Good morning.

We are here today to talk about paths to literacy.

Hello. My name is Mary and I’m happy to welcome you to today’s webinar. We are thrilled to have so many participants joining us. This event will be recorded and available tomorrow on the Perkins website in case you know someone who wasn't able to join us today. Thank you for joining us. We would do our best to ensure you have the good experience as you attend this webinar. It is my pleasure to introduce -- project manager at Perkins school for the blind. They will introduce is to an online the online resource for information and literacy for students were blind or visually impaired including those with additional disabilities. This website was developed as a joint project between the Perkins school for the blind and Texas school for the blind and visually impaired and offers they range of information on literacy. Welcome and take it away.

Hello everyone. We are glad you could join us today. Are going to be looking at a PowerPoint presentation we hope will be useful reference tool for you or for anyone who was not able to watch the whole webinar but we're going to take you to the live site so we will go back and forth they little bit. Title bit.

Let's mentioned this presentation in this website were developed by the school for the blind in Texas and Perkins with active engagement and lots of work by Jim, they treasured colic from collect from the Texas school for the blind and visually impaired. Jim died earlier this year after battling cancer and we dedicate this presentation to his memory. He is also quoted throughout. He was they treasured colleague in this field they will be missed. I seed.

Today's objectives are to explore the literacy website that is hosted by the Perkins school for the blind and Texas school for the blind and visually impaired to become familiar with the range of content available on this site, to identify ways the site can be of assistance, to individuals working in the field of blindness and to learn how you can get continuing education credit.

We try to pull together lots of different kinds of information about literacy and I think as we go through there is lots of different approaches to literacy and literacy for all different kinds of children and that I think is unique but it is also very interactive. It is a place where we can learn with and from each other about the addressee for students with visual impairments including those with multiple disabilities and deaf blindness and it takes you to other websites and resources so it is a portal I hope becomes kind of a community for those of us interested in literacy.

The background of this is kind of fortuitous timing. The Texas Gulf of school for the blind and visually impaired has been working with a grant created materials about literacy and they created some DVDs with wonderful video and some accompanying research materials on literacy. The problem is many of these materials can no longer be viewed on any player that exists. They no longer -- we are looking for a way to pull together in surf information to make it accessible again at the same time Perkins had been working with Verizon and with the Children's Hospital here in Boston developing resources of our literacy. A desire to update that and keep it current and make it more accessible. We join together on this project.

We’re going to switch to the live site and give you a look at what is on the homepage. There is a lot there so we will walk through it together. I want to point out the accessibility features in the top right-hand corner. You can adjust the screen so you can change the color of the background or the font and you can increase or decrease the size of the font. The search part is a pretty standard place in the top right-hand corner. I wanted to point upper navigation we have a series of tabs across the top of the homepage as well as going down the left-hand sidebar. We will talk more about these different sections and what they are about but I wanted to give you a sense of the variety. There are 12 content areas. This slide on the homepage rotates so you were he something different every time you log on. This gives a sense of some of the different items on here.

We are going to go through these in detail but those other content areas, a welcome m message, a place to log in. This is the area in the new section for the most recent post to appear. We have videos and links to other websites and other different activities posted. There is a way to use social media to let others know about what is going on. We have got the Facebook icon, twitter and the RSS feed button all here to help you share content. Jim is very much in this site in woven throughout and we are so grateful to him and all he contributed to the field and he certainly continues to be an inspiration. A little advertisement for today’s webinar. I want to point out the new forum topics are also posted on the bottom of the homepage. This is for questions and discussion topics can happen if there are categories and we will look at that a little more. The place for upcoming events to talk about different activities related to literacy and we invite you to add things if you know of other defense. Now were going to go back to the PowerPoint presentation.

We have looked at the homepage as a whole. I want to call your attention to the fact there are 12 content areas as well as different types of content so you start to see a pattern as we go through these. Each of the 12 content areas has strategies, resources, technology and research as well as a forum and you will see that throughout. This is meant to be and it director website so I want to call your attention again to the fact there is a form and ways to post comments. You can use the social media tools I showed you in order to share different favorite articles or posts to others and we hope you will post new content.

