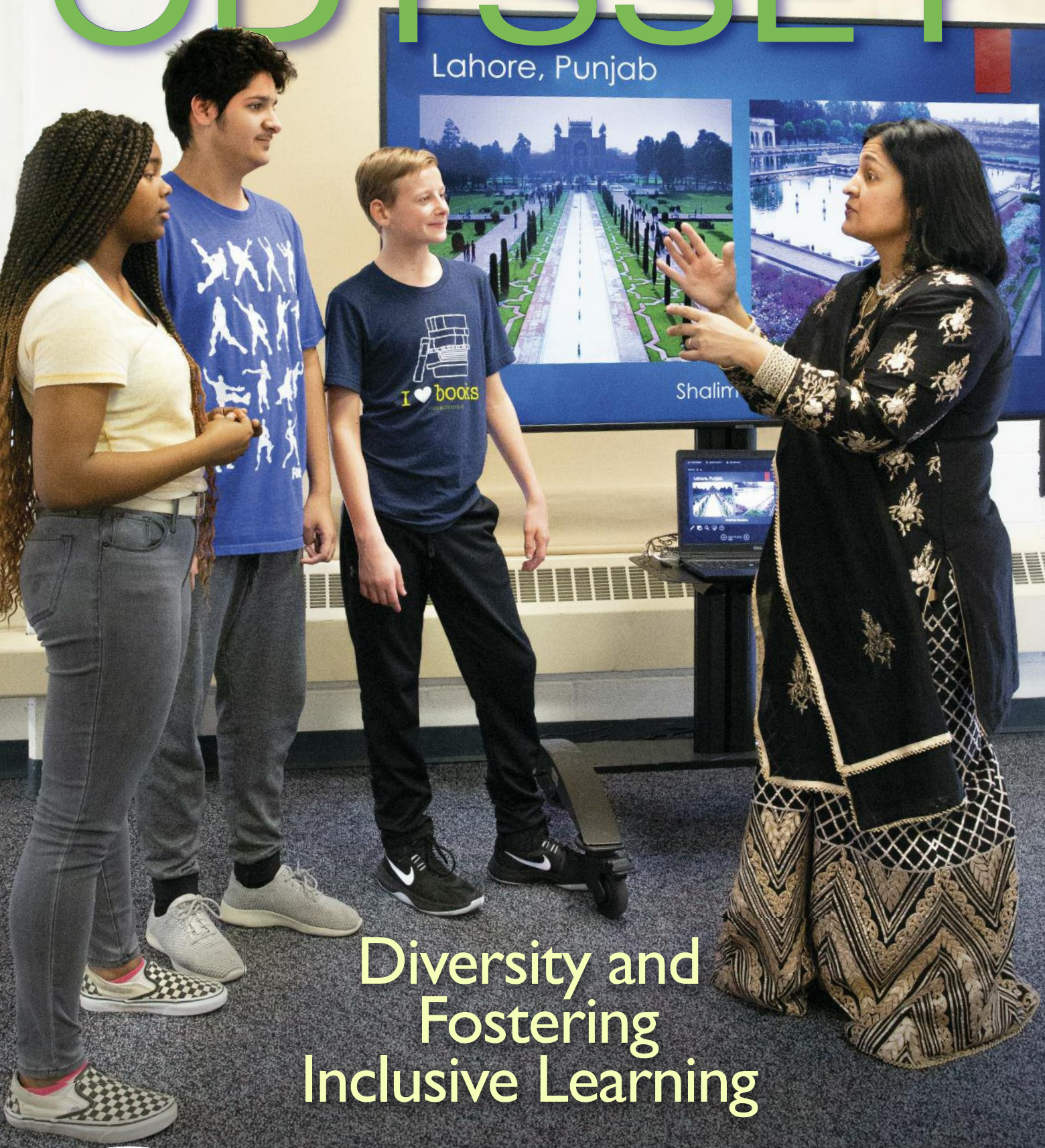
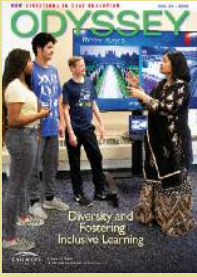


ODYSSEY



Diversity and Fostering Inclusive Learning

ODYSSEY



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About the cover: *Taiyabah Naeem*, one of the inclusive excellence ambassadors from the Clerc Center, answers questions from middle school students after a presentation on her culture. Learn more about how Gallaudet and the Clerc Center are fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion on page 76.

We would like to thank all of our student, parent, teacher, and staff models from the Clerc Center, and Cathleen Kleiler and Brad Weiner from Stephen Knolls School, for their assistance in illustrating this issue.



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LETTER FROM THE CAOS

Preparing Today's Students to Be Citizens of the World

WHILE NAVIGATING A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean."
~ Ryunosuke Satoro

As we move through this time of a worldwide anti-racist protest movement and calls for change against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been heartened to see communities and individuals pulling together to support each other across the nation. The pandemic upended school life, and we spent vast amounts of time and care working with families, teachers, staff, and administrators in making the switch to online learning. With the death of George Floyd, the national dialogue quickly shifted to racial justice, spearheaded by the Black Lives Matter movement, which seeks to dismantle systemic racism at all levels of our communities, including in our schools.

In many ways, these crises have brought to the forefront the inequities of our communities and challenges faced by both schools and families in providing education in this new reality. Our commitment to inclusive practices in education remains as important as ever while the demographics of schools across the United States continue to rapidly shift. How do we foster the senses of belonging, ownership, social justice, social-emotional growth, and personal connection in the learning experiences of students coming from backgrounds and homes that vary by race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, locality, age, level of education, disability, language use, and other social conditions?

In this issue of *Odyssey*, compiled prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the worldwide protests, professionals and families share stories and experiences on a multitude of topics. Gloshanda Lawyer, Cheryl Shahan, Leala Holcomb, and David H. Smith discuss how to integrate principles of social justice into a teacher preparation program. Arathy Manoharan discusses the anti-bias curriculum related to young adult literature that she utilizes in her high school English classroom. LaShawna Sims, who is part of a military family, shares how she acquired services and support for her children with cochlear implants. Flavia Fleischer, Rachel Friedman-Narr, and Will Garrow explain the importance of Deaf Community Cultural Wealth for deaf students with disabilities. Also included are articles about promoting gender inclusivity in schools, a parent's journey from identifying her deaf-blind daughter's medical issues to finding the appropriate educational placement, making arts education accessible for deaf children with multiple disabilities, and how to utilize Universal Design for Learning. Evon J. Black reflects on the theme of this issue in her endnote, sharing how embracing diversity and inclusion in our schools empowers everyone and how there is still much work to be done.

Next year's *Odyssey* issue will focus on transformative practices in education, collaboration, and administration. We must direct our focus to the profound and vital changes now taking place in education—not only through innovative approaches involving interpersonal and technological skills but also, more importantly, through leveraging strategies and committing to new practices aimed at dismantling systemic racism and other forms of inequities in our schools and educational programs. Please share your stories with us at Odyssey@gallaudet.edu.

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



Marianne Belsky



Nicole Sutcliffe

This article is a companion to “Family Language Planning with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: Fostering Multilingual Development” on page 8 of this issue.

Grandparents, Parents, Children—and Four Languages: A Deaf Family’s Story

By Norma Morán and Franklin C. Torres

Despite different childhood experiences—primarily differences centered around language access—both of us felt included in our large Spanish-speaking families and grew up with a strong sense of cultural identity and values. Now as we raise our three children together, this is what we want for them as well—a sense of cultural identity and pride . . . and fluency in at least four languages.

Franklin’s Story

I grew up in Lima, Peru, a deaf boy in a Deaf family. Our home language—the language of my younger brother, my parents, an aunt, and a cousin—was Lengua de Señas Peruana (Peruvian Sign Language, or LSP). I went to La Inmaculada on the outskirts of our city. Established in 1936, it was the first deaf school to be established in our country. Naturally I was bilingual, learning informal spoken Spanish as I socialized with hearing children near my home; using LSP within my home; and using written Spanish in formal interactions with hearing people, including hearing family members. I enrolled in a hearing high school as La Inmaculada offered only primary education and there were no high schools for deaf students, and I tried to succeed that first year without interpreters. However, this proved impossible. At age 17, I immigrated alone to the United States. First, I attended St. Rita School for the Deaf in Cincinnati, Ohio, then I transferred to the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) in Washington, D.C. Learning English and American Sign Language (ASL) simultaneously required a steep learning curve; however, I was armed with a strong linguistic foundation as I was already bilingual in LSP and Spanish. These helped me in learning ASL and

Norma Morán, MA, is an active member of several organizations, including the National Advisory Group for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), the Maryland/DC chapter of Hands & Voices, the National Advocacy Organization for Parents of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children, the Latino Deaf Hard of Hearing Association of the Metro Area DC, and the Kendall Parent Teacher Association. She has worked in the Peace Corps in Kenya, the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., and at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. She currently contracts with Linguabee, a sign language interpreting agency. In 2018, Morán co-authored *Universal Design for Learning to Help All Children Read: Promoting Literacy for Learners with Disabilities*, a toolkit for USAID and the Global Reading Network. She has given numerous presentations to a wide variety of organizations and institutions.

Photos courtesy of Norma Morán and Franklin C. Torres



Above: Torres and Morán often share storybooks written in Spanish with their children to support their sons' growing vocabulary. Here, Torres shares a story that offers the text printed in both Spanish and English.

English.

I graduated from MSSD and went on to attend Gallaudet University, earning a bachelor's degree in Spanish with a minor in education, a master's degree in deaf education, and, eventually, a doctoral degree in postsecondary and adult education.

Norma's Story

I was born deaf to a hearing family in Santa Ana, El Salvador. My young mother did not know I was deaf until I was 2 years old, just as El Salvador was beginning its descent into a chaotic civil war. Determined to do what was best for me, my mother took me to visit the school for the deaf in San Salvador, an hour south of Santa Ana. I can't remember much about the visit. However, the school was not what my mother thought, and the conditions there appalled her; she could not bear the thought of sending her young daughter to that school.

Faced with the deepening civil war and a school that appeared woefully inadequate, my mother decided to seek better opportunities in the United States. My family immigrated to Reno, Nev., when I was 3.5 years old. Almost

immediately, I began attending preschool, part of a public school program in which the Total Communication philosophy was supported. Having received no systematic linguist input at all, I was language deprived. Nevertheless, I learned quickly; on the second day, I was apparently able to begin to express myself, signing "cookie." My mom began learning sign language, and then my sister—my parents' second deaf child—was born.

I began college at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, N.Y., where I had my first life-changing exposure to ASL. After graduation, I joined the Peace Corps, serving in Kenya. For three years, I worked in a deaf school in a small town using Kenyan Sign Language with my students. Upon completing my service, I returned to the United States for graduate education at American University in Washington, D.C.

Franklin C. Torres,

PhD, assistant professor in the English Department at Gallaudet University, teaches developmental English and general studies. He is a native of Peru and came to the United States when he was 17 years old. Torres obtained his doctoral degree in postsecondary and adult education from Capella University in Minneapolis, Minn. His doctoral dissertation, *An Examination of Literacy Experiences in First Generation Deaf Latino College Students*, is the first known study that explores the experiences of deaf first generation Latinos who have graduated from college. Torres has presented at local, national, and international conferences and recently published an article related to deaf Latino/a/x college students. He is actively involved in various organizations at the local, national, and international levels.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at Norma.Moran@gmail.com and Franklin.Torres@gallaudet.edu, respectively.

Today—Children, Work, Activism, and Four Languages

We are determined to give our children the languages that are their birthright. Reyna, our first child, was born hearing. She attended a Spanish immersion program in elementary school, speaks Spanish with her maternal grandparents, and signs with us. Ramón, our second child, was born deaf. Accordingly, we agreed that each of us would use our native sign language with him—Mama would use ASL and Papa would use LSP. However, when Teófilo, our third child, was born deaf, we realized that we needed to develop a plan for being more intentional and thoughtful with our children’s language exposure. We agreed that we wanted all our children to achieve native fluency in LSP, ASL, and English and become comfortable in Spanish. We would continue with what we had started—Papa would continue to use LSP at home while Mama would continue to use ASL. Ramón and Teófilo, now in kindergarten and preschool, respectively, would also learn English as well as be exposed to ASL on a daily basis at their school and through their friends in the Deaf community.

We have found that our hearing daughter and our deaf sons require different strategies for Spanish language learning. Reyna has been learning and using Spanish since elementary school. Ramón and Teófilo have focused on learning the written form of Spanish, and this has occurred mostly within

Below left and right: Teófilo signs “abuela” (grandmother) as his mama looks on.

our home. We have been using multiple children’s books and flashcards, all in printed Spanish, to support our sons’ growing vocabulary. We plan to adapt our language planning to increase the sophistication of their printed material as they begin achieving reading ability in English.

Our children also use LSP with Franklin’s father, who lives in our home, and they refer to him with the LSP sign for “grandfather.” At 3 years old, both Ramón and Teófilo were able to fingerspell and write *abuelo*, the Spanish word for “grandfather,” as well. Their abuelo is their secondary caregiver so they have a close bond with him, resulting in their continuous exposure to LSP. His wife, Franklin’s mom and their *abuela*, passed away before our children were born. Perhaps it shows the depth of their linguistic understanding that when they refer to her, they do so with LSP signs.

Our children use ASL to refer to Nana and Tito, Norma’s parents. They can fingerspell their names in ASL and write their names in Spanish. When writing cards, they know to write “Nana” and “Tito” instead of “Abuelo” and “Abuela.” We encourage our children to fingerspell in both languages, knowing that fingerspelling is an important skill. Whether they are learning English or Spanish—or any other written language—fingerspelling helps deaf and hard of hearing children to master reading in the targeted language. The alphabets are nearly identical, with the primary difference being the addition of shape or motion to signify Spanish accent marks (e.g., ñ).

Although bilingual and multilingual children may mix



Right: Ramón chats with his mama about his *abuelo* (grandfather).

languages, this does not mean they are confused (Reguenaud, 2009). For instance, occasionally Ramón and Teófilo would fingerspell “Abuela” when they meant “Abuelo,” then they would self-correct by fingerspelling the correct word. Similarly, they would fingerspell “Abuelo” when they meant Tito, then again correct themselves. In bilingual homes, children typically use one language more than another. At this time, ASL remains Ramón and Teófilo’s primary language due to attending a bilingual school and being involved in events in the Deaf community. We understand at this point not to expect our children to be balanced bilinguals; that is okay because we encourage active learning of languages in various ways. Ramón and Teófilo already know the difference between LSP and ASL, and they will become more sophisticated with their multi-language usage as they grow older. English, we recognize, will be another primary language for them as they grow and begin to read and develop fluency.

Historically, there has been robust research and initiatives in



bilingual education for deaf students, yet minimal research has been done on multilingualism in deaf children (Pizzo, 2016). Despite this, we are convinced that there is no limit to the number of languages a child—deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing—should learn. There are benefits to being a multilingual family. Being able to converse with all family members in their preferred languages allows our children to develop strong relationships with both sides of our family and maintain connection to the culture and community that is their heritage. Further, research shows that children who are bilingual or multilingual demonstrate better self-control than their monolingual peers (Kovács & Mehler, 2009).

Both of us feel fortunate to have grown up in culturally accessible households. This culminates in possessing a strong cultural identity that we want to pass on to our children—along with ASL, LSP, English, and Spanish.

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Family Language Planning with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: Fostering Multilingual Development

By Christi Batamula, Bobbie Jo Kite Herbold, and Julie Mitchiner

Christi Batamula, PhD, an assistant professor in the Education Department at Gallaudet University, has worked at Gallaudet since 2005 when she began as an early childhood educator at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School on Gallaudet's campus. She has also published articles based on her research and teaching and has presented her research at a variety of national and international conferences.

Bobbie Jo Kite Herbold, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Education Department at Gallaudet University. In addition, she provides consulting services to American Sign Language and English bimodal bilingual programs nationwide. Herbold has taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and a kindergarten-first grade combination class at the New Mexico School for the Deaf.

Families who live in the United States or migrated here from other countries and who do not speak English often feel pressured to stop using their home language with their children and to focus on learning English (Fillmore, 2000). This is true for hearing families and for families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Parents report that their decisions about language opportunities for their deaf or hard of hearing child reflect a multitude of factors. These include:

- **Pressures from society**—Parents report pressures to use the dominant language of the culture—spoken English—as that is the language of higher status within American culture (Batamula, 2016; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Kite, 2017; Mitchiner, 2014).
- **Information about communication**—Parents report that the information shared by professionals has a strong impact on their language choices (Humphries et al., 2015; Kite, 2017; Li et al., 2003; Young et al., 2006).
- **Families' own experiences**—Parents note that their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs affect their language choices (Batamula, 2016; Kite, 2017; Mitchiner, 2014).
- **Families' knowledge about language development**—Knowing that the most important language learning tends to occur in the first years of a child's life affects parental decision making (Mitchiner, 2014).
- **Deaf or hard of hearing child's listening and language abilities**—Parents report that the degree of a child's hearing and his or her language abilities affects their decision on language choice (Crowe et al., 2014).

Photos courtesy of Norma Morán and Franklin C. Torres



Above: Developing a family language plan allows families to plan when to use which language throughout their child's day.

Approximately 95 percent of deaf children are born to hearing families (Karchmer & Mitchell, 2003), and 71.6 percent of family members do not consistently sign with their deaf children (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2010). Yet learning American Sign Language (ASL) ensures the child's cognitive development and reduces family frustration (Kushalnagar et al., 2007). As a visual language, ASL is the most accessible language for a deaf or hard of hearing child; this gives the child a solid foundation in literacy, both in reading and writing, and helps ensure academic success (Chamberlain & Mayberry 2008; MacSweeney, 1998; Padden & Ramsey, 2000; Strong & Prinz, 2000).

Grosjean (2001) states that the linguistic rights of deaf children are to acquire sign language as their home language. Families who choose ASL as a language for their deaf or hard of hearing child now need to figure out how to add ASL to their household language. This should not necessarily mean removing the language of the children's parents, whether or not that language is English. Too often "experts" tell parents from other countries to use only English and ASL with their children. Whatever language a child's family uses, removing it from their child's life can negatively affect the connection between the

child and his or her family and lead to a loss of cultural knowledge and identity for the child. Holding on to the language of the child's family is important and complex—and it can be even more complex for multilingual families.

Family Language Policy

Family language policy is a relatively new field of research that integrates language acquisition and language policy and focuses on the study of the relations between language policy and family language choice and use (Spolsky, 2012; King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008). During the last 10 years, family language policy studies have described how bilingual and multilingual families navigate and support their children as the children develop two or more languages. All bilingual and multilingual families, whether hearing or deaf, have similar challenges. One way to face some of these challenges is to develop a family language plan. A family language plan allows families to plan when to use which language throughout a child's day. The goal is to maintain balanced input from each language and to ensure mastery in both.

Julie Mitchiner,

PhD, associate professor in the Education Department at Gallaudet University, directs the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants, Toddlers and Their Families: Leadership and Collaboration Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate Program. Prior to joining the Education Department, Mitchiner worked for six years as an early childhood education teacher at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School. She has presented at many national and international conferences and published several articles related to Deaf families with children who have cochlear implants and family language planning with deaf and hard of hearing children.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at Christi.Batamula@gallaudet.edu, Bobbie.Kite@gallaudet.edu, and Julie.Mitchiner@gallaudet.edu, respectively.

Family Language Plan For Families and Professionals

The family language plan should be drafted collaboratively with a professional who works with deaf and hard of hearing children and their families. This specialist may be an early childhood education teacher, an early intervention specialist, an ASL specialist, a speech-language pathologist, a Deaf Mentor, or a professional who works closely with families. Work on the plan begins when the family and the professional sit down together to discuss the linguistic goals of the family for their child. It will likely take several meetings. To ensure communication between the professional and the family is accessible, including a translator or an interpreter can be valuable. The time necessary to develop a family language plan varies depending on many factors, but it should happen over the course of several visits and never in one visit. It is critical for the professional to spend time with the family and get to know the family members well to be able to recommend the most helpful and natural family language plan.

Family Language Planning The Steps

Family language planning begins with the following six steps:

- 1. First meeting**—Ideally, first meetings take place in the family’s home. It would be beneficial for the professional to consult with a professional who is part of the family’s community to become conscious of the family’s cultural beliefs and practices. The family and the professional discuss the child’s typical day during the week and on weekends. The professional may tour the child’s home and assess the environment, identifying strengths pertaining to language development in the home environment. The professional may share his or her experiences with languages, information about language development, and general research; the family may share the languages used by the family members both inside and out of the home and the languages the family wants the child to learn and use.
- 2. Observations and evaluations**—The professional, teachers, ASL specialists, speech-language pathologists, and family members identify the child’s strengths and areas of need. Using the results of the evaluation and assessment of



Above: Planning can help families become conscious about when and how to use which languages, ensuring the child has a balanced input of two or more languages.

the child’s languages, the family and the professional work together to develop goals in each of the child’s languages.

- 3. Goals**—With help from the professional, family members identify the child’s goals. Goals are targeted for the child but also pertain to the family. For example, if the child is using ASL and the family is new to ASL, support and resources are provided to the family to increase their ASL skills. The goals should be monitored and reviewed periodically.
- 4. Daily routines**—The family members begin by identifying their daily routines, from waking up in the morning to going to sleep in the evenings. Each routine should be listed.
- 5. Language matched with routine**—The family identifies which language is the most natural to use in each routine that occurs throughout the day. For example, if a family chooses to include spoken language with their child, the child and family members may choose to use spoken language in the morning when they turn on and test the child’s assistive listening devices. Mealtimes, when family members come together, may be ideal opportunities to use sign language so each person has full access to the conversation. The language use during a particular time

should be intentional and natural. At the same time, the family needs to be mindful about maintaining a balanced input of two or more languages throughout the day to accomplish fluency in two or more languages.

6. Written plan—The whole family, or as many family members as possible, should be included in drafting the family language plan. The family can also include any caretakers, roommates, or other people routinely engaged with the child. The family language plan is based on the professional’s recommendation from his or her observations and evaluations, the child’s daily routine, and the goals the family has identified. The family language plan should identify language-learning opportunities throughout the child’s day.

Planning can help families become conscious about when and how to use which languages, ensuring the child has a balanced input of two or more languages. Family language planning can include bringing resources to the child, such as sign language classes for parents, Deaf Mentoring services, heritage language classes and programs, cultural and community-based support groups, speech-language therapy, connections to associations and organizations for families with deaf children, information about schools and programs that serve deaf and hard of hearing children, and family support groups. A living document, the family language plan can be revised and improved periodically to meet each family’s needs.

Families in which English is not the language of the home should not be told to abandon their home language. Instead, professionals should help these families balance the use of their home language with ASL and English to further their deaf or hard of hearing child’s acquisition of all languages in the child’s life. This allows deaf and hard of hearing children to maintain connection with their parents and their parents’ community, their family’s heritage, and their peers while fostering the development of English literacy skills.

Authors’ note: We are members of the ASL and English bilingual and multilingual community who value working with families. We recognize our position and power of white privilege and welcome any input and feedback on our research. Additionally, we are early childhood and deaf educators and researchers at Gallaudet University. This article and its companion article, “Grandparents, Parents, Children—and Four Languages: A Deaf Family’s Story” by Norma Morán and Franklin C. Torres on page 4, are the result of a working collaboration between researchers on family language planning and a family from the community.

Carlos’s Day

A FAMILY LANGUAGE PLAN

Carlos* is a 3-year-old boy whose parents arrived in the United States from El Salvador the year before he was born. The following shows how his family attempts to balance use of three languages—Spanish, English, and ASL—throughout the day.

Activity	Language Used
Wake up	Put on cochlear implants, sing the “Good Morning” song in Spanish
Breakfast	ASL used with his family
Outdoor play	Spoken English used with friends at the playground
Crafts	Spoken Spanish used with family members
Lunch	ASL used at lunch with his family
Nap/quiet time	Read aloud a book using ASL
Indoor play	The child’s choice—caregivers ask Carlos which language he prefers
Watch TV	Educational TV programs watched in spoken English with captions
Dinner	ASL used with family
Bath time	ASL time
Bedtime	Spoken English used to read aloud a bedtime story
Additional supports and exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention services—spoken language support 2x a week for 30 minutes • Family ASL class 2x a week for an hour • Attending Spanish-speaking church on Sundays

*Carlos is a pseudonym.

