The Future of Deaf Education:

Practices Impacting Positive Change

GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY | LAURENT CLERC NATIONAL DEAF EDUCATION CENTER

ODYSSEY

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.

Published articles are the personal expressions of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Gallaudet University or the Clerc Center.

Subscription information: Subscribe to *Odyssey* by visiting *http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu* and clicking on the Subscribe tab at the top of our webpage.

About the cover: *Allyship is the future of deaf education. Whether through local or national communities of practice, teacher preparation programs, ongoing professional development activities, or modifications made to teaching practices to reflect the diverse characteristics of today's deaf and hard of hearing students, these practices result in positive change.*

FEATURES

CLERC CENTER NEWS

With ASL and English, Your Child Can...
LEARN, THRIVE, SUCCEED!

- Deaf and hard of hearing children are entitled to full communication access in their home, school and community.

- Consideration of communication opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing children should be based on facts.

- Access to identification and intervention by qualified providers, family involvement, and educational opportunities should equal those provided for hearing children.

- Parents have the right and responsibility to be primary decision-makers and advocates.

American Society for Deaf Children
www.deafchildren.org
(800) 942-2732

Getting Deaf Education from Today to Tomorrow

Education is a promise of change. Inherent in learning is the opportunity for eventual growth. However, education can do more than simply prepare us for life; it can empower us to teach, learn, and work in new ways. This applies equally to students and their teachers, and to everyone in their orbit—parents/caregivers, administrators, support personnel, service providers, role models, and anyone else with a role in the deaf education ecosystem.

Odyssey has, since its inception in 2000, carried the tagline of "New Directions in Deaf Education," making the future of deaf education an underlying theme in every issue published. However, in this issue we are exploring this theme head-on. What challenges are we facing and with what innovations have we responded?

Submissions for this issue ranged from building communities of practice, to Language Development Planning Meetings, to multicultural education, to teacher preparation programs. These articles provide perspectives that present a mix of research and experiential authority. We are grateful to our authors for sharing their findings and stories, and we are especially interested in learning how these articles may have contributed to your future in deaf education. We invite you to tell us on Facebook and Twitter with the hashtags #ClercCenter and #DeafEd. You are also welcome to reach us at *Odyssey@gallaudet.edu*.

Since last year's issue of *Odyssey*, the Clerc Center has launched free resources that will lead to exciting possibilities and new practices, all of which can cumulatively help to shape the future of deaf education:

- **K-12 ASL Content Standards**. Eight education organizations and an external research team helped develop groundbreaking anchor and grade-level standards for American Sign Language development and acquisition that align with the Common Core State Standards. Read about the Standards on page 86.

- **Parent Advocacy App**. Imagine a mobile resource that empowers parents and caregivers to better advocate for their child before, during, and after Individualized Education Program and 504 meetings as well as other school meetings. Be sure to subscribe to our e-mail newsletter so you are among the first to know when this app is available from Apple's App Store and Google Play.

- **Evidence-based webcasts**. Watch and learn from our webinars, available for 24/7 playback, with national experts on early language development and educational interpreting. Check them out on our website.

We began as interim co-administrators of the Clerc Center in April 2017, coincidentally the month of the bicentennial anniversary of deaf education in the United States. With 200 years of remarkable history bolstering us, we have our eyes set on positioning the Clerc Center for collaborations on bold research and resource development. Together, we can explore, innovate, and decisively impact the future of deaf education.

—**Marianne Belsky** and **Nicole Sutliffe**
  Interim Chief Academic Officer/Interim Chief Administrative Officer
  Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center
  Gallaudet University

Marianne Belsky

Nicole Sutliffe

See this letter in ASL

Michella Maiorana-Basas, PhD, assistant professor and coordinator of the undergraduate program in deaf education at Flagler College, in St. Augustine, Florida, has over 10 years of experience teaching in a K-12 bilingual setting for deaf and hard of hearing students and over 17 years of experience as a professional in deaf education. Her research focuses on content area reading practices of teachers in upper-grade classrooms in signing programs; she has dedicated her study and service to building philosophical bridges in deaf education. Maiorana-Basas welcomes questions and comments about this article at *mmaiorana basas@flagler.edu*.

A SHIFT TO THE MIDDLE:

Redefining the Community of Practice for Deaf Educators

By Michella Maiorana-Basas

Since its beginning, the education of deaf and hard of hearing individuals has been steeped in a debate around language (Lane, 2003). It was the 1880 International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan, however, that marked a distinct turning point in our field. This event intensified what some informally refer to as the "language wars," as professionals clashed in a debate on whether signed or spoken language should be used as the primary language of instruction and communication with deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Despite advances in educational research since that time, we have yet to find solutions to the challenge of improving the academic achievement of deaf and hard of hearing children. Marschark and Hauser (2008) point out that some of these challenges are likely a function of the language wars, along with only recently gained insights into the "cognitive underpinnings of language and learning" and the "divide between those who teach deaf children and those who conduct research."

What we do know is that the language wars have (intentionally or not) created a condition in which many professionals feel compelled to choose a side: *Should we use ASL, spoken language, or something in between?* This creates a false barrier that is removed only when the professionals in the field of deaf education recognize that it is to our advantage—and the advantage of every deaf or hard of hearing child—to find a "radical middle" and unite our field.

Photos courtesy of Michella Maiorana-Basas

Above and right: The Radical Middle project logo; Chris Spike discusses her group's collaborative vision at a Radical Middle workshop in Flint, Michigan.
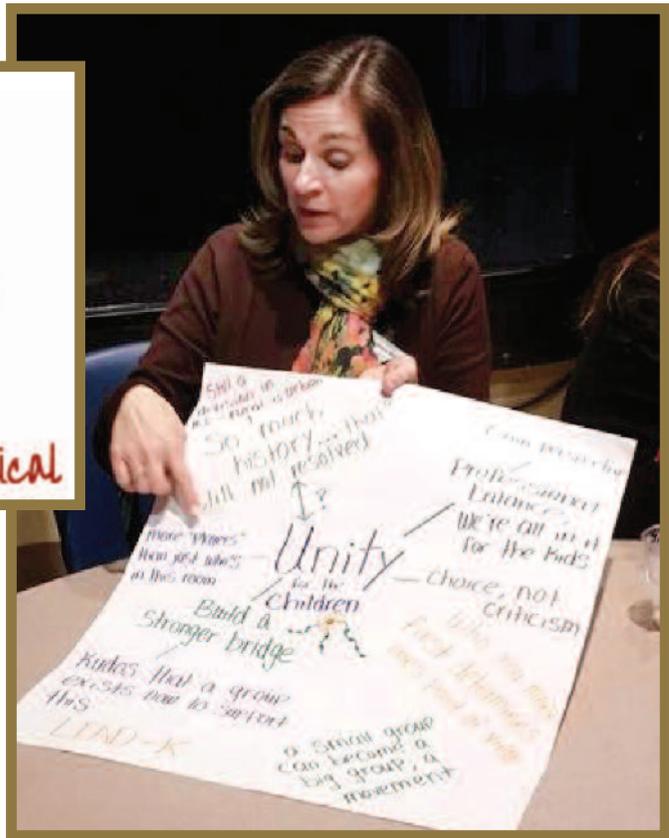
Unity in Deaf Education: Not a Novel Idea

The first attempts at philosophical unification began with Edward Miner Gallaudet, son of a deaf mother, supporter of signed communication, and founder of Gallaudet University, and Alexander Graham Bell, son of a deaf mother, inventor of the telephone, and founder of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Lang, 2003; Winefield, 1987). While these men approached language and education of deaf and hard of hearing individuals from very different perspectives, they found common cause in the need to establish a professional preparation program for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, and they made a sincere attempt to unify the field (Winefield, 1987). Their efforts faltered, however,

at the 1895 Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf held at the Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint. There Gallaudet and Bell officially abandoned their attempts at unity, solidifying the bifurcation that exists in the field of deaf education today (Aldersley, 1996; Winefield, 1987).

Toward One Community of Practice

The first step on our path to unity is to recognize that all of us, regardless of beliefs, philosophy, or approach, are part of a single community of practice. This, however, is easier said than done as the seemingly endless debate about language has left an air of distrust among professionals, parents, and deaf and hard of hearing individuals. This distrust permeates our field through ways in which information is disseminated, ways in

which research is interpreted and applied, and ways in which guidance is provided to families of deaf and hard of hearing children.

Researchers (Hajek & Slaughter, 2014; Lederberg, Schick, & Spencer, 2013) have found that when parents sought advice regarding the communication and educational options available for their child, the philosophical stance of the professional on the issue of language was the driver for decision making. Further, Hajek and Slaughter (2014) indicated that the professionals often failed to discuss or fully explain children's educational options other than those in line with their philosophical beliefs.

A Personal History

During my own professional journey, I began to see myself as a "resident of a philosophical silo," and I began to
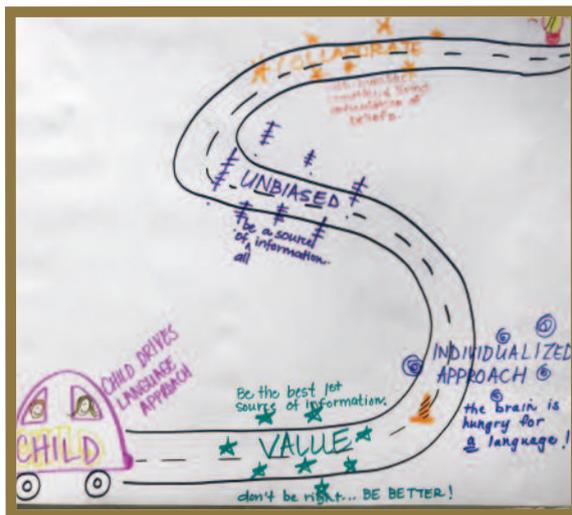
regret the impact that this had on my students, on my relationships with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and on my relationships with the parents of the students I taught. Through professional and personal reflection, I made a deliberate choice to force myself into a mindset that accepted a different narrative.

Despite seeing the potential benefits and my own intellectual commitment, the act of transforming my thinking proved to be both difficult and uncomfortable. Part of that discomfort stemmed from a fear of being alienated from my friends and colleagues in my own philosophical camp. To find my way, I joined with a few colleagues to create a community of practice in which individuals from a diverse swath of communication approaches and professional experiences could engage. We called it "The Radical Middle project."

How a Dinner Fed a Movement

The founding members of The Radical Middle project came to know one another through the National Leadership Consortium on Sensory Disabilities (NLCSD). As part of a federally funded grant through the Department of Education-Office of Special Education Programs, NLCSD

provides opportunities for doctoral students from a consortium of universities across the country to participate in a research-based enrichment program (Easterbrooks & Maiorana-Basas, 2015) in addition to their prescribed doctoral programs.

The first two cohorts of NLCSD fellows included scholars who equally represented bilingual approaches and philosophies, programs in which the language of instruction and communication was American Sign Language and English was taught primarily through reading and writing, and scholars who supported listening and spoken language approaches and philosophies, programs in which the language of instruction and

communication was spoken English and English was taught primarily through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Whether this was a purposeful selection or a coincidence remains a mystery. Regardless of the intention, the different backgrounds and beliefs of these scholars created an opportunity. It allowed us to begin the process of fostering trust.

After several grueling semesters of managing doctoral coursework and collaborative work, five of us and a handful of other doctoral students from other programs and universities found ourselves convening in a hotel lobby during a 2011 conference. In that moment of interaction, we decided that after a year of working together through the NLCSD enrichment program and through our interactions at national conferences, we should shed our professional exteriors and get to know

Visit Us Online

For more information about The Radical Middle project and updates on our live moderated discussion series, check us out at *www.radicalmiddledhh.org*; on Facebook at *www.facebook.com/groups/TheRadicalMiddleDHH/*; and on Twitter at @RadicalMidDHH, #bebetter, #iamtheradicalmiddle, #strongertogether, and #TRMDHH.

each other as human beings. We agreed to meet for dinner.

I do not know exactly what we expected, but the very action of breaking bread provided an opportunity for us to find the positive intent within our interactions. Our conversations lasted well into the night; we engaged in raw, honest dialogue for the first time. As the gathering concluded, a group of students who breathed the language of separate ideologies in deaf education managed to cross over "the great divide" of the language wars. We collectively agreed that the extreme polarization in deaf education was a barrier to progress and concluded that working together was not only possible but mandatory if we wanted to move forward and improve the field. We agreed to form a structured online community of practice. Our goal was to keep the conversation going; The Radical Middle project was officially born.

About a year into our development, we shared the ideas and concepts of The Radical Middle project with our colleagues and mentors in deaf education. We assumed that others saw the need and value of such a project and would be interested in at least exploring it in their professional practice. However, as we talked about our efforts and beliefs, we faced some decidedly negative reactions. These included the reactions of highly respected and experienced scholars, who responded with statements that included, "We are still arguing about this? I thought we solved this problem years ago …" and "This argument is not new and not likely going away. You'd do well to keep your head down and focus on the work where you can really make a difference!" However, when we discussed The Radical Middle project with other
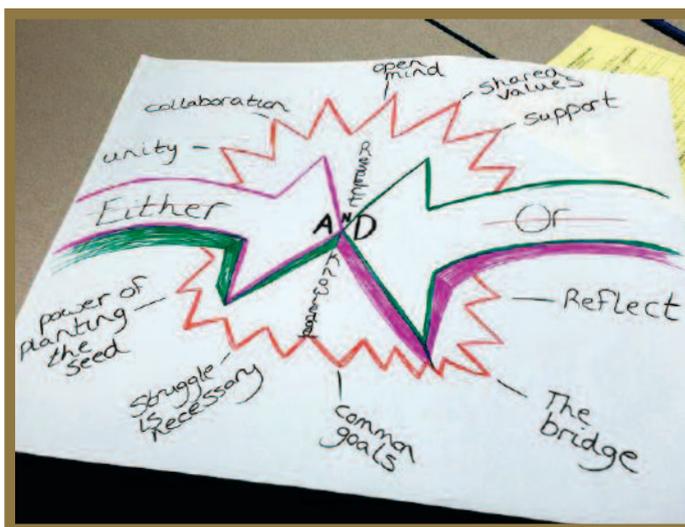
doctoral students, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, and deaf and hard of hearing individuals, we were met with the opposite reaction. They did not disparage our ideas at all; in fact, they seemed hungry for this type of connection. We realized that many individuals supported this idea, providing a critical mass that would keep us focused and lead us to continue our discussions over more dinners and cups of coffee.

Despite seeing the potential benefits and my own intellectual commitment, the act of transforming my thinking proved to be both difficult and uncomfortable.

The Mission of The Radical Middle

The more we met, the stronger The Radical Middle project grew. We defined our goal:

To encourage scholars who are representative of a wide range of educational, cultural, and linguistic philosophies to learn and work together through research and collaborative scholarship, holding a common goal of doing what is best educationally, culturally, and linguistically for each deaf and hard of hearing child and his or her family. (Radical Middle DHH, 2015)

The Radical Middle project is about adopting a holistic approach to how scholars engage, design, and disseminate research with each other, with parents, with teachers, and with deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Our focus is on advancing professional development and bridging gaps between research and practice and research and families from a cross-philosophical perspective. We want to work together to investigate and establish evidence-based practices for educating deaf and hard of hearing children regardless of their preferred method of communicating.

Through this shared vision, the members of The Radical Middle project continue to pursue conversations with each other, maintaining respect for all members whatever our communication and educational philosophies. While The Radical Middle project is structured as a professional online community, parents, deaf and hard of hearing individuals, researchers, and experts are welcome, too, and their opinions and experiences are appreciated.

Online for Community

Deaf and hard of hearing children need and deserve a "continuous system of care" (Tucci, 2017), and sometimes this can only occur if there is an honest dialogue among a wide variety of

professionals. The Radical Middle project aims to be a part of that continuous system of care by fostering professional connections and building bridges across philosophical divides. To strengthen these bridges and connections, the members of The Radical Middle project are committed to providing support and guidance to each other when tensions surface in online and face-to-face dialogue.

In building our "radical" community of practice, we have certainly made many mistakes. However, despite our setbacks, we have successfully begun the process of talking and listening to one another. Through our online dialogues and national presentations, we have witnessed a shift in the way we approach one another. We engage in difficult—and sometimes emotional—conversations, and when our viewpoints are challenged, we work to overcome our natural defensive reaction. We are right where we are supposed to be: uncomfortable.

This discomfort is part of our professional struggle and perhaps part of our professional growth. Lane (2003) points out that one of the most important lessons we can learn from our history is that "controversy grows from ignorance." As such, it is our job to endure the discomfort, to talk about it, and to move beyond our perceived disagreements so that we can learn from one another.

It is important to note that being part of The Radical Middle project is not about giving up personal or professional identity, being neutral about important issues, or compromising expertise. Being part of The Radical Middle is about intentionally seeking opportunities to increase understanding and learning from those who approach deaf education from a different perspective. It is not just the work of data analysis, research, and exploration of evidence-based strategies; it is the inner work required for healing in the field.

"Coming to the middle" is hard. However, the community of practice that started as a handful of doctoral students is now a thriving online community of over 1,000 participants. We believe we must continue to make the conscious choice to discuss our differences and to stay receptive to collaborations that expand our perspective or, at the very least, help us understand other perspectives better. We plan to continue our work, and together we hope to learn, grow, and heal. We cannot afford to give up on unity like Gallaudet and Bell did. There is too much at stake—and our deaf and hard of hearing children are too important.

The Radical Middle project was conceived by the following founding members: Dr. Jennifer Beal, Dr. Joanna Cannon, Dr. Caroline Guardino, Dr. Michella Maiorana-Basas*, Dr. Christina Rivera*, Dr. Uma Soman*, Dr. Jessica Trussell*, and Dr. Jenna Voss*. Our Board of Directors is made up of the above founding members (excluding Dr. Uma Soman) in addition to Mr. Michael Ballard and Mr. John Kirsh, who joined the initiative in February 2017.

*NLCSD fellow

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STEPping Toward a Radical Middle

By Michella Maiorana-Basas

Language approach remains controversial for too many deaf educators. Perhaps no amount of research can determine the rightness or wrongness of any single approach as deaf and hard of hearing individuals—like all individuals—are far too diverse to have their education classified in such absolutes. Those of us who participate in The Radical Middle project find the barriers among professionals in deaf education to be artificial; we believe that we should shift our perspective and realize that the stakeholders in deaf education have more in common than not.

Here are the steps toward becoming part of The Radical Middle community of practice:

1. **Recognize that everyone has beliefs that include bias.** To be an effective professional, we need to recognize how our bias impacts our interactions with parents, students, and other professionals.

2. **Do not feel compelled to compromise your knowledge base or belief system.** Be confident in who you are as a professional and be willing to find a common thread with others. Remember that when you take a stand for something, it does not mean you are automatically against something else.

3. **Challenge yourself to have an honest, judgment-free dialogue with someone who is your professional or philosophical counterpart.** Go to dinner. Have some coffee. Put yourself in an environment in which you can come together as human beings and not as professionals ensconced in already-decided and highly-defended roles.

4. **Avoid making definitive statements.** Be humble and know that your truth is not everyone's truth.

5. **Value diversity.** Encourage others to do the same.

6. **Attack issues, not people.** We are stronger together, and in order to be strong, we need to find ways of building each other up. Attacking one another solves nothing and creates barriers to learning and growing.

7. **Engage in self-analysis.** When engaging in dialogue, ask yourself the following: How does my comment help others understand my perspective? How does my comment foster productive discussion? How does my comment help us move forward? How could my comment lead to a solution?

8. **Join The Radical Middle for our live discussion series,** The Art of Expertise: 10 Tips for Finding the Middle (visit *www.radicalmiddledhh.org* or *www.facebook.com/groups/TheRadicalMiddleDHH/* for more information).

9. **Follow The Radical Middle** on Twitter at @RadicalMidDHH for updates, announcements, and live tweeting events at professional conferences.

10. **Do it for the children.** We know that when teachers and researchers collaborate, student achievement improves (Cooper, 2007), specifically in mathematics and reading (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). What educational benefits are our deaf and hard of hearing students missing due to our reluctance to collaborate?

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Julie Mitchiner, PhD, associate professor in the Education Department at Gallaudet University, co-directs the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants, Toddlers and their Families: Leadership and Collaboration Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate Program. She received both her bachelor's degree in early childhood education and her master's degree in deaf education with a specialization in family-centered early education from Gallaudet University and her doctorate in education with a specialization in early childhood education with a secondary concentration in multi-cultural/multilingual education from George Mason University.

Top, right: Interveners sometimes play back and forth games with students (e.g., brushing a student's face with the paper strips on a birthday hat and waiting for the student to communicate that he wants the action repeated).

A Positive Perspective:

PREPARING PROFESSIONALS TO WORK WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

By Julie Mitchiner and Linda Risser Lytle

As co-directors of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants, Toddlers and their Families Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate Program at Gallaudet University, we believe that it is important to infuse a positive perspective of being deaf as we work with families with deaf and hard of hearing children. Typically, these families first learn about being deaf through a deficit model of hearing loss, and as a result they experience grief and anxiety about having a deaf or hard of hearing child (Hintermair, 2014). In a paradigm shift, our students are trained to provide appropriate support and service to children and their families from a perspective in which being deaf is similar to the way one views individuals with cultural differences. The program, which began at Gallaudet six years ago, offers students a framework with which to work with families that emphasizes the deaf or hard of hearing child's strengths (Bauman & Murray, 2010).

Perhaps one of the most important aspects in this sociocultural model which presents being deaf in a positive way is a change in terminology. Students are prompted to pay attention to their language and use it to provide families with an optimistic perspective. The term *early intervention*, for example, has negative connotations so we reframe this term and refer to *early family involvement*.

Photos courtesy of Debbi Bosso, Erin Kline, Dana Stewart Kline, and Lisa Charney

Jesús O. Barreto Abrams   LaTrice L. Dowtin   Emily Wojahn   Dana Stewart Kline   Elizabeth Allen
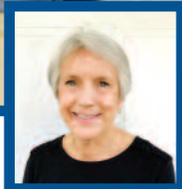
Linda Risser Lytle, PhD, professor in the Department of Counseling at Gallaudet University, is director of the Summers & Online School Counseling Program, which is supported by a training grant from the United States Office of Special Education Programs, and co-director of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants, Toddlers and their Families: Leadership and Collaboration Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate Program at Gallaudet University. Lytle is a licensed psychologist and maintains a private practice in Washington, D.C. She received her doctorate in counseling from The Catholic University of America. Most recently, she co-authored *Turning the Tide: Making Life Better for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Schoolchildren* (2014) and *Raising the Whole Child: Addressing Social-Emotional Development in Deaf Children* (VL2 Research Brief No. 11, 2016).

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at *Julie.Mitchiner@gallaudet.edu* and *Linda.Lytle@gallaudet.edu*, respectively.

Similarly, when we discuss the children with their families, we avoid the term *hearing loss*, preferring to refer directly to children's *hearing levels*. Instead of discussing communication options, which implies that the family must choose one approach to communication for the child, we use the phrase *communication opportunities*, which implies that a child can benefit from a range of communication approaches. Changing language can change attitudes, and these changes enable parents to see their children in a more positive light.

Working, Researching, and Exploring
The Capstone Projects

An especially exciting aspect of the program, which is based partly online and partly in the classroom, is the capstone project required of each of our students. These projects bring together students' learning as they apply what they have learned to design and implement a project in the community. Community service

Above, left to right: Five graduates of the program who completed capstone projects with exciting results.

projects give students the chance to internalize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions developed through their coursework and contribute to the field in meaningful ways.

Jesús O. Barreto Abrams, a student who works in the Washington, D.C., area as a sign language interpreter, did his capstone project in his native Puerto Rico. Abrams, who joined the program while working on his doctorate in clinical psychology, secured funding from Gallaudet University's Research Support and International Affairs to look at the perspectives of parents and professionals involved in early intervention with deaf children. Fluent in Spanish, American Sign Language (ASL), and English, Abrams used a phenomenological approach to identify Puerto Rico's most significant problem for both parents and professionals—which was the lack

Left: Staff members encourage students to become active participants in reading (e.g., by turning the pages of a "touch and feel" book).

of resources. He also found that every participant in his study, regardless of background (e.g., audiologist, teacher, parent), supported the use of signed language with their children, either through ASL or through signs and spoken language in conformance with the principles of Total Communication.

LaTrice L. Dowtin, another of our graduates, earned her PhD in clinical psychology at Gallaudet University and is also a specialist-level nationally certified school psychologist. Dowtin developed a memory assessment for deaf and hard of hearing children, ages 2 to 5 years and 11-months as her capstone project. This memory assessment is to be included in a nonverbal pre-school performance scale published by Stoelting. With the materials finalized, Dowtin and her co-author are working out the last parts of an instruction manual that will be published first in English and hopefully later in ASL. Dowtin said she felt her work in our program not only prepared her for success but was the reason she secured an internship with Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she is already making home visits; consulting for primary care; providing psychoeducation and therapy for caregivers and young children; and helping infants, toddlers, and their caregivers form healthy attachments. Dowtin is one of our newest program faculty; she is currently co-teaching the capstone courses.

Other graduates have experienced similar career boosts. Emily Wojahn, who just received her certificate, had been working as a kindergarten through second grade teacher in the Family-Centered Early Education Department at the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind. After she graduated from our program, she was able to change jobs, becoming a Colorado regional hearing resource coordinator for the Pikes Peak region of Colorado. In this position, she works directly with families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (ages 0-3).

Dana Stewart Kline, another recent graduate, is working as the student advisor at the Delaware School for the Deaf (DSD) where she provides behavioral support and counseling services to students K-12. Kline earned her certificate while pursuing a graduate degree with the Gallaudet Summers & Online School Counseling Program. During this time, she worked full time at DSD, providing consultative and direct services to students K-12 with deaf-blindness and additional needs and serving as the liaison to Delaware's Statewide Deaf-Blind Program. Kline, who enjoys working with families, produced an hour-long video to educate parents of deaf-blind and multiply disabled children on detailed strategies that support literacy development. The video has been published on YouTube, used for multiple trainings across several states, and posted on the National Center on Deaf-Blindness website, which is shared with each state's Deaf-Blind Project as well as the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind. Called *Literacy for Us*, the video may be accessed at *https://nationaldb.org/library/page/ 2678*.