We’re going to look at each of the content areas in detail but I want you to get a sense this is a wide range of literacy tools and techniques and populations we are looking at, everywhere from emergent literacy for young children through braille and braille technology as well as special topics and conditions we will be looking at.

We will start out with general literacy and as you would imagine this gives you an introduction to literacy as well as general strategies and instructional strategies for working with students who are blind or visually impaired. What I want to mention is this definition of literacy we are looking at. Traditionally, many people thought of literacy as being about reading and writing, whether that be to print or braille and we are expanding that definition. That is more and more common in the field. People recognize auditory strategies, speaking and listening are keep tools to literacy and in addition objects and pictures, there are many other ways we can have literacy tools that supplement reading and writing. We will talk about those as we look at the site. One of the categories we have is learning media assessment. I think of learning media assessment is something that is a true challenge and hallmark of the petition for teachers and I also know many teachers including myself who can go all the way through the assessment, gather my information and stare at the page and figuring out the right format for my report. Needing a boost. One of my favorite pieces on this site is there are some samples you can look at, how somebody else describes a variety of children and it can sometimes get you over the writer's block and give you good ideas. There are blank LMA forms. There is an introduction to the idea of learning media assessment and that is a wonderful resource for parents who are curious. There are documents, and I'm not sure if there are videos, but there are documents between deciding between print and braille in special consideration for the learning media assessment if a child has a hearing impairment. Lots of complex and unique to our field information in the area of how you determined the correct learning media for students with visual I impairments. In addition there are strategies and resources, a form and technology. We hope you will add to the section as well.

Charlotte mentioned we have the next pensive you of l literacy. There used to be this category called pre- braille. I remember learning that in college, now it is so much more than pre- braille. It has everything to do with understanding concepts so you can then have some form of written saved communication systems so it is a very rich area. There's lots of great and new information in this area. Is a definition on the site? There are strategies. There is a section on developing story boxes. There is a Dot's four family website designed in Arizona linked through here that is wonderful information for ion for families which is where you want to start, right with the family. There is also a document about alphabets objects. If you are creating tap the books and you want something representing the B for that child, what can you use. You go to the list and you get lots of ideas. You may have thought of another one and you can add it to the site. I love the interactive nature so we’ll get better.

We’re going to go back to the live site to look at multiple disabilities. There are lots of places to explore on here and we wanted to give a sense of what some of the sections look like so as you see on the left you can click on any of these sections to go directly there and we're just waiting for it to open up so we can look at multiple disabilities. Each of the pages has the newest post up at the top as well as a featured question. This is the forum where you can post a question and also a response and featured media further or different videos posted. There are cases where there are more than one video. They cycle through so every time you go to that page you will see a different video. Scrolling down you will see this is the overview and again each section has an overview. Instructional strategies for students with multiple disabilities are the instructional strategy section. We do have a specific section on technology for students with multiple disabilities because that is such a big way for kids to access literacy if maybe they are having difficulties with print and braille and traditional media. We include story boxes and storyboards and I'm going to click on this to give a sense of what that looks like. Our hope is this is very practical. Talking about a story box and a storyboard as well as how you can make them. We hope this information would be something you could share with parents or anyone with anyone who is new in the field, perhaps a parent professional. There is a feature on all the pages where you can print it with a printer friendly version so it's very easy to share this information or you can’t e-mail it and forward to others. Other things in this section wanted to call your attention to books for students with alterable disabilities. You have to drill down. There is a lot in this particular area but just to give a sense of some of what is on the site I wanted to show you language experience, to click on this it would take you to another page that talks about what these are and how to make them and show you some examples. We invite you to post your examples of things you have m aide. Object books are the same thing. Background information as well as photos of different examples and ideas about how to make t hem. Predictable books are the ones that have a lot of rhyme and repetition. A list of some of our favorite books. Accessible books and PowerPoint e-books are similar but showing you what these are and how to make them, again there is more information on here. Modifying books. This takes you through the how to, how do you modify content, how do you modify the book itself to make it accessible for students who have no vision or some kind of motor difficulties and the whole combination. We hope this information will be very part the goal.

