text. So I would not limit it to only individuals who are visually impaired, who have dyslexia, who are physically. I think that the issue of print disabilities and the access to alternative media must be opened up and encouraged more for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. Many of our state guidelines now for accessing accommodations for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing are not putting in that they could have access to Read Alouds. Whether that be technology or whatever, because I think again of going back to traditional old definitions of reading, writing, and now even what is a print disability. I think why I like the way that I'm trying to define it today is that it states the functional limitation associated with print disability. And I'd rather focus on that and then focus on the independent access to text or any kind of text information. And by utilizing a functional limitation rather than listing that these are the people with certain disabilities who should have access to it. Let's be more

inclusive and look at the individual who needs to be able to take in and process information rather than get stuck on our old definitions.

>> Katherine. A lot of your comments have implications for testing and you have mentioned the importance of knowing what we are trying to measure when we test. Testing is particularly and particularly standardized testing is a real issue that's being discussed with regard to reading, writing, English, for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Could you address the importance of understanding once again what it is that is being measured with respect to testing and English? And I think that is a point that is well worth emphasizing.

>> Noel. Right it is and it's an extremely complex issue for people who are interested and working with individuals with disabilities, as it is for measurement people, and companies that produce these high stake tests, for instance, that we're all required to be using practically on a daily basis. When you are producing a test you have certain skills that you want to measure and you want to measure those in a very reliable and a very valid way. And so test producers, and then standardize these skills that they determine are important, let's say for instance, to measure the ability to know a certain information in geography. And so they standardize that across populations to be sure that when we are comparing one individual score to another individual score it has been done in a standardized way. So that we can interpret how those two people do in the same manner. Now when you enter the issue of an accommodation. Let's take the issue of extended time. When I let one individual have extended time, that test was not standardized on allowing everybody to have extended time. Whether that's five more minutes or an hour more. So it changes how we can make inferences about the total score. So from a measurement prospective, how measurement people look at this. It changes the test. And therefore is not as comparable. So in how you deal with that, is that you do some work and you give for instance a group of people, let's say we have a group of people who have learning disabilities and we give them a half hour more on a test. We would take their test and we would compare that through some fancy statistics to people who didn't have the extended time, and see if the items in those tests do sort of clump together in the same manner, and that's called factor analysis. And the whole area of research in that is called measurement and variance. And it is very critical. Because what we found on the SAT for instance, was that when individuals with learning disabilities as in ADHD were provided, and this is the new SAT extended time, it did not change the factors or what was being measured any more when they had the extra time, as compared to individuals who did not. That means that their total score can be seen as an accurate representation of what their able to do and they can be compared to students that did not have the extended time. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of research or a lot of tests don't have that kind of research. And so some states become and some institutions become very anxious about giving accommodations because they don't have this way to compare it for people who don't. And that in a sense is the problem for that institution or that testing company. It is not the fault of the individual with a disability. There is another whole line of research that has been done and looking all the way down to the items. Are their certain items that discriminate against individuals for instance who are deaf and

hard of hearing. It's been worked on and obviously if their questions are asked in a negative way will that influence the score and then influence on inferences that you can make. So the issue of testing and accommodations is a very sensitive issue and those of us who work with individuals with disabilities, we can't ignore. We can't just say well too bad. We don't care about what it does to the test score. We are moving more toward trying to come up with solutions to this measurement issue by creating tests that are more universally designed. That everybody could have extended time on and that wouldn't impact on the total score.

>> Katherine. Well thank you for that synopsis. This is a real sticky issue in our field and we're gonna be looking to experts like yourself to help us navigate through that issue of testing for sure. Cindy do you have some more questions for us?

>> Cindy. We have quite a few questions. Let's go with this one from an educator at a school for the deaf. They asked how can they help to advocate in redefining print disability. How can we widen that definition to include interpreted or signed test. Do you have some sources or some information that they could possibly take to their administrators to get that process?

