



Roberta J. Cordano, JD, became the 11th president of Gallaudet University on January 1, 2016. Prior to Gallaudet, Cordano was the vice president of programs for the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in St. Paul, Minnesota. Cordano has held several leadership roles in different sectors, including health care, higher education, and government. She is a founding member of the Metro Deaf School, a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade bilingual-bicultural charter school for deaf and hard of hearing children in St. Paul, and a founding board member of the Minnesota North Star Academy, a bilingual-bicultural charter high school for deaf and hard of hearing students.

High Expectations and Support a Catalyst for Student Success

By Roberta J. Cordano

As educators, it is easy to get lost in the nuts and bolts of education—reading scores, math capabilities, and whether students are progressing. However, as this issue of *Odyssey* magazine so beautifully illustrates, to educate is to support the whole child. Student success must not only look at test scores and literacy but also at whether children are growing, thriving, and becoming lifelong learners.

For deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind children, language access is critical in order to support the whole child, as language impacts every aspect of life. Bilingual education creates an environment in which children can receive this access from the beginning because it fosters a climate of “and” not “or.” Deaf education for generations frequently revolved around “or,” as in “deaf children should learn English or American Sign Language, but not both.” Education that focuses on American Sign Language and English gives deaf and hard of hearing children every opportunity for success. Deaf culture cherished and hearing world navigated. High expectations and extra classroom support.

The use of “and” in our approach to deaf and hard of hearing children is a catalyst for their success in the future. If they know opportunities await instead of limitations, they will push themselves to succeed. This goes hand in hand with high expectations, which

are absolutely vital to student success. If children know they are expected and encouraged to do anything they want as adults, they will. If they think that their educators do not believe in them, that their future is full of barriers and not building blocks, they will be hampered in their growth, jeopardizing their future. High expectations are critical.

When you look at these children, whether

your role be that of a parent, teacher, aide, administrator, or other supporter, remember to keep your expectations high. Often we can get so caught up with focusing on the here and now of tests and tactics that we forget the critical fact that deaf education, as with all education, is not about teaching children but rather shaping adults. Student success equates to adult success, and that should be the ultimate goal of all education.

I want to thank all those reading this for your support of deaf and hard of hearing children. I know you tirelessly work to bring

them success. I have seen the immense dedication by parents, teachers, administrators, and others to supporting the success of our deaf and hard of hearing children. As we know, it takes a village to raise a child. Thank you, villagers, for all you do. I know that our deaf and hard of hearing children will flourish as we provide them with an environment that recognizes their unique abilities and strengths, and pushes them to strive, thrive, and succeed.

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