Also there's a little bit on curriculum and assessment. There is a section on early literacy and multiple disabilities. Writing for students with multiple disabilities, you will find throughout the site there are multiple access points to the same information. For example, writing for students with multiple disabilities is something you can get to the multiple disabilities section but also something you can get through in the writing section. We do have something on special considerations in the learning media assessment if a student has a hearing loss in addition to a visual impairment. Now were going to go back to the PowerPoint presentation.

The next section we're going to look at is the braille section. Again cut you get the repetitive pattern, you have the introduction and the instructional strategies but we also included material specific to braille. Everything used to be considered pre- braille for anyone who had not yet started to read braille but in this section we try to hone in on the specific prerequisite skills that are necessary before braille is introduced formally. We have information about type of graphics including a wonderful video. This looks at how any kind of chart or illustration or graph or anything that is something in addition to the text and how it can be made available to learners who are blind or visually impaired so it gives tech weeks on how to do that as well as resources where you can learn to do that yourself. There is a section of production of braille so if you are new to the field or if you are actually in a general education teacher and you're wondering where these things come from, there's a little bit of information about that as well as links to where you can order books in print or braille. Is a bit braille repair including a video that is kind of a how to guide takes you through the steps. That is some of what you can find in the braille section. In struggling readers, I think this is a huge issue for a field and across education but we have particular challenges for students who are not quite at expected levels. One of those is accessibility to materials design for this population. The introduction of contractions and how you do that or when you do that. Their children for whom we are not sure what it is that is holding them back and I think that is a huge issue. On this section of the site in the content area we have instructional strategies and an overview and I think it has great tips and ideas. There are indicators for possible learning disabilities and a very big question in my mind when I look at a student who is struggling is it due to vision loss or some other kind of disability area. Teasing out those things is almost impossible but we have an approach to it and some ideas are based on the work of -- in making an evaluation meaningful. We have experts in that book as well. These also new materials using the Wilson reading program. The Perkins school for the blind and at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and other school districts around the country, teachers of the visually impaired have gravitated toward the Wilson reading program and finding it very applicable and useful for kids with visual impairments. The challenge is how to adapt I t. That’s a lot of work and it takes a lot of time and maybe it's a block in terms of people doing it. What I love are materials walking us through a case study of a student who has been using this and it is heartwarming. It is one of those where the student was not making much progress and using this program has and that is our goal. There are other directions and suggestions for adapting the Wilson reading program. Again, cutting sure your time in trying to do that and giving practical recommendations. Many of our students use print. Largely our role there is to help them with access to print and there is a section with magnification and many links out to some of the things out there these days and also considerations for using magnification. There are a couple wonderful articles on handwriting in signing your name that I love. There’s one called signing your name and handwriting if you have low vision that I hadn't been aware of before. Other things I keep finding. There's a lot of this site. Also strategies, resources and technology and research and a form for you to contribute. The next section is writing. This looks at the writing process as well as the mechanics of writing and those are interrelated but also very different. With the mechanics of writing for students blind or visually impaired we look at some of the tools for handwriting as well as tools for writing braille. That includes low-tech things like Slate and stylist all the way up to some of the more recent hike check items. Each item. That's another area where we hope you'll add your ideas and resources as you become aware of new tech knowledge ease. Also in the writing section we do look at the process. Why right, why do we write? For students who are blind or visually impaired the lack of incidental learning is an issue when it comes to developing any literacy skills but really very specifically when we look at writing. We think about the number of times during the day you jot down a quick note to yourself or you make a shopping list or you e-mail someone, that happens throughout the day and for our students that is not something they are able to observe others doing so how can we bring that information to them about the richness of writing and how it can help us in our lives.

We also look at oral strategies as we talked about with the broad definition of literacy. This is an important part of the whole range of literacy skills so when we are looking at writing and oral strategies, we’re looking at using some speaking and voice recognition software and specific tech takes for making that a writing tool. As we mentioned, there is information specific to students with multiple disabilities. The other thing we included is a section on spelling. For students who are blind or visually impaired, this is often a tricky area. For students were braille readers and using contractions, sometimes it is a little confusing about the actual spelling. For students who have low v vision, sometimes it is hard to see the correct spelling and for people who are auditory learners and listening to books or any kind of information, they don't get a chance to see how something has written out. This offers helpful tips and resources on the issues related to spelling.