>> Noel. I wish I had some information that I could say here's the article or here's the data to do that. I think we are just beginning to pull this type of interpretation and this is certainly my interpretation of it. I think it's going to take all of you that start challenging local policy, and your school policy, on questioning why print disability is not inclusive of a population. One of the ways that might be helpful is to try instead of comparing access to alternative media to individuals who are visually impaired or who are learning disabled, using examples of those with motor disorders might help. You know yes they visually can see the e-text, but they can't turn the page. Let's expand how we are defining this term print disability and maybe we need a different word than print disability, because that again sort of goes back to that old language thing. It starts putting up blinders on individuals to be more inclusive. So I think the very big answer is that all of you are going to be the success of changing that interpretation and challenging every type of policy that's out there related to this. Again, I wish I could give you something, but you're the answer. You're the answer that's going to make that difference. And I think theirs certainly enough rational folks out there that can begin to understand why this is if we can present it to them and show them examples and show them how we should include visuals for deaf and hard of hearing in this. And then how we could do it and provide them the examples. Because most of us can learn when we can see and understand and hear examples, more than even the research in this area. I think the research study that I suggested earlier for you all to go and I will list it on the web for you in the future that's just been published in the American Educational Research Journal, shows this tremendous need for Read Alouds for the deaf and hard of hearing. Because this issue has come up even stronger, because of No Child Left Behind. And in that article and in an answer also to this question. They looked at individual students who are at public schools across private institutions all the way across the board, and schools that were for deaf and hard of hearing. And trying to look at did we see differences as to who was accessing

or defining people of having a print disability across those. And no. The field really, you're on the cutting edge. Everyone of you out there is on the cutting edge of making a difference in this area of including and helping individuals in policies, positions, and your administrative positions understand that a print disability is not just for those with visual impairments and dyslexia.

>> Katherine. And with that effort Noel. What are some of the research questions we need to address?

>> Noel. Well boy what I would jump on that from that is you know theirs that old saying that it takes a community to do anything and to raise a child, and to whatever it is. It certainly takes a community to make some changes. From concern about who is included in print disability to the access of alternative media and defining alternative media past just screen readers. We need to look at the system. You can have the best access or best technology in your building but if you don't have the policies at that local and your school that allows that individual to access that. It's not going to be helpful. And if you don't have state policy that advocates this, you may not have the funds at your local school to do what's needed. And if we don't have a much bigger national picture on this. So one of the very big areas of research that I see it makes is that we look across all the systems because access to that individual is gonna require access across all of them. The repositories where we have books on tape, need to be accessible whether your in Montana or your sitting in South Georgia. It shouldn't be owned by an institution or those repositories shouldn't be owned by states. There should be access for all of you to help the individuals you work with obtain that. With all that system, we also need to understand better the individuals for who this different types of alternative media is affective for. And not just by category disabilities. We could have a deaf and hard of hearing individual for whom certain types of alternative media work perfect with and another individual who it does not. So we have to see how the system and how the individual can best access the type of knowledge that we get through the ability to read and to write. The other area of research that I've sort of tapped on, and that is the issue of validity research. To look at these tests that are now our high stake tests and how can we make them accessible. How do we know that the scores on those tests are measuring the same thing for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. So there's a whole host of validity research that needs to be ongoing. And the other area we have when you look at the research in accommodations across all disabilities. You find the majority of it on testing accommodations. Very little on what is effective for instructional accommodations. And a few years ago I did a study looking at issues of math accommodations for students who were in eighth grade who were allowed accommodation of extended time. And what we clearly saw was not the student's didn't do better because they had extended time. They did better with extended time and knowledge. That means you can have all the accommodations of the world, but if you haven't had access to the teaching and the knowledge it doesn't make any difference. The accommodation doesn't make the difference, it's how you can access knowledge over a lifetime or through certain types of instructional opportunities. So to refocus of us off of just looking at testing accommodations and look at instructional or work place

accommodations and what are effective in those areas for deaf and hard of hearing and other types of disabilities.

>> Katherine. What about current research? Can you help us understand some of the research that is currently taking place, for instance with regard to testing or universal design?