Bilingual and Multilingual Resources for Families with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children

E-BOOKS AND BOOKS IN SIGN LANGUAGE:

- **ASL Tales**, <https://storiesbyhand.com/tag/asl-tales/>
- **Pointy Three in Apple Books** by Adam Stone and Joyce Hom, <https://books.apple.com/us/book/pointythree/id538361566>
- **Scholastic Storybook Treasures in Sign Language**, www.newkideo.com/titles/scholastic/sign-language-scholastic/
- **Shared Reading Project**, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>
- **VL2 storybook apps** (available in other languages), <https://vl2storybookapps.com>

VIDEO STORYTELLING AND SONGS:

- **Educational Resource Center on Deafness**, Texas School for the Deaf, www.tsd.state.tx.us/apps/pages/outreach
- **Hands Land** (ASL Rhymes and Rhythms), www.handsland.com
- **Rocky Mountain Deaf School YouTube videos**, www.youtube.com/user/RMDSO/videos

WEBSITES:

- **Early Intervention Network**, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>



- **Multicultural Considerations**, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>
- **Multilingual Early Childhood Deaf Education: ASL/English & LSP/Spanish**, www.facebook.com/ASLE.LSPS/

ASL INSTRUCTION:

- **The ASL App**, <https://theaslapp.com>
- **ASL Connect**, Gallaudet University, www.gallaudet.edu/asl-connect
- **Sign On**, American Society for Deaf Children, <https://deafchildren.org/sign-on/>

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Gender Inclusion

in the Clerc Center's Demonstration Schools

By Stephen Farias

When Roberta J. Cordano became president of Gallaudet University and began her term in January 2016, it was with an air of positive transformation. Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD)—the two demonstration schools under the umbrella of Gallaudet’s Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center and located on the University’s campus—took part in this transformation, which included making the entire campus a more inclusive environment for individuals of all genders.

In August 2016, President Cordano and her team paved the way for the university campus towards becoming more gender inclusive by implementing single-use bathrooms across campus. This was a big step by President Cordano and her team as it showed that the university truly is committed to providing an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment for all community members. At the time, I was responsible for overseeing the third-fifth grade and sixth-eighth grade departments in my role as the coordinator of teaching and learning at KDES. In our leadership meetings at KDES, we all wanted to move towards a more inclusive approach with how our bathrooms were set up. Prior to President Cordano’s push for a more inclusive campus, we had the typical male-female bathroom arrangements.

KDES Pushes for Change

In the spring of 2017, the KDES leadership team (KLT) agreed that it was time to switch things up and work together to ensure our bathrooms were more gender inclusive. In our ensuing meetings with our chief academic officer, Marianne Belsky, and our chief administrative officer, Nicole Sutcliffe, full support was given for us to conduct research in our efforts to update our restrooms at KDES.

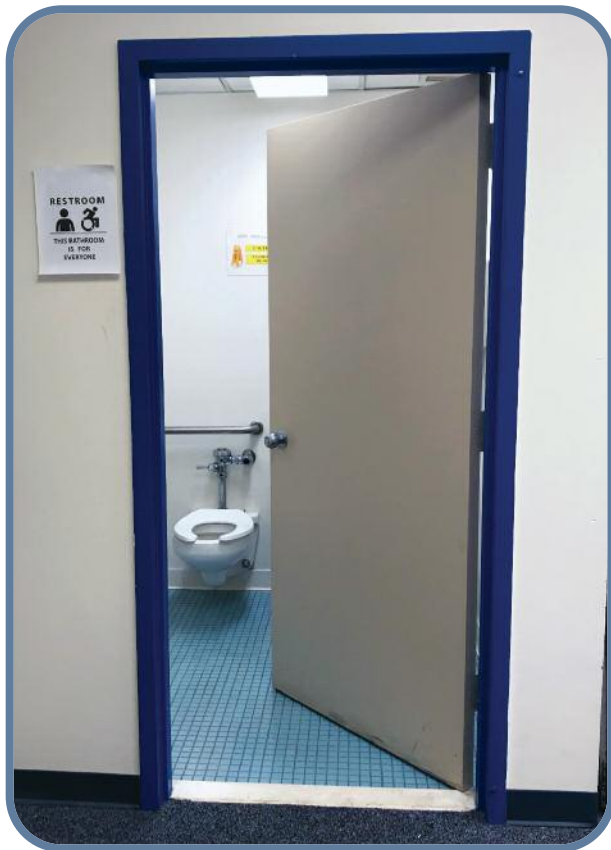
In the weeks that followed, the KLT quickly came together to identify ways in which each bathroom could be updated. We had the benefit of already having a long-standing practice that only one student was allowed to use the bathroom at a time. We also had the advantage of having smaller-sized bathrooms. With these in mind, we went ahead and changed the bathroom signs to “blue” and “yellow” instead of the binary “male” and “female” titles. Students who needed to use the bathroom would go to the common area in their respective departments and collect either a “blue” or a “yellow” bathroom pass. Then they would head to the bathroom that matched their pass and, using the magnet that was attached to the pass, place their pass on the

Photos by Cat Valcourt-Pearce

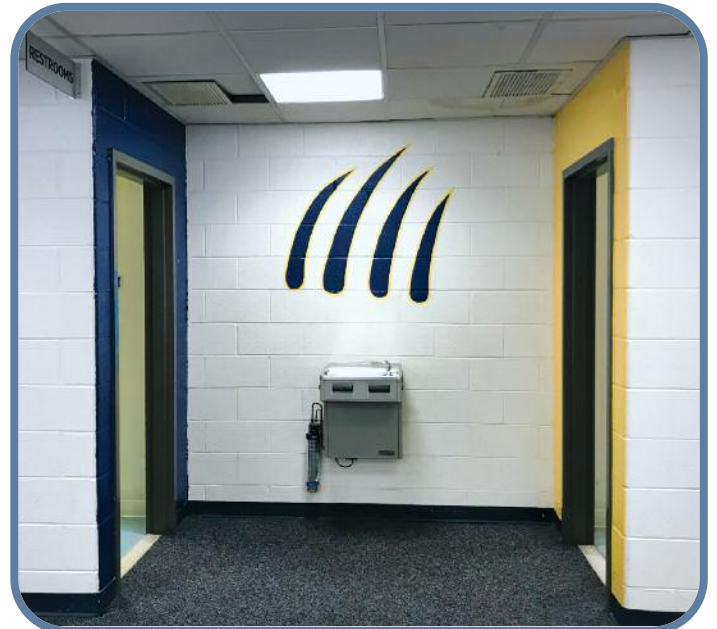
Screenshot courtesy of the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center

Stephen Farias,

MS, is the manager of instructional programs at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center’s Model Secondary School for the Deaf on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. He received his bachelor’s degree in history from Gallaudet and his master’s degree in deaf education from McDaniel College in Westminster, Md. Farias welcomes questions and comments about this article at Stephen.Farias@gallaudet.edu.



From left: In KDES, there is a wheelchair-accessible bathroom designated “for everyone” available; bathrooms for the students have been renamed “blue” and “yellow” and painted as such—they are designated as gender neutral and used by only one student at a time unless a teacher is present.



door frame of the bathroom so others knew it was occupied.

We explained this approach to the KDES parents at one of our evening events with the school community, and there was a strong show of support from them for us in making this happen. As the semester went on, this implementation was a smooth one for the community; students quickly adapted and embraced this positive step forward.

Clerc Center Leadership Projects

The Clerc Center is made up of three respective major teams: KDES, MSSD, and the National Deaf Education Center. Leaders from each team have long since convened on a regular basis for Clerc Center leadership team (CCLT) meetings. In these meetings, a wide variety of topics is covered ranging from budget and operations-related

work, to professional development planning, to in-house training for the leadership.

In meetings that took place during the spring of 2018, CCLT members were tasked with undertaking several leadership projects. My role at the time had shifted—I was now the interim manager of instructional programs at MSSD. I was assigned to work with Rosalyn Prickett, deputy Title IX coordinator, and John Skjeveland, director of operations. Rosalyn, John, and I were tasked with researching and developing a new set of guidelines for the Clerc Center that focused on creating a more gender inclusive school environment. We quickly came together and devised a game plan for how we would do this. We agreed that we absolutely had to research current D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) policies and that, perhaps most importantly, we had to gauge the pulse of other important

stakeholders throughout the entire drafting process. With that in mind, we set up a schedule of regular meetings and identified projects we each would tackle as we went along.

Researching Policies

One of the first steps we took was to research the policies already in place here in Washington, D.C.’s public schools. We discovered that DCPS is progressive and has been striving for inclusion for the past several years as a core value. In 2011, DCPS created and released *A Plan to Create an Inclusive School Community* (DCPS, 2011), and in 2015 they released their *Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Policy Guidance* (DCPS, 2015). Another very helpful document that provided the necessary framework for us in our efforts was the *Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students* (NCTE &

GLSEN, 2018), released in September 2018 in a collaborative effort between the National Center for Transgender Equality and GLSEN.

Among the many highlights and areas of emphasis in both documents, we especially appreciated the way they shared key points specifically for parents and families, for students, and for school staff. We also appreciated the way both documents were extremely thorough, covering aspects that ranged from a glossary of various terminology to requirements for school facilities. Seeing this put into place inspired us to ensure we worked to build a policy for the Clerc Center that was equally as comprehensive.

Focus

When we were working to develop our guidelines, one of the biggest priorities for us was to set a clear purpose and focus for doing so. These would, in turn, serve as a beacon for us as we moved forward.

Our purpose for developing the gender inclusive school policy was to:

- Foster an educational environment that is safe, welcoming, and free from stigma and discrimination for all students regardless of gender identity or expression.
- Facilitate compliance with local and federal laws concerning bullying, harassment, privacy, and discrimination.
- Ensure all students have the opportunity to express themselves and live authentically.

These were the main principles that drove our work and, essentially, what these boil down to is ensuring every student, regardless of identity preference, feels safe, welcome, and at home here at the Clerc Center.

Collecting Feedback

As we worked through our various drafts, we collected feedback from a variety of community members and

stakeholders. We presented several drafts to the CCLT members in our weekly work sessions and also worked with individuals who identify as transgender or as gender nonconforming throughout the process. One of the key individuals who contributed to this project was Blake Culley, a school psychologist at KDES and a transgender person. Blake has a very nuanced and professional understanding of how to support, teach, and work with all students, and that includes students who identify as nonbinary. Their input throughout the stages of developing our policy was of monumental help.

It was through our work with Blake that we arrived at the realization that we also needed to present this document in an American Sign Language (ASL) format so as to align with the bilingual mission of the Clerc Center. When we released the ASL version of the *Clerc Center Guidelines on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students* (Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, 2019) to the community (viewable on YouTube), Blake played a vital role in the development of this resource, and they can be seen on screen explaining many aspects of the policy in ASL.

Going Forward

These efforts at the Clerc Center are a part of the direction that Gallaudet University is undertaking in its efforts to make all of its facilities and programming inclusive for transgender students, staff, teachers, and faculty. Both Gallaudet and the Clerc Center are committed to a campus climate that is inclusive and supportive of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals.

Author's note of gratitude: Forming a policy as comprehensive as this one did not happen without the involvement of many key individuals, and due gratitude and recognition must be given. Thank you to President Cordano and CAOs Nicole Sutcliffe and Marianne Belsky for their undiluted support and belief in us as we worked to develop this policy for the Clerc Center. Thank you to Blake Culley, Alex Leffers, and Larissa Clapp for their willingness to lead professional development workshops for all community members and for providing guidance, feedback, and input throughout the stages of drafting the policy itself. And last, but certainly not least, thank you to Rosalyn Prickett and John Skjeveland for teaming up with me over the past year and a half as we worked to present this plan to the Clerc Center community.

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Key Highlights of the Clerc Center Guidelines

ON TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS

Some of the key highlights from our new guidelines include the following:

- **Glossary**—Rosalyn, John, and I all felt it was imperative to include this part. In many of the documents we researched while developing our own policy, we found that the inclusion of a glossary to clarify common terminology employed was very helpful as a necessary step towards arriving at a common place of understanding.

- **Student transitions**—This was perhaps one of the most important distinctions we worked to include. By including this, we are hereby protecting students from veiled discriminatory practices that are shrouded in statements that call for certain diagnosis or treatment thresholds. At the Clerc Center, gender identities asserted by students will be accepted. Students here have the right to initiate a process to change their name, pronoun, attire, and access to gender-related programs, activities, and facilities that are consistent with their current gender identity. We will treat this on a per-person basis and will customize support to optimize each student's equal access to our educational programs and activities.



Gender Inclusive School Policy

- **Access to gender-segregated activities and facilities**—Since the Clerc Center currently maintains separate restroom and locker room facilities for male and female students, we felt this was another important distinction to make. With this policy in place, all of our students, including nonbinary students, will be allowed equal access to facilities that are consistent with their gender identity. Clerc Center students will, therefore, be empowered to determine which facilities are consistent with their chosen gender identity. This policy also protects students who feel uncomfortable using a shared gender-segregated facility; upon a student's request and regardless of the reason, that student will be provided with a safe and non-stigmatizing alternative. What this means is that we may add a privacy partition or curtain, allow access to use a nearby private restroom, or design a separate changing schedule for that student. As explained in other policies similar to ours, it is a threatening and stigmatizing practice when schools or organizations require transgender or gender-nonconforming students to use a separate space against their wishes. Under no circumstances will a Clerc Center student be required to use gender-segregated facilities that are inconsistent with that student's gender identity.
- **Physical education classes and intramural and interscholastic athletics**—As the world of sports is usually a very binary place, we felt it was important to make it clear what the Clerc Center's stance is on this as well. In all physical education classes and throughout our athletics program at the Clerc Center, all students will be permitted to participate in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity.

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Right: Theater classes begin with introductions led by the teaching artists.

Making Arts Education Accessible for Deaf Children with Multiple Disabilities: A Partnership

By Michelle A. Veyvoda and Jodi L. Falk

Kaiser's Room, a New York-based theater arts education organization; St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf in Brooklyn, N.Y.; and the New York Deaf Theatre are piloting a theater arts program for deaf students with multiple disabilities. The goal: to develop a school-community partnership that provides culturally responsive, linguistically accessible, and fully inclusive theater classes for deaf and hard of hearing children with multiple disabilities in a school setting.

Educating children in the arts—the expression of human creative skill and imagination, often in the form of painting, sculpture, music, dance, and drama in works of beauty and emotional power—has numerous benefits. According to Americans for the Arts (2013), a nonprofit arts advocacy organization, children who participate in the arts demonstrate improved academic performance and lower school drop-out rates. Further, the use of drama in the classroom has been documented to support teaching and learning in the area of literacy development (Ruppert, 2006).

Specific benefits accrue for students from low-income backgrounds and students with disabilities who are afforded education in the arts (Americans for the Arts, 2013; Dorff, 2012). According to Americans for the Arts (2013), children from low-income families who are highly engaged in arts programming are more than twice as likely to graduate from college as their peers with no arts education. For children with disabilities, the benefits of arts education are profound, including development of knowledge and general skills, independent decision making, extended attention span, social skills, and enhanced communication skills (Dorff, 2012). In addition to aiding children with self-expression, education in the arts helps children learn to plan and develop feelings of pride and accomplishment and skills in problem solving and critical thinking (Clemens-Hines, n.d.).

Arts programming across artistic disciplines—including visual arts, dance, and drama—has been successfully modified to include children who are deaf, blind, and have motor difficulties. Tara Miles (2017), a family educator at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School in Washington, D.C., notes that dance is a visually accessible art form that can be accessed

Photos courtesy of Michelle A. Veyvoda



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The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at mveyvoda@iona.edu and jfalk@sfilesales.org, respectively.

“without barriers.” Other researchers agree that arts education can give voice to students with disabilities, maintaining that through arts education, “disabled young people acquire the skills and competencies of a visual language within a multicultural agenda that recognizes and celebrates difference” (Taylor, 2005), and that arts education both empowers students and facilitates the development of self-expression and identity. Taylor also discusses the importance of students being taught by teaching artists who themselves have disabilities and share the same disabilities with the students they teach, noting that these individuals function as role models and may have a “profound impact on raising students’ self-esteem” (2005).

Unfortunately, a one-size-fits-all approach to arts programming in schools and communities typically does not offer access to the most vulnerable children. Due to physical, linguistic, geographic, or financial

roadblocks, children who encounter these intersecting barriers may be unintentionally excluded from the arts programs that are available to their peers. For example, in a theater or movement class, the curriculum might be inaccessible for children who are different from their peers in that they use wheelchairs, or they use an alternative form of communication, or they cannot access transportation, or they come from families that simply cannot afford enrichment classes. For these reasons, many theater arts programs may inadvertently exclude their community’s most marginalized children, including those with disabilities, those from financially insecure backgrounds, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Three New York City-based organizations—Kaiser’s Room, St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf, and the New York Deaf Theatre—seek to change that for deaf

and hard of hearing children, especially those children with disabilities, by partnering to bring arts programming to them. We plan to collaborate on arts education programming that is high quality while being accessible and ethically administered. Other arts programs have paved the way. For example, Arts Partners, a program at Buffalo State College, engages college students enrolled in arts courses in community-based experiences through which they plan and execute arts programming for children with special learning needs in Buffalo's inner-city classrooms (Andrus, 2012.) The National Dance Institute has partnered with three New York City public schools, including a bilingual English-American Sign Language (ASL) school, to bring dance to special needs students whose families struggle financially (Seham, 2012). With our emerging partnership, we seek to engage New York City's most vulnerable children in accessible theater arts experiences with teaching artists who are culturally or audiologically deaf or hard of hearing and can function as role models for the children with whom they will work.

Kaiser's Room Where the Answer is YES

Kaiser's Room is a nonprofit organization based in New York City that provides opportunities for imagination and connection through theater and dance for students of all ages and abilities. Michelle Veyvoda, a speech-language pathologist with years of experience working with deaf and hard of hearing children and co-author of this article, serves on the Kaiser's Room Board of Trustees.

Many of the young artists served by Kaiser's Room spend their days in specialized schools with highly structured activities



Left: As part of a series of warm-ups, teaching artists include imaginative gross motor activities.

and routine sessions of speech, occupational, physical, and behavioral therapy. Kaiser's Room provides a rare opportunity in their highly programmed day for freedom of expression and self-determined decision making. There are no rules in a Kaiser's Room production—no set choreography that must be executed,

As Kaiser's Room began to explore ways in which to expand its reach, schools for the deaf emerged as potential partners.

no blocking that must be followed exactly. Participants who wish to walk off stage during a performance are free to do so, typically accompanied by a teaching artist who will continue performing the show alongside them. A participant who wishes to perform the entire show by sitting against a wall is considered just as much a part of the production as a participant who belts out songs from downstage.

The teaching artists of Kaiser's Room respond individually to each child's needs. For example, when it is indicated, the Kaiser's Room teaching artists respond, "Sure, we can perform this song from your parent's lap," or "Absolutely, we can do this dance sitting in a chair."

Stephane Duret, founder of Kaiser's

Room and a teaching artist with the organization, describes an experience several years ago when he was on stage with a child with autism at the Chicago Children's Theater. The child wanted to lie under a bench onstage throughout the performance. Rather than impose rules on the child, Duret instead joined the child under the bench and performed the entire show from there. According to Duret, at the conclusion of the performance, the child—who had not spoken to Duret throughout the show—looked at Duret and said, "Friend." For Duret, this moment was the catalyst for creating Kaiser's Room. At Kaiser's Room, flexibility and respect for the ever-changing needs and preferences of participants is summed up by the slogan: "Imagination. Connection. A World of YES for

All Abilities.” Kaiser’s Room supports the arts as a conduit to developing imagination and human connection.

As Kaiser’s Room began to explore ways in which to expand its reach, schools for the deaf emerged as potential partners. Kaiser’s Room recognized that its philosophy and instructional methods are a natural fit for work with the Deaf community, in which 40-50 percent of individuals have additional disabilities (Nelson & Bruce, 2019). Veyvoda suggested the organization create a pilot class at St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf, a school at which she had previously worked and which, she knew, had a diverse population of deaf children. Kaiser’s Room was committed to adjusting its programming to be accessible to a diverse deaf student body. This included ensuring classes would be linguistically accessible to the deaf children, most of whom use sign language but many of whom do not sign or speak and use alternative or augmented communication devices or methods to communicate. In addition to using a variety of listening devices and having varied access to sound, the St. Francis students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Further, 45 percent have disabilities in addition to deafness.

Kaiser’s Room recognized the importance of complete language access, representation, and role models for deaf children (Howerton-Fox & Falk, 2019), and decided that its collaboration with St. Francis would involve teaching artists who were deaf. This would ensure the programming would be consistent with the values and culture of the Deaf community. However, without the internal expertise and infrastructure to effectively engage diverse, profoundly deaf children in theater arts programming, Kaiser’s Room needed to find a partner to develop and execute classes in an appropriate, accessible, and ethical manner. Fortunately a partner was nearby.

Above and right: During all class activities, such as this stretching exercise, connection and flexibility are the driving motivations of the teaching artists.



New York Deaf Theatre Partnering for Students

The New York Deaf Theatre was established in 1979 by a group of deaf actors and theater artists who wanted to create opportunities to produce a dramatic art form that was not found elsewhere in New York City: plays in ASL. A nonprofit, professional organization, the New York Deaf Theatre is the longest-running company of its kind in the greater New York City area and the third oldest Deaf theater company in the United States.

Over its nearly 40 years of existence, the New York Deaf Theatre Company has evolved beyond producing quality theater for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing audiences to engage with theater education. For six years, it has produced a “sign-along” program, in which deaf and hard of hearing individuals and ASL students present a concert of songs in ASL to students throughout New York City. Much of the Deaf talent fostered by New York Deaf Theatre has gone on to become teaching artists with various performing arts programs in the local community and throughout New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The New York Deaf Theatre has always been proud to provide a platform where deaf and hard of hearing individuals are given employment opportunities and the Theatre continues to look for partnerships that support its mission.

The first meeting of representatives of Kaiser’s Room and the New York Deaf Theatre occurred in the spring of 2019. The





Left and below: After floor activities, students follow teaching artists' directions to walk with "heavy feet" and "light feet" at different speeds. These activities allow students to use their imaginations while connecting to their developing skills of maintaining attention and imitation.

of this meeting, it was determined that Kaiser's Room, with teaching artists from the New York Deaf Theatre, would pilot a series of classes at the school. By the fall of 2019, preparations for the classes were underway. These included:

- **Training for teaching artists**—Kaiser's Room held a training for teaching artists of the New York Deaf Theatre. An ASL interpreter was present to ensure full communication access. The training consisted of several activities intended to help the teaching artists empathize with the needs of the participants. They discussed barriers that they may unintentionally introduce into the performance space and ways of building rapport. With guidance from Duret, they experimented with ways of creating a supportive, flexible, and "yes-centered" experience for the participants.
- **Building community**—At the trainings, the teaching artists engaged in thoughtful conversation around the role the arts can play in social communication and connection for children with disabilities, and they discussed and experimented with ways to turn behaviors that are often perceived as negative, such as withdrawing or self-stimulating, into an opportunity for connection and engagement. However the young participants choose to move, imagine, create, communicate, or participate is accepted, and teaching artists learn to say "yes" and embrace all participants and ways of participating.
- **Adjusting curriculum**—Kaiser's Room and the New York Deaf Theatre began the process of adjusting the

goal: to partner in creating classes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and have additional cognitive or developmental disabilities. At this meeting, representatives from the two organizations shared missions and philosophies, identified the need in the Deaf community for artistic programming, outlined a potential pilot structure, and made a plan for next steps—including finding a school in which to pilot the program. St. Francis stood out as an ideal partner. Two people—a New York Deaf Theatre board member and the executive director of Kaiser's Room—had consulted with the school regarding other community-based theater initiatives. The group decided to reach out to incoming director Jodi Falk, co-author of this article, and invite her to meet Duret, learn about the Kaiser's Room philosophy, and consider if such a partnership would be possible.

St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf Sharing a Mission of YES

In Brooklyn, N.Y., St. Francis educates deaf students of all abilities, including those with autism, intellectual disabilities, and/or developmental delays. The school serves students as young as babies in the Parent-Infant Program and educates children and teens through eighth grade. In the halls and classrooms of St. Francis, visitors see students and staff communicating in ASL, with augmented or alternative communication devices such as the Picture Exchange Communication System, through digital communication software, and in spoken English. The guiding beliefs at St. Francis are inclusiveness, accessibility, and the support of students' independence.

On a warm summer day, Veyvoda, Falk, and Duret met in person. The goal was for Duret to share the Kaiser's Room philosophy with Falk and to create a shared vision for an inclusive and accessible theater class at St. Francis. By the end



Kaiser’s Room curriculum for deaf and hard of hearing children with additional disabilities. One early idea shared by the New York Deaf Theatre’s executive director, J.W. Guido, was to establish a common vernacular of signs and classifiers that could be used by participants who have limited mobility and limited ability to sign or gesture. This is an ongoing process and will evolve as the two organizations gain more experience with the students of St. Francis.

- **Selecting students**—During the fall of 2019, Kaiser’s Room administrators and New York Deaf Theatre teaching artists made a site visit to St. Francis. The goal was to tour the space, learn the culture of the school, and determine which class would participate in the pilot. Jenna Brooks, the educational supervisor at St. Francis, suggested one class of six students in fourth through seventh grade. Within this class, one student is deaf-blind, all students have intellectual disabilities, and all have severe language delays and use forms of alternative or augmentative communication. Two students have a diagnosis of autism, and one student, while undiagnosed, presents with the characteristics of autism.

Partnership in Action Classes Begin

In early February, this class of six students, two deaf teaching artists, a classroom teacher, a deaf teacher’s assistant, a hearing teacher’s assistant, a speech-language pathologist, and the educational supervisor launched the first session of the theater arts pilot. The deaf teaching artists led the class. It consisted of a series of warm-ups, which involved imaginative gross motor activities, such as pretending to be various animals. Following warm-ups, the group sat in a circle and engaged in more imaginative work, such as imagining they were holding something wet, petting something soft, and lifting something heavy. This work allowed students to explore their imaginations while also connecting to their developing skills of maintaining attention and imitation. Following this activity, the group walked through the space, following the teaching artists’ directions to walk with “heavy feet” and “light feet” and to walk at different speeds. The session ended with stretches as the students were encouraged to “reach up to the stars.”