I love this area, the area of dual media. Partly because I think it is in the decisions between print and braille and oral strategies or auditory strategies and the difficult decisions. You do some of your hardest thinking and get some of her greatest successes with these children. When you have decided this is a student to we used dual media, typically with look at that is printed braille but I think it also can the other varieties and combinations of media. Then there are many I think very complex and challenging questions about how you do this and when you do this, what do you teach using which media? Lots of decisions. I think it is an area we need many more voices weighing in and what has worked with you for your students. We are having a variety of experience in this area. On this part of the website there is an overview of dual media and then a section on instructional strategies which gives a lot of practical suggestions and ideas that came help us in the field.

Some of the materials that came from the project have been incorporated here. A framework for braille called professional consensus on instructional considerations for students in braille literacy programs. It has got a lot of good information. There is a chart that talks about different areas of braille and what kind of professionals through their research decided it would be optimal to devote to that topic with your students and how long it might take to teach these particular areas in the study of braille. That is useful information to have when you're thinking when you put in real instruction and how much time.

There is a document called clarification regarding the choice of braille is the reading and writing medium. I go back to that time and again to center myself thinking about the considerations I should be using. There are other strategies and lots of resources. Technology resources, great research, and I wish I could cite turning but Ernie but there's some wonderful research from Tennessee in dual media and a forum area for you to participate.

I live in Texas and English language learners are more than half I think of our student population at this point. There were people speaking many different languages and has compounded in some ways our delivery of great education programs. Getting the right materials in the right format and balancing part of what is going on for the students. These are children who might have additional disabilities and fitting that together to have a comprehensive program is challenging so I love having this section. I hope this grows rapidly. I think there is a lot we are all learning in this area but this hasn't overview of literacy for English language learners I find very helpful. Instructional strategies, there's also an article that I think Jim road linking American sign language and English when you are considering children to have a different language so again it's not only what we think of as a typical foreign language. ASL as a foreign language and how do you fit that in with their learning English and braille or low vision learners. It is challenging. There is a reference book in here I had never seen before and I found it at as I was getting ready for this and this website is like that. I think of it as three dimensional. You can go into it from all different areas and things pop up. It is a wonderful resource I hope you will help contribute to.

In the area of auditory strategies, we touched on this a little bit before but this has got the same kind of structure beginning with an overview and instructional strategies where we look at developing listening skills. For any learner through his blind or visually impaired, listening skills are crucial. This particular section of the site gives some strategies which were written by our friend Jim and great ideas for how you can really help students use learning and listening effectively. There is also a bit about assessment of hearing and the importance of hearing. For our students I think we know they are at higher risk for having your loss in addition to visual impairment and they really need to have their hearing checked on a regular basis. There is information that can be shared with parents and professionals as well as helping to educate anybody in this f field. There is a section called teaching the use of a reader. What we refer to hear, readers are often used in college and in adult life to help with daily tasks or assignments if the student is in college so it might be something like someone helps you read your mail or find a book not available in print or in braille. Again, this is not a skill that happens automatically. Learning how to engage your reader and train the reader, I think we have become aware this is an in error students need to be physically taught how to do.

The section called play with sound is a new addition. What is fun about this particular page is I think Diane has had wonderful ideas on how to use a piece of software called studio recorder available through -- and it is a way you can help her students have fun with literacy when you think about what is involved with say for example doing an interview. Who could we interview, making a list of questions about what you would want to ask this person. Recording information either using the software or transcribing it into the print or braille and finally delivering it, had you tell a story that begins interest during or what are the rules of the radio. I think this is a wonderful way to look at expanding literacy and a different door into literacy and what I think is exciting about this is you don't have to be at a school for the blind or somewhere with a lot of hustle equipment. We’re talking about something a teacher might be up to set up in a classroom because the software is available. This is a good example that was shared and again we invite you to share your own tools and things you think might be helpful or exciting to others in the field.

