

# **Evaluation of the Computer Literacy Program at the Center for Deaf-Blind Persons**

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### **Synopsis**

The Center for Deaf-Blind Persons offers a Computer Literacy Program for people with various degrees of hearing and vision loss. It was established with the goal of meeting the pronounced need of deaf-blind individuals to be exposed to the computer as a tool for opening new channels of appropriate and varied communication with their surroundings, to ease their isolation and as a means of enriching their significant amounts of free time. As of January 2008, 25 students participated, and over the past year procedures for work between the department and outside organizations such as the Welfare Department, in addition to internal procedures, were designed and implemented. This evaluation was designed to determine if the goals of the program were reached and to evaluate the extent to which this program contributed to an increase in quality of life for the participants.

The evaluation results show a **very high level of satisfaction** from the students and a significant percentage of them reported a strong desire to expand the scope of studies and frequency of lessons. In addition, the students expressed a **very high level of satisfaction with the teachers** assigned to them, **the pace of instruction and the student-teacher relationship**. It seems that most of the students in the course feel empowered by the exposure to the computer and express a desire to increase their knowledge in this field. The students noted that **their studies greatly strengthened their self-confidence, contributed to enriching their daily lives and that due to their studies they are experiencing a process of personal growth and empowerment**. For the overwhelming majority, this was their first opportunity to learn about computers.

Students were also surveyed regarding additional areas they would like to learn more about as well as recommendations and opinions on the Learning Center. Subjects of interest included communication via the computer, including e-mail,

ICQ and conversations via Messenger, surfing the Internet more proficiently, purchasing items via the internet (this is particularly useful for individuals with limited mobility), using Braille, the structure of the computer and refresher classes.

In light of these evaluation results, it seems fitting to further formalize this program as an integral part of the services offered and to **expand** it both in regard to the target population and the number of course hours. Because the student group is heterogeneous in terms of their sensory-cognitive abilities, the current course should serve as a basic model. At the conclusion, interested students could continue on to further classes that would expose them to different computer programs according to their area/s of interest.

It is possible that in the future the students will channel their knowledge for volunteer positions or employment. More than one student expressed an interest in studying computers in order to work in the field.

**Comments received** from students included:

"I want to learn more and more about computers. When I was young I tried to learn about computers but it was difficult because nobody understood me; it was a problem of communication. Now I am very satisfied because now, after all these years, I finally get to learn computers and people understand me."

"I hope to continue studying until I've reached a point that I can completely operate the computer. I very much enjoy the lessons. It is very interesting for me and thank you so much for providing this service."

"I feel that thanks to this computer course, my level of thinking and my education are now constantly increasing."

"The course enables me to be focused and to learn more at home. I wouldn't have been able to succeed at doing that and here I succeed!"

"I am very excited about the computer and especially the e-mail as I use it to communicate with my friends. It is very fast and I really enjoy it."

"Because I don't have internet at home yet it is hard to practice. I hope that to have a computer and internet so I can help my children and supervise them. If I knew how to use the internet I could keep an eye on them and prevent them from visiting problematic sites. The computer would also help me send e-mail and communicate via the internet."

"I want to say thank you!"