

ODYSSEY



supporting students:
**working together to
meet diverse needs**

Get Published in Odyssey!

Share Your Experience with the Nation!



We are seeking submissions for our next issue of *Odyssey*. A strong correlation exists between early identification and intervention services and successful outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children. We recognize that families face challenges in learning all they need to know about their children's hearing loss in order to support their linguistic and cognitive development, something that is paramount to all future learning and to successful education outcomes for all children. We also know that families continue to need support throughout their children's years in school, and recognize that programs and resources may vary from state to state and from school to school.

For the next issue of *Odyssey*, we would like you to share with the nation your stories of success in early intervention and outreach. Our goal is to help families, schools, and other agencies learn about programs and strategies that have been effective in helping deaf and hard of hearing children and their families. Possible topics might include the following:

- How your state's outreach program identifies and assists families of deaf and hard of hearing babies and toddlers with access services
- How your state's outreach program supports families of older students
- How the Individualized Family Service Plan process in your school works and how it supports the whole family's needs
- Your experience, as a parent, in getting information about your child's hearing loss as well as finding and receiving services for your child and for your whole family
- Your experience as an educator or professional in working with preschool-age or younger deaf and hard of hearing children and their families to promote language development

Additionally, some families of deaf and hard of hearing children face special challenges in getting the information and support they need. This includes those children who live in rural areas, who have additional disabilities, who are members of minority groups, and/or who come from homes where English either is not spoken or is not the first language. We especially welcome articles describing experiences and successes in working with these student populations in early intervention programming.

Please e-mail your ideas to Odyssey@gallaudet.edu by September 17, 2010; fully developed articles are due by October 22, 2010. We also welcome shorter news stories about programs, activities, and educators or other professionals who have had an impact on deaf and hard of hearing students. Contact us via e-mail at any time with questions or to discuss your ideas.

Working Together to Meet Diverse Needs

The theme of this issue of *Odyssey*, "Supporting Students: Working Together to Meet Diverse Needs," is an illustration of the excellent work happening across the country to serve our diverse population of deaf and hard of hearing students. The changing demographics of the students we serve mandates that we continually work both individually and collectively to identify the most effective ways of educating and serving our students. After reviewing the submissions received for this issue, I am both excited and hopeful about the collaborative and/or systematic approaches to addressing individual students' needs evidenced in the articles in this issue of *Odyssey*.

These articles range from descriptions of collaborative relationships between the family and the school, to program-wide initiatives that focus on meeting individual student needs within larger school programs, to classroom strategies and support services in use at various schools. They share a common thread: They show how students benefit when various professionals come together to address student needs. This reflects ongoing progress towards

and a collective commitment to providing quality services for all deaf and hard of hearing students.

All of us—the professionals and families working with deaf and hard of hearing children—must work together to make advances in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students and to ensure that each student succeeds. Shared knowledge and experience are keys to our success and the Clerc Center is committed to making this happen. Sharing these articles through *Odyssey* is just one way to facilitate the dissemination of our shared knowledge and experiences.

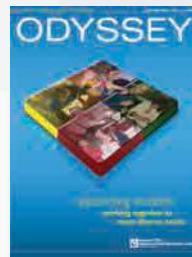
Another way the Clerc Center is partnering with others to better serve deaf and hard of hearing students is through our strategic planning initiatives. Last year, stakeholders from across the country gathered to review public input the Clerc Center has received. Based on that input, we developed goals and objectives for enhancing student success. The goals center around helping students realize their full linguistic and academic potential; collaborating nationwide to develop and disseminate resources designed to help deaf and hard of hearing students with additional disabilities; and expanding resources for early intervention services. We have begun working towards these goals, and we are currently calling for submissions to *Odyssey* that focus on early intervention and outreach services. Please visit our website at <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu> to learn more about our mission and the goals and objectives of our strategic plan.

We also would like to hear from you. Was there an article in this issue that helped you? What would you like to see in future issues? Share your thoughts at Odyssey@gallaudet.edu.

Thank you for joining us in this issue of *Odyssey*.

—Edward Bosso

Vice President, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center
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ODYSSEY • Clerc Center Mission Statement

The Clerc Center, a federally funded national deaf education center, ensures that the diverse population of deaf and hard of hearing students (birth through age 21) in the nation are educated and empowered and have the linguistic competence to maximize their potential as productive and contributing members of society. This is accomplished through early access to and acquisition of language, excellence in teaching, family involvement, research, identification and implementation of best practices, collaboration, and information sharing among schools and programs across the nation.

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National Deaf Education Center. The Clerc Center includes Kendall Demonstration Elementary School, the Model Secondary School for the Deaf, and units that work with schools and programs throughout the country. All rights reserved.

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4

Inclusion at a School for the Deaf: Making It Work for a Student with Special Needs

By Bob Brehm

10

Deaf Children with Disabilities: Rights Under the IDEA

By Barbara Raimondo

15

Advocating for Your Child's Education: What You Need to Know

By Matthew Rider and Charlene Ward

20

Helping Children with Sensory Processing Disorders: The Role of Occupational Therapy

By Margarita Sweet

23

Pet Therapy: A New Way of Reaching Students with Additional Disabilities

By Kimberly Mockler

25

Partners with a Purpose: The Consultant Teacher Model in Educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

By Candi Mascia-Reed

30

Determining a Student's Readiness to Successfully Use Interpreting Services

By Cindy Huff

35

Addressing Students' Language Needs in a Bilingual ASL and English Classroom

By C. Michelle Shadow, Bobbie Jo Kite, and Jen Drew

40

The Guided Reading Approach: A Practical Method to Address Diverse Needs in the Classroom

By Laura M. Schaffer and Barbara R. Schirmer

44

Enhancing the Reading Process: Tips for ASL/English Bilingual Classrooms

By Melissa Rusher

47

Helping Students Toward Independence: The STEPS Program at USDB

By Kimberley P. Smale

NEWS

50 Book-in-a-Day Workshop Turns Students into Poets and Publishers

50 First-Ever All-Deaf Rugby Team Launched

50 MSSD Celebrates 40th Anniversary

IN EVERY ISSUE

52 Upcoming Conferences



Celebrate!



Gallaudet National Essay, Art, and ASL Contest for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Gallaudet University and the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center sponsor an annual contest for deaf and hard of hearing students. This year's theme was "Helping Others: How I Can Make a Difference in My Community."

Contest winners are announced each spring in our showcase publication, *Celebrate!* This year, the Clerc Center is making a difference in the community by going green and publishing *Celebrate!* online only. Look for the newest issue on our website in May!

To see past issues of *Celebrate!* and/or to learn more about the contest, visit <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/contest>.

WORLD A R O U N D Y O U

- ➡ Read about the accomplishments of young deaf and hard of hearing people!
- ➡ Learn about exciting opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students!
- ➡ Keep up to date on events in the deaf community, in the United States, and around the world!

World Around You, an e-magazine designed for deaf and hard of hearing teens, is available FREE!

To sign up, visit our website:

clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/worldaroundyou





Bob Brehm and wife Judy Meima live in Maryland with their two deaf children, both of whom are students at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School in Washington, D.C. If you'd like to continue the discussion of educating deaf children with multiple disabilities, Brehm can be reached at bobbrehm@att.net.

Photos by Clerc Center staff

inclusion at a school for the deaf:

making it work for a student with special needs

By Bob Brehm

A young boy sits hunched over his math papers in the classroom. He works vigorously, writing carefully and then erasing hard when he makes a mistake. His feet kick the table legs continuously, and occasionally he goes into a self-stimulation mode with a sudden jerking of his head and arms and a vocalization to match his movements. Still, he keeps at the work, seemingly in his own world.

Minutes later the boy looks up and tells his support aide that he's tired and wants her to finish the paper or at least tell him what to write. She patiently yet firmly explains that this is his math work and she'll help when he's stuck, but that he's expected to do the work himself like all the other students in the class. The boy's opposition grows and his self-regulation seems to be depleting. The aide offers him something to satisfy his basic sensory needs, in this case a rubber stretchy toy, which the boy grabs and starts to bite while saying over and over again, "ME TIRED. YOU FINISH." The aide tells him to take a break, and then she reviews the morning schedule with him. In a manner that clearly shows her emotional commitment to working with him, laying out the steps on her fingers, she asks him, "MATH FINISHED. NEXT WHAT?" He correctly answers, "RECESS." Before she can finish reinforcing the expectation that he must do his math work before going out to recess, he pulls himself together, says, "CALM ME," and then gets back to work.

Ten minutes later, math work done and turned in to the smiling teacher, the aide accompanies the boy to the playground for recess. There he wants to play with the other children, but they seem to be communicating with each other and playing at a level he doesn't really understand. So he tries—hard—to join in, but the others become frustrated when he doesn't understand the rules, plays too aggressively, or tries to get them to join his play, which



tends to be scripted and repetitive. He finds himself lagging behind the others, sometimes alone and sometimes just on the outskirts of their game. At times the aide is able to successfully engage one or two other children in facilitated play with the boy and all enjoy it. In general, though, his differences lead to him being alone in a group activity.

The boy in this story is a student in the third grade at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) on the campus of Gallaudet University, and he is my son. Miguel has a diagnosis of Pervasive Developmental Disorder, or PDD, which along with the more common forms of autism is characterized by significant developmental delays and challenges in relating to others, learning and using language, and sensory processing. His overall developmental profile suggests that he functions more like a 5 year old than like his 9 chronological years. This is Miguel's seventh year at KDES, and we and the school have worked hard over those years to figure out how to meet

his educational needs in a school that does not have a particular focus on students with multiple disabilities.

Miguel was adopted at age 2 from an orphanage in Ecuador, where he had no exposure to sign language and, given his disability, very limited interactions with others. We didn't know about the PDD at the time, believing that like so many adopted

Left: Miguel and his sister, Wendy, share a special moment.



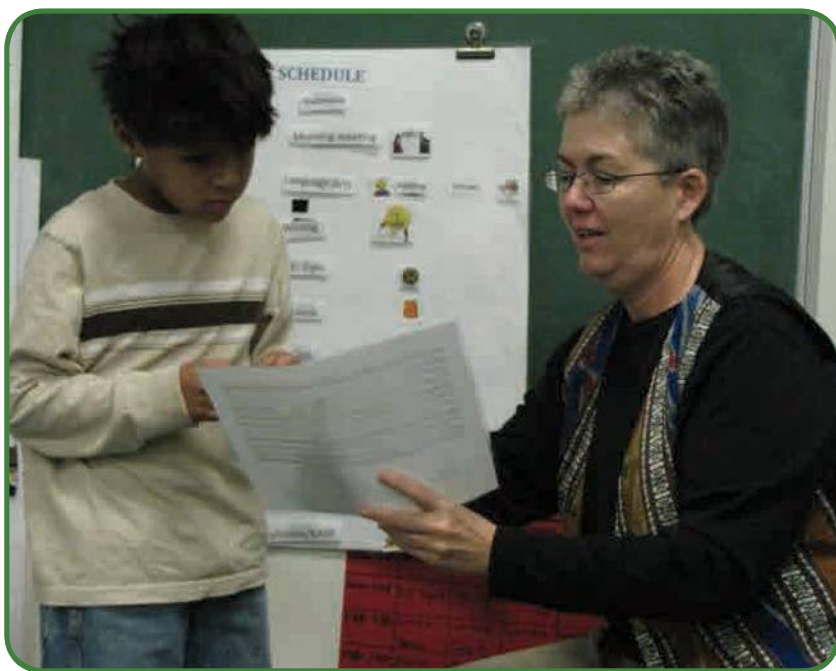
deaf children what he needed most was a loving family and immersion in American Sign Language (ASL). Our family is a mix of hearing parents who sign but are not fully fluent; Miguel; and biological daughter Wendy, who is four years older than Miguel. Wendy is deaf, having begun to lose her hearing at age 2½. We moved to Washington, D.C., to enroll the two children in KDES. Wendy is now an eighth grader focusing on her choice of high schools.

The Search for Reasons

When Miguel's development and language use did not show progress after a year at KDES, we became concerned and sought help. He was very difficult to deal with, showing almost no affection and having frequent tantrums and difficulty sleeping. We received the diagnoses of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and mental retardation, both of which we rejected based on our own instincts and those of professionals we consulted who work with deaf children. After an extensive search we found ourselves at the door of Dr. Annie Steinberg, who is a psychiatrist and pediatrician who signs and whose career has focused on the needs of children with behavioral and developmental challenges who are also deaf. With reports from school and videotapes from home as background, she then evaluated Miguel and met with us for a full day. The diagnosis was clear: Miguel has a significant disability.

Dr. Steinberg's suggestions for how to proceed were initially as unsettling as the diagnosis. She steered us to the work of Drs. Stanley Greenspan and Serena Weider and what is known as the Developmental, Individual Differences, Relationship-based Approach, or DIR®. In this approach, the goal is "to build healthy foundations for social, emotional, and intellectual capacities rather than focusing on skills and isolated behaviors" (www.floortime.org). As this is a highly individualized program designed to engage the child in meaningful shared and emotionally infused interactions, parents are the most important people in the mix, particularly in the early stages. For Miguel to begin to develop in socialization and language, my wife and I would have to take the lead. Their play-based approach is known as Floortime™, and using this model we developed play that allowed for shared problem solving, a continuous stream of interactions, and communication based on facial expressions, gesture, and language to get our little guy to come out of his shell, communicate with us, and enjoy the back and forth of human interaction.





We were amazed at the results. Within weeks of starting that approach, Miguel was calmer, less withdrawn, and more interested in conversation. He was becoming happier and more affectionate every week. Still, we faced the significant challenge of incorporating this approach at school so that Miguel would be similarly engaged there and have the chance to benefit from the talented staff and the ASL-rich KDES environment. After all, we could get him rockin' and rollin' at home, but as non-native signers we could never serve as Miguel's language models or educators.

Collaboration Pays Off

At first it was a challenge getting the people at school to incorporate the DIR approach into Miguel's education. However, we felt it was consistent with what we saw in use at KDES, most notably with the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. Reggio Emilia focuses on motivating each individual child for learning and socialization. Over time, the staff at KDES came to agree that we had to:

- start from where Miguel was at developmentally and go from there, and
- focus on his level of sensory regulation and engagement with others as goals, seeing those as prerequisites for learning and developing in a school environment.

At one point the school's leadership told us that Miguel would be better served at a school that focused on students with multiple disabilities. We explored that possibility, visiting both schools for hearing students and schools for the deaf with a special education or autism focus. In the end we were convinced

that inclusion at KDES was the best option for Miguel. There he receives full immersion in an ASL-rich environment modeling and interacting with typically developing deaf peers. We told the school our preference was to stay, but that Miguel would need accommodations to make that happen. We believed that given KDES's mandate and small size, it would be possible to get Miguel the resources he needs to succeed. After much negotiation, we were relieved to learn that the school agreed.

An Educator and Accommodations Make a Difference

We worked with the school to identify the support Miguel needed. Perhaps the most significant of the resources that has been offered to Miguel has been the 1:1 aide assigned to him. Charity Warn, now a KDES math teacher, was assigned to work directly with Miguel for two years. Her role was to keep him engaged—with her and with others as much as possible. She

was also to make sure he got breaks both inside and out of the classroom and that he was prepared for transitions throughout his day. With her warmth and expressive signing, Charity took Miguel places in conversation that we'd never seen before. For the first time, people at school were seeing the joyful Miguel that we had come to expect all the time at home. As Dr. Steinberg observed after a visit to the school: "Charity effectively broke down learning tasks that were overwhelming for Miguel, and using clear, articulate and well-executed ASL, she was consistently able to help Miguel understand receptively and respond with evidence that he could complete the tasks she set before him."

Charity described her experience with Miguel as follows: "Miguel's motivation to learn and do well in school caught my attention. After he helped me understand where he was coming from, I was able to show him strategies for dealing with classroom tasks and help him overcome his fear of failure. His self-esteem improved significantly because he no longer felt inferior."