Math literacy, this was not on our original outline and we realized when we went out for peer review particularly in Texas, we got a wake-up call that numeracy has an equal place at the table. If you think about the ways you use numbers in your daily life, we talked about the way we use writing in our daily life, but using numbers that is very much part of the day-to-day activities if we are talking about telephone numbers or keeping track of finances or anything like that. All of that is related to recognizing numerals and having an understanding of numbers and their function. This doesn’t go into deep code but it does point you toward a lot of resources that already exist on the Texas school for the blind and visually impaired website. I encourage you to think about mathematical literacy or numeracy as part of the whole package.

That is all of the content areas. We want to go in a different way now. We want to look at strategies as a way you can get into this website. If we go to the live website, were going to look under strategies and look at a particular one, under that title, there are a list of examples of different strategies. The one we will look at is let's make macaroni and cheese. This is an example of a PowerPoint book created by Dr. Holly Cooper at the Texas school for the blind and visually impaired in the death wind project. I think we can go to the PowerPoint. It is a step-by-step look that has audio embedded in the PowerPoint and as you go to the PowerPoint, were going to the PowerPoint and you can download this and put it on your computer and use it with the child who hopefully likes macaroni and cheese. The student can learn to click and go to the next page and it will say to get your macaroni and cheese mix and then you would need milk and that walks you all the way through. You have the book already there. The other part if we go back to the website that I particularly like am Holly also provided a step by step instruction. You can download the directions. If you're saying I don't know how to do PowerPoint books and you're not sure you can make it work, not only do you have the book but you also have step-by-step directions on how to make it work and I think that is very useful as we move into the digital era we are in but maybe some of the specifics elude us. In each area there are strategies. You can get through it under strategies. We are hoping you will contribute continuing education credits by submitting strategies.

Under resources, a tad you get through in the top bar or under each section. In resources, you will need to be logged in and we will explain that in a little bit, you can post new content in this area. There are examples of resources you can see in this PowerPoint. It will be more excited exciting when you go to the live site itself, login and then you can see everything and add to it there.

I'm going to go back to the live site to look at it elegy. Again this is one of the four areas in each of the content areas. I'm going to give you a brief tour of what is here. This quite a bit about iPads, were going to come back and look at one of these. IPads are very popular, but I think a lot of teachers are scrambling to catch up with the latest tech knowledge he and how it can be used as more than just kind of the game and how to make it an effective learning tool. There is a bit about funding. Some downloads for technology. Again, a lot more things about iPads. I invite you to have a look at your leisure but I wanted to take you to one of the post I really love that was shared from British Columbia. This particular one has a long title. IPad, iPod, iPhone, I technology and apps used successfully with individuals for deaf blindness or with issue impairments and additional disabilities. What I love about this post is there is a presentation shared at a conference that takes you through the background. This is a research so much as it is kind of a how to and a document is shared that is different early writing apps and the different features. You haven’t iPad into trying to figure what to do and where to start; this is a nice tool that is a list to get you going. In addition I think there is been a lot of discussion about how we know if and iPad is an effective learning tool. You might be questioned by parents or school districts are trying to tie the -- into using and iPad and were going to look at this Word document I think gives you an example of an assessment tool to show you how you might use this to share how can be effective. A planning tool for yourself as well as a way to demonstrate to members of the team what kinds of things are happening. This is something that could be -- having some way of formalizing little bit more how data is collected. We’re going to go back now to the PowerPoint presentation.

The next area that appears in each of the content areas is re- -- research. You can get across that through the tab for the individual content areas. The next set of slides is here for reference purposes so were not going to go to each of them but if you want to share this information with others you would need -- we have a slide on accessibility features and the what's new and how to get the word out using social media. Upcoming events.

Registering with the site is really easy and it allows you to get I think full use of this website. It is an inviting website. You can come in and look but it's also a place where the unique piece is the interactive nature of it and by logging in you become one of the contributors and we would talk about how you get credit but we also really want comments. We want your successful strategies. It is very easy to do and what I also appreciate his there is an accessible -- which is a very simple math problem. Please login and that will give you access too much of the other parts of the website in a way that is more interactive.