The pilot phase of the course development is scheduled to continue for eight weeks. While we don’t know what the future has in store for this exciting partnership, we look forward to continuing to bring arts programming to deaf and hard of hearing children of all abilities.

Author’s note: Readers interested in contacting Stephane Duret, founding director of Kaiser’s Room, can e-mail him at stephane@kaisersroom.org.

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LaShawna Sims,

BBA, the daughter of a retired Navy SEAL, wife of a technical sergeant in the Air Force, and mother of two sons, has discovered how to navigate life—and get services for both of her sons—within the structure of the American military. Her older son, Karl, 9, was born deaf, and her younger son, Logan, 7, was born deaf and is autistic. Sims plans to enter a deaf education master’s program at Texas Woman’s University in the fall of 2020. She is the 2019 Armed Forces Insurance Nellis Air Force Base Spouse of the Year, an award she earned in recognition of her work in giving back to the military community. She is also the bilingual southern Nevada regional guide for Guide By Your Side, a program of Hands & Voices. Sims welcomes questions and comments about this article at lashawnasims@ymail.com.

In the U.S. Military: Gleaning Support for Our Deaf Sons

By LaShawna Sims

Our oldest son ran to us at the end of the movie. He had just watched it with his classmates during our time together at an after-school event night. Enthusiastic as always, he reported that “the movie was cool after they turned on the captions.” The statement reflected so much about our son—his passion, his acceptance of his deafness, and his comfort and connection with his peers who, in this case, were all hearing. It all felt so natural, and in some ways it was. However, like the captions on the movie screen—which were only provided after his dad talked with a teacher—our son’s comfort with himself and connection with his peers did not just happen. In fact, they involved considerable behind-the-scenes work.

As a wife and mom in a military family, I’ve found that this work is different from the work of those parents of deaf and hard of hearing children whose families are not serving in the military. For us, being in the military has required periodic moving—once in the middle of the school year—and each move required a new set of contacts, schools, teachers, and services. Still, in general we have received accommodations for our sons and support for my husband and me.

Perhaps I knew better than other wives what to expect since I grew up in a military family. I was born in San Diego, Calif., and grew up in El Paso, Tex., where I felt lucky to be able to stay in one place with my mom and her family while my dad, a Navy SEAL, completed assignments around the world. When I was young, I told myself I would never marry a military man, but after I met the man who would become my husband and he proposed to me on a Florida beach, I knew the military would become my life.

Photos courtesy of LaShawna Sims



Above, clockwise:
K2 and Logan ... best friends; K2 is excelling in Taekwondo; Logan loves to climb—everything; a loving and proud family.



After we married, my husband was assigned almost immediately to Afghanistan. When he returned to his duty station in Little Rock, Ark., we decided to start our family. I was pregnant almost immediately. Our son, named Karl after his dad and whom we call Karl II or “K2,” made his appearance that November. Like all newborns in Arkansas, K2 was tested for hearing loss. He was given the Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE). No problem. He passed. That December, we traveled across several states and settled in Arizona, where we had been re-assigned. There, we noticed that K2 talked, babbled really, less than before, and that he was not responding to sound. Curious and concerned, we

entered his bedroom one day when he had his back to us. We called his name and clapped our hands. He didn’t respond. When he finally turned around, he was startled to see us. He hadn’t known we were there.

We took K2 to be re-tested and the OAE was re-administered. Again, he passed. That is when the audiologist asked us if we knew about auditory neuropathy. We did not. Neither my husband nor I had any family member who had any kind of hearing loss. The term was strange to us. The audiologist explained that auditory neuropathy is a condition in which the outer hair cells within the cochlea are present and functional, but sound is not reliably transmitted to the auditory nerve and

the brain. Auditory neuropathy does not show up on the OAE, she said, and she suspected that this is what our son had. To know for sure, he would have to have another test—the auditory brainstem response (ABR)—for which he would need to be sedated. K2 was 9 months old, too young, I felt, to undergo unnecessary anesthesia. While I accepted the possibility of his being deaf, I still had some doubts.

While I felt I was entering uncharted territory, deafness did not seem like a tragedy. I had known two deaf boys—friends of my brother—growing up. They had been in our home, and I had learned fingerspelling to talk with them. Already we were relying primarily on vision to communicate,



and now we re-doubled our efforts. We started learning American Sign Language (ASL). We got *ASL for Dummies* and used signing in our home. At 9 months old, K2 took to ASL like a fish takes to water. One of his first words was “more.” We used the sign at mealtime, and he mastered it immediately. Suddenly everything was “more.” By the time he was 2 years old, he had a sign vocabulary of over 170 words. K2 was communicating away in signs.

In May 2012, Logan was born. I actually prayed that he would have a hearing loss like his brother so that the boys would have each other for support that we, as hearing parents, might not be able to provide. Like K2, Logan passed the OAE, but the automated auditory brainstem response, a test similar to the ABR, showed he had hearing loss. When the nurse told me the news, she seemed apologetic. Perhaps a second test was called for, she

said; perhaps Logan just had fluid in his ears. She was surprised when I smiled and shook my head. By this time, we were an ASL home. Logan would fit right in.

About three months later K2 finally had an ABR, and profound hearing loss was confirmed. Things moved quickly after that. Early intervention services intensified. K2 and Logan were fitted with hearing aids, and when they did not help, we decided to give our sons access to sound through cochlear implants. Cochlear implants never changed our decision about ASL, however. We would remain a signing family.

Our car became a second home to us.

Traveling was constant—school, programs, therapies, and doctor’s appointments. I can recall the rare days of no therapies or appointments. I would sit at home feeling anxious, thinking I was missing some appointment somewhere for one of the boys. Logan’s surgery was without problems, but K2 developed an orange-sized lump on the left side of his head under which the implant lay. No infection was detected, but after three months of non-invasive approaches the lump did not disappear. We decided to move forward with a revision surgery. About a year and a half later, new problems developed around the incision of his left ear. In 2016, the implant was removed. We made plans to re-implant as soon as his body healed.

At the same time, Logan was diagnosed with autism. His speech therapist had suggested additional testing, but though I liked and respected the therapist, I’d postponed the testing.

Sure, Logan was less social than his brother, and, yes, he had tantrums, even tantrums that lasted 30 minutes or more, but perhaps this was just because of the frustration of trying to communicate with hearing people ... at least that is what I told myself. The therapist was wonderful. She didn’t pester me but when Logan was 2.5 years old, she told me he had stopped looking at her. That’s when I knew that, indeed, something else might be going on. The conversation in which I learned that Logan had autism was different from the conversation I’d had earlier when I learned my sons were deaf. My hearing seemed to tunnel in on the words “moderately autistic.” I kept watching the professional who was talking but I heard nothing else. In the midst of all of this, my husband received orders to his next duty station. We would move again. This time to Las Vegas.



One advantage of living in the military is the way families reach out to help each other. When I learned we were moving again, all I had to do was get on Facebook and search for groups that addressed the special needs children in our upcoming Las Vegas duty station. Groups like these connect newcomers to families already on site who can offer advice on how to set up services. I connected with other parents and was able to get a wealth of information. The



move progressed smoothly, and the online contacts I made enabled a relatively easy transition to the Las Vegas classroom and medical services. K2 had surgery to re-implant the cochlear implant in his left ear, and services for both boys resumed. Our lives were so full that I didn't even know how I felt about Logan's autism until I began training as a parent guide for Hands & Voices' Guide By Your Side program in Nevada. Hands & Voices is a parent-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing support to families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing, with chapters throughout the United States and even throughout the world. As part of the training, parents tell their story, and I was finally telling mine. When I got to the part about Logan's diagnosis of autism, I shocked myself as I burst into tears and sobbed. After that—my

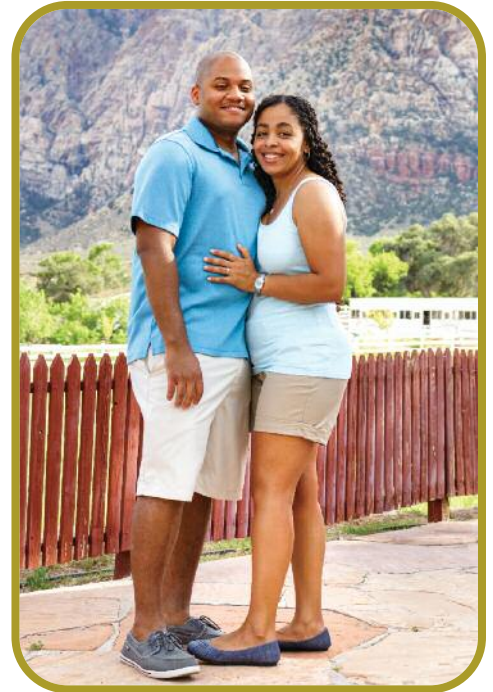
feelings recognized perhaps for the first time—I moved on again.

It was 2017, and we were living in Las Vegas. Hands & Voices Headquarters, hoping to bring its work into the military, was in the midst of creating the Hands & Voices Military Project. The goal of the Military Project is to bring awareness to the unique lifestyle and needs of military families with deaf and hard of hearing children across the nation. It was that year that I joined the leadership team as a project leader. I love Hands & Voices. The organization supports parents regardless of their choice of communication with their deaf and hard of hearing children. The organization offers a safe place to explore options, get emotional support, and learn from one another. Hands & Voices believes: "What works for your child is what makes the choice right."

Today, both of my boys are doing well. K2 has moved into a mainstream setting with an interpreter, and his teachers are open to our insistence on accommodations and sensitive to his needs. He participates as an anchor for the school morning news and excels in his studies. He has picked up Taekwondo, moved quickly through its ranks, and was recently promoted to high orange belt. He was also invited to be a part of the Competition and Demo team for his Taekwondo school. K2 is bright, ambitious, and kind. He told me he wanted to run for his school's student council, and I said, "Go for it." He did and won the election. Now he serves as the student council representative for his third grade class. We've always told K2 he has to ask when he needs assistance or doesn't understand. We are so pleased that he has the self-confidence to do this. He is great at self-advocacy. Sometimes he comes home and announces that he is sick of talking and we should "just sign." This is fine with us. We are raising a bilingual boy!

Logan is excelling in a special class for

children with autism. His diagnosis enabled new therapies, and he no longer has extended tantrums. The teacher uses different strategies and progress is slower, and as parents we are involved in his schooling and therapies to help him continue to succeed. Logan is a sweet and loving boy. He continues to astound us in overcoming obstacles he faces. He likes watching rockets launch and climbing on, up, and over things.



I don't know if it is the military culture that has inspired our drive and success in educating our boys. I do know that the support of other military families has been critical, and the educators and therapists have been open and responsive. As it continues to grow, the Hands & Voices Military Project will provide even more awareness and support to us and to military families like ours.

We are so proud of our sons and optimistic about their future. We can only hope that the accommodations and understanding our boys are receiving will allow them to reach their full development.

Patrick Graham,

PhD, an associate professor in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Teacher Training Program at Western Oregon University in Monmouth and an adjunct professor in the Department of Education at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., is passionate about social justice in deaf education. He focuses extensively on multicultural learning among deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Graham's interest in working with deaf and hard of hearing children on the autism spectrum began when he adopted his second son, Derrick, who is deaf with autism spectrum disorder.

Right: Effective learning strategies allow educators to create a more inclusive environment for deaf and hard of hearing children on the autism spectrum.

Increasing Social Awareness for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children on the Autism Spectrum: Innovative Strategies

By Patrick Graham, Raschelle Neild, and Aaron Shield

For families and educators, understanding and working with children who experience a combination of deafness and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be challenging. Yet both understanding and work are crucial. For children with ASD to succeed, parents and educators need to understand them and to be able to work together to implement successful educational strategies. These strategies fall into two categories: 1) strategies for improving social interaction, primarily focusing on communication; and 2) strategies for incorporating the students' interests, which may be intense but restricted (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). What this means is that some children can be very focused on a few specific interests so educators can modify strategies to use each child's interests to introduce new knowledge and teach various skills.

Many children with ASD experience characteristics such as over-reliance on adults, difficulty transitioning, restricted interests, repetitive behaviors and play, and a need for structure and predictable routines (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Bryan & Gast, 2000; Dawson, Meltzoff, Osterling, & Rinaldi, 2008). These characteristics are broad and varied, and they can be challenging—especially for students who exhibit more severe manifestations of ASD.

Unfortunately, there is not enough research on teaching strategies to support deaf and hard of hearing children with ASD. Guardino (2015) examined teacher preparation programs in deaf and hard of hearing education and saw that most of these programs do not include coursework or significant information about deaf and hard of hearing students with additional disabilities, which is problematic given that the Gallaudet Research Institute (2013) reported that 40-50 percent of deaf and hard of hearing students have an additional condition and 1 in 59 American deaf children have a diagnosis of ASD (Szymanski, 2012). Luckner and Carter (2001) report

Photos courtesy of Dawn Crock, Indiana School for the Deaf



that teachers need to be competent in teaching strategies, collaboration, and modifying the classroom environment to be effective teachers for children who are deaf or hard of hearing with additional disabilities. Ewing (2011) notes that pre-service teachers need more development in cooperative learning strategies, differentiated instruction, and self-determination. In light of this, it can be difficult for educators to ensure appropriate and effective inclusive education for every child (Walter-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).

We encourage helping students to develop supportive relationships and ensuring they have a sense of belonging and being a part of an inclusive community. To do this, we, as educators, must develop a “toolbox” of strategies and frameworks of practice. The information in this toolbox will help teachers who have deaf or hard of hearing children with ASD in their classrooms. These approaches are inclusive; they work for most children. They include: routine explanation, video modeling, peer-to-peer social interaction, and differentiated instruction.

Strategy 1: Routine Explanations

Focus on the child’s ability to generalize. Generalization allows an individual to complete an activity in different settings, with different people, at different times, and with different materials. It allows for the transfer of learned information to new experiences. The child’s generalization abilities can be built up through the use of specific social stories, incidental language, and clear rationales for expected behaviors.

The classroom is filled with a sequence of routines every day: arrival, lining up, preparing for and eating lunch, and turning in assignments. The same is true for the child’s home in which the sequence of routines includes getting up; eating breakfast; preparing for departure to school or a program; and, in the afternoon, homework and, later, bedtime. Each routine enlists a common series of steps from beginning to end, and these steps must be followed sequentially to ensure the goal is achieved. Teaching these skills in the context of routines promotes generalization and self-management while at the same time avoiding confusion and the stress of making multiple

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changes (Janzen, 2003).

Still, it is not enough to implement the strategy of keeping routines identical. Teachers should address the reasoning behind the routine, and the underlying reason should also be made clear to the child. Repeating the reason behind

each routine will help children internalize

the routines faster; further, children will begin to understand the concepts behind the actions and to clarify expected behaviors (Thrasher, 2014). For example, teachers may incorporate the strategy of line formation as students enter or leave the classroom. As this happens—as the routine is established—teachers can explain to students that they line up because they need to be safe, and forming lines makes it safer and quicker for all students to get from point A to point B. The same strategy holds for other activities in the classroom, such as turning in assignments. Assignments should be returned to the same location, and teachers should explain that the reason is ease of access to all of the assignments; the teacher or student does not have to look all over the place for specific paperwork. This may seem obvious, but it is not obvious to all children. Teachers need to explain why specific behaviors are established and expected.

Strategy 2: Video Modeling

Video modeling allows students to watch a short video of an expected behavior; imitate the behavior; and rewind, re-watch, and repeat the behavior until it is internalized. The video shows the same action repeatedly without the kinds of variations that complicate real-life situations. Watching it can support students who have difficulties with social behaviors (e.g., maintaining eye contact). Shukla-Mehta, Miller, and Callahan (2010) explain

that video modeling can “allow a student to see the appropriate actions for performing the target behavior immediately prior to performing the skill, increasing the probability of successful performance.” Video modeling can be used both at home and in the classroom.

Thrasher (2014) and Shukla-Mehta et al. (2010) encourage educators to consider three different forms of video modeling. These forms include:

1. **Basic modeling video**—These videos are created by educators or peers to show specific skills, such as making eye contact, passing out books, or raising hands. The action in the video is done in the same way each time, and students view the videos repeatedly.
2. **Self-modeling video**—These videos are often created in response to basic video modeling. Students film themselves as they perform the skills they’ve learned. An effective assessment tool, these videos can help educators evaluate how well the students are learning and internalizing socially appropriate behaviors.
3. **Point-of-view modeling video**—These videos allow the students to see the behavior modeled correctly and gain access to the point of view of the person on the receiving end of the behavior. For example, a point-of-view video could show a student raising a hand in the air and then a smile appearing on the teacher’s face, or students lining up and passing smoothly down the hall without any stops or disruptions to other people. Point-of-view modeling can also show what happens when the behavior is not correctly executed and used as negative reinforcement for a desired behavior. For example, the video could show students who deviate from the line as they walk down the hall, bumping into other people and being late for class. Thrasher (2014) suggests that students can grasp the point of the videos with only 40 to 60 seconds of video modeling.

When videos are presented to the students repeatedly, they can be helpful for internalizing social and academic behaviors and provide opportunities for students to practice their skills. Educators can send these videos home to parents, and parents can use the videos to help their children practice the same skills at home. Videos can be posted and stored on the Internet, and students can also access them through simple downloads and file sharing.

Strategy 3: Peer-to-Peer Social Interaction

Significant research exists on hearing individuals with ASD and social skills, peer groups, and friendships (Frankel, 2005), but only limited research has been done related to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing with ASD. While most children learn about relationships and the unspoken rules that govern social relations through observation, deaf and hard of hearing

children with ASD, like hearing children with ASD (Laugeson et al., 2009), often need additional instruction, guidance, and practice.

By the end of first grade, most children have adapted to the school routine, classroom rules, schedules, and environment, and they are successful at navigating the informal environments established by their peers (Frankel & Whitham, 2011) as well as the more structured environment of the classroom. It is at this point that children with ASD can begin to feel isolated as they repeatedly break rules they are unable to remember, do not know, or misinterpret, resulting in social isolation. Children who are ignored by their peers can become aggressive and increase inappropriate behaviors while withdrawing from social situations and peers even more (Frankel & Whitham, 2011).

In order to break the cycle of inappropriate behavior, isolation, and exclusion, multiple aspects of relationships must be addressed. The focus should be not only on improving the social skills of the child with ASD but also on educating the other students in the classroom about children with ASD and their experiences (Buron & Wolfberg, 2014). Through alternating the skills, experiences, and perceptions of every child in the environment, it is possible to reduce and even eliminate confusion and misunderstandings for all. It also allows a new classroom and school culture to emerge—a culture that is inclusive and unique in its ways of relating, communicating, and fostering relationships (Burn & Wolfberg, 2014).

Peer support groups like Circle of Friends or Friend 2 Friend, national social and language skills programs that offer valuable support to students with special needs, can assist with making meaningful home, school, and community connections. These support groups have attempted to foster mutual relationships, develop understanding, and build capacity for acceptance and empathy in peers, siblings, and classmates (McCracken, 2004). Both programs use a systematic researched-based approach to educate both individuals with ASD and their peer groups in an inclusive environment (Buron & Wolfberg, 2014) and to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities in the community.

During peer-to-peer interactions, facilitators may coach typically developing peers on how to effectively interact with their peers with ASD. This often includes encouraging a typically developing peer to respond to certain stimuli by making specific statements. For example, if an individual with ASD tries to push ahead in line or snag a ball out of turn, a typically developing teen can explain, “It’s my turn now, but you will be next.” If a teen with ASD is irritating a typically developing teen, the typically developing teen can learn to say, “I don’t like that. Please stop.” Thrasher (2014) explains that explicitly teaching statements such as these to typically developing peers allows them to engage in shared experiences with individuals with ASD; they are not dependent on a

student aide to effectively interact.

Strategy 4: Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction can be defined as “a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent is to maximize each student’s growth and individual success ...” (Hall, 2002). Teachers who use differentiated instruction must have a strong understanding of the content and curriculum. They must be able to ask themselves how to modify the curriculum and instruction so that each student can be successful and achieve

Six Tips for Teachers

WHO HAVE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS WITH ASD

By Patrick Graham, Raschelle Neild, and Aaron Shield

In order to be effective with deaf and hard of hearing students with ASD, try the following:

- 1 Ensure your explanations are concrete and relatable.** Avoid excessive details. Be clear and use video modeling as a consistent repetition of expected behavior.
- 2 Provide clear and consistent routines.** If routines need to change, let your student know in advance; provide repeated instructions and outline expectations.
- 3 Utilize peer-to-peer social groups to outline routine expectations.** Use prompts to facilitate conversations and repeat sentences for emphasis if needed.
- 4 Make a video to demonstrate appropriate behavior interaction.** Model the behavior you would like to see in your student, and make another point of view video to show the reaction they will get for the modeled behavior. Walk through the video with your student, pointing out expectations, and repeat the video if necessary. Send the video home to parents and explain expectations.
- 5 Do not use open-ended questions.** Be direct with students. Break down steps if necessary.
- 6 Use specific interests to teach general concepts and social skills.** A child’s interests can be used to encourage turn taking, address personal hygiene, and complete tasks.

the learning outcomes needed to move on to his or her next goal (Tomlinson, 2016). In a classroom in which a teacher implements a variety of strategies to differentiate instruction, teachers and students become partners in the learning environment.

There is no one way to differentiate a classroom for students, but there are several key things to consider. These do not have to apply to each student in every lesson; however, they should be considered as teachers plan their classes, develop students' Individualized Education Programs, and modify their instruction and assessments for their students.

Differentiated instruction can seem overwhelming at first. Teachers should start small, keep things manageable, work with colleagues, and recognize what goes well. Implementing differentiated instruction should proceed slowly to provide multiple approaches to content, product, and process. To begin to implement differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2016), teachers should:

- Attend to student differences. A teacher should unconditionally accept students for who they are and hold them to high expectations.

- Understand that assessment and instruction are inseparable, ongoing, and related to each other. The information gained through assessment can provide teachers with information about students' interests, which can impact learning. Assessments should occur periodically; they should not be held to the end of a unit when it is time to move on.
- Modify content, process, and product. By thoughtfully using the information gained in assessment and instruction (content), what students are learning (process), and activities to support the learning (product), teachers can modify all aspects of student learning.

Reflections on Strategies

When teachers provide these four strategies—the use of generalized behaviors, video modeling, peer-to-peer support, and differentiated instruction—to deaf and hard of hearing students with ASD, they can more effectively reach these students in their classrooms. These effective learning strategies allow educators to create a more inclusive environment for deaf and hard of hearing children on the autism spectrum and, as a result, increase their access to the academic and social worlds.

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Yes, We Can!

Addressing Personal and Cultural Connections Within Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

By Jennifer S. Beal and Davinique Small

As part of her teacher preparation program, Davinique Small helped a student make cultural and personal connections between her reading and her own life, thus enhancing reading instruction and the student's reading skills.

Georgia*, an 8-year-old African American student in the third grade, can decode printed English into spoken language but struggles with reading comprehension. She wears cochlear implants, uses primarily speech to communicate, and is in the process of learning American Sign Language (ASL). Every day she receives five hours of educational services in a general education setting and 120 minutes of services with a teacher of the deaf, who works with her on reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is a skill included in Georgia's Individualized Education Program. Davinique Small, an African American graduate student in a teacher preparation program at Valdosta State University who is co-author of this article as well as an educational interpreter, developed a reading project that would focus on this objective. Small worked with Georgia for two hours per week, providing instruction that included reading aloud in spoken English and sign-supported English. Small and Georgia would read a book together, and Small would use evidence-based teaching strategies and embedded assessments to improve Georgia's reading skills.

Still, Small planned to do more. First, she wanted the content of the reading to reflect the African American culture that she and Georgia shared. This would increase Georgia's interest and perhaps boost her attention, and, therefore, hopefully improve her comprehension. When Small learned that Georgia loved princess stories and that one of her favorite stories was *Sleeping Beauty*, she remembered a book from her own childhood, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale* by John Steptoe (1987). She had read the book—a princess tale of two sisters who lived in Zimbabwe—as had her friends, teachers, and parents. Small considered the book a staple in the African American community.

Photos courtesy of Davinique Small



Left: Small helps a student make cultural and personal connections between reading and the child's own life as they read and discuss the story *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*.

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Small also wanted to tap into and build on Georgia's relationship with the Deaf community. While Georgia had always described herself as "deaf," she had previously had limited interaction with the Deaf community. When she entered her new school, however, she found herself surrounded by a large population of deaf and hard of hearing students and a hub of Deaf community activities. She was able to experience ASL, Deaf Santa, and the steady presence of interpreters. Small saw an increased willingness in Georgia to communicate with deaf schoolmates, the interpreters, and teachers of the deaf through ASL. Georgia also expressed a desire to acquire more sign language to chat with a deaf schoolmate who communicates solely in ASL.