Another important accommodation for Miguel was the availability of sensory strategies all day long, for example, "heavy work" such as arranging chairs before a group activity or tactile stimulation like the stretchy toy described above. Meeting Miguel's sensory needs helps him stay regulated, and thus ready for engagement and learning.

When Miguel was in first grade, the family decided to add medication to the mix of approaches used with him. This has proven beneficial, although not the mainstay of his progress. Miguel is less impulsive and more attentive, with the result being that he arrives at school more ready for learning. At the same time, without the support and accommodations, we would

not be seeing so much progress in development.

A continuing challenge is the need for constant coordination of the work of the multiple people involved in Miguel's school life—from teachers to therapists to ASL specialists. He benefits most when all of those people apply their skills in a consistent way, reinforcing the learning from one setting to another and emphasizing the practical application of language and socialization learning throughout his day.

Miguel at School Today

Since those early months of using the Floortime approach, Miguel's overall progress both at school and at home has been amazing. He is now happy much of the time, seems to derive real joy from being close to those he loves, tries hard to interact and regulate his actions, and his tantrums and disruptive behaviors are less frequent and shorter in duration. This progress shows that when families take the lead in Floortime, when schools focus their efforts on an approach like DIR, and when both actively collaborate, wonderful things can happen for a child with significant challenges. In Miguel's case:

- his atypical behaviors have come to be seen as unexpected rather than disruptive or intrusive;
- the frequency and intensity of his truly disruptive behaviors have decreased significantly;
- his level of engagement has greatly increased;
- he feels himself a true participant much of the day at school;
- his language is blossoming, albeit still significantly delayed for his age;
- his self-help skills and independence are increasing rapidly at home and at school; and

- his relationships are becoming deeper, with shared experiences and empathy increasingly evident.

Miguel is now in the third grade, getting ever further from the kindergarten where there are other children at his developmental level. He lags significantly behind his peers and has not proceeded up the developmental ladder in a fluid way, skipping important steps that contribute to a child's ability to use language and socialization in a practical context. Still, he is doing well and even thriving in some ways. His teacher, aide, and others who work with him directly are collaborating like never before, and the school's leadership is supportive. People enjoy Miguel, and that shows in the quality of their interactions with him. He's a handful and doing inclusion right (see sidebar) is a continuing challenge for any school. Still, Miguel gives something to the school, too. As Pat Hulsebosch, a parent of a former KDES student and a senior Gallaudet University faculty member says, "All too often it seems that children like Miguel are viewed for what they 'need,' what they take away from others—at home and at school—in terms of attention, time, resources, etc. We should also be looking at them in terms of what they add or contribute to our families and communities, and what we can do to enhance their contributions."

There are many factors in Miguel's progress, including our approach at home, the role of his big sister, and our good fortune in finding exceptional Gallaudet graduates to help out at home. But school is critical—from pre-school through high school we are looking at 16 years of growth and learning in an educational setting. So for us, while inclusion at a school for the deaf is an important principle, for Miguel, it's an imperative.

Inclusion at a School for the Deaf—A Parent's Perspective

"To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled."

~From the IDEA law defining "Least Restrictive Environment" or LRE

"It is within schools that children and adults learn some of the most basic lessons about who matters in the world ... it is only within inclusive schools that anyone can become a fully loving and competent human being and citizen. ... Inclusion is not a favor school systems do for students whom they perceive as 'disabled,' but a gift to our common humanity"

~From *Widening the Circle: The Power of Inclusive Classrooms* by Mara Sapon-Shevin

Inclusion Makes Sense, But There are Challenges

Activist educators and parents have successfully argued that LRE when applied to deaf students can mean placement in a school that

is fully accessible through visual language, meaning a school for the deaf. This is now accepted practice. Not so well-received has been the argument that LRE for a deaf student with multiple disabilities must then mean that he or she gets to go to that same school for the deaf. Throughout the country there are states where the schools for the deaf prefer to educate students with multiple disabilities in separate classrooms or even on a separate campus from other deaf students, and there are school districts where a deaf child like Miguel is sent to a hearing program for multi-disabled children rather than a school for the deaf.

The questions raised about inclusion in schools for the deaf are similar to those encountered in public education in general: Will resources allocated to the special needs students take away from the "regular" students? Will those students slow down the learning for others? Wouldn't a student like Miguel be better off in a place where the staff is trained in dealing with his or her needs? Many who favor inclusion answer these questions with a resounding "NO," and there is a growing group of educators and parents who support this

perspective. What is needed is the engagement of all stakeholders in an open process of considering each of the objections and the potential benefits for all children of the inclusive approach. In the words of Sapon-Shevin, "Inclusion means engaging all members of the school community in explicit discussions of the value of inclusiveness." However, that discussion is just a starting point; to make it work, inclusion must be done right.

Deaf children with multiple disabilities need to go to school in a language-rich, visual learning environment with full-time exposure to ASL and deaf culture. In this way they are the same as all of their deaf peers. Only the schools for the deaf offer the possibility

- Coordination of educators and service providers in a way that enhances the student's opportunities for progress
- A qualified aide to provide 1:1 support to the student
- Strategies to support the student's development in sustaining interactions with peers; while his or her ability to relate to people may grow rapidly, for the most part it is adults who can adjust their communication styles and have the patience to successfully interact
- Language goals that focus on finite learning to fill gaps in the student's language base and encourage the everyday practical application of language



of providing such an environment. Still, in addition to the lack of broad support for the inclusion approach, there are practical challenges in successfully applying this model in schools for the deaf. Inclusion for a student like Miguel means 1:1 support for much of the school day, which may be a question of resources for the school. Not enough teachers of the deaf have training in educating multi-disabled students. Not enough professionals have training in deaf education in the kind of approaches that in the past have been seen as "alternative," such as DIR® and Floortime™. There is more training available for approaches that rely on behavioral training that are in use in school systems throughout the country. There is hope, however; Gallaudet University and colleges with deaf education departments are showing a growing interest in bilingual/bicultural deaf education, and in those settings there are opportunities for expanding the preparation of teachers in the inclusion approach.

Key Programmatic Elements

The ideal educational program for a student such as Miguel would include several elements that distinguish it from plans for students with less challenging needs. Among the key provisions:

- Identification of the student's interests and the utilization of those interests to work on academics
- Use of visual schedules and the time to discuss them with the student
- Flexibility on how the student participates (as opposed to if he or she participates)
- Use of sensory strategies throughout the day and breaks from sit-down classroom work as needed
- Careful consideration of student discipline (a child such as Miguel has frequent "unexpected" behaviors and the occasional disruptive behaviors; learning social skills must be approached through a variety of methods, from social story picture books, to role playing, to pretend play and recognition of good behavioral choices)

In addition to those elements listed above, a plan for the future, when the academic gap between the student and his or her classmates in an inclusive setting is likely to widen (the educational team will need to find ways to keep the student fully engaged and challenged

as the material and pace needed for the other students' academics increases), is also an important part of the educational program.

Schools for the Deaf are Well-Poised to Do Inclusion Right

In 2008 the Clerc Center adopted new strategic goals. Among them is the commitment to "provide leadership in the identification, evaluation, and dissemination of evidence-based instructional practices, strategies, and resources for deaf and hard of hearing students with disabilities." This is a welcome start in what should be a national dialogue around inclusion at schools for the deaf.



Additionally, deliberate discussions need to take place involving the school community of educators and parents about how an inclusive school setting is beneficial to schools.

The entire KDES program is "special education," with small class sizes and sensitivity to the individual needs of all students to a degree not possible in large public school settings. Each KDES student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), so in some ways it's not as much of a stretch to get inclusion right there as it might be elsewhere, where at times "inclusion" might mean putting a student in a regular classroom with an aide to keep him or her busy. As Sapon-Shevin says in *Widening the Circle: The Power of Inclusive Classrooms*, "Inclusion offers us chances to rethink the teaching/learning process, recognizing that people learn in many different ways, and that education can be structured very differently." For schools like KDES and other schools for the deaf, that doesn't have to be such a radical notion.

Some accommodations are relatively easy to make. Once a school is committed to an inclusion approach, strategies do not necessarily have to stretch limited resources (e.g., the use of visual schedules and sensory activities)—and most often other students derive benefits

from those strategies indirectly.

Other resources may be less accessible regardless of the student's placement. Those include challenges in identifying, training, and supporting teachers of the deaf in the inclusion approach. For a hearing child with multiple disabilities, there are often alternatives to inclusion at the local public schools. The choices may not be great, and at times it may be hard to get the alternative program approved for a child, but often there are choices. For a deaf child, very few such choices exist around the country. So if the child clearly needs, as Miguel does, to be in a visual learning environment surrounded by people signing fluently in ASL, that means inclusion at a school for the deaf.

Making schools for the deaf inclusive settings for deaf students with disabilities is important for their all-around development. The consequences of disregarding this need may be severe. In the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of *Odyssey*, Dr. Steinberg says, "It is all about language and the opportunity to gain access to language. ... The deaf child who has an autistic spectrum disorder and is reliant on sign language may require additional adaptations to make communication and socialization accessible. Without this, the possibilities for social isolation are staggering."

Even if Miguel were hearing and we had a choice of a special needs school where all the children had challenges at least as severe as his, our family would probably not choose that option. Miguel clearly benefits from the communication and behavior modeling of all the people at KDES, from being part of a community of deaf children and deaf and signing hearing adults, and from being in school with his big sister, Wendy, for several years.

Miguel's experience at KDES shows it is possible to make inclusion at a school for the deaf work. Lori Rolnick, an occupational therapist at KDES and the former IEP coordinator, offers this perspective: "There is no doubt that from the beginning, creating an environment where Miguel could thrive was a challenge for both the school and the family. There were many long meetings that left us feeling frustrated and unresolved. Throughout this period, however, the family persisted and the school adjusted until finally we put in place some key accommodations and strategies which began to open the door to greater engagement and learning. Miguel today is a different child, and a testimony to what can happen when school and parents form a partnership that is truly in the best interest of the child." And, as Wendy says, "Many people ask this question: 'Is it challenging to have a brother like him?' The answer is yes, but it's not at all close to as challenging as it is for him."

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Esq., is a long-time advocate for the rights of deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families. She has presented on and written about numerous topics, including early hearing detection and intervention, education, test equity, civil rights, family support, deaf-hearing partnerships, and parent and deaf community involvement. She has been associated with the American Society for Deaf Children, the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, the Maryland School for the Deaf, the National Association of the Deaf, and other organizations. Raimondo is forever grateful for the support and information she received through Kendall Demonstration Elementary School's Parent-Infant Program when she found out her children were deaf. Raimondo welcomes questions and comments about this article at baraimondo@me.com.

Photos by Clerc Center staff

deaf children with disabilities: rights under the IDEA

By Barbara Raimondo

Parents of children who are deaf and who have disabilities often face barriers in ensuring that their children receive the services they need. Some of these barriers include lack of awareness about deafness-disability constellations, shortages of professionals knowledgeable about how deaf children learn or the impact of the disability on deaf children's learning, and lack of research-based recommendations on effective teaching methods. Regardless of the presence of barriers, each state's education system is required to serve those children appropriately.

According to one study, approximately 39 percent of deaf children surveyed have additional "educationally relevant" conditions (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2008). It is clear that deaf children with additional disabilities constitute a large minority of deaf children. This article provides information on how the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B applies to this category of children. Part B covers children ages 3 through 21. Part C is the section of the law that applies to children under age 3. It will not be addressed here, although many concepts in Part B and Part C are similar.

Eligibility

A child is eligible to be served under the IDEA if he or she has a disability or disabilities that fall into one or more of 13 specified disability categories and, because of this disability, requires special education and related services. The categories are:

- Autism
- Deaf blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Mental retardation
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness

IDEA requires that a free appropriate public education be provided to eligible children. This means that schools must provide special education and related services designed to meet the individual education needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met (U.S. Department of Education, September 2007).

- Special education is specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.
- Related services are those required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. They include transportation, interpreting, parent counseling and training, speech-language pathology and audiology, therapeutic recreation, physical and occupational therapy, school nurse services, and others.

IDEA requirements apply to all children who are eligible for IDEA services regardless of their type(s) or severity of disability. IDEA emphasizes individualization and meeting a child's unique needs. It requires that the course of a child's education be set out in an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The sections below describe key parts of a child's IEP.

Evaluations

A child's IEP starts with identification of his or her needs through evaluations and assessments. Schools must gather information on the child's functional, developmental, and academic areas. The child must be assessed in all areas related to his or her suspected disabilities. This includes, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities.

Schools must use various tools and strategies for determining a child's functional, developmental, and academic needs. Evaluations and assessments must be administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel. This means that for a deaf child, special care must be taken to ensure that the specialist performing the evaluation is able to communicate appropriately with the child.

Information collected from evaluations is used to create a profile of the child's Present Levels of Performance.

Present Levels of Performance

The IEP must include a statement of the child's Present Levels of Performance, including academic achievement and functional performance. This statement comes from assessments and evaluations. It should include a description of how the child's disability(ies) affects his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. Does the child's disability make it difficult for him or her to pay attention for long periods of time? Does the child's disability dictate the necessity of classroom accommodations? It is important to make a link between the child's disability and the direction of the IEP. The IEP is meant to respond to the needs of the child based on his or her disability. IDEA defines the general education curriculum as "the same curriculum as for nondisabled children." For preschool-aged children, it should include how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities.

Present Levels of Performance must be measurable. While a professional may believe that a child is "doing well" or

"lagging" in a particular area, personal opinions are difficult to substantiate and are interpreted differently from person to person. It is important that the Present Levels of Performance are documented in such a way that anyone reading them would understand them.



Present Levels of Academic Achievement

How is the child doing in such areas as reading, language arts, math, science, and history? At what level is he or she performing? Some examples of present levels of academic achievement are:

- "Tracy scores at the 3.2 grade level on the 'Math Key' assessment."
- "Della solves fifth grade-level math word problems with 50 percent accuracy."
- "Given 100 high-frequency words from the fourth grade curriculum, Dana can accurately identify 42."

Present Levels of Functional Performance

The term "functional" is meant to be used in the context of routine activities of everyday living. Therefore it could include activities such as self-care, the ability to follow routines, social skills and the ability to follow social cues, and the like. IDEA



does not give specific examples of functional performance, and it does not include examples of how functional performance should be measured. However, measurement of functional performance should be based on the needs of the child. Some examples of present levels of functional performance are:

- “During transition times, Dabney tantrums 50 to 60 percent of the time.”
- “Tawanda turns in three out of five homework assignments.”
- “With peers or professionals in school, Colleen makes eye contact 10 percent of the time.”

These statements serve as a starting point for the child’s annual goals.

Annual Goals

Once you know where you are starting from, measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, should be written. The annual goals must be designed to meet the child’s needs that result from his or her disability, enable him or her to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, and meet the child’s other educational needs that result from his or her disability. These goals should be aligned with the general curriculum and the academic standards that are applied to all children.

Using the examples from above, some measurable annual IEP goals might be:

- “By the end of the school year, Tracy will score at the 4.8 grade level as measured by the ‘Math Key’ assessment.”
- “Della will solve sixth grade-level math word problems with 70 percent accuracy.”
- “Given 100 words from the fifth grade curriculum, Dana will accurately identify 75.”

In these cases we have set measurable goals of more than one year’s progress in one year’s time. While IDEA does not specify that IEP goals must be written this way, it does require schools to ensure that children with disabilities reach the grade level benchmarks set for all students under the No Child Left Behind Act. If a child starts out behind, the only way he or she will catch up is by making more than one year’s progress in one year’s time. Some examples of measurable functional goals are:

- “During transition times, Dabney will tantrum no more than 10 percent of the time.”
- “Tawanda will turn in 95 percent of her homework assignments on time.”
- “With peers or professionals in school, Colleen will make eye contact 50 percent of the time.”

The ability to achieve academic goals is tied to progress towards functional goals for many children with additional disabilities. The IEP must adequately address functional goals. Like academic goals, functional goals should be measurable.

