



GOLDEN NUGGETS

A Practical Guide
for the Beginning Teacher
of Students who are
Deaf/Hard of Hearing

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
I. Education and Employment	2
Programs, Degrees, Licensures, and Jobs	2
Using a Portfolio	3
Interviewing for a Job	3
Getting a Job	4
Further Resources	4
II. General Deaf Education Questions	5
Being Committed to Children	5
Getting Started	5
The Important Things to Worry About in the First Week	6
New Teachers' Experiences and Feelings	7
Teaching Reflectively	7
Learning Styles	8
III. Curriculum Issues	9
Understanding by Design	9
Structured vs. Holistic Approaches	9
Teaching Reading I	10
Teaching Reading II	11
Vocabulary Explosion	11
Writing Strategies I	12
Writing Strategies II	12
Animals in the Classroom: Terrible or Terrific?	13
Why Have a Science Fair?	14
How to Have a Successful Science Fair	15
Using E-mail in the Classroom	16
Planning Great Field Trips	17
Special Subjects and Deaf Education	18
Music with Children who are Deaf	18
Deaf Culture	19
IV. Preschool Education	20
Teaching Preschoolers	20
Preschool Intervention	20
V. Student Assessment	21

Table of Contents Continued

VI. Classroom Management	22
Strategies and Activities	22
The Marble Jar	22
Link System	22
Red Light, Green Light	23
Money System	23
Keeping Student Attention	23
VII. Students with Special Needs	25
Students who are Mentally Retarded	25
A Preschooler with No Language	25
Students who are Autistic	26
VIII. Communication Issues	27
The Cochlear Implanted Student	27
Finger Spelling	27
Speech Intelligibility	28
Beginning a Speech Session	28
IX. Developing Thinking Skills	29
Improving Thinking Skills	29
Do Deaf People Think Like Hearing People?	29
Giving Students Reasons to Learn	30
X. Parent Relationships	31
The Need for Parental Involvement	31
Motivating Hearing Parents to Learn Manual Communication	31
Conclusion	33

Introduction

by Vivian Smith and David S. Martin

A well-known professor of education at Boston University once decided he would invite back some of his recent graduates from the teacher education program to find out how they were succeeding in their first weeks as full-time teachers. As they sat around a large table, he asked, “Well, how are things going for you all?” A young woman to his left burst into tears and said accusingly, “You LIED to us!” Shocked, he asked, “What do you mean?” She replied, “You never warned us that teaching full-time would be so terribly tough!” This true anecdote set him to thinking carefully – when teacher education candidates graduate, they are not by any means “polished” teachers; they are only beginning in a profession where lifelong learning constantly adds to one’s expertise.

This incident underlines the need to recognize that new teachers have special needs – for a support system, for a mentor, and for a set of suggestions from experienced educators that can help them get over the sometimes huge hump of that first year of full-time work with students. While this guide cannot serve as either a mentor or a true support system, it is nonetheless intended to be a resource that new teachers (and student teachers) can use for reference when they encounter issues or simply want to read about many things that are possible.

We developed this guide through weekly question-and-answer responses to new teachers of students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The new teachers submitted their queries to us via the bulletin board at www.deafed.net; answers are written from the viewpoint of the responding educator. Our intention was to provide both general and specific guidance to the beginner, to demonstrate that one need not always re-invent the wheel.

Ms. Shannon Graham, who teaches at Washington State School for the Deaf, has provided valuable insights through her responses to a number of the queries in this volume. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Katherine Obenhaus of Clark County Schools in Nevada, Dr. Nanci Scheetz of Valdosta State University, and Richard Kendall of the Marlton School in California for their highly useful recommendations for improvement of the text. Lastly, but definitely not least, we would like to express great appreciation to Ms. Michelle Hoversten of Kent State University for valuable work in the careful editing and formatting of this Guide.

We truly hope this Guide can be a useful resource for those who are just beginning in this exciting profession. While the majority of the suggestions in this Guide relate directly to communication situations where American Sign Language may be the primary mode, the book nonetheless is intended to be useful for any communication situation in the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The suggestions may be easily adapted to other communication settings. We welcome your suggestions, ideas, and additional topics so that this will be a helpful document for all beginning teachers, regardless of their educational setting or communication modality. Send your comments to the Join Together Project office (catalyst@kent.edu) and they will be forwarded to the editors.

All the best to you!

Note: Questions and responses are not presented in their originally submitted form. Text has been edited for clarity and to remove identifying information.

I. Education and Employment

Program, Degrees, Licensures, and Jobs

I am extremely interested in going into deaf education. I had some questions before I get started on my degree...

1. *How hard is this field to get into? Are jobs readily available for the most part or hard to find?*
2. *In comparison to a regular education degree, does a special/deaf education degree take longer or does it just require more specialized courses?*
3. *Is there a per-state deaf education license, or will I receive a general education license when I complete my degree? I ask because many job postings mention state specific licenses.*
4. *How important is it to get a degree from a CED endorsed program?*
5. *Is there anything I can do now to prepare for getting my degree and getting a good job?*

Answer

1. The field of deaf education is not difficult to enter if one has full preparation and a degree in the field; a Master's degree is highly recommended. There are, it seems, always positions available if one is willing to be geographically flexible.
2. A regular education degree is an important foundation; usually deaf education is in addition to that. Some people major in regular education as an undergraduate and then deaf ed. as a master's student. Others who have already graduated in some other field at the B.A. level take an expanded M.A. degree that includes some regular education also. You could inquire of several different universities to see the options (check especially Gallaudet University, DC; California State University at Northridge; and National Technical Institute for the Deaf-Rochester, NY).
3. Each state awards its own deaf ed. license; you would probably need to qualify for both a regular ed. and a deaf ed. license. Some states require only a partial regular ed. license and a full deaf ed. license; others require the full license in both fields. Currently we see an emphasis on having deaf students access the full regular curriculum. Many varieties of licenses are offered across the United States, but most deaf ed. programs prepare students to satisfy most states' requirements. Usually when you graduate from a deaf ed. program in one state, you qualify for licensure because that state supervises that university; however, many states have what is known as "reciprocity" in which they recognize other states' qualifications. When reciprocity is recognized, however, the state granting the licensure usually requires the candidate to take THEIR state teacher test(s), and MIGHT require the completion of one or two additional courses.
4. A CED-endorsed program is a very good idea because those are national standards. State licensure offices are more interested in whether a university satisfies their state standards, separate from CED. Generally, though, if a university program is CED-endorsed it will also satisfy state standards. Furthermore, by graduating from a CED-endorsed and state-approved program, one can apply for a job anywhere since some schools want graduates of a CED-endorsed program and others want graduates of a state-approved program. You can win both ways by being in a CED-endorsed program.
5. We suggest you do two things now: (a) see if you can volunteer in a deaf ed. classroom for a few hours, to give you insight into deaf children and what it means – this will help to ensure you are making a good decision; (b) begin taking sign language courses now so that when you enter a deaf ed. program you will already be an intermediate-skilled signer – most programs now require a person be an advanced signer by the time they enter the final internship experience.