Small planned that she and Georgia would read the book together and build on Georgia's relationship to the two cultures that were her heritage. She developed reading lessons with Jennifer Beal, a professor for the reading project and co-author of this article, as part of a course requirement in Valdosta State University's deaf education master's degree program. Beal would help Small flesh out the project and provide feedback. Small would do the following with consistent feedback from Beal:

- Administer two reading assessments
- Develop data-based reading objectives
- Create and implement four reading lesson plans that focused on the book and reading objectives
- Embed pre- and post-tests in each lesson
- Use evidence-based instructional strategies (see Beal, 2018, for a comprehensive review of the project)

Small began by administering the grade-level word lists and reading passages of the Basic Reading Inventory Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve and Early Literacy Assessments (Johns, Elish-Piper, & Johns, 2017) to assess Georgia's decoding abilities and her reading comprehension level. The results showed that Georgia's vocabulary was at an independent level of second grade, her instructional level was third to fifth grade, and her frustration level was sixth grade. In relation to her reading comprehension, Georgia performed slightly above grade level, scoring an independent level of second grade, an instructional level of third grade, and a frustration level of fourth grade. Small also used the Signed Reading Fluency



Rubric (Easterbrooks & Huston, 2008) that allows assessment of a student’s ability to render printed text into sign language across 13 indicators and five ability levels to determine Georgia’s skills in ASL and know which reading objectives to address through sign language. The results showed that out of the 13 sign language components (e.g., facial expression, role taking, and eye gaze), Georgia was struggling with her palm orientation when fingerspelling as well as use of body shifts to show turn taking in conversation. Using this information, Small developed four objectives based on the suggestions of the National Reading Panel (2000): 1) phonemic awareness, 2) vocabulary, 3) fluency, and 4) comprehension. She also included accurate use of palm orientation when fingerspelling based on the Signed Reading Fluency Rubric results. Small and Beal followed the recommendation of Salend (2015) and developed lesson plans that were individualized and personalized for Georgia and contained multicultural components.

Small observed the lessons taking place in Georgia’s general education classroom and noted that students were tasked with identifying similarities and

differences between fairytales and what has become known as *fractured fairytales*, fairytales that resemble a well-known tale but contain startling changes. Georgia and her peers were learning how to create Venn Diagrams comparing the original *Cinderella* story to fractured *Cinderella* fairytales. These fractured *Cinderella* stories, popular with teachers (We are

Teachers, 2020) include examples of fractured storytelling in which, for example, Cinderella is represented as a cowgirl (Lowell, 2000), as a male prince (Cole, 1987), as an Algonquian Native American (Martin & Shannon, 1998), or as a penguin (Perlman, 1995).

Small also observed Georgia’s social studies class and saw that the students were discussing and comparing multiple empires, including the Roman, Greek, and Mali empires. She decided to build on Georgia’s knowledge about Mali, a country in Africa as well as an early African empire, and her love of princess stories to develop a lesson centered on identifying cultural parallels between *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale* and Georgia’s own Black culture and Deaf culture. She related fairytales and folklores to Deaf storytelling. Small also connected fingerspelling and explicit vocabulary instruction in ASL to the printed English in the text. Dialogue presented in print was interpreted into ASL, and each character in the story was given a name sign. The English names of the characters come from the Shona language and are related to their personal characteristics, which are revealed in the story: The father is called

Mufaro, which means “happy man”; Nyasha, the kind sister, has a name that means “mercy”; and Manyara, the mean sister, has a name that means “ashamed” (Jeffries, 1992). Small pointed out how the names of the characters align with the Deaf community’s use of name signs, which also may be based on the physical characteristics or personality traits of the bearer. Understanding quickly, Georgia gave Small a name sign, too, using the position and movement for *queen*, but with a D handshape to reflect *Davinique*, Small’s first name. Small pointed out that nicknames are often given within the African American community. When Small was younger, her family referred to her as “SB” for Sleeping Beauty, her favorite princess. Using the book as a springboard, Small and Georgia discussed this and other parallels between the Deaf and African American communities.

Other materials were selected to reflect Georgia’s interests and connections to American Black Deaf culture. Small mapped out which strategy would require which material and how each would be implemented into the instruction. For example, she planned to use visual supports such as storyboarding to illustrate the plot. (See Table 1.)

In working with Georgia, Small and Beal were in conformance with the laws (i.e., Every Student Succeeds Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) that require that teachers use evidence-based strategies and individual student data to guide their instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, 2015). Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing receive the majority of their educational services as Georgia does—within the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). These students generally participate in either “push-in” environments, in which they experience their instruction in general education classrooms, or “pull-out” environments,

Table 1.

Small linked evidence-based strategies with materials and instruction. Below is the listing.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGY, USE OF	MATERIAL(S)	INSTRUCTION AND CONNECTIONS
<p>Explicit vocabulary instruction (Paul, 1996)</p> <p>Modeling (Rosenshine, 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Happy Magic</i> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Short Vowels Activity Book</i> • <i>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale</i> by John Steptoe • Note cards • Unravel rubric • Highlighting tape • Video camera 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASL vocabulary paired with printed English words • Expectations are modeled • Evidence in text is highlighted • Quotation marks are added to indicate dialogue
<p>Visuals charts and visual supports (Easterbrooks & Baker, 2002)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story cards, storyboards • Venn diagram • Unravel rubric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storyboarding to illustrate the plot • Venn diagrams to compare the African American and Deaf communities
<p>Guided reading (Schirmer, Therrien, Schaffer, & Schirmer, 2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Happy Magic</i> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Short Vowels Activity Book</i> • <i>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale</i> by John Steptoe 	<p>Georgia read the printed English while Small provided support (in signs)</p>
<p>Activating prior knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978)</p> <p>Higher-order thinking skills (Easterbrooks, & Beal-Alvarez, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Happy Magic</i> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Short Vowels Activity Book</i> • <i>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale</i> by John Steptoe • Note cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple discussion questions related to general education • Emotions, problem solving, and arts in the Deaf, Zimbabwean, and American hearing communities
<p>Dual coding theory (Paivio, 1991)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Happy Magic</i> • <i>Disney Princess Phonics: Short Vowels Activity Book</i> • <i>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale</i> by John Steptoe • Note cards 	<p>Simultaneous use of printed English and visual representations of the vocabulary words to make flash cards; Georgia fingerspelled, signed, and spoke each word</p>
<p>Self-monitoring (Gunter, Miller, & Venn, 2003)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklist • Video recording of Georgia signing the story 	<p>Georgia assessed a recording of her productions of fingerspelled vocabulary and role shifting for accuracy related to palm orientation and clear role shifting</p>
<p>Active learning (Bonwell & Eison 1991)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART Board® • Letter beads • String • Name tags • Crowns • Who Said It?” game 	<p>Game-based learning by stringing letter beads to spell vocabulary words—the activity related to the art of jewelry making in Zimbabwe; “Who Said It?” game, in which Georgia supports who said dialogue by finding evidence in the text</p>

in which they experience their instruction in separate educational settings.

As part of the project, Georgia was asked to describe what was happening within a story using five story cards with illustrations from the story and matching each card with a dialogue strip. She was also video recorded using body shifts to indicate which person was talking and performed a self-evaluation in which she answered the following questions: *Can you tell who was speaking here? How do you know?* (Easterbrooks & Beal-Alvarez 2013). Small used the unravel strategy, in which students are asked to underline and highlight text, sometimes number paragraphs, pay attention to certain words, and predict content to support comprehension. Small prompted Georgia to break down the story into decipherable chunks and allowed her to go back to the story to find the answers to questions. Georgia was successful, going back within the text and finding dialogue as well as problems and solutions related to the plot. The post-assessments showed that Georgia was able to achieve her reading objectives and improve her overall reading comprehension. Small had successfully embedded cultural connections and personalized instruction into evidence-based instructional strategies for reading instruction.

About 15 percent of America's deaf and hard of hearing students are African American and about 25 percent are Hispanic/Latinx (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011). Teachers who work with deaf or hard of hearing students can use the process documented here to meet the diverse and individualized needs of their students while using strategies that have evidence in support of their effectiveness. Personalized instruction and evidence-based instruction provide the surest path to effective teaching.

**Georgia is a pseudonym.*

Fragments of Conversation

A STUDENT, A TEACHER, AN AFRICAN PRINCESS, AND EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING

Georgia is an 8-year-old student at a Title 1 elementary school with 69.3 percent free or discounted lunch recipients within a suburban area. With a total of 512 students, the student-to-teacher ratio is 13. The racial breakdown of the school is about 38.9 percent white, 38.7 percent African American, and 10.9 percent Hispanic. The school goes from kindergarten up to fifth grade. All deaf and hard of hearing elementary students within this school district are filtered through this elementary school. It acts as a hub school for these students primarily for its central location and teacher of the deaf who is not itinerant; thus, she can provide all day/daily services.

Georgia and teacher Davinique Small worked on reading skills by reading and discussing *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale* (Steptoe, 1987). Small used several strategies to help Georgia understand the text, activating prior knowledge and getting Georgia to see parallels between her own life and the life of the fictional princess in the book and between Deaf culture and African American culture.

SMALL: How can we relate storytelling in Deaf culture to storytelling in Mali's [African] culture?

GEORGIA: Hmm ... [the African people] did not have writing, so they talked.

SMALL: Do you and your siblings ever disagree? How do you solve that disagreement?

GEORGIA: "Siblings" means "brothers," right? My brothers can annoy me. Sometimes we fight because we both want to play Fortnite, but they don't share with me. I always just tell my grandma.

SMALL: What are the steps in the "unraveling method"? Why do we use it?

GEORGIA: We underline and number the paragraphs. I use it in Mrs. J's [general education] class.

SMALL: How can we use our bodies to show multiple people speaking?

GEORGIA: We move them side to side?

SMALL: Is signing the same as talking?

GEORGIA: No ... I don't know ... I think maybe. Talking, you use your mouth not hands.

SMALL: Remember how we discussed that black people in America are called African Americans? Do you think they are the same as Africans? Are we from the same culture? Same skin complexion? Both have the word *African* in our ethnicity label.

GEORGIA: Maybe they talk different, but they are brown, too, like me and you.

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Teresa: Curious and Fun Loving— A Family's Journey

By Kristi Arsenault

Trying to imagine our journey without the support of family, friends, educators, therapists, and doctors is impossible.

Our daughter Teresa entered our lives having been diagnosed with a mild-to-moderate hearing loss in her left ear and a condition known as hypotonia. Hypotonia relates to poor muscle tone and is a symptom of an undiagnosed condition, but as we did not have a medical background, we were really at a loss as to what that meant. My pregnancy had been pretty smooth, and Teresa was one of the few children actually born on her due date. Thus, whatever was causing her moderate-to-severe hypotonia and hearing loss was a mystery. However, her birth was just the beginning; as she grew older, there were more diagnoses to come.

Feeding issues (possibly related to her hypotonia) meant that we would spend the next five months in three hospitals, making every effort to get our daughter home. Teresa had about 10 different auditory brainstem response (ABR) tests during this time. However, the audiologists were never totally sure what her hearing loss was since she would sometimes wake up or would not remain still during the testing. After she was finally discharged, we faced a major challenge in finding an audiology team willing to perform an ABR while Teresa was under anesthesia so we could get an accurate hearing status.

Teresa was almost 12 months old before we finally received a call from a hospital in the Baltimore area that would perform the ABR. When the results came, we were shocked. Teresa now had a status of moderate loss in both ears. We were stumped as to what could cause such quick and progressive hearing loss. Some audiologists and geneticists pointed to a possible genetic anomaly, while others speculated about a range of possibilities, including a potentially ototoxic antibiotic Teresa had been given during her first year of life. We were put in touch with our county audiologist, who immediately informed us that we needed to get to an ear, nose, and throat specialist and see about possible fluid in the middle ear. *Could that be causing Teresa's hearing loss? Or was it possible structural issues with the bones? Or ...?* So many questions, and so

Photos courtesy of Kristi Arsenault



Left: Teresa (age 1) enjoying her first time in a swing; with dad Felipe; with mom Kristi; celebrating the Fourth of July.

Below: Teresa smiles happily during her first day of school at MSD in 2018.



few answers.

Around the time Teresa was 18 months old, she had another ABR with air and bone conduction tests performed while she was under anesthesia, and tubes were placed in both of her ears. She had very little fluid in her ears and this time received what would become the final diagnosis related to her hearing: severe sensorineural hearing loss. It was overwhelming. My husband Felipe and I did not know where to turn. Teresa was finally aided with hearing aids at 19 months old, and we were receiving some of our first instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) from a

teacher in the county in which we live. We tried to learn from different online resources and from hand-outs that were provided to us. Then we learned about a family education program at the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD). We contacted the school to learn more; everyone was welcoming and invited us to come for a visit.

Teresa was just 2 years old when we made our first visit to MSD. We met staff members and families. We were excited to meet other parents; it was wonderful to know others who were raising a deaf child with little to no experience or prior family history of deafness. That day, a new world

opened up to us—part of our journey not just as parents but as parents of a child who is deaf. For more than a year, Teresa would enjoy a fully inclusive learning environment at MSD. She was immersed in ASL and had strong support from the staff and her peers. Teresa could barely sit up on her own when she turned 2 years old, but within two months of being in the program she began to crawl and was motivated to get to objects and people she found interesting. We were floored by how her abilities started taking off, and we noticed that she became more attentive to ASL, a visual language that she found immediately accessible. The

other children saw Teresa as another deaf child, and they did not seem to mind that she did not quite sign as they did, walk or run, or even color like they did. They simply saw another child and accepted her for who she was.

We continued to take ASL classes provided by the MSD family program and other online resources. We attended conferences, going to meetings of the American Society for Deaf Children and ASL workshops to help us sign more and support our daughter at home. We were learning so much and signing as much as we could, but we noticed that Teresa still did not express herself much in sign. We wondered if we were doing something wrong. Why was learning so different for her? Soon we would gain insight into not only understanding how Teresa was unable to access the world around her, but also how her brain was developing in terms of language.

We had had two prior genetic tests that ruled out any genetic cause for Teresa's hearing loss and hypotonia. With our third and final genetic test, however, Teresa was diagnosed with a rare disorder that impacts both cognitive and language development, which included a possible expressive disorder.

Right and below: Teresa and a teacher work together on a craft at the Easterseals Child Development Center; Teresa enjoys finger-painting at the Center.

It also provided an explanation for Teresa's hypotonia. Again, shock could not begin to describe what we felt. Teresa was such a happy, full of life, and loving child; it was so hard to imagine that something could hinder her brain from developing normally. It was hard to believe that our child would not naturally acquire language—something many of us take for granted. We knew about the incredible ability of the brain to learn and adapt. Did Teresa's brain not have that ability as well?

Teresa's teachers at MSD had noticed that she looked at the world in a slightly different way than her peers did, and they called for assistance from an organization known as Connections Beyond Sight and Sound (CBSS), the deaf-blind project in Maryland. Teresa



had a unique way of noticing the edges of things. Over a year's time, the CBSS team discovered hints and then made confirmation of a condition known as cerebral or cortical vision impairment (CVI), a brain-related vision impairment. Learning about CVI shed light on what had kept us in the proverbial dark for so long. Teresa was missing incidental visual information. She was now considered deaf-blind. This set us on a new course and proved to be a major turning point.

A New Journey Help for Our Deaf-Blind Daughter

We had hoped that Teresa could attend MSD full time, but her needs outgrew what the school could support. Where does a child with deaf-blindness go? We were given names of schools in Maryland that have programs that support children with deaf-blindness; it seemed the most logical school was the Maryland School for the Blind. There was just one dilemma: it was far away. To get to the school, we would have to move.

It was a difficult time. While exploring other possible school options, we were still in need of a daycare. We looked into different daycare and child

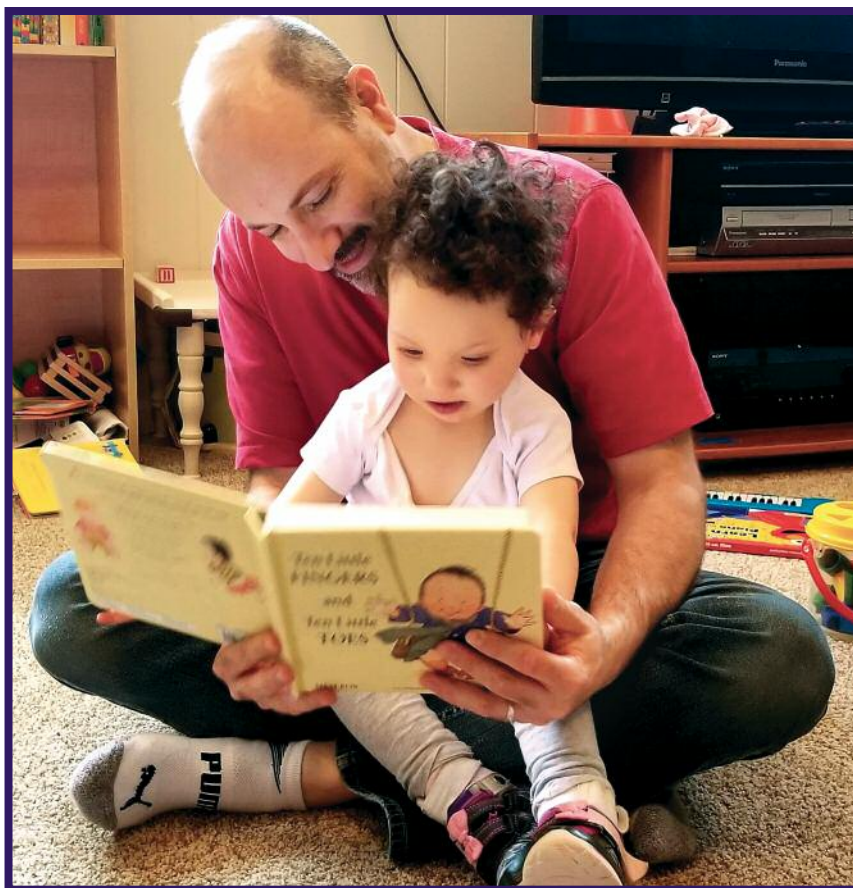


Right: Teresa loves to read with her parents.

development centers in our area, but we were often told that our daughter's needs were too great and could not be supported. The Maryland Family Network (www.marylandfamilynetwork.org) has an online resource to help families locate schools to support children with special needs. One option popped up about 20 minutes from where we lived. It was a child development center run by Easterseals, which has a local office in the D.C. area. We called the center, and they were quite enthusiastic to have us come for a visit. Shortly after, Teresa was enrolled. She was placed in a preschool program

We should never forget that a young child's journey, no matter his or her abilities, is best supported by helping that child reach his or her full potential.

with 19 children who were her peers in age, all of them typically developing. We were quite nervous about this next adventure, but before we even started we grew hopeful. The children in the class knew Teresa's name and warmly welcomed her. They were all so curious, asking many questions: *What are those things in her ears? What is that thing [g-tube] in her belly? Why don't I have one? How do I get one?* When Teresa joined circle time, the teachers and children



signed the alphabet with her and they even learned new signs, like colors and weather-related words, based on some resources provided by teachers from MSD who visited Teresa in her classroom. Their fingerspelling became quite impressive—probably better than mine! The children at the center seemed to enjoy Teresa as part of their world and, in turn, Teresa had not just three adult teachers in her classroom but 19 children who also became her teachers.

We should never forget that a young child's journey, no matter his or her abilities, is best supported by helping that child reach his or her full potential. One way that potential is supported is through inclusive environments, which have opened up a new world to children like Teresa. Typically developing children benefit from these environments, too. They come to see the beauty and joy these differently-abled children bring to the world. In getting to know my daughter, her

typically developing classmates do not see only her disabilities; they also see another child who shares their joys and fears.

We are grateful for Teresa's growth and all that we have learned while at MSD and the Easterseals Child Development Center. We are also grateful for the opportunities for our daughter to be in such inclusive environments. Helen Keller offered many beautiful sayings, but there is one that has especially hit home: "When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed one that we do not see the one which has been opened for us." Doors have opened for us and for our daughter. As we venture on to find her next school, we grow ever more grateful to all those who have helped throughout our journey and excited about what's behind the next door.

Shared Cultural Connections

Help Students Analyze Literature

By Arathy Manoharan

The title of “person of color” was bestowed on me when I moved to the United States. Until that time, I had simply identified as Indian. I was born in a small town, Kottayam, in Kerala, a state in southwestern India. When I was young, we moved to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), but I never lived in Middle Eastern culture. Many people, like my parents, had moved to the UAE from Kerala, and my life remained within the Kerala community. I attended a school in which the students and most teachers were from Kerala, the school followed the Kerala state curriculum, and I returned every summer to our family’s original home in Kottayam.

When I was 16 years old, I left Dubai and returned to Kottayam to stay. I finished eleventh grade and graduated from twelfth grade, earned a bachelor’s degree from CMS College in Kottayam, and then moved to New Delhi to get a master’s degree in English literature at Delhi University. At the university, I got to know students from all over India and from other countries. In 2009, during the final year of the master’s program, I learned about the Deaf community. I came across Indian Sign Language (ISL) classes on campus, and I happened to watch the movie *Sweet Nothing in My Ear*, which discusses Deaf culture and Deaf pride. I took a class in ISL and met my first deaf person (my teacher, Rabindranath Sarkar). My life changed completely. I became part of the local Deaf community, and after I got my degree I worked as an English teacher for deaf adults. I learned what it meant when a deaf person uses the term “hearing person.” Indeed, I “became hearing,” as described by Dr. Dirksen Bauman in his TED (2018) talk “On

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Photos courtesy of Arathy Manoharan



Becoming Hearing: Lessons in Limitations, Loss, and Respect.” What I mean is that I realized that as a hearing person I had a specific privilege in that it is easier for hearing people to fit into societies that were created by people who hear for people who hear. Hearing people who join the Deaf community experience what it feels like to be “the other,” someone for whom the society was not designed.

After a year of teaching deaf students, I realized that I needed to be able to apply the principles of bilingual deaf education in order to be able to do justice to my profession. For this reason, at the age of 23, I moved to the United States to pursue another master’s degree in deaf education from McDaniel College in Westminster, Md. On this predominantly white campus, I served as a graduate assistant in the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. As I had once “become hearing,” I now became a “person of color.” This is how people saw me and how they referred to me. It became a new aspect of my identity.

Of course this was only one of the 1,000 natural culture shocks that I experienced in coming to the United States. In India and Dubai, I had watched American movies in which the unspoken assumptions of American culture were reflected matter of factly on the screen (e.g., children were allowed to close their bedroom doors, parents actually knocked before

Clockwise from top right:

Manoharan as a toddler in India; as a child in Dubai; with her younger sister in India; in her classroom at MSSD.

entering, and teens were allowed to have crushes on their peers and even encouraged to talk to their parents about them). I enjoyed these movies and I learned from them, but it might have helped me to gain insight into myself and my own family if I had also had books available that reflected Indian culture—the culture in which relationships between young teens of the opposite sex were forbidden—the culture and the cultural assumptions that underpinned my own life.

My learning continued inside and out of the classroom, and when I graduated and joined the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) as an English teacher, I realized that I had a lot more to learn about the intersectional identities of deaf children. As a “person of color,” I was believed to be in a better position to understand what students of color go through, but I really didn’t know what a deaf black student goes through in high school, what a Latinx student has to deal with, or what East Asian American students have to put up with on a daily basis. I was introduced to young adult literature with culturally



In the Classroom: Anti-Bias Education Through Reading a Young Adult Novel

By Arathy Manoharan

At first, I struggled to come up with a well-thought-out year-long plan to incorporate teaching social justice into my classroom. I first exploited and then avoided the heritage months. While they proved worthwhile for involving students in outside activities, I realized that this practice might not have a positive effect on students whose identities were not part of the heritage months.

Now I plan the academic year with genres of writing (i.e., narrative, argumentative, informative, poetic), social justice standards, and Common Core State Standards guiding my instruction. I have students read material reflecting each genre and then write their own. While students deepen their understanding, they also improve their skills in reading informational texts, argumentation and analysis, and insight into what social justice means. Here's how I approached and handled one unit.

Select reading material—*The Hate U Give*, an award-winning young adult book by Angie Thomas, is about a teenage girl who witnesses her friend murdered by police and then grapples with police brutality and activism. The novel serves as a 'mirror' to students who identify with the characters and as a 'window' to students who find themselves in a position of privilege in comparison to the characters (Sims Bishop, 1990); it also raises searing issues of social justice.

Develop goals—By the end of the unit, I wanted my students to analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice, both historically and today. Analyzing this impact is a critical practice for anti-bias education. The essential question I wanted my students to consider: *Would Khalil, the young protagonist's friend, receive justice?* This higher-order question also promotes discussion, stimulates student thinking, and allows students to hypothesize, speculate, and share ideas. I wanted my students to consider this open-ended question (for which there is no single "right" answer) within the context of social justice and social justice standards. There are four standards (Teaching Tolerance, 2016):

1. **Identity**—Students develop positive identities based on language, historical, and cultural knowledge.
2. **Diversity**—Students examine the historical, political,

diverse characters by my friend and colleague Lia Bengtson, who was trying to help me understand my students better. Young adult literature captures the interest of my students as they are able to relate to the characters in them. When they read about characters who look like them and talk like them and who stand up for what they believe in, students are able to more meaningfully explore social justice. Further, they are equipped to branch out into exploring other social issues through projects related to their reading.