The IEP also must include a description of how the child’s progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports on his or her progress toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided.

Services

The IEP must include a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child or on behalf of the child. As mentioned above, special education is specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Special education can take the form of a different way of teaching reading, a particular approach to reinforcing math concepts, or other methods of presenting material to a child that is tailored to his

or her strengths. Related services are those required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Supplementary aids and services are provided for the purpose of enabling children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. Supplementary aids and services could also be provided to staff who may need training or support in meeting the child's needs. For example, training in the use of a child's communication device could be a supplementary service.

There can be overlap among these three categories. For example, the pacing of presentation of material could be considered specially designed instruction or could be considered a supplemental aid or service.

Regardless of how a service is categorized, it is essential that the child receives what he or she needs in order to have his or her educational and functional needs met. Services must be designed to help a child meet his or her annual goals.

The IEP must also include the projected date for the beginning of the services and the expected frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications.

For the first IEP in effect once a child turns 16, transition services and postsecondary goals must be included. These must be updated annually. IDEA allows students to be served through age 21 if the IEP team determines that is necessary. This is an important part of the IEP for students because it ensures that there is a plan for the student once he or she completes high school. It is an especially critical part of the IEP for students with disabilities who will continue to need community and vocational rehabilitation services. These linkages with programs outside of the school system should be made during the high school years so the student has a smooth transition after leaving school, without any gap in services. Some advocates recommend starting transition services no later than age 14 although the law does not require this.

This part of the IEP must include:

- appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and
- the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

The U.S. Department of Education (2007, January) has made clear that this requirement applies "whether or not the child's skill levels related to training, education, and employment are age appropriate. The IEP team must, however, develop the specific postsecondary goals for the child, in light of the unique

needs of the child as determined based on age appropriate transition assessments of the child's skills in these areas."

Placement

After the child's needs, goals, and services have been determined, it is time to decide what educational setting is most appropriate for him or her. The placement chosen should be one in which the IEP goals can reasonably be expected to be met. Parents are part of the group that decides placement.

The IEP must include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in other activities. For children who are placed in specialized settings, such as a school for the deaf, this is where the IEP team would document the reason why that is the appropriate setting.

The child must be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for him or her. The law defines this as:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities must be educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment can occur only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

However, the LRE for a deaf child may be different from the LRE for a child who is not deaf. The U.S. Department of Education (1992) has provided guidance as to what LRE means for a deaf child: "[R]egular educational settings are appropriate and adaptable to meet the unique needs of particular children

who are deaf. For others, a center or special school may be the least restrictive environment in which the child's unique needs can be met." Center or special schools include county-based regional programs and schools for the deaf.

The U.S. Department of Education also said that there are cases when the nature of the disability and the individual child's needs dictate a specialized setting. A specialized setting can provide a structured curriculum or special methods of teaching. The U.S. Department of Education (1992) noted, "Just as placement in the regular educational setting is required when it is appropriate for the unique needs of a child who is deaf, so is removal from the regular educational setting required when the child's needs cannot be met in that setting with the use of supplementary aids and services."

IDEA makes it clear that no one setting is appropriate for all children and that placement decisions must be based on the unique needs of each student.

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Special Factors

IDEA requires IEP teams to consider “special factors” in the development of a child’s IEP. These include:

- In the case of a child whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports shall be considered.
- In the case of a child with limited English proficiency, the language needs of the child should be considered.
- In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, instruction in Braille and the use of Braille should be provided unless the IEP team determines that type of instruction is not appropriate for the child.
- In the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, his or her language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in his or her language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child’s language and communication mode, should be considered.
- Whether or not the child needs assistive technology devices and services should be considered.

Tips for Parents

- Be familiar with your child’s evaluations whether they are done by school personnel or outside the school system. IEP teams are required to consider information from outside evaluations, so if you have had your child evaluated outside the school district, you may share that information with other members of the IEP team.
- Finding trained and knowledgeable personnel can be challenging for school districts. There simply are not enough professionals qualified to do this in every area of the country. School districts may have to look outside the district for expertise. This is permitted under IDEA.
- Parents have a role in helping document their child’s needs. As a parent, you should let teachers and other members of the IEP team know what you observe of your child at home and in other settings. When you are with your child, you may wish to take notes on what he or she is doing functionally, developmentally, and academically. Take note of your child’s strengths. Think about your areas of concern. Prepare for IEP discussions ahead of time. Parents have valuable input on the needs and abilities of their child.

Learn about your school district’s general education curriculum. The IEP should serve as a mechanism to access this curriculum. IEP goals should reflect this.

- Don’t wait until the IEP meeting if you have questions or concerns. It is a good idea to stay in touch with your child’s teachers and service providers throughout the school year,

not only at IEP time. Try to establish a good rapport early on.

- Review the IEP progress reports that are sent home. Under IDEA, schools are required to report to parents on progress of IEP goals and objectives at least as frequently as progress is reported for all children. Often, this means you will receive an IEP progress report each time you receive a grade report. Contact the school if you have questions or concerns about the information in the progress report.
- The IEP can be changed if needed. While IEPs should be written to be valid for a year, they may be modified at any time if the IEP team agrees.
- Don’t be confused by use of the terms “primary” or “secondary” disability. Parents have reported that their child’s school has categorized one disability as a primary disability and another as a secondary disability, then proceeded to provide services based on the first but not the second disability. Providing services this way does not comply with IDEA. The terms “primary disability” and “secondary disability” do not appear in IDEA. Further, IDEA requires the IEP to address all the educational needs that result from the child’s disability(ies). Thus, whether one thinks of one disability as primary and the other as secondary, the child’s needs must be met. Finally, the notion that IDEA contemplates refusing the provision of some services on the basis that the child is receiving other services contradicts the idea of a free appropriate public education.

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advocating for your child's education: what you need to know

By Matthew Rider and Charlene Ward

Parents of deaf and hard of hearing children in the special education system may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information they need to learn. The goal of this article is to give parents a place to begin in the effort to work with the school to ensure that their child receives an appropriate education. There are three broad areas that parents need to be familiar with: their child's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), their child's needs and strengths, and how to work with the school to ensure that their child's needs are met.

IDEA, originally called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, is federal legislation that was developed in 1975. It was renamed as IDEA in 1990. It requires school districts to ensure that each of their students who is identified as needing special education services has access to an appropriate education. Even though IDEA has been around for decades, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children might find that they need to educate school personnel about their child's needs and how they should be met under IDEA for several reasons:

- Students with hearing loss are a low-incidence population. Less than 1 percent of the student population has been identified as being deaf or hard of hearing. This means that school personnel may have limited experience with deaf and/or hard of hearing students.
- Many students with hearing loss have additional disabilities that also need to be considered; however, the number of professionals skilled in working with deaf and/or hard of hearing students with additional disabilities is limited.



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Photos by Clerc Center staff

- The increasing number of students with cochlear implants brings new language and communication needs into the school.
- Other disabilities, especially physical disabilities, may be accommodated in similar ways for most students with that specific disability. For instance, most students with mobility challenges need help getting around the school building. Students with speech disabilities need speech and language services. As a result of this tendency to generalize, there are erroneous assumptions that may be made among administrators in public schools:

- **All hearing loss is the same.** Deafness as a physical condition is measured in decibel perception.

However, the ability to understand speech and other sounds at specific frequencies varies widely.

- **All deaf students know sign language.**

Communication among deaf people is varied. Deaf children who are born deaf are not immediately fluent in signed communication. Furthermore, not all deaf and hard of hearing people use the same mode of signed communication. Some students may also communicate well through spoken English. It is not a given that all deaf and hard of hearing students are proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) or that ASL is the ideal classroom communication method for them.

- **Deaf students can get by in school with an ASL interpreter.** Deaf students may need various types of accommodations to ensure that they have access to communication and information at school. One accommodation is the use of educational interpreters, who translate spoken language into sign language for deaf students who sign and translate deaf students' sign language into spoken language. However, this type of support may not be what every deaf or hard of hearing student needs. Students vary in their needs and skills, and whether a student would benefit from using an educational interpreter depends on his or her need for visual language access and skill in using an interpreter appropriately.

- **All sign language interpreters are fluent signers.** The provision of a sign language interpreter does not guarantee that

the deaf or hard of hearing student has full access to language and communication at school. A high degree of fluency is needed in both ASL and English, in addition to specialized training in translating between the languages, in order to effectively interpret for a student. Educational interpreters can have a wide range of proficiency, from beginner to native signer, and may have varying amounts of training. Their ability to effectively provide deaf and hard of hearing students with access, therefore, varies widely as well.

Under IDEA requirements, schools must identify the unique strengths and weaknesses of each disabled student. Ideally, evaluations should be done by trained professionals who are familiar with the school-aged deaf and hard of hearing population. Schools must then create and follow an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that will ensure that the student receives services and educational opportunities appropriate to his or her needs. An IEP is a document that identifies an individual child's needs, establishes goals for him or her, and describes the support he or she will receive to ensure that those needs are met. Each child's IEP needs to be reviewed at least annually to ensure that appropriate progress is being made towards the goals. This focus on the individual child's needs should prevent decisions from being made based on generalizations or misconceptions.

Parents are a very important part of this process. They are always part of the IEP team, and as team members who know well how the child communicates at home and in other settings as well as the child's other abilities and needs, their input is critical. Additionally, in situations where schools do not have a strong understanding of deafness, parents can help educate the school. There are many strategies parents can use to ensure that their perspectives and knowledge of their child are taken into consideration during IEP planning and to work with the school for the best possible outcome.

Since the input of each team member is so important, it is strongly encouraged that the full team be present for each part of the meeting. Some schools prepare draft IEPs prior to the actual meeting. If that is the case, the school must make it clear that the draft is a preliminary one and open to discussion and revision during the meeting. This is stated in the Federal Register, Monday, August 14, 2006, page 46678: "With respect to a draft IEP, we encourage public agency



staff to come to an IEP Team meeting prepared to discuss evaluation findings and preliminary recommendations. Likewise, parents have the right to bring questions, concerns, and preliminary recommendations to the IEP Team meeting as part of a full discussion of the child's needs and the services to be provided to meet those needs. We do not encourage public agencies to prepare a draft IEP prior to the IEP Team meeting, particularly if doing so would inhibit a full discussion of the child's needs. However, if a public agency develops a draft IEP prior to the IEP Team meeting, the agency should make it clear to the parents at the outset of the meeting that the services proposed by the agency are preliminary recommendations for review and discussion with the parents. The public agency also should provide the parents with a copy of its draft proposals, if the agency has developed them, prior to the IEP Team meeting so as to give the parents an opportunity to review the recommendations of the public agency prior to the IEP Team meeting, and be better able to engage in a full discussion of the proposals for the IEP. It is not permissible for an agency to have the final IEP completed before an IEP Team meeting begins."



If you feel the school is not meeting your child's needs because it has not evaluated him or her properly, you may request an independent educational evaluation at the school's expense. Federal law describes this as "an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the public agency responsible for the education of the child in question" (34 C.F.R. 300.503). So if educators need additional information, help them connect with an expert independent evaluator who will be the help they need. Your state school for the deaf may be able to help you locate an independent

evaluator who is not only an expert in his or her field but who is also knowledgeable about deafness.

Be Prepared for the IEP Meeting

There are several things you can do prior to and at each annual meeting:

- Ask the school for any evaluation findings and preliminary recommendations related to your child prior to the meeting. Review all the information and come to the meeting prepared with questions, concerns, and any preliminary recommendations you may have.
- Know the team members required to attend the IEP meeting, and all the extra members who will also be attending. The IEP meeting room may be full. Be sure you understand what everyone's role is by the time the IEP discussion begins at the meeting.
- There are rules under IDEA that protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents. They are called procedural safeguards, and they apply to IEPs as well as other parts of a child's education. Your child's school must provide you with a copy of the procedural safeguards before each meeting. The IEP administrator will also review them with you. Make sure you understand both what your rights are under the procedural safeguards and what the next steps you can take are if you disagree with the IEP team about any part of the document.
- Make sure that minutes (notes) are recorded at the meeting and that your agreement or objections are noted in those minutes. The minutes of the meeting are considered part of the IEP itself and should be included in the final version that you receive. Make sure you read the minutes and correct or clarify any disputed points before you leave the meeting.
- Always review each copy of the IEP before you, either

What You as a Parent Can Do

Make it a priority to know the law behind all the decisions regarding your child's education. Understand your child's rights under IDEA and the parts of the IEP process as well as the IEP document.

Be the Expert, Find an Expert

Learn as much as you can about your child's needs. In many cases deafness as a disability is a relatively new concept to educators, as is deafness coupled with additional disabilities. You can help your child by educating them and the school.

Any information you offer educators regarding your child's communication skills, decibel hearing loss, learning strategies, etc., will help them understand how incredibly dynamic deafness is and how the one-size-fits-all approach to deaf education is not effective. If necessary, bring an expert from outside of the school to your child's next IEP meeting to act as a consultant on deafness. Most schools for the deaf maintain a list of professionals in the area who are qualified to speak on behalf of deaf students.

verbally or in writing, indicate that you agree with it. Mistakes can happen and the school can accidentally print up an invalid or older version of the IEP for you to sign.

- Understand that once the meeting is over and the IEP document is signed by all participants, that IEP is to be implemented per its time frame. Asking to change something that you overlooked in the meeting requires another IEP meeting since the IEP is a legal and binding document and cannot be changed without the approval of the IEP team.
- Continue to follow up after the meeting. By law, once the IEP is implemented, progress reports must be sent home at least as frequently as regular grade reports are sent home. Review the progress reports the school sends you indicating your child's progress towards IEP goals and objectives. Contact the appropriate service provider if you have any questions or concerns about the reports or your child's progress.

Understand the Cost of Accommodations

School administrators are aware of their responsibilities under IDEA and eager to provide needed support for students. However, while considerations of what a school can afford are not supposed to weigh into discussions about what a special education student needs, school districts are businesses and have to be fiscally responsible. As a result, IEP accommodations for students that do not have a big impact on limited financial or human resources may be approved more quickly than accommodations that have a larger impact on resources. Examples of low-impact accommodations include strategic classroom seating, special access to the school elevator for students with limited mobility, and additional testing time. More expensive accommodations such as ASL interpreters, additional staff or alternative educational placements, and mental health treatment may be weighed more carefully. School administrators may also be reticent to approve accommodations that require major systemic change to their overall school climate since such change usually involves significant expense in terms of consultation, staff training, and policy book re-writes. It is not uncommon for parents to feel the school's resistance to their requests for more complex accommodations.

If you feel your child's needs are not being addressed, it is helpful to approach your relationship with the school system from a positive, can-do perspective. In most cases, schools do not like to reach impasses over IEPs and would prefer to resolve issues directly with parents. They would rather avoid going to mediation and/or due process arbitration, which are the legal



options available to parents under IDEA procedural safeguards. These processes can be time consuming, costly, and can severely damage the collaborative relationship between the family and the school. This is not to say that it is not necessary to stand your ground sometimes on issues that are critical to your child's educational success. However, you are more likely to be successful in negotiating with a school when your relationship is not adversarial in nature.

Know the Least Restrictive Environment for Your Child

All children must receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). IDEA requires that children be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for them. In public education, there is a continuum of educational settings, and for most children with disabilities, the classroom in the neighborhood school that the child would attend if he or she were not disabled is considered the LRE. However, for deaf children, the LRE may be different. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) states, "Any setting, including a regular classroom, that prevents a child who is deaf from receiving an appropriate education that meets his or her needs including communication needs (and therefore does not allow for the provision of FAPE) is not the LRE for that individual child...the regular classroom is an appropriate placement for some children who are deaf, but for others it is not. The decision as to what placement will provide FAPE for an individual deaf child—which includes a determination as to the

LRE in which appropriate services can be made available to the child—must be made only after a full and complete IEP has been developed that addresses the full range of the child's needs."