Elizabeth Allen, a 2013 graduate, developed a monthly program for families with deaf children, called Families to Families, that brought families together to meet, share information, and provide each other with support. Based in Norfolk, Virginia, that project is ongoing.

An Interdisciplinary Focus

Our students are professionals, many of whom work full time as teachers, interpreters, speech-language pathologists, and other specialists. They study social work, audiology, counseling, and international development, among other fields, and they bring the diverse perspectives and expertise from their various disciplines to our program. Skills in collaboration and leadership with professionals from different disciplines in the fields of early family involvement and early childhood are emphasized.

Courses are taught using a co-instructor model, with instructors coming from different professional disciplines, and one instructor who is deaf and one instructor who is hearing. While this structure takes quite a bit of work and planning, it is one that we deeply value. Learning as part of an interdisciplinary group is quite different from learning within one's chosen discipline and sometimes takes time to get used

to. However, the value of learning with and from others with differing personal and professional perspectives is enormous. As Beth Hamilton, one of our graduates, stated:

This program was a 180-degree change for me from what I thought I knew. It encouraged me to seek more information, to engage in deeper conversations with other professionals and with parents, and to better understand how effective interdisciplinary approaches can be. (Personal communication, 2013)

In an instructor-solicited course reflection assignment, which was completed anonymously, another student reported:

The mutual exposure and experience of learning together and being challenged by various worldviews was certainly my favorite part of this course. With each discussion, I felt as though I learned valuable information from my colleagues even if the topic was an area with which I was already familiar. (Personal communication, summer, 2017)

Students not only learn about interdisciplinary teamwork, but they practice it in each of their courses. The heart of the program is interdisciplinary. This is shown in a multitude of ways—through the program's management, instructors, students, curriculum, and even location. Rather than being found housed within an academic program, our department is housed in Gallaudet University's graduate school. Understanding the importance of collaboration and

contributing knowledge and skills from their respective disciplines to support the child and the family is critical.

Creating a learning environment in which deaf and hearing professionals learn together and support each other is another key component of the program. Hearing individuals sometimes come to the program with limited experience with deaf people, and deaf individuals sometimes come with limited or negative experience with hearing people. Courses are designed so that individuals with varying personal and professional backgrounds and varying hearing levels and language abilities work and learn together—and are enriched in the process as they develop new skills, assimilate new information, and sometimes cultivate new attitudes. Teamwork and mutual respect are modeled by our deaf/hearing instructor teams.

History of a Program

The program was the brainchild of Marilyn Sass-Lehrer, formerly within the Department of Education at Gallaudet, and Beth Benedict, within the Department of Communication at Gallaudet. The collaboration model they developed has remained strong. When Sass-Lehrer and Benedict moved on to other endeavors, the interdisciplinary program co-director model was retained with co-directors coming from the Department of Education (Mitchiner) and the Department of Counseling (Lytle).

When it was first conceived, the program was one of a

Above: An intervener may provide a student with a touch-cue to let the student know where he or she is.

handful of online programs offered through Gallaudet University. Today online instruction has become mainstream as professionals throughout the country value being able to work full time while living at home and earning a certificate in an area important to their jobs. At Gallaudet, a bilingual university, ASL and English are equally valued. Instruction and student work are shared online both through English and ASL; accessibility is key.

Our students want the Gallaudet experience, the experience of a bilingual environment of ASL and English. We are finding that as difficult as it is, individuals are willing to take time off to come to on-campus classes because they find worth in the experience of face-to-face interactions in the classroom. Both the first and final courses in the program are a hybrid; they include a long weekend on campus and several weeks of work online. Additionally, periodic video meetings with our students individually and in groups foster robust discussions.

Goals: Looking to the Future

The first cohort of eight students graduated in the summer of 2012, and as the program continues to thrive, 60 students have graduated and approximately 10 new students enter each year. Our goal has remained the same: to address the critical need for more well-prepared professionals to work with young children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. Deaf professionals, who have rich experience and a deep understanding of what it means to be deaf and can meaningfully contribute in our field, are especially needed. Evidence shows that families benefit from interactions and mentoring with professionals who are deaf (Hintermair, 2000; McKee, 2006; Watkins, Pittman, & Walden, 1998). Deaf adult professionals become role models and cultural mediators between the hearing and the Deaf community.

Also crucial is recruiting diverse instructors to support

professionals in becoming competent to work with families from diverse backgrounds. This is especially important as the number of families from diverse backgrounds is increasing. Their cultural knowledge and experiences in working with young children from all backgrounds enriches the field in early family involvement.

Unfortunately, today many practicing professionals still lack the specialized knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with families of deaf and hard of hearing children, and they are often required to obtain training after they have been hired for a position (Sass-Lehrer, Moeller, & Stredler-Brown, 2016). Our program—with its emphasis on a positive view of being deaf and support for work in community—begins to fill this training gap. It is an exciting time in the field of early family involvement, and we are excited to be leaders in preparing students to meet the growing need for well-prepared, culturally knowledgeable professionals.

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MEETING CONSULTING NEEDS IN GENERAL EDUCATION SETTINGS:

Five Strategies
for Itinerant Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

By Brittany Dorn

Teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing find consultation increasingly part of the job due to the national trend toward inclusion. The push toward inclusion has been accelerated by implementation of universal newborn hearing screening and advances in technology that have included digital hearing aids, cochlear implants, and hearing assistive technology systems (Berndsen & Luckner, 2012). As a result, deaf and hard of hearing students are increasingly educated by general education teachers—and these teachers may lack knowledge of what it means to be deaf or hard of hearing.

While teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students continue to offer direct services to students, with 87 percent of these students spending at least part of their day in a mainstream classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), consultation with teachers and support staff is increasingly important. According to Miller (2008), "a variety of service delivery models [are] available to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing, but the itinerant teaching model is the predominant model nationally, even internationally." This means extensive collaboration, which sometimes involves working with resistant professionals who may be less than thrilled about having an "outsider" in their classrooms.

In a 2013 survey of 365 itinerant teachers, consultation with professionals and parents was rated as the second most important job responsibility (the first was working with students). The majority of teachers responded that their undergraduate and graduate programs did not adequately prepare them to work as itinerant teachers. When itinerant teachers were asked to suggest professional development topics, they cited consultation and effective collaboration (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013).

Very little research exists on consultation in deaf education, but other fields offer research and suggestions that may be applied to this area. These suggestions include: setting and focusing on shared goals, using objective measures—not emotion—to justify accommodations, listening, being careful with language, and emphasizing why—not just how—students need services and accommodations.

Photos courtesy of Brittany Dorn

Left: The author (center) with staff from Clarke Mainstream Services. As more students who are deaf or hard of hearing are educated in neighborhood schools, the need for itinerant teachers of the deaf and mainstream services grows.

Forced into consulting by changes in how deaf and hard of hearing students are educated, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing can use research from other fields to learn how to become effective consultants. They must master skills implicit in the role of consulting so that they can do this in a collaborative way that acknowledges shared responsibility for problem solving and solution monitoring with classroom teachers and other school professionals. Becoming effective consultants not only makes the work easier but also ensures swifter and more effective accommodations for the deaf and hard of hearing students.

The following five strategies have been developed for fields such as business and psychology, but they may also be effective for teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students who find themselves working with general education teachers.

Strategy 1:
Work to Set Up Shared Goals

Sometimes teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students may feel that they have opposing goals from those of the classroom teacher, administrators, and special education director within the school district. While a teacher of a deaf or hard of hearing student focuses on that individual student, the classroom teacher focuses on the achievement of the class as a whole. Similarly, teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students may struggle to ask the special education director about purchasing technology for one student when the special education director is focusing on saving money to allocate across the entire district. However, each of these professionals shares one overarching goal: to help students be successful. The principal may have a more general focus on the student body, the special education director may be thinking

about all the students with disabilities in the district, and the teacher of a deaf or hard of hearing student may be working with one profoundly deaf third grader. However, when these professionals gather to discuss this third grader, the student becomes the common denominator for all three professionals.

Many people are unfamiliar with the idea of mutual gain, and this unfamiliarity presents a major obstacle to effective collaboration (Feinberg, Beyer, & Moses, 2002). Mutual gain is the idea that both parties can benefit from the decision made. Too often, people feel that they are in a win-lose situation. Discussions focused on mutual gain and shared interest naturally position all players on the same team and lead to increased buy-in (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011). How does this apply to deaf education? Teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students should remind other teachers

and administrators of the shared goal and use the word "we" whenever possible. When faced with an obstacle, for example, the teacher of a deaf or hard of hearing student can ask the team, "How can we best deal with this challenge?" and "What can be done to help us reach our goal?" Whenever possible, the teacher of the deaf or hard of hearing student should physically sit beside the classroom teachers (Fisher et al., 2011) as they discuss or face a challenge together.

While the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students works with team members to establish goals, the team members should determine the best way to meet those goals. Although tempting, teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students should avoid the urge to try to provide every step toward the solution

Right: Whenever possible, position the work or "obstacles" across from you and your collaborative partner as you work together on a solution.

of a problem. Solutions must fit the context of the school, and school professionals know this context better than an itinerant consultant. For example, in the case of helping a student access the announcements made over a loudspeaker, multiple solutions exist. The announcements could be typed, printed, and delivered to the student, or they could be projected on a television or computer screen. There is no best solution—there is only the solution that works within the context of the school. On teamwork with school staff, Fisher et al. (2011)

caution, "If they are not involved in the process, they are unlikely to approve the product. It is that simple." When other professionals feel ownership of a solution, they are more invested in its success and work harder to try to accomplish it.

Additionally, there are often ways to meet individual student goals in a way that improves the environment for all students. For example, high expectations for speaking and listening may lead to higher-level classroom discussions. Amplification, such as a pass-around microphone and corresponding Soundfield system, which allows all students—not just those who are deaf or hard of hearing—to hear amplified sound, projects important information to the whole class. The transmitter of a personal FM system can be used as a "talking stick" to remind students to take turns when speaking, thus increasing expectations for all students in the room.

Strategy 2:
Use Objective Measures— Not Emotions—to Persuade
The job of an itinerant teacher can be emotionally taxing and isolating. It is common for a district to employ a single teacher for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and to task that teacher

with advocating for every deaf or hard of hearing student in the district. This teacher may observe students in difficult situations—in a classroom where the videos are not captioned, in the lunchroom where the student is socially isolated, or with a teacher who, despite instruction, addresses the interpreter rather than the student. Further, the classroom teacher and other educational professionals may not understand deafness, may downplay its educational significance, or may listen intently to suggestions but then fail to implement them.

According to Wrightslaw (*www.wrightslaw.com*), an advocacy resource for parents, intense emotions can become an Achilles' heel during the negotiation process (Wright, 2008). It may be tempting to appeal emotionally to the school staff—to plead with the general education teacher to incorporate the deaf or hard of hearing student into the classroom in the manner that the teacher of deaf or hard of hearing students knows is best. However, this is not an effective course of action. According to Wright (2008), "You must transform your emotions into energy." As much as possible, this energy should transform into suggestions and recommendations presented through statistics, data, and objective measures. According to Fisher et al. (2011), "The more you bring standards of fairness, efficiency, or scientific merit to bear on your particular problem, the more likely you are to produce a final package that is wise and fair." Further, basing arguments on objective data decreases the likelihood of a battle of wills or feelings (Fisher et al., 2011). For example, teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students may be tempted to state what they think or feel about the need for a student to receive increased service time by saying, "I can tell he needs more time working with me because he's struggling in his classes and he seems lonely at school." This appeal is largely emotional, and it can be easily disputed. A general education teacher

might reply, "Well, he's doing fine in my class, and I've seen him smiling in the hallway. I think he's fine." A better course of action is to seek out and use data that adds credibility to suggestions. For example, a teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students who believes it necessary to increase the amount of time a student spends with her might report: "Out of the six classes in which he is enrolled, this student currently has three Fs and three Cs. Additionally, I observed him in the cafeteria on five separate occasions, and four of the five times he sat alone and engaged with fewer than two peers during each 35-minute lunch block." Assessments and checklists, sometimes available for free through websites, can structure and add credibility to data. For example, using the Hearing Itinerant Service Rubric, which is available for free downloading (*https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com*), can help teachers develop and present data that shows whether a student's service time should be increased.

Similarly, when advocating for equipment such as the FM system, the numerical results of the student's functional listening evaluation, which measures how well a student can hear at different distances and with different levels of background noise, should be emphasized. Not only does data persuade more effectively than emotions, it is harder to dispute.

Right: Requesting listening breaks from the student's perspective—in addition to the rationale of the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students—is more meaningful.

Strategy 3: Listen

In his book *Just Listen*, Goulston (2010) explains that in the same way new knowledge builds on prior knowledge, initial judgments about people (e.g., this teacher doesn't want extra work) form a filter through which we interact. In order to really hear people, Goulston explains that we need to remove this filter: "Open your own mind and look for the reasons behind the behavior, and you'll take the first step toward breaking down barriers … if you want to open the lines of communication, open your own mind first."

Certain behaviors such as eye contact, nodding, and rephrasing help people know you are listening. In a study of effective early childhood consultants, resource consultants "actively listened, showed empathy, reflected on feelings, and asked clarifying questions" that led to more effective teamwork (Frankel, 2006). When people feel heard, they are more open to your message, according to Goulston. In addition to helping people feel heard, active listening helps solve the problem. As explained in the book *Getting to Yes* (Fisher et al., 2011),

THREE THINGS THAT <u>HELP</u> ME LEARN IN CLASS:

1. The Fm helps me listen.
2. show me the directions on paper
3. Look at me when you talk to m

THREE THINGS THAT MAKE IT <u>HARD</u> FOR ME TO LEARN IN CLASS:

1. It's hard for me to concentra because it's noisy.
2. nosie from the hall way
3. Kidz whispering when than not supposed to
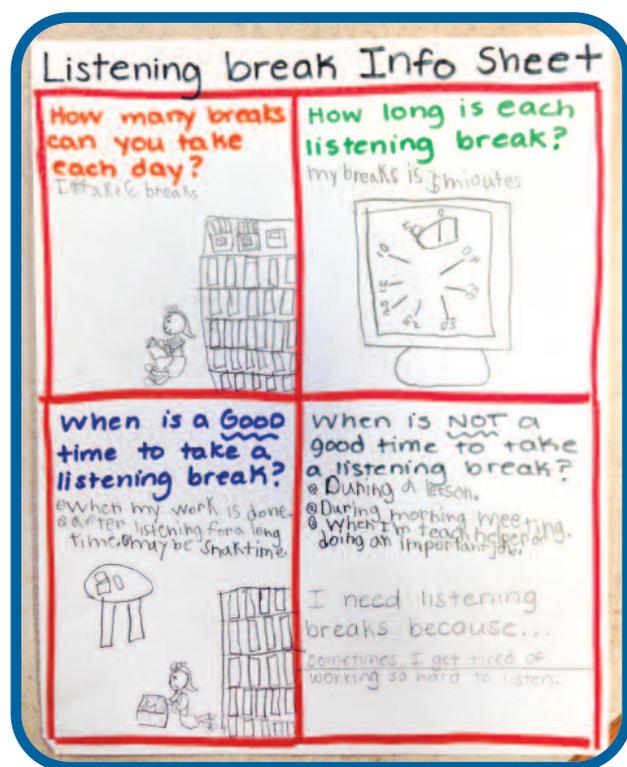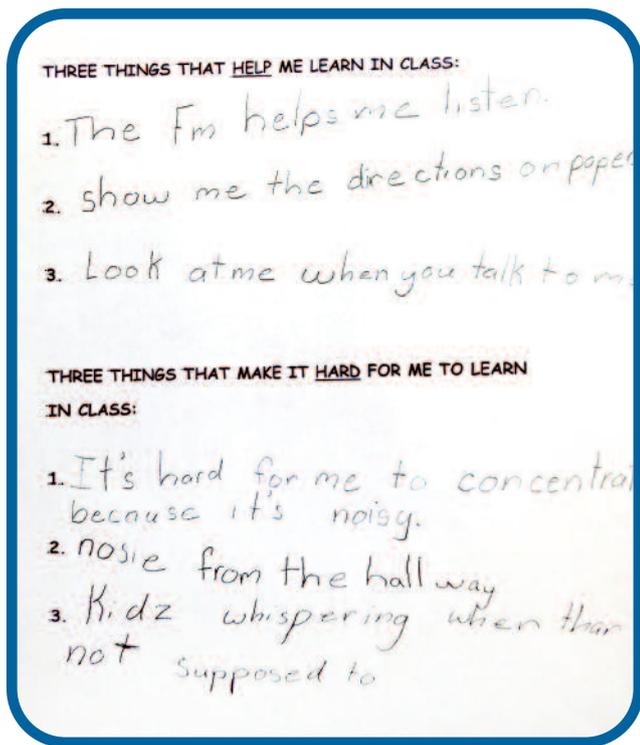
Above: Using the words of the deaf or hard of hearing student is often a more powerful way to show the *why* than any advice the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students could give.

understanding the other person's perspective does not simply help with the negotiation, it *is* the negotiation.

As teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students, we find that some classroom teachers immediately understand and implement our suggestions; in other classes, it is two months into the school year and despite our constant reminders, the closed captions are still not turned on—or the FM system is misused, or the teacher still gives direction to the interpreter and not the student. As we learn to effectively consult, we realize that *who* is being asked (and in what context) is as important as *what* is being asked. To ensure our students receive the accommodations they need, we, the consultants, need to focus not only on the request but on the individual teacher to whom the request is addressed and on

the school context within which we are doing the requesting.

Strategy 4: Be Deliberate with Language

Language matters! This is especially true in deaf education, in which the stakes are high, the situation is personal, and the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing is often working with classroom teachers who are overwhelmed and at times defensive. In this environment, the words that the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing uses to deliver a message may often be as important as the message itself.

In his book *Schools That Learn*, Senge et al. (2012) provide sentence starters for effectively providing information and asking for clarification; in other words, "balancing inquiry and advocacy." For example, when explaining the reasoning behind a decision, a teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students might say, "I am proposing this [accommodation or modification] because [it is indicated by this data, assessment, or observation]. Is this a fair conclusion?" (Senge et al., 2012). Teachers who consistently use data to support their points can expect the same from others. When following up on a point made by someone else, the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students might ask, "What leads you to say that?" or "Would you please help me understand your thinking?" as a way to probe for objective data (adapted from Senge et al., 2012).

The Region 13 Education Service Center, a Texas-based resource that

offers ideas on collaborating to benefit students, suggests in its videos that teachers pay attention to the *type* of question asked. Consultants should avoid questions in which the wording is leading (i.e., questions in which the wording hints at the answer), closed (i.e., questions that require only a yes or no answer), or negative (i.e., questions in which a student or situation is portrayed in a negative way). Although the speaker may not realize he or she is asking these types of questions, the listener may subconsciously shut down or become defensive as a result of the language that constitutes these types of questions.

Strategy 5: Emphasize Why, Not What

Simon Sinek (2009), in a popular and powerful TED talk, introduces a visual to represent the way people communicate ideas. It is an illustration made up of three concentric circles: the largest, outer circle labeled "what"; the next largest circle labeled "how"; and the smallest, inner circle labeled "why." According to Sinek, most people ineffectively make requests by moving from the outer to the inner circle, explaining what they are asking, then how to accomplish it, and finally why they are making their request. He suggests reversing the strategy, beginning with the rationale—the "why" of the request—and then moving to the "how" and finally stating the "what."

For the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students, this means addressing the *why* might be more effective than putting in successive requests for the *what*. Through in-service and follow-up meetings, using simulations of hearing loss and incorporating hands-on activities, the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students can help the classroom teacher understand the meaning and purpose of inclusion, the educational implications of deafness, and how compromised accessibility means compromised learning. The teacher of

deaf and hard of hearing students can help others understand what it is like to be deaf or hard of hearing in a typical classroom and the importance of making accommodations.

Working Together for Student Success

Teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students have the important role of bringing awareness of individual students' needs for accessibility and modifications to classroom teachers and working with those teachers to identify ways to assist the student in the context of the individual school setting. As consultants dedicated to the educational success of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, our success comes more easily when we help classroom teachers understand the rationale for accommodations. Once this happens, teachers do not need to be told of every single accommodation. Instead, they

Below: Equipment reminders are stronger when they are written by the students themselves. This sign was created by a fourth grader to remind her classmates and teacher of the signal lights on the Soundfield tower.
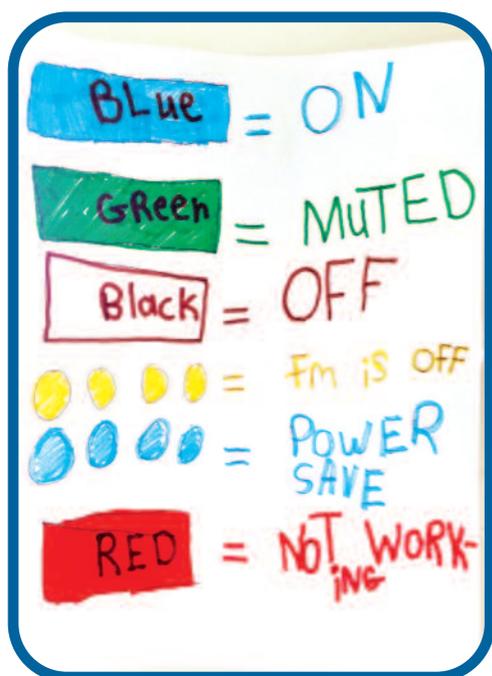
start to independently assess the student's environment and look for ways to support the student. The role of the teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students is to act as a problem-solving partner throughout this process.

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A Community of Practice:

Partnership Prospers Between Providers and Parent Leaders in Washington State

By Kris Rydecki Ching and Christine Griffin

Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning.
~ Paulo Freire (1998), *Pedagogy of Freedom*

Improving services for our youngest deaf and hard of hearing children in Washington State has meant the creation of a professional learning community—or community of practice—for our professionals in early intervention for children who deaf or hard of hearing. In a state that has distinct geographical differences, these highly specialized professionals traverse mountain passes, expansive rural vistas, and agricultural countryside in order to support families of deaf and hard of hearing babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. In the metropolitan areas of the state, our early intervention professionals are often part of private specialized programs; in the rural areas, they often work alone.

Kris Rydecki Ching, outreach director for birth-5 at the Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (CDHL), a statewide agency that provides services to deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to 22 years old, came up with the idea of creating a community for this group of professionals. She felt that creating a community of practice would help break down the isolation that easily occurs when professionals have to pursue their work alone.

The CDHL has provided opportunities for other professional groups to interact with each other, hosting several quarterly statewide videoconference meetings for educators and professionals in deaf education. We have offered statewide videoconferences for itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech-language pathologists, educational audiologists, special education directors, and deaf and hard of hearing education program

Photos courtesy of Kris Rydecki Ching and Christine Griffin

Above: A diagram of Community of Practice (Allan, 2008).

directors. Our early intervention professionals have the opportunity to connect at the annual state Infant and Early Childhood Conference in Tacoma if they can manage to get there. However, until the development of the community of practice, they had no way to maintain regular contact with each other.

Communities of Practice

A community of practice has been defined as "a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals" (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005). Communities of practice connect people who might otherwise be isolated in their interests or work. They offer opportunity for individuals who share a context, in our case working with families of deaf and hard of hearing children, and enable them to talk with each other about challenges and possibilities.

A community of practice allows for members to share information and knowledge and assist each other with solving problems; it facilitates the

process of collecting and evaluating best practices while introducing collaboration among members (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005). In addition, communities of practice allow participants to identify items on which collective action can be taken, to focus attention on practices that could benefit from change, and to find ways to transform practices (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005). Within every community of practice, each member is viewed as an equal participant; information is shared equitably among members.

We planned for our community of practice to include early childhood teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech-language professionals, listening and spoken language specialists, deaf and hard of hearing family mentors, and program administrators—all the varied professionals who were involved in visiting and working with families of deaf and hard of hearing children in their homes. By sharing resources, assessment tools, and home visit strategies, participants could

Christine Griffin, MEd, is coordinator of Guide By Your Side, a program of Washington State's Hands & Voices, the parent-driven organization with chapters in the United States and Canada. She earned her master's degree in adult education from Western Washington University, with a focus on parent engagement and involvement, and she has worked to support parents of children with special needs since 2006. Griffin has presented and trained family members and parent leaders both locally and nationally. She and her husband live in Washington State and are the proud parents of two young adult children who are deaf and hard of hearing; the story of her family, *Standing Up for Our Children*, was published in *Odyssey* in 2013. In 2016, Griffin was awarded The Seaver Vision Award from Hands & Voices.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at *kris.ching@cdhl.wa.gov* and *gbys@wahandsand voices.org*, respectively.

parent guides, as these individuals also work with families in the home environment. Quite by chance, Griffin had been researching community of practice principles and practices for a course she was designing on the topic of nonviolence as part of her work in her final quarter of graduate school at Western Washington University. Griffin had been drawn to the community of practice framework because it allowed for the inclusion of individuals with varying backgrounds and skills. In communities of practice, no hierarchical structure exists and no specific skill set or skill level is required; to join, individuals need only share an interest in the subject—in our case early intervention with deaf and hard of hearing youngsters and their families—as well as share an interest in connecting with others and improving their own practices. Griffin saw the new community of practice as an opportunity for herself and others in the Guide By Your Side program to network with the early intervention professionals with whom they frequently partner to support families. To her, it seemed only natural that the community of practice include parent guides. This would help both the professionals and the parent guides as they teamed up to support families. They could learn from each other. In their discussion, Griffin explained this to Ching, asserting that including the parent guides in the community of practice would only benefit the participants, supporting the foundational belief that a community of practice is to empower all members. Griffin noted that this belief was rooted in adult educational philosophies that focus on equitable education practices (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Further, Griffin feared that if the parent guides were excluded, the isolation of professionals and providers would increase.