I. Education and Employment

Using a Portfolio

I am preparing a professional portfolio and I wonder if there is a certain format that is recommended we follow to design them. Are there standards we are required to meet, and does each state require a different portfolio setup? For example, if I knew which state I wanted to work in, would I have to cater my portfolio to that state's set-up?

Answer

I would advise that you contact any state in which you may be applying for a job to find out what they require, if anything. If you're not sure, then organizing a portfolio around the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards (available via www.ccsso.org) is always a good idea, because that is a set of standards shared by many states. Generally the critically important components of any teaching portfolio include the following: a resume; a statement of your philosophy of education; a self-reflection; one or two detailed lesson plans that include an introduction and a reflection on your part as to how well the lessons succeeded and why; a case study of one interesting student; a statement of how you used technology in your teaching; two different assessments you developed and the accompanying student results; and supplemental materials such as classroom artifacts, photographs of the classroom, excerpts from your reflective journal kept during student teaching, letters of recommendation, and your transcript.

Interviewing for a Job

I'm very interested in the oral deaf approach (auditory training-learning to use their hearing, language, speech, cochlear implants, etc). What are good questions to ask when I go for interviews? Are there any professional organizations I can join? Do you know of any websites that offer information with regards to the oral approach?

Answer

The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell) supports the oral philosophy. You will find much information at their website, www.agbell.org.

During a job interview, you might be asked what professional magazines you read. The Volta Review, available through AG Bell, is a scholarly research and scientific journal.

Questions you might wish to pose during your interview include:

1. Is any signing permitted at the school? gestures?
2. What percent of the student body has cochlear implants?
3. What opportunities would you have to attend workshops? (This shows your interest in professional growth.)
4. Will you have a mentor at your new job?

Another professional organization (in addition to AG Bell) for you to join would be the Council of American Instructors of the Deaf, or CAID (www.caid.org), for collegial information from teachers of the deaf. This organization encompasses all teachers who teach students who are deaf and hard of hearing, whether they use sign language or the oral method.

I. Education and Employment

Getting a Job

I am currently student teaching in a Bi-Bi program to help complete my undergraduate degree in Deaf Education. My cooperating teacher has informed me the school may be looking into getting another teacher at the elementary level for the upcoming year. With me being a student teacher there, would I have a better chance of getting the job in comparison to others?

Answer

We would suggest your chances are a bit better than others simply because you represent a known quantity in the eyes of the school. In fact, a number of people get their first positions in exactly that way. We would advise you to take advantage of this possibility: do a great job of student teaching, find details about the application process, and definitely submit your name and resume if it seems this school would be of interest to YOU. You have an advantage because you know the school much better than an outside applicant. Use your cooperating teacher and university supervisor for detailed advice on the process. Good luck.

Further Resources

Where might I find additional resources?

Answer

To help you further as you begin your career, resources are available through several professional organizations and institutions. Some examples would be the Council on Education of the Deaf (CED), the Council of American Instructors of the Deaf (CAID), the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD), Gallaudet University, and the National Agenda for Deaf Learners (see the National Association for the Deaf [NAD]). Each of these organizations has websites and announcements of printed publications that are either free or of reasonable cost. Be sure also to become familiar with, and regularly read, the professional journals of the field—the American Annals of the Deaf and the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education.

II. General Deaf Education Questions

Being Committed to Children

How important is a teacher's commitment to children?

Answer

A commitment to children is an essential characteristic for new, as well as experienced, teachers—through a sense of commitment they CAN make a difference in children's lives. Sometimes their love must be "tough" love while also recognizing the different types of support and caring that each individual student requires.

Sometimes, according to one new teacher, it is important to "let go" and NOT help the child in every single way—students ultimately have to apply what they have learned so they may "own" their successes. For example, John* had repeated his kindergarten year and was one of the academically lowest students in the class. He did not want to try anything on his own and seemed helpless. Instead of continually rushing to help him, his teacher realized he could do things on his own and was really only craving the extra attention; she decided to see what John could do alone. The teacher communicated to John she thought he COULD do the work, but if he tried and then still needed help she would be glad to assist. Soon he was busy at his desk and enthusiastically raising his hand, shouting with pride, "I'm done with my work now!" The teacher also let John's mother know that he was doing much better and perhaps she should reduce her own dependency-producing behavior.

Applying "tough love" is not always easy—new teachers need to learn that sometimes teachers help the most when they put their trust in students' helping themselves.

*Not student's real name.

Getting Started

How can I prepare for my first day of teaching students who are deaf and hard of hearing?

Answer

We would recommend seven different points on this important question:

1. Try to find a mentor teacher to give you advice, to remind you of meetings, and to give you feedback.
2. Let students know you care and involve them in classroom activities. Also, communicate that you are there for the children, and show patience with them.
3. Be organized---have your room set up, desks and books and (if elementary-level) cubbies assigned, places to put supplies, etc. The first day sets the tone for the rest of the year. We find that time is well spent the first day discussing with the children the establishment of rules, rewards, and consequences, with input from them, and then posting them on the wall. We also recommend you spend time getting to know the students' likes, dislikes, and abilities through various activities. Let each child tell about herself or himself through a bulletin board with pictures. Also, give a profile of yourself, with your name sign and photo. Explain the overall objectives of the year for each subject.
4. Get students comfortable with their surroundings; be sure not to "give in" on challenges to your control--in this way you establish the tone for the year. For homework, send fun word puzzles so you can gauge where students are academically. Teach social courtesies (please, thank you, etc.). Give one student every day, by turns, different responsibilities--like passing out candy, for example.

II. General Deaf Education Questions

Getting Started (continued)

5. Remember that students who are deaf or hard of hearing are in most ways just like hearing students; students have varying degrees of challenges. Just because a student is deaf does not necessarily mean she or he automatically has additional challenges.
6. Above all, it is really important to use a mentor for general and specific help. Your mentor needs to be fluent in ASL, Deaf-friendly, and sensitive to deaf cultural issues.
7. You need to make sure your classroom is Deaf-friendly in the sense of having a visual environment with many stimulating activities and a communication system which allows everyone to communicate with each other easily and to see what everyone else is communicating.

The Important Things to Worry About in the First Week

What would be the main things I should worry about in my first week of my first teaching job?

Answer

The important things are to “survive” the first few weeks. We would suggest the following:

1. Make sure you know the school’s policies on attendance and discipline.
2. Try to identify an experienced teacher who could become an informal “mentor” for you as questions arise.
3. Find the source of school supplies so you can draw on it as needed.
4. Get the background information of your students so you know their IEP’s and other expectations.
5. Do a general plan for the first month and a specific plan for the first week, using some high-interest lesson plans that worked well for you in student-teaching.
6. Plan to do some diagnostic assessment of your students to find out where they are currently in some skill and knowledge areas.
7. Decide and implement your own system of classroom management, and be consistent with enforcing your standards and expectations. Positive behavior programs are worth investigating. Make sure your classroom behavior management plan incorporates whatever the school-wide plan is. Also, be sure you are aware of the incentives built into your school-wide plan, and use some strategy for ensuring appropriate responses to student behaviors. (See also Section V of this Guide.)