Take the time to learn, in your own way, what LRE means for your child. It is not a "one size fits all" mandate. What it means for your neighbor's child is not what it means for yours. As outlined above, any discussion about the LRE should not happen until the end of each IEP meeting. The IEP team must review all the information they have, identify the goals for the child, and decide on the accommodations and services the child needs. After that

Take the time to learn, in your own way, what LRE means for your child. It is not a "one size fits all" mandate.

discussion is complete, it is time to determine what kind of program is the least restrictive. Be able to explain what “least restrictive” means for your child and ask for clarification if the school disagrees. If you and the school continue to disagree about the LRE for your child during the IEP meeting, make sure that is documented in the minutes and get a copy at the end of the meeting. You will need that documentation if you decide to pursue mediation or due process arbitration under the procedural safeguards.

Maintain a Collaborative Relationship with the School and the IEP Team

Your child may receive support and accommodations from a variety of teachers and other professionals. Familiarize yourself with who is responsible for each aspect of your child’s education. Establish a line of communication with each individual.

Stay Up to Date

Lastly, continue to educate yourself. Ask questions and search for information. There are many websites designed to support parents seeking information and advocacy advice. The U.S. Department of Education is a good place to begin. Below are some websites that are easy to navigate and can answer many of your questions.

- <http://idea.ed.gov> - U.S. Department of Education (Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004)
- www.ndepnow.org - National Deaf Education Project
- www.nichcy.org - National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
- www.wrightsław.com - Wrightslaw Special Education Advocacy

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Photos courtesy of Margarita Sweet

helping children with sensory processing disorders:

the role of occupational therapy

Imagine yourself inside the coach of a train on your way home during rush hour. It's packed and you can't move. You want to find your mobile text device so you dig into your backpack. The train suddenly stops and

In this scenario, to relax during the train trip you must have adequate sensory processing skills, including:

- A mature tactile system to feel comfortable around the people riding on the train who may unexpectedly touch or rub against you (maintaining your usual personal boundaries is difficult in this situation). Your tactile system also enables you to find items, such as your mobile device, without using your vision.
- Your vestibular and proprioceptive systems, which play an important role in maintaining your balance while the train moves or stops. These systems tell you where you are moving in relation to space and to activate your muscles in order to obtain a desired position. In this case, they help you move your hand to find and hold the handlebar without hurting anyone and increase your muscle tone to help you stand still and not fall.

For many people, riding on a train during rush hour is a normal experience. They get used to the crowded conditions and/or already know that they are not likely to be harmed in this situation. However, for some who have intact sensory systems, this experience can be very challenging. They may feel uncomfortable standing close to strangers, lose their balance on unstable surfaces, depend on their eyes or take extra time to find an object inside a bag, or simply avoid taking the train during rush hour. We all experience unpleasant situations that we cannot control, and this is normal. But when someone has difficulties functioning in daily life, he or she may have sensory dysfunction.

Normally functioning sensory systems develop through sensory experiences. Children are stimulated through their senses in many different ways. They learn to tolerate this stimulation and also how to use the information they receive to control themselves and their movements and interact with the world around them. For example, just



as the eyes detect visual information and relay it to the brain for interpretation and action (i.e., copying information from the chalkboard or becoming excited when you run into a dear friend), other sensory receptors pick up and relay information to the brain for interpretation and purposeful response.

Even though a person's sensory system is intact, he or she may have a sensory processing disorder (SPD), also known as sensory integration dysfunction. This means the person's brain does not correctly process the data it receives through the senses. SPDs are linked to many issues, including autism spectrum disorders, Attention Deficit Disorder, developmental and/or neurological disorders such as Fragile X Syndrome, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, and even food allergies (Mitchell, 2010). In some people, a SPD may co-exist with these diagnoses; in others, they may only have a SPD. The red flags of sensory integration dysfunction in children are a child's unusual responses to touching and being touched, and/or to moving or being moved (Kranowitz, 1998).

The day-to-day living of people with SPDs may be affected. Children, who may have not yet learned how to independently compensate for sensory difficulties they experience, face challenges in focusing on learning in school. For example, under-responsive or over-responsive sensory systems may cause these students to fear movement while using the playground equipment, dislike being in circle time, or have difficulty transitioning, or the students may present a high activity level, touch everything, and/or take excessive risks that compromise personal safety. Either way, this may prevent them from participating fully in classroom activities.

This is where occupational therapy (OT) comes in. Occupational therapists figure out why people have difficulties with daily activities and help them develop skills or strategies for adapting to and participating in these activities. Therapists play a valuable role in the school system, working with students who have SPDs. At Kendall Demonstration Elementary School

(KDES), therapists make a big difference in some students' ability to benefit from their educational environment and their teachers' understanding of their needs. The following story of three KDES students illustrates how OT can help.

Every morning at KDES, three deaf students with additional disabilities come to the sensory-motor gym for OT services identified in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The gym setup changes each day, carefully arranged by their occupational therapist

to ensure the students continue developing and regulating their sensory skills. The students eagerly take off their shoes, leave their backpacks and jackets neatly placed on their chairs, and attend to the therapist's directions. The directions may, for example, guide the children through completing an obstacle course, playing on different kinds of swings, riding scooters, putting their hands in a box full of rice and beans to find hidden objects, being squeezed with balls or mats, or following a sequence of moves to make a dance. Those activities and others often incorporate academic concepts such as numbers, shapes, or colors, and reinforce the use of language, allowing the students to have fun while developing key sensory processing skills.

This scene might seem unremarkable, but to their teachers, parents, and the students themselves, it is an extraordinary—and satisfying—experience. A year ago, it was difficult for the three students to follow the therapist's directions. Each student isolated him- or herself in his or her own games, and it was nearly impossible to transition the students to a structured activity. One would spin on a swing continuously for 30 minutes without getting dizzy. Another would imitate others' disruptive behavior and engage students in aggressive wrestling games. The third would sit back and simply watch others. Those students needed order. Their sensory systems were under-responsive, over-responsive, or seeking additional sensory stimulation. The students also needed structure to engage in more purposeful play in order to develop academic skills (fine motor, visual motor, and visual perceptual skills) and improve their self-regulation skills to attend to their teachers and peers.

Over the past year, those students have become more adept at regulating their behavior and strengthened several skills:

- Instead of running into the sensory-motor gym, attacking the various objects, and playing on their own, they now sit patiently and listen to the therapist give them instructions, usually a sequence of steps in an obstacle course along with a set of rules agreed upon with the students.
- Their language skills have improved and expanded to the point that they have a sign for most of the equipment found in the room and cooperate with their peers by taking turns or asking for their involvement in team-coordinated activities.
- They make eye contact more consistently during discussions.
- They cooperate when transitioning from one activity to another.
- They understand when it is time to stop and move on to a different step.

The progress these students have been making has helped them to focus during other school activities. The therapists have also provided guidance to the students' classroom teachers in helping the students stay regulated. The teachers ensure that the students receive sensory breaks throughout the day. Their classrooms are structured so that they have a variety of activity stations that require the students to use their senses. There are beanbags on



which they can sit while reading a book; boxes filled with sand, water, or beans; and/or toys that vibrate. When transitioning from the classroom to another location, the teacher may lead the students in fun walks.

A key ingredient in the success of OT is the training and experience of the therapist, who must be able to guide students with SPDs in meaningful and natural ways to help their brains modulate information received through their senses. This, in turn, affects achievement in their academic, physical,



and social-emotional growth. The therapist's ultimate goal is to give the students the tools they need to independently find ways to cope when they don't feel regulated (i.e., when they feel overwhelmed, fidgety, inattentive).

For more information about SPDs, visit the website of the Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation at www.spdfoundation.net.

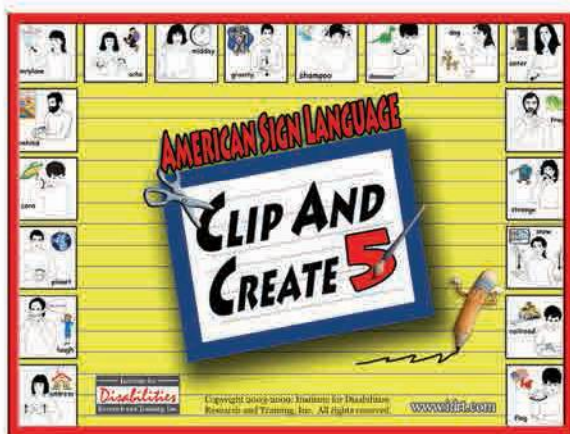
To learn more about OT, visit the website of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., at www.aota.org.

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pet therapy:

a new way of reaching students with additional disabilities

By Kimberly Mockler

Thomas is a profoundly deaf student with cerebral palsy. He has difficulty sitting or staying in one place for longer than a minute and is constantly moving around the classroom. He also used to have difficulty focusing on his school work or making eye contact with his teachers, teacher assistants, and peers—until Penni started coming to visit.

Penni is a 13-year-old Pembroke Welsh corgi who was originally bred and trained by Canine Companions for Independence to be a hearing dog for the deaf. She ended up as a therapy dog visiting schools for the deaf instead. Penni has now been visiting Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf on Long Island, New York, with her owner, Florence Scarinci, for over a decade, and has recently started making regular visits to my classroom at St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf in Brooklyn, New York.

When Penni comes to visit, Thomas goes to his favorite blue inflatable chair and sits down (something he rarely does without prompting). He is learning to focus on and maintain eye contact with Penni for periods of time long enough during which to pet her, play with her,



Kimberly Mockler, received her bachelor's degree in history/secondary education from SUNY Geneseo and her MA and MEd in deaf education and special education (with a concentration in mental retardation) from Teachers College at Columbia University. She has worked at the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults in Sands Point, New York, and taught for two years in a self-contained classroom for deaf and hard of hearing students for the New York City Department of Education. For the past four years, Mockler has been teaching at St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf in Brooklyn, New York. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at KMockler@sfdesales.org.

Photos courtesy of Kimberly Mockler

and give her treats. It is extremely difficult for Thomas to sit calmly and quietly for any extended period of time or to make eye contact or focus on any one thing. Penni is helping Thomas learn these essential behaviors in addition to other behaviors, such as interacting appropriately with a dog and playing fetch. These behaviors help Thomas experience different types of interactions and focus on needs other than his own, important skills for him to acquire. Thomas is just beginning to transfer the skills he is learning during his visits with Penni to times when she is not in the classroom. He is making slow but steady progress and is showing a lot of potential and improvement, especially in terms of eye contact and his ability to sit quietly and complete his school work.

Therapy dogs like Penni aid in instruction in a variety of ways. They are particularly suited to work with preschool-aged children and special needs populations where the curriculum most easily can incorporate a therapy dog into lessons. With these two populations, therapy dogs can assist with teaching eye contact (a vital lesson within classrooms for the deaf), turn taking (i.e., playing a game of fetch or Hide-and-Seek with the dog), and fine motor skills (i.e., brushing the dog and pouring water into a bowl for him or her).

Therapy dogs can also assist during cooking lessons (the students bake dog biscuits, of course!) and help students learn how to become “dog trainers” by having the therapy dog run through a mini-agility course set up in the classroom or follow signed or visual commands by the students. Students also learn about dog ownership and dog care by brushing the dog, giving him or her treats, playing games with the dog, and learning about dogs in general.

While most therapy dogs are hearing and trained auditorally, there are some deaf therapy dogs and hearing therapy dogs who are trained visually (using American Sign Language, standard obedience hand signals, or a combination of the two). These visually trained dogs are ideal therapy dogs for classrooms with deaf and hard of hearing students. Penni is one such therapy dog that is ideally suited to visit classrooms for the deaf.

Karen Papasergiou, a special needs teacher at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf, said, “I thought pet therapy might be the best way for the students to understand unconditional love. Little did I know that after 10 years, we would have surpassed my wildest dreams and had some of the most successful moments with Florence Scarinci and Penni. Throughout the 10 years, they have assisted my students in times of emotional need, during



language lessons, on trips, introduced our students to breeders, assisted us at the Westminster Dog Show, baked dog biscuits, assisted in a Christmas sale to raise money for canine victims of Hurricane Katrina, trained us to understand agility training, and many more experiences. The students don’t even realize they’re learning, but instead intrinsically incorporate Penni and Florence into their lives.”

Scarinci, in turn, expressed that “it was my sincere wish that she [Penni] would change one person’s life for the better. Little did I know that the person whose life she would change would be me and that as a therapy dog she would touch hundreds of lives.” Penni has also been recognized for the impact she has had on others. She was nominated by the students of Mill Neck to be the American Kennel Club’s Therapy Dog of 2007 (Award for Canine Excellence)—and she won!

In addition to visiting schools for the deaf to help students like Thomas learn school behaviors and life skills that will help them become successful, Penni and other therapy dogs also visit nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospitals, psych units, centers for children/adolescents/adults with developmental disabilities, libraries, colleges, and any facility that feels their population can benefit from a therapy dog and requests a single visit or regular visits.

For more information about having a trained therapy dog visit your school or facility, or to learn more about deaf ASL-trained therapy dogs, please visit <http://www.deltasociety.org>.

partners with a purpose:

the consultant teacher model in educating deaf and hard of hearing students

By Candi Mascia-Reed

Educating deaf and hard of hearing students is a rewarding yet complex endeavor. Students are the beneficiaries when educators consistently reflect on and dialogue about teaching strategies, curriculum, student expectations, and school culture beliefs and practices. In the Union Street School for the Deaf and the Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf, in Hackensack, New Jersey, each student's learning potential is maximized through an innovative educational model adapted from the Special Education Department in the Hackensack School District called the Consultant Teacher Model. In this model, instruction, resources, and support are provided by a quartet of participants: the consultant teacher, educational interpreter, general education teacher, and teacher assistant; the student is the fifth participant.

The role of the consultant teacher is flexible and dynamic and remains within the school district; it is not a traveling itinerant model. The role of the educational interpreter is unique, requiring a commitment to and support of each student's learning potential through assessed communication needs. Teacher assistants are full participants in the academic model. Safety nets are implemented to monitor student success, professional needs, and student classroom placement.

The Consultant Teacher Model at the Union Street School for the Deaf Elementary and Middle School

School at a Glance

The Union Street School for the Deaf serves 38 students from pre-kindergarten through grade eight. Small group instruction classes are provided for all grades by certified teachers of the deaf. The Union Street School is located in a separate building adjacent to the Hackensack Middle School, which serves hearing students in grades five through eight. All students report to the Union Street School each day. Students recommended for mainstream classes represent a wide range of academic abilities.

Union Street School elementary students, grades one through four, depending on their schedules, take small group-instructed classes in the Union Street School, and/or are transported via mini-van with educational interpreters back and forth daily to Fanny Meyer Hiller Elementary School.



Candi Mascia-Reed, EdD, has 30 years of classroom and administrative experience in the field of deaf education in elementary through postsecondary teacher-college settings. Mascia-Reed is the supervisor of the Union Street School for the Deaf and the Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf, both in the Bergen County Special Services School District in Hackensack, New Jersey. She is the co-founder of New Jersey Deaf Education Affiliates, a state-wide, nonprofit organization for professionals in the field of educating deaf and hard of hearing students. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at canree@bergen.org.



Left: A consultant teacher of the deaf confers with an educational interpreter.

Photos courtesy of Candi Mascia-Reed



Left: Union Street School students are transported to a local elementary school throughout the day.

Depending on their mainstream schedules, Union Street School middle school students and educational interpreters walk back and forth to the Hackensack Middle School beginning with homeroom period. Some students may remain for mainstream classes, while other students may leave after homeroom period to return to the Union Street School for small group-instructed classes for parts of the day.

Academic courses provided for middle school students within the Union Street School are departmentalized. Union Street School middle school teachers provide instruction in small group classes for some subjects as well as Consultant Teacher services for students in the Hackensack Middle School and in Fanny Meyer Hiller Elementary School. Time for consultation is built into the middle school teachers' schedules. They create their own weekly schedules for consult planning time.