Ching had initially thought about including the parent

provide and receive moral support from each other and discuss current research articles and topics of interest. Ching believed that providers would not only be less isolated but that they would gain new knowledge and build networking channels.

Coming Together
Partnering with Hands & Voices

The initial community of practice meeting of the early intervention professionals for deaf and hard of hearing children was held in June 2016. Some individuals arrived in person; those who could not attend, especially the professionals who live and work in central or eastern Washington, attended through videoconferencing.

As Ching brainstormed agenda topic ideas for the first meeting, she decided to call Washington State's Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side coordinator, Christine Griffin, to invite her to present on parent-to-parent support services. Washington State Hands & Voices is a chapter of Hands & Voices, a parent-driven organization that supports parents and caregivers of children who are deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing regardless of their choice of communication. Guide By Your Side is a program of Hands & Voices that matches new parents and caregivers with "parent guides," individuals who are also parents of deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing children and are trained to work with new parents to provide up-to-date information, resources, and peer support.

As they talked, Griffin inquired about the new community of practice and asked about the inclusion of

guides as well as pediatric audiologists and early intervention family resources coordinators, but she had shied away from including them in a belief that she should "begin small." Nevertheless, she responded positively to Griffin's suggestion and gathered feedback from the other professionals about inviting the parent guides to community of practice

meetings. She wasn't surprised that there were mixed feelings about combining professionals and parents in the same community of practice. Some believed that one group would not fully participate due to the other group's presence.

Ching had worked closely with a parent guide. Both had attended several preschool transition meetings in their respective roles, supporting children, their parents, and school districts. It was this working relationship and collaborative involvement that led her to also feel confident that the parent guides, who are also trained specialists working in families' homes, should be included and that inclusion would strengthen ties and improve practices.

Today

Today we—the early childhood professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing children and their families and the parent guides from Washington State Hands & Voices—are beginning our second year of investment in a community of practice. In our first year, we had four meetings, with over 30 participants on the e-mail list that covered the state. At each meeting there have been 12 or more attendants, both in person and virtual. As part of a foundation, they worked together to develop "relationships of trust, mutual respect, and reciprocity" (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005), necessary for a strong community of learners. Discussions led to decisions to focus on the transition process from early intervention to the early stages of education. We agreed that students need appropriate supports and services during this important time.

This year we have continued these meetings at locations around the state at different deaf and hard of hearing early childhood program locations for those who can attend in person and using Zoom teleconferencing to include individuals who are not able to be physically present. This has allowed us to learn more about what each program offers and to tour individual sites. Our agendas cover announcements and updates

Below: Members join in discussion using Zoom.

as well as support time to focus on and talk through difficult home visit situations, problem solving, and reviewing research articles.

As our meetings continue and we share information, we move into deeper levels of inquiry and learning as a group—a process that is shown in the community of practice diagram (Allan, 2008). Other activities to support deaf and hard of hearing children and their families are underway. We are expanding services, events, and activities for children and families as well as professional development for staff. We have regional deaf and hard of hearing family night events, and we offer parent leadership workshops and training.

While this is underway, our community of practice has worked to develop trust among a variety of providers and family leaders; it continues to create a space where we can share with and learn from each other. When we come together, we bring our different backgrounds and individual perspectives, and we keep the focus on our commonalities. We all want to improve outcomes for children and families. We will continue to grow and learn together, expanding partnerships and developing stronger relationships with high expectations for positive change. We know that it takes a village, and we continue to create our village—and at its heart is our community of practice.

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Exploring Feedback Mechanisms for Preservice Teachers' Lesson Plans

By Dana Kan and Uma Soman

Although written lesson plans are a standard requirement in teacher training programs, limited information exists about effective methods for reviewing and assessing these documents. University supervisors determine how to evaluate lesson plans, and methods and expectations vary widely across training programs. Consequently, preservice teaching candidates might not receive the support they need to maximize their abilities to plan effective lessons for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In response to this concern, we designed and implemented a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research study to evaluate the impact of in-person and written feedback to graduate students pursuing their master's degree in deaf education at Vanderbilt University. SoTL is an inquiry-based research method that strives to improve teaching in postsecondary education. It requires university instructors to apply the same skills we teach our students—such as systematically analyzing and evaluating the strengths and weakness of our teaching methods—to our own higher education classes.

Our graduate students' main opportunity to learn about lesson planning occurs during practicum. Unlike traditional coursework, practicum pairs teaching candidates with experienced teachers who mentor them as they practice planning and implementing lessons with the experienced teachers' students. Although mentoring teachers provide positive and constructive feedback to the teaching candidates, university supervisors formally evaluate the candidates' written lesson plans.

Written Feedback on Lesson Plans

Lesson plans are complex products that consist of numerous details, such as information about the students to be taught, learning objectives, instructional activities, materials, and evaluation procedures. All these details must align with the communication, academic, and social/emotional needs of individual students. Teaching candidates must make a copious number of decisions within a single lesson plan to maximize the likelihood of growth for their students.

Photos courtesy of Dana Kan and Uma Soman

Above: A deaf education graduate student conferences with her university practicum supervisor.

Given the multifaceted nature of lesson plans, we designed a detailed grading rubric to evaluate the written lesson plans submitted by our graduate students during their practicum experiences. The rubric consists of 54 items grouped into the following eight categories: 1) knowledge of students, 2) measurable objectives and learning standards, 3) materials, 4) instructional sequence-activities, 5) instructional sequence-strategies, 6) evaluation and data collection, 7) reflection, and 8) technical aspects. Each item is scored as *emerging/absent* (0-3 points), *developing* (4-6 points), *effective* (7-8 points), or *superior* (9 points). Based on the individual items, a score from zero to nine is assigned to each of the eight categories. The category scores are then summed to determine the candidates' final grade. In addition to the rubric, we provide personalized written comments throughout the graduate students' lesson plans.

Despite these detailed feedback procedures, we noticed some graduate students made recurring errors. We contemplated possible reasons for their lack of improvement and identified the following areas of weakness associated with written feedback:

- Written feedback requires the graduate students to dedicate time to assignments that have already been graded, possibly making them seem less pressing than assignments that are still due. The graduate students might view their assignment grades but not allocate time to carefully read our written comments or review the graded rubrics.

- Written feedback is reviewed independently by the graduate students, so it is possible they might not understand our comments or rubric decisions.

- Written feedback is not provided until after the graduate students have taught the lessons. As a result, opportunities to apply the feedback immediately are eliminated, potentially reducing the likelihood of generalization to subsequent lesson plans.

In-Person Feedback
Adding Conferences

In response to these concerns, we systematically incorporated structured pre- and post-lesson conferences with individual graduate students in addition to providing written feedback through the detailed rubric and comments. Pre-lesson conferences occurred during the week before the graduate students implemented their lesson plans during practicum; post-lesson conferences occurred within the week following implementation. Each conference lasted 30 minutes and addressed specific prompts given to

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the graduate students at the beginning of the semester. In general, pre-lesson conferences were intended to strengthen the graduate students' lesson plans before they were implemented, while post-lesson conferences supported the graduate students' reflection process after implementation.

It should be noted that we routinely provided in-person feedback to the graduate students after our on-site observations of their practicum teaching. The structured pre- and post-lesson conferences differed from these meetings in that they focused on the lesson planning process rather than lesson implementation, and our role was to facilitate the graduate students' thought process about lesson planning rather than to provide feedback from our observations of their teaching. Thus, although we typically observed the lessons that were conferenced, it would be feasible to implement pre- and post-lesson conferences without observing the lessons' implementation.

To evaluate the impact of in-person feedback on the graduate students' lesson planning skills, we randomly assigned each graduate student to a university supervisor (i.e., one of the two authors). The university supervisor conducted the pre- and post-lesson conferences with her assigned graduate students for two of each graduate student's six submitted lesson plans. At the end of the semester, the other university supervisor—who was unaware which lessons had been conferenced—graded the graduate students' written lesson plans using the rubric. We also surveyed the graduate students about their experiences with the rubric, the written comments, and the in-person conferences.

SoTL Project Promising Results

Our data showed the graduate students improved their lesson plans when they received both in-person and written feedback as compared to written feedback alone. Specifically, there was an improvement of four percentage points for the mean rubric grade of lessons that were conferenced over lessons that were not conferenced. For example, a graduate student who scored an 86 percent on the rubric for lessons that were not conferenced would, on average, have scored a 90 percent on lessons that were conferenced. This is the difference between a B and an A- using a standard letter grade system.

Qualitative data supported our quantitative results. Out of 18 graduate students, 16 felt feedback provided through in-person conferences caused the greatest change in their performance as teachers when compared to the written comments or

completed rubrics. Similarly, when asked to evaluate the influence of each feedback mechanism on their development as teachers using a 5-point scale, where 1 meant *no impact* and 5 meant *strong impact*, the graduate students' average rating of conferences was the highest: 4.28 for conferences, 3.24 for written comments, and 2.65 for the rubric.

As expected, one disadvantage of written feedback was its lack of immediacy. Approximately a quarter of our graduate students reported not reading the comments or reviewing the rubric until more than a week after the feedback had been provided; one graduate student reported not reading the comments or reviewing the rubric at all. Even when the graduate students reviewed their written feedback, only 61 percent reported reading the comments carefully and only half reported reviewing the rubric carefully.

Our concern that the graduate students might not understand our written feedback also seemed accurate. Although the feedback in general was mostly understood, 100 percent of the graduate students rated the conference feedback as mostly or very clear compared to 72 percent for the written comments and 50 percent for the rubric. The in-person format of the conferences gave the graduate students opportunities to solicit additional information, thereby eliminating any confusion about our feedback.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence supporting the importance of in-person conferences came from comments made by the graduate students themselves. One student said, "[The conferences] helped me get inside the head of an experienced teacher who could guide me to the best version of

my ideas for a lesson. The conferences were something I really looked forward to and took the most from." Another student felt "the conferences were very positive and encouraging … a great way to ensure the lessons had all the appropriate pieces."

The graduate students also made positive comments regarding the helpfulness of the immediacy of the feedback from conferences as compared to the delayed feedback provided by the written comments and rubric. Specifically, they appreciated the increased confidence they felt when implementing the lessons and were encouraged by the increased learning opportunities they felt they were offering their students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Additional Benefits
Lasting Impact
Adding in-person feedback to written feedback on our graduate students' lesson plans had positive quantitative and qualitative outcomes. In addition to improving the graduate students' lesson planning skills, individual pre- and post-lesson conferences gave the graduate students the opportunity to explain the numerous lesson plan decisions they made—a useful skill for collaborating with future administrators, colleagues, and families.

The conferences also afforded us individualized time with our graduate students, allowing us to connect with them on a more personal level than was possible through didactic coursework. As knowledge of our graduate students has increased, we have been better able to customize our instruction to them. Subsequent classes of graduate students have had consistent results, and we continue to include in-person conferences as a standard part of our practicum requirements. Given the impact teacher quality has on student learning, we expect the improvement in our graduate students' lesson planning skills to have a positive impact on the children they teach after graduation.

Individual Conferences:
Suggestions for Implementation

By Dana Kan and Uma Soman

Although every training program is unique, university personnel who supervise teaching candidates might find the following suggestions helpful as they incorporate in-person feedback into their students' practicum requirements.

- **Structure the conferences**. We created pre- and post-lesson conference preparation forms that each included five prompts we would ask, along with examples of strong responses. The prompts are given to the graduate students at the beginning of the semester and are intended to extend their thinking beyond description of their lesson activity. For example, one of the pre-lesson conference prompts asks the graduate students to analyze how their knowledge of their students informed their lesson plan. The graduate students are not required to submit written answers; rather, we use the graduate students' responses during the conferences to engage in meaningful discussions.

- **Include a prompt related to the students' professional development goals.** During the pre-lesson conference, the graduate students are encouraged to consider their personal goals for learning as well as specific ways they plan to reach those goals. During the post-lesson conference, they reflect on how they grew as teachers after implementing each lesson. The graduate students appreciate these prompts, noting that they regularly think about their students' growth but often neglect to consider their own development as teachers for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Professional development goals have included ensuring data collection does not interrupt the lesson activity, capitalizing on opportunities to improve language development by responding to student-initiated conversations, and incorporating techniques to promote student independence and confidence.

- **Ask open-ended questions**. Although we have been tempted to support our graduate students with easy answers rather than thought-provoking questions, we trust them to effectively determine how to plan strong lessons for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Sometimes this means patiently giving the graduate students time during the conferences to consider our questions; sometimes we provide additional support to facilitate their construction of new knowledge.

- **Limit pre- and post-lesson conferences to 30 minutes**. Our graduate students overwhelmingly feel a half hour is adequate for substantive discussion without burdening their busy schedules. When necessary, we schedule additional time for conferences to support candidates who either request or who are in need of extra assistance. Although complaints about the conferences are minimal, scheduling is the most often cited criticism.

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Passing It On:
Counseling, Advising, and Mentoring Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students of Color

By Tim Albert

They say that "as a twig is bent, so shall the tree grow," and this has been true for me. The people who helped me when I was young—at the Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD), the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), and Gallaudet University—and my mother, who taught me how to read as a child, enabled me to counsel and effectively mentor students, especially deaf students of color, today. Counseling is a creative act; in a way, it is offering to others what was once offered to me.

As a child, my mother sat with me and taught me to write the letters of the alphabet, to count, and to read. While I practiced, I noticed something about my mother that would always inspire me: she was involved with her community. Every day she cooked delicious southern food—fried fish, fried chicken, red beans and rice, southern creamed corn, green peas, macaroni and cheese, and cornbread. She packed it in small boxes, drove to my father's job, and gave the boxes filled with tasty and nourishing meals to my father and his coworkers. My mother also ran a daycare program in our home, and as I watched her with the other children, I learned from her strength and activity. She loved her work, and I was grateful to see her doing something significant with her life; I was inspired by her passion and generosity in helping people.

I was born deaf and I went to various public schools until I was 16 years old. I was thrilled when I was approved to transfer to LSD, where I had the opportunity to meet and socialize with deaf, deaf-blind, deaf disabled, late deafened, and hard of hearing students. I fell in love with American Sign Language and Deaf culture. I did not like reading, but I realized its importance and I forced myself to do it.

At LSD, I found that I loved helping people, just like my mother. I found that everyone had different communication styles, and I learned to adapt to all of them. Communicating allowed me to advocate. I loved advocating for other people, and each person had individual

Photos courtesy of Tim Albert, the Lexington School for the Deaf, and the Texas School for the Deaf

Above, clockwise from left: Albert with his mother, Floyd Lee Albert, and wife, Stephanie; with Youth Empowerment Summit participants at the 2011 NBDA Conference in Charlotte, N.C.; as president of NBDA, posing with past NBDA presidents in 2016.

needs. I dreamed about becoming a counselor or a social worker.

Other important opportunities opened up for me at LSD. I played football! I had not been allowed to play in mainstream programs, where I realized I had experienced discrimination due to my deafness. I also met deaf teachers—the first deaf teachers I had ever known. One of them, Nick Imme, encouraged me to go to college. He said that I had the skills to be a successful leader, and for this higher education would be necessary. Maria Stephens, a LSD counselor, agreed. With their support, I applied and was accepted into NTID at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

At NTID, I would meet individuals who were both black and deaf for the first time. These included professors Shirley J. Allen and Aristotle Ogoke; counselors Carl Moore, John "JT" Reid, and Ronnie Mae Tyson; staff assistant Martina Moore-Reid; and the late Reginald Redding, who was director of the Center for Student Resources. I was honored to work with William Olubodun, an African deaf man who served as coordinator for NTID's Multicultural Student Program under the Department of Human Development. I worked under him as a cultural peer mentor. I enjoyed this position immensely as I was eager to work with first-year students of color. I got involved with various activities, events, and workshops. They gave me the opportunity to learn and grow

personally and professionally.

I also explored my personal heritage, writing and directing plays about Frederick Douglass; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Thurgood Marshall; and Harriet Tubman—all American heroes who were African American. I met people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, and I was challenged to become more creative and confident as I prepared myself for the future.

The year 1994 was a turning point for me. NTID sent me to the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) Conference, where I met Al Couthen. Al, the first educational leader I had known who was both black and deaf, paused the youth leadership part of the conference to make sure I joined. I remember I was talking to a beautiful woman when he found me and tapped

talked to them about staying in school. I emphasized how important it was to get a degree. I knew that these students paid attention partly because of my degree and partly because I was black and deaf.

I also had the opportunity to be a mentor and a role model—and I felt this experience deeply. Once we were going to a nearby ice cream parlor. My students wanted to bring an interpreter to help with the ordering, but we didn't need an interpreter to order and I told them so. Instead I brought my Blackberry, and they each took a turn typing in their orders. They were so pleased. We all value our independence. Another time a teacher brought a black deaf student to my office who did not believe I had a master's degree. When the student confessed that he did not read well, I told him my own story— how I, too, had been a struggling reader until I was a teenager. After hearing my story, the student actually turned his own life around and became a better reader.

me on the shoulder. I wanted to finish my conversation, but he grabbed my arm and pulled me away. When we entered the youth leadership session, I saw students from colleges around the county, all of them deaf and black. We discussed important topics and recommitted to staying in school and working for our communities. I realized how important it was to attend such meetings.

As much as I enjoyed exploring my African American heritage, many of my friends at NTID were white. When I showed a photo of us to my friend back home, he saw those white faces around me and gave me a smack on the back of my head. I guess he thought that since I grew up in New Orleans, I should hang out with black deaf folks more than with white deaf folks. However, I told him that LSD had beautiful and diverse students and staff, too, and I treasured *all* my friends.

After I graduated from NTID, I went to Gallaudet University. My goal was to obtain two degrees—bachelor's and master's degrees in social work. The internships I had while a student at Gallaudet were valuable in providing me with the opportunity to gain skills I needed to work with diverse people in the community.

Once I graduated and began working—first at the Georgia School for the Deaf, where I would supervise the dorms—I was surprised to see the effect that my presence had on others. Simply seeing a black male who was deaf in the professional position of social worker sometimes caused a strong reaction. In fact, when I was introduced, one student, himself black, told me he did not believe I was the school social worker. He—and so many others—were used to seeing black individuals only as housekeepers and janitors. They did not believe that a black person could be professionally successful until they saw it with their own eyes. When this student realized that I really was a degreed social worker, he wanted to learn more about how I had succeeded, and he realized that he, too, could become successful. With this student, and with others, the conversations were the best! I

Advising, Counseling, and Mentoring

The more I worked with students, the more I understood their challenges. Working with NBDA, I traveled around the country visiting students in mainstream programs and schools for the deaf. I worked with faculty and parents, and I felt myself becoming a seasoned professional.

After the first part of our marriage, my wife and I found jobs in different states, and for three years we were only together on weekends and school breaks. We were fortunate when NTID offered both of us positions, allowing us to finally work in the same city and be able to live together. Now I am director of the Student Life Team, and my wife is director of Diversity and Inclusion. With the help of four wonderful program coordinators, I am able to organize events and establish structures that support deaf and hard of hearing students, especially those who are Latinix or African American as well as other students of color. These include co-curricular activities and events and social and cultural programs.

We offer:

- **One-on-one mentoring sessions.** Students can use these to discuss joining clubs, to figure out how to contact departments, and to learn how to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

- **Cultural heritage months.** Native American, Latinix, African American, Asian American, and others are invited to come as motivational speakers.

- **Student discussions.** We call it "Hot Lava," during which students can learn how to maintain and improve their academic achievement, interpersonal communication skills, social skills, and leadership development.

- **Leadership retreats**. These are offered for the executive board members of clubs and Greek organizations.

- **Job opportunities**. We have full-time, part-time, and summer opportunities through which students can develop a strong work ethic and leadership skills and earn money.

Looking Forward, Looking Back

It's been 20 years since I graduated from RIT and then continued my education at Gallaudet University, receiving both the bachelor's and master's degrees in social work for which I aimed. When I look back, I know that part of my success is due to the people who supported me—my mom, who ignited

Above and left: Albert with students at the Texas School for the Deaf after giving a presentation about his accomplishments.

in me a passion for helping others; the teacher and counselor at LSD, who encouraged me to continue my education; and the people in NTID's Department of Human Development, who enabled me to discover and explore my heritage as an American who is black, deaf, and male. In their separate ways, each of these people contributed to helping me succeed in life.

Now I have come full circle. It is my role to give back. I do this through doing my job well, supporting others, and being a role model for students at NTID and RIT. We—deaf and hard of hearing individuals, especially those who are African American, Latinix, or come from other underrepresented groups—are passing on the legacy of those who came before us. Once today's students develop the personal, technical, and leadership skills to enter the workforce, they will pass it on, too.

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Right: Assessments such as the BRI and AIMSweb are used to identify a student's reading level.

Effective Practices in Teacher Preparation Programs:
Reading Action Research Projects

By Jennifer S. Beal

Data-driven instruction is simply good educational practice. In our deaf education certification program—which confers master's degrees in education at Valdosta State University through a variety of online options—we address this issue directly with our graduate students, all of whom are teacher candidates. One of the ways we do so is through a required "reading action research project."

Part of our Methods to Teach Reading and Writing to Deaf Students course, the reading action research project requires that the teacher candidates engage in an inquiry-focused process that includes planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and revising (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Wang, Kretschmer, & Hartman, 2010). The project is carried out within the real world of teaching reading to deaf and hard of hearing students. It challenges teachers to collect data across literacy tasks, analyze it, and use it to determine the effectiveness of their interventions or instructional strategies (Tankersley, Harjusola-Webb, & Landrum, 2008).

First: Understand the Student

The project begins with the course. As coursework is online and our teacher candidates are in various states, the professor provides a video-recording outlining the steps. Teacher candidates learn that they must:

- **Identify and obtain permission to work with a student in need of an intervention.** The student can be in any K-12 grade and in the teacher candidate's or another teacher's classroom. They may work with the student in class or on a tutorial basis.

Illustrations courtesy of Jennifer S. Beal
Photo by Matthew Vita

Summary of Assessments:

BRI
- Basic Reading Inventory
- Word list/Vocabulary
- Independent level – 6th grade
- Instructional level – 7th grade

BRI
- Basic Reading Inventory
- Passage
- Fluency: 81 wpm – 25th percentile for 4th grade
- Comprehension: Independent – 3rd grade
- Instructional – 4th grade

AIMS WEB
- Reading comprehension maze
- 12 out of 15 attempted answers correct
- Below the 25th percentile of 4th grade

- **Administer assessments to identify the student's reading level.** This includes the *Basic Reading Inventory: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve and Early Literacy Assessments* (BRI) (Johns, Elish-Piper, & Johns, 2017), with its grade-level word lists and reading passages.

- **Select reading passages that align with the student's instructional and independent reading levels.** To address vocabulary and comprehension instruction, teachers use materials at a student's instructional reading level, while materials at the student's independent reading level are used for fluency.

- **Conduct a miscue analysis on these assessment passages.** The miscue analysis through the BRI allows the teacher candidate to identify the strategies the student uses to make sense of the text. While passages selected and analyzed are the same for students who use spoken language and students who use sign language, the analysis is modified for signing students to account for things such as sign substitutions and omissions. Students are also asked to retell the passages and respond to five to 10 comprehension questions.

- **Conduct a third reaading-related assessment for triangulation.** For students who use sign language,

another passage on their reading level is selected and they are video-recorded as they render it in sign language using the Signed Reading Fluency Rubric (Easterbrooks & Huston, 2008), which measures 13 sign language components (including facial expression, role taking, and eye gaze) and five levels of proficiency across each component (including *not observed*, *emerging*, and *fluent*). For students who use spoken language, teacher candidates work with the mentoring teacher to select a third assessment. This may be the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test, or a different assessment.

Second: Develop Teaching Objectives

Using the data they have collected, our teacher candidates develop objectives for instruction. The instructional objectives must span the four areas cited as critical by the National Reading Panel (2000). These include:

- **Phonological awareness.** For students who use spoken language, phonological awareness might focus on pronunciation of ending sounds or identification of syllables in given words. For students who use sign language, phonological awareness might mean manipulating the individual parameters of signs (i.e.,

phonological awareness and vocabulary; lesson plans 3 and 4 address fluency and comprehension.

Lesson plans are developed according to a template that includes all of the mandatory components of the handbook of the edTPA, the teacher performance assessment, developed by researchers at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (2013) that is used around the country to measure teachers' readiness to teach.

Teacher candidates talk with their students to identify a teaching theme—perhaps spooky stories or the Incredible Hulk. Next, they describe the pretest-posttest that they will administer to document their students' performance on each objective before and after instruction. Teacher candidates also identify strategies that will support the student in acquiring, maintaining, and generalizing the reading skills.

The teacher candidates note step by step what they and their student will do during instructional time, including the instructional strategies they plan to use and the references for those strategies. They detail how they will open the lesson by discussing the objectives, how they will activate their learner's prior knowledge, and how they will embed a "hook" to get their learner's attention. Further, they explain the learning tasks, instructional supports and strategies, expected student responses, how they will scaffold and mediate information as students access and practice instructional information, and how they will use technology within the lesson. Finally, teacher candidates are encouraged to have their student summarize what he or she has learned. A posttest, exactly the same as the pretest, measures the change in proficiency related to each objective. After delivering each lesson, they provide feedback to the student related to data, the instructional objectives, and what they will focus on in the subsequent lesson. Teacher candidates also engage in reflection after each lesson, post these reflections online, and respond to the comments and reflections of their peers.

handshape, location, and movement).

- **Vocabulary.** For both students who use sign language and students who use spoken language, focus is on the recognition and knowledge of words that are used in the teacher's instruction.

