2019 was quite busy for the AERO Board. We just wrapped up a great Division Day in October, finalized a position paper on the importance of VRT certifications and amended our By-Laws. Most importantly we have elected our 2020 board with some great new faces and some new divisions! Always remember that you as members are why this board exists. If there is something you would like us to take on in 2020 please let me or any board member know. We already have some great plans in the works, but we are always up for more!!

Vicki Lorenz, AERO Board President

WHO ARE WE?

Please reach out to any board member with ideas, questions or concerns.

2020 Board Members
Past President  Jessica Chandler
President  Vicki Lorenz
President Elect  Staci Wills
Secretary  VACANT
Treasurer  Sarah Kelly
Board Member  Stephanie Welch-Grenier
Board Member  Ying-Ting Chiu
Board Member  Karen Koehler
Board Member  Angela Petro
Board Member  Molley Alford
Board Member  Lisa Milliron
Board Member  Jerry Hillyer
Board Member  Kim Maruna
Division Leaders
Education Curriculum  Shelley McCoy
Information and Technology  Jordy Stringer
Low Vision Rehabilitation  Lisa Milliron
MD & Deafblind/Infant & Preschool  Jenni Remeis
Orientation and Mobility  Jessica Chandler & Kim Maruna
Vision Rehab Therapy  Stephanie Welch-Grenier
Physical Activity & Recreation  Anna Devine & Brendan Devine
Itinerant Personnel  Molley Alford

My Experience of Attending the 2019 Science Educators for Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice International Conference

Ying-Ting Chiu
Department of Teaching and Learning, The Ohio State University

Science Educators for Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice (SEEDS)

Annual International Conference
Old Dominion University
College of Education and Professional Studies
4301 Hampton Blvd
Norfolk, Virginia 23529
October 11 - 14, 2019
Thanks to AERO’s support, I was awarded the David H. Newmeyer Member Grant to attend the 2019 Science Educators for Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice (SEEDS) International Conference in October 2019. This year, the SEEDS held its second annual conference at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. It was a four-day conference in which attendees shared their work that promotes equity, diversity, and social justice in science education. The theme of this year’s conference was “Reclaiming the profession: Science teaching and science teacher education as social justice.” Therefore, we talked primarily about the role of the science teacher and the support that science teachers need to teach diverse students, especially students who are underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.

In the conference, we discussed gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, politics, community, urban and rural schools, etc. I was one of the few attendees that were concerned about students with disabilities in the science classroom and brought up the challenges that students with disabilities face when learning science. Specifically, I talked about the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired in the science classroom and some issues in science education for students with visual impairments for other conference attendees to reflect on. For instance, science teaching relies heavily on visual methods. However, students with visual impairments, especially those who are blind, can barely use their vision to carry out the tasks that need to use vision as their sighted peers. Do we as science educators allow students with visual impairments to use alternative methods to learn science and report their observations? This is a difficult question that has no simple answer to it. However, it helped the attendees to think more deeply and carefully in terms of how science is often taught and approached and what kind of social justice that we are advocating for our students by using students with visual impairments as an example.

Up until now, disability has not much been discussed in the field of science education. To my knowledge, it is because of the gap between science education and special education. The science educators and science education researchers that I met at the SEEDS conference were very intrigued by the discussion of the science learning of students with visual impairments. They asked many questions and listened and discussed attentively. Many of them told me that they had never thought about the needs of students with visual impairments in the science
classroom because they had not met any of them. I was not surprised by the response. As a matter of fact, my primary intention to attend this conference was to meet more educators and researchers in science education and share my knowledge and experience working with students with visual impairments with them. I hope students with disabilities, including students with visual impairments, will be discussed more in the science education community in the future.

Equity, diversity, and social justice have gradually drawn attention in the field of science education. Even though gender and race have been the primary foci, Disability has gradually been included in the discussion in the science community. To bridge the two fields, i.e., science education and special education, at the end of special education, we need more organizations like AERO that supports interdisciplinary work to promote education for students with disabilities, including students with visual impairments on a broader scope. Again, my sincere appreciation to AERO for supporting my work that aims to promote science education for students with visual impairments in the science education community.

