

# partners with a purpose:

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

By Candi Mascia-Reed

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

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

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

#### *School at a Glance*

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

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



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

*Photos courtesy of Candi Mascia-Reed*



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

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

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

### *The Consultant Teacher Model*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

#### Program at a Glance

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 1: Sample Schedule of a Consultant Teacher

Union Consultant: \_\_\_\_\_ Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Student placement in this program is a team effort. Decisions are not based solely on student academic performance but include the demonstration of student self-motivation, parental support, successful and mature utilization of an educational interpreter, and experience and success in some middle school mainstream academic placements. Teamwork among the consultant teachers, the teacher assistant, the educational interpreter, and the student's self-advocacy is an integral daily component of the high school model.

### *Curriculum Modifications and/or Accommodations*

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

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



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



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

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

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

An example of an accommodation might be:

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

### Teaming Up for Success

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

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

### Reference

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

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

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

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

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