- **Fluency.** For students who use spoken language, this may mean reading with expression that is appropriate to the text. For students who use sign language, this may mean rendering phrases in conceptually correct sign language.

- **Comprehension.** To show comprehension, students who use sign language and students who use spoken language are assessed on their ability to accurately identify specific details from the lesson.

Typically, our teacher candidates differ in their ability to construct measurable objectives. The professor, therefore, provides a formula that they may apply that includes specific behavior, criteria (e.g., identify five words), and degree of success (e.g., across two out of three trials). Posting their objectives for feedback allows other teacher candidates to see their work and enables them to teach each other. Teacher candidates revise their objectives as needed before they begin their lesson plans.

Third: Develop the Lessons

The next step is to identify an instructional theme and a learning goal, to note the state standards that are relevant, and to develop four lesson plans. They must address two objectives per lesson plan: Lesson plans 1 and 2 address

> Teacher candidates also engage in reflection after each lesson, post these reflections online, and respond to the comments and reflections of their peers.

Put It Together

Candidates receive feedback on each lesson from the professor prior to delivering it. As teacher candidates enter the graduate program with various levels of experience and proficiency, feedback is individualized and rendered

Pretest Rubric:

	1	2	3	4	Total:
Vocabulary	Student identified fewer than 2 target vocabulary words	Student identified fewer than 5 target vocabulary words	Student identified fewer than 8 vocabulary words	Student identified 8 or more vocabulary words	3
Phonological Awareness	Student properly segmented fewer than 2 words	Student properly segmented fewer than 3 words	Student properly segmented fewer than 4 words	Student properly segmented all 5 words	1
Fluency	Student had 10 or more miscues	Student had 8 or less miscues	Student had 5 or less miscues	Student had 3 or less miscues	2
Comprehension	Student correctly answers 3 questions or less	Student correctly answers 5 questions or less	Student correctly answers 8 questions or less	Student correctly answers all 10 questions	3
Total:					9/16 = 56%

Posttest Rubric:

	1	2	3	4	Total:
Vocabulary	Student identified fewer than 2 target vocabulary words	Student identified fewer than 5 target vocabulary words	Student identified fewer than 8 vocabulary words	Student identified 8 or more vocabulary words	3
Phonological Awareness	Student properly segmented fewer than 2 words	Student properly segmented fewer than 3 words	Student properly segmented fewer than 4 words	Student properly segmented all 5 words	1
Fluency	Student had 10 or more miscues	Student had 8 or less miscues	Student had 5 or less miscues	Student had 3 or less miscues	2
Comprehension	Student correctly answers 3 questions or less	Student correctly answers 5 questions or less	Student correctly answers 8 questions or less	Student correctly answers all 10 questions	
Total:					16/16 100%

individually. This allows the professor to demonstrate evidence-based strategies for modeling, scaffolding, and mediation (Vygotsky, 1978) within the real-world process of developing and implementing a lesson plan with a student.

The professor also comments on teacher candidates' reflections and provides additional insight or ideas to fine-tune instruction. Teacher candidates create a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes each of the four lessons that is video-recorded, captioned, and uploaded to YouTube. They provide the link to their peers, who are required to watch and comment on their presentations.

Research in Action

Using action research in a graduate-level course on how to teach reading to deaf and hard of hearing children is an effective instructional practice. Although the lesson plans require detailed information, our teacher candidates have overwhelmingly supported the level of detail as it has proven helpful in their preparation for the edTPA.

In anonymous surveys from the end of the year, one graduating teacher candidate called the reading action research project an "excellent experience to work on creating lesson plans, reflect on instruction, review effectiveness, and think about future planning." Still another wrote that doing the assessments and lessons and "synthesizing them into a final project … really forced me to think about the function of each assessment and how it fit within the bigger picture." Further, a third graduating teacher candidate observed: "We learned about assessing a student and creating lessons based on the results. I enjoyed this practical part of this class."

As they administer assessments, create data-based instructional objectives, develop lesson plans, incorporate state standards and features of the edTPA, and deliver their lessons, our teacher candidates learn to use assessment data to guide their teaching. The result is that the reading action research project benefits both our teacher candidates and our K-12 students.

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Right: RSD teacher Christina Nunez engages her students in hands-on activities that support language development.

Capitalizing on Community:
Using Data and Collaborating for Children's Language Instruction

By Martha M. French and Susan C. Searls

It's the end of a long school day, and members of the Early Childhood Center (ECC) at the Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD), in New York, are sitting down to talk about one of their children. Their focus is the child's language development. The ECC teachers, the speech-language specialists, and the authors—ECC program director Susan Searls and consultant Martha French—are present. The child's teacher begins with a presentation about the child, sharing assessment information and showing video clips of the child in different activities. After the teacher finishes, we ask questions and some in the group—those with previous or different experiences with the child—add new information, contributing to an emerging picture of the child as a young communicator. Our goal is to understand as fully as possible how this child understands and uses language, what motivates her to communicate, and when she is likely to shut down or tune out. Eventually we begin to discuss new strategies that the teacher might use to expedite the child's language development. The notetaker records the strategies we suggest. Later the strategies will be typed and disseminated to all the participants.

Photos courtesy of Martha M. French and Susan C. Searls
Forms courtesy of the Early Childhood Center at the Rochester School for the Deaf

These meetings are relatively new for the ECC team at RSD. They began in the fall of 2016, and since that time the ECC team has been having regular discussions—we call them Language Development Planning Meetings—to better use data from language and observational assessments. The decision to come together as professionals on a regular basis to discuss individual children arose from concerns that ties between assessment information and instructional planning could be and should be stronger. Further, teachers typically plan for the instruction of their students on their own, and we felt that the collective knowledge of the team was an untapped resource for planning.

Two concepts—that of "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and of the descriptive review process (Carini, 2001; Himley, 2011)—guided these meetings, a central feature of our efforts to implement a collaborative approach in understanding the child and improving his or her language instruction.

Communities of Practice

The concept of communities of practice provides theoretical support for our discussions. Lave and Wenger (1991) define these communities as groups of people who engage in activities related to a shared purpose. For example, the ECC team at RSD is one community of practice; its members are involved in activities related to the education of young children who are deaf or hard of hearing. These individuals also belong to the larger RSD community of practice, a group of people involved in educating deaf and hard of hearing children from early childhood through high school.

What people *do*—their activities or "practices" within a community of practice—varies. At RSD, for example, while all staff members share the purpose of educating deaf and hard of hearing students, some teach, others administrate or offer support services, and still others cook and clean and engage in other activities to support student learning. Some members of the RSD community of practice are what Lave and Wenger (1991) call "old timers," with more

Susan C. Searls, MA, director of Early Childhood Programs at the Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD) in Rochester, New York, has taught students who are deaf or hard of hearing from preschool to postsecondary levels. Previously she served as the RSD director of Instructional Support and Professional Development and as coordinator of Family and Sign Language, Deaf Studies Programs. She has also served as a board member and summit host to organizations and programs supporting early language acquisition for young students. Searls is a strong proponent of early intervention, ASL and English bimodal/bilingual education, and family involvement.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at *frenchmartham@gmail.com* and *ssearls@rsdeaf.org*, respectively.

Above: In a small-group preparatory meeting, RSD teacher Karen Windhorn (second from right) discusses her presentation for an upcoming Language Development Planning Meeting.

experience in the community. These individuals typically have valuable institutional knowledge based on their history and experience within the community. Others are newcomers who have less experience in the community and bring fresh perspectives and ideas based on experiences elsewhere. These differences, as well as differences in education, professional and personal activities, and personalities account for differences in the knowledge represented within a community. Accordingly, knowledge varies within the community of practice that is RSD and even within the small and relatively cohesive community of practice that is the ECC team.

Community of practice theorists explain that learning occurs among members of a community based on these differences in knowledge. As individuals within a community interact with one another, whether in formal meetings or in less formal conversation, they learn from each other. Intentionally and incidentally, members of communities of practice construct new knowledge through their interactions. Our intent with the implementation of Language Development Planning Meetings was to capitalize on the knowledge within the ECC community.

The Descriptive Review Process
The descriptive review process that we adopted was developed by Carini and others as a systematic way of thinking and talking about individual children to better support their needs as learners (Himley, 2011). The process is tied to observational assessment and "founded on the belief that the best people to generate knowledge about children are those closest to them." Although the descriptive review process relies partly on assessment, it requires looking at children differently from what might be viewed as a medical model of education; its purpose is not to "diagnose, treat, and categorize." Instead the descriptive review process requires that individuals strive to discuss the child without judging, making snap decisions, or labeling.

Avoiding talk that focuses on children's deficiencies makes space for seeing children's strengths and differences. As the name suggests, individuals in these meetings aim to collaboratively *describe* the child as fully as possible as the basis for generating new knowledge of how best to support the child's development. Each meeting focuses on one child.

Descriptive review process discussions are democratic and inclusive. Everyone is expected to contribute, and participants are not expected to interrupt or cross-comment. A circular or semi-circular seating arrangement reinforces the participatory, inclusive nature of the meetings.

The roles of three individuals—chair, presenter, and note-taker (Himley, 2011)—provide the focus of each meeting. The chair meets with the presenter prior to the meeting to assist in planning the presentation and then facilitates the meeting. The presenter describes the child and poses a "focus question" to orient the participants' discussion on a specific concern. Following the presentation, participants take turns asking questions and offering suggestions of strategies. The notetaker records the participants' suggestions.

At RSD: Our Language Development Planning Meetings
We adapted many elements of the traditional descriptive review process for our Language Development Planning meetings. For example, we use the roles of teacher/presenter, facilitator, and notetaker, and we follow an agenda that includes equitable turn-taking among participants. We avoid using labels and categories. We avoid talking about children in ways that focus on deficits and deficit-focused thinking.

In a slight difference from the traditional descriptive review process, our focus questions are standardized because our discussions are always aimed at language development and instruction. These questions and our discussion process are guided by three forms that we have developed: a teacher/presenter form, a facilitator form, and a notetaker form. These forms ensure we cover all basis of discussion in a systematic way.

Prior to the Meeting
Our Language Development Planning Meetings are scheduled once a month during a time already established for team meetings. Searls, as director of ECC, works with individual teachers to select the students who will be the focus of these meetings at the beginning of the school year. The students are selected according to those who have made the least progress in language development across the past two years. Typically, these are the students whose teachers would most benefit from a deeper understanding of their development and new approaches to planning their language instruction.

A week or so prior to each meeting, Searls and the facilitator meet with the teacher of the child who is scheduled for discussion, and they discuss the presentation following

guidelines included on the teacher form. These guidelines prompt the teacher to think through information that is important to describing the child's language development to the team. We use two important evaluation tools: the Kendall Communicative Proficiency Levels, or P-Levels (French, 1999), which provides information about the child's functional language development, and the Visual Communication Sign Language Checklist (Simms, Baker, & Clark, 2013), which provides information about the child's development of American Sign Language. This information allows us to determine the child's current levels of functioning and goals. It is shown as a visual in the meeting; other information, such as that which addresses the child's background and temperament

Above: Windhorn, left, presents information about one of her students during a Language Development Planning Meeting.

(noted in the teacher form), is generally used as a guide for describing the child. The teacher does not need to give scripted or written responses. The teacher form also includes the focus questions that will guide the participant's discussion of strategies. (See p. 42 for the teacher form.)

In our experience, these smaller planning meetings often have more than one outcome. Not only does the teacher receive assistance for her presentation, but related issues, such as poor attendance, are highlighted. These issues can be critical to supporting the child.

During the Meeting

The same person serves as facilitator for all our meetings and uses an established agenda as her guide. (See p. 42 for the facilitator form.) At the beginning of each meeting, she reminds the team of the ground rules for discussion, including the label-free way of talking about children. She also monitors

the time during the meetings, making sure that our discussions move along as planned.

The facilitator form is used as a reference; it is not displayed or given as a handout. Following the teacher's presentation, the facilitator guides the teams' discussion of the focus questions, which are displayed from the teacher's form. As the meeting concludes, the facilitator reviews the next steps which include immediate follow-up meetings with the teacher to support further planning and later a status report by the teacher on changes in her instruction and the child's progress.

Another ECC team member serves as notetaker for all our meetings and records the strategies that participants suggest in response to the focus questions. Following the meeting, these strategies are typed and disseminated to all participants electronically. Although the teacher/presenter is expected to modify instruction for the child based on the suggestions, she has flexibility in how she does so.

Recognizing Community, Structuring Practice

As members of a community of practice that share the goal of educating young deaf and hard of hearing children, we are confident that we have much to learn from one another. Although we do not have data on the effects of our Language Development Planning Meetings, these meetings clearly generate new ideas for supporting our teachers in planning instruction for students' language development. As Carini (as cited in Himley, 2011) points out, sometimes teachers become "frozen" in their ways of thinking and their responses to children in their classroom. A descriptive review process can unfreeze teachers and "allow them to see the child or situation from many points of view, to have new ideas and images to work with, to flesh out new meanings, to imagine possibilities—and so to get the teaching going again." The process produces knowledge that helps teachers and teaching move forward.

Moreover, the benefits of the process go beyond supporting teachers and individual students. In our meetings we practice a way of thinking and talking about children, language, and assessment that spreads to all we do. We learn to see children differently as we practice describing them in more detail and eliminating deficit terminology from our conversations about them. We learn to compare the results of two language assessments, to ask ourselves questions about these assessments, and to look for patterns or discrepancies in our data.

Perhaps most important, we practice thinking about how to tie assessment information to instruction. Using assessment for

Form-ing a Meeting

By Martha M. French and Susan C. Searls

. . . .

FOR FAMILIES OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN AND THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THEM

These forms* were developed to facilitate the Language Development Planning Meetings:

1. **Facilitator form**—This form is what the facilitator uses as a reference for the Language Development Planning Meeting. It is not displayed or given as a handout.

2. **Teacher form**—The teacher uses this form to plan his or her descriptive presentation about the child. During the presentation, the assessment information (side one) is displayed. The focus questions are also displayed when the team is ready to discuss suggestions.

3. **Notetaker form**— The notetaker's work is shared with everyone after the meeting.

*These forms may be downloaded from French & Searls's article in the online 2018 issue of *Odyssey* at *http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu*.

instruction becomes a concrete reality rather than an educational platitude. In this era of assessment accountability, when children are often reduced to test scores or categories, our Language Development Planning Meetings—based on the descriptive review process and the benefits of individuals functioning as a community of practice—help us to sustain views of our children as complex individuals, each of whom possesses core strengths upon which we can build.

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To view the forms in PDF format

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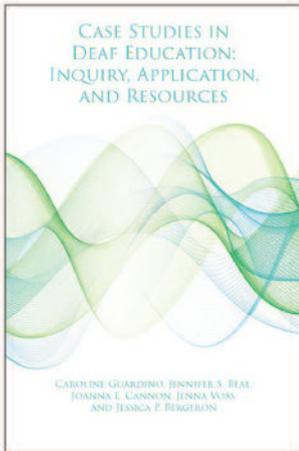
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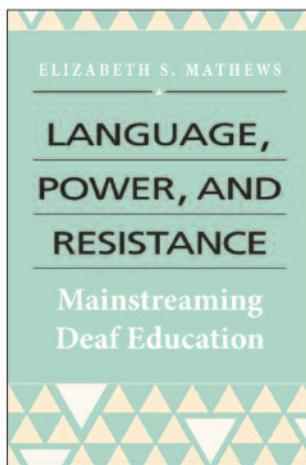
Examines mainstreaming and the social and medical models of d/Deafness
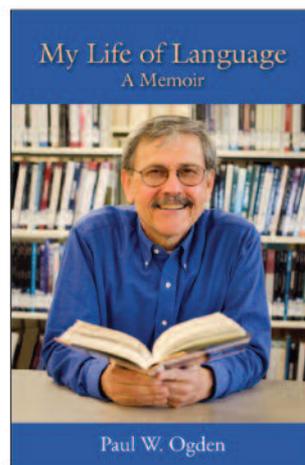
Inspiration from a lifelong advocate of deaf education
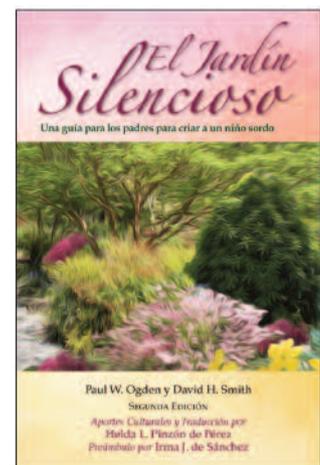
Condensed Spanish edition of The Silent Garden: A Parent's Guide to Raising a Deaf Child
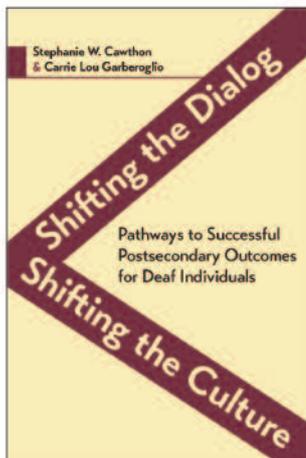
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ASL Is Just the Beginning:

A PLEA FOR MULTICULTURAL DEAF EDUCATION

By Akilah English

In recent years, deaf and hard of hearing people have raised awareness about the importance of providing early intervention, support, and resources for deaf and hard of hearing children. Most critically, we emphasize the importance of using American Sign Language (ASL). With ASL, parents and educators can directly and freely capitalize on the child's vision to ensure he or she is exposed fully to language and avoids the pitfalls inherent in early language deprivation.

However, as we recognize the importance of using ASL to ensure an essential language foundation, we must also recognize that increasingly our deaf and hard of hearing students come from diverse ethnicities, cultures, and lifestyles. In fact, in recent years the numbers of students in schools for deaf and hard of hearing students that come from diverse ethnic groups has shot up exponentially (Nieto & Johnson, 2018). For students to reach their full creative and academic potential, the education they receive should reflect the diversity of their backgrounds (Lynch, 2017). This means we should initiate multicultural education in schools for deaf and hard of hearing students across the country. Multicultural education promotes the development of cultural competence and proficiency and allows students to understand and appreciate differences and values in their own and each other's cultures. When teachers do not include a multicultural educational approach, deaf and hard of hearing students miss their window of opportunity to understand and appreciate the differences between their own cultural practices and beliefs and those of their classmates.

James Banks, founding director of the University of Washington's Center for Multicultural Education in Seattle, Washington, and pioneer educator and researcher, notes that educational institutions, teacher preparation programs, and community organizations must recognize the need for multicultural education to ensure students develop cultural proficiency and that they value, accommodate, and respect diversity (Banks & Banks, 2004).

Photos courtesy of the Marie Philip School at The Learning Center for the Deaf

PHOTO CREDIT: MATTHEW VITA

Left: Teachers should incorporate the works and perspectives of people of color into their curriculum.

Goals of multicultural education include:

- helping students gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspective of other cultures,

- providing students with cultural and ethnic alternatives for academic support, and

- reducing the pain and discrimination that members of some ethic and racial groups experience.

In Every Classroom 5 Multicultural Dimensions

Most multicultural education theorists agree that the major goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools so that all students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in an ethnically and racially diverse nation and world (Banks, 1999). Banks

(1999) established five dimensions of multicultural education that extend throughout the curriculum. These dimensions can be incorporated into math and science classes as well as language arts classes. Incorporating the following critical dimensions enables teachers to create a multicultural environment for deaf and hard of hearing students in every classroom or program.

1. CONTENT INTEGRATION

Content integration occurs when teachers use materials and examples from a variety of cultures to illustrate key concepts in the curriculum. According to Banks, many teachers often reject multiculturalism in biology, physics, or mathematics because they fail to see the relevancy in these subjects, but of course there is relevancy. Educators can ensure multicultural content in any subject through their use of examples without

eliminating or weakening curriculum standards.

Most schools for deaf and hard of hearing students have ASL specialists to integrate the teaching and use of ASL into the curriculum. However, too often the ASL focus is exclusively on the perspectives of European Americans and does not include information from the works or perspectives of people of color.

One of the most important ways in which the teaching of ASL reflects the perspective of European Americans is found in the use and teaching of sign language. Most ASL curricula recognize European signed languages, and they should also highlight the rich signed languages of deaf people of color. Deaf

students should be able to learn about these languages, too—how they developed, what they consist of, and how they are used today. For example, they should be able to develop a sophisticated understanding and appreciation of Black American Sign Language, Mexican Sign Language, Kenyan Sign Language, and other signed languages. In the process of learning about these languages, marginalized deaf and hard of hearing students of color could experience an intensified pride in their cultural identities.

2. KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION

Knowledge construction is something each of us does every day, and constructed knowledge, rather than knowledge itself, is what we find in textbooks—and this, of course, is heavily influenced by culture. Teachers need to be aware of this and help students to understand, investigate, and determine how cultural assumptions have influenced our frames of reference and perspectives within each discipline. This means that teachers should help students understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the

attributes of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Understanding the role of cultural bias helps students become skilled critical thinkers and allows them to develop independence in their analysis and thought.

For example, years ago when I was working in the elementary department at a deaf school, a male student entered my classroom wearing a pink shirt. A female student scolded him, telling him that pink is for girls and blue is for boys. He was wrong, she said, for wearing pink. This was a perfect opportunity for me, as an educator, to have an in-depth discussion with my students on gender stereotypes. I approached the discussion on a concrete level in deference to my students' ages. I explained that the female student was not wrong—this expectation of boys stemmed from what she had seen in society, which is full of gendered expectations and standards. I pointed out that we see these gendered stereotypes everywhere—in movies, in books, on the Internet, and on TV. I used *The Paper Bag Princess*, by Robert Munsch, a book that addresses gender stereotypes through the eyes of a prince who is not pleased with a princess's appearance. We talked about gender

identities, social roles and expectations, and our own biases.

3. EQUITY PEDAGOGY

Equity pedagogy is when teachers use techniques and strategies that facilitate the academic achievement of students from marginalized groups. I have seen deaf and hard of hearing students from marginalized cultures benefit, for example, from the use of role playing and cooperative learning. Using equity pedagogy requires that we understand how students perceive social interactions with their teachers and their peers. We need to get to know our students, especially the marginalized students, and to find ways to include them in our classroom. We need to allow students to share their backgrounds, likes and dislikes, favorite hobbies, and other aspects of their lives. When students share this information, they develop a sense of belonging. They are more likely to feel that you, the educator, appreciate their presence.

When I was a teacher, some students had access to language and others did not. Students with language accessibility would raise their hands to answer questions without giving those with delayed language access a chance to answer. Wanting to create a classroom in which all my students had a chance to respond to my questions, I decided to employ strategies that would allow equity of the participants. Each time I asked a question, I would ask the students who typically raised their hands first to wait for others who were still processing their thoughts. Another strategy I came up with was having a can and filling it with students' names written on popsicle sticks. I told students they would be given an opportunity to respond when the popsicle stick with their name was drawn from the can. I also empowered the students with less access to language to ask their classmates for help. In the process, all students benefited; these strategies helped raise everyone's self-esteem.

4. PREJUDICE REDUCTION

Prejudice reduction entails actively working to reduce students' prejudice against marginalized groups. Students in early childhood education are at a critical period both for acquiring language and for learning and internalizing prejudice towards others. The people and events they witness every day result in development of attitudes, ideologies, and perceptions. Preschoolers are concrete thinkers. They internalize the feelings of adults who may be demonstrating prejudice toward others or experiencing prejudice from others. They witness, demonstrate, and experience shame. They recognize physical characteristics such as race, gender, and physical disabilities, and they can connect these to the events of shame that they experience or witness.

Teachers may respond by providing positive verbal and nonverbal reinforcements for the students of color and by involving students from all racial and ethnic groups in cooperative learning activities that prompt them to develop and identify what is right or wrong from a social justice standpoint. Educators should be careful to provide accurate materials, discussing what is fair and unfair, and helping students to engage in social activism. They can design interventions to encourage students to acquire positive feelings towards marginalized groups.

5. EMPOWER SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture must be structured to empower students from marginalized groups. Schools should be inclusive and considerate of the struggles and circumstances of marginalized families. Certain activities, such as grouping and labeling practices, the prominence and sometimes overemphasis on achievement through sports, and the interaction of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial linear should be examined.

> **As educators, we need to recognize that ethnicity, language, and gender are contributing factors in how students receive their education.**

Questions we should ask ourselves include: Who are our students? Who are our teachers? Who are our leaders? Are diverse ethnic groups represented in our leadership? Is a zero tolerance policy for

bullying—especially bullying due to racial, religious, or other identities—established? Does the school welcome students, teachers, and staff members from different cultures?

Responding to these questions can help educators establish a school environment that is equitable and accessible. If the student body of the school is predominately white, teachers may focus on how to make members from nonwhite groups feel welcome and safe. If the school has large numbers of children from deaf families, teachers may want to consider how best to include students from hearing families who are still learning about the Deaf community and its culture.

Sometimes competition in the classroom or school can hurt an inclusive atmosphere. For example, one of the competitive events that I witnessed that negatively affected equality in the classroom was the seemingly benign spelling bee. As I watched a spelling bee unfold, I saw that

the students who had the luxury of practicing the words at home were spelling one word after another successfully. However, the students with less language accessibility at home, or who had parents or guardians who worked multiple shifts and were not home in the evening, or who were sleep-deprived due to having to be up all night to tend to their younger siblings struggled. I realized that spelling bees do not empower deaf and hard of hearing students who come from nonsigning or unstable home environments.

At the Center of Success: Dialogue

I believe one word is key to social justice in the classroom: *dialogue*. Dialogue allows understanding and the building of trust. Educators need to create a safe space in which they encourage students to ask questions and become active listeners. Educators should also be

Above: Educators should encourage students to express their thoughts and feelings in a multitude of ways.

able to answer a student's questions with appropriate and accurate information. We need to encourage students to express their thoughts and feelings through conversations, writing, drawing, creating dramatic plays, and the use of arts, music, and movement.