>> Noel. Yeah, the area of Universal Design is an interesting whole area because we all throw that term around and there's Universal Design and there's Universal Design and Learning. And I'd like to just sort of separate that. Universal Design as you're all well aware started with people that were concerned about providing the physical environment, and that be accessible to all individuals. So we had policies that allowed curb cuts and all sorts of ways to physically allow any individual to have access to their environment. Universal Design and Learning extends that concept of Universal Design from the physical space to sort of a pedagogical space. And when IDA was re-authorized it securely defines that. It says a Universal Design is a concept or a philosophy for designing and delivering products and services that are useable by people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities, which include products and services that are directly accessible without even always requiring assistive technologies and products and services that are interoperable with assistive technologies. In other words if I design a test and I can measure the concepts that I need to measure and time is not relevant to that with what I'm measuring, then let everybody have extended time. Don't say it's only for individuals with disabilities. If it's Universal Design Learning, it would be accessible to all individuals.

>> Katherine. And Noel what about Universal Design then in testing?

>> Noel. Well, in that area it would be the same type of thing. I can design a test that would allow everybody to be tested and time would not be an issue or I would create the language so whether English was your second language or your deaf and hard of hearing, I wasn't measuring a syntax. I would make that language accessible to all individuals. And the testing areas where Universal Design is probably easier to deal with than Universal Design and Learning once you get into teaching, but both of them. A cast has done a remarkable job of providing us resources and knowledge of how to provide more universally designed environments. Let me give you an example of what we're doing. I'll give you two different types of examples using this. We are doing some work in the area using ipods and having students be able to download their e-text and use their ipods as their means of accessing their academic textbooks and the new generation is all about MP3 players. Now somewhere down the line that should be accessible to anybody. Right now we're also taking that ipod kind of technology for downloading books and downloading information so that a medical student who was doing clinical rounds who might have a reading problem or accessing that print can use their ipod. And their ipod will be designed in a manner in which it can help them access information that they couldn't do without that alternative media. But the ipod and the MP3 player can be a universal tool for all individuals we hope down the line. Not only those individuals who have a diagnosed disability.

>> Katherine. Well these kind of things to me really bring us back to kind of how you opened at the beginning of today's training when you talked about the power of language. I've heard you use the phrase access for knowledge. Can you kind of summarize your thoughts about that because that just kind of turns the whole definition of reading up on it's ear. Access to Knowledge. What do you mean by that?

>> Noel. Yeah, and this I truly try to calm myself down. I get too hysterical because this is really where my passion is and that is. What we have right now going on in learning is it's all about knowledge. You have to have a certain amount of knowledge in order to be able to do certain things. That might be in reading. That might be in math. Whatever area it is. And what we're concerned about is being able to help all individuals with or without disabilities be able to get a hold of that knowledge. Because what we need in the world to function is knowledge. For instance in the area of reading, we know that the best predictor of a students performance in reading is not necessarily just their skills but the knowledge that they bring to that task of reading. If you've never been able to read because of dyslexia, because of visual impairments, or it's been limited because you are deaf and hard of hearing. You don't have as much knowledge to bring unless someone was able to get that knowledge to you in another way. When you read a book, many of you don't just bring the knowledge that's on that page to understanding what you're reading, you bring all the knowledge of a lifetime. Your experiences, what you've read before on that topic. So the access to the knowledge is more critical than any other thing that we can do for individuals with disabilities. And we have so many ways now days through technology to provide individuals an access to knowledge that never before could we have done. And in the future, none of us knows how we're going to communicate knowledge. Even without disabilities. Knowledge is a commodity now in the higher education. People sell knowledge through distance learning and all sorts of ways and we need to be sure that the individuals that we work with. The barrier that they have is not just that they can't read something or they can't hear something that we have to be sure that we do not allow the barrier of lack of knowledge to be something that they wear around them the rest of their lives. There are too many ways that we can help individuals access knowledge themselves and act and provide them the tools to do that so that they can do it on an ongoing basis. They can access the New York Times. They can access whatever knowledge there is out there because that's the critical thing. Change is going on. The leaders in the world today are those that have the knowledge to take us beyond where we currently are. The individuals that we work with should be the leaders for tomorrow in providing that knowledge. And it's our responsibility to find the ways that we can get that knowledge because it's not how well you decode words, it's not how well you calculate, it's how well you can reason and think. And you have to be able to have the knowledge to do that.