Above all, keep a positive attitude—you are well prepared for this role and although there will be challenges, this is the moment for which you’ve been preparing for years. Good luck!

II. General Deaf Education Questions

New Teachers' Experiences and Feelings

What feelings do new teachers typically experience?

Answer

Most new teachers of children, deaf, hearing, or otherwise, face a predictable sequence of feelings as they go through their first full year in the classroom as a professional. In fact, a few years ago researcher Carol Tomlinson did some investigation and was able to graph the roller-coaster feelings of a group of first-year teachers.

Tomlinson found that new teachers begin the school year with Anticipation, but by October they are into a Survival mode. By December or January, they have become somewhat Disillusioned about teaching. But then, somehow, by the end of February, they go through a kind of "re-birth" which she calls Rejuvenation. By April-May they are engaged in Reflection on the year, and by June they are back up to Anticipation again, but with a new and deeper understanding of what teaching is all about.

So if as a new teacher you are experiencing these feelings, know that you are not alone. However, there is one way to avoid the deep "valley" that occurs in mid-year, and that is to have a mentor—a trusted colleague in the school who is not in a supervisory capacity but someone you can meet with regularly and share frustrations as well as seek new ideas. If you don't already have a mentor, contact your Principal about identifying a person who could fill that role. Good luck on your first year!

Teaching Reflectively

How should I review my first year of teaching?

Answer 1

As first-year teachers approach the completion of their first year of teaching, it is important to stand back and take stock. Earlier in this section, we discussed the general curve of success and frustration of first-year teachers, and that new teachers normally hit a low point mid-year before starting back upward again by spring. But this process does not happen automatically—it happens when you consciously stop for a bit and review the year, take a deep breath, think about what went well and why, and what you will do differently next year and why.

Once they carry out this process, many people find they are beginning to feel more positive again because they now have some clear plans as well as ideas about "lessons learned."

It is, of course, also helpful to have in-depth conversations with fellow new teachers and veteran teachers—and your mentor if you are fortunate enough to have one. Get their perspectives on what they did differently between their first and second years, and how they changed as professionals.

If you engage in this process before the end of the school year, that establishes a platform for doing some new kinds of planning during the coming summer. By fall, you are ready to begin with renewed enthusiasm and some definite wisdom.

II. General Deaf Education Questions

Teaching Reflectively (continued)

Answer 2

When you come to the end of your first year as a teacher, it will be very helpful to stand back and reflect on how far you have come since the beginning of the school year, and what remains of the present school year. Two reasons for this: this process helps (1) to make sure you are planning well for the remaining weeks of school and (2) to confirm things you have learned from this important first year so you can repeat the successes next year and find alternate ways of doing things that did not work out as planned. The process of reflection is one you probably had to do as part of your student teaching before becoming a regular teacher. But now it is a bit different.

While keeping a reflective journal is effective to help in the thinking process, it is also helpful to take time and ask, "What have I learned this year that I can benefit from next year?" Make a list of lessons learned, or make two columns on a piece of paper (Column 1—what I will do the same next year, and Column 2—what I will change next year). Look at the lists and try your ideas on an experienced colleague. In this way you will have the benefit of your own thought as well as the feedback from someone who is a seasoned professional.

It is a bit early to plan concretely for next year because you're still in the midst of this year's groups. However, it is essential you note for the record some of the key lessons-learned from this year—before they are lost in the rush of completing and closing out the school year.

You will find that the best of experienced teachers engage in a process like this—always sharpening their skills by reflecting on what has previously happened. Try this process, or some process like it, and you will be pleased to see that you start to develop the ability to think in large chunks of time, as well as start to think in terms of what is going to succeed best next time around.

Learning Styles

I am currently undertaking some research into learning styles of people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Does anyone have any references for information on this?

Answer

Current research and publications from Gallaudet University (www.gallaudet.edu) may help. Your local university library also can be a useful resource in addition to general use of the Internet.

III. Curriculum Issues

Understanding By Design

*Are there currently many teachers of students who are deaf and hard of hearing who have implemented the backward design process as discussed in the text *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe? How successful is this process?*

Answer

There are a few who are using *Understanding by Design*, but we are not sure how to find out who they are. It is still new, but there was an excellent presentation on this topic at a recent national conference of the Association of College Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, so awareness is building about it, especially among those who prepare teachers.

Wiggins and McTighe have actually produced three different books on the subject – *Understanding by Design*, the *Understanding by Design Handbook*, and most recently the *Understanding by Design Workbook* (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). All three do a marvelous job of demonstrating, through practical exercises, how teachers can apply a very important idea in curriculum planning. That idea is to always begin with what one wishes to be the final outcome of a lesson or classroom experience, and then to plan backward from that point – covering the materials, procedures, and assessments. This process assures that teachers have a clear focus on what their overall aim is for the experiences they will lead. Other useful models of curriculum organization, of course, can be found; another to look into would be Jacobs' *Mapping the Big Picture* (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).

Structured vs. Holistic Approaches

Educational experience is a wonderful way for students to learn, but at the same time, do students need some structure? Do you think teachers should be traditional with worksheets and such, or base learning on all kinds of experiences? I find it difficult if there is no structure, but is there some way to be in the middle and how?

Answer

Why not do both? Personal experiences for language and writing are a good idea, followed by giving general facts about your unit or current theme. Then reinforce these ideas through worksheets. With so many learning styles among any group of children, we cannot expect them all to learn using the same approach or even expect any given student to learn in only one way. Vary your approaches – use inquiry, independent research, experience-based instruction, worksheets, individual coaching, large-group visual presentations, and more. Variety keeps students learning in different ways as well as interested. Worksheet questions should be designed to access higher-order thinking skills; while Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives is well established, all classroom assignments should encourage active learning and problem-solving (analysis, synthesis, etc.). For knowledge-level and recall activities, the use of cooperative learning strategies can boost active learning and higher-order thinking skills. (See also Section VII in this Guide.)

III. Curriculum Issues

Teaching Reading I

What are a few of the most important aspects in teaching reading to students who are deaf?

Answer

We are currently using the Fairview Reading Program. It has five components.

1. The adapted Dolch Lists of words: There are many words in English that prove difficult for the child who is hearing impaired. For example, the word "make" has eight different meanings, therefore eight different signs the child must learn. The lists go from pre-primer to third grade.
2. Bridge phrases: There are usually two or more English words and one ASL sign. For example, "look up" isn't signed "look" then "up" it is signed as one movement. There are lists from pre-primer to third grade.
3. Reading one-on-one in the Multiple Skills Series. These are books from picture on up to high school level. I like using this series because I have some students in the 2nd grade book, others in the 4th grade book, and even one in the 6th grade book. The books are color coordinated so the kids are not embarrassed they are in 5th grade reading on a 2nd grade level. Each story is one or two paragraphs with five questions regarding main idea and details following the story.
4. Writing part: This is most challenging. Students write once a week. They write a half page on a variety of topics. The teacher changes their paragraphs into English and the children rewrite the story and keep the draft and the "good" copy in a folder. The teacher can also rewrite the draft correctly for the students to see.
5. The fifth component is done by our deaf librarian and focuses on the use of ASL and its grammar. The child tells a short story, and the teacher listens then repeats the story using as many components of ASL as possible. The child repeats the story trying to imitate the ASL demonstrated. If there is no staff member who is deaf, the teacher should act as the ASL Model.