However, an educated dialogue entails use of language. Therefore, language acquisition—avoiding language deprivation in the early years—is critical. This means intense use and study of ASL in the earliest years of education while teachers and administrators reconstruct education so that deaf and hard of hearing students from all ethnic, racial, gender, and social class groups have an equal opportunity to learn. This means introducing appropriate content and supporting students in understanding how knowledge is constructed. It means implementing prejudice-reduction strategies so all deaf and hard of hearing students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in a diverse, tense, and problem-ridden world. It means working to build, sustain, and empower school cultures.

Banks notes that "because of the enormous problems within our nation and world, education cannot be neutral." As educators, we need to recognize that ethnicity, language, and gender are contributing factors in how students receive their education. We can establish a multicultural approach to education in our classroom. We can honor the ethnicities of all our students and ensure each of them acquires language. These are enormous goals, and it is up to us to achieve them.

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INCORPORATING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND INTO TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS:

One Director's Experience

By P. Lynn Hayes

Deaf-blindness is defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as "a concomitant hearing and visual impairment, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that [deaf-blind individuals] *cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.*
(Federal Register, 2004, 34 CFR 300.8 (c) (2))

Deaf-blindness is a low incidence disability and within this very small group of children there is great variability. Many children who are deaf-blind have some usable vision and/or hearing.
(National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2018)

In recent years, teacher trainees have seen an increase in the number of students with both vision and hearing loss (National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). The *2015 National Child Count of Children and Youth Who are Deaf-Blind* identified 10,611 students with dual sensory impairments in programs throughout the United States (National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2016). Further, many children who are deaf-blind have also been identified as developmentally delayed, multiply disabled, and visually and hearing impaired (National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2016). Clearly, a need exists for well-trained teachers to work with this extraordinary population.

The faculty of Vanderbilt University's master's degree program in education of the deaf wrote and received a grant from the Office of Special Education to address the needs of these unique students—and in the fall of 2014, our first deaf education master's degree-level

Photos courtesy of P. Lynn Hayes, Djenne-amal Morris, and Heather Lightfoot Withrow

P. Lynn Hayes, EdD, IT/TC, director of Vanderbilt University's master's degree program in education of the deaf in the Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences in Nashville, Tennessee, has over 30 years of experience working with deaf and hard of hearing children and adults. She also has experience as a teacher trainer and an American Sign Language interpreter. Hayes has been vice principal of a residential school for the deaf and director of an early intervention program, and she is currently a consultant for the Tennessee Deaf-Blind Project. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at *Lynn.Hayes@vanderbilt.edu*. To learn more about Vanderbilt's master's degree program in education of the deaf, visit *www.vanderbilt.edu/innervu/news/masters-in-education-of-the-deaf.*

students began our new two-year program of study. In fact, the students began the program before they arrived on campus. In June 2014, the project director sent students lists of webinars, websites, and articles on both vision and hearing loss and shared some of the wonderful resources we are fortunate to have in both communities.

Creating a Program
Where to Begin?

The challenges and decisions related to setting up a successful program were enormous. We had to figure out how to meaningfully educate teachers of students who had vision and hearing loss as well as other concomitant disabling conditions. We had to further consider how to adapt our current program of study to meet the growing needs of both future teachers and students in public schools.

The following seven steps explain how we made our decisions, and what we suggest other administrators faced with such challenges consider as well:

1. Look on campus. At Vanderbilt, we are fortunate to have a graduate program in vision impairment (VI) in addition to our own graduate program. This allowed us to talk with experts and figure out what VI courses and programs would be appropriate for our students. We decided, for example, to allow our deaf education students to audit the Medical and Educational Implications of Visual Impairment course. As this class was held in the evening, it would provide a perfect fit for master's degree program students who often lack the flexibility to add daytime coursework. In the VI course, students develop an understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the eye (in part by dissecting the eye of a cow), learn about syndromes and diseases that affect the eye, consider assessment and literacy strategies, and explore opportunities to work cooperatively with both students and faculty in the VI field.

We also developed five weekend seminars, one credit hour per semester, to be taken over the two-year program of study. Dates, decided with an eye to avoiding football games, family reunions, and weddings, were determined
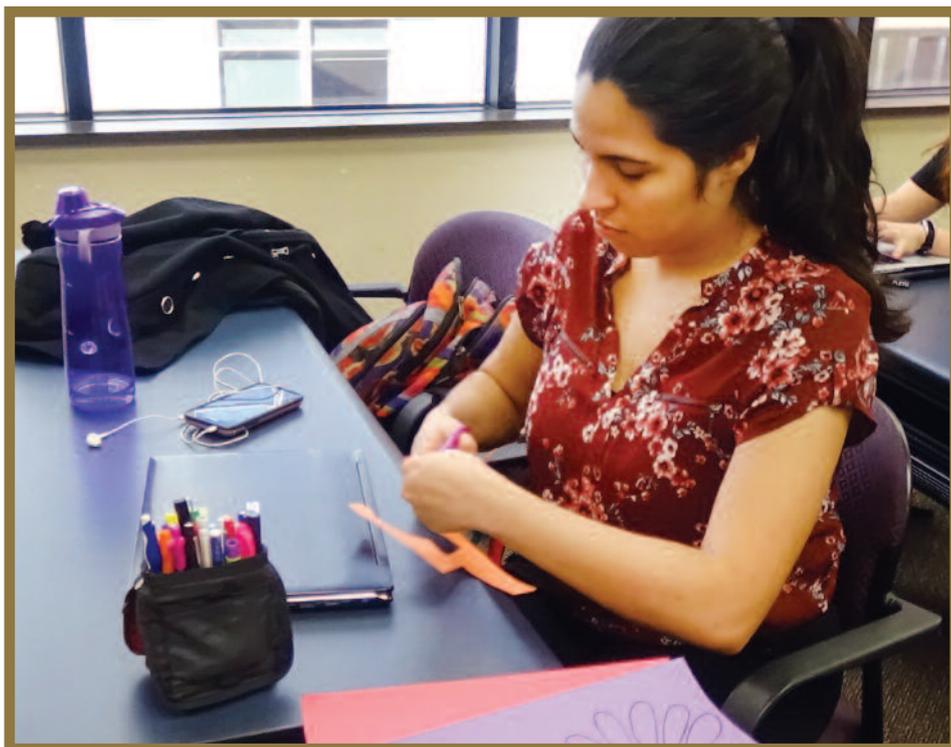
months in advance. In addition, a $1,000 stipend was available to cover income lost for students who usually worked on the weekends.

Students in both the vision and hearing programs received PowerPoint presentations and required readings for each seminar. Students in the vision program were not required to attend but always invited to participate as their

calendar allowed. Participants were asked to rate each seminar and provide feedback to the project director for upcoming events.

2. Talk to educators of students who are deaf-blind. I am thrilled that individuals working with children and adults who have dual sensory impairments comprise the most welcoming community, and they want to see future teachers with a new skill set.

Prior to writing the grant, I contacted the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) and the Tennessee Deaf-Blind Project (TNDBP). The NCDB, a technical assistance program funded by the Department of Education, is housed in the Research Institute at Western Oregon University. Its mission is enormous:

> [To] *provide families, professionals, and the community with: opportunities for shared leadership and collaboration, a national network of supports and services across the age range, personnel who are qualified and knowledgeable, and systems with improved capacity.* (National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2017a)

The NCDB website (*https://nationaldb.org*) offers so much in the way of assistance and education to families, consumers, teachers, and the public, including information about projects in each state. It notes project names, personnel, and the number of children served in each state, and it lists numerous resources and events in which students can participate.

3. Meet with state project staff for children and youth who are deaf-blind. We are fortunate to be located in the same working community as the TNDBP. The TNDBP goal is:

> [To] *provide families, educators, and other professionals with information and training to help improve outcomes for*

individuals from birth through age 21 who have combined vision and hearing loss. (Tennessee Deaf-Blind Project, 2017)

I met with project staff and we agreed that students in the program of study could complete some of their 100 hours of community service with the TNDBP. That meant our students could elect to go on school or home visits with the TNDBP staff, participate in workshops, provide office support, and do other helpful tasks.

Further, students would be welcomed to TNDBP-sponsored workshops (*www.childrenshospital. Vanderbilt. org*) at no charge and participate in any of their activities. In addition, we would work cooperatively to find speakers who could benefit both the TNDBP and Vanderbilt master's degree program students. In return, TNDBP staff were invited to attend the students' weekend seminars. This collaboration proved especially helpful when one of our speakers asked to include local families in his presentation. TNDBP staff contacted families and we greatly benefited from their participation.

4. Determine the program of study. Using campus resources—educators who specialized in education for students who are deaf-blind—and the TNDBP, we determined what we would cover in the two-year program of study. This included courses entitled Introduction to Deaf-Blindness, Orientation and Mobility, Literacy Strategies for Children with Deaf-Blindness, Sensory Learning for Children Who Are Deaf-Blind, and Sensory Integration. Each year the courses are reevaluated, and seminars are tailored to reflect suggestions made by students from previous seminars.

5. Locate instructors. The weekend seminars required instructors, and again assistance from individuals at the NCDB and the state Deaf-Blind Project was vital. On the NCDB website, we browsed through names of NCDB state projects, national initiative groups, site directories,

> **Each year the courses are reevaluated, and seminars are tailored to reflect suggestions made by students from previous seminars.**

Printing House for the Blind (*www.aph.org*), in Louisville, Kentucky. Visiting requires a road trip, made special as students in both the vision and hearing loss programs travel and tour together each year.

7. Prioritizing resources. The NCDB and the TNDBP are the most essential resources for our graduate students—each offers a glorious bag of tricks for those who would work with individuals who are deaf-blind and their families. The NCDB website, available to the public, shares unique and important information and projects.

family specialists, and Helen Keller Nation Center for Deaf-Blind Youths & Adults region representatives. I spoke directly with individuals at the NCDB, and they led me to speakers who, in turn, led me to other speakers.

6. Find community happenings. With minimal money for travel, we again went to the TNDBP staff for suggestions about what was happening in our community, state, and southeast region. In addition to local and state workshops, we were happy to learn about the Southeast Region Transition Institute, which is hosted by a different state each year. This weekend seminar is for teens who are deaf-blind and on track for college or employment.

Our students participated in this workshop not only by working with students who are deaf-blind but also by meeting with project staff, listening to speakers, and learning about the work of interveners, individuals who personally assist deaf-blind children and youth. To date, students have participated in two weekends, and this summer we will be more involved as Tennessee is hosting the Southeast Region Transition Institute. We are also fortunate to be within driving distance of the American

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Bringing It All Together

When our students graduate, they understand the characteristics of students who are deaf-blind as well as those with additional disabilities. They have a sense of where to begin and whom to contact. They have had the invaluable experience of meeting and working with service providers and other individuals in the VI field, and they find their future employment opportunities enhanced by these connections. School administrators and special education directors have expressed appreciation that graduates have these additional experiences, and in some cases it has helped with employment opportunities.

Are our graduates ready to tackle all that lies ahead? Do they have every skill to meet the needs of every student? Of course not! Still, they are on their way. At Vanderbilt, we believe that we've set up a model for other training programs in deaf education to follow. The need is critical. What might work in your community?

Literacy for Students Who Are Deaf-Blind:
Training from the NCDB

By P. Lynn Hayes

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) maintains a wealth of knowledge and information on its website, Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (*http://literacy.nationaldb.org*), for individuals and professionals who want to work with students who are deaf-blind on developing literacy skills.

According to the site:

> [The NCDB literacy website] *incorporates the stages of literacy development and key components of reading into instructional strategies for children with dual sensory challenges. The content is organized around evidence-based strategies identified as being effective in building emergent literacy skills and moving children along a continuum toward independent reading.* (National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2017b)

For example, under "emergent literacy," a list of strategies and sections on "What to Do" and "Things to Consider" is presented. In addition, users can download printable information (e.g., material entitled "Ask Yourself" that offers reminders of the content covered in each section). One section focuses on skill development and has helpful information for those writing Individualized Education Programs for their students. Video clips, teacher-friendly articles, and examples (e.g., activities, strategies, adaptations) that relate to the topic areas are also included. Webinars, contacts within the community, and information on what's new in the field are available as well.

The NCDB, in partnership with a diverse group of experts in the field of deaf-blindness, has also created the Open Hands Open Access Deaf-Blind Intervener Learning Models (OHOA), a series of 27 modules that is especially useful for interveners—individuals who work one on one with children and youth who are deaf-blind, assisting them throughout the school day. The idea was to provide online training, up to six hours per module, to interveners working in educational settings. The goal has grown to include online instruction and educational materials for administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Each module focuses on a specific area, such as emergent communication, and includes an introduction, a series of questions to be addressed, and a review. PowerPoint presentations, relevant articles, video clips, and learning activities are also available.

One of the wonderful things about the OHOA modules is how the collective community— state and national deaf-blind project staff, parents of children who are deaf-blind, higher education faculty, teachers, educational interpreters, and interveners—worked cooperatively to build them. Learn more at *https://moodle.nationaldb.org*.

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Cued Speech:
An Opportunity Worth Recognizing

By Karla Giese

When I first visited the Alexander Graham Bell Montessori School (AGBMS) several years ago, I was not sure what to think about Cued Speech. I asked a lot of questions, and I requested to see unedited writing samples from several deaf students there. What I saw astonished me. Each sample was written in age-appropriate English. I wanted to know why, so I started exploring and researching Cued Speech.

What Is Cued Speech?

English, as every speechreader knows, is only partially visible on the lips. In fact, the amount of English that is clearly distinguishable, even should a speaker talk slowly and clearly, has been estimated to be as low as 30 percent. Certain sounds such as "pah" and "bah," and even whole words such as *mat*, *bat*, and *pat* or *mark*, *bark*, and *park* are indistinguishable when seen on the lips. When these words occur together (e.g., *Pat, put the bat on the mat*." or "*Mark, why did the dog bark at the park*?"), whole sentences can look the same.

In 1965, Dr. Orin Cornett, a professor at Gallaudet University, invented a visual system to address this issue. Cornett paired handshapes with sounds. By using these handshapes near the mouth in conjunction with speech, spoken language would attain a visible form. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals would not be dependent on the guesswork inherent in lipreading. Cornett reasoned that when distinct speech sounds—called phonemes—could be made to look different from each other, then a deaf or hard of hearing child could understand the speaker. With the systematic use of accompanying handshapes, a young deaf or hard of hearing child could have visual access to spoken English or any other spoken language.

Using hands to code English spoken "through the air" would allow deaf and hard of hearing children to learn it through vision almost as easily as hearing children learned it through listening (Cornett, 2000). Cornett's system became known as Cued Speech.

Photos courtesy of Karla Giese
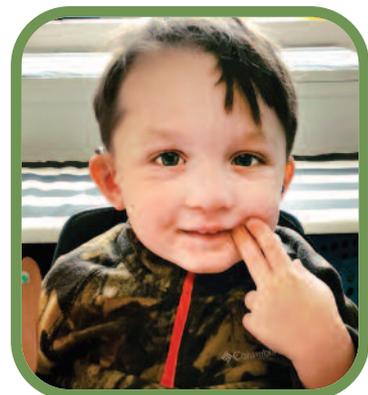
The National Cued Speech Association (*www.cuedspeech.org*) provides the following definition:

> Cued Speech is a visual mode of communication in which mouth movements of speech combine with "cues" to make the sounds (phonemes) of traditional spoken languages look different. Cueing allows users who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have language/communication disorders, to access the basic, fundamental properties of spoken languages through the use of vision.

Above, clockwise from left: A teacher cues "moo" with a student; a student cues /ee/ at the beginning of the word "eat"; another student cues the word "turkey" (the first phoneme is /tur/ and the second is /kee).

Today about 8 percent of deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in programs throughout the United States use Cued Speech, according to Gallaudet University's *Regional and National Summary Report of Data from the 2013-14 Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth* (Office of Research Support and International Affairs, 2014). While this constitutes a small number, these students, like all of our students, deserve support in their choice of communication.

Cued Speech makes each sound-based unit of speech visible by using eight handshapes in four positions near the mouth, provides visual access to the sounds of spoken English, and allows users to internalize its phonemic patterns. Phonemes, the building blocks of words, are the smallest unit of speech that make one word different from another word. For example, the sounds "puh," "mmm," and "buh" (represented by the letters *p*, *m*, and *b*) comprise different phonemes that when joined with "at" produce the words *pat*, *mat*, and *bat*.

One of the most important goals of Cued Speech is to support student's development of literacy. The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that knowledge and understanding of the phonemic pattern of English is an integral part of learning to read English. Cued Speech provides a pathway to that phonemic pattern through vision, completely bypassing auditory channels. Cued Speech is not a language but a code for sound patterns that can be used to support the process of learning to read and write. For users of Cued Speech, reading becomes learning a visual consonant-vowel code via print to match the language they already know via cued English.

In addition to English, Cued Speech has been adapted to over 65 languages worldwide. It was never designed to replace American Sign Language (ASL). In fact, Cornett, the inventor of Cued Speech who advocated for it during his entire lifetime, encouraged those who used Cued Speech to also learn and use ASL. ASL allows full linguistic and emotional expression and connection to other people—deaf and hearing—who use ASL; it also supports connection to Deaf culture and the Deaf community.

Above: Giese cues /b aw/ at the beginning of the word "ball."
Far right: Examples of phonemes in English.

Using Cued Speech in addition to ASL or other communication philosophies, such as Sign Supported Speech or Simultaneous Communication, can be beneficial in a multitude of ways:

- Spoken languages are acquired naturally through daily interaction and not explicitly taught. The use of Cued Speech allows deaf and hard of hearing children to experience language immersion through vision and supports the natural acquisition of English (Kyllo, 2003).

- Cueing is distinct from ASL. Using Cued Speech preserves the linguistic and structural integrity of ASL and allows for a clear separation of two languages: English and ASL.

- Cueing supports bilingualism. With English and ASL confirmed as two distinct languages, cueing provides access to English in its spoken form while allowing ASL to be used without interference.

Uses of Cued Speech

While Cued Speech can be used for full spoken language immersion and to support the development of the phonemic awareness critical to learning to read, it can also support lipreading, auditory discrimination, speech, and pronunciation (Cornett, 2000; LeBlanc, 2004; Wang, Trezek, Luckner, & Paul, 2008).

Areas in which Cued Speech has been shown to have an impact:

- **Language**—As Cued Speech makes spoken language accessible through vision, it allows hearing families to share the native language(s) of the home with their deaf and hard of hearing members; these families can provide language access to a language they already know so their children are not deprived of language at a young age.

- **Literacy**—As Cued Speech provides visual access to the phonemic code of spoken language, it provides students with a critical component in learning to read. Cued Speech can be paired with phonics-based instruction often used in the schools.

- **Lipreading**—As Cued Speech disambiguates lip movements, it removes confusion of look-alike sounds, words, and sentences.

- **Auditory discrimination**—As Cued Speech validates or clarifies what was heard, it can be used to train the brain to discriminate between specific sounds for those who use hearing aids or cochlear implants and are working on their listening skills.

- **Speech and pronunciation**—As Cued Speech can visually show proper pronunciation, it can reinforce speech skills. Since Cued Speech is phonetically based, the deaf or hard of hearing child is completely aware of all the sounds that make up each word, which can support the articulation process.

Cued Speech in Schools: AGBMS

AGBMS prides itself on providing unique educational options for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students. Located in the suburbs of Chicago, AGBMS is a full-inclusion program providing a Montessori curriculum with both individualized and small-group instruction that allows students unlimited opportunities for interaction with their same-age peers—deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing. Cued Speech is used throughout

Want to Learn More?

We are happy to share more information about Cued Speech. You can contact the **National Cued Speech Association** (*www.cuedspeech.org*), **AGBMS-AEHI** (*www.agbms.org*), the **Illinois School for the Deaf** (*www.illinoisdeaf.org*), or **CueSign, Inc**. (*www.cuesigncamp.com*). Feel free to ask about upcoming workshop opportunities or to join any of the annual Cued Speech Camps!

the school with *all* the students, and ASL is used as a supplement. Each teacher receives formal instruction in Cued Speech and uses cues with the students, allowing for direct communication access in any classroom regardless of a student's hearing status. Cued Speech is used throughout the day but especially during lessons in language and literacy. A teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, a speech-language pathologist, and a language enrichment specialist work closely with staff to ensure language immersion and accessible communication are ongoing.

AGBMS provides support services for deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to 15 years old and designs an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student based on his or her language and communication needs. Due to the specialized nature of the team and design of the school, AGBMS is able to provide a range of educational opportunities, from one-on-one assistance, to self-contained classroom support, to full inclusion. AGBMS is approved by the Illinois State Board of Education to provide services to deaf and hard of hearing children as well as children with speech and language delays.

The IEP team closely monitors the reading and writing progress of each deaf or hard of hearing student. Our goal is to close the gap that deaf and hard of hearing students often experience between their own reading and writing levels by using Cued Speech so our students leave AGBMS using age-appropriate (or above!) reading and writing skills. Goals incorporated into the IEP have a heavy emphasis on language development, and we work with each student individually to ensure he or she is making appropriate gains.

AGBMS, through its Alternatives in Education for Hard of Hearing and Deaf Individuals (AEHI) component, provides statewide outreach, including Cued Speech workshops, individualized parental training and support, educational consulting, professional development opportunities, and access to a wide variety of information on the benefits of Cued Speech.

Cued Speech at ISD

The Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) began to incorporate Cued Speech into its bilingual program during the 2010-2011 school year. Cued Speech was incorporated when data collected by ISD teachers indicated that ISD students, while making progress in phonics and reading with the support of Visual Phonics, were still experiencing issues with comprehension. Working in collaboration with a literacy consultant, ISD administrators came to believe that the students' lack of English knowledge was the primary cause for their deficiencies in reading comprehension. To address this concern, ISD educators decided to increase the use of spoken English with sign support, to use English as the primary language of instruction during literacy lessons, to increase the

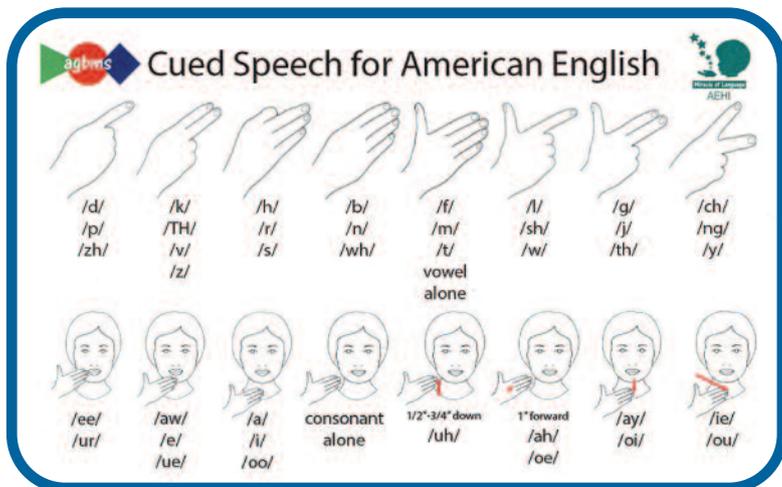writing activities completed by students, and to explore Cued Speech.

After attending a formal Cued Speech training, two experienced high school educators requested permission to look at the use of Cued Speech and Visual Phonics in two high school reading classes. Both educators would teach the same program. One educator taught using Cued Speech; the other educator taught using Visual Phonics. At the completion of the program, the outcomes were compared. While the experiment did not meet the parameters of a formal study, results indicated that students who were instructed using Cued Speech outperformed the students who were using Visual Phonics. This improved performance occurred in the following areas: generalization, ability to chunk/segment and blend sounds, retention of irregular pronunciations, and ability to receptively

understand cued information. The teachers noted that when Cued Speech was used, there were increased opportunities for repetition and practice of content in the classroom. The ISD administration made the decision to move forward with expanding the use of Cued Speech in reading and language classes across all grade levels. The purpose: to provide students with a complete visual representation of the English language, allowing them the opportunity to acquire English naturally through face-to-face communication in adherence with ISD's bilingual program goals.

Today Cued Speech is used—but with wide variance—in classrooms and subject areas throughout ISD, pre-kindergarten through post-high school. The language of instruction in a given class is based on several factors, including educators considering the language needs of the students in the classroom, the target language of the lesson, the language in which the information presented will be assessed, and the requirements set forth in the IEP of each student.

Cued Speech for American English

| /d/ /p/ /zh/ | /k/ /TH/ /v/ /z/ | /h/ /r/ /s/ | /b/ /n/ /wh/ | /f/ /m/ /t/ vowel alone | /l/ /sh/ /w/ | /g/ /j/ /th/ | /ch/ /ng/ /y/ |

| /ee/ /ur/ | /aw/ /e/ /ue/ | /a/ /i/ /oo/ | consonant alone | 1/2"-3/4" down /uh/ | 1" forward /ah/ /oe/ | /ay/ /oi/ | /ie/ /ou/ |

Cued Speech and ASL

If a deaf child is born to a family in which the parents are deaf and ASL is the native language, that child will most likely learn ASL as his or her primary language—and could learn English as a second language via Cued Speech. A deaf child who is born into a family in which the parents are hearing could learn English via Cued Speech as his or her first language and ASL as a second language.

I am going to the store.

American Sign Language:

Cued American English:

Cued Speech provides an effective tool for bilingual families who wish their deaf or hard of hearing children to develop English proficiency. In my interactions with native cuers over the years, I have learned that many "cue kids" learn ASL by their teen years. The native cuers that I know generally prefer English for academics and communication with hearing people and ASL for communication with others who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Cueing and ASL can be incorporated into children's lives in a variety of ways:

- Cueing at home and using ASL at school
- Cueing at school and using ASL at home
- Cueing for half a day and using ASL for half a day
- Cueing for phonics instruction and using ASL for storytelling
- Cueing for English instruction and ASL for ASL instruction

CueSign, Inc. (*www.cuesigncamp.com*) supports the use of both ASL and Cued Speech. CueSign brings people together from all walks of life, with diverse backgrounds and native languages. According to its website, CueSign's membership includes deaf and hard of hearing children, teenagers, adults, Cued Speech transliterators, ASL interpreters, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, counselors, teachers, and children of deaf adults.