A couple more features on the homepage we looked at our forum, and I wanted to mention the subscriptions since we hadn't touched on that. You can subscribe to different content areas if you go into the forum section. If you teach braille, and that is your main focus you may to want to do -- or if you are a -- teacher and you see every type of student you might want to subscribe to all of them but whatever you do this is a way to have e-mail notification delivered directly to you when there has been a new post so you will be alerted in case you don't have a chance to go on to the site yourself and look around. Posting content, we’ve been talking about that a couple times and were going to look at how you can get strategies -- credit for submitting s strategies. At the moment we created a template and were going to show you that in a minute, that you can learn two continuing education credits for posting a strategy. It's a nice way to get professional development credit. For a lot of you who may have a hard time finding specific workshops that are tailored to what you need, it's a nice thing to know about as another option. When you go to that section it will talk a little bit about how to earn the credits. There is a rubric that tells you how we evaluate the different strategies and what the criteria is for an unsatisfactory post, satisfactory and exemplary. Would you submit a post it will display automatically but then we have a process behind the scenes to be sure to give you the credit. Now were going to look at the live site and I'm going to show you quickly how that works. You would go into the strategy section and you will find the templates, you can click to see the rubric and how to the credits, and then there is a click for the step-by-step instructions which is extremely detailed with a lot of screenshots showing you what to do. I'm going to show you the template and you need to be logged in to do this, but basically the components are the title, a description, figuring out what it relates to, is it a braille it to the or something for students with multiple disabilities. You can check more than one box if it fits a number of categories. Everything that is required has a red asterisk. We require an image uploaded of the activity. We think it’s helpful for people to see materials. If you end up having a student in the photograph we need to release foreign to be signed by the parents and there is a link directly to that release form so you can get that back to us. You have an optional ability to add a URL if you want a link to a particular product. You can link to a video or upload a file. If you have a Word document or PDF you want to share. I'm going to show you the continuing education part again. With materials we asked the use of bullet list. It makes it easier for people to scan quickly. What are other ways the activity can be used? One of the things I think is a nice feature is we are trying to online each of the strategies with the common core standards as well as with the braille standards developed from California. If you click on any one of these you will see there is a drop-down menu and you can check off the boxes of the ones with which your strategy is aligned. You can check off numerous boxes in one section and check them off across different sections.

Now we're going to go back to the PowerPoint presentation. We are going to look at posting comments. The comments are little different from the forum so just so you are aware there are two different places on the site. The comments are for you to talk about something that has already been posted. For example you see a strategy and you say it worked when I tried that, someplace for you can take it to the next level. There is featured media as we saw on several of the content areas. Hopefully there will be more as we continue to build this website. There are questions on many areas. There are interesting questions right now it we would love for you to chime in with your answers. I'm calling your attention to the site map because it is not obvious in the regular navigation bar what the subsections are but the site map does walk you through those specific post. Searching the site I think is fairly straightforward.

How would you use this site? We really designed it to be interactive. I think of it as not only a resource because there’s a lot of information there already but as a common arena for all of us to talk together about literacy. I know there are some wonderful national conferences on literacy and some of the information on this website comes from those presentations but it's very difficult for everybody to get to those and you might've gone and your question was about braille and right now you have the student with low vision and a different question. There is an online arena for discussion. I love to see teachers and parents and classroom teachers and teachers of the visually impaired post their questions and get answers from each other and resources. It’s little different than a list serve for you post your question and some people chime in. This I think is looking for more enduring resources that will have the presentations that have been made. Videotapes that have been made, digital media created and a place you can go back to and find them. The organization of this website is complex but very easy to use as a person using the website. I have talked to the people at Perkins who have created that are on this website. It's a place to keep up with research and new developments and we hope to be hearing from you. If you want to post a comment and join the forum you're welcome to and you do that to the website. If you’d like to contact us about the website, go to the e-mail address for the site and you can connect -- and we welcome your ideas and your comments.

We’re going to open up for questions. We encourage you to contact us if we don't have time for your question today. [Event Concluded]