I began to attend events hosted by the DC Area Educators for Social Justice with my colleagues, during which I was introduced to a plethora of resources. I learned about sites such as *teachingtolerance.org*, *teachingforchange.org*, and *zinnedproject.org* that help teachers craft lesson plans with a social justice theme. Meeting other educators who were incorporating social justice issues in their curriculum and learning about the resources they used gave me the confidence to revamp my lesson plans.

As I see more instances of injustice in the world around me, I realize that I am able to understand and engage in the discourse and decisions that shape my future because I have access to the tools of literacy and critical analysis. These are the tools I want to give to my students. These tools will allow them to understand and meaningfully participate in the world around them. I have come to realize that as a person of color, I experience a unique advantage in working with my students. With our shared experience, they connect with me easier, and I am in a better position to support them as they navigate the world we all share.

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and social context of diversity and develop a respectful comfort with individuals who are similar to and different from themselves.

3. Justice—Students learn to recognize individuals as members of groups, identify stereotypes, and recognize the individuals and events that have contributed to social justice around the world.

4. Action—Students express empathy and carry out an action against injustice and bias in our society.

Craft anticipation guide—I developed an anticipation guide for my students to help them identify and confront common misconceptions related to the communities described in the novels. I checked out what is on the Internet and used this information to develop the guide for my class.

Increase students' background knowledge—At first I thought that I could introduce diverse young adult novels and that would naturally lead to discussion on social justice issues. I soon realized that my students needed more background knowledge. They needed to know more about the communities, historical settings, and current issues to fully engage with this novel. I helped them develop background knowledge through showing a documentary, *13th* by Ava DuVernay, and using news articles related to police brutality from *newsela.com*, an instructional website that offers up-to-date, high-interest articles that meet students at their reading level. Students also watched relevant news reports from *thedailymoth.com*, a website that delivers news using American Sign Language. Once armed with the background knowledge related to the novel, the students could more easily engage with it.

Research—The level of the students' skills determined whether the documentary or their research came first, with the more advanced students doing their own research before viewing the documentary and the students who were less advanced first viewing the documentary. Students researched a range of topics, including: the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Black Panther party, the history and significance of music, TV shows in Black culture, code switching in the Black community and in the Deaf community, the prison industrial complex, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. Students selected a topic, developed 10 guiding questions for their inquiry, and searched online for answers to their questions. I also gave them a set of reliable resources related to their topics. They received feedback from me and at least one peer on their work, and they created slides with the information they learned and presented them in class to their peers.

Read—I created a three-week reading schedule for the students and shared it with them using Google Classroom. Students were expected to create notes as they read the book focused on information that would help them answer the question of

whether or not Khalil would get justice. They were given 20 minutes to read their novels in class. They also created character webs to keep track of the storyline and Book Snaps, a digital visual representation used to annotate and share reflections of an excerpt of a book or text.

Write—Students wrote an argumentative essay connecting the articles, text, documentary, and question. "Justice means ... more police accountability, cameras, [and] diversifying the police force ...," wrote Jake, a freshman from Maine, in his argumentative essay. "Khalil may not have gotten justice, but I hope that justice will come [for others]."

Final creative project—I planned a multimedia poetry slam that enabled students to express what they learned during the unit. Reflecting on the killing of young African American boys and the police officers who had not been found guilty, Justina, a freshman from Pennsylvania, looked fiercely at the camera and asked, "What kind of justice is this?" She answered her own question with another question, coming closer to the camera and fingerspelling, "W-H-I-T-E justice?"

Reflections—Teaching the unit on justice using contemporary young adult novels has provided an opportunity for mutual dialogue between the students and me. When talking about issues of identity, power, privilege, and bias, I have become the learner and my students have become the teachers. By facilitating projects that required questioning, forming challenging opinions, and feeling outrage or inspiration, I enabled my students to critically engage with the text. As a result, students made the texts their own, connected classroom learning to current affairs, and came a step closer to taking action toward advancing justice in their school and communities.

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Resource

Book Snaps—<https://bookcreator.com/2017/09/booksnaps-and-book-creator/>

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ONE-STOP LESSON PLANNING:

How Universal Design for Learning Can Help Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

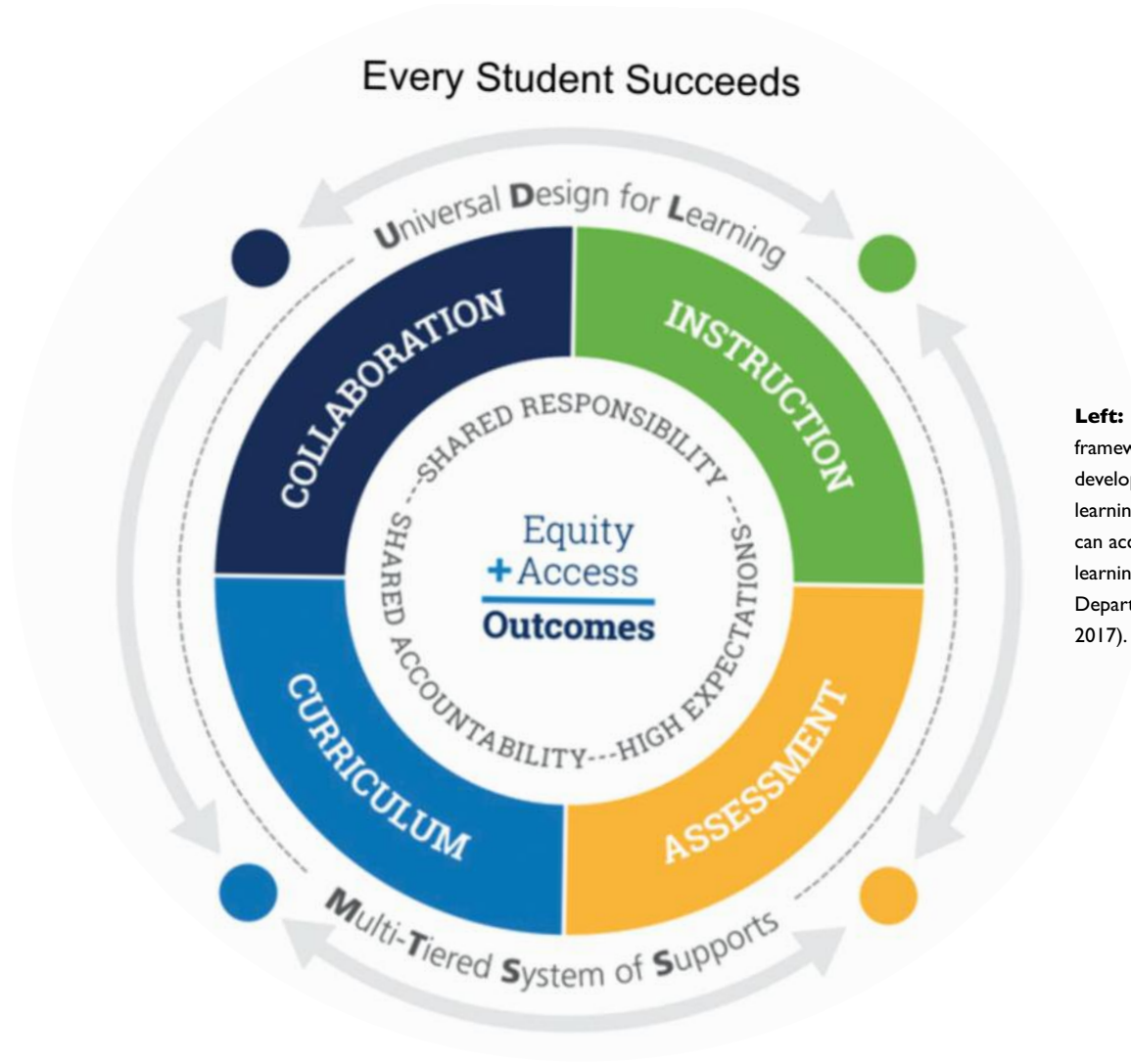
By Katie Taylor

Tony's bed shakes from the Supersonic alarm clock set to wake him up at 6:30 a.m. He rubs his eyes, quickly remembering that today's the first day in his new school after moving to a new town with his mom. A light starts to flash, telling him that he needs to get up. Getting dressed for the brisk November morning, Tony thinks about what his new teacher, classroom, and peers will be like. Will he have to explain why he wears hearing aids, needs background music and noise to be minimized, needs vocabulary in advance of the lessons, captioning on videos, and more things that help him access the curriculum that he usually has to ask for? What will the other students be like? Will they be accepting of him? His mind won't stop worrying about his new school and the barriers he may encounter.*

Step into Tony's world for a moment. Then imagine that he doesn't have to advocate for himself. Instead, he gets to choose how he is going to receive the class content. He gets to choose how he is going to show the teacher what he has learned. Imagine that the barriers of a traditional classroom have been eliminated. The best part is that Tony and students like him fit in with others because they are not doing anything different from anyone else; everything that deaf and hard of hearing students do, other students do as well. Accommodations are built into the general

Illustrations courtesy of Katie Taylor

Every Student Succeeds



Left: UDL is an “educational framework that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences” (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

education lesson seamlessly. The tools they need are available to all. The students who don't need them are not forced to use them. This is the idea behind Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

A Look Back And Many Steps Forward

About 50 years ago while designing cockpits for fighter planes, Air Force engineers discovered the “average-sized” pilot did not exist. Each pilot was unique—each had unique measurements in every aspect. As a result, the engineers modified the

cockpit to include adjustable seats and adjustable access to flying instruments (Rose, 2015). Similarly, in an ideal world, classrooms are not designed for and educators are not trained to teach the average student because the average student, like the average pilot, does not exist. Just as every fighter pilot has unique measurements, each student has unique measures, unique strengths and weaknesses (Rose, 2015). UDL allows teachers to easily accommodate every student; it blurs the lines of special education and general education. All educators work

together, making the classroom and curriculum accessible in such a way that everyone is included. In fact, UDL allows teachers to set up classrooms, design lessons, and teach with every student in mind by addressing three main areas:

1. Engagement and motivation of students
2. Representation of content
3. Expression of what the students have learned

When planning for a student who

DHH IN THE UDL WORLD



THE 5 TIPS FOR INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DEAF/HARD OF HEARING THROUGH UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

FLEXIBLE SEATING

Students with hearing loss need sight of everyone's face to follow the conversation. U-shaped desk/table arrangements are best.



REPRESENTING CONTENT



A visual representation (open/closed captions and descriptions) of the spoken language on all media and presentations/lectures is suggested for full access to auditory information in the classroom.

SMALL GROUPS

Students with hearing loss often participate and learn from peers best in small groups. Provide device for live captioning software and ear level fm/dm systems be utilized. Allow student with hearing loss and their group to move to a quiet room or hall wall to work to ensure optimal signal to noise ratio.



OPTIONS FOR REPETITION



Students with hearing loss often to need options for how the information is represented and may need early access to materials before the information is presented in the classroom. Pre-teaching vocabulary and early access to reading materials and media content

EXPRESSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Flexibility in the ways that a student with hearing loss can express what they have learned will increase engagement and motivation to participate in activities. Provide back channel to ask questions, visual presentation in slides, google draw, etc.



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is deaf or hard of hearing, five ideas are critical in creating a UDL classroom. Teachers concerned with UDL should:

1. **Establish flexible seating.** Deaf and hard of hearing students are dependent on visual access to the whole classroom. Teachers should give many options to allow students to find a seat that works for them.
2. **Find, create, and use visual representations.** Visual representations include captions on videos and movies; these have been shown to help all students, but they are critical for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
3. **Allow access to quiet locations.** To facilitate communication, allow students working in small groups to move to quieter locations, such as the hallway or another room. Communication in groups can be difficult for deaf and hard of hearing students, especially when it is compounded with background noise.
4. **Present the content in multiple ways.** Have materials available in print, video, and through teacher and peer interaction. Ensure vocabulary words are repeated in class discussion. Digital discussion formats are also effective. Numerous technical advances, like Padlet or lino, provide backchannels that allow students to equally and anonymously participate during discussions. This can reduce fears and ease participation for deaf and hard of hearing students.
5. **Allow multiple options for expression of knowledge.** These may include presentations with slides, Google Draw, and curation of videos. These may also include use of backchannels for questions and feedback (Taylor, 2019).

In Indiana, the Promoting Achievement through Technology and INstruction for all Students (PATINS) Project was set up to promote UDL for students throughout the state, bringing information, training, and services at no cost to educators (2017). We work in collaboration with national organizations such as the Center for Applied Special Technology, which works to improve education using flexible methods and materials through UDL.

The PATINS UDL Lesson Creator (tinyurl.com/UDLLessonPlanner) is posted online and available to all. This tool allows users to walk through many aspects of creating a more inclusive lesson. It can help educators prepare for students, even before they know who the students will be. It includes a lesson plan that is designed to allow teachers to reach students with the widest range of

abilities, significantly minimizing the need for further accommodations.

While this may be a more in-depth lesson plan than some teachers might be used to, it offers a thorough walk-through of many UDL considerations. Using this lesson plan as a template to create individual lessons can help teachers develop a meaningful process for crafting future lessons. Teachers may plan one unit this way and repeat it weekly until they feel comfortable. Then they can expand the process into other subjects, units, or sections. Once educators master planning their lessons in this way, there is no need to use the lesson plan every time.

The concept of UDL has been integrated into the Every Student Succeeds Act, the federal legislation that was signed into law in 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This is a concept that is here to stay.

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Universal Lesson Design

PATINS
PARTNERSHIP FOR ALL STUDENTS

PATINS UDL Lesson Creator

A Universally Designed lesson is purposefully designed from the start to meaningfully include the widest range of abilities, significantly minimizing the need for further accommodations. This tool is intended to walk the user through many of the aspects of creating a more inclusive lesson.

This is intended to produce a model UDL lesson with resources and additional information. While this may be a more in-depth lesson plan than some teachers might be used to, it offers a thorough walk-through of many UDL considerations. Creating a lesson using this template a few times could help teachers develop the necessary process mentally for future lesson planning.

After you click "submit" at the end of this lesson, you will have the opportunity to go back and edit your responses here. You will also receive your completed lesson plan in a much more readable format as your own Google doc, to which you can make further edits to the content as well as the format.

* Required

When thinking about the design of classrooms, consider UDL—removing barriers to reach each student, increasing engagement, motivation, and retention. UDL can ensure students have access to their curriculum and that they do not need to advocate for that access. UDL allows students to choose the ways in which they receive the classroom content; it allows teachers to design lessons to reach every student. Educators will see that what may benefit one student will benefit others. Why not have UDL available for all students?

**Tony is a composite representing deaf and hard of hearing students the author has known.*

Flavia Fleischer, PhD, is a professor and chair of Deaf Studies at the California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She started at CSUN in 2011 as department chair and is serving her third consecutive term in that position. Fleischer's professional interests center on American Sign Language (ASL), ASL linguistics, deaf education, and Deaf culture studies.

Rachel Friedman Narr, PhD, is a professor of deaf education at the California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She began her work at CSUN in 2003 and started the Deaf Education and Families Project in 2007. Her professional interests include teacher preparation, investment in public education, and outreach and education for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Right: Deaf elementary school students with disabilities work on literacy learning activities.

Why Deaf Education Matters:

Including Deaf Students with Disabilities

By Flavia Fleischer, Rachel Friedman Narr, and Will Garrow

Annie is a 5-year-old student with significant physical and cognitive disabilities, and she is deaf**. She attends a kindergarten class in her neighborhood school with hearing students with disabilities and a one-to-one assistant who signs. Annie's parents use sign language with her, and they've provided her with cochlear implants in the hopes that she will be able to access and acquire spoken language, too. Though she doesn't say many words that other people understand, Annie uses her voice and many sign approximations to make her needs and wants known. She is also learning to use a Picture Exchange Communication System with her signs to make her wants and needs clearer. She is engaged with and responsive to her environment.*

Frankie is a 10-year-old fourth grade student with Down syndrome, and he is hard of hearing. He uses spoken language to express himself; he has hearing aids but doesn't always use them. Frankie sits in his local school class and appears engaged; however, for several years he hasn't made much progress on his Individualized Education Program goals. He reads simple words and enjoys looking at pictures in books. Frankie doesn't have many friends, and his parents have been unimpressed with his progress. He receives itinerant services from a teacher of the deaf who serves him in a classroom for hearing students with moderate disabilities. The itinerant teacher of the deaf doesn't know much sign language.*

Photos courtesy of Dana Rhinerson and Tanya Bliven



PHOTO CREDIT: DANA RHINERSON

Will Garrow, PhD, is an associate professor of deaf studies at the California State University, Northridge, where he has taught since 2011. In his research and teaching, Garrow uses critical race theory to analyze different forms of social inequities to investigate and challenge the interrelated forms of oppression that the intersectional Deaf community faces.

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at Flavia.Fleischer@csun.edu, Rachel.Narr@csun.edu, and William.Garrow@csun.edu, respectively.

Deaf education—having deaf students educated in an environment in which they are with other deaf students as well as deaf adults—matters. This environment allows for Deaf Community Cultural Wealth (DCCW), the knowledge, skills, and tools that a community passes down from one generation to the next, to be acquired by the deaf students (adapted from Yosso, 2005). Annie and Frankie—and every deaf student with a disability—are members of the Deaf community and thus should have access to the Deaf community with its generational DCCW. For deaf students, this usually comes most effectively through deaf education.

However, instead of educating deaf children through deaf education, educators and administrators measure deafness against other forms of disability, decide which is most severe, and use that decision to determine placement. The practice of determining a primary disability and addressing it within neighborhood public schools contradicts what we know about how deaf children learn. Without an environment that builds on their visual and/or spatial

strengths, Annie and Frankie are not only missing easily accessible language that is critical; they are missing exposure to and interaction with other deaf individuals. In their “inclusive” classrooms, they interact only with hearing adults and children. The visual and/or spatial needs of deaf children are ignored.

Not Just Language **Deaf Community Cultural Wealth**

DCCW, as framed by Fleischer, Garrow, and Friedman-Narr (2015), reflects not only the invaluable human right to an easily accessible language but also the critical cultural knowledge gleaned by deaf individuals through centuries of navigating and networking through environments that are designed for those who hear. DCCW allows deaf individuals to flourish in hearing-centered spaces, including schools and other organizations in our society.

Deaf school children, including those deaf children with disabilities who function in all-hearing environments, rarely have exposure or access to DCCW. They do not have access to

peers and adults who are able to model, teach, and discuss with them how to navigate through society. As a result, they are less able to develop the essential tools that allow them to succeed in various environments, even those that have been labeled “inclusive.”

For deaf children with disabilities and their families, access to DCCW is as important as it is for other deaf children. Too often we find deaf students with disabilities in placements determined by what mainstream educators determine to be “primary” disability, which can complicate the services students receive (Borders et al., 2015). When deaf students with disabilities are not in dedicated deaf education programs, they may not receive services that are appropriate for their innately visual and/or spatial ways of being (Humphries et al., 2014; Johnson, 2006; Lane, 1999).

It’s not surprising that educational services for deaf students with disabilities have been characterized as scarce, problematic, and inappropriate (Szymanski et al., 2012). Jokinen (2018) encourages us to consider this issue using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He states, “Truly inclusive education also means a transition from mainstream needs-based teaching to student needs-based learning” (UN General Assembly, n.d.). Student needs-based learning emphasizes navigating hearing environments through accessible information; it addresses how tiredness affects deaf students in hearing spaces (Bess & Hornsby, 2014), and it employs adults who possess DCCW and understand what it means to be a deaf learner.

When a child has the confounding effects of insufficient access to language, educational programming is filled with obstacles. These include: initial challenges in identifying a disability, limited professionals with needed expertise, limited programs, and a pervasive “they don’t fit here” mindset of professionals and administrators. Understanding and valuing DCCW accepts that dedicated deaf education classrooms are the most appropriate placement for deaf students with disabilities. Educators need to realize that education in sign language with deaf peers is the least restrictive environment for them. Allowing children like Annie and Frankie to be educated outside of the environment of deaf education arguably further disables them; educators have ignored how

Student needs-based learning emphasizes navigating hearing environments through accessible information; it addresses how tiredness affects deaf students in hearing spaces (Bess & Hornsby, 2014), and it employs adults who ... understand what it means to be a deaf learner.

hard it is for students like them to gain information about their environments through audition.

Teachers of the deaf do need more training and skill to feel better prepared to welcome students like Annie and Frankie into their classrooms (Musyoka, Gentry, & Meek, 2017). However, no longer should excuses such as, “He’s not an ASL user ...,” “His other disability is more severe than his deafness ...,” “He doesn’t fit here ...,” or “We don’t do Deaf Plus here ...” be accepted. Placements for deaf children should include self-contained classes for deaf students with disabilities or placement in all-deaf classes in which students are on grade level and learning their state’s core curriculum as well as residential and day schools for the deaf.

Deaf students with disabilities represent 40 percent or more of the deaf student population (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2013). Some of the more commonly identified disabilities include intellectual disabilities, learning, or health

Below: A deaf first grader with a disability practices sequencing. **Right:** Learning to write one’s name is a beneficial academic skill and important life skill.



PHOTO CREDIT: LEFT, TANYA BLIVEN; ABOVE RIGHT, DANA RHINERSON

and low vision as well as the conditions of being autistic and deaf-blind (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2013). We should be educating these children through a framework that centers on deaf education rather than a framework that centers on special education. We should allow families and students the opportunity to learn from and connect with deaf peers and deaf adults, and we should ensure deaf students with disabilities get the education—and the DCCW—to which they are entitled.



*Annie and Frankie are composites representative of deaf students the authors have known.

**The term “deaf” in this article includes the various intersectional identities of individuals within the Deaf community. These include, but are not limited to, individuals of all ages who are D/deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or deaf with disabilities (sometimes referred to as Deaf Plus).

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Deaf Community Cultural Wealth: A Closer Look

By Flavia Fleischer, Rachel Friedman Narr, and Will Garrow

Deaf Community Cultural Wealth (DCCW) comprises six “capitals”—socially accumulated assets and resources that work in concert to support deaf children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development. Each capital is significant because it constitutes an integral part of the formation of a whole, well-rounded deaf student with the skills and tools to flourish and succeed in school and in life. The capitals of DCCW include: linguistic, social, familial, aspirational, navigational, and resistant (adapted from Yosso, 2005). Here is a closer look:

- 1. Linguistic capital**—The acquisition of a natural, fully accessible language is crucial for the development of complex cognitive skills and provides access to socialization for positive development and self-awareness. This is arguably the most critical aspect of development in childhood. Cognitive skills cannot be attained without linguistic capital. Even with the best assistive technology, many deaf children do not have full and natural access to spoken languages (Humphries et al., 2014). Naturally developed signed language is crucial to ensure maximum individual linguistic and cognitive development. Deaf-blind children access signed language through tactile input that is completely comprehensible and allows their cognitive skills to develop to the fullest extent possible.
- 2. Social capital**—Everyone agrees that socialization is an integral part of human development. Having access to and gaining social capital through an educational environment of deaf professionals and deaf peers allows deaf students, including those with disabilities, opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions and exposure to everyday discourse. In supposedly inclusive hearing environments, academic and informal conversations and interactions are lost on deaf students. They can see them happening, but their opportunities to engage are limited or mediated through an interpreter or signing aide.
- 3. Familial capital**—Familial capital involves the concept of a network of people who are caring, invested in, and supportive of the community and of the individuals within the community. Kinship typically refers to relationships of family, but it can also be fostered within and between families and friends. Feelings of kinship can be developed through participation in sports, school, and other social or community organizations. The sense of kinship develops as individuals experience a networked support system that provides the ability and opportunity to discuss one’s feelings, thoughts, and ideas in depth and to receive supporting feedback in return.
- 4. Aspirational capital**—Aspirational capital allows students to dare to dream, to have hopes and goals “in the face of perceived and real barriers” (Yosso, 2005). Aspirational capital is an integral component for developing resiliency, which allows a child to persevere and resist socially and psychologically imposed roadblocks of the larger community. It enables children to go beyond their immediate, often barrier-filled circumstances. Despite good intentions, exclusively hearing educational environments for deaf students with disabilities have the potential to result in inherently low expectations, as studies show that teachers often have lower expectations for students with disabilities (Borders et al., 2015). This is a barrier that is rooted in our thinking about being deaf as well as about being deaf with disabilities, and it should not be a reason to squash a child’s dream.
- 5. Navigational capital**—Navigational capital is the ability to maneuver through social institutions by, for, and of hearing people. Social institutions are designed for people who have been perceived as representing the norm. People who do not fit the norm develop a different skill set for navigating the same spaces. Imagine you are deaf. How would you navigate a school designed for hearing students? How would you handle people who yell to get your attention? How many bells would have to ring to tell you to come in from recess? How many teachers would raise their voices to tell you to get in line for lunch? Deaf students with well-developed navigational capital are more attuned to their environment and, whenever possible, help create an environment that capitalizes on their strengths.
- 6. Resistant capital**—Resistant capital is the “knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005). Faced with negative messages about their identity, people with resistant capital are able to maintain their dignity and to create spaces that transform negative views of themselves into an understanding of their own potential. Unfortunately, education is a space that often teaches children to conform rather than how to apply transformational resistance. This is why it is important for us to consider how we can model and encourage resistant capital in our classrooms, programs, and schools. Deaf children with disabilities often don’t acquire resistant capital because they don’t have opportunities to socialize or be exposed to deaf peers and deaf adults who have such skills and knowledge. Deaf educators need to prepare deaf students with disabilities—and all deaf students—to understand and appreciate transformational resistance to support and promote diversity among their peers.