The Consultant Teacher Model

Accountability and a process for continuous improvement are important characteristics of the Consultant Teacher Model in the Union Street School. Oversight and monitoring are provided through constant communication among all teachers and staff members involved in ongoing data review. A key element in this process is the flexible role of the teachers and staff members in this model. For example, instead of teaching full time, two middle school-certified teachers of the deaf at the Union Street School have multiple responsibilities:

- As classroom teachers, they provide direct instruction for two or three small group instruction classes in core content subjects held within the Union Street School as well as two resource courses in the Union Street School providing consultant services for 11 students in grades five through eight and 12 students in grades two through four. The middle school class assignments are specific to each teacher's New Jersey Highly Qualified Teacher status.
- As consultant teachers, they provide accommodations and modifications for mainstreamed deaf students in all elementary and middle school grades; consultant teaching support to Union Street School kindergarten through grade four students who take mainstream academic classes in the local elementary school; support for their assigned general education teachers in the elementary and middle

school locations through monthly in person visits, e-mail, and educational interpreter collaboration; and monthly observation reports on each student.

To ensure the consultant teachers have the flexibility to fulfill their responsibilities to each individual student and general education classroom teacher, they coordinate their own weekly schedule. Although each consultant teacher is assigned a core content area, they make all other determinations in regard to class and consultation scheduling. (See Figure 1 for a sample schedule.)

Educational interpreters have an enhanced role as well.

In addition to completing monthly observation reports and participating as full members of the Consultant Teacher Model team, they provide mainstreamed students with reviews of content-specific signs/vocabulary/concepts during resource class time and confer with the consultant teacher through a system of communication folders in the classroom.

Students receive monitoring and support appropriate to their individual needs. A mandatory resource period is scheduled for each deaf student who takes an academic course at the elementary level or in the middle school. These classes are held in the Union Street School with a teacher of the deaf along with a certified educational interpreter and/or a teacher assistant. The resource period provides pre-teaching, re-teaching, and supplemental instruction in each core subject area specific to individual student or student group needs. Students have the opportunity to review class notes provided by volunteer mainstream class peers in each class and clarify homework assignments. Other accommodations provided during the resource period may include opportunities for students to re-take tests or to have extended time for test taking. Students are required to complete a weekly Resource Room Student Log.

In the spring, prior to the beginning of the next school year, the Union Street School education team meets to discuss mainstream general education placement. The education team is comprised of the parent/guardian, the Union Street School case manager, the Union Street School small class instruction teacher, the sending district case manager, the school supervisor,



Above: Union Street School students walk to Hackensack Middle School for homeroom.

speech teachers, and the consultant teacher. Prior to Individualized Education Program meetings and decisions regarding mainstream class placements, the Union Street School case manager requests, in an e-mail correspondence, written feedback from the current general education teacher. The educational interpreter is also required to provide, in writing, a feedback form specifically on how the student has utilized the interpreter services in a particular mainstream class.

The Consultant Teacher Model at the Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf

Program at a Glance

The Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf is a program within a "host school site." Students represent a wide range of academic abilities. Two consultant teachers, one teacher assistant, and an educational interpreter team provide services for students in grades nine through 12. Currently, there are 12 students. Students are fully mainstreamed except for a daily mandatory



Left: A teacher at the local elementary school, left, teaches a social studies lesson as an educational interpreter translates next to her.

resource period during which they receive pre-teaching, re-teaching, and additional support in all of their academic mainstream classes. Students and staff do not travel; they are in the host school site and

participate in all facets of the general education population, course selections, technical courses, sports, and clubs.

The Consultant Teacher Model has also been refined for use in the Hackensack High School. As at the Union Street School, the two high school consultant teachers have multiple responsibilities and coordinate their own weekly schedules. They provide two types of direct instruction by teaching resource periods with the teacher assistant and/or the educational interpreter, and a mandatory English lab period for all incoming freshmen. This English lab provides a transition opportunity, in addition to the mainstream English class, to review and define lessons learned in the mainstream English class.

The consultant teachers also provide support to the general education teachers. While in the classroom, both teachers observe lessons and will often provide additional commentary to the lesson along with the general education teacher. If a

Figure 1: Sample Schedule of a Consultant Teacher

Union Consultant: _____		Week of: _____				
Period	Time	Monday	Tuesday 1/2 Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
HR	8:12-8:30	Consult – Interpreters and middle school team	Consult – Interpreters and middle school team	Consult – Interpreters and middle school team	Consult – Interpreters and middle school team	Consult – Interpreters and middle school team
I	8:30-9:05 Day 1		Resource/Study Skills 2-Math,SS/Science 5-Math	Consult – Communicate with Teachers Lynes and Roache	Resource/Study Skills 2-Math,SS/Science 5-Math	
I	8:30 - 9:23 Day 2	Resource/Study Skills 8-Language Arts, Math		Resource/Study Skills 8-Language Arts, Math		Resource/Study Skills 8-Language Arts, Math
2	9:26-10:16	Language Arts 5/8	Language Arts 5/8	Language Arts 5/8	Language Arts 5/8	Language Arts 5/8
3	10:19 - 11:09	Prep Consult – Monico SS/S Lynes SS/S		Prep	Prep Consult – Roache, Hansen	Prep – Consult with Hansen, Pre Algebra
4	11:12 - 12:02	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
5	12:05 - 12:55	Language Arts 6	Consultant Language 8 – Modify test	Language Arts 6	Language Arts 6	Language Arts 6
6	12:58 – 1:48 Day 1	Pre Algebra 8	Consultant Period Meet with Teacher Roache	Pre Algebra 8	Pre Algebra 8 Resource 5 Math Resource 6 Lang., Math	Pre Algebra 8
6	1:25 – 1:50 Day 2	Study Skills/Resource 4 SS/S + Book Club	Consult Letter to Hillers Teacher DRA Lynes, Petrocelli - Math	Study Skills/Resource 4 SS/S + Book Club		Study Skills/Resource 4 SS/S + Book Club
7	1:51 - 2:42	Mathematics 6		Mathematics 6	Mathematics 6	Mathematics 6
Dismissal	2:50					

student needs them, they may sit next to the student to explain a particular point. They do not team teach lessons with general education teachers.

The teacher assistant provides invaluable support in all classes, including the resource period. The consultant teachers, teacher assistant, and educational interpreters all provide monthly observation reports.

As at the Union Street School, in the Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf's Consultant Teacher Model,

consultant teachers and the teacher assistant create their own weekly schedules. This affords the consultant teachers the flexibility to schedule consulting time with general education teachers, educational interpreters, administrators, guidance counselors, and each other. Each week, the teacher assistant and the two consultant teachers discuss where they are needed according to student needs in each mainstream class for that week. For example, one teacher is assigned to math and history classes; the other teacher is assigned to science and English classes. This year, there are sophomores and seniors; there are no freshmen or juniors. One consultant teacher has one student in Chemistry 10 and six students in English 10 during the same period. This teacher may be in one of those classes for part of the period and then go into the other. She may, after discussing with the interpreters in each class and the general education teacher, decide that week that she will need to be in one class the full period because a new lesson is being introduced. She may arrange with the teacher assistant that he go into another class to provide student assistance.

Deaf students in the Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf have varied academic skills and reading levels. All Hackensack High School deaf students are scheduled for mainstream classes as well as one small group instruction resource period with teachers of the deaf, the teacher assistant, and/or an educational interpreter. Until this year, there were no small group instruction classes with teachers of the deaf with the exception of the Freshmen English Lab and the mandatory resource period for all students. This year, the program has had the opportunity to place a few students in a Hackensack High School small group class taught by their own special education teachers. In these instances, the teacher assistant schedules himself in these classes according to student needs, an educational interpreter is assigned each day, and the consultant teacher touches base with the Hackensack High School special education teacher to review accommodations and provide support in the resource period. Since these are already small group-instructed classes with special education teachers, modifications have already been made to curriculum and lessons.

Throughout the entire pre-kindergarten through grade 12 program, each student's individual needs are carefully considered as part of the educational planning process.

Student placement in this program is a team effort. Decisions are not based solely on student academic performance but include the demonstration of student self-motivation, parental support, successful and mature utilization of an educational interpreter, and experience and success in some middle school

mainstream academic placements. Teamwork among the consultant teachers, the teacher assistant, the educational interpreter, and the student's self-advocacy is an integral daily component of the high school model.

Curriculum Modifications and/or Accommodations

Throughout the entire pre-kindergarten through grade 12 program, each student's individual needs are carefully considered as part of the educational planning process. Curriculum modifications and/or accommodations are provided for all students scheduled in academic mainstream classes. Students who are scheduled for any small group instruction classes already receive modifications and/or accommodations to their coursework as provided by certified teachers of the deaf in a small group class setting. For those students assigned to academic mainstream classes, "curriculum modifications" are those that relate to addressing specific curriculum objectives while "accommodations" may involve consultant teachers providing re-written tests, quizzes, or homework assignments per individual student abilities. At the high school level, an example of a curriculum modification might be the following:

In a Hackensack High School English 10 class, students are assigned to read The Crucible. At the same time, the general education teacher also assigns The Scarlet Letter as an independent reading assignment. This second independent reading assignment will not be



Above: A general education teacher at the local elementary school teaches math with support from an educational interpreter.



Left: A consultant teacher of the deaf works with students in the Resource Room with support from a speech teacher and a teacher assistant.

discussed in detail in class; nevertheless, students are responsible for answering homework comprehension questions. After consultation with the general education teacher and discussions with the program supervisor and the educational interpreter in that class, the consultant teacher makes a curriculum modification for this particular group as follows: Students will be responsible for the full text of The Crucible. During the resource period, the consultant teacher will introduce the students to the plot and the major characters of The Scarlet Letter. The students will read specific excerpts from the story in the resource room.

The curriculum modification gives this particular group of students, who need more time for class discussions, vocabulary work, and writing about text, the opportunity to work to their full potential on *The Crucible* and at the same time exposes them to another text, *The Scarlet Letter*.

An example of an accommodation might be:

A group of students in a fourth grade math class have an upcoming test. The consultant teacher receives the test a few days prior to the test date. After discussions with the Union Street School classroom teacher, who has this group of students for a small group reading class, and the educational interpreter assigned to the math mainstream class, the consultant teacher rewrites some or all of the word problems according to the individual needs of each student's reading level. Students are responsible for all the items on the test.

Teaming Up for Success

Marschark, Convertino, and LaRock (2006) write: "As long as philosophies, opinions, and political expediencies guide the education of deaf students, there is little chance of significant improvement. Collaboration among all those involved in the education of deaf students is the only way to improve the educational success of deaf students" (p.194).

It takes consensus building to become change-agents and outreach facilitators in support of an overall program design. In the Hackensack, New Jersey, programs for the deaf in the Bergen County Special Services School District, professionals are not just "thinking outside the box"; they have actually "moved" the box and successfully put students first.

Reference

Marschark, M., Convertino, C., & LaRock, D. (2006). Optimizing academic performance of deaf students: Access, opportunities, and outcomes. In D. Moores & D. Martin (Eds.), *Deaf learners: Developments in curriculum and instruction* (pp.179-200). Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Adapting a New Model: Hackensack High School Program for the Deaf

Hackensack's deaf education programs are unique in the state of New Jersey in their use of the Consultant Teacher Model. The more common forms of instructional support for mainstreamed deaf and hard of hearing students are: a support teacher who stays with the student(s) all the time; or a pull-out model, with an itinerant teacher of the deaf coming in to provide resource assistance; or a co-teacher of the deaf who teaches alongside the general education teacher. So how did a school district manage to think outside of the deaf education box and implement a new approach?

Three years ago, Bergen County Special Services established a new high school program for the deaf in Hackensack, New Jersey. We decided that we would only set up this program if we could be trained in the Consultant Teacher Model that was already in use with special education students attending Hackensack High School. Once trained, we realized that we had to adapt this model to fit the needs of our deaf students. The Hackensack model, for instance, has the general education teacher, the consultant teacher, and the teacher assistant, while our model includes the educational interpreter and a component of student responsibility for learning (the Student Resource Room Log), a mandatory resource period each day, scheduling of interpreters and the speech teacher infused in the resource period to support language/vocabulary/course content, and a system of sharing all observation reports across team members. When we began the program, we used the Hackensack Consultant Teacher Reporting Model; however, after the first year, we revised some procedures and forms while still keeping the consultant model concept intact.

We received support from the Hackensack High School administration and other community members during this process. My team of teachers, interpreters, and the school audiologist provided two workshops to the Hackensack High School staff prior to the beginning of the new school year. In addition, I—as well as the teachers of the deaf and the educational interpreter team—met on several occasions with the Hackensack High School special education team to receive information on the Consultant Teacher Model. The model proved so successful in the high school program that we started using it in the Union Street School program last year.



Cindy Huff received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Kansas State University and her master's degree in deaf education from Gallaudet University. She is the director of Statewide Outreach Programs at the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD). Huff taught deaf and hard of hearing students in both integrated and residential settings for a total of 10 years. After a stint as a designer and facilitator of training programs in the international nonprofit arena, she returned to deaf education when joining NMSD in 2004. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at Cindy.Huff@nmsd.k12.nm.us.

determining a student's readiness to successfully use interpreting services

By Cindy Huff

Prior to the passage of the All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975, signed language interpreting was a service reserved almost exclusively for deaf adults. Only when deaf students began attending their neighborhood schools at an accelerated rate did children become consumers of interpreting services in order to access their academic programming. In the 30-plus years since the passage of this law, the fields of deaf education and signed language interpreting have only recently begun to take a look at the implications of a student receiving the bulk of his or her school experience through third party communication.

Ideally, all students would experience direct, multidimensional communication in the K-12 setting. This experience is generally considered to be more efficient, effective, and



Photos courtesy of Cindy Huff

empowering. Interpreted communication, because it involves a third party, tends to be more linear. This makes it critical that quality standards for interpreting services be in place when direct and multidimensional communication is not possible for all or part of the educational process for a deaf or hard of hearing student.

A common assumption is that providing a deaf or hard of hearing student in grades K-12 with an interpreter is enough for that student to access his or her total school experience in integrated programs. The reality is that innumerable factors have an impact on whether a student experiences success with an interpreted education. To address these factors, it is vital that an interactive and trained educational team carefully consider each child's individual needs, skills, and readiness for accessing learning through an interpreter. It is the collaborative work of this team that will lead to successfully serving each student



Figure 1

Broad-Spectrum Student Competencies	
STUDENT COMPETENCIES	CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM
Ability to maintain eye contact	• What is the length of time a student can attend to the interpreter? • Can the student navigate other visual supports in the classroom while watching the interpreter?
Ability to ask for clarification or repetition	• Is the student assertive? • Can the student proactively monitor whether or not he or she is receiving a clear message? • If a student is confused, does he or she have the ability to distinguish whether the interpretation is weak or the teacher's content or teaching style is unclear?
Social-emotional abilities	• How do student behaviors compare with their chronological age? • What are the student's emotional responses to stress, transitions in the daily schedule, discipline, and typical peer interaction? • What is the student's level of self-confidence and autonomy? • What are the student's social problem-solving skills?
Visual capacity	• Are there any vision issues that would impact the way an interpreted message is received?
Cognitive abilities	• What are the student's academic problem-solving skills? • Did the student have early language exposure and acquisition? • Will interpreted messages need to be adapted to ensure comprehension by the student?
Self-awareness	• Does the student know that he or she is deaf? • Does the student have a concept of how and when hearing people access auditory information and his or her own need to access that information visually?
Awareness of the interpreting process	• Does the student understand the concept of third party communication? • Can the student separate the message of the speaker from the interpreter delivering the message? • If applicable, does the student have the ability and flexibility to use a variety of interpreters who potentially have different linguistic signing styles?



Figure 2

according to his or her individual language and communication profile.

How do educational teams determine when, or if, a student is ready to effectively use interpreting services? Considering “student readiness” may seem like routine practice, although more often than not, placing a student in an interpreted setting happens without a systematic analysis of student competencies to guide program design.