That's a lot, but it works and is fun. This program is now being used in 42 states nationwide.

Other well-tested approaches to teaching reading include the Shared Reading Program from the Clerc Center at Gallaudet University and the Star Schools Project.

Reading Milestones, developed by Steven Quigley, is still being used in some classrooms. It was designed for the lower functioning student. It has very controlled vocabulary.

Other educators are using trade books with repetitive themes. After reading the book, the student/class makes their own book following the theme of the trade book.

The "Accelerated Reader" is another popular reading program, allowing students to work at their own pace using the computer to monitor test scores. The student must pass a certain number of quizzes before the computer allows him/her to move to the next level. One of the plusses for this program is that it makes the student more responsible for his/her own reading and pace.

III. Curriculum Issues

Teaching Reading II

I have seen round-robin reading done in the deaf ed. classroom (where students take turns in reading to the group), but most regular education teachers do not like this strategy. Is round-robin reading beneficial for students who are deaf?

Answer

We should permit students to have plenty of time for independent and quiet reading; round-robin reading sometimes results in peer pressure and reveals various reading levels and styles which can be embarrassing to some students. It is possible to do some round-robin reading with the overhead projector; otherwise, it is easy for the teacher to lose the children in round-robin. Keep round-robin reading to an occasional basis, and check for bridging concepts and vocabulary (bridging is where the concept requires two or more English words but only one sign, such as "get up"). You may wish to investigate the method known as the "Hands-Up ASL Word Wall."

Vocabulary Explosion

How can I increase my students' vocabulary?

Answer

A recurring challenge for the deaf education teacher is how to increase the vocabulary of the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. Some educators have said it takes up to 125 exposures of a vocabulary term before the deaf child "owns" that word. I have two helpful hints to strengthen this academic area.

First is a simple piece of laminated poster board. Many times during the course of the day unknown vocabulary will pop up. It might occur during a lecture, reading of a textbook/library book, or even a fun cooking activity. Place the term on the poster board using a water soluble vis-à-vis pen. I like to use yellow poster board--it is easy to read. For easy display, add a piece of Velcro to the corners of the poster board and to the chalkboard, bulletin board, or wall where you will hang the poster board. Each morning review the words and signs. You may wish to use these words in spelling sentences or creative writing from time to time.

The second helpful hint is a personal ABC Dictionary. Each student makes his own from a regular folder. Add 27 pieces of paper. The first page is your title page and each consecutive page will have a letter of the alphabet in the right-hand corner. During letter writing or creative writing students always have words they need spelled. Instead of writing those words on the blackboard or on scratch paper, write it in the ABC folder. These terms often occur frequently; once they are in your students' folders you will not have to repeat this task. Be sure to add terms from your poster board and watch for vocabulary explosion!

III. Curriculum Issues

Writing Strategies I

I am looking for a strategy to help my students brainstorm and organize information before writing, for example, when they have to write a couple of paragraphs on a specific topic. Is there an outline they can follow to help them through the process?

Answer

I do "webbing" a lot. You put a circle in the middle of your paper, where the topic is written. Then you have three or four bubbles extended from the topic. You write subtopics in the extended bubbles. Now you have to address each bubble by adding several lines to expand on each subtopic. This is a good prewriting activity. You can then begin to take this information and turn it into a full paragraph or two.

Writing Strategies II

What are strategies that will facilitate "good written English skills" by students who are deaf and hard of hearing?

Answer 1

One strategy is to use Daily Oral Language focusing on sentence structures for students who have some residual hearing. Dr. Harry Lang from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, NY is a resource in this area. Students often have a difficult time describing their observations in written English; this is an exercise we do to help improve observation skills. A favorite poem, the Diamante, has a format that includes all main parts of the English language--nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs.

Answer 2

Journaling is a great idea for writing experiences. Take a regular spiral notebook and, using a paper cutter, cut the notebook in half (using wire cutters for the spiral). This makes the journal book less daunting for students. I recently used journaling in my anger management unit in the classroom, starting each day with a topic such as "If my little sister gets a new toy and I don't, is it okay to break her toy?" or, "If your classmate insults you, is it okay to insult back?" Using real situations helps, and exploring positive alternatives is a life skill the students need to develop.

III. Curriculum Issues

Animals in the Classroom: Terrible or Terrific?

What are the pro's and con's for keeping animals in the classroom?

Answer

- Some Cons:
- Effort
 - Cost
 - Maintenance

- Some Pros:
- Use animals to introduce the Scientific Method.
 - Teach what animals need to survive.
 - Teach life cycles.
 - Teach responsibility for caring for the animals. Let students help set up class rules for caring and petting.
 - Use animals for creative thinking skills and problem solving lessons.
 - Teach habitat, ecosystems, environment, food chains, food webs.
 - Great for writing assignments using the pets as characters.
 - Other writing ideas include: perspective -- What would a gecko want for Christmas? Thanksgiving dinner? Pass out stamped postcards pre-addressed to you (the teacher); a student can mail you a note and ask about the pet at some point during the year (at the child's discretion).
 - Animals in the classroom teach social skills like respect and nurturing of living things.
 - Use as topics for your observation journal: observe, touch, take care of, make predictions, draw conclusions and record the daily lives of living things.
 - Superb for oral language and vocabulary development.
 - Pets encourage students to ask questions and seek answers.
 - They are good for forming and solving math problems.
 - Use animals for drawing or to illustrate writing.
 - Awesome reinforcement for the low functioning high school student who isn't interested in computers because he doesn't have one at home, can't read for pleasure, doesn't want to play cards but can feed and water the animals, clean cage, etc.
 - Teach the animal kingdom. Example: A gecko is a reptile. He sheds his skin. What would this look like under a microscope?

III. Curriculum Issues

Why Have A Science Fair?

A science fair project is a lot of work for the teacher as well as the student; so, why would one want to have a science fair?!

Answer

We can identify at least ten reasons to have a science fair:

1. Introduction to the scientific method: this is a step-by-step technique for identifying a scientific “problem” and working through to a solution.
2. Research skills: require three sources (a textbook, an encyclopedia, and an Internet website) from students to help develop their research paper. This also helps with reading and computer skills.
3. Language skills: participating in a science fair enhances student’s language skills. They are exposed to English grammar in a different environment. The work on the display needs to be grammatically correct as well as the research paper.
4. Vocabulary development: there are specific terms associated with a science fair project e.g., experiment, purpose, procedure, hypothesis, and conclusion.
5. Data collection and variables: an experiment needs to be conducted more than once. Variables can be introduced to validate experiment. Math can be integrated by using tally marks or bar graphs to represent data results.
6. Following directions: in order to have a successful experiment a student must read and follow directions. The procedure of the science fair sets up a step by step “recipe” to conduct the experiment.
7. Communication skills: after the research, experiment, and display board have been completed, there is one more step to a science fair project. The student must present his exhibit to the judge(s). The student must communicate clearly and explain the outcome of his/her work.
8. Self-esteem: successfully presenting a science fair project to classmates and then to an adult judge can be nerve-wracking, but when everything is all said and done it is worth the effort. Most students come away from the experience with a smile and a sense of accomplishment.
9. Promotes higher-level thinking skills: the whole process of the science fair project enhances thinking skills.
10. Encourages an interest in science: the students are allowed to choose their own experiment; therefore, they choose topics about which they are curious and want to learn.