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Hard Truths About Suspension and Social Justice:

A Look at a School for Deaf Students

By Todd LaMarr and Lisalee D. Egbert

Suspensions—a form of discipline that removes students temporarily from the learning environment—are used to address unwanted behaviors in the classroom. While suspensions have been a common form of school discipline for many years, they can become problematic when they reach high rates and when they disproportionately impact specific groups of students. While every student can face suspension, suspensions are not administered evenly across gender, racial, and ethnic categories. Students of color and males are disproportionately suspended and negatively impacted by suspensions (Morris & Perry, 2016; Smith & Harper, 2015; Wood, Harris III, & Howard, 2018).

Suspensions can negatively impact students in many ways. Suspension from the classroom can lead to students missing out on information, falling behind in class, and, as a result, struggling with overall academic performance (Morris & Perry, 2016). Suspensions are associated with a greater risk of students dropping out of high school without a diploma (Noltemeyer, Ward, & McLoughlin, 2015). Further, some research indicates that school suspensions contribute to a school-to-prison pipeline; practices and policies that push students out of the classroom also serve to push them into the criminal justice system (ACLU, 2019; Cuellar & Markowitz, 2015).

Suspensions in Schools for the Deaf

While school suspensions have received a lot of attention in the field of education, little if any research exists on suspensions in deaf education. In fact, we have not been able to find any articles or reports in deaf education that focus on suspensions and potential group disparities.

We collected data ourselves, selecting one residential school for deaf students and using data available in the public state database. We initially collected data on two deaf schools but decided to focus on one since the data told a similar story in both schools (i.e., high suspension rates in previous years and improved rates more recently). Additionally, focusing on just one school

Illustrations courtesy of Todd LaMarr and Lisalee D. Egbert

Figure 1.

Suspension Rates: Deaf School, County and State

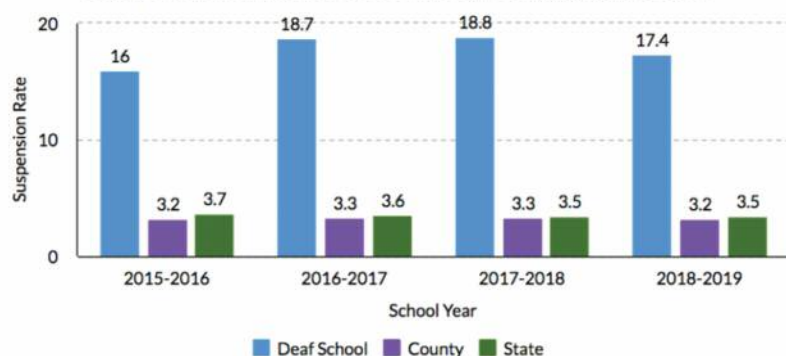
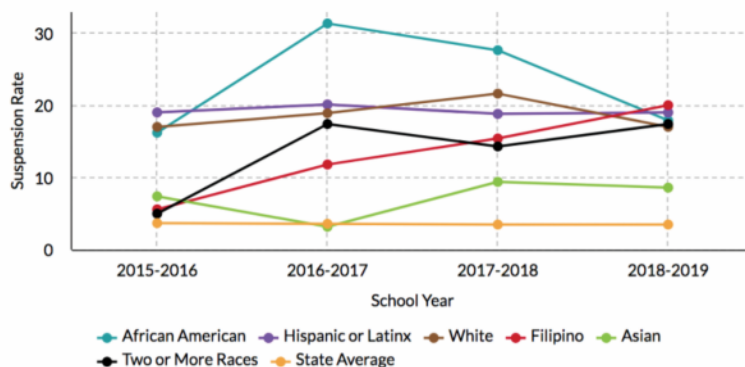


Figure 2.

Suspension Rates by Race/Ethnicity Over Time



allowed us to go more in depth. Based on this data, four main findings stand out:

- The school’s average suspension rate was alarmingly high compared to county and state averages (see Figure 1). Over the last four years, the deaf school’s suspension rate was never lower than 16 percent; the suspension rate for the county and state in which the school was located never reached above 4 percent. In 2018-2019, the most recent school year for which data are available, the state’s average suspension rate was 3.5 percent, the county’s was 3.2 percent, and the deaf school’s was 17.4 percent.
- Overall, students of color were more likely to be suspended than their white peers (see Figure 2). Across the four years, suspension rates varied significantly among ethnic groups; however, every year the highest suspension rates were received by a group of students of color, most frequently by African American and Hispanic/Latinx students. While white students had a high suspension rate, African American and Hispanic/Latinx

students always had an even higher suspension rate. Additional patterns related to race and ethnicity included the following (see Figure 3):

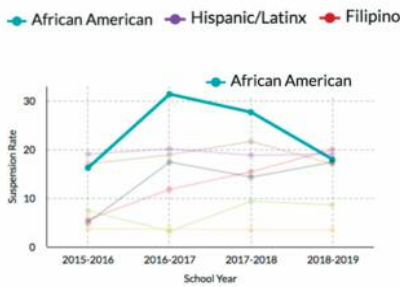
- African American students received the highest suspension rate of all the groups during the last four years. In the 2016-2017 school year, African American students were suspended at a rate of 31.3 percent, a rate much higher than that of Hispanic/Latinx students and white students at 20.1 percent and 18.9 percent, respectively, who were suspended during the same time period.
- While the suspension rate for Hispanic/Latinx students did not fluctuate greatly over the last four years, their rate remained consistently high, never dropping below 18.8 percent.
- Suspension rates for Filipino students continued a steep upward trajectory, increasing from 5.6 percent in 2015-2016 to 20.0 percent in 2018-2019,

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The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at LaMarrT@arc.losrios.edu and legbert@mcDaniel.edu, respectively.

Figure 3.

Suspension Rates for African American, Hispanic/Latinx and Filipino Deaf Students



more than tripling in just four years.

- There were disparities based on gender. Males were suspended at a much higher rate than females (see Figure 4), and African American male students received the highest suspension rate every year (see Figure 5). For each of the last four years, the rates of suspension for African American males were alarming. In the 2016-2017 school year, for example, the suspension rate for African American male students was 43.8 percent.
- The data for the most recent school year presented some positive trends: The most recent suspension data showed a decrease in suspensions compared with the data of previous years. For the 2018-2019 school year, the total suspension rate at the deaf school was 17.4 percent. Although still high, it is lower than the two previous years, although not as low as 2015-2016. Further, compared to the previous year, the 2018-2019 suspension data saw a large decrease in the suspension rate for African American students (over 9 percent) and a slight decrease for white (4.6 percent) and Asian (0.8 percent) students.

The Data Illuminate Social Justice Demands

The data from this school, though perhaps not representative of deaf schools throughout the country, warrants us, as parents and educators, to pay more attention to suspension rates at our nation’s schools for deaf and hard

of hearing students. Of course, suspension may in some cases be necessary, but we need to look at schools for the deaf, just like schools in mainstream education, in light of the negative effect suspensions have on suspended students. To do this, school administrators, teachers, and staff, with the involvement of parents, need to consider what their suspension policies are; they need to consider their suspension rates; and they need to consider if racial, ethnic, or gender disparities exist in policy implementation.

The data may be especially concerning because deaf students of color who received the highest rates of suspension also performed lower academically than Asian and white deaf students at the school (see Figure 6). For example, state data show rates of achievement for Asian and white deaf students in meeting the English Language Arts/Literacy standard that are low—but higher than those of African American and Hispanic/Latinx students. In 2018-2019, for example,

15.38 percent of Asian students and 3.03 percent of white students exceeded the standard, and 7.69 percent of Asian students and 9.09 percent of white students met the standard. In comparison, no African American or Hispanic/Latinx students exceeded the state standard, and not one African American student and only 3.70 percent of Hispanic/Latinx students appear to have met it.

Of course, we recognize that these data are just numbers and do not reveal any full story. Many factors could have an impact on suspension rates. We are unaware of the practices and policies of the school. We are unaware of the reasons for suspensions or the school’s practices and policies related to

Figure 4. Suspension Rates: Males and Females

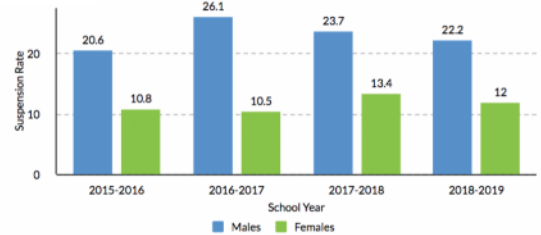


Figure 5. Male Suspension Rate by Race/Ethnicity

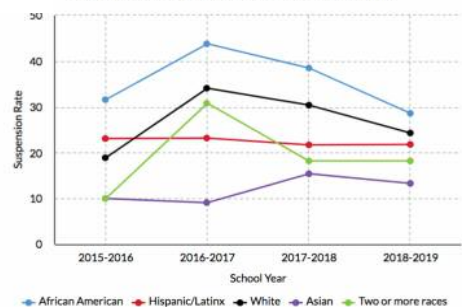
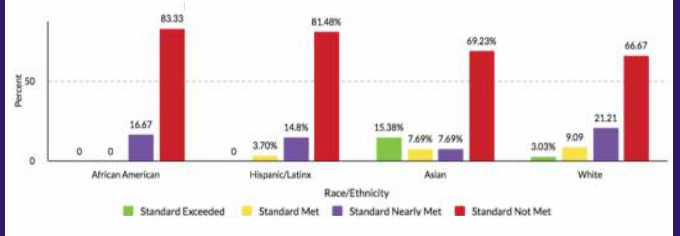


Figure 6. English Language Arts/Literacy (2018-2019)



suspension. We do not know if the school is aware of its suspension rates, the patterns that the rates reflect, or if steps are underway to address the high rate of suspensions.

Fortunately, many research-backed strategies exist that allow a reduction in suspension rates. Schools may help to reduce suspension rates if they:

- Adopt an intervention that encourages teachers and staff to have an empathic mindset about discipline rather than automatically responding punitively toward misbehavior (Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016)
- Practice restorative justice as an alternative to suspensions when students misbehave (Fronius et al., 2016)
- Provide professional development focused on unconscious bias for teachers and staff (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., 2017)
- Enhance school resources to identify and support students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018)
- Adopt a strength-based view of educating African American boys (Wright, 2018)
- Train and support teachers in implementing culturally responsive positive behavior supports (Bal, 2018; Banks & Obiakor, 2015)

Suspension and its implementation are a social justice issue. To create learning environments that foster academic achievement and inclusion, we, as educators who care about the lives of our deaf and hard of hearing students, need to ensure we address the suspension data at our schools. The data for most schools is publically available and can help educators and families bring attention to this too often ignored area of education that has significant

short-term and long-term impacts on all students but especially students of color—and especially those students of color who are male.

Authors' note: Our hope is that this article

will act as a catalyst for educators and parents to look up the suspension rate at their child's school and, if the rate is high, open up a discussion with the school about implementing alternative practices to suspensions.

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Candi Mascia

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Lessons Learned:

A Retired Principal Returning to University Teaching Offers Advice for New Teachers

By Candi Mascia Reed

As I re-enter the university classroom and look back over 40 years of work in deaf education, I've come to see respect for diversity and inclusion as part of a longtime set of values that good teachers bring and have always brought to their classrooms. I had left teaching at the university level to become the principal of a Total Communication program in northern New Jersey. After 16 wonderful years, I wanted to return to the college campus and share what I know with the next generation of teachers.

When I entered a career that would prove challenging and remarkable, there was no educational verbiage about inclusion, social-emotional student growth, ethnic or cultural diversity, or deaf and hard of hearing students with disabilities; and certainly there was no discussion of embracing high expectations for our students. Since that time, it is not only the language that has changed but the very landscape of the classroom—and changed dramatically. Among the changes that teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students face are:

- **More deaf and hard of hearing students from other countries**—This demographic change is one of the biggest. Students from other countries often arrive with little to no formal education and no skills in either speaking or signing. They might not have experienced early intervention, educational interpreting services, technology, or other services we usually take for granted in the United States. Further, communication is not just difficult in the classroom; often parents and caregivers speak or understand little to no English. Their deaf children often find themselves significantly language deprived.

Photos by Matthew Vita



Left: Teachers are increasingly incorporating technology such as SMART Boards® into their classrooms. Here, students with disabilities participate in adaptive physical education (PE) while viewing a video made by the school's PE teacher.

PHOTO CREDIT: CAT VALCOURT-PEARCE

- **More deaf and hard of hearing students with disabilities**—Teachers work with students whose disabilities range from mild to profound, from having slight learning disabilities to significant cognitive disabilities. Teachers learn how to address curriculum standards and implement assessment practices to address the needs of their students with special needs. In concert with others, they find and implement effective and meaningful accommodations and modifications; they craft assessments that measure meaningful progress through grade-level curriculum. Deaf and hard of hearing students with disabilities deserve our attention. Classroom culture, values, and beliefs need to emphasize the same high expectations as teachers have for the general population of deaf and hard of hearing students.
- **Curriculum changes**—No longer are teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and their students relegated to basement classrooms. Gone are the days when no

curriculum existed for deaf and hard of hearing students, and the only classroom books were written specifically and rigidly “for deaf children.” Most importantly, the advent of the Common Core State Standards and federal, local, and school district academic accountability for all students has dominated the educational landscape for the past dozen years.

- **Assessment practices**—Whether our deaf and hard of hearing students find themselves in general educational environments or special education, whether they are educated with each other or in concert with hearing peers, documentation of their progress and the systemic analysis of data are now required; assessments—formative and summative—occur throughout the year. Teachers understand and accept the heightened accountability for both students and teachers, and accept, embrace, and work with those requirements from local, state, and federal initiatives.



Left: Classroom teachers are teaching students from more diverse backgrounds and cultures in today's schools. **Below:** Today's teachers work collegially, collaboratively, and with other education professionals.

- **Role of the teacher**—Today's teachers may be itinerant, collaborative, consultant, or co-teaching with a general education professional. Teachers learn to understand students' backgrounds, meet with parents, learn any new curriculum, and sometimes, with administrator permission, invite parents and caregivers into the classroom and show them their ongoing work with their student. No longer does a teacher find him- or herself alone day after day in a single classroom. Today's teachers work collegially, collaboratively, and in the service of their students with other education professionals. The old expression that "Teachers go into their classrooms and close the door" is no longer true. Today's teachers open the door, invite folks in, learn from other teachers and professionals—and teach them as well. Further, teachers keep learning. They learn all they can about instructional approaches and interventions, resources, and materials. They increase their knowledge of second language acquisition and development and theories and practices, and they keep informed on current research and practices in the field. Some teachers take special education courses, and some hone their communication skills in American Sign Language (ASL), an English-based signing system, or spoken and written English.

- **Technology**—Developments in technology have changed all aspects of education for deaf and hard of hearing students. Teachers can avail themselves of a wide-range of technology resources for instructional practice. Online and web-based activities help increase student knowledge more interactively. E-books and literacy websites help students develop their reading and writing skills as well as self-assess their literacy skills and development. There has



been an increase in the availability of online stories with deaf and hard of hearing characters and engaging SMART Board® technology; a proliferation of interactive online learning programs can be adapted to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students in emerging, developing, and maturing levels.

It is unfortunately true that the low incidence of the deaf and hard of hearing population sometimes precludes the hiring of additional staff or securing of unique resources and materials to provide additional services needed for our students, especially those from other countries. Yet technology has improved, and if a teacher finds that his or her class is predominantly from one ethnic speaking background, many technological aids exist to translate from their language to English or ASL in real time. Often teachers can work with others in their building to use technology to improve the signing literacy, English written literacy, or English-speaking capabilities of those students.

Keeping up with Changes Keeping Important Stuff the Same

One aspect of teaching has not changed: the values and beliefs teachers have and their effect on every classroom. My doctoral dissertation on identifying shared characteristics of effective writing literacy programs demonstrated that a shared culture, values, and beliefs were paramount to providing effective writing literacy education for students. The study was conducted in 2009 at three schools for deaf and hard of hearing students, each school identifying itself as using different communication modalities (oral/aural, Total Communication, or ASL). Looking at aspects of each school's writing literacy program, I found—and still find—a shared school culture, values, and beliefs about literacy to be one of several predominant themes. Each school's specific communication mode was not a variable in the study. (See "Characteristics of an Effective Writing Literacy Program," Reed, 2012.)

As the years went on and I became more comfortable in my role as a school administrator, I found that the particular theme of school culture resonated across a broad spectrum of school topics. School culture, with its implicit set of values and beliefs, affected everyone—me, my teachers, students, staff, and families. It also affected all aspects of student learning: literacy, curriculum development, assessment, professional collegiality, treatment of students and families from other countries, and the needs of

deaf and hard of hearing students with disabilities.

Today, administrators and teachers create, implement, and embrace their school cultures, values, and beliefs while teachers create an individual classroom culture as well. Ideally, this means not only supporting a school culture of educational practices and rituals but also supporting a culture that welcomes diversity in a range of areas, including student race, ethnicity, and gender as well as family socio-economic background and education. In our profession, it also means accepting and working in a positive way within the great communication debates of deaf education.

Another aspect of teaching that has not changed is our determination to improve academic outcomes and close the literacy gap between our deaf and hard of hearing students and their hearing peers. This gap haunted our profession 40 years ago when I was in the classroom. It haunted our profession 16 years ago when I served as an administrator working with talented staff designing, implementing, and creating learning environments, assessments, and resources. It haunts our profession still.

Today, a culture of support exists for each deaf or hard of

**School culture,
with its implicit set
of values and beliefs,
affected everyone—
me, my teachers,
students, staff,
and families.**

hearing student regardless of disability; high expectations are established as a result of the belief in each child's ability to succeed. You feel it when you walk into their classroom. There's an indescribable presence, an intensity yet a lightness of mood. Students feel care, comfort, and welcome. They sense a commitment from the teacher before the teacher expects excellence from them. The teacher demonstrates a love of learning before students are expected to learn. The teaching is flexible and nonthreatening. The feeling is safe and expectant.

Today's teachers work creatively to generate powerful learning environments. They don't just think outside the box, they move the box—and the primary beneficiaries are our deaf and hard of hearing students.

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Gloshanda

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Cheryl Shahan,

PhD, a clinical assistant professor and a faculty member in the deaf education program at the University of Tennessee, works with interns, students, and other faculty members in navigating the social justice-bilingual journey. Shahan taught at the New Mexico School for the Deaf prior to obtaining her doctoral degree from Gallaudet University, which included a focus on sex and gender equity issues.

First Comes a Look at the Self:

INTEGRATING THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE INTO A TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

By Gloshanda Lawyer, Cheryl Shahan, Leala Holcomb, and David H. Smith

For us, social justice in education means that educators can be agents for bringing equity into the everyday lives of people at every level of society. In order for equity to be obtained, teachers and other school personnel must be able to recognize inequities in all forms, including but not limited to gender, race, class, ability, and language. Additionally, teachers and school personnel must be prepared to act against forms of inequity within the classroom in order to promote social change among students and in society as a whole. Striving for a world in which opportunity is equally available to every student has become the goal of classrooms throughout the United States.

The deaf education program at the University of Tennessee, housed in the Theory and Practice in Teacher Education Department, includes an educational interpreting major as well as a deaf education teacher preparation major. In the fall of 2014, we decided to embed the principles of social justice within the content of the deaf education program as well as apply these principles in real-world application specifically within the teacher preparation major. The four authors and Kimberly Wolbers, program director of the Deaf Education Teacher Preparation Program, began working systematically to instill the concept and practice of social justice within our classes. This meant: 1) evaluating our own awareness levels; 2) working collaboratively with faculty and doctoral students; 3) addressing the curriculum, implementing strategies that included selected assignments, materials, resources, and presentations; and 4) addressing faculty and students' readiness and resistance to this process. It meant not just attempting to change the awareness and habits of our students but looking at and perhaps changing ourselves as role models.

Photos and illustration courtesy of Gloshanda Lawyer, Cheryl Shahan, Leala Holcomb, and David H. Smith



Social Justice in the Classroom Evaluating Awareness

Previous research found that many teachers expressed preference for teaching students like themselves (Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992). Therefore, raising teacher candidates' awareness that their preferences and the differences in their identities form their students' identities was an important part of our process. In deaf education settings, this means that most teachers are white while 50 percent of their students are students of color. Most teachers are female while their students range the gender spectrum. Most teachers are English monolinguals having learned American Sign Language (ASL) in school, and most students come from families that do not use English or ASL in their homes. Most teachers are abled while 40 percent of their students have disabilities, and most teachers come from cultures in which the individual is prized over the family or the community while most students come from cultures in which the family or the community is prized over the individual. (See Table 1.)

It is important to recognize that most teachers are different from the majority of their students. Due to the lack of similarities between

teachers and students, it is critical that university preparation programs create opportunities for future or current teachers to recognize that differences in identities matter and to enable young teachers to engage in ongoing self-reflection. Naming the characteristics of those who determine the content and style of the classroom environment is a good starting place in the process of bringing social justice into the classroom and in fostering introspection.

Beyond the Hierarchies Working Collaboratively

Within higher education, power hierarchies exist between faculty and students, even at the doctoral level. One of the ways we applied principles of social justice was through working beyond these typical power hierarchies and establishing a collaborative model. Two doctoral students, both among the authors of this article, served as social justice liaisons, working in concert with the deaf education program faculty. This collaboration included standing meetings, check-ins, discussion sessions, readings, and exchange of materials related to various topics of justice. Some of the topics included: language, gender, race, class,

Leala Holcomb, PhD, is a postdoctoral research associate with the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and a family outreach educator at the California School for the Deaf, Fremont. Holcomb is co-founder of Hands Land, a company that produces and releases American Sign Language rhyming and rhythmic videos on Amazon.

David H. Smith, PhD, a research professor and the director of the Center on Deafness since 2011, is a faculty member in the deaf education program at the University of Tennessee. Previously, Smith was on the faculty of the deaf education program at Fresno State. He also taught at the California School for the Deaf, Riverside. He is co-editor with Thomas Holcomb of *Deaf Eyes on Interpreting* and co-author with Paul Ogden of *The Silent Garden* (3rd Ed.).

The authors welcome questions and comments about this article at glawyer@lamar.edu, cshahan1@utk.edu, lhocom5@vols.utk.edu, and dsmit147@utk.edu, respectively.

Table 1: Characteristics of Teachers and Students in Deaf Education Settings

Most Teachers	Most Students
White	Multiethnic (50 percent students of color)
Native-born	Immigrants (1 in 5 children enrolled in school)
Christian	Not Christian
Monolingual (learned ASL in college)	Home language not English (25 percent from Spanish-language homes)
Middle class	Varying class
Women	Gender spectrum
Heterosexual	Sexual orientation/relationship spectrum
Able-bodied	Dis/abled (40 percent receive services for disabilities)
Individualist	Collectivist

(Gallaudet Research Institute, 2013; Goodwin, 2002; Sleeter, 2008)

and disability.

The liaisons were responsible for providing the materials, leading discussions, and assisting faculty in the areas that the faculty had decided were areas of needed growth or change within the program. In anticipation of tough talk, or “courageous conversations” in the words of researchers Singh and Salazar (2010), we realized the importance of trust and open-mindedness in introducing this issue, particularly when we used information based on the experiences of individuals with diverse backgrounds.

We rely on each other for information and resources that best fit certain assignments in the course, and reach out to each other and other colleagues for support. We constantly provide check-ins, acknowledge the possibility of us causing harm without realizing it, and explicitly invite colleagues and students to hold us accountable when our words, whether signed or spoken, or actions cause harm.

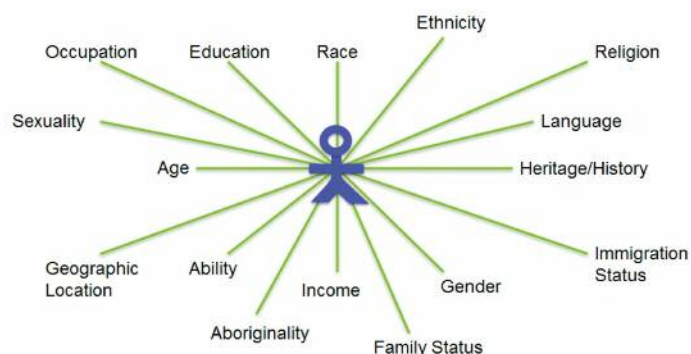
Practical Strategies Addressing Curriculum

We have used various strategies to incorporate the concepts of social justice into our courses. These include:

- **PowerPoint presentations**—We include representation from different communities in the PowerPoint presentations and highlight different perspectives of various groups through pictures or texts. We even have a slide for a “Social Justice Pause,” allowing students to take time to reflect on any given topic through the social justice lens.
- **Assignments**—We ask students to focus on gender, race, and disability in their field logs or class observations. We also ask that their notes focus on the following:
 - *Communication and identity*—This means observing turn-taking between the teacher and students and between peers and encouraging peer-to-peer interaction.
 - *Social dynamics*—This means observing the way students interact with each other and group themselves as well as observing the way the teacher groups students in terms of gender, race, and disability. Does the teacher call on some students more than others? How does the teacher work to include all students?
- **Materials**—These include dolls representing various races, cultures, and sexes, including Asian, African American, and Muslim; books accurately representing diverse communities; and pictures and videos that include people from different backgrounds.

