FACT SHEET

COMMUNICATION
What is he trying to tell me?

Some students with dual sensory impairments cannot express some or all of what they want to say through speech, sign language, fingerspelling, writing, or gestures. When students cannot express themselves in these traditional ways, they often choose other ways of expression. The students choose the way that is easiest to get their message across. This expression is communication. The student may communicate through facial expression, body movement, posture, vocalization, crying, tantrums, etc. Parents and/or professionals frequently see these reactions as behaviors that need to be eliminated, when in fact the student is trying to communicate and becomes more and more frustrated when his communication is misunderstood. If, instead, the student’s attempt to communicate can be acknowledged and expanded, difficult behaviors may begin to decrease.

Points to Remember:

1. Look at all of the student’s behavior as an attempt to communicate.
2. Be sure the student has had medical problems eliminated.
3. Attempt to understand the student’s communication efforts.
4. Teach the student a more acceptable way to communicate what he has to say, after showing you understand the effort.