III. Curriculum Issues

How to Have a Successful Science Fair

How can I make our Science Fair a success?

Answer

A science fair project consists of a research paper, an experiment, and a display board. A hypothesis must be developed. Data must be collected to back up experimental results. The conclusion either accepts or rejects the hypothesis. Here are some tips to make your science fair a success (and will encourage you to do it again next year!)

1. Be organized. Set up deadlines and due dates for draft of the research, typing the research paper on the computer, completing the experiment, and completing the display board. As each section of the project is due give a grade of some kind.
2. Use a folder. Give handouts and have students place them in their "Science Fair" folder. Handouts should include an example of a bibliography, a display board, a checklist of items to be included in the project, possible websites, etc.
3. Practice presentation. Once everything is completed, have the students practice their presentation to one another in pairs. Then have the students practice in front of the whole class. If possible, practice again in front of another class. This will help with "nerves" and will help the student organize his thoughts. After the presentation, allow time for questions from the audience. After all, the judges will be asking questions, too. If you are going to be interpreting, you should practice reversing as the children are giving their presentations.
4. Other tips:
 - When writing the research paper, go ahead and teach the bibliography format and include that information as you go along. Don't wait until the end of the research to write the bibliography.
 - Always, always, always repeat your experiment. This allows for data collection. If you only do the experiment once, there is no room for control variables.
 - Use several judges. I use two insiders from my school and one "outsider" from another school. I act as interpreter for the outsider. This is a good experience for the student as well as the judge needing the interpreting services.
 - Make your display board colorful. Use a border and matching letters. If your experiment calls for a box, wrap it in pretty paper. Use pictures or original drawings! A digital camera works great.
 - After you have your local science fair, go to regional competition. Take your top three winners. You might be the only deaf competitors out of 500+ but what a great experience for your deaf students! And you, too!

III. Curriculum Issues

Using E-mail in the Classroom

My students enjoy working with the computer, especially e-mail. Our dorms have computers and many of the commuters have computers. Any ideas on how I could use e-mail in my classroom?

Answer

Language and English grammar will continue to be the teacher's #1 challenge for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. What if we came up with a compromise between the students' interest in the computer and the teacher's desire to see English sentence structure practiced? We're always asking our students to write a creative assignment or create a paragraph from a field trip experience. How about having students e-mail you their homework assignment? You'll be amazed at how willing your students will be to write a paragraph with e-mail! Some of the low functioning students could elicit help from their peers in the dormitory.

Here's what to do: Copy the draft e-mail to Word, change the font size to 18 or 20, double space it, and then print it. Correct the English and return the corrected hard copy to the student who then sends another e-mail with the corrected paragraph.

Hints for success:

1. Be sure everyone knows their e-mail address and password. Have each student show you that he/she can log in.
2. If a student does not have or can not remember his/her e-mail, set up an account. The students like "cutesie" names but can not remember them so when you set up an account I suggest something easy to remember like first and last names with no spaces. For the password, keep it short because it is easy to make a typo, especially since all you see is *****.
3. When the student successfully enters his/her account, have the student enter your e-mail address into the address book and you verify it is absolutely correct. Otherwise, the students can mistype your address and the e-mail will not go through.
4. One of the best ways to use e-mail in the classroom is to set up what we in the past called penpals—now they would be called e-pals it seems—in some other location or community. You do this by contacting a teacher in another deaf education classroom and arrange for reciprocal communication, with the exchange of e-mail addresses. Then, on a scheduled basis, such as once per week or so, have your students get in the habit of sending a message to an e-pal and replying to messages sent back. You and the other teacher could agree on themes so it is not just discussion of sports and the weather—telling, for example, about what they are studying in social studies and comparing that; or exchanging information about current events if your students are old enough to be aware of some of those. The communication will build outward from there and you will find that new ideas will come up.

III. Curriculum Issues

Planning Great Field Trips

How can I make our field trips successful?

Answer

An important dimension of making learning come alive for students is the integration of different kinds of field trips into teaching. But field trips are only worthwhile if they are (1) well planned, (2) well supervised, and most important (3) tied into some ongoing unit of instruction. Some tips for having successful field trips include the following:

1. Prepare your class by a) covering the content of what they will see on the field trip (e.g., a museum) and b) developing with them some key questions to find answers for during the trip itself.
2. Be sure a parent permission letter is distributed and collected back.
3. With the students, review the reasons for the trip, discuss the behavior which you as a teacher expect of them as representatives of the school, explain in advance any groupings you want students to use for organizing themselves, contact supervising parents, determine whether any additional spending money will be useful, and discuss appropriate clothing. Arrange for transportation with the school's administrator.
4. Be sure the volunteers helping you supervise are familiar with what you expect as well with the facility you are going to visit. They, too, may help in the teaching process.
5. Plan your own packet—first-aid kit, basket for lunches, list of emergency phone numbers, cell-phone numbers, and head counts.
6. Once the trip is finished, be sure that either on the same day back in the classroom or at the latest the very next day, you do a debriefing with the students—what did they see, what questions did they find answers for, what new questions did they develop, and what were their surprises during the visit. Tie these experiences back into the unit that is ongoing, e.g., social studies.
7. Reflect on the trip as a whole, thinking about what went well, what could have been done better or differently, and how you would carry out a similar trip in the future.

Hillman, C. (2004, Spring). Meaningful Field Trips. *The New Teacher Advocate*, 6-7. (Available from the Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society [www.kdp.org])

III. Curriculum Issues

Special Subjects and Deaf Education

In preparing to become a K-12 Deaf Education Intervention Specialist, I have found there is no preparation in the area of special subjects (e.g., art, music, physical education). Are there currently any programs designed to address those areas for deaf educators? If not, are there any being developed?

Answer

You are asking an important question. Most deaf education programs have such limited time in their program they have difficulty fitting in all of the academic areas and deaf education methodology. The areas you mention, which are important to a well-rounded academic program and which are indeed left untouched by many programs, are supposed to be covered by the preparation that future deaf ed. teachers receive before they enter deaf education--in other words, their regular-education preparation. However, some states do not require that a deaf ed. teacher also have preparation in regular education; in those cases, it is then incumbent upon the new teacher to participate in workshops or even courses to help fill in areas of need for which they did not get specific preparation. Another strategy is for the new teacher to identify a mentor--an experienced fellow professional--upon whom to depend for guidance in many areas, including any curriculum areas in which the new teacher feels not well prepared. The latest re-authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) should be checked to see what changes may be required to be implemented in this area.

Music with Children who are Deaf

Can music be used with children who are deaf?

Answer

The answer is a definite "Yes!" I use music as a bridge to teach English and American Sign Language.