Figure 1: Living Document

A Living Document: Your Anti-Bias Journey



(Please note this list is not exhaustive)

Source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

- **Dynamics**—Teachers plan mindful interactions among students with various backgrounds and characteristics; they address any progress or uncomfortable feelings or resistance openly as a class.
- **Course topics**—All courses can include a social justice component, including science, social studies, and math. Teachers can address famous female scientists; they can explore cultures or facts about history and current events. They can even make sure to use names from various cultures in math word problems.
- **Inclusion in our lesson plan template**—Our lesson plan template has a section reserved for social justice considerations. We observe students’ ability to embed social justice in their lessons and provide feedback or even share additional resources.

students are asked to convert and record on video the written responses in ASL. The questions we ask are in response to

Developing a Living Document Recognizing Resistance

The Living Document, a tool that helps measure and monitor student awareness of social justice, was developed by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. The Living Document also helped guide our own introspection. The exercise of completing the document—which represents different aspects of an individual human being, including gender, education, geographic origin, and ethnicity—enabled us to draw from a variety of sources and develop discussions that furthered our own self-reflection. (See Figure 1.)

We also used the Living Document with our students. We told them that it would help them document their individual journey toward understanding self, others, and the world. It would neither be graded nor corrected. The Living Document positions students to contemplate topics they may have never thought about, and it places social justice at the forefront of their thoughts. Over the first few courses, the Living Document presents the students with questions to answer privately in writing, such as: *What is privilege, and what are your privileges? What is social justice, and what are your responsibilities in supporting social justice? What does power have to do with fairness and justice?* Eventually,

Table 2. Moving Toward Social Justice: Questions to Spur Self-Reflection

We ask our students to contemplate the following questions and to eventually record their responses in ASL.

1. What is oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, audism, heteronormativity, classism) and what are its causes? What are the factors that create an imbalance of power within a culture?
2. Is it ever necessary to question the status quo? Why or why not? When is it appropriate to challenge the beliefs or values of society?
3. What is privilege and what are your privileges?
4. What is social justice and what are your responsibilities to support it?
5. What does power have to do with fairness and justice? Do we have choices concerning fairness and justice? What allows some individuals to take a stand against prejudice/oppression while others choose to participate in it?
6. What does it mean to be harmed by stereotypes or to be a member of a subordinated group? In what ways can subordinated groups keep the larger cultures aware of their issues?
7. When should an individual or a group take a stand against what he/she/ze/they believe to be an injustice in opposition to an individual and/or larger group? What do you view as the most effective ways to take a stand against injustices?
8. What are the benefits and consequences of questioning and challenging social order? How does conflict lead to change?
9. How did power, privilege, and oppression play out in the history of deaf education? What about the current state of deaf education? What do you think “liberation” means to deaf people of all identities in deaf education?
10. What is your subjectivity, positionality, and reflexivity to Deaf communities (or communities that you serve)? What is the potential harm of your presence and involvement in deaf education (or communities that you serve)?

Note: Several of the above questions were derived from <https://kennedysclass.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/essential-questions.pdf>.



Teaching the Teachers A Process of Learning

This process has brought us to some uncomfortable places; however, social justice is irrelevant when it is entirely theoretical and rooted in good feelings. What has helped us move through our disagreements, painful conversations, and feelings of disconnection in relationships and trust is our ongoing commitment to the vision of social justice. We understand that allyship—the concept that we can leverage individual and collective power to stand in support of individuals denied equality—is a verb and a journey in itself, which means we must continue to grow, learn, and repair relationships along the way as professionals working with each other and our students.

As we look back, we realize that our students may wonder if we are familiar enough with society’s injustices to look at issues through a social justice lens in our classes. Our students may even want to wait until we—and they—become “experts” in social justice. We gently remind them that social (in)justice happens every day regardless of what we do, that it is important for us to try to identify social injustice and combat it, and that making mistakes along the way is inevitable. It is our hope that current and future teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students gain the social consciousness and motivation to address issues of social injustice—and social justice—in their classrooms.

contemplating oppression—including racism, sexism, audism, and classism—and their own responsibilities in fostering social justice within their communities and classrooms. (See Table 2.) After reading students’ responses, we have a better understanding of each student’s level of self-reflection and awareness. For example, working with the Living Documents allowed us to see that some students struggle with the idea of having cultural privileges. This finding guides our instruction by steering us toward the commitment of embedding lessons, stories, guest speakers, and readings to deepen these students’ awareness.

When students gain new information about social justice from our classes or experience beyond the classroom, they go back to their Living Documents to reflect on their experience. This process is recursive, becoming part of our ongoing anti-bias journey as teachers and students. Without a doubt, the Living Document assignment provides ample information about whether we are effective in weaving social justice into the design of all courses in the program.

The Living Document serves as a form of formative assessment. While in the thick of our courses, we use it to see how our students are progressing in their understanding of social justice. Additionally, while students are developing lesson plans, we pose questions on “social justice considerations” such as: *Does this lesson promote positive self-identity, encourage students to learn about who they are/where they come from/their heritage and/or identities, and/or help students recognize and develop language to describe unfairness in society? How can you assist (other) students in feeling safe or even brave to share this information with each other?*

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Julie Tibbitt, EdS, is the principal of the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford, Conn., and a doctoral candidate in the Education Department at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., where she earned her education specialist degree in critical studies. She has a strong interest in making sure assessment is accurate and used to guide the instruction of deaf and hard of hearing learners, especially those with unique cultural, academic, social, and physical needs. Tibbitt welcomes questions and comments about this article at Julie.Tibbitt@asd-1817.org.

Formative Assessment:

A Tool for Closing Achievement Gaps in Diverse Classrooms

By Julie Tibbitt

Sometimes our deaf and hard of hearing students, especially those from communities in which adults seek personal, societal, and financial recognition, struggle to show academic success. This is too often reflected in standardized tests, including those focused on reading, as they highlight reading gaps instead of content knowledge (Luckner & Bowen, 2006). This means that too many deaf and hard of hearing students often do not show age-appropriate academic achievement, and schools have copious data on how deaf and hard of hearing students—especially those of color or those with additional disabilities—are not performing.

As a former teacher and now a principal, I have sat through hundreds of Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and observed as students nervously watched the sharing of the results of their evaluations and saw that they made only modest gains in literacy or mathematics. However, the modesty of these gains was partly a result of the way the data is sought, compiled, and reported. The bulk of data comes from standardized tests and tasks, such as journal writing, weekly vocabulary and spelling quizzes, homework completion, rubric-graded essays, and class tests based on questions that rely on multiple choice or matching. Despite its problematic nature, such data remain the building blocks of the goals and objectives that guide each student's IEP for a full year. Further, too often these

Photos courtesy of Julie Tibbitt



Left and below: The relationship between teacher and student matters during formative assessment. Here, teachers take the time to check on the students' understanding during performance tasks.



goals are superficially written and rely greatly on quantity over quality. This does not bode well for students' self-esteem, and it stymies deaf education professionals who want to show hard data of successful outcomes.

Formative Assessment: A Building Block for Success and Parity

One way that teachers can combat this dilemma and at the same time improve individual performance is through the use of formative assessment. Some educators shrink from terms that indicate formalized evaluation or testing, and formal assessment remains underutilized by teachers and administrators, including those in special education (Black & Wiliam, 1998a). Yet assessment has always been part of effective instruction. In fact, without assessment, instruction cannot exist.

Assessment—or evaluation or testing—should not come only after the instruction has already taken place. It should be incorporated throughout the learning of each lesson.

Formative assessment simply means assessing students at intervals as they tackle specific goals rather than waiting to administer an assessment when the lesson plan proclaims that a goal should have been reached. It means continual assessment prior to IEP meetings. Using assessment in this manner not only measures student learning, it can help guide

it. With formative assessment, teachers use various tools and strategies to determine what students know, identify gaps in their understanding, and plan future instruction (Pinchok & Brandt, 2009). For example, an expertly done diagnostic interview during math class can unveil precisely how a student's mind might be processing information during subtraction exercises. This would allow the teacher to immediately address any misconceptions. Thus, formative assessment can function like a GPS of instruction, guiding teacher and student toward a given destination.

Further, using formative assessment reminds educators to structure teaching through students' strengths rather than through their perceived deficits. As assessment continues, interactive dialogue between teacher and student becomes the hallmark of instruction. Research indicates that this can make a difference in the learning experience of typically underachieving students, such as students of color and students with disabilities (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). A particular study revealed that low-achieving students and students with learning disabilities who received frequent assessment feedback increased their efforts and tackled more challenging tasks (Fuchs et al., 1997). Black and Wiliam (1998a) reviewed 250 empirical research studies involving classroom assessment and found that formative assessment



Above: Children’s curiosity is formative, meant to be shaped and guided by those who believe in them.

unequivocally raised the caliber of learning for students, especially students with learning disabilities and other underachievers. A few studies that focused particularly on self-assessment and peer assessment—two strategies of formative assessment—found improved outcomes among elementary students in their oral reading rates and writing composition; the key difference was that these students received immediate feedback either from self-monitoring or from their classmates.

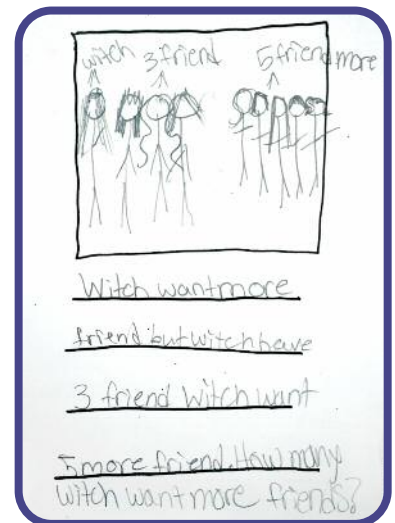
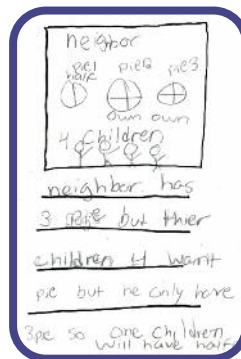
In a follow-up study to their literature review, Black and Wiliam (2004) provided in-service training to more than two dozen teachers across two school districts on the use of three specific types of formative assessment: questioning, feedback, and self/peer assessment. Ultimately, they found that enhanced and more frequent interaction between teachers and students led to substantial learning gains. In addition, most of the teachers felt that their instructional practices improved, and two schools even adopted a policy of giving constructive feedback in lieu of grades on homework. This lends credence to Butler’s 1988 study across high- and low-achieving students; performance for such students improved when they received comments with their grades instead of receiving grades alone.

Hattie & Timperley (2007) also wrote about the power of feedback. To be effective, feedback must be intertwined with a clear purpose; teachers need to understand and connect the feedback tangibly with the lessons on which they are working, and they need to keep the feedback specific (e.g., commenting on the way a student uses transition words in a composition essay is more effective than commenting on that student’s overall writing style).

Implementation: For Every Age

Formative assessment can be used with students of every age and cognitive level. Assessment focuses on continually modeling and engaging with the child and emphasizing the process of doing a task or learning a skill rather than on the end result (e.g., asking a young child to talk about his or her drawing brings substantially different results than merely exclaiming, “Oh, wow! Is that a dog?”). In formative assessment, teachers may gently ask the child if he or she has any different or better ways of doing his or her work (e.g., addition exercises). This may seem like a rather simple question and it might not even yield a useful response, but if it is done repeatedly and over time, it helps students eventually learn how to ask similar questions on their own—and even catch themselves in the act of doing something incorrectly and correcting it.

Formative assessment lends itself to higher-level problem solving. When I taught elementary math, I loved asking students to compose their own word problems. This was my favorite way to gain insight into their conceptual understanding. I would usually require that students incorporate five elements into their problems—numbers, key words, a drawing, a number sentence, and a statement of the whole problem in a way that made sense—and I would make sure their problems made sense to them. These five elements, if each correctly done and put together well, would deliver a solidly written word problem. Creating word problems is a higher-level task than merely having students respond to number drills. Students think creatively and even reason explicitly about structure in order to design and write a math problem; they actively construct authentic meaning. If there is a gap in the student’s concept, it becomes clear as student and teacher confront the problem; and this in turn creates teachable moments. These teachable moments allow for teacher and student collaboration, discovery, and reflection.



Above and right: Too often a teacher or parent may get sidetracked with the quality of writing and overlook the target of the lesson—mathematical conceptual understanding.



Frequently, teachers and service providers express concerns that students do not appear to retain skills taught in earlier grades. As a result, educators feel obligated to reteach the same skills or simply move on to the next unit, leaving behind significant conceptual gaps. Sometimes the cause for this is language delay or some other circumstance beyond the school's control. The first step in addressing such gaps would be to abandon the widespread belief that knowledge must come before understanding. For example, if a fifth grade student cannot memorize basic multiplication facts, the origins of this struggle might be viewed not only in neurological terms but also cultural origins (Ben-Yehuda, Lavy, Linchevski, & Sfarid, 2005). Exposing the student to accessible and tangible discourse and using multiplication across different content areas can lead the student to new connections and better understanding. Using frequent feedback, one of the hallmarks of formative assessment, allows a teacher to reach expertly into a student's perceptions on multiplication as well as coach on the type of tools, not always rote memorization, which might be used to find the solution.

A Win-Win: Assessing Assessment

Although there is limited literature on the use of formative assessment among deaf and hard of hearing learners, a strong consensus exists that relying exclusively on standardized assessment offers limited benefits. Scholarly research has consistently pointed to formative assessment as a more promising practice for high-quality education. Further, federal laws promote formative assessment as a research-evident means of improving learning outcomes for all students with disabilities (Madison-Harris & Muoneke, 2012).

Formative assessment is part of a commitment to using inclusive practices in the classroom. Through ongoing evaluation and guidance, formative assessment allows us to reach and educate every single student. With the multiple and intersectional identities of the students that educators serve, the learning process benefits from consistent social-cultural awareness and application. This is integral to formative assessment; it functions like a process in which the knowledge, interests, and experiences of our diverse students drive instruction and allow teaching through students' strengths rather than through their weaknesses.

As a professional educator, I feel ethically obligated to showcase our students in a manner that highlights their abilities and to help them see themselves in a positive light.

After all, our diverse students have enormous potential. Someday, they will be the ones handling our needs. While we can provide fair and thorough assessment to ensure appropriate education, it is up to us to take a step further and use formative assessment to elevate the teaching and learning experience, especially for students of color and those who have disabilities.

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Fostering Equity and Inclusion at the Clerc Center and Gallaudet University: Three Perspectives

By Lisa Montalvo, Taiyabah Naeem, and Lia Bengtson

Lisa Montalvo,

NCC, LPC, has worked as a counselor and therapist for nearly 20 years both in school and mental health settings. For the last 12 years, she has worked at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. Montalvo is very much involved in the Deaf Hispanic, Latino, and Latinx communities and provides support and resources to individual community members.

Taiyabah (Tai)

Naeem, MS, is a project manager at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. A former high school science teacher, she has taught high school chemistry and medical terminology at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf. Naeem grew up in Toronto, Canada, and attended mainstreamed schools. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Gallaudet and her master's degree in deaf education from McDaniel College in Westminster, Md.

In February 2019, a counselor, a project manager, and a teacher from the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center were chosen as inclusive excellence ambassadors to the Gallaudet University Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. As inclusive excellence ambassadors, Lisa Montalvo, Taiyabah Naeem, and Lia Bengtson believe the division's motto that in diversity there is strength and beauty; and they are committed to strengthening diversity—with its strength and beauty—in the Gallaudet community.

Researchers have found that students of color on predominantly white campuses struggle with underrepresentation, social isolation, academic hurdles, and racial stereotyping from both their peers and their teachers (New, 2016; Foundation for Art & Healing, n.d.). Assimilation into the larger culture without devaluing one's own culture is a challenge for these students. It is also a challenge for students who may experience similar difficulty due to their ethnicity, national origin, economic or social deprivation, sexual orientation, or intersectionality.

A prime issue is communication. For deaf and hard of hearing students who are new to the United States, communication with their families may be difficult. While learning American Sign Language (ASL) is a challenge for many hearing families, it presents an especially significant challenge for many immigrant families as the adults, like their children, are learning English. ASL classes, parent support groups, classroom accommodations, and resources are usually geared toward those whose families already know English; for non-English speakers, they may be hard or even impossible to find. For this reason, providing a diverse professional staff in schools and programs that serve deaf and hard of hearing students may be especially important. These individuals—administrators, teachers, and staff—can have an outsized impact on students. When students can connect with knowledgeable professionals from their own communities, understanding and personal bonds may form more easily. The guidance that these individuals offer students can mean the difference between success and struggle in the next important phase of their lives.

In this article, co-authors Montalvo, Naeem, and Bengtson each reflect on the ways in which they have been able to support deaf and hard of hearing students and allow others to see the importance of having diverse professionals in our school community.

Photos by Matthew Vita



1

Helping Parents Trust the School More

By Lisa Montalvo, School Counselor

“When everyone at school is speaking one language, and a lot of your classmates’ parents also speak it, and you go home and see that your community is different—there is a sense of shame attached to that. It really takes growing up to treasure the specialness of being different.”

~ Sonia Sotomayor

My family did not know that I was deaf until I was 2 years old. It was devastating news. They had no idea how to raise a deaf child. We lived in Philadelphia then, and they sought help at Temple University. My family’s language was Spanish, but at Temple the professionals told my family not to speak Spanish to me. They wanted my parents and me to use English and for us to learn ASL, too. They felt that trying to teach me Spanish, English, and ASL at the same time would be confusing. Unfortunately, my father told my mom that they would not learn ASL. He felt that speech and speech therapy with the help of hearing aids were the best options for his deaf daughter. Both of my parents felt that talking with hearing people would give me a better education.

My parents came from Puerto Rico, but I did not know anything about Puerto Rican culture as a small child. My family knew another Puerto Rican family with a deaf

Lia Bengtson, MA, has taught social studies to middle school students at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School in Washington, D.C., for seven years. She earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education and cultural anthropology from Beloit College in Beloit, Wis., and her master’s degree in deaf education from Gallaudet University. Bengtson is one of the founding members of the Social Justice Committee at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center.

Montalvo, Naeem, and Bengtson welcome questions and comments about this article at Lisa.Montalvo@gallaudet.edu, Taiyabah.Naeem@gallaudet.edu, and Lia.Bengtson@gallaudet.edu, respectively.

Above, left: Inclusive excellence ambassadors Naeem, Bengtson, and Montalvo discuss ways of supporting deaf and hard of hearing students and professionals in the school community.

daughter. Her name was Noemi. I was 5 years old, and Noemi was a teenager. I was always excited to see her; I could relate to her so easily. Noemi knew signs, but my mother, who still wanted me to rely solely on speech to communicate, told her not to sign to me. We signed anyway. We would sneak away and hide. Noemi taught me fingerspelling and signs. Looking back, I realize that my special friendship with Noemi was the start of my identity development. We didn't talk about identity or culture; we didn't know our heritage. We just enjoyed each other in the special way that two people from the same culture sometimes do. We shared a communication and a connection that was beneath the surface. We didn't question it; we simply knew it was there.

I only began thinking about my identity as an adult when I began working as a school counselor at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD), the high school on the Gallaudet University campus. MSSD has a diverse student population. I remember sitting down for a counseling session with one of my students who was Hispanic/Latino/Latinx*. The student had expressed frustration that her family wanted her to come home after school every day, and, as a result, she missed the opportunity to participate in after-school activities. This interaction caused me to reflect on my own upbringing. My family also wanted me at home when I could be there, and I had also found it frustrating. However, I now realize that our culture—the Hispanic/Latino/Latinx culture—places a strong value on family. We tend to have large, close-knit families, and we tend to gather with them often. It is not uncommon for three generations to live in the same household or at least have homes near each other. Even as adults, we pay attention to our parents, and grandparents often play an important role in their grandchildren's upbringing. After my session with this student, I realized how important it is to interact with Hispanic/Latino/Latinx students and to encourage exploration and learning about our culture.

MSSD sent several students to various events and conferences to help them learn more about our culture and connect with other deaf and hard of hearing Hispanic/Latino/Latinx community members. Our students came back with a stronger sense of identity and feeling more proud of themselves as Hispanic/Latino/Latinx individuals. Gallaudet has a Latinx Student Union and a Manos Unidas, and our students participate in some of their activities.

As I am a Latina myself, I am able to help the parents of my students understand that they may not need to hold quite so tightly to their growing children. I can help put them at ease, and once they are at ease, they may see how important it is to



Above: Lisa Montalvo

let their deaf or hard of hearing child grow and learn. Parents have responded positively to finding out that I am on campus for their children. When one family found out that I am Puerto Rican, they were near tears. “God blessed you, my angel,” they said in Spanish. They trusted MSSD more because at least one of its adult professionals came from their own culture. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, whom we call a “Nuyoricán” as she is a Puerto Rican who was born in New York, is one of my role-models. She wrote a children’s book called *Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You*. Sotomayor’s advice is simply to encourage children to “just ask” if they see someone different from themselves.

This advice applies to my students at MSSD and to deaf and hard of hearing students around the United States who may be unsure of their identities, their family’s culture, or their background; it’s okay to ask.

From my experience working with students, I realized that my parents did their best. They expressed how proud they were of me, and they expressed some regrets; they’ve said that they wish they could have done some things differently. I am grateful for them. They are the reason I became a counselor and am able to share my experiences as a deaf Puerto Rican.

**“Hispanic/Latino/Latinx” is used throughout this article to allow for inclusivity. “Hispanic” refers to native speakers of Spanish or those individuals who have Spanish-speaking ancestry. “Latino” refers to individuals who are from or descended from people from Latin America. “Latinx” is a gender-neutral term used to refer to people of Latin American cultural or racial identity in the United States; it encompasses those who identify outside of the gender binary, such as transgender people or those who are gender-fluid.*

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2

Taking Charge, Building Pride

By Taiyabah Naeem, Project Manager

“The bravest are the ones who know they have the power but don’t abuse it. Instead, they use their power to help empower others.”

- Tanveer Ahmed Naeem (the author’s father)

“*Pani pina, meri pyari beti,*” my mom would tell me. Her words translate to, “Drink water, my sweet daughter,” and in Pakistan, this is a way to acknowledge a beloved little child in the Urdu language. I was deaf and could not hear her, but I could read her lips and I understood.

I was the only deaf child in my Punjabi Muslim Pakistani family in Toronto, Canada. My parents, whose languages were Urdu, Punjabi, and English, did not know I was deaf until I was 2 years old. They learned this from medical doctors, and they were immediately told that they should not teach me in Urdu or Punjabi. Further, they were not to teach me in ASL, and they were to keep me away from schools for deaf students. I was to be educated only in English, the dominant language of the hearing Canadian community, and to go to our neighborhood school in which spoken language was dominant and all of the students were hearing. This advice had lifelong negative repercussions, not just for me but for my parents, their parents, my younger brothers, and now for my parents’ grandchildren. However, this was the early 1980s and my parents simply believed the doctors. They stopped using their traditional languages at home. Instead, they morphed themselves into being as “English” as possible. This must have been a terrible hardship for them, and it shut off much of our culture to me. I was the oldest child and when English became the language of our home, my brothers were denied our parents’ languages as well. Today, I know my parents did their best, but they still wish they had never listened to the doctors.

Despite being denied its language, we participated in our culture in other ways, dressing up in beautiful traditional suits

and attending Pakistani events that were filled with wonderful music and delicious, spicy food. I appreciated and loved the beauty of these events, and I know that I was blessed to be raised in such an environment. While English surrounded us, my parents and I were exposed to other languages, too—Urdu, Punjabi, and French. There was no way to completely escape that part of ourselves no matter how hard my parents tried.

I knew that my family and I also faced a lot of barriers and challenges, including racism, as individuals in North America who came from a South Asian country. I was always aware that something about my culture and my skin color made me different from other North Americans, and the difference was not regarded in a positive way.

I did not learn ASL until I was 24 years old. That’s when I arrived at Gallaudet University and began to pick up this language that I wish I had known all my life. At Gallaudet, I also began to understand that I had been denied another culture in addition to that of my parents: Deaf culture. Being at Gallaudet and learning ASL opened up a whole wonderful world for me. I no longer felt alone or misunderstood. I met so many inspiring people—deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing—including children of deaf adults (CODAs).

However, as a person from South Asia, I lived in brown skin, and the others around me usually did not. It had been ingrained in me that to succeed in life, I had to behave and act as “westernized” as possible. Somehow I had conflated the comparative lightness of everyone else’s skin with what it meant to be westernized, so while I perfected my English and my ASL and eventually became successful in my academic and professional life, I felt a deep void that I could not explain. I began to recognize and understand the cause of this void when I began teaching science at MSSD, the high school on Gallaudet’s campus. At MSSD, I was privileged to work in a diverse environment. For the first time, I was engaged with students of color from various backgrounds. Some of them were Hispanic and some were Asian, including a few from South Asia like me; they were students who also struggled to balance their Deaf identities and what it means to be a brown person in the North American Deaf community.