When I look back, I am happy that I kept an open mind and explored the use of Cued Speech, especially for the purposes of English literacy. Cued Speech allows deaf and hard of hearing children to see the language they are learning in real time—and every student is entitled to be supported in his or her chosen mode of communication and instruction.

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Preventing Abuse of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children:

What Teachers Can Do

By Jennifer A. L. Johnson

When the bell rang, Michael[*], one of my most behaviorally challenged students, charged through the door followed by his classmates. Typically my students, sleepy from their early morning bus ride to school, came in, went to their desks, and put their heads down. This morning was different, and the ruckus immediately got my attention. Michael was upset. His classmates were pointing at him and asking questions—and he had cuts all over his face. I gave the other students a job to do and brought Michael to my desk.

I knew Michael well. He was in my third grade class. Tall for his age, with dark hair and eyes, he had a profound hearing loss and his parents had never learned sign language. It was suspected that his mother had an intellectual disability. He did not have access to communication except at school. As a result of his limited exposure to language, he really struggled to communicate basic ideas. He primarily used gestures and pantomime interspersed with nouns. I knew the conversation we were about to have would be difficult.

"What happened to your face?" I asked. Through pantomime, gestures, and a few formal signs, Michael explained. His dad had pushed him through a window. He didn't seem to understand that this wasn't normal, that most fathers do not push their sons through windows. I knew of previous incidents in prior years, and I had no reason to doubt his story. When my students went to PE a couple of hours later, I consulted with the building counselor, explaining what Michael had told me and asking her how she thought I should respond. Together, we went to speak with the principal, who asked

Photos and illustrations courtesy of Jennifer A. L. Johnson

Jennifer A. L. Johnson, MS, has worked in public schools as an interpreter, a teacher of the deaf, and an instructional specialist for 10 years. Since 2015, she has been a member of the American College Educators–Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child Maltreatment Work Group, and since 2017 she has worked at Texas Woman's University in a variety of roles, including intern supervisor, adjunct. She received both her bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders and her master's degree in education of the deaf and hard of hearing from Texas Woman's University. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in special education, with a concentration in emotional/behavioral disorders, at the University of North Texas, in Denton. Her research is focused on child abuse prevention and bullying in populations with communicative disorders and deafness. Johnson welcomes questions and comments about this article at *jenniferjohnson 15@my.unt.edu*.
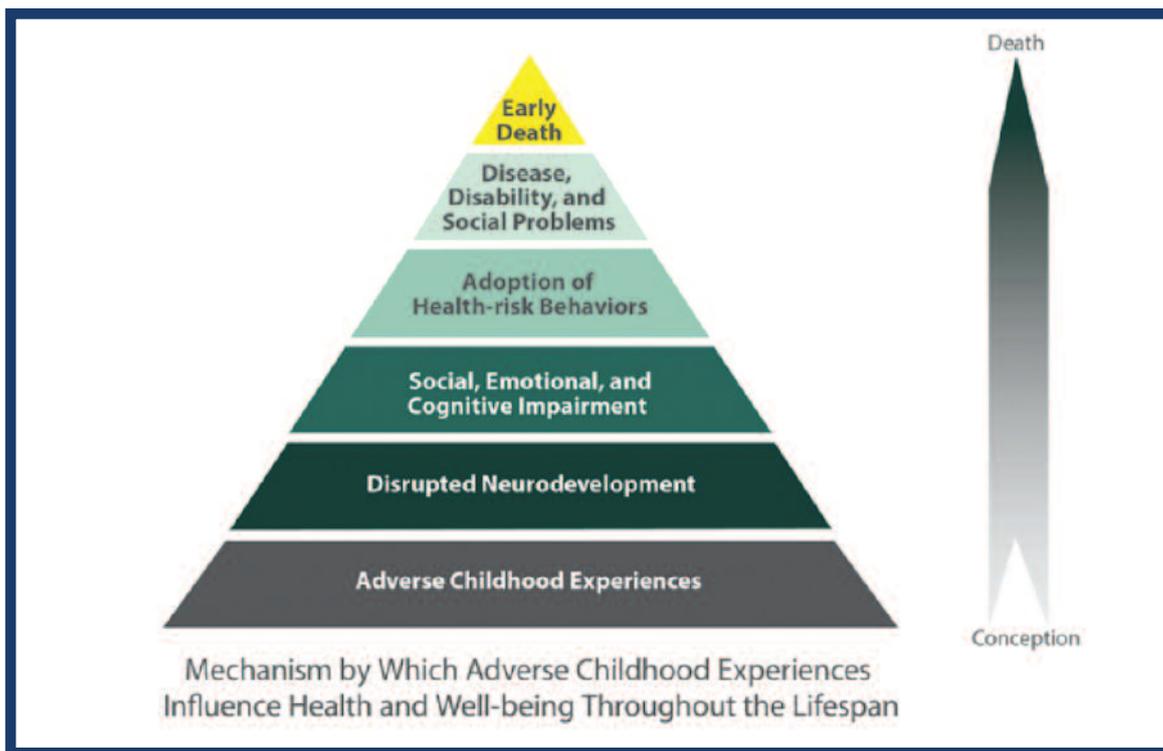
Left: The ACE Pyramid represents the conceptual framework for the ACE Study. The ACE Study has uncovered how ACEs are strongly related to development of risk factors for disease, and well-being throughout the life course. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016)

ACE Pyramid diagram (bottom to top): Adverse Childhood Experiences / Disrupted Neurodevelopment / Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairment / Adoption of Health-risk Behaviors / Disease, Disability, and Social Problems / Early Death. Arrow at right labeled from Conception to Death.

Mechanism by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

that I file a report with Child Protective Services before I left school that day. In Texas, there are two ways to fill out a form—via phone or online. I chose to fill out the online form, and it took me over an hour.

About a week later, a case worker from Child Protective Services, accompanied by an interpreter, came to the school to talk with Michael. Due to district policy, I was not permitted to be present during the interview. After approximately 30 minutes, the case worker and interpreter came out of the interview and told me that it didn't seem as though Michael understood the questions being asked.

The case worker, unable to ask questions that could be perceived as leading, couldn't phrase questions so that Michael understood them; the questions that she did ask were too abstract for him to understand. For example, whenever Michael was asked about his father, he said that his father worked far away and described his physical characteristics. The interpreter said she interpreted exactly what the case worker said, but Michael didn't have the expressive language skills to explain what happened in a way that the interpreter could understand.

I was frustrated. Michael didn't have the knowledge to understand that something abnormal was happening to him, and the case worker was less than skilled at interviewing a student who was deaf and had limited language skills. The interpreter had not been able to understand him either, and she had simply conveyed the few signs and gestures she'd been able

to understand to the caseworker. As a result, nothing changed in Michael's living situation. A few years later a report was filed with Child Protective Services on behalf of his sister, who is hearing. As a result of that report, his mother said that she had to leave the father or the state would remove the children from the home. The mother fled to another state for a few months, but then she returned to Texas to live with Michael's father.

As I received updates, my heart went out to a boy who was helpless to understand—let alone report—what was happening to him. I began to look for resources and information to teach my students about abuse … how it could come from parents or friends, how they should be prepared to identify it, and how they should not submit to it. Unfortunately, there was nothing that was appropriate for use in my class.

Four years later, when I went back to school to begin work for my doctorate, one of my goals was to explore how teachers of the deaf could help students—especially those with delayed language—be able to identify and refuse to accept abuse. I realized that we needed to teach our students that when people behave violently and hurtfully to children, especially repeatedly, we call this abuse and it is not acceptable. That same year I went to the American College Educators–Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACE-DHH) conference, and I learned that the ACE-DHH had a working group that was starting to address maltreatment of children with communicative disabilities and deafness. I joined the group and have been working with them for the last two years.

A Plan to Protect Children
Safety and the IEP

The ACE-DHH Child Maltreatment Work Group has targeted two documents in which the inclusion of safety statements could protect deaf and hard of hearing children as well as children with communicative disabilities. These documents—the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the document that guides and supports families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing up to 3 years old, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP), the document that supports the education of deaf and hard of hearing children from ages 3 to 21—are familiar to educators of deaf and hard of hearing children. Our work group feels that statements of safety and safety objectives should be included in both documents.

1 in 4 children with disabilities have been abused.
Jones, et al. (2012)

For example, some deaf and hard of hearing children, like other children with delayed language acquisition, are unable to answer questions beginning with "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how." This inability puts a child at greater risk of being abused because perpetrators know that the child will not be able to communicate, even to answer relevant questions, when abuse is suspected. The ACE-DHH, therefore, proposes including a statement as an objective in the IFSP and the IEP that addresses the critical need of answering these questions.

A work group of the Council for Exceptional Children has been tasked with the same objectives, addressing child maltreatment in children with deafness and communicative disabilities, and for the same reasons. Other organizations, including Hands & Voices, a parent advocacy group for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, and Kidpower, a group that provides resources for all children to prevent abuse, have supported the inclusion of these statements as well.

In September 2017, the Council for Exceptional Children, Hands & Voices, Kidpower, and the ACE-DHH released a letter addressing both the knowledge and the action necessary to protect these children. Protection occurs on three levels:

1. AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING—At least 25 percent of children with exceptionalities will experience maltreatment by age 18 (Jones et al., 2012). Perpetrators of abuse are typically those with which the child has familiar contact, such as parents, relatives, friends, clergy, and teachers. Abuse has long-term negative effects on the child's well-being throughout adulthood (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

2. RECOGNITION AND REPORTING— Forty-eight states have laws regarding those who are required to report suspected child abuse. Professionals who are frequently mandated to report include social workers, teachers, principals, physicians, nurses, counselors, therapists, child care providers, medical examiners, and law enforcement officers (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016). The needs of the child must come first, and teachers and other professionals should never hesitate to take actions to protect the child. For detailed information about the requirements of each state, visit *www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/*.

3. PREVENTION AND RESPONDING—In addition to the inclusion of safety statements in the IFSP and the IEP,

Signs That a Child Is Experiencing Abuse

....

❏ The child shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.

❏ The child has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.

❏ The child has learning problems or difficulty concentrating that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.

❏ The child is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.

❏ The child lacks adult supervision.

*Information from
www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Michigan State University, College of Education, Child Abuse and Neglect Wiki, *http://deafed-childabuse-neglect-col.wiki.educ.msu.edu*

O.U.R Children Project, *www.handsandvoices.org/resources/OUR/index.htm*

Kidpower, *www.kidpower.org*

teachers and other professionals should know the warning signs that abuse may be occurring and respond appropriately. Warning signs include sudden changes in behavior as well as physical or medical problems that, though brought to the parents' attention, are not resolved. Trust your gut. If a teacher suspects abuse is occurring, he or she should check in with the child (Johnson, 2017). For more information on signs and symptoms of abuse, visit *www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan/.*

A Responsibility for Training

Schools have a responsibility to prepare teachers and staff to recognize and report signs of abuse. Some states now mandate training, and other states are in the process of developing materials (Townsend & Haviland, 2016). Schools also offer a variety of approaches to provide training and support. These include:

- **Online training for all employees.** The organization Darkness to Light offers the Stewards of Children program,

an evidence-informed child sexual abuse prevention, recognition, and intervention training program for educators (Townsend & Haviland, 2016). Darkness to Light also offers a course called Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect for $5 per person (Darkness to Light, n.d.).

- **Training select teachers who will train other teachers.** Kidpower offers a three-day program called the Kidpower Skills for Child Protection Advocates Institute. The fee for the program is $1,250 (Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower International, 2017). Participants can then return to their districts to use and teach safety skills from the Kidpower program to those who were unable to attend the program.

- **Establishing a responsible internal office.** For example, the Dallas Independent School District has established the Office of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Prevention that provides training, information, support, and assistance in reporting suspected child abuse to the proper authorities.

5 Tips to Incorporate Abuse Prevention in the Classroom

The following tips* can help educators eliminate risk factors associated with child abuse.

- **Teach children they can say, "No."** This means giving children choices and allowing them to question and even express their displeasure when they engage in an activity they do not enjoy.

- **Teach children language needed to express themselves.** This means teaching them words to express emotions (e.g., happy, sad, excited) and physical states (e.g., hungry, in pain, lonely). They should also know the vocabulary for each of the parts of their body and the names of individuals with whom they have contact. Children need to be able to interpret and respond to questions related to who, what, where, when, why, and how. They need to know the difference between secrets and surprises and telling and tattling.

- **Teach children to identify positive interactions with friends and family.** Children should be able to identify through drawing, writing, role playing, or telling the appropriate individuals with whom they interact each week and to describe what they do with those individuals on a weekly basis.

- **Teach children how to avoid and, if necessary, react in unsafe situations.** Children should be able to identify through drawing, writing, role playing, or telling three to five unsafe situations and how they can be avoided. Children should also be able to identify what to do in an unsafe situation if it cannot be avoided.

- **Teach children how changes in their bodies affect their health, decisions, and emotional well-being.** Teachers should actively teach about sexuality by following the National Sexuality Education Standards as identified by grade level. (See *www.futureofsexed.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf.*)

*Adapted from *www.deafed.net/Forms/03_22_16_Safety_Checklist_Document.pdf*

> If we can stop the cycle with even one child, one family... our efforts are more than worthwhile.

The district also provides a handbook for employees as well as an internal hotline (Dallas Independent School District, 2011).

- **Including general training for teachers.** Every teacher should be aware of the National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD); a counselor at this number can help teachers decide whether to call Child Protective Services or the police. Teachers may be trained to communicate with the child about whom they care and will do all they can to help (Johnson, 2017).

- **Writing safety statements and objectives in the IFSP or IEP.** This allows educators and parents to take an active role in preventing maltreatment.

It is up to all of us to do our part in preventing child abuse, and especially to be alert to the potential for abuse of children with communicative disorders. We have a responsibility to keep children safe. Participating in training and learning how to recognize the signs are key.

*Michael is a pseudonym

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Debra Nussbaum, MA, manages projects on language development and communication support at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Since 1977, Nussbaum, a member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, has been involved in direct service provision in audiology as well as resource development, research, and professional training.

Lauri Rush, PsyD, has been the director of Counseling and Psychological Services at Gallaudet University since 1995. She has worked as a licensed clinical psychologist with deaf and hard of hearing children as well as with families and adults at the California School for the Deaf-Fremont and at Gallaudet University. Her areas of interest and expertise include family therapy, clinical supervision, ethics in mental health, and crisis management. Rush is the parent of a deaf 15-year-old daughter.

Reaching Out:
Supporting Doctors in Learning About the Deaf Community

By Debra Nussbaum, Lauri Rush, Carla Shird, and Catherine Martin-Davis

The incidence of infants who are born deaf or hard of hearing in the United States is between 1 and 3 in 1,000 births (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). *This incidence of hearing loss increases significantly as a child gets older, and by the time a child is school-aged, it is estimated that 9 to 10 in 1,000 children will be identified as deaf or hard of hearing* (American Academy of Audiology, 2011). *Additionally, approximately 15 percent of American adults (37.5 million people) aged 18 and over report hearing challenges* (National Center on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2016).

Doctors typically have limited experience working with patients who are deaf or hard of hearing. This is in part related to the low incidence of infants born deaf or hard of hearing and the low—but increasing—percentage of children and adults with hearing loss. When doctors do have experience and training with deaf and hard of hearing individuals, it generally focuses on the medical aspects of hearing (e.g., evaluating hearing, facilitating and restoring hearing through hearing aids and cochlear implants). As a result, repeated pleas have gone out for the medical community to better understand the nonmedical needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, especially from parents and educators of deaf and hard of hearing children.

Unfortunately, limited opportunity exists for medical students and doctors to learn what is involved in working with deaf and hard of hearing patients and what is necessary to know in raising and educating a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Only a few medical training programs and continuing education programs infuse information about the cultural, linguistic, cognitive, social-emotional, and educational aspects of being a deaf or hard of hearing person with the medical aspects of hearing—and one of them is Howard University Medical School in Washington, D.C. Partnering with Gallaudet University, Howard medical students have had the opportunity to interact with deaf and hard of hearing professionals and to learn the unique needs of the Deaf community.

Photos by Matthew Vita

Above: Carla Shird, from Gallaudet's CAPS team, sets up the agenda for the day.

While expanding the curriculum of every medical school would be ideal, evidence has shown that even a one-day training on deaf awareness and communication can have a positive impact on how doctors support their deaf and hard of hearing patients (Humphries et al., 2014). The training that Gallaudet University developed with Howard University can serve as a model for other educational programs throughout the country that are interested in reaching out and partnering with medical schools and doctors. Initiation of such a program has the potential to improve medical service provision to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.

Doctors in Training Come to Learn
The Gallaudet/Howard Experience

Gallaudet's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Howard have partnered to train medical students for many years. At the most recent training, 35 medical students came to the Gallaudet campus for a workshop on providing quality care to deaf and hard of hearing individuals and the Deaf community. At the workshop, Howard's students interacted with deaf and hard of hearing professionals and experienced communication through American Sign Language (ASL). They learned about the importance of using culturally sensitive terminology; considerations for counseling families related to language acquisition; realistic expectations for use of listening technologies, including cochlear implants; and considerations for using a sign language interpreter.

As the doctors in training participated in the workshop, they learned about the social, cultural, educational, and psychological implications of being deaf or hard of hearing— and how they could best support their deaf and hard of hearing patients. A hearing parent of a deaf child—who is also a professional within Gallaudet's counseling program—and a deaf professional added important personal dimensions to the training. A role-playing activity concluded the training, simulating a doctor's experience with a deaf patient and providing an opportunity to apply much of the information discussed.

Carla Shird, MA, LPC, CDI, is a licensed mental health counselor who previously worked in Counseling and Psychological Services at Gallaudet University. She has been a mental health counselor and substance abuse specialist for 10 years and has worked in the mental health field for over 15 years. An alumna of Howard University, Shird has worked with the Howard University medical student program for 10 years. She is also a Certified Deaf Interpreter.

Catherine Martin-Davis, MA, LPC, RPT-S, has been a mental health counselor in Counseling and Psychological Services at Gallaudet University since 2015. She has worked in the mental health field for over 20 years and has experience working with deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing individuals in clinics, hospitals, and school settings. In addition, Martin-Davis is a board-approved supervisor in Maryland and a registered play therapist supervisor; she has recently started in private practice.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at *lauri.rush@gallaudet.edu*.

While there may be professionals who counsel families to use either signed or spoken language, it may not be in the best interest of the child to do one or the other. Doctors are in the position of advising families about the linguistic aspects of their child's development, and it is therefore important that they take an active role in sharing with families the critical importance of immediate and full access to language in the most accessible way possible. To this end, doctors should encourage families to explore the benefits of facilitating language acquisition visually through ASL while also fitting the child for listening technologies and exploring spoken language. Doctors need to know that partial access to a language is not enough to learn it effectively; that benefits accrue to children who are bilingual in ASL and English; and that, just as important, children can and do master both languages successfully.

Doctors can help parents see the connection between their child's timely language acquisition—either signed or spoken—and their child's linguistic, cognitive, and social health. Further, doctors and other members of the medical community should learn about the important asset of the Deaf community and how interaction with deaf and hard of hearing adults can add insight and joy to the journey of raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.

3. Discuss the varied outcomes resulting from the use of technology.

What is the Deaf community perspective about cochlear implants?
~ question from a workshop participant

While doctors and medical professionals may receive general information about hearing aids and cochlear implants, they often do not learn the varied effects of these devices on the lives of deaf and hard of hearing people. These effects include fitting and maintaining hearing aids and implants and the highly individualized benefit each person receives from them. Ideally, doctors should understand and convey that listening technologies are only part of the continuum of supports recommended for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

When counseling families about cochlear implants, doctors need to look beyond the surgery and discuss the effects of the

What We Need to Tell Medical Professionals
Five Points for Improving Care

The points below are part of a model that deaf educators can use in reaching out to the medical community. If medical professionals can do the following, it may improve the level of care for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

1. Share information in culturally sensitive language.

It was extremely informative to see how using different words can change … how a parent feels.
~ comment from a workshop participant

Doctors need to understand the importance of sharing information in a positive, supportive manner rather than in an apologetic manner that conveys hopelessness and despair. This is especially important when a newborn baby is found to be deaf or hard of hearing. When a respected doctor conveys hope and potential, families are more apt to feel positive about their child's future. How information is shared is sometimes as important as what information is shared, and using culturally sensitive terminology is important. For example, many deaf and hard of hearing individuals feel that using the term "hearing impaired" emphasizes a pathological view of a person. Describing a person instead as "deaf" or "hard of hearing" provides terminology that is part of a deaf individual's cultural perspective.

2. Recognize and share the importance of immediate language access.

Are there many professionals who are "purists" in their recommendations about language acquisition (only supporting either signed language or spoken language)?
~ question from a workshop participant

implant on an individual's life. These include:

- varied outcomes in spoken language
- importance of consistent use
- necessity of training
- cultural perspectives of the Deaf community
- day-to-day considerations (e.g., paying for batteries, returning to the hospital for programming of the external components of the implant, coping when external parts of the implant are not working, the possibility of internal device failure)

Doctors and clinicians should be aware of and be able to counsel families about realistic expectations and recommended supports to promote language acquisition and learning of a child using cochlear implant technology. This may mean countering the misguided belief that children with cochlear implants should not sign and sharing evidence about the benefits of a child becoming bilingual, whether the child's languages are both spoken or one is signed and one is spoken (Davidson, Lillo-Martin, & Chen Pichler, 2014).

4. Understand that being deaf or hard of hearing impacts social-emotional health.

It really hit me when I needed something in the Gallaudet bookstore, how I had to think about how I was going to communicate what I needed.
~ comment from a workshop participant

Being deaf or hard of hearing is not just about the physical process of hearing but also about the social-emotional aspects of being a deaf or hard of hearing individual. People who are deaf or hard of hearing often share experiences of being left out of conversations, feeling isolated, and being bullied. It is important that doctors are familiar with the many interwoven factors involved in the social health of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and are aware of possible red flags to look for which might indicate that the attention of mental health providers is required. In addition, advice from a medical practitioner emphasizing the healthy benefits of being involved in the Deaf community can go a long

Right: Shird teaches medical students the ASL sign for "doctor."

> **Access to quality medical care for individuals begins with a fluent and trusting flow of communication between the patient and physician.**

way in supporting positive social-emotional health.

5. Provide access to communication.

Do you think doctors are thorough enough with deaf patients … or do they abbreviate and gloss over information?
~ question from a workshop participant

Access to quality medical care for individuals begins with a fluent and trusting flow of communication between the patient and physician. It is therefore critical that the medical community understands how to provide effective access to communication for the deaf and hard of hearing patients within their practice. This includes understanding the pros and cons of various interpreting options as well as the ethics and confidentiality involved in using an interpreter. Doctors should communicate with patients who are deaf or hard of hearing as they would with any patient; abbreviating information should never be an option. Patient communication and care should not be impacted by an individual's hearing status.

Get Involved
Set Up a Training in Your Community

Families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, like families of all children, look to their doctors for guidance in making decisions about their child. The Deaf educational community has the knowledge and experience to work with doctors, medical students, and clinicians to make a positive impact on the medical care received by individuals who are

Right: Medical students role play real-life scenarios working with deaf and hard of hearing patients.

deaf or hard of hearing.

Look for opportunities to offer workshops in your area. Invite staff from local hospitals or local medical practitioners to activities such as a "lunch and learn" at your school or agency. Follow the lead of Gallaudet and make outreach to medical practitioners a goal. When given the opportunity for education and training, doctors can be on the front lines of improving not only access to care and medical outcomes but also social and academic outcomes—and the quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

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Seeking Submissions
for the 2019 Issue of Odyssey

THEME: Parent-School Advocacy

In the field of special education, advocacy is seen as a critical component to success in the educational setting. In the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's *Critical Needs of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Public Input Summary** (Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan, & Gala, 2013), parent advocacy was identified as the critical component necessary to support the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The question is how schools view advocacy and how individual families view advocacy and their role in the overall educational process. Do schools encourage and welcome parents as advocates? Do families advocate? Is advocacy impacted by cultural influences? Is there a cultural bias inherent in the idea that advocacy is something to be embraced by parents?

A parent's ability to advocate for his or her child who is deaf or hard of hearing requires knowledge and an understanding of special education laws as well as of their child's specific needs. There is concern that families who are disconnected, disengaged, and/or underserved may not have the knowledge, opportunity, and/or resources to advocate for their deaf or hard of hearing children.

The 2019 issue of *Odyssey* will focus on how schools, professionals, and families are working together to encourage parent advocacy for deaf and hard of hearing students. The Clerc Center seeks articles from parents and education professionals sharing their stories and experiences—the strategies they used, the challenges they faced, and the outcomes they achieved in their quest to gain necessary services and supports for their children or students.

We are particularly interested in articles about how schools and parents work together to achieve these goals as well as articles about the experiences of families who are from traditionally underserved groups, including those students who:

- are lower achieving academically
- come from families that speak a language other than English in the home
- are members of diverse racial or cultural groups
- are from rural areas
- have secondary disabilities

Please e-mail your ideas to *Odyssey@gallaudet.edu.* We will begin accepting submissions on June 1, 2018, and continue until October 5, 2018, or until the magazine reaches capacity. Contact us via e-mail at any time with questions or to discuss your ideas.