1. Select a song and type the lyrics. Distribute a copy to each student. Read each line to determine the meaning. Discuss then translate to ASL. This is done for the complete song. Place the lyrics on an overhead projector while songs are being learned.
2. Listen to the song on your CD or tape cassette recorder. Match the signs to the rhythm and beat. Change the selection of signs, if needed, making sure the intent and meaning is not lost.
3. Now you are ready for choreography! Add dance steps and moves. Try a contagion-ripple effect going from left to right. If you have enough students use two rows. Have the front row move to the back or split into two groups, left and right alternating and signing to each other. Be creative!
4. Now that you have a song ready, what do you do? Our school is always putting on programs for holidays throughout the year. Plan ahead. Your song can fit the theme of one of your school programs. Try collaborating with another teacher. If you teach older students, perform for a younger class. Take your class into the community. Be guest presenters for a hearing class. Helen Keller is usually studied in the 2nd and 3rd grades. Many children have not had the privilege of meeting a person who is deaf.

Performing songs improves English skills and provides opportunities for improved self-esteem. It takes courage to perform on stage in front of the student body!

III. Curriculum Issues

Deaf Culture

What is the place, if any, for Deaf Culture in the curriculum?

Answer

Deaf Culture has a vital place in the curriculum for teaching students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The rich traditions of the Deaf Community – its history, stories, humor, heroes, poetry, behavioral norms, and more – are important as means for building pride and self-esteem in your students. Sources are available for these ideas. A wonderful resource could be nearby Deaf adults (teachers and others from the local community) who could be invited into your classroom to teach and share these areas of knowledge.

IV. Preschool Education

Teaching Preschoolers

How might a preschool teacher of the deaf do an activity in each of the following four areas: Reading to Students, Language Experience, Independent Reading, and Dialogue Journals?

Answer

Reading to Students—read "trade" books for 15 minutes after lunch every day; the teacher has to read. Try copying a section on a transparency and read it with students using ASL—students read silently first and then explain the sentence in ASL to verify understanding.

Language Experience—after, for example, a field trip, take advantage of the event by having the students write about their recent experience. Using a big piece of bulletin board paper, do a pre-writing activity with sequencing of ideas, and then take turns having students sign one sentence to you. Write what they say, then post it in the hallway for others to read.

Independent Reading—a great program called Book It! is sponsored by Pizza Hut (www.bookitprogram.com). The teacher determines how many books or pages will be read by the end of the month. If the student reaches the goal, he/she gets a free personal pizza coupon; the family goes out to eat and the student's is FREE because they've earned it. Also, many teachers give a regular amount of time in class for students to read silently; they then share their reading with other students later.

Dialogue Journals—pass out an article to students; students write their reflection on it with a short summary. Then either peers or the teacher comment on the reflections. Try not to use this time for grammatical comments unless the students request it—this is the opportunity for students to express their thoughts without mental barriers. One rule during this time is that students can't talk or sign when they are using the dialogue journals. They must WRITE their thoughts. Communication can be student-to-student or student-to-teacher.

Preschool Intervention

If you are working in a preschool intervention program, how do you make parents feel comfortable and help them deal with d/hh issues? Also, it is the parent's choice to choose a communication mode for their child, but how do you help them?

Answer

A program called SKI*HI is a parent-infant program for birth to age five. The parent advisor goes into the home once a week. Lessons on hearing aids, communication methods, auditory training, etc., are shared with the parents. If this program is not available in your area, then share as much information as you can with parents to help them make a wise decision. Also, you could have parents meet a deaf person who uses signs and another who does not, and ask each person to give his/her perspective on life and education.

V. Student Assessment

Student Assessment

What should I be aware of when considering assessment for my students?

Answer

One of the biggest challenges for teachers of children who are deaf and hard of hearing is to design assessments that are at the same time equitable and comprehensive. Comprehensive means covering all of the relevant concepts and facts that one wants to assess, and not neglecting any areas. Equitable is quite another matter. Many of the assessments provided externally--standardized tests, especially--create special barriers for children who are deaf and hard of hearing, so extra care needs to be taken to make sure the assessment items are fully ACCESSIBLE.

There are several tests to which any written assessment should be subjected. These tests include avoidance of the use of idiomatic language, to which a deaf person would have no access; avoidance of lots of subordinate clauses embedded within sentences; provision of enough context for multiple-choice items--deaf test-takers need more than hearing test-takers in order to establish the context in which to answer multiple-choice items; and avoidance of low-frequency words which the deaf test-taker may well not have encountered.

The rule, then, is to "level the playing field" so a test of, for example, content in math, social studies, or science, does not become a test of the test-taker's abilities in the English language, but instead is a direct assessment of the actual content. Of course, if the purpose of the test is to assess the knowledge and skill of English, then, for example, idioms might play a role--but only if the teacher is interested in testing FOR that.

A whole separate approach, rather than adapting written tests, is to use alternative methods--rubrics applied to some student product, observation scales, interactive interviews, and the like. Remember, the rule is to make the assessment material fully ACCESSIBLE and FAIR or EQUITABLE.

VI. Classroom Management

Strategies and Activities

Do you have any classroom management activities or strategies?

Answer

There are many strategies which can be successful. We present a few here.

The Marble Jar

Use a marble jar in the classroom to encourage good behavior. A marble is awarded to an individual student or the whole class for following class rules. Use, for example, a pint-sized jar; when the lid spins and no longer grips you know the jar is “full”. A good behavior party has been earned. Students get a free period to eat popcorn and play language-oriented games like Junior Scrabble.

At the beginning of the school year give out marbles like crazy! You want the rules to be ingrained and to reinforce positive behaviors. If you see the class is lagging or not paying attention, hold up a marble and say, for example, “The first student who turns to page 182 in your textbook gets this marble!” Boy, do the students come alive!

At the end of a lesson you might review the class rules to determine if a marble was earned. Was everyone quiet? Did everyone raise their hand to speak? Did everyone pay attention? Was everyone respectful? Emphasize that, at this time, the whole class earned the marble, not just one individual.

One way to encourage good grades also reinforces the concept of the marble jar. Using a small area above the chalkboard use a general theme e.g., frogs and lily pads. Each child writes their name on a frog. There are seven black dots between each lily pad. When a student makes an A on a test his frog jumps from one dot to the next. When a frog lands on a lily pad a marble is earned for the marble jar! Other themes could be dogs chasing cats, football players running the field, or dinosaurs and tar pits. Use your imagination and what sparks an interest in your students.

Link System

The Link System is a classroom management tool that puts the responsibility of behavior back on the students. It eliminates the need to “fuss” at the students. Make a chart using three simple words: walk, talk, touch; then the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 at the bottom of the chart. Students must raise their hand to walk (e.g., go to pencil sharpener, bathroom, etc.). This will eliminate disruptions when students get out of their seats without permission. Students must raise their hand to **talk** (i.e., to the teacher during class participation as well as to other students during the day). This eliminates excess chatter amongst the students. Students must raise their hand to **touch** (e.g., to tap another student or touch someone’s desk or belongings).