Student Language Competencies

Educational teams are asked to consider student language competencies in three categories: signed language, spoken language, and other languages. Within each category, the following details should be examined.

Pragmatic Skills—Ability to use language across a variety of formal and informal settings and outside of the present and immediate environment, abstract reasoning and theory of mind, discourse skills, effectiveness of mode(s) or language(s) used to communicate in a variety of settings

Receptive Skills—Ability to understand questions, conversations, or dialogue, simple or connected communicative language; ability to understand references to the immediate and/or to the not present, abstract, or imaginative

Expressive Skills—Level of self-expression (i.e., questions, conversations, simple or connected communicative language; references to the immediate and/or to the not present, abstract, or imaginative)

Semantics/Vocabulary—Number and variety of vocabulary words or phrases that are understood and can be used competently both receptively and expressively

Syntax—Structure and complexity of the language(s) used by the student, metalinguistic ability across languages; for young children and delayed language users, type and variety of semantic relations between words and concepts

STUDENT COMPETENCIES	CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM
Signed language skills	In addition to the detailed exploration described above: - Is the student considered fluent in signed language or is he or she still in the process of acquiring language skills? - What is the student's ability to read and understand fingerspelling?
Spoken language skills	In addition to the detailed exploration described above: - Will the interpreted message be supporting the spoken language message or replacing it entirely? - What is the functional use of amplification or cochlear implant(s) for the student regarding his or her understanding of spoken language? - What is the intelligibility of the student's spoken language? - Will the interpreter be needed to make the student's message clear to his or her peers and teachers?
Other language skills	In addition to the detailed exploration described above: What are the language skills in all other languages used by the student (i.e., English, including Cued Speech; Spanish; Navajo; a signed language of another country)?



Considering Student Readiness to Use an Interpreter

The Outreach Department at the New Mexico School for the Deaf has developed specific procedures to help programs determine the appropriateness of providing interpreting services

to individual students. A crucial part of making this determination is deciding, based on solid information, whether or not the student is prepared to receive those services. Not all students are ready to access instruction through an interpreter. Before a student is placed with an interpreter for any part of his or her academic schedule, it is essential to consider and evaluate a spectrum of student competencies (Figures 1-3).

This information will assist the educational team in determining the student's strengths and needs in accessing both the academic and non-academic components of his or her school program through an interpreter. Once this information has been gathered, the team can better determine if a student is "interpreter ready" and which aspects of his or her programming could be successfully provided via interpreting services. The

Figure 3

Continuum of Student Readiness

Student is likely "ready"	Student may be "ready" with added support	Student may or may not be "ready"	Student is not "ready"
This student is developmentally on track in language, social-emotional and cognitive skills. He or she is able to handle the standard curriculum in an integrated setting with minimal support. He or she is familiar with the interpreter role and developmentally "ready" as determined by the educational team to receive interpreting services for some of his or her academic schedule.	This student is developmentally on track in language, social-emotional and cognitive skills. He or she is able to handle the standard curriculum in an integrated setting with added support. He or she is familiar with the interpreter role and developmentally "ready" as determined by the educational team to receive interpreting services for some of his or her academic schedule.	This student is lagging developmentally in language, social-emotional and/or cognitive skills. He or she may be able to handle the standard curriculum in an integrated setting with intensive support and supplemental instruction. He or she is familiar with the interpreter role and may be developmentally "ready" as determined by the educational team to receive interpreting services for some of his or her academic schedule.	This student is limited developmentally in language, social-emotional and/or cognitive skills. He or she is not able to understand an interpreter or handle the standard curriculum in an integrated setting. He or she is unfamiliar with the interpreter role and not developmentally "ready" as determined by the educational team to receive interpreting services for any of his or her academic schedule.
Implications for staff roles and student programming This student will likely do well in an interpreted setting. The educational team will need to monitor student progress, making adjustments to the interpreted programming as necessary to ensure ongoing success.	Implications for staff roles and student programming This student may do well in some interpreted settings with added supports such as pre-teaching or content review. The educational team will need to monitor student progress often, making adjustments to the interpreted programming as necessary to ensure ongoing success.	Implications for staff roles and student programming This student may or may not do well in some interpreted settings. Interpreting will require significant supports such as tutoring and supplemental instruction. The educational team will need to monitor student progress frequently, making adjustments to the interpreted programming as necessary to ensure ongoing success.	Implications for staff roles and student programming This student is not ready to receive interpreting services and requires direct instruction from an educational team trained in working with deaf and hard of hearing students and fluent in the student's language and communication mode.

examination of student competencies is applicable to American Sign Language/English and to any type of transliterating (i.e., Cued Speech, Signed English, oral interpreting).

When a Student is Not Ready for Interpreting Services

When the educational team determines that the deaf or hard of hearing student cannot effectively access some or all aspects of instruction and/or interaction with peers and staff through an interpreter, the student should have:

- An environment where he or she can communicate directly and fluently with staff and peers
- An educational team that is formally trained in working with deaf and hard of hearing students
- An educational team that is able to meet identified student needs in all incidental and structured learning opportunities outside the classroom
- An educational team that has knowledge and skills in assessing student progress in communication and overall language and consistently incorporates assessment information into educational programming
- An educational team that can provide a parallel experience in the classroom, exposing him or her to the same concepts being introduced to all students
- An educational team that can simplify or expand concepts as appropriate
- An educational team that can develop a specific plan to monitor and assess the development of his or her language

In Conclusion

With escalating numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students using interpreters, many aspects of an interpreted education have been explored. Interpreter skill and qualifications are frequently considered when determining whether or not a student is receiving quality access to the curriculum. As vital as this and other factors are, a student's readiness to effectively use interpreting services is independent of interpreter credentials. Student readiness should become a standard consideration for educational teams when planning and implementing programming that may include interpreting services.



Resources for Professionals Working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in a Rural State

Determining student readiness for accessing educational programming through interpreting services requires collaboration among the student's complete educational team. The team needs high quality evaluation and assessment information to inform their programmatic decision making. As a largely rural state, New Mexico school districts often do not have educational and diagnostic team members who can communicate directly and fluently with deaf or hard of hearing students. In some cases, an interpreter may be the only team member with this ability. Using an interpreter for the administration of language assessments and learning competencies will very likely not produce valid results.

Serving as the state resource on the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Outreach Department at the New Mexico School for the Deaf provides layers of services to support students attending public schools in their home communities. The Outreach team conducts formal student observations that result in reports containing information about student access to the curriculum and their overall school experience as well as the students' use of language and communication and recommendations for student programming. The observation reports and the ongoing relationship with the program can support the team's determination of whether or not a student is ready to use interpreting services. In addition, educational teams statewide can request comprehensive evaluation services, ensuring the evaluation is completed by a qualified team of staff specialists certified in their areas of expertise. This team administers evaluations using direct and fluent communication.



addressing students' language needs in a bilingual asl and english classroom

By C. Michelle Shadow, Bobbie Jo Kite, and Jen Drew

In the fall of 2008, we (co-teachers Michelle and Bobbie Jo) began team teaching in a bilingual American Sign Language (ASL)/English classroom. We faced the same challenge teachers everywhere face: a new year with new goals and a classroom of students with diverse learning needs. In our case, we had 10 first grade students who read and did math on several different grade levels and used two languages—ASL and English—with varying levels of proficiency. Two students came from homes where languages other than English and ASL were used, and some students had additional learning challenges ranging from memory processing problems to Autism Spectrum Disorder. Later in the year, two more students and another teacher (Jen) joined the class.

Our goal was simple: To develop students who are bilingual language users while making strong academic progress. Our enthusiasm for this effort was high, but we also recognized the difficulty of the tasks ahead of us. After all, we were being asked almost immediately how we were going to meet all the needs of our students, and how we were going to use both ASL and spoken English when not all of our students had access to both languages. These were questions that we had just begun to explore.

We started by carefully reviewing the needs of each student and the content and skills we needed to cover over the next year. This information was then used to construct learning environments that would meet the needs of all our students, and that proved to be a struggle at the beginning. A critical component of bilingual classrooms is helping students understand that the two languages are different and must be kept separate. Based on that, we initially decided that the best approach to instruction was to separate students into two learning groups based on their primary language use. This made sense to us; after all, we had students who were learning written English through spoken English. We also had students who were making good progress using ASL to learn written English.



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Photos by Clerc Center staff

Using primary language use as the deciding factor, we placed eight students into one instructional group and two into the second group. When we evaluated that approach a month later, it was clear that it wasn't working. The group of eight students read on six different grade levels and four math levels, and the teacher for that group was struggling to meet each student's needs. Upon re-evaluating our goals, we realized that we'd set up the classroom with language use as the most important thing we wanted our students to internalize. This was not what we wanted; academic knowledge and critical thinking skills are as important as fluency in both languages.

Based on our review, we changed the groupings to reflect academic needs. The result was two groups with an equal number of students in each; the two students who benefited from spoken English had similar academic needs and were placed together in the group with the teacher who had begun the year as the spoken language teacher. We then adopted a new approach to developing bilingual proficiency and an appreciation for both languages in our students.

What is the Goal?

How information is communicated to students affects their learning, and the method of information transmission should be considered for each part of the school day. Therefore, we decided that the best approach to developing bilingual proficiency and appreciation would be making careful choices about language use based on the goal of the activity or lesson taking place at the moment. As a result, we would be code-switching throughout the day.

For example, how would you respond to a student who walked up to you and used spoken English to ask if he could use the bathroom while you were asking for the rest of your students, not all of whom had access to spoken English, to line up? Would you use ASL? Spoken English? Would you consider written English? The goal of that interaction between teacher and student at that moment could help the teacher decide how to communicate. In the situation above, the teacher would need to

decide on the most appropriate language to use in response. If the student was fluent in ASL, then that could be the language of choice to avoid isolating the other students in the area who

did not have access to spoken English and to model inclusive language use. However, if the student did not have adequate ASL skills, then a good approach would be using spoken English, followed by an immediate ASL interpretation. That would expose the student to proper ASL through the translation from spoken English to ASL while also allowing the other students access to the interaction.



Goal Setting for Various Situations

We applied this approach to each classroom interaction. Our first grade classroom of unique language learners faced challenges with ASL, spoken English, and code-switching on a daily basis. We faced each challenge with a clear question in mind: *What is the goal?* Several situations we experienced last year help illustrate our goal setting and decision making.

- Student in spoken English: "Michelle, what is Bobbie Jo's favorite color?"
- Michelle in spoken English: "Ask Bobbie Jo yourself."
- Student in spoken English: "But how do you sign it?"
- Michelle in ASL: "COLOR YOUR FAVORITE WHAT?"
- Student asks Bobbie Jo in ASL what her favorite color is.

In the above scenario, the goal was to help the student both learn ASL and get the information she needed. Since the student did not know enough ASL to ask Bobbie Jo herself, it was crucial that Michelle model appropriate language use without dismissing the student's need to communicate directly with Bobbie Jo.

Students were given the assignment of presenting about an animal at the annual school Expo. In preparation, they went to the library to find books on their favorite animal. Charlie chose a book about walrus that was above his independent reading ability. He and the classmates in his group were not able to read the book with full comprehension. ASL was their primary language, and they all were still developing academic ASL skills.*



Bobbie Jo chose to use ASL as the language for the students' initial experience with the book.

Bobbie Jo's goal for this activity was for the students to understand the information about walruses in the book. With that goal in mind, she focused solely on the content in the book and reserved English language activities for a later date. By using the language that the students could best understand to introduce them to new information, the goal of the activity (to learn about walruses) was not diminished. The students were able to share detailed facts about walruses after the initial activity. After later activities related to the book, including English language activities, the students had gained enough content knowledge through ASL and their understanding of written English to write their own book about walruses. Throughout the experience, they also strengthened their academic ASL skills through the discussions they had.

- *In a social studies unit about safety, students were learning about why seat belts are important. Bobbie Jo's goal was for the students to understand the concept prior to reading or writing about it. For this*



reason the students were first exposed to this concept through ASL as Bobbie Jo modeled language use regarding seat belts and engaged the students in role play. If the goal had been to develop spoken English skills in regards to seat belts, then Michelle would have taken the group and done the same activity ... in spoken English.

- *Michelle taught grammar each day in language arts class. The class was composed of a mix of students who used ASL exclusively and students who used both spoken English and ASL. Michelle taught each lesson to the group in ASL. While students did seatwork after each lesson, Michelle went to each student and used his or her language of choice (spoken English or ASL) to review the content that had just been taught.*

Using ASL as the language of instruction ensured that all students were included in instruction. (When we had a student in our class who did not know ASL, we obtained an interpreter to translate it into spoken English for that student.) Spoken English was never the primary language of instruction in our classroom unless all the students present had full access to the information through that mode of communication; this avoided excluding some students from participating. We also did quick comprehension checks with each student on an individual basis after each lesson. Students who primarily used ASL benefited from the brief review of content and one-on-one attention. Students who primarily used spoken English also benefited from the content review and strengthened their spoken English skills through discussion of the new information.

*Guided reading was a daily part of the language arts curriculum. Michelle often found herself working with students on reading in either ASL or spoken English. One day while reading *The Manners of a Pig* by Bronwen Scarffe, she asked a student, "If the cow [a character in the book] was deaf, how would he ask for some food? Would he sign, 'I AM HUNGRY ... PLEASE GIVE ME SOME FOOD'?"*

A key component of our goal-setting approach was our focus on creating opportunities for all the students to think critically about the differences between written English and ASL. This emphasis on helping students consider how to say things in each mode is an important part of developing reading comprehension skills. We knew students understood the story when they were able to retell portions in their own words and in their preferred language without reciting the words in the book. Our work helping students to think about translations was also an important part of the process of helping our students to develop story retelling skills.



Students' Contributions

Students of all ability levels have something valuable to contribute to the group. We found that our time together as a whole group was as beneficial as our instructional time in smaller groups. Providing students who use both ASL and spoken English with the opportunity to work collaboratively was crucial to achieving our goals. Every day we noticed ways students supported others' learning.

I Will Teach You ASL

Julia* arrived at KDES in January and joined our class without any sign language skills. Initially she needed an interpreter to have full access to communication and instruction. One day Erinn*, a native signer, brought an ASL dictionary to school. Without any of the teachers knowing, she took small moments during the day to show the pictures in the book to Julia. Julia has since learned to use ASL well and her positive early experiences with a native signer may have influenced her use of the language now.

Reading and Writing are Fundamental

Three students found themselves together in the classroom library frequently. One day we found them sitting around a picture dictionary. All three were looking at the words, writing them, and discussing their meaning. The student who had the strongest language skills was doing a lot of explaining to the other two students.

Playing with Language

We don't always realize how funny the things we say can be, but students are certain to catch these little moments. In English, "You rock!" means that you are a totally awesome person. Say "YOU ROCK" in ASL, however, and it means that you are a rock. We often found the students and ourselves using language in ways that we all found funny. That was a positive development because it helped the students understand how to put words together. One example of playing with the two languages is: "I LIKE 'CLEAN' PIZZA." The ASL sign for PLAIN (a sign that indicates nothing is on the pizza) is the same sign as CLEAN, and students who knew that enjoyed catching the wordplay. We also guided students through the process of figuring out meaning from context by asking about other possible meanings for that same sign. In the above context, PLAIN would make more sense than CLEAN.

The impact of having fun with the two languages has lingered. One year later, we have students from that class walk up to us in the hallway and tell us in ASL, "YOU ROCK!"

Challenges

Separating languages is crucial in an ASL/English bilingual classroom in order to provide students with strong language models in each language. The fact that we were dealing with a visual language and a spoken language (instead of two spoken languages) presented a new set of challenges, especially since we had students who were learning the languages concurrently. We found it easy to model both languages effectively when we were alone with students. However, we also encountered



challenging situations, for example, when a student without spoken language access walked into a spoken English group discussion. We had to ask ourselves: How do we meet all individual student needs without isolating any of the students? Should we code-switch mid-sentence? There were not many easy solutions, and we did not always deal with every situation perfectly.