>> Katherine. Wow, well your passion does show Noel and I think that everybody in the audience just probably is cheering right about now because that's a really profound [inaudible] for those of us in the field that work with deaf and hard of hearing. Cindy, I

think we have time for one more question before Dr. Gregg kind of summarizes and perhaps makes some recommendations for us. Do you have another question for us?

>> Cindy, Yes, actually we have several that are along the same lines. I think most of the audience does agree with you that access to knowledge and learning is essential. There's some concern though that in testing is a little bit different because the idea of a test is to see how much knowledge has been learned and especially with standardized tests that means as you said that theirs a standardization and that the questions are written in a particular way. So if a test is changed in to sign language then the validity perhaps is no longer there. And as part of that, there were a couple of comments that while we do want access to the knowledge, perhaps if we get too much into the Read Alouds and all, is that perhaps taking away from the students learning their English grammar? Are we going to just focus on the sign language and not focus on them actually learning the English?

>> Noel. Sure those are great questions and certainly I have my opinion. You all have your opinion on it. I think if you are wanting to measure a student's performance in communicating, in traditional English Syntax that's one thing. If I want to measure their ability to show me how much they know in mathematics that's something else. So then I might present their mathematics test in a way that I am not limiting them because of their difficulty with syntax. That's where I say theirs a difference. If I want to measure an individuals ability to decode words. That's one thing. But if I want to measure how well they can tell me what their science book said or science information on a test then I say that's when you use the alternative media and assistive technologies. Because you're not measuring reading there you are measuring science knowledge. And you hopefully have gotten that science knowledge in them through something. But those are two different things. My extension of that would be is I don't know down the line how we all will feel about how everybody has to read the same way. I don't know where that will go with the ipods and the whole video world and everything else is changing on all of us. So how these definitions of what reading and writing will be down the line I'm not sure. Right now we all want. We want somebody to be able to read in the traditional way in certain situations. But I don't want to limit somebody's ability to show me they have knowledge. A certain type of knowledge simply because they have difficulty decoding words or traditional syntax is much more difficult for them to do. Because then I'm measuring syntax or reading decoding. I'm not measuring their knowledge of certain constructs in science or mathematics. So probably the answer is we're gonna have to continue to do both of those things. Just that we don't limit somebody's access to their advancements in their area or their profession because we're measuring the wrong thing.

>> Katherine. A lot of your comments really have implication for the future of our work. Toward that effort, I really would like for you to talk a little bit about the Alternative Media Access Center that has begun in Georgia and to kind of cushion that with your recommendations for educators and other professionals who work with people who are deaf and hard of hearing from your particular point of view an area of expertise with students with learning disorders. And from the perspectives of access, instruction, and

testing. So can you kind of combine some final comments about those recommendations and kind of intertwine it with giving us AMACs vision?

>> Noel. Sure, and I will certainly put up the website for AMAC and RCOBs so that you can go online and really explore those and others. But if you wanted to go today that would be www.amac.uga.edu and alternative media access in the state of Georgia we have a state in higher education that has provided tremendous resources both in providing accommodations through assessment centers as well as a concern that all students should have access to alternative media not just if you go to one school where they have a big disability office etc. And so therefore you can get alternative media. But if you go to some small two year college that doesn't have quite that many resources you wouldn't get it.

>> Katherine. So particularly Noel, for post secondary programs.

>> Noel. Right. The idea was we wanted to be able to get at all individuals have access to it and have access going through the web, so they were not always dependent on coming into a disability office. And that's how the whole idea of AMAC came into being. Is to provide a portal by which students could have access to alternative media if they had appropriate documentation and then that information could be downloaded onto their computers or their ipods or whatever that they are using. And Christopher Lee whose directing that center has done a fabulous job of getting that up and running and has lots of great ideas related to not only those with visual impairments and dyslexia but for the deaf and hard of hearing. The idea behind AMAC though is again to provide access to all individuals who should have alternative media and it's documented at this time and hopefully down the line it will be a Universal Design Access so all individuals can provide it. And have the independence of getting that alternative media without having to rely on someone else to provide that to them. Again, the whole focus of alternative media is the access to knowledge and for all individuals regardless of where they go to school, what their job is, etc. And their plans with AMAC to extend it past just post secondary. And I know that you can contact AMAC when you get on that website and ask them all sorts of specific questions that you might have. But it's a fabulous center and he's done a great job in helping us all take some of this to another level. And right now we do need documentation for individuals to have access to alternative media. So the importance of assessments that functionally look at some of these issues and understand what it takes to use alternative media and what alternative media is important for different individuals is all part of it. So both the assessment of the person's profile of the technology need and then how does that fit into the system so they can access it is all part of that picture.

>> Katherine. Noel, I can't thank you enough. You have really provided a challenge to us. Do you have any final recommendations for those of us in the field of deaf and hard of hearing?

>> Noel. I would just simply say thank you all for coming but also that you do open up these discussions with each other and your policy makers and your administrators. Some of the questions that were presented were so on target related to validity and how tests and what we want test to be able to tell us and to be sure that the tests we have are valid and are reliable. And that we are ensuring students, ensuring individuals, all the way from the time they enter school until the rest of their life that they will have equal access to knowledge that everyone else has.

>> Katherine. Noel, thank you so much. It is very important for those of us in work with people who are deaf and hard of hearing to look to other fields and other experts for our challenges and to stay abreast of Universal Design concepts and thank you so much for sharing information with us today. And many of the articles and references to information that you mentioned today. We will make sure that that information is archived in the future. It will take a number of weeks, but we'll make sure that that information is available to our audience. So thank you all for coming today. PEPNet is very anxious to provide training. We want to answer your questions and provide you with technical assistance. We want to be involved in your technology use activities. So please call on us. On the PowerPoint, there is a slide that shows you the contact information for each of our regional centers and there's also a slide that directs you to your coordinator or specialist in the PEPNet-South region. So please access that information. We also want to invite you to participate in the next teletraining which is on October the 25. So put that on your calendar. And that teletraining is entitled An Inside Look. Providing remote captioning accommodation. So, I now that is one that you all are looking forward to. And registration for that teletraining will be available to you soon. It's not at this moment but it will be available to you soon at www.teletrain.org so we also want to remind you to fill out your evaluation survey that will be mailed to you in an email at some point following this teletraining. And it's time for you to get your pencils and your pens out for your final CEU verification code which is a series of numbers and letters. TT919. That code again is TT as in teletraining 919. The final verification code for CEUs and participation certificates is TT919. Many thanks to my phone moderators. Cindy Camp, thank you for bringing the questions to us. A big thank you to Jenny Bougwa, whose the master mind and the developer of the teletraining. She's kind of wizard behind the curtain and we couldn't do this without her. A big thank you to PEPNet-South. The entire PEPNet team and central office especially to Dr. Marshall Colvets [assumed spelling], whose the director of PEPNet-South for always supporting us in our teletraining efforts. Please take a look at the last slide of the PowerPoint for a reminder of upcoming events. The Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness begins on September 30 and continues until October 4. Our biannual conference, PEPNet's biannual conference takes place in April. And we have extended the deadline for proposals. The deadline for proposals is not until October 1, so take a look at our website and get your proposals in. And November of 2008, there is another training in Houston for addressing the needs of students labeled deaf and low functioning, at risk, or deaf blind. On behalf of PEPNet-South and all of the regions of PEPNet, we want to thank you for teletraining, and we hope that we see you in October. This is Katherine Bruni signing off. Thank you for teletraining.