At one point, an Indian teacher and I met with the South Asian students. We established an ongoing dialogue, and it was during these dialogues that I began to realize that I carried shame related to my ethnic background. In South Asia—India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and other countries—most people have brown skin. This is the color of my parents’ skin and of my own. My shame



Above: Taiyabah Naeem

was conflated with being from another country. It intensified when I would see my mother criticized for speaking broken English with an accent when she tried to advocate for me in schools and hospitals, and when I would see my father appealing his western peers, neighbors, and friends to ensure we were on good terms with them because speaking up for ourselves might mean we would risk losing our jobs and our livelihood and face retaliation. I felt shame when I was bullied by hearing peers for not understanding English when the truth was that I couldn't hear people when they were speaking English to me and when people criticized my signing or speaking abilities. I was ashamed of being deaf, of being brown, and of being of Pakistani descent. Work and counseling transformed that shame into pride, though I still experience it vicariously; it sweeps over me like a wave when South Asian and other minority students describe their painful experiences in the countries from which they fled, only to come to the United States and be told that they should change or shorten their names because they sound "odd" or that they are "too complicated" or when I see adults making fun of South Asians. That shame continues to seep into my life in various ways in both the deaf and hearing worlds.

Last year, I was on a panel for the Metro South Asian Deaf Association (MSADA) that represents deaf and hard of hearing people from South Asian countries. I had the opportunity to listen to others share their life experiences and what it means to be a deaf or hard of hearing person of color in an environment that is primarily made up of individuals who are not of color. Together, we united a group of South Asian deaf youths to discuss their lives and experiences, beginning with recognizing and accepting their real names and their life experiences both in the United States and in their parents' places of birth. This experience was inspiring and increased my passion to make a difference in the lives of those who are underrepresented and from traditionally underserved backgrounds. I felt such pride when I finally had an opportunity to work with a deaf South Asian manager and another teacher, both of whom are women, and together we took charge of various curriculum and teaching projects at the Clerc Center. I also felt pride when I attended the MSADA gala at Gallaudet in October 2018. I saw people that looked like me wearing gorgeous traditional outfits all in one place and signing beautifully. I remember wanting to cry out of sheer happiness. I had finally found my people—they were South Asian, deaf, brown, and just like me.

Deaf and hard of hearing children of color throughout the nation need to know that they are not alone and that they can be proud of who they are and achieve success.

It's one thing to be a person of color. It's another thing to be a Deaf person of color who continues to journey in a world that is designed to support hearing people and place them in a position of privilege because they have "better English" or because they "know more" and have "been here longer." A system that was designed to support this particular group intentionally or unintentionally shames and oppresses other marginalized groups; unfortunately, it permeates our communities today, including the Deaf community. That cycle cannot be broken unless we continue to speak up, fight, and advocate for equality—especially for our deaf and hard of

hearing children from diverse backgrounds. We need role models in our educational system, more deaf and hard of hearing people of color as teachers, professionals, educators, and administrators to lead these children and instill hope, respect, and pride for their heritage and cultural backgrounds all while making a difference in the Deaf community. Deaf and hard of hearing teachers and educators of color also need to have the opportunities and ongoing support throughout their professional lives. This means having all of us, as human beings of all colors and backgrounds, attend conferences and gatherings to discuss these deeply painful and complex issues.

As a member of the Deaf community, I believe that there is room to heal, move forward, and learn from each other's experiences. Deaf and hard of hearing children of color throughout the nation need to know that they are not alone and that they can be proud of who they are and achieve success. However, the first step begins with us as adults trying to understand their pain and to create a path to help them lead the way.

Cruelty lies in the fact that my parents were robbed of the opportunity to pass along their language to their children. It also lies in the fact that this happens to many deaf South Asian children. I will never forget the pain in the eyes of a MSSD student of South Asian descent when he signed to me, "That is not my real name. My real name is the one that my parents from India gave me. I don't want to change my name to fit other people's lives because it's easier for them. I want them to accept me for who I am and where I am from." I also had a young Pakistani deaf girl say to me, "I may be deaf, brown, and wearing a hijab, but I am worthy of love and respect, too."

Hope lies in the fact that organizations exist for deaf and hard of hearing individuals from South Asian communities, and we are committed to working for equality and justice. Together, we will succeed.

3

Teaching Through a Social Justice Perspective

By Lia Bengtson, Social Studies Teacher

A historian must pick and choose among facts, deciding which ones to put into his or her work, which ones to leave out, and which ones to place at the center of the story. Every historian's own ideas and beliefs go into the way he or she writes history. In turn, the way history is written can shape the ideas and beliefs of the people who read it.

- Howard Zinn; adapted by Rebecca Stefoff,
A Young People's History of the United States

For the first 13 years of my education, I never had a teacher of color. As a hearing, Korea-born, transnational adoptee who grew up in the suburbs of St. Paul, Minn., I had many friends who were also adopted from South Korea, but the schools I went to and the neighborhoods I lived in were predominantly white. The standard educational curriculum I experienced—from the mid-1990s to mid-2000s—reflected little to none of my identity or experiences.

When I got to college, I had my first taste of being a participant in my own learning. For the first time, I was allowed to question, investigate, and learn about matters that I chose. As a double major in elementary education and cultural anthropology at Beloit College in Beloit, Wis., I had the opportunity to delve into concepts of whiteness and white privilege through my anthropology classes—to explore how society and history have been dominated by the limited perspective of the dominant culture that we refer to as “white,” and how less dominant voices have too often been ignored or erased.

Now I teach social studies to middle school students at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. I also serve as an inclusive excellence ambassador for the Clerc Center. I am able to use my position to help create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment, primarily

through the way I believe is most important: working with our nation's youth.

By focusing social studies education on social justice and teaching history from diverse perspectives, my students gain the tools to build a more equitable society. My ultimate goal as a teacher is to equip my students to become independent, critical thinkers. As deaf and hard of hearing students, they are largely marginalized within our society; 75 percent are students of color, and these students are perhaps further marginalized. Their history is all but ignored in standard textbooks. Helping them to understand, like Howard Zinn, whose quote begins this article, that history is inherently biased gives them a tool to see how our national narrative relates to them. To be informed thinkers, I tell them, we must examine who wrote the texts we read and from what perspective a story is being told (e.g., those who conquer and those who are conquered will have decidedly different experiences, tell dramatically different stories, and write vastly different texts).

It is crucial to provide my students with a variety of experiences and perspectives that can demonstrate the relevance of history to their lives. I am so fortunate that my school is located in our nation's capital, where I can provide a range of these experiences to my students (e.g., when we

were focusing on world religions, I had my students research one of the five major world religions and then provided them with the opportunity to interview a person of that religion either in person or via videophone).

One year, my students established an electronic pen pals partnership with the Bajaj Institute of Learning, a Deaf school in India, and we exchanged a number of videos with students there. The Bajaj Institute is one of a few deaf schools in India that uses Indian Sign Language in its instruction, and the exchange provided a great way to expose my students to a different sign language as well as introduce them to the geography, religion, and culture of India. On opposite sides of the world, we videotaped our students—who were all about

the same age—asking and responding to questions such as: *What is your favorite food? Does your family sign? What is your favorite sport? What do you do on the weekends?* At the end of the semester, we exchanged a box full of handmade cards, small gifts, and favorite snacks. The Indian students sent us ties, which are part of their school uniform, and hand-stitched pouches.

For the past two years, KDES's middle school has



Above: Lia Bengtson

participated in the Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools. With the help of resources from the Zinn Education Project, which provides free teaching materials for middle schools and high schools, I have also been able to engage my students in social justice-oriented activities and projects. The Zinn Education Project provides materials that introduce students to a more accurate and complex understanding of U.S. history and emphasizes the role of working people, women, people of color, and organized social movements not found in the traditional curriculum (Zinn Education Project, 2019).

This year, my class is focused on U.S. history, and my goal is to provide my students with the opportunity to learn the history of the United States from diverse perspectives—perspectives that I was not privy to as a child. I attend events hosted by the D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice, which partners with Teaching for Change and the Zinn Education Project. Through these workshops, I have found great resources that focus on anti-bias, multi-perspective education.

As I have increasingly integrated this content into my

teaching, I have found my students to be very responsive. They are open-minded, curious, and willing to learn from one another. The positive response from my students, combined with my own early lack of access to a curriculum that reflected a diversity of experience, gives me the drive to continue my efforts to foster openness and diversity in my classroom while deepening my students' critical-thinking skills. Further, when students grasp that historical events have relevance to their lives, they are empowered to be reflective about what they read. The goal is to help them become active participants in their own learning and voices in their own future, which is, of course, our country's future history.

Reference

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GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

REGIONAL CENTERS

Through partnerships with the Gallaudet University Regional Centers' (GURCs) host institutions, the regional centers share Gallaudet's undergraduate and graduate programs and the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's resources and expertise through training programs, workshops and conferences, youth programs, technical assistance, and consultation.

For more information, please contact national.outreach@gallaudet.edu.

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Seeking Submissions for the 2021 Issue of *Odyssey*

THEME: Transformative Practices in Instruction, Collaboration, and Administration



The next issue of *Odyssey* will focus on how schools, professionals, and families have been transforming the learning experiences of deaf and hard of hearing students as we move into the third decade of the 21st century. Education is undergoing profound changes that involve not only interpersonal and technological skills but also new practices and strategies aimed at dismantling systemic racism, addressing inequities, and effecting restorative justice. What innovative practices have been adopted that address the numerous demands for academic success and social-emotional well-being that have arisen?

What are we doing to ensure all deaf and hard of hearing students with diverse backgrounds and skills have access to rich educational opportunities and experiences involving STEAM, makerspace approaches, and other emphases on career readiness alongside long-standing concerns for language acquisition and learning? What does literacy development for deaf and hard of hearing students look like when their textbooks have been replaced with electronic texts? How has social media been leveraged in language-rich learning contexts with increased emphasis on visual images, inclusion of captions, and video content in American Sign Language and other sign languages? How do deaf and hard of hearing students navigate social-emotional exchanges in virtual environments along with those in real-world settings?

We want to know:

- How have priorities shifted, and how have we been transforming students' learning experiences in order to meet new expectations, especially within existing systems?
- Which soft skills (e.g., people skills, social skills, communication skills) are needed for career readiness, and how do we ensure deaf and hard of hearing students develop those skills?
- How do we ensure equitable practices are being effectively implemented and that they rise above performative approaches to become authentically restorative?
- How do administrators think about "talent" when recruiting, mentoring, and growing professionals, especially those who are also members of minority groups?
- How do educators deliver high-quality, culturally responsive instruction that meets the needs of diverse deaf and hard of hearing students?
- What community tools and other strategies do families leverage in ensuring their deaf or hard of hearing children are prepared for a rapidly transforming world?



The Clerc Center seeks articles from families and professionals sharing their stories and experiences. Please e-mail your ideas to Odyssey@gallaudet.edu. The deadline for article submissions is November 15, 2020, or when the magazine reaches capacity. Contact us at any time with questions or to discuss your ideas.

REAL Project: A New Partnership Between the Clerc Center and AIDB



The Southeast Regional Early Acquisition of Language (REAL) Project is a federally funded collaboration between the Clerc Center at Gallaudet University and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind

Gallaudet is a linguistically and culturally diverse community ensuring high-quality scholarly activities and significant research for and about deaf and hard of hearing people from birth

(AIDB). The purpose of the REAL Project is to develop partnerships within Alabama along with eight other state partners in order to provide services—including training and resources—focusing on early language acquisition to professionals involved with early hearing identification, early intervention services, and early childhood education for parents and caregivers of deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to age 3.

through adulthood. With significant research and resources available to and through the Clerc Center, we have the capacity to provide support, training, and resources to the nine partnering states through the state of Alabama's established infrastructure for information sharing and training at AIDB. The region served by the REAL Project includes the following southeastern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Through collaboration with state partners, these professionals will increase their knowledge of the importance of early language acquisition and early language acquisition resources and strategies.

To learn more about this project, contact Debbie Trapani and Leslie Page at Debra.Trapani@gallaudet.edu and Leslie.Page@gallaudet.edu, respectively.

Clerc Center Partners with Michigan Department of Education to Support MSD

In the fall of 2019, the Clerc Center began a partnership with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to support the Michigan School for the Deaf (MSD) in responding to community feedback that the school needed leadership that understood the unique needs of deaf and hard of hearing students and the design of a bilingual program. Clerc Center chief academic officer Marianne Belsky and chief administrative officer Nicole Sutcliffe met with Teri Chapman, state director of the Office of Special Education

(OSE); Janis Weckstein, assistant director of OSE; and Millie Hursin, administrative project coordinator, MDE-OSE, to discuss the needs of the community, the school, and the state.

At the request of the state leaders, the Clerc Center conducted a program review of MSD to assess the needs related to the academic program, family engagement, and leadership and operations. After reviewing the results of the assessment with both school and state leaders, action plans were created to support the school in these critical areas. To date, Clerc Center trainers Sara Stallard, Stacy Abrams, and Tammy Murphy have provided trainings to parents, teachers, and staff. The trainings included: Text-

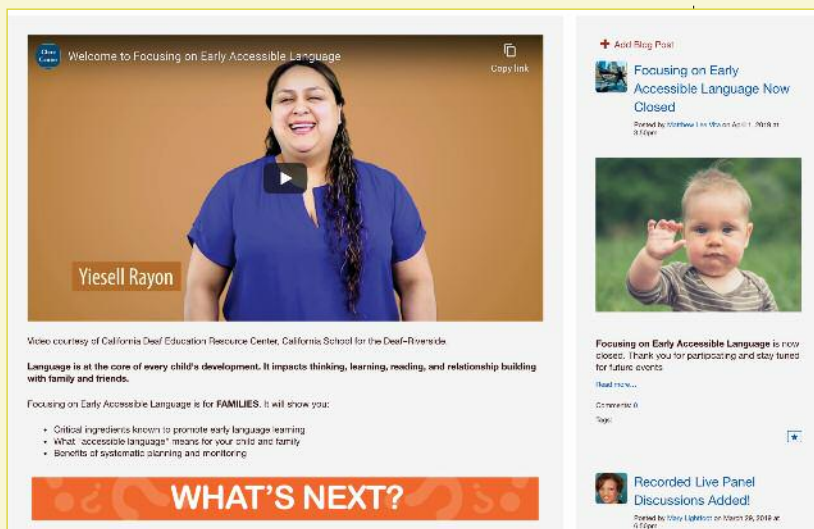
Based Learning; The 4 E's of Raising a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child: Expose, Educate, Embrace, and Elevate; What Does an Optimal Bilingual Education Classroom Include?; K-12 ASL Content Standards; and Activate the Learning Environment. The Clerc Center team has also worked with Hursin to conduct regular observations of teachers, provide feedback, and identify future professional development needs. In 2020, Belsky and Sutcliffe will begin a series of leadership training sessions with the newly established school leadership team.

Through the relationship with MDE and MSD, the state has requested training the directors of OSE in all the

counties and school districts in Michigan as well as training for itinerant teachers in the Detroit and Traverse City areas. Additionally, the Detroit Public School System has requested a program review of their offerings. Detroit Public Schools serves deaf and hard of hearing students across one of the largest school districts in the state.

What started as a community effort to transform MSD has evolved into a partnership for statewide transformation. The Clerc Center is proud of the work of the school and state leaders and looks forward to a continued partnership to advance the education of deaf and hard of hearing students.

Focusing on Early Accessible Language Webcast



language for deaf and hard of hearing babies.

The information in the video is geared toward families interested in learning more about how to support their deaf or hard of hearing child's language and communication development as

to support your child's language acquisition. Families are encouraged to view two other Clerc Center webcasts—"Maximizing Language Acquisition in ASL and Spoken English" and "Language Learning Through the Eye and Ear"—to best support concepts that are covered in the video.

This video was shared as a result of collaboration efforts between the Clerc Center and Hands & Voices' Family Leadership in Language & Learning (FL3). In addition to viewing the video, viewers had the option of joining and interacting with two different panels made up of families and professionals. This video can be found on the Clerc Center website under "Online Learning" at <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>.

After years of working with families, two early intervention experts—Stacy Abrams, a training coordinator at the Clerc Center, and Debra Nussbaum, formerly a project manager at the Clerc Center

who retired in 2019—presented in *Focusing on Early Accessible Language with Babies Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, a 30-minute video that shared the areas of consideration by families that focus on early accessible

early as possible. The video addresses three main areas: 1) what we know about language access for deaf and hard of hearing children, 2) what we know about language access for all children, and 3) recommended opportunities

Free Online Training from the Clerc Center for Parent Leaders

Exploring a Valuable Resource: Setting Language in Motion is a free, online, self-paced training that took place from February 18 to March 4, 2020, in the Clerc Center Online Community. It was designed to support parents working with other parents, families, and caregivers of deaf and hard of hearing babies and young children.

This training explored the seven modules from *Setting Language in Motion: Family Supports and Early Intervention for Babies Who Are Deaf or*

Hard of Hearing, the accompanying activity guide, and other related resources. Parents, families, and caregivers had an opportunity to come together and discuss application of the ideas presented. They also had an opportunity to earn a Certificate of Completion.

The training was provided through a partnership

between the Clerc Center and Hands & Voices' Family Leadership in Language and Learning (FL3). To learn more about the Clerc Center,

visit <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>. To learn more about FL3, visit www.handsandvoices.org.

Clerc Center Hosts 2020 Education & Advocacy Summit



The Clerc Center, in collaboration with the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) along with Gallaudet University's Welcome Center and Departments of Deaf Studies, Government, and Social Work, hosted its third Education & Advocacy Summit: Deaf Education on February 25, 2020. A Youth Summit was also held concurrently with the professional summit.

The professional summit, with 120 participants, was for deaf education administrators and professionals as well as special education administrators. It was organized by Clerc Center project manager Taiyahah

Naeem and the staff of Planning, Development, and Dissemination at the Clerc Center. **Mary Lightfoot**, online learning manager at the Clerc Center, gave a presentation on the Parent Advocacy app—an innovative Clerc Center resource for families navigating the world of Individualized Education Programs, 504 plans, and other educational meetings—explaining the various sections and encouraging participants to download the app for immediate use. **Barbara Raimondo**, executive director of CEASD, shared updates about the federal issues and advocacy. **Carrie Lou Garberoglio**, associate director of the National Deaf Center, presented on the U.S Office of Special Education

Program Grantee: Transition for Deaf Students. **Thangi Appanah**, associate professor in Gallaudet's Education Department, and **Julie Tibbitt**, principal of the American School for the Deaf, presented on strategic decision

making that involves looking at ways to optimize educational outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing students. **Julie Rems-Smario**, education programs assistant in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit of the California Department of Education, updated participants related to LEAD-K. Finally, short updates were shared with the participants in the areas of the Regional Early Acquisition of Language (REAL) Project and the Clerc Center's free resources.

The Youth Summit had approximately 75 deaf and hard of hearing high school students who came to learn more about the legislation process, from current and former students' experiences on the Hill, and about deaf verse and building strong communication skills from Gallaudet's Department of Communication Studies. This youth event was supported by the National Association of the Deaf's Youth Program.



Clerc Center Educators Present at NCTE

Clerc Center educators Sara Stallard, Jessy Willoughby, and Arathy Manoharan delivered a landmark panel, “Deaf Students and Poetry in the English Classroom: Using American Sign Language and Technology to Foster Creative and Critical Inquiry,” at the 2019 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention in Baltimore, Md. They shared stories about how bilingual studies in English and American Sign Language (ASL), along with the use of digital tools, enabled their deaf and hard of hearing students to create, analyze, and translate poetry.

NCTE focuses on best practices in language arts education across the United States, and their annual convention draws thousands of English teachers from all over the country. This panel gave Stallard, Willoughby, and Manoharan the opportunity to demonstrate, through unit development and showcasing student work, how deaf and hard of hearing students are able to engage deeply in the study of English poetry in order to shatter the myth that hearing is required in order to understand language in full.

In “Haiku, Tanka, and Senryū in Translation: Classroom as Creative Lab,” **Stallard** highlighted the study of Japanese poetry, including analysis of English translations via online databases; syllabic usage in composing poems; translations of haiku into

ASL, replacing 17 spoken syllables with 17 sign movements; and experimentation in sign language video production. In “Lewis Carroll’s ‘Jabberwocky’: From English to American Sign Language,” **Willoughby** shared strategies for decoding unusual words that appear in “Jabberwocky.” ASL translations by expert performers served as models for translation choices and

promoted critical and creative inquiries into the nuances of meaning, using the five parameters of ASL: handshape, movement, location, orientation, and facial expressions. In “Slam Poetry: Video Performance in American Sign Language with English Subtitles,” **Manoharan** described the extension of a literature and



Sara Stallard
Haiku, Tanka, and Senryū in Translation: Classroom as Creative Lab



Jessy Willoughby
“Jabberwocky”: From English to American Sign Language



Arathy Manoharan
Slam Poetry: Video Performance in American Sign Language with English Subtitles

research unit focusing on social justice with the addition of a week’s study focusing on slam poetry. This included watching slam performances in English and ASL, using brainstorming techniques, consulting with guest experts, and producing videos in ASL with English subtitles.

If you would like training or support in facilitating

similar experiences with bilingual or multilingual approaches to the study of poetry or other English language content areas, contact Sara.Stallard@gallaudet.edu.



Embracing Diversity and Inclusion in Our Schools: Empowering All

By Evon J. Black

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

Evon J. Black, MS, is the assistant director of recruitment in the Admissions Office and Outreach Programs at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. She graduated from the Arkansas School for the Deaf and went on to receive her bachelor’s degree in psychology and her master’s degree in educational technology from Gallaudet University. For more than 25 years, Black has worked closely with deaf and hard of hearing student development that ranges from primary, to secondary, to postsecondary education. Her passion for students and education led her to implement the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) Youth Empowerment Summit (Y.E.S.) program in 1997. Twenty years later, she served as president of NBDA from 2017-2019.

This year’s *Odyssey* theme, “Diversity and Fostering Inclusive Learning,” brought back memories of the struggles my mother and I encountered in our efforts as an African American family to successfully navigate through a predominately white education system.

My mother was a single mother of six children. I was the youngest and the only deaf child. We resided in a small, rural African American community in Northeast Arkansas. The Arkansas School for the Deaf (ASD) was located several hours away. By the time I was ready to attend primary classes, I was among the first group of African American students to integrate into ASD. At that time, ASD was clearly not ready to embrace diversity or foster inclusive learning. I experienced a double standard in the dorms. What was especially memorable to me was the practice of requiring the African American girls to wait until the white girls finished taking their showers first before being allowed to take ours. Eventually that practice was discontinued, and attitudes have changed and evolved since then.

Several years later, in 1975, P.L. 94-142 (now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)—which guaranteed a free appropriate public education to each child with a disability—was enacted by the United States Congress. One of the main provisions of the law was for parents and students to attend and participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Attending and participating in IEP meetings was

intimidating for my mother. She was not accustomed to being in a room with several school administrators, teachers, and other professionals who did not look like us. Neither did they share an awareness or understanding of our culture and the community in which we resided. She also found it challenging to comfortably comprehend the meeting discussions

since unfamiliar concepts and terminology were used. My mother was not provided with training to advocate regarding my learning needs and goals, and tools such as the Clerc Center’s Parent Advocacy app didn’t exist back then.

One of my educational goals was to

Commitment is more than words; it requires leadership and action, reaching out and valuing all the diverse groups

attend Gallaudet University. I was influenced by some of the older black ASD graduates who were attending Gallaudet during the time I was a high school student. During one of my IEP meetings, there was discussion about placing me on a vocational training track rather than an academic track. The IEP for me that year included taking vocational classes. My mother, however, was not aware of what students would learn from taking vocational classes. During the school year, I began complaining to my mother that I was being taught how to clean, cook, and sew. My mother was clearly unhappy about what I was learning. She expected me to be enrolled in academic classes so that I could be prepared for college. My mother was also a resourceful person. She used resources in our community, such as the summer camps and after-school programs available at our church,

to help supplement what I was learning at ASD. She was determined to ensure I had access to educational and learning opportunities that had not been available to her when she was growing up. After graduating from ASD, I did go on to attend Gallaudet. I earned both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree despite the challenges of that period in time when diversity and inclusion weren't a priority in schools or even a concern.

Many schools today do try to be more inclusive (e.g., celebrating Black History Month, Deaf History Month, and/or others; modeling inclusive language; utilizing more diverse learning materials in class), but we are still struggling in terms of hiring diverse teachers and staff, including at the top levels (e.g., principals, directors, superintendents). Students with disabilities are still struggling to have their needs met in

schools and programs. Access and acceptance of students and families from LGBTQIA and immigrant communities are still issues. Diversity and inclusion are still a work in progress across the nation in all schools, deaf and hearing. The questions remain: *What must we do to better meet the educational needs of the diverse population of deaf and hard of hearing students in our schools? How do we keep expectations high and best support students based on their goals and unique life experiences?*

Progress cannot be adequately attained unless schools and programs are truly committed to embracing diversity and fostering inclusive learning, to empowering students and their families. Commitment is more than words; it requires leadership and action, reaching out and valuing **all** the diverse groups that make up the fabric of our communities.



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