One thing we had to decide early on was how to allocate instructional time for the use of each language, and the strategies we would use to keep the languages separate while still having students develop both languages. We experienced the most success using spoken English in small groups and then providing immediate interpretation of what was spoken to the other students and teachers in the classroom. This meant that we spent a great amount of time code-switching throughout our day. However, that approach paid off; our students ended the year with a great appreciation for both languages and both modes of English. They all developed a strong sense of their language needs and instinctively chose the language that would be the most useful to them in various situations.



A year has passed since we started this work. We look back and see that facing daily challenges with our primary question in mind, “What is the goal?”, and making decisions accordingly resulted in us walking away knowing that learning took place.

** The names of students have been changed to protect their privacy.*



American Society for Deaf Children

The American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC) is a national, independent, nonprofit parent organization that supports and educates families of deaf and hard of hearing children and advocates for high quality programs and services.

ASDC Provides

- Quarterly magazine, *The Endeavor*, with focus on issues of importance to families.
- Biennial conventions which bring together families of diverse backgrounds to meet, learn, and share information
 - Access to ASDC's lending library, which includes books, videotapes and DVDs
- Collaboration with parent and professional organizations working to improve public policy
 - Leadership training opportunities for parents and professionals
- Website with important information and links: www.deafchildren.org
 - Information to policy makers
- Speakers bureau: ASDC provides speakers on a wide range of topics for your next meeting or conference



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the guided reading approach: a practical method to address diverse needs in the classroom

By Laura M. Schaffer and Barbara R. Schirmer

Many deaf students struggle with learning to read. This is the case nationally as well as at the Michigan School for the Deaf (MSD). In 2006, the elementary teaching staff began working together to implement a change in their reading instruction so their approach would be systematic and consistent across grade levels. Prior to that, teachers were using a variety of methods, including a basal series purchased by the school several years earlier. With the diverse backgrounds and specific learning needs of many of our students, it was essential to choose an approach that allowed targeted instruction based on individual student needs. The Guided Reading Approach, developed by Fountas and Pinnell (1996) and popular among teachers of hearing students, was one such model. Additionally, this approach was among the nine areas of literacy recommended for use with deaf students by the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center. However, there was little previous research to show its effectiveness with deaf students.

With little research on successful reading programs for deaf students, MSD chose to implement and investigate the effectiveness of the Guided Reading Approach as the fundamental lesson structure for teaching reading on a daily basis within a balanced approach of methods for teaching literacy that also included activities such as shared reading and writing, independent reading, and teacher storyreading. However, some aspects of guided reading had to be modified for teaching deaf students. Some of these modifications involved



Photos courtesy of Laura M. Schaffer



asking the students to read using story sign (reading publicly in sign rather than silently), pre-teaching vocabulary, and retelling in American Sign Language (ASL). As an ASL/English bilingual school, we also incorporated into guided reading lessons ways to distinguish differences between both languages.

The focus of this approach is on small group instruction and it allows the teacher to choose from any reading material. This is especially beneficial because the teacher can identify texts that are motivating and meaningful. The teacher also has the flexibility of selecting text that is thematically connected to other content being studied in the classroom. The lesson structure itself follows a pattern of *before*, *during*, and *after* reading activities that are specifically targeted to students' needs based on the teacher's ongoing assessment of each child. Because this model pinpoints a student's instructional reading level, the teacher is able to build upon each student's knowledge base to steadily improve language skills, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension skills regardless of initial ability and background. Data collected in the form of monthly running records enabled us to track student progress and determine the success of the Guided Reading Approach with our deaf elementary students at MSD.

In our first year of using the Guided Reading Approach, the majority of our students in grades one through five were reading at an early kindergarten to early first grade level. The students lacked a solid foundation of language, vocabulary, background

knowledge, and word recognition skills. In other words, they were at the emergent and early stages of literacy development. Our challenge was to boost their ability to read text at levels closer to their respective grade levels. Our primary focus during this first year was on building word recognition skills. As the students became more skilled readers, the emphasis in following years changed to building fluency and comprehension as well as fostering greater independent reading competence.

The Guided Reading Approach at MSD

Assessment

This approach to teaching reading requires that the teacher determine each student's instructional reading level. Though there are many different ways to assess instructional level, running records (Clay, 2000) is the tool that MSD chose. When conducting a running record, the teacher asks the student to read a passage in story sign. The teacher keeps track of omissions, substitutions, words the students cannot identify, and fluency. If the student's word recognition falls between 90-95 percent, the readability level of the passage is considered to be the student's instructional level. This level is called instructional because it offers the best opportunity to build on the skills the student already possesses and yet is still challenging. In other words, the text is neither too frustrating nor too easy. At MSD a running record kit was developed with several books at each level. Using the Fountas and Pinnell book leveling system, running record

books were selected for appropriate vocabulary and concepts that were not too heavily abstract as well as content that was not too culturally hearing based, such as telephones or animal noises. After running records were completed, students were grouped homogenously by instructional level. Other variables considered in grouping were students' decoding skills, preferred language output (spoken English or ASL), and learning styles. The groups were flexible and, therefore, changed during the course of the year depending on the outcome of the monthly running records.

Instruction

Students spend about five sessions with one book. Each session with the students includes a *before*, *during*, and *after* reading activity and lasts approximately 10-20 minutes. The following is a typical weekly lesson structure. The teacher is expected to tailor each specific activity to the needs and levels of the students based on monthly running records and daily observations and anecdotal notes.

Day 1:

Before: Prior knowledge is activated, new knowledge necessary for understanding the story is built, and new vocabulary is taught, often with pictures.

With emergent and early readers, the amount of time spent at this step is more substantial. For example, one reading group read a book about ice climbing. One of our staff members does this as a hobby, so he was invited to come and meet with this particular reading group. He brought his climbing gear and let the students try it on to feel its bulk and weight. He brought many pictures of himself climbing ice and going into ice caves. The various parts of the climbing gear were labeled with index cards by the students. They were fascinated by this experience and were motivated to read their books. Many connections to the text were constructed by the students from interacting with the climbing gear and the pictures. They were able to take their understanding of ice climbing to a deeper level. After this lengthy introduction to the book, the students were better prepared to have more meaningful interactions with the text.

During: The teacher has a copy of the book and does a "picture walk" with the students, encouraging them to tell the story from the pictures using ASL. The text is generally ignored at this

point, though targeted vocabulary might be highlighted.

After: The teacher asks questions about the picture walk, asks for predictions, and reviews vocabulary.

Day 2-4:

Before: A brief activity takes place focusing on targeted skills, such as reading strategies, building vocabulary, text structure, word recognition and decoding skills, and ASL concepts.

During: Students read the book to themselves. Often, especially at the emergent level, the students are asked to sign the story to themselves at their individual pace. Students reading text at higher levels read silently. The teacher focuses on one or two students per day to observe, in detail, and note the strategies, or lack of strategies, that the students use while reading. For example, one teacher observed a student sign the sentence "The boy got on the bike." The student signed *got* and *on* separately. As the other students continued to read, the teacher intervened with that specific student to explain that one sign expresses both English words. The student practiced this with the teacher and then continued reading. The teacher

documented this as a skill to be reviewed in upcoming lessons. During reading, the teacher also takes note of challenges in vocabulary and decoding. This information is then used to develop targeted *before* and

after lessons for the following day.

After: A brief comprehension or fluency activity is carried out. This can be as simple as a quick retelling of the story or sequencing pictures from the book. A fluency activity might include the student taking turns reading with a partner, re-reading the text independently, or doing what is called choral reading, where the students read together with the teacher. For choral reading, our teachers like to display one copy of the text so everyone can see it.

Day 5:

Enrichment activities are generally conducted on the last day. Students can choose to do a reader's theater activity with the book or buddy read (read back and forth with a partner). Usually, a writing activity, such as rewriting the ending or reader's response, concludes the experience with the book. A new text is then selected for the following week.

After this lengthy introduction to the book, the students were better prepared to have more meaningful interactions with the text.

Research Findings on Using the Guided Reading Approach with Deaf Students

When we analyzed the running records data from the first two years, we found several major patterns (Schirmer & Schaffer, in press). First, improvement ranged from a half-year to two years of progress each year. Though this seems modest, it is important to remember that research has consistently shown that the average deaf student gains one-third of a grade equivalent change each school year (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2006; Holt, 1993; Wolk & Allen, 1984). Second, achievement dropped precipitously from the end of one school year to the beginning of the next school year, particularly for students at the earlier grade levels, and it took several months of the new school year for the students to recapture the level they had achieved at the end of the previous school year. And third, reading achievement levels at the outset were low regardless of grade level, with none of the elementary students at or close to grade level when guided reading instruction began.

We are currently in our fourth year using guided reading and several changes have been made to fine tune the approach during years three and four. MSD now has a literacy specialist

who observes and coaches the teachers to help ensure fidelity to the approach and to assist with making appropriate individual modifications. We also recognize the importance of developing summer reading enrichment programs to slow the enormous summer regression. Our plan is to analyze the impact of the second two years and, based on teacher observations during those years, we fully expect to find that the students have made significantly greater progress than during the first two years.

The selection and implementation of the Guided Reading Approach at MSD was a good fit for our staff and students. Teachers are able to focus instruction on their students' strengths and weaknesses through ongoing assessment and clear benchmarks for their progress. The lesson structure permits the teacher to select *before*, *during*, and *after* activities that best address the needs of each student. It was critical for us in identifying a method for reading instruction to choose one that allowed us to implement systematic, quality reading instruction based on evidence of its effectiveness. The Guided Reading Approach is providing us with the instructional tools that are enabling our students to become increasingly capable readers.

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Melissa Rusher holds bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in deaf education. She has 11 years of experience teaching deaf children and training preservice teachers. Rusher is currently an assistant professor of deaf studies and deaf education at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, and the owner of Dragonfly Educational Services, which serves deaf and hard of hearing consumers throughout Southeast Texas. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at DrMelissaRusher@live.com.

enhancing the reading process: tips for asl/english bilingual classrooms

By Melissa Rusher

As a classroom teacher, I was able to find research showing that American Sign Language (ASL) can enhance reading comprehension for deaf children when correctly integrated into a bimodal bilingual context (Andrews, Ferguson, Roberts, & Hodges, 1997; DeLana, Gentry, & Andrews, 2007; Hoffmeister, 2000; Kuntze, 2004; Li, 2005; Nover, Andrews, Baker, Everhart, & Bradford, 2002; Padden & Ramsey, 2000). However, research findings often did not include practical instructional tips. Instead, I relied on instinct, or a “try and see” method, in my use of bimodal strategies.

In my current role as a teacher trainer, my goal is for future teachers of the deaf to have a more solid foundation. From my own personal teaching experiences, in my observations of effective reading teachers, and with support from current literature, I have compiled a list of strategies that will help teachers using a bimodal bilingual approach to reading instruction.

- **Catch their interest and keep it!** Becoming a fluent reader is challenging, and motivating students to read is important. Select high-interest materials and passages. Use books with deaf characters when possible.
- **Translate, don't transliterate!** Deaf students who use ASL to communicate need to use a translation approach to show reading comprehension. After decoding the English words, students must then essentially translate what they have read into an equivalent, accurately-expressed message in ASL. Students who sign the text word-for-word are transliterating, and it will be difficult for you to see whether or not they truly understand the text. Students should translate, or interpret, the text instead by giving a semantic equivalent of the message in ASL form after they finish reading. In general, students should also be encouraged not to sign along while reading because this simultaneous attempt to sign and read is more likely to show you the student's sign vocabulary than reading comprehension. Below are two exceptions:
 - Emergent readers do read aloud, and for young deaf readers this means reading and signing. The key is for teachers to guide these beginning readers to make sense out of what they are reading so they do not end up merely reciting the text.
 - Some students may choose to sign brief passages to themselves while reading in an attempt to figure out meaning from the context.
- **Handy 3x5s!** The temptation to look at the text while signing will cause some students to stumble along. Have students read a few lines or a complete paragraph to themselves without signing. Cover the text with an index card and then ask the students for their

translation. This is a great way to facilitate a mental code-switch—to help the students mentally change the language channel. This supports language separation and allows you to see what they really understood.

- **Unknown vocabulary? No problem!** When students translate, they don't have to know every word on the page. This is a great relief to deaf students who might obsess about the one word in the paragraph they don't know instead of the 29 that they do know. The translation process allows the teacher to help the student use context clues and language expansions—valuable strategies for any reader.
- **Accept all kinds!** When translating, students should have the option of literal or free translations. In literal translations, students are more constrained by the source text. In free translations, students can take creative liberty. Accept either translation depending on what strategies you want to see used. However, remember that a translation means students must produce a signed rendition of the text that is accurately expressed in ASL.
- **Build their confidence!** Learning to read this way is time-consuming. Students can get bogged down in the time it takes to translate and lose interest. Start off by allowing them to read a whole paragraph at a time and just give you the main idea or “gist” of the paragraph. This increases students' motivation for this type of reading. With a few weeks of practice, they will start to speed through the text. Once they do, ask them to add in more details.
- **Focus on meaning!** Just as students can get bogged down with vocabulary, teachers can overemphasize syntactical structures. Teach students to make semantic approximations rather than focus on syntax. Sophisticated translations will come much later. You can, however, model these as appropriate to the age and functioning level of your students.
- **Chunk and bridge!** Students do not automatically realize that there are not word-for-word equivalents between ASL and English. You must help them learn to identify words or groups of words that have a one-sign equivalent or a non-manual equivalent. Begin by pointing these out directly, but help students gain the ability to pick them out themselves. Engage in discussion and build critical thinking skills. Chunking and bridging are similar concepts, but bridging involves drawing brackets [] around the phrase that has a one-sign equivalent.
- **Crutches not allowed!** When students do not know a word, they may try to use fingerspelling as a crutch. Instead, encourage them to identify a similar concept, using a thesaurus if necessary. Fingerspelling should be used only when a sign equivalent does not exist.
- **Seize the moment!** The translation process provides opportunities for you to point out parallel structures between ASL and English.
- **Monitor and adjust!** Use scaffolding to help students move from actual to potential development and monitor progress so that students are continually challenged.

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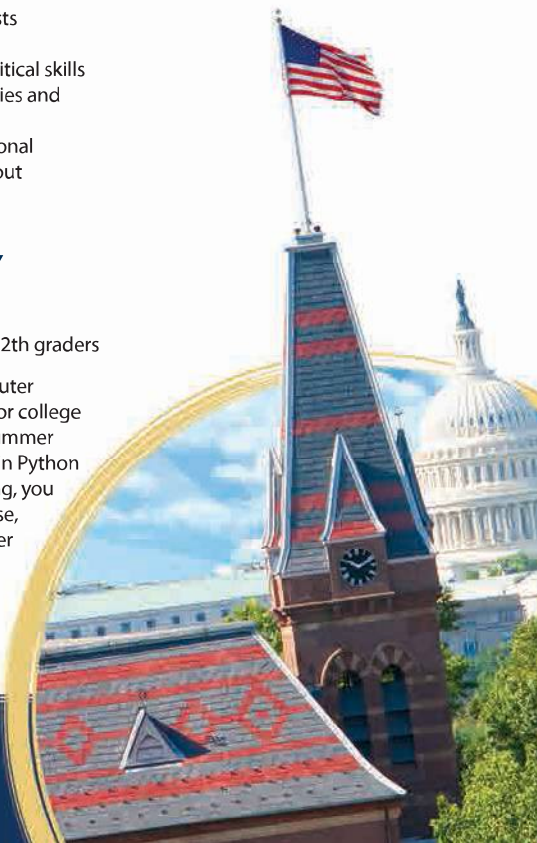
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Are you good in math? Are you interested in computer science? Gain valuable experience in preparation for college studies in computer science through Gallaudet's Summer Computing Academy. The Academy offers courses in Python Programming and Robotics. In Python Programming, you learn basic programming, and in the Robotics course, you gain hands-on experience in applying computer knowledge to constructing robots. You also go on field trips to scientific centers in the greater Washington, D.C. area. Get a head start on your future in computer science.