When a student is breaking one of the three rules, the teacher makes eye contact with the student and then crosses out the number 5. This will continue throughout the day, crossing out the next number as rules are broken. You will soon find that students reprimand each other. At the end of the day count the numbers left and that is how many links the students have earned that day. Attach the links to the ceiling of your classroom. When the links touch the floor, your students have earned a reward of your choosing. Some teachers allow the students to watch a closed-captioned movie from Captioned Media Program (www.cfv.org), others allow popcorn or games for a specific number of minutes.

VI. Classroom Management

Strategies and Activities (continued)

Red Light, Green Light

The red light, green light system is based on a traffic light. This classroom management tool works well for younger children. Write each child's name on a clothespin or laminated index card with Velcro on the back. When the child is following class rules, his name is on the green light. After two warnings, the name is placed on the yellow light either by the student or the teacher. If the child continues to be uncooperative, his name is placed on the red light and a privilege such as recess is taken away. All names begin on green light each day.

The Money System

The money system works well for elementary students. It also can be integrated with the curriculum when studying economics. You want to be pro-active and set up your students for success. Determine a set amount of "money" each child can earn daily. You can use play money or Monopoly money. If possible, have the school secretary be the "banker" and determine a set time when the students can deposit their earnings. Students can go shopping once a week or biweekly. Not all items need be tangible. Brainstorm with the students things they would like to do such as sit in the teacher's chair or eat lunch with a friend. One teacher let the students earn water balloons all year; at the end of the school year class picnic, students had a great time throwing their water balloons at the teacher! If your school has a carnival, the students can earn tickets to play games or buy goodies. Other suggestions include drawing on the chalkboard, be first in line, do only half of the math assignment, choose any class job for the week or do all the class jobs for the day, write in ink for the day, use the teacher's rocker for the day, take home a class game for the night, or be the leader of a class game.

Keeping Student Attention

How do we keep the attention of students who are deaf and hard of hearing?

Answer

Keeping the students' attention is THE challenge isn't it?! If they are not looking, they are not learning.

- Use a behavior modification method with marbles, as described earlier in this section. For example, hold up a marble and say "the first person to find page 325 in the textbook will get the marble" or "the first person to find the 3 kinds of rocks in their Science folder will get the marble." Students will hustle! The marble goes into a small jar. When the marble jar is full the class gets a "good behavior" party. This means one period (45-50 minutes) of free time and having something good to eat e.g., popcorn. The neat thing about this method is you can reward not only one child but the whole class can earn a marble. In the closure to a lesson you can ask the whole class, "Did you pay attention well? Did you cooperate? Did you earn a marble?"

VI. Classroom Management

Keeping Student Attention (continued)

- Use an IN/OUT can. Have two cans, one labeled IN and another labeled OUT. All students' names go into the IN can. When you are checking homework or doing Q & A, pull a name from the IN can. That person has to answer the question. That name then goes into the OUT can. This continues until everyone has had a chance to answer. This really works because no one knows when their name will be next. It is also very fair. We tend to call on the same kids over and over; this approach evens things out. This is a great method, too, when the principal needs help or you need an errand. Just pull a name!
- Classroom Setup: Space and visibility are two main components in setting up your classroom fun. Students need the visibility for communication purposes. Space is necessary for constant movement for all kinds of activities.
- Lesson Implementations: Student objectives and teacher expectations should be clearly presented. Lecture time should take no more than 10 - 15 minutes following a relevant and meaningful activity/project. Time between activities can be minimized to reduce distractions.

Be sure to check out other classroom management systems and techniques; teacher workshops are often presented on these. Your school-wide plan for behavior management should be another source to help you.

VII. Students with Special Needs

Students who are Mentally Retarded

As a student teacher, I am working on a three-week intervention plan for a student who has mild mental retardation. I am trying to work on different teaching strategies and styles in order to give her the best instruction possible. However, I am having difficulty finding much literature on how to teach children who are deaf and who have mild mental retardation. Is there anything you would suggest reading, anywhere you'd suggest looking for material, or any suggestions you have yourself?

Answer

We are finding that many of our children who are deaf have "problems" other than just deafness, but "Hearing-Impaired" (or preferably Deaf or Hard of Hearing) is what you see on their IEP's. Many of our children have retention problems or are slow learners and need much repetition and hands-on activities to better learn various concepts. Also, we are seeing more behavioral and emotional problems along with deafness. I am not sure there are a lot of books written on deaf individuals with mental retardation but teachers of the deaf are masters at adaptation of materials used in the regular ed. classroom. You could probably read some of the Special Ed. books and make adjustments as needed. There is a big emphasis on self help skills like using/reading a newspaper and telephone book, reading labels on food or menus like McDonald's, and making change. Behavior management is important, too. Many students need immediate rewards for exhibiting correct behavior; they are more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated. Charts with stickers and earning points to go to the classroom "store" on a weekly basis are good strategies. Another is to use a small pint jar and when you want to reward the whole class or individual students, give marbles. When the jar is full of marbles the class has earned a good behavior party e.g., one free period to play language oriented games such as Junior Scrabble and eat popcorn.

A Preschooler with No Language

I have a three-year old in my class who has just started wearing hearing aids and being exposed to signs. She only wears the aids at school because Mom doesn't want to upset her at home. She can voice Mama, and she seems to understand a few signs like "put", "eat", and "shoe", but she is not yet signing them. My questions are: How can I support her mom in learning and using signs (I've given her books, offered my time, etc.)? How much should I focus on auditory training? How can I get her mom to get the aids in? How do I help set up a deaf mentor for her?

Answer

The SKI*HI program is a parent-infant program for children with hearing loss from birth to age five. A "parent advisor" goes into the home once a week. She has a curriculum and lessons she follows. There is a big emphasis on helping the parent and child get used to the hearing aid and how to start developing language. For the little ones there is a loop that fits around the ear which helps hold the hearing aid in place. It is vital that auditory training start as soon as possible; the child should be wearing her aid all waking hours. Just like glasses, it should be the first thing she puts on in the morning. It will take adjustment for both the mom and the little one but worth the struggle. There are many good videos that have sign language lessons. This as well as the teacher and books will help Mom learn sign language. Right now she needs "survival" signs--signs that are of uppermost importance to the child such as more, bathroom, milk. Make a list of that kind of vocabulary to teach first. The idea of a deaf mentor is excellent. If you could hook up this mom with another mom who has already gone through the experience of a young child being diagnosed as deaf, this could be very beneficial.

VII. Students with Special Needs

Students who are Autistic

I currently hold a license as an Intervention Specialist for the D/HH population K-12. My supervisor has asked if I would be willing to take into my self-contained English class another student who is not deaf or hard of hearing but has autism and possibly other developmental delays. She asked me because she feels he is at about the same academic level as my students. Am I technically allowed to have him in my class since I am not licensed specifically for special education in that area? I was not sure how this works now that teachers are supposed to be highly qualified, and in his situation I feel I am not highly qualified.

Answer

This question is best answered from the perspective of the autistic child. A student with autism has special needs. Is this placement in the best interest of this child with autism? What other options does the district have? Will a one-on-one assistant be provided? How many deaf children are in your class? How would this child affect the learning of the students who are deaf?

While Deaf Education comes under the large general category known as Special Education, certification or licensure in deaf education is NOT special education in many states. A teacher with a Special Education degree is needed in this situation—someone who has knowledge of the special needs of a student with autism.