*https://issuu.com/clerccenter/docs/publicinputsummary

Deshonda Washington is executive director of Georgia's Hands & Voices and program director of Georgia's Advocacy Support & Training (ASTra) Program. Trained as an educational advocate through the ASTra program, Washington is passionate about supporting deaf and hard of hearing families throughout Georgia. She participates on the ASTra committee and has made presentations throughout the state. Her goal is to empower parents and to ensure deaf and hard of hearing children, including those with disabilities, reach their highest potential. Washington is married and has three children—Ashanti, Lauren, and Lorenzo Jr. Lauren, who was born deaf, prepared her for a lifelong journey of advocating. Washington believes in the Hands & Voices motto: "What works for the child is what makes the choice right." She welcomes questions and comments about this article at *Deshonda@gahandsandvoices.org*.

# Georgia Leads Truce in "Language Wars":
A Parent Perspective

By Deshonda Washington

Almost 30 years ago, to have a baby who was deaf meant becoming a casualty of what the experts called "the language wars of deaf education." I know because that is when my daughter was born. Today things are different—and I hope that they continue to change.

For every parent, at least every hearing parent, having a child who is deaf or hard of hearing presents a challenge, especially since in most cases (as was the case with us) the deaf child is the first deaf human being that the parent has ever known. With no preparation, we must figure out how to raise our offspring—more precious to us than ourselves and so different—in the best way possible. How do we communicate? How do we share our family history and heritage? How do we ensure our child's education? How do we share our love? We turn to experts—the doctors, audiologists, therapists, teachers, counselors—who have studied the issues of hearing loss from multiple angles and worked with deaf and hard of hearing people in a variety of capacities, and we find that they disagree. They disagree vehemently.

Some experts believe that deaf children should be raised through speech and lipreading; these experts negate the use of sign language. Other experts believe that deaf children should be raised through the immediate and primary use of American Sign Language (ASL); these experts negate the use of amplification. My home life reflected this division. We were "a house divided."

Photos courtesy of Deshonda Washington
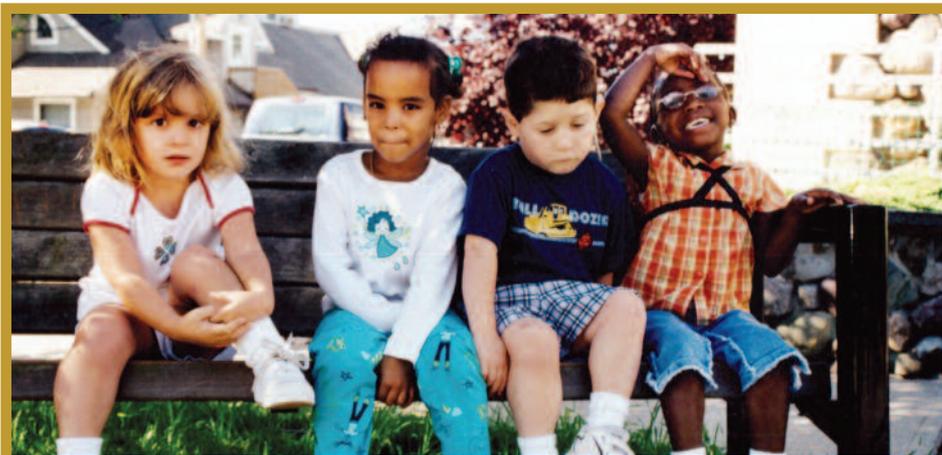
My husband heard about cochlear implants, the device that revolutionized hearing—at least for some deaf people—by administering electrical impulses directly to the cochlea through an implanted device. He wanted our daughter, Lauren, who was born deaf, to have an implant; he wanted her to hear and speak. I felt differently. I believed that Lauren was deaf because God made her that way. We should not try to make her adapt to our world. We should immerse ourselves in her world, not have her try to immerse herself in ours. My husband won the battle. Lauren received her implant at 2 ½ years old.

Our journey took a turn into the exclusive use of listening and speaking, promoted by the oral camp. We made sure that Lauren received all services, the limousine of services. We had in-home physical and occupational therapists, and speech therapists from a highly sought-after speech school in New Jersey. We invested as fully as possible in our oral journey, and we worked with Lauren constantly. Still, it didn't seem to be working.

Above (top row): Lauren, age 3; age 5 with classmates at the Lake Drive Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program in Mountain Lakes, NJ; **(bottom row):** Lauren, age 12; with her father after a basketball game at the Georgia School for the Deaf; receiving a "Student of the Month" award from the Optimist Club in Rome, Georgia.

Lauren wasn't speaking at the rate we had anticipated, and I began to get worried. Children need to communicate, and Lauren and I were not communicating. Against her speech therapist's recommendation, I started learning signs and incorporating sign language into her life. I didn't care about the disagreements of experts. I saw what Lauren needed. She could sometimes make sense of sounds and she was developing good speech skills, but for full access in the educational realm she needed signs. Our journey changed after I realized that. As opposed to speech and lipreading alone, signs made a quick and profound difference in Lauren's understanding and communication. This would be especially true for her education—where every word needed to be
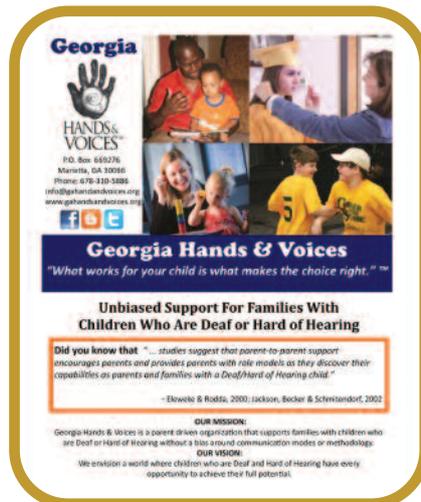
communicated. However, we did not abandon our journey of listening and speaking. We continued with amplification and speech, and we incorporated sign language.

The experts seemed surprised, almost angry. Twenty years ago, using signs, speech, and amplification seemed to be a revolutionary idea. Parents could pick one communication mode or the other but not both! Sometimes we even felt that the experts looked at us as if we had violated some sacred principle. "How dare you!" they seemed to say.

Fast Forward—Pathways to Change!

Today so much has changed. Children are identified earlier, often at birth, and services kick in quickly. Perhaps just as important, everyone crowds in and gets a seat at the table as educational plans are developed. Speech therapists, audiologists, sign language interpreters, and representatives of the Deaf community put aside their differences and sit down together. Everyone works to understand what is needed for our children to be successful.

Perhaps the changing attitude has already paid off. When Governor Nathan Deal announced plans to have Georgia's students reading by third grade, the deaf and hard of hearing educational community took up the challenge. Comer Yates, executive director of the Atlanta Speech School, and Kenney Moore, director of the Division of State Schools for the Georgia Department of Education, announced the need to form a community of practice focused on those involved with the education of deaf and hard of hearing children. Individuals from the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Georgia Department of Education, public and private early interventionists, parents, and deaf and hard of hearing adults met and set aside the differences that emerged over communication philosophies. We agreed that literacy and language are a fundamental right of deaf and hard of hearing children, and that we would work to support this—no matter how a child or a child's family preferred to communicate. The result is the Georgia Pathway to Language and Literacy, a community of practice that serves as a professional network for individuals involved with education of deaf and hard of hearing children and as a repository of knowledge about the education of deaf and hard of hearing children. Whether children, adults, or their families use ASL or spoken language is irrelevant; all are welcomed.

Hands & Voices—The Pioneers of Change

This mirrors the philosophy of what we pioneered at Hands & Voices, an organization developed and driven by parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We insist that the child—not the ideology—should be the center of educational planning, and that parental communication choice, whatever it is, should be supported. As parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, we use ASL, Cued Speech, signed English, Total Communication, and speech- and lipreading, but we share the interest of wanting the best for our children. As our website says, what we value most is a well-adjusted and successful kid.

Some of our children receive amplification and do extremely well in mainstream educational settings, even without receiving special education services. This is still a small percentage of the deaf and hard of hearing students here in Georgia, though the numbers are steadily increasing. Other children are successful with the use of a sign language interpreter or captioning. Still others, like my Lauren, are successful with the use of special education services to accommodate her needs. Finally, there are children who do best in schools for the deaf where everything is accessible via ASL.

As people learn to appreciate those who support different communication philosophies, I am able to live what I felt so long ago. It is expressed in the model of Hands & Voices: "What works for the child is what makes the choice right!" We have come a long way from almost 30 years ago, and I don't feel alone anymore.

Collaboration Amidst the Changes:

HOW GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM PLANNING SERVE AS A VALUABLE TOOL FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WITH COCHLEAR IMPLANTS
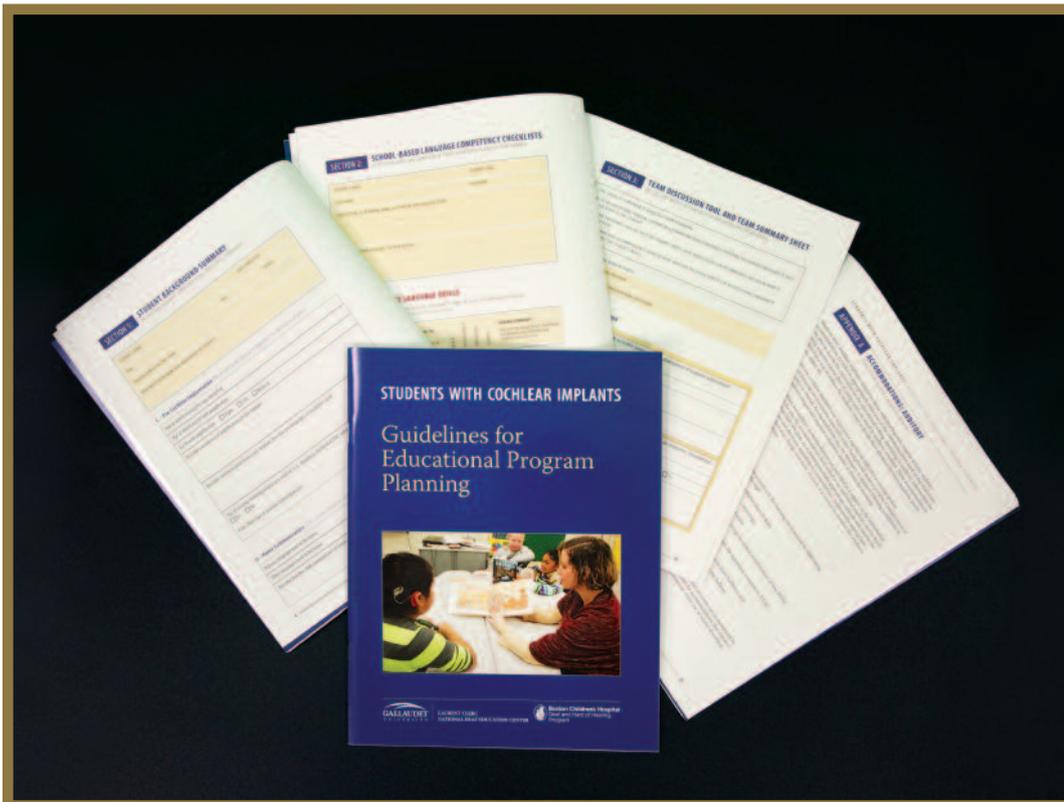
By Jennifer Johnson

Jennifer Johnson, BS, is an itinerant teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students for the York County Public Schools in Yorktown, Virginia. She has been a teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing for seven years. She earned her bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies-special education for students who are deaf and hard of hearing pre-K through twelfth grade from Radford University in Radford, Virginia. Prior to her current position, Johnson was a teacher and a case manager in a self-contained classroom. She welcomes questions and comments about this article at *jjohnson2@ ycsd.york.va.us.*

Utilizing *Students with Cochlear Implants: Guidelines for Educational Program Planning* (2015) has produced a significant change in my practice as a teacher for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. As an itinerant deaf education teacher serving an increasingly diverse student population that includes various types of hearing loss, communication modes, hearing and assistive technologies, cultural backgrounds, and secondary disabilities, the challenge to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each of my students had become strenuous. Additionally, it was difficult to know the best way to support classroom teachers as they sought to support their students who are deaf or hard of hearing on a daily basis.

The first time I used the *Guidelines* was with an 8-year-old student who was bilaterally implanted, orally educated, and had used Auditory-Verbal Therapy. Through previous work with the student, I knew that phonetic issues were a concern. Additional assessments showed concern with specific issues such as blending and concerns with phonemes. Further, when reading became more complex, the student exhibited difficulty with comprehension. From a pragmatic standpoint, she had communication breakdowns and did not have the strategies to repair them. Within these breakdowns she experienced difficulties with language that was figurative or idiomatic. Furthermore, the student's attention

Photos by Matthew Vita

gaps in their learning, and these gaps are different for each student. The *Guidelines* helped me identify gaps by allowing me to consider the details of the student's educational profile, determining his or her needs, and then writing realistic goals. One gap I was able to see related to self-advocacy. Students, including youngsters still in preschool or kindergarten, need to learn to advocate for themselves. While I knew this was an important skill that required explicit instruction, using the *Guidelines* provided me with the confidence to share this knowledge with the IEP team and to share ideas of ways to address that need.

Detailed language checklists are included in the *Guidelines*. Initially, I was concerned that some team members would balk at having to take the time to complete the checklists, but that turned out not to be the case. Everyone completed the checklists quickly and seemed to appreciate how the checklists helped him or her consider different areas of the student's learning needs. The *Guidelines* were also helpful in providing specialists, such as a student's audiologist, with more information about the gaps that the audiologist needed to consider in working with the student. One reason this is significant is because sometimes the student's records are incomplete. Without all of the necessary information, it can be difficult to know how to address the needs effectively.

was difficult to maintain.

I reached out to Mary Ann Kinsella-Meier, project manager at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University, working with her through telephone and e-mail. Dr. Kinsella-Meier helped me with the use of the *Guidelines* and advised me to make sure the FM system, which the student used throughout the day, was connected and being used correctly (e.g., that teachers correctly used the mute/unmute button and correctly set up the transmitter for class and small group discussions).

One of the most challenging parts of being the sole teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students at a given school has been providing other team members with evidence for recommending changes to the IEP. While the team members and I realized the needs of the student, the *Guidelines* helped us understand how to address them. The *Guidelines* especially helped my team members see why changes were needed, and they also functioned as third-party validation to support recommended changes.

One consistent characteristic of students who are deaf or hard of hearing is the individuality of their language learning. Many of the students have

> **I have found the auditory, visual classroom, and self-advocacy skills appendices to be the most helpful tools to use as I consult with IEP team members.**

In addition, the resources found in the appendices were helpful. With these at my fingertips, no additional research was needed, which saved a significant amount of time during the IEP writing process. They were in accessible language so that I could pass them on to the team members to utilize in their work with the student, too. I have found the auditory, visual classroom, and self-advocacy skills appendices to be the most helpful tools to use as I consult with IEP team members. The self-advocacy skills in the appendices have been helpful in writing necessary goals that are directly connected to the students' other IEP goals. Additionally, they have been helpful in determining necessary and specific accommodations for students.

After using the *Guidelines* with one student, I felt comfortable using this material with other students even if they did not wear cochlear implants. A significant majority of the questions addressed within the *Guidelines* are pertinent to any deaf or hard of hearing student. They are also an important reminder for me to ensure all areas of the students' needs are addressed and prioritized appropriately. I knew this tool was a real eye opener when one IEP team member said, "There is a lot going on here," meaning that the student we were discussing had more needs to address that were in some way related to the student's hearing level than she had previously realized.

It is a challenge to be the only person responsible for providing all the necessary information about hearing levels and challenges related to a student—to be the "lone ranger" on the IEP team. As this lone ranger is often me, I find reassurance in using the *Guidelines*. This tool has allowed me to become more confident in answering questions from team members, to articulate more clearly my recommendations, and to have a respected reference to support any changes that I recommend. Further, it reassures me that I am covering all bases and fulfilling my responsibility.

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Developing a Literacy Curriculum:
When Planning Resembled a Tennis Match

By Jodi L. Falk and Virginia McNamara

Jodi L. Falk, PhD, has been Upper School educational supervisor for St. Joseph's School for the Deaf (SJSD) in the Bronx, New York, since 2007. Prior to this position, she was the SJSD parent-infant teacher. Falk received her bachelor's degree in speech-language pathology from Hofstra University and both her master's degree and her doctorate in the education of the deaf from Columbia University's Teachers College.

Virginia McNamara, MA, has been a sixth- to eighth-grade classroom teacher at St. Joseph's School for the Deaf in the Bronx, New York, since 1989. She received her bachelor's degree in speech-language pathology/audiology from Marymount Manhattan College and her master's degree in the education of the deaf from Columbia University's Teachers College.

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Who better than their teachers and administrators to develop curriculum for our deaf and hard of hearing students? At St. Joseph's School for the Deaf (SJSD) in New York, communities of practice were evident as teachers worked together toward the common goal of developing and implementing an English Language Arts curriculum—a reading and writing workshop spiraling curriculum at SJSD. Today this curriculum allows each teacher to build on skills that students developed in earlier classes, and our students appear to love it.

It all began 10 years ago, when SJSD teachers and administrators decided to develop a new curriculum to support our students in reading and writing. Prior to that time, our teachers made individual choices about the content in their classes, guided only by state standards and each student's Individualized Education Program. We wanted to create a curriculum that would allow each teacher to build on the knowledge and skills that students had developed in earlier classes, to revisit the same topics, and to explore them more deeply.

However, to create what educators call "a spiraling curriculum" takes time, and this meant the use of professional development to allow teachers to leave the classroom to work. In addition, we recognized ourselves as members of a community of practice, and we instituted the community of practice tenet of collaboration; and collaboration marked every step of our planning and every aspect of our work. Teams of teachers, administrators, and consultants sat down to work and write together. Teachers planned and co-taught units together, and students learned together in peer-to-peer models. Conversations regarding best practices in workshop methods, unit planning, curricula planning, and deaf education occurred whenever the teams met. Planning sessions resembled tennis matches, with ideas volleyed back and forth at breakneck speed.

In a collaborative decision, we developed our instruction following the literacy workshop model described by Calkins in Pearson & Gallagher (1983), in which students begin with a high degree of teacher support that is gradually released as they progress. This included mini-lessons, guided practice, and independent practice in every lesson. Consultants from LitLife, an

Photos and illustrations courtesy of Jodi L. Falk and Virginia McNamara

Figure 1: Day-to-day steps guide teachers in their lessons.

	Reading		Writing
		September	Book Blurbs
	Historical Fiction	October	

Grades 6-8 Year 2 Calendar – revised 8/11/17

Grade 6-8 Year 1
September 22, 2016

Identification	Step Six	Step Seven	Step Eight	Step Nine	Step Ten
Guided Practice	**Readers identify typical characters represented in horror especially horrific villains and victims.**	**Readers identify foreshadowing in horror stories.**	**Readers identify how foreshadowing builds suspense.**	**Readers compare and contrast horror stories by the same author.**	**Readers closely read for a specific feature in a horror story.**
	ML: Teacher reads aloud *The Cask of the Amontillado* modeling your own thinking about characters in horror.	*ML:* Teacher reads aloud *The Telltale Heart* modeling your own thinking about foreshadowing and using the language of features of the genre.	*ML:* Teacher shares the video of *The Pit and the Pendulum.*	*ML:* With teacher guidance, in a large group setting, students compare and contrast two or three previously studied stories by Edgar Allan Poe	*ML:* Teacher will read aloud to a small group from *Scary Stories, More Scary Stories, Short and Shivery Tales,* etc.) Teachers rotate tables, reading to about t... per day
	IP: Students choose a character from the story to provide text evidence for why they are a villain or a victim.	*IP:* Students provide evidence of foreshadowing in the text of *The Telltale Heart.* If possible they refer back to previously read/viewed stories and provide examples of foreshadowing.	*IP:* Students will provide evidence of all features of the genre previously studied, with a focus on foreshadowing and suspense.	*IP:* Students (independently or in pairs) will compare two or three different previously studied stories by Edgar Allan Poe. (Including but not limited to: presence or absence of blood, presence or absence of insanity, presence or absence of a murder, presence or absence of hidden body, etc.)	*IP:* Stude... their thir excerpt... story lab... features... OR Stud... name a... explain... feature... that the... the story... hallmark...

	Writing
	Biographical Research and Power Point Presentations

educational staff consultation agency, provided the foundational knowledge of the workshop model as designed by Allyn (2007). Classroom teachers and educational supervisors provided the expertise of best practices in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. Together, we worked on generating a reading and writing workshop curriculum.

Balanced literacy—a philosophy in which several instructional practices, such as guided reading and writing, shared reading and writing, independent reading and writing, read alouds, and word work (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996)—provided the framework for a new SJSD literacy curriculum (Berchin-Weiss, Falk, & Egan Cunningham, 2016). In addition to the genre units of study, we also utilized teaching programs and materials designed specifically for deaf and hard of hearing students. These included Visual Phonics (International Communication Learning Institute, 1982), Fairview Learning (C. S. Schimel, owner and CEO, personal communication, May 10, 2010), Bedrock Literacy (Di Perri, 2013), and a Bilingual Grammar Curriculum (Czubek & Di Perri, 2015), and they were helpful in designing a holistic English Language Arts program that included instruction in reading comprehension, conventions, grammar, and word usage.

Once team members arrived at consensus, the ideas were brought to paper. We wrote each unit plan to provide teachers with framing questions, objectives, estimations for length of time, immersion and identification of the topic, guided practice in the topic, and a celebration of the topic (Allyn, 2007). We began with teacher modeling through mini-lessons, followed by guided practice and then student independent work (Miller, 2002). The independent work could be small group practice or solo practice. Teachers conferred with students during the independent practice of the daily instructional objective (Calkins, 1994, 2000).

Day-to-day steps provided teachers with a guide in which the teaching point, mini-lesson, and independent practice were described (see Figure 1). The final products were yearlong calendars delineated by grade level and unit plans that included goals, teaching points, mini-lessons, and independent practice.

Collaborating Across Grades
Impact on Middle Schoolers

At SJSD, we have a maximum of six students with one teacher and one assistant in each middle school grade. While teachers in grades K-5 and special needs classes taught reading and writing workshop in their individual homerooms and followed a year-long calendar designated for their grade level, we, as middle school teachers, realized that we could combine classes for our sixth through eighth grades and work together to structure a curriculum that unfolded on a three-year cycle. This would yield one large group of 20+ students that we could co-teach across three grade levels.

Above and right: Teaching assistants work with students in small groups and individually during workshops.

Although our students are "typically developing," they may have a variety of learning issues and challenges; they often have language delays due to late immersion in English or American Sign Language (ASL), but psychological testing shows no abnormal disability and their IQs are in the normal range. Like most teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students, we differentiate our teaching—adjusting content, product, and process for each of our students. However, we recognized the importance of exposing our students to the authors and genres that are familiar to students in general education. Without knowledge of writers such as Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe, our students might miss out on common cultural references. Our teachers felt it was important to broaden the students' knowledge base as well as develop their reading and writing skills. Therefore, we decided to eschew units on process, strategy, and conventions, though these are prescribed in most workshop units (Allyn, 2007), and focus primarily on genre. We designed units to be flexible—teachers could use each unit in various ways with different students and different classes. For example, teachers could decide if they would focus on all of the objectives of a unit or only some of the objectives. Teachers could also decide how to pace their instruction. Instead of listing instructions by days, such as "Day 1, Day 2 …," the SJSD curriculum listed instruction by steps: "Step 1, Step 2 …."

Supplemental information and materials were provided—some developed by our teachers and some by the consultants from LitLife. Suggestions of book choices, anchor charts, graphic organizers, and conceptually correct ASL to support instruction were included. The mini-lessons and independent practice included many methods that teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students use, such as visuals, explicit instruction, think alouds, higher-order thinking skills, and mediated learning, and teachers were encouraged to separate their use of ASL and English (Easterbrooks, 2010).

Co-Teaching Planning and Instruction
A Curriculum Evolves in Class

Initially, the sixth through eighth grade teachers met daily and made decisions on who would be the lead teacher, how students would be grouped, and the materials needed for each step of a given unit. All teachers actively instructed students, moderated breakout groups, conducted small group read alouds, and conferred individually with students.

Materials were generated, such as rubrics and graphic organizers. The department supervisor purchased new books for the classroom libraries and teacher guides on genres to support student learning. Teachers and administrators worked together on gathering materials to ensure best practices.

Teacher assistants worked with students in small groups and individually. A large, multipurpose space in the school became the workshop space. A closet was stocked with writing materials and became the writing workshop closet. Academic and behavioral needs were addressed. Tables were set up—as many as were needed and in whatever configuration worked best for the particular day's lesson. Student seating arrangements included:

- Heterogeneous groups so there was peer modeling
- Homogeneous groups so students who needed extra support or additional enrichment received it
- "Free choice" seating (with a limited number of students per table)
- Random seating assignments by grade, ensuring there was a mix of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at each table

Teachers often conferred with students who were not in their homerooms or in their grade. The team created conference note sheets that the students kept in their workshop folders. When a teacher conferred with a student, the date, topic, and suggested follow-up focus points were noted on the form. This allowed the teacher who conferred with the student to know at a glance what had been covered during previous conferences. Also, by periodically glancing over the conference sheets, the lead teacher or the homeroom teacher could see any student who had not had an individual conference for a few days and set up a "red flag," ensuring no student slipped through the cracks.

The degree of release—and independent work—was determined by students' needs and abilities, not by grade level. This gave teachers the freedom to differentiate levels of instruction for all students. The units were written in a way that they could be taught with more or less depth and complexity. Teachers decided the degree of the unit's complexity based on the abilities of their students; they could provide enrichment for some students and support for others. The amount of release, like the complexity of instruction, depended on the skill of the

individual student. For example, when teachers released their students into independent practice, they would differentiate the product of their teaching by assigning some students to draw a picture, other students to develop labels, still other students to make a poster, and still others to write in paragraph form. To differentiate process, teachers would assign some students to work in larger groups with guided instruction, some students to work in pairs with minimal teacher support, and some students to work individually with teacher conferencing. To differentiate content, teachers looked at and individualized the goals of the unit.