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helping students toward independence: the steps program at usdb

By Kimberley P. Smale

Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) serves students with varying abilities and needs. At the high school level, a range of transition services is required to help this diverse group of students prepare for life after high school. Three years ago, USDB established the STEPS program as part of this range of services. STEPS is a training and transition program geared toward students 16-21 years of age. It allows them to learn and practice real-life skills that will help them become contributing members of their community.

STEPS is designed for higher functioning or moderately disabled students who are planning to transition to independent living upon exiting the program. Students currently enrolled have a variety of disabilities, including a mixture of deafness, blindness, mild cognitive delays, or mild physical limitations. (Students with severe disabilities who would not benefit from college preparation planning, lessons in transit, or career learning opportunities do not participate in this program. These students benefit from a different type of transition planning and are eventually transferred to severe disability programs throughout the state.)

The Concept

The STEPS program concept was developed over several years by Trena Roueche', residential program/educational program director for USDB's Deaf North Division, using original ideas and components from transition programs nationwide. Several key concepts were adapted from the Texas School for the Blind transition plan. Curricula used in the program include Rubrics for Transition I: For Higher Function Students, Rubrics for Transition II: For Students with Moderate Disabilities, and Cooking to Learn I-III.

Transition Planning and Enrollment in STEPS

On or before each USDB student's 16th birthday, transition planning begins in earnest. Specialists or teachers interview the student to determine educational, career, and life goals; this includes a complete inventory of interests and talents. Each student's level of preparedness for independent living is also assessed. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team then meets to begin setting goals and planning for transition based on the interviews and inventories completed prior to the meetings. Students and their families are key members of the IEP team and discuss where they see themselves (or their child) in the future. The IEP team writes the transition plan and goals to reflect that vision. Services

Kimberley P. Smale is the public information official at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB). Questions and comments about this article are welcome and should be sent to Trena Roueche', residential program/educational program director for USDB's Deaf North Division, at trenar@usdb.org.



Photos courtesy of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

provided in the STEPS program are written into the final IEP as part of the transition plan for students who would benefit from these services.

The transition plan and corresponding goals are reviewed and modified regularly until the student graduates or exits USDB programs. Some students require additional time with USDB after they complete their high school diplomas or certificate course requirements in order to set and meet independent living goals. Those students may continue to participate in the STEPS program until they exit USDB programs and are independent, or until their 22nd birthday, whichever comes first.

Program Components

The STEPS program offers both educational and career/trade components. The educational component is designed to assist students who are on an academic college track or planning to attend an applied technology college. These students attend training in daily living, self-advocacy, college success strategies, and other core transition training classes. They also receive help with college applications and scholarship paperwork.

Students who plan to pursue a career or trade after leaving USDB participate in the career/trade component. They receive job coaching from program specialists and are employed within the community at various temporary job placements with the ultimate goal of an offer of permanent employment at the end of the term. As students in the educational component do, students in this track also attend core curriculum classes on campus



designed to teach independent living skills.

The transition training classes include daily mini-courses taught on the USDB campus. These courses focus on budgeting, meal planning, responsible choice making, sex education, household maintenance, transportation, community resources, banking, laundry, shopping, and self-advocacy. Daily attendance is required for all STEPS participants and each student's progress is monitored carefully. When weaknesses are identified, transition specialists step in to offer extra help and counseling. The STEPS program offers several living options that include both campus apartment living and added educational components. The goal is to allow students to apply what they have learned in their life skills lessons, and to practice using various transit options and assistive technology, all with minimal supervision.



Planning to Exit

During the last years of USDB services, the transitioning student continues to prepare for independent living. At this time, the transition team completes an independent life skills inventory assessment to determine student readiness for independence. The student's money management, meal planning, shopping, cooking, and household management skills are evaluated and plans are made to improve on weak areas before the exit date. When students achieve a 95 percent or better on the life skills inventory, they graduate into



“USDB Apartment Living.” Students at this level of transition live independently on campus in dormitory apartments with 24-hour staff available for assistance during the week. On weekends, the apartments are unsupervised, but staff members are available on campus for five-hour shifts Friday and Saturday evenings and a staff member is on call for the rest of the weekend in case of emergency. In order to participate in the weekend unsupervised program, students must review a rules and procedures packet and sign a behavior contract. This time of short periods of independence with a safety net is an important step before students transition to independent living.

Near the end of their time with USDB, students move off campus into group or subsidized housing and apply for Section 8 vouchers if appropriate. These students enjoy minimal supervision from program staff that includes a daily visit or scheduled phone call each evening. Off-campus residents also return to attend independent living classes on campus each afternoon. As students transition completely out of USDB services and move into independent housing, USDB hosts an Open House to gather furniture and useful appliances that become the property of the students. This allows the students to start out with the essentials and to focus on job and personal success.

Early Signs of Success

The STEPS program was introduced into the USDB curriculum during the 2006-07 school year, and it is showing great promise with progressive student outcomes. Clarissa Reed, one of the first STEPS students, is an early success story. She is nearing program completion and attending the local applied technology college studying sheet metal trades. Clarissa completed the supervised cottage program and is currently living on her own in the community. She works part time for the USDB residential program when she isn’t at school, and she is actively job hunting and preparing for full-time employment after graduation. Clarissa is successfully budgeting her time and money to meet commitments and has learned valuable communication skills to work with the outside world. She is arranging transportation, making appointments, and using a videophone and video relay services.

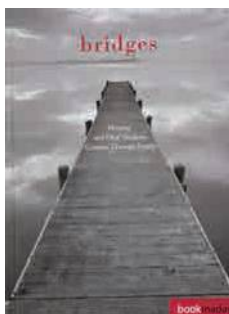
Nineteen students currently participate in the STEPS program, each with individual goals for success and a personalized transition plan. When students exit USDB, the goal is to have them set up in a home, employed, and completely ready for independence. We look forward to watching our students progress as they enter the world and use their skills for the big steps ahead of them in life!

Book-in-a-Day Workshop Turns Students into Poets and Publishers

Imagine creating a book of poetry in one two-day workshop! Students from the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) and hearing students from Calvin Coolidge High School, a public school in Washington, D.C., took on this challenge and published *Bridges: Hearing and Deaf Students Connect Through Poetry*.

Kwame Alexander founded Book-in-a-Day as a way to engage students in the writing process that is both cool and relevant to their world. During the first day of the workshop, the MSSD and Coolidge students engaged in exercises such as journaling and trying out types of poetry forms (i.e., list poems), then they began to write their own poems. During the second day, the students brainstormed a book title, designed the cover, wrote the interior text, created a marketing plan, and organized the plan for the book launch at Busboys and Poets, a local bookstore at which they would perform their poems in sign and voice and then autograph books.

For more information about Book-in-a-Day and to learn how you can bring this program to your school, visit www.bookinaday.org.



team existed, but the coaches and students from both schools were excited about the opportunity to work together to start one.

The story of the two teams caught the attention of Fox Media, which made a documentary called *Giving Back...An Inner-City School Teaches Rugby to a School for the Deaf*. The documentary shows how the two teams found a way to be both friends and competitors. To view a captioned version of the documentary, visit www.realamericanstories.com.

If your school or community program is interested in setting up a rugby team, check out the Play Rugby USA website at www.playrugbyusa.com.

MSSD Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Over 500 MSSD alumni, teachers, staff, families, and friends gathered together September 25-26, 2009, to celebrate MSSD's 40th anniversary. The alumni reconnected with former classmates, teachers, and staff members during individual class meetings, a volleyball tournament, the Homecoming football game, and an all-day festival. They also gathered in the MSSD lobby to reminisce over class photos, artifacts, and yearbooks as well as to view the MSSD Museum displays with highlights from 1969-2009. The day finished off in style with an anniversary party.

During the anniversary weekend, new officers were elected to the MSSD Alumni Association (MSSDAA). MSSDAA is an independently run organization with its own board and website.

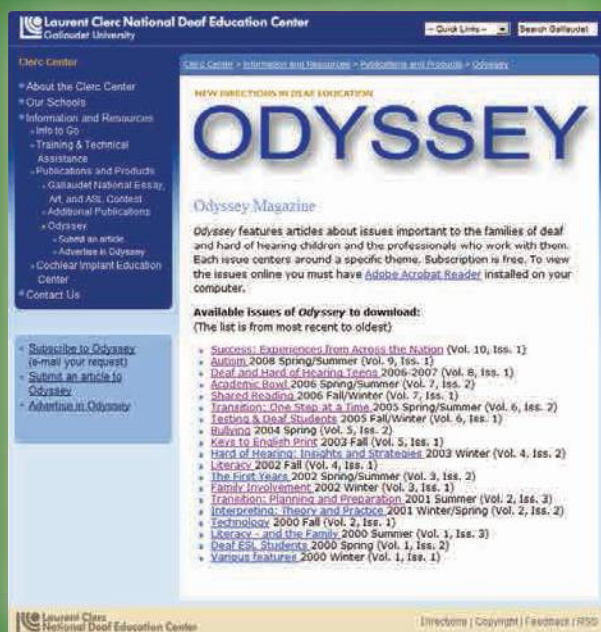
First-Ever All-Deaf Rugby Team Established

Tal Bayer, rugby coach from the Hyde Leadership Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., and Mark Burke, athletic director from the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD), had an idea.

What if the two schools worked together to launch a MSSD rugby team? The MSSD students had no experience with rugby and no precedent for an all-deaf rugby



HELP ODYSSEY GO GREEN!

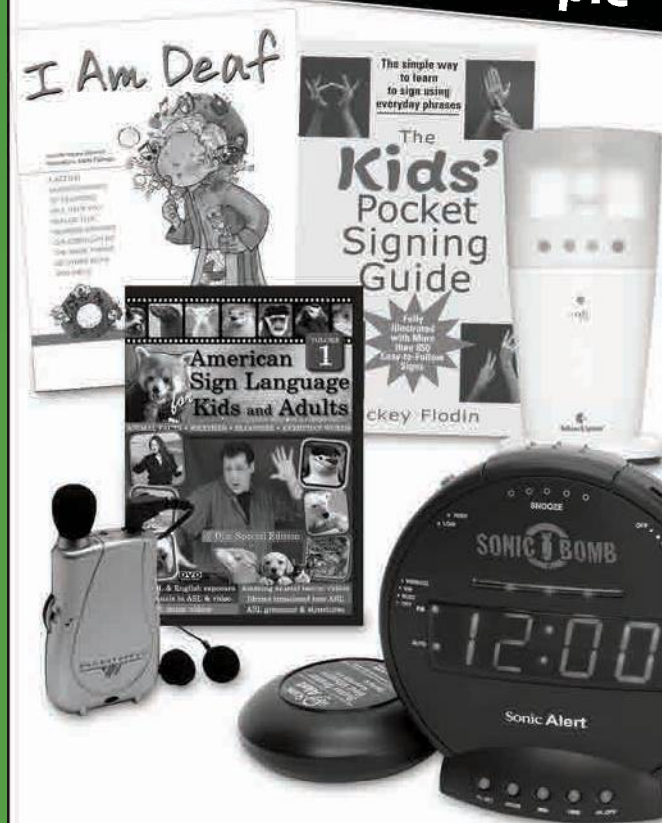


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CALENDAR

Upcoming Conferences



May 6-8

National Council of Hispano Deaf and Hard of Hearing Conference 2010: "Sordos Latinos, Orgullosos," Schaumburg, Ill. To be held at the Marriott Chicago Schaumburg Hotel. For more information: www.idla2008.org.

June 17-19

ADARA Breakout Conference: "Effective Mental Health Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons," Atlanta, Ga. To be held at the Westin Atlanta North Hotel at Perimeter. For more information: www.adara.org.

June 17-20

Hearing Loss Association of America's Convention 2010, Milwaukee, Wis. To be held at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center and Midwest Airlines Center. For more information: <http://www.hearingloss.org/convention/>.

June 24-27

2nd National Deaf People of Color Conference: "Hands Joined, Signs United, Colors Flying," Portland, Ore. To be held at the Oregon Convention Center and Doubletree Hotel. For more information: www.deafpeopleofcolor.org.

June 25-28

AG Bell 2010 Biennial Convention: "Endless Possibilities," Orlando, Fla. To be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. For more information: www.agbell2010convention.org.

July 6-10

50th Biennial Conference of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD): "Celebrate Our Heritage. Invest in Our Future," Philadelphia, Pa. To be held at the Philadelphia Marriott-Downtown. For more information: www.nad.org.

July 18-22

21st International Congress on the Education of the Deaf: "Partners in Education," Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. To be held at the Westin Bayshore. For more information: www.iced2010.com.

October 16-19

National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Incorporated: "NASDSE 2010," Nashville, Tenn. To be held at the Sheraton Music City Hotel. For more information: www.nasdse.org.

November 18-20

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Annual Convention: "Leadership into New Frontiers," Philadelphia, Pa. For more information: www.asha.org/events/convention/.

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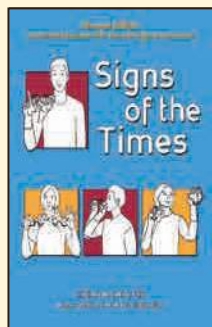


During this week-long program, trainees ages 15-18* get hands-on training as well as learn about the mental, emotional, and physical demands astronauts must face. Fields of study include engineering, space technology, and aerospace science. The Advanced Space Academy program is a college-accredited program through the University of Alabama-Huntsville (UAH). All Advanced Space Academy participants will earn one hour of freshman-level general science credit from UAH.

Considered by many to be the ultimate summer camp, Advanced Space Academy is much more. Offered nearly year-round, Advanced Space Academy is more than just a summer camp; it is an experience that many of our graduates say has shaped their career paths and expanded their imaginations.

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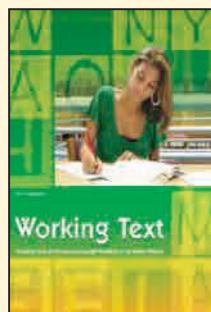
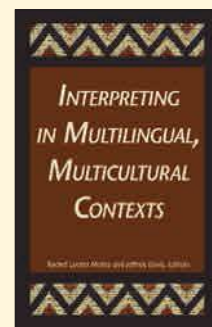
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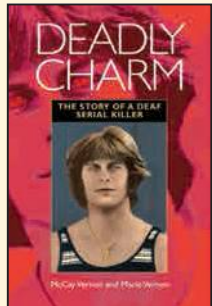
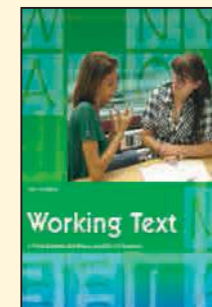
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Deadly Charm **The Story of a Deaf Serial Killer** McCay Vernon and Marie Vernon

Born deaf and given to the state by his mother, Patrick McCullough faced a hard life with equal parts of charm and rage that eventually led him to kill.

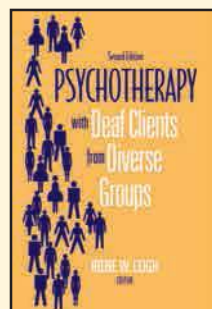
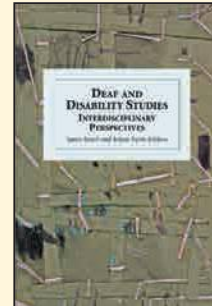
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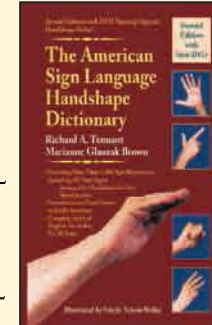
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The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, a federally funded national deaf education center, ensures that the diverse population of deaf and hard of hearing students (birth through age 21) in the nation are educated and empowered and have the linguistic competence to maximize their potential as productive and contributing members of society. This is accomplished through early access to and acquisition of language, excellence in teaching, family involvement, research, identification and implementation of best practices, collaboration, and information sharing among schools and programs across the nation.