It would seem you need to involve several people: your administrator in terms of just what is expected for this child, including reviewing the child's IEP, and to see if there is a possibility of an assistant for you; and a person who is knowledgeable about autism for you to use as a consultant to guide you. While placing children with different disabilities in the same classroom is done, the teacher should have access to expertise for how to handle the various special needs.

VIII. Communication Issues

The Cochlear Implanted Student

How should I deal with a student who has a cochlear implant?

Answer 1

We see an increasing number of students who have had cochlear implants, some more successful than others. This trend is expected to continue and probably accelerate as the years progress. If you have students with implants in your classroom, you will need to ensure these students have some regularly programmed separate instruction on the use of their hearing and voice for speech and language production. However, at the same time, you also need to ensure they have a regular place in your classroom and develop and use skills in VISUAL language, too. Implants are not "cures", and those students will continue to benefit from a visual, as well as auditory, environment in order to maximize their learning potential.

Answer 2

Students with cochlear implants need auditory as well as verbal input. Some students need American Sign Language. All of these students could be in your class. How do you meet the diverse needs of these different students? It is possible to group those who need the oral approach and those who need the manual approach for reading instruction. You would teach the same lesson to both groups. Students with cochlear implants would get the vocabulary and stories orally. They would read out loud. Students needing ASL would learn new vocabulary and read their stories via sign language. Both groups would take the written test. This is for reading class only. You must encourage both groups to interact with one another during the other subjects as you do not want cliques among the students.

Finger Spelling

Do you think finger spelling should be used with younger children? Why do you think finger spelling is not used as often in ASL?

Answer 1

We recommend finger spelling for emphasis, separate from names of places or people for whom there are not any signs. Use finger spelling to build vocabulary; finger spelling also helps for those synonyms whose signs are similar. Thus, finger spelling definitely has a place in teaching and it would not be correct to say finger spelling is dropping off in view of ASL usage--it remains very useful. In fact, it is essential that students and teachers be fluent both receptively and expressively, with a focus on reading the whole word and not one letter at a time. Starting young is critical.

With multiply disabled children, one does not fingerspell a great deal unless the words are also signed--we find that finger spelling does not mean a lot to such children, except for short words like "bus" and "bag" where the word is important to them.

VIII. Communication Issues

Finger Spelling (continued)

Answer 2

Finger spelling is appropriate and should be started early for young students. Signs become "loan signs"-- shapes of finger spelling and movement. Students will eventually evolve into finger spelling full words and using signs.

Speech Intelligibility

I have a seven-year-old student with an FM device in speech therapy, and one of our goals is to increase speech intelligibility. How can we work on focusing his attention on self-feedback?

Answer

If you are using an FM device, you can say the sound for him to hear and then switch and have him say it and hear himself.

Beginning a Speech Session

What are some ideas for beginning a session with a speech student who is highly active?

Answer

Try and do more than one activity in a session. Also, try using audio taped sounds for discrimination practice. Little ones seem to enjoy that. Also use some computer games; children love computer activities. Use some sort of token system so he will be able to see his own progress. Even something simple, like a graph, will give him feedback he can see and show him goals he can reach.

It would also be wise to discuss this situation with a speech and language specialist trained to work with students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

IX. Developing Thinking Skills

Improving Thinking Skills

How can I enhance my students' thinking skills?

Answer

One of the important considerations for all teachers, including beginning teachers, is how to enhance the thinking strategies that students use in all areas of the curriculum. While a number of published thinking-skills programs are available—many with the expectation of specialized teacher professional development—there are some techniques that teachers can use immediately without (or in addition to) the use of a published program. Some of these techniques are:

1. Arranging the classroom seating in a semi-circle to facilitate group dialogue—group discussions are a key to fostering thinking at high levels.
2. Asking higher-level questions; beginning questions much more often with words such as Why, How, Please Explain etc., rather than with What, When, and Where. This phrasing forces students to think.
3. Using what we know as “wait-time”. The research is clear that if a teacher asks a well-worded question based on knowledge that students have, the longer the teacher waits the better the chance of students responding thoughtfully. On the other hand, when we as teachers grow uncomfortable with no student responses to a question and answer the question ourselves they get the message quickly that they don't really have to think in this classroom because the teacher will do it for them. So, even waiting up to 5 seconds often pays off.

In the long term, however, it is important to see if your school will participate in the professional development that goes with adopting one of the published thinking skills programs—only a few teacher preparation programs actually prepare new teachers to teach for higher-level thinking, so a specific focus on that set of teaching skills is highly useful as well.

Do Deaf People Think Like Hearing People?

Do deaf people think like hearing people do? This question was asked by someone I know, and I didn't have a proper response.

Answer

Many scholars and researchers have puzzled over the question of how deaf and hearing people's thinking processes are the same and different. Both deaf and hearing people express language, whether oral or through-the-air, from the language centers located in the brain's left hemisphere. On the other hand, there is some evidence that although deaf people, like hearing people, process language in the same way, deaf people receive through-the-air language in the right hemisphere because of the visual component. A classic study done, more than twenty years ago by Ursula Bellugi in California, with deaf stroke patients that had lesions on different parts of their brain seemed to establish this distinction. Sign languages also structure the experience of language somewhat differently in terms of emphasizing the important idea at the beginning and again at the end of a sentence—however, this would not be considered a difference in thinking per se, but rather a

IX. Developing Thinking Skills

Do Deaf People Think Like Hearing People? (continued)

difference in sequence of expression in order to tailor the expression to visual understanding. This topic is highly complex and is still being investigated, and this response is a hearing person's perspective on it; it would be important to ask a deaf person's perspective on this topic, too. A few years ago, two volumes were published through Gallaudet University Press — *Cognition, Education, and Deafness: Directions for Research and Instruction* and *Advances in Cognition, Education, and Deafness*. These books may be available in your university library, and if so would provide some summary of investigations. Although they are now more than 10 years old, they would give directions to some of the researchers for you to investigate to see what some of those authors have produced more recently.

Giving Students Reasons to Learn

It seems that the root problem many of our students who are deaf/hard of hearing face in school is not an inability to learn, but a lack of reasons to learn. Teachers are so pushed to get through all of the required material that academic tasks without actual applications to the students' daily life are the norm, rather than the exception. Do you agree with this perceptiveness and if so, how can this problem be addressed?

Answer

All children think their personal lives are more important than school; the trick is teaching them to compartmentalize their priorities. It may be helpful to let students write about their lives and experiences. In addition, some teachers find it helpful to take five minutes at the beginning of each class session to chat and socialize before the period actually starts--students then seem more focused and interested. Also, other teachers make themselves available before and after school for "down" time with students--establishing that relationship is so important.

X. Parent Relationships

The Need for Parental Involvement

The need for parental involvement is crucial to a well-balanced child. How can the teacher tap into this valuable resource?

Answer

Have your students' parents share some basic information. This can be done at school registration time or at the IEP meeting if your school does this process at the beginning of the year. Use a form, created by you, to gather information such as address, phone numbers (home, work, and cell), student's birthday