Teaching Today
Heartening Encounters

The students have responded positively to the new curriculum. Not only do they complain less about writing, but they are also eager to go to workshop and express disappointment when it needs to be canceled. We often see students spontaneously apply skills they learned in workshop to other areas of their work, and we enjoy their excitement when they report understanding cultural references they see on television. Further, students have developed confidence in their presentation skills—an unexpected and wonderful outcome. As with every aspect of the curriculum, students "spiral" in their ability to present publicly, beginning in sixth grade by standing with a friend to sign one sentence on stage and by eighth grade volunteering to give solo presentations, act in skits, and perform on videotape. As we respond to our students' response, we realize that the curriculum has raised our expectations as teachers.

The curriculum continues to evolve. When technological advances rendered the blogging unit obsolete, it was replaced with a unit on opinion writing that encompasses a variety of media. Planning sessions have evolved as well. Today our team meets weekly. Each teacher selects and leads one unit. The lead teacher is responsible for collection of materials and preparation necessary for that unit as well as for direct large group instruction. This teacher, as our leader, is also responsible for sending out weekly e-mails as a follow-up to the planning meetings.

In a further evolution, teachers and teacher assistants are present for each large group lesson, providing instructional and technical support and assisting with behavior management. The teachers lead small group sessions and conference individually with students. One teacher may lead a group, another teacher may take a station, and a third teacher may lead a pull-aside activity.

Professional development—that allowed time out of the classroom during which we could work with each other and with other professional educators—and the tenets of community of practice—that encouraged us to speak freely, frankly, and even forcefully with each other—continue to allow us to teach, maintain, and improve the curriculum we have used

for 10 years. This collaboration, in which all contribute as equals, has enabled us to maintain the integrity of the instruction. Professionals brainstorm, discuss, and write together. Teachers instruct individually and together in various co-teaching forms. Students learn from direct instruction, collaboration, and each other. Best practices of balanced literacy theory, workshop methodology, and deaf education enable teachers and administrators—and students—to succeed with a spiraling reading and writing workshop English Language Arts curriculum at SJSD.

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Incorporating Principles

of Social Justice and Respect for Diversity

IN TRAINING COUNSELORS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS

By Linda Risser Lytle, Cheryl L. Wu, and Danielle Thompson-Ochoa

One of the major concerns in the K-12 education systems today is that the ethnicity of school professionals does not reflect the ethnicity of the students. This is true for most school professionals, including school counselors, the focus of our training programs at Gallaudet University, where we try to reflect the diversity of the United States when we select our counselor trainees. Further, we work to broaden our students' worldview and to foster development of multicultural competencies. This is not only critical for them in our increasingly diverse world, but more important it is critical for serving deaf and hard of hearing students and the families with whom they will work.

From their very first semester, our counselors in training are asked to be mindful of our nature as cultural beings and to explore how they—and individuals from other cultures—engage in the world. Individuals enter our programs with ideas, concepts, and opinions; they think they know their own minds and know right from wrong, good from bad. They often know little about how, where, and from whom they assimilated their information and beliefs, however, or whether they learned these things consciously or unconsciously. They don't recognize how others, equally good people, may have very different and equally valid beliefs. While they are serious about wanting to help students, they know little about what "help" looks like through different cultural lenses, and this could reduce their effectiveness.

Photos courtesy of Mark Schwartz, Jody Olson, and Michele Heise

Danielle Thompson-Ochoa, PhD, joined Gallaudet University as an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling in 2014. Prior to coming to Gallaudet, she was a school counselor at the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind in Honolulu. Thompson-Ochoa received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Clark Atlanta University, her master's degree from Gallaudet, and her doctorate from the International University of Graduate Studies in the West Indies. Her teaching interests include training students to become school counselors and working with school counseling supervisors and counselors in K-12. Her research interests are in career transition program development and bullying prevention in schools.

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For this reason, we intentionally train our school counselors through a comprehensive multicultural/social justice curricular framework that highlights the following:

- **Social and cultural diversity**. We have two foundational courses that address diversity within the theoretical framework of American Deaf culture and community and identity development in deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing individuals.

- **Large- and small-scale diversity exercises.** With these, we don't teach about concepts; instead we illustrate them as we mindfully lead trainees through a variety of activities, including simulations that help them to develop their own knowledge, skills, and awareness.

Above: MSAD school counselor Lisa Wasilowski welcomes students, teachers, and staff back to school dressed as the school mascot as a way of making initial connections with them.

- **Cross-cultural dialogue**. We provide space to practice facilitation and engagement in difficult conversations across cultures.

- **Cultural encounters**. Our trainees leave the classroom and enter carefully chosen and unfamiliar communities with the goal of learning about other cultures through interacting with individuals. A white student might visit an African American church, for example, or a straight student might visit a gay cultural center. Students observe, converse, report back, and reflect on their conversations. This allows them to

learn about the culture of other people and to recognize and perhaps to address preconceptions and biases they may have held.

When they go into the field to do their internships, our counselors in training report seeing evidence for much of what they learned in class. For example, a recent school counseling intern was placed in a large mainstream program in a public school in Washington State. He reported that he became aware immediately of his advantage as a hearing white male. As he worked with mostly white hearing female colleagues and deaf students within a school in which the majority of students were hearing, he became aware of a respect directed toward him that he felt he had not yet earned. This began on the first day of his internship, he said. The dissonance between his own estimations of his counseling expertise and that of those around him was amplified as his direct supervisor, a deaf female, seemed only marginally accepted by her hearing colleagues while the same colleagues seemed not only to accept him but turned to him for experience and skill in counseling that he knew he didn't yet have. Especially stinging, he said, was an oppression that the school system imposed on the deaf and hard of

hearing students with whom he was working. He felt keenly aware that the needs of those students were ignored or misunderstood, and he credited his graduate training with this awareness. He was also aware that his gender and hearing status functioned as a privilege; he was awarded an acceptance and respect that females and professionals who are deaf or hard of hearing had to work harder to attain. Equally important, our trainee refused to take advantage of what was, in effect, a prejudice that worked in his favor. Rather than rushing in to impose his feelings on others, perhaps ruining relationships in the process, he concentrated on building relationships with colleagues. He was able to make deliberate decisions on how to approach the various community members, stay true to his own values, and advocate for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the school. He was mindful that whatever he did or did not do, he was but a very small and transitory piece in a larger picture. He would leave when his internship was finished. The deaf and hard of hearing students and the supervisor about whom he cared would remain. For them, the school was *home*; they would need to find their own paths in dealing with this less-than-ideal environment.

School counselors are most effective when they understand their privilege and cultural identity. By becoming aware of others in this intentional way, compassion for and connection with others are much more likely. Brian Tingley, Class of 2015, who became a school counselor at the California School for the Deaf-Riverside, created signs to post in his office and on his door to convey a strong message of caring for his students as one of his first actions. Tingley understood that as a new counselor he needed to introduce himself and form connections using every opportunity he had. As he had learned from both instruction and direct experience in our program, no important counseling work could be accomplished without those first important steps in building relationships. He knew that it was important for students to feel safe and welcomed. Tingley was quick to embrace school counseling curriculums that are offered nationally, believing it is important to make connections with the broader educational community. He embraces his deaf and hard of hearing students as part of the diversity within the world, connected to a broader community of students. In that spirit, he brought to his school "Actively Caring," a curriculum that focuses on the concepts of kindness and "paying it forward." With this, students learn they have much to give as well as to receive.

At the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD), school counselors establish connections with students through presentations and skits. In the elementary department, school counselors dress up as characters while they share stories such as *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun* by Maria Dismondy (2008), about a girl who has the courage to be herself despite how others make fun of her. Lisa Wasilowski, MSAD school counselor and a 2005 graduate of our program, says one of her favorite

School Counseling:
A New Model for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students?

By Linda Risser Lytle, Cheryl L. Wu, and Danielle Thompson-Ochoa

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has found that school counselors are most effective when they follow a comprehensive developmental model rather than provide individual services that tend to be responsive and not preventative. While the ASCA model offers important guidelines and represents a solid beginning, it does not suffice for school counselors who work with deaf and hard of hearing students.

For the past year and a half, the faculty of the Department of Counseling school program at Gallaudet University has worked to expand the ASCA national model to address the unique counseling and program needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. Our model would provide school counselors in general education settings with an orientation to the skills and knowledge necessary to work with deaf and hard of hearing students; it would provide counselors in schools for the deaf with the skills, knowledge, and training necessary to work with deaf and hard of hearing students and the skills, knowledge, and training to implement a comprehensive schoolwide counseling program for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Our goal is two-fold:

- to provide an orientation to practicing counselors who are not necessarily trained to work with deaf and hard of hearing populations (e.g., school counselors in general education settings who may occasionally work with deaf and hard of hearing students but who do not have the knowledge and skills about being deaf to work with these students effectively), and

- to provide training to counselors in residential schools for the deaf who know deaf and hard of hearing children and youth and who have the language skills to work directly with them through a comprehensive developmental model.

The ASCA model has four themes: leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. To make explicit the work needed to support deaf and hard of hearing students, we have added four additional themes:

1. **Access**. Access is important as it addresses maximizing participation in both formal and informal academic and social interactions for deaf and hard of hearing children in school as well as at home and in the community—a huge challenge due to the complex diversity in language and communication among our deaf and hard of hearing students.

2. **Integration**. Integration increases opportunities for students to fully participate in school events; it must be structured in carefully intentional ways to ensure deaf and hard of hearing students are engaging with their hearing peers in substantive ways as opposed to engaging in parallel activities.

3. **Inclusion**. Inclusion refers to ways to fully include deaf and hard of hearing students from culturally diverse backgrounds (e.g., those who are of color, those who have immigrated to the U.S., those who are the children of immigrants, those who are not from English speaking or signing homes, those with additional disabilities, those who live with gender diversity, those from economically and educationally disadvantaged families).

4. **Allyship and cultural responsiveness**. Allyship and cultural responsiveness involves understanding and appreciating diverse cultures and emphasizes consultation and collaboration with all who potentially impact the student's life. It means intentionally building alliances between those who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are hearing, including students and professionals and the support systems that sustain them.

In addition, the model explores the unique challenges of school counselors in general education settings who have minimal or no background in working with deaf and hard of hearing students. We propose that in addition to issues within the ASCA model, training for counselors of children and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing addresses: a) language acquisition and communication fluency, b) diverse learning needs and cultural identities, c) life skills, and d) competencies to tackle discrimination and oppression.

While the ASCA has not yet embraced this model, the organization recognizes that equal access to all parts of the educational experience is key to students' success at school. Further the ASCA recognizes that this adapted model incorporates social justice and cultural awareness into the standards and principles of school counselors who work with deaf and hard of hearing students.

We continue to educate the ASCA about the unique challenges of working with deaf and hard of hearing students, especially challenges related to language access and the importance of counseling and eliminating barriers for personal, social, academic, and career success. The ASCA has agreed to publish and disseminate this model in the form of an ASCA resource manual. For more information, contact Cheryl Wu at *Cheryl.Wu@gallaudet.edu*.

duties is dressing up as the school mascot to welcome back students, teachers, and staff on the first day of school. Wasilowski and her fellow counselors know that initial connections made through presentations and interactions as a welcoming mascot may open doors to deeper work. These sorts of activities allow students to feel more comfortable in seeking help and managing their emotions and behavior.

Since our programs focus so heavily on social justice, it is no surprise that we graduate school counselors who are quick to notice students who are marginalized and work to support them within their schools. Our counselors help establish groups for these students—LGBT students, deaf-blind students, adopted students, and others who may feel isolated and alone. Group participation allows these students to both support one another and have a safe space to explore their identity. In each of these groups, counselors support students as they build confidence and self-esteem; counselors expand the equity of educational experiences.

Training for school counselors includes developing skills in consultation and collaboration, and thus they are able to provide support not only to students but also to teachers and administrators. Making connections with teachers positively impacts changes in the classroom and supports students as well as teachers. School counselors work with principals and other administrators to support a healthy school environment and to implement policies that protect students and promote social justice.

Data shows that significant changes in individual development occur as our counselors in training progress through our programs. Furthermore, as these students complete their fieldwork experiences in schools throughout the nation, we clearly see their passion for helping students and working for social justice in both big and small ways. This may be especially important as surveys have shown that the primary service provided to deaf and hard of hearing schoolchildren is individual counseling (Lomas, Nichter, & Robles-Pina, 2011). We graduate school counselors who are ready to work with teachers and administrators and work for social justice within their schools. We are proud that our graduates also keep a watchful eye on their deaf and hard of hearing students and are always ready to provide support.

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Expanding Professional Development Opportunities for Bilingual Education Planning

In January 2018, the Clerc Center established a new position to meet bilingual education needs nationally; at schools and programs for deaf and hard of hearing students; and within the Clerc Center, which includes its two demonstration schools, Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD).

Selected to fill this inaugural position was Debbie Trapani, who served as KDES principal from 2013-2017. Her previous experience includes working as a literacy specialist at the Delaware School for the Deaf, in which capacity she coached, provided training, developed materials, conducted research, and served as a mentor for the now defunct ASL/English Bilingual Professional Development program. Subsequent to this position, Trapani was director of statewide Early Childhood Education services in Delaware. She has also held teaching positions in early childhood, elementary school, and high school.

"The understanding of what bilingual education entails varies from individual to individual, program to program. What is critical is that we all understand that bilingual education can benefit deaf and hard of hearing children even if they use a combination of signed, spoken, and written languages. As the director of bilingual education, possibly the first position of this type, I am excited and committed to creating partnerships toward the coordination, development, and provision of training opportunities and materials for educators, support staff, and administrators," said Trapani. "There are many goals that I hold in my capacity as the director, but they can be grouped into two target areas: nationwide and at the Clerc Center."

Goal 1: Across the Nation

"I will start with identification of resources that can be used toward development of training, workshops, and information-sharing materials," said Trapani. As a result, she hopes to build capacity toward offering professional development planning and support in the areas of:

- ASL/English bilingual education and programming
- Program-specific philosophy of bilingual education
- Language planning (individual, classroom, and school)
- ASL assessments
- Bilingual teaching strategies
- Language and communication policy

As a precursor to providing these training opportunities, Trapani plans to identify a small cohort of professionals who can serve as trainers and mentors to future trainers, thereby increasing the capacity to support professional development needs and sustain the vibrancy of training offerings.

Professional development planning will depend on the needs of each program. "I want to take into consideration the readiness of administrators at all levels and the teachers and staff involved with teaching and supporting deaf and hard of hearing students," said Trapani. "Training materials will be developed for families and other groups as identified by the particular needs of the particular program."

Goal 2: At the Clerc Center

The Clerc Center employs close to 175 teachers and staff and operates two demonstration schools. Trapani aims to develop an organization-wide common understanding of bilingual education, foundational information, and the "how-to's" of bilingual education implementation. "This includes teaching strategies, language allocation, and use among all classroom teachers, related services, administrators, and Student Life staff towards the creation of a fully accessible bilingual program for all deaf and hard of hearing students," said Trapani.

Trapani also intends to implement a Clerc Center-wide professional development plan that will ensure KDES and MSSD students become linguistically competent in both ASL and English while taking into consideration signacy, literacy, and oracy; providing these students access to age-appropriate curriculum and grade-level material, and facilitating the development of their literacy skills while promoting a positive sense of self and identity amongst the student body.

Next Steps

Trapani has begun to reach out to bilingual education specialists and equivalent positions at deaf education programs and hopes to expand this professional network many fold. She is also working on identifying potential trainers. "Collaboration will be essential if the deaf and hard of hearing students we serve are to receive every opportunity to succeed in school and in life."

Interested professionals, programs, and schools can discuss possible opportunities and ideas by contacting Trapani at *Debra.Trapani@gallaudet.edu*.

K-12 ASL Content Standards:
A Groundbreaking New Resource for Professionals
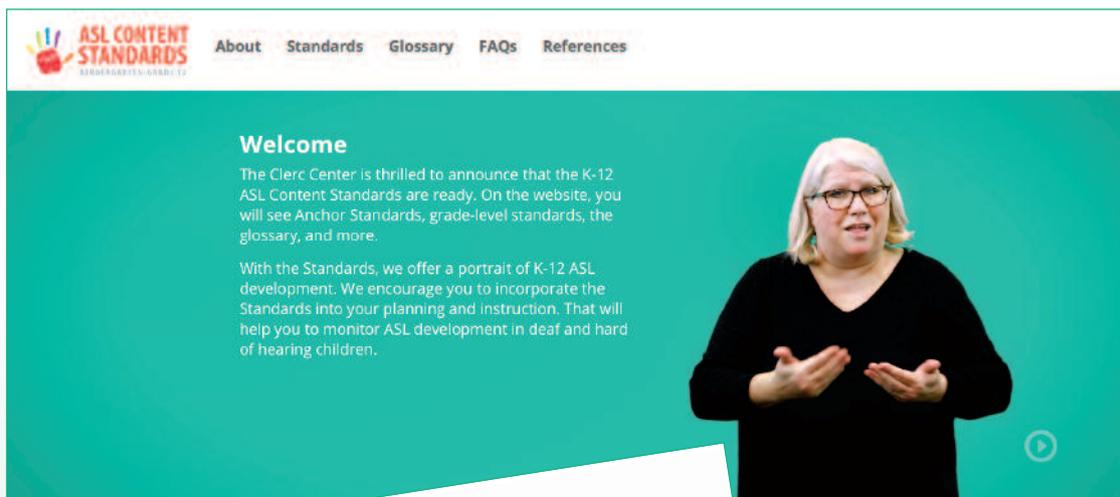
The Clerc Center announced the release of the K-12 ASL Content Standards on January 31, 2018, to nationwide excitement. The Standards were developed to guide American Sign Language (ASL) instruction so that deaf and hard of hearing children can learn about and study ASL as a first language in the same way hearing children in the United States learn about English as part of their academic studies. Among initial reactions, Karlin Hummel, high school principal at the Texas School for the Deaf, exclaimed: "Our high school team of ASL

AFFIXES

Fingerspelling and Fingerreading

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TRANSITION

teachers, curriculum specialist, and administrators excitedly came together to talk about how we could incorporate the Standards within our program. For us at the Texas School for the Deaf, these Standards function much like a beacon lighting the way forward."

The Standards are based on grade-level expectations of children learning ASL as their first language. Similar to teachers using the Common Core State Standards to teach English, teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students are expected to align instructional plans and assessments to gauge student progress toward achieving grade-level ASL competencies.

"We appreciate the work that has gone into creating the new K-12 ASL Content Standards," said Rachel Coleman, executive director of the American Society for Deaf Children. "It is our hope that these Standards are implemented in such a way that we see an immediate benefit to deaf children throughout the country."

Currently, there are no formally documented national content standards for ASL L1 learners. By taking this initiative to develop the Standards, the Clerc Center hopes to encourage educators to take an intensive look at the linguistic development of their students to ensure they are developing appropriately and attaining language development benchmarks.

The Standards were developed by the Clerc Center in collaboration with a team of researchers from the fields of ASL linguistics, deaf education and educators from several universities and their school partners, and with the California School for the Deaf-Fremont. The team of researchers helped develop the research foundation for the Standards during the first phase of this project. Feedback from reviewers participating in feedback groups also led to the development of glossary terms.

"Hands & Voices celebrates the release of these Standards and knows how valuable they will be to parents and educators alike in order to make appropriate goals for individual students who need supports in this area," said Janet DesGeorges, executive director of Hands & Voices.
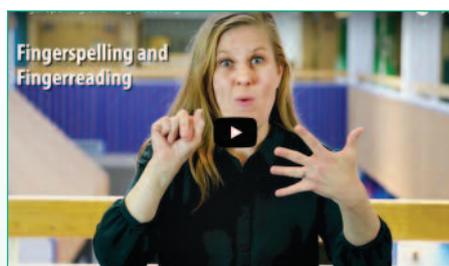
The online resource is organized into several parts:

- **Anchor Standards**. The Anchor Standards set the foundation for the Standards and describe the general expectations of K-12 students learning ASL as a first language. The Anchor Standards are separated into five sections: Viewing, Published Signing, Discourse and Presentation, Language, and Fingerspelling and Fingerreading.

- **Grade-level standards.** The grade-level standards set expectations for students in grades K-12, delineating the specific knowledge and skills that all students are expected to demonstrate as they progress through the curriculum. Grade-level standards are organized by grade clusters.

- **Glossary**. The glossary is a list of terms and their definitions, along with an explanation of each in ASL.

- **References**. The references provide the research foundation for the development of both the Anchor Standards and the grade-level standards.

"The Standards are necessary to give today's educators realistic benchmarks and grade-level indicators of student development in ASL; without the Standards, each educator has a different evaluation tool. This does not reflect the norm in education today, which is focused on standards and evidence-based reporting," said Debbie Trapani, director of Bilingual Education at the Clerc Center.

The Clerc Center will be hosting a series of discussion forums with experts in the field to answer questions and moderate discussions about the Standards. Information collected from these sessions, along with a national survey from the Clerc Center to learn more about different uses of the Standards, will help determine next steps.

Visit the K-12 ASL Content Standards website at *www.aslstandards.org*.

Looking to the Past, Examining the Present, and Finding Hope for the Future of Deaf Education

By Laurene E. Simms

Laurene E. Simms, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Education at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. After graduating from the Indiana School for the Deaf in Indianapolis, she earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and a master's degree in deaf education from Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College) in Westminster. Simms earned her doctorate in language, reading, and culture from the University of Arizona in Tucson. As an ASL and English bilingual education consultant and a former elementary school teacher, Simms has hands-on experience in the implementation of a bilingual and multicultural educational environment for diverse deaf and hard of hearing children and is an acknowledged expert on the topic of using ASL and English as the languages of instruction.

Today, we celebrate more than 200 years of deaf education. To understand the future, we must look back and study the history of deaf education while examining its current status. We often look at the first example of deaf education as being in Hartford, Connecticut, way back in 1817, but the truth is deaf education began long before that. When Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet encountered Alice Cogswell in 1814, deaf education took place there. Prior to that, we had Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, where for almost two centuries (1700s-early 1900s) deaf and hard of hearing people interacted; deaf education took place there. Also, let's not forget the education that took place among Native Americans and African Americans who were deaf or hard of hearing.

The theme of this issue of *Odyssey* is "The Future of Deaf Education: Practices Impacting Positive Change." We've experienced a multitude of obstacles, challenges, and frustrations throughout history. We can use the patterns in what has succeeded, and what hasn't, in deaf education to determine what will happen going forward. With that said, I see three positive changes for the future.

First, there is a notable growth in the number of deaf and hard of hearing professionals and researchers who are invested in deaf education. They've applied a deaf-centric epistemology to their work, a crucial aspect developed through their own Deaf lens and their struggles and successes. After all, take a look at Laurent Clerc, who partook in deaf education in France long before anything formalized ever began in the United States. When Clerc, who would become the first deaf teacher of deaf and hard of hearing children and the first deaf teacher trainer in the United States, came to America in 1817, he had this same deaf-centric epistemology emerging from similar life experiences as

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modern-day deaf and hard of hearing people. We need to return to Clerc's days and examine how he approached deaf education. We need to start from square one, this time with deaf and hard of hearing professionals leading the way just as Clerc did.

Another positive change I see is the increase in deaf and hard of hearing people who are self-educated and use sign language. We need to analyze how they have become fluent in reading, writing, and signing. With this increase, why are their accomplishments not fully integrated into research or studies on deaf education? Clear identification of how deaf and hard of hearing people have become literate in reading, writing, and signing must take place. After all, fluent signing is not magic nor a secret; it emerges from ongoing interaction in

signing at school, at home, and with friends during the early years. Successful reading is not magic nor a secret either; it requires reading, reading, and reading. Immersion in both signing and reading is how deaf and hard of hearing people can become literate.

Finally, the third positive change I see is the proliferation of allyship. I see increasing numbers of allies working with deaf and hard of hearing professionals and researchers. They are at long last respecting our lived experiences. Historically, hearing professionals have studied deaf and hard of hearing people and then explained what they thought was best for us. Again, we should look at how Clerc profoundly changed deaf education in the United States. Clerc knew what was best based on his own experiences as a deaf person, but he also
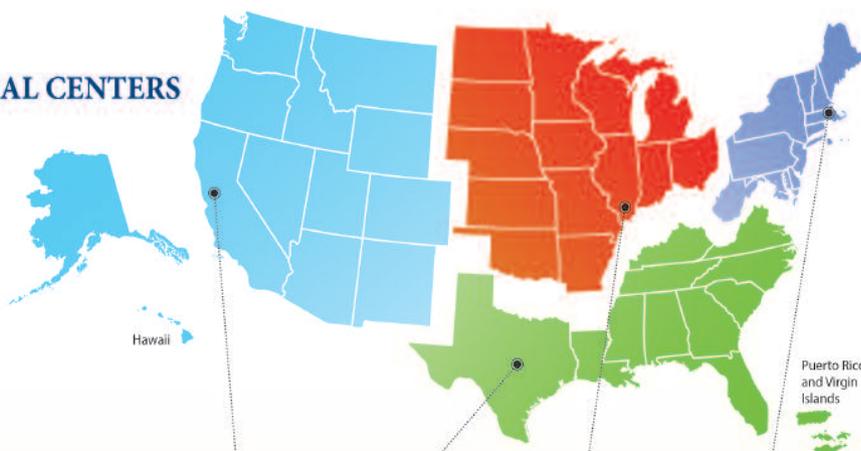
had an ally—one who was hearing and listened to what he had to say: Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. Let's not forget the other ally: Mason Cogswell, Alice's hearing father who helped bring Clerc to the United States. We are now returning to that allyship among families, educators, and professionals who sincerely listen to deaf and hard of hearing people.

These three positive changes—deaf and hard of hearing professionals and researchers working through a deaf-centric lens; the increase in literacy in reading, writing, and signing; and allyship among hearing people—are what we can look forward to in the future. By looking to the past and examining today, we can see what exists for the future … and find our hope.

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