CONFERENCES

The 2019 AERO Division Day Conference – Together Towards Tomorrow was a great success. We had over 100 attendees and raised over $5000 to help AERO continue to serve our members! We are already underway planning for the 2020 conference on 10/23/20 in Butler County. We will REIMAGINE 20/20. If you have ideas for presentations or requests, we are always open.

REIMAGINE 20/20

10/23/20
Butler County ESC Hamilton, OH
Keynote Speaker and Sessions with Cole Imperi

LIVE A BRIGHTER LIFE
EMBRACE THE LIGHT OF LOSS

Cole teaches people, businesses and organizations how to embrace loss, difficult moments and mistakes to turn those into foundations for growth.

Check out her TedTalk: https://youtu.be/W00FCKKnlyg

Thursday Pre-conference 4-6pm
Friday’s Events: Lunch banquet to honor AERO Award Recipients and Post-conference Mocktail Hour

Best Practices for Addressing the Shortage of Certified Vision Professionals

The overall shortage of vision professionals across the United States has led to many agencies, organizations, and policy makers using untrained staff to provide services to individuals across the life span with visual impairments. The large variance and accuracy with which these services are provided by untrained individuals has led to improper training, dangerous techniques, and the need for retraining at a later point in the individual’s life. Albeit, well-meaning supervisors and administrators have made decisions to use untrained and uncertified staff to provide said services in an attempt to address staffing shortages; however, these practices leave something to be desired. As AERBVI members, we strive to provide the most recent up-to-date research to ensure that consumers are receiving the best services and training available. In an attempt to address the lack of best practices research, the RSA (Rehabilitation Services Administration) tasked the OIB-TAC to provide current research to the field.

The OIB-TAC (Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center) and Mississippi State University’s National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision have worked to research and address service delivery strategies
and techniques for older adults with visual impairments to ensure, that despite
the overall shortages of instructors in the field and limited financial resources,
individuals receiving rehabilitation services are provided the best service delivery
available to them by university trained and certified individuals from the field of
vision rehabilitation. OIB-TAC gathered a task force of certified professionals and
leaders, in the area of blindness and low vision research, to address the topic of
best practices for older blind adults receiving rehabilitation services.

*Best practices are service delivery strategies or techniques that appear
effective based on available evidence; are client-centered; are sensitive to
the context of the service delivery setting; and are responsive to evolving
technology, resources, and/or research (OIB-TAC, 2017).*

This task force convened in January 2017, with a culminating report covering best
practices recommended for agencies providing services to older adults. The
service delivery methods and best practices discovered and discussed in the final
draft of the OIB-TAC report (2018) addresses the need for certified staff,
consistency in training methods, and direct supervision by certified staff while an
individual is working towards certification. The final report provides agencies a
way to move forward towards best practices in their hiring process, by ensuring
that all non-certified staff are provided direct supervision by certified staff, while
working to receive certification themselves. OIB-TAC determined:

*Acceptable practice includes a plan to move toward the best practice, and
the unacceptable practice is typically regarded as unsafe, detrimental, or
nonproductive in assisting OIB consumers become as independent as
possible (OIB-TAC, 2018).*

As AERBVI members, we should always strive to ensure that all consumers of
blind rehabilitation services across the life span are provided with the best
services available to them through the use of university trained and certified staff,
in the area of training taking place. The AERO Board encourages all Ohio
providers, administrators, and policy makers to consider OIB-TAC’s findings and
work towards implementing best practices into their hiring decisions and service
delivery models for individuals across the life span. We also encourage all
individuals completing training in the vision rehabilitation field to sit for standardized exams to obtain certification or licensure in their given area of study. OIB-TAC’s full best practices report can be found at the link below:


AERO’s Board Members would like to thank RSA and OIB-TAC for their work in addressing and researching the topic of best-practices in the field of vision rehabilitation.

Sincerely,

AERO Ohio Board
Vicki Lorenz, AERO President
Stephanie Welch-Grenier, CVRT/COMS, Public Policy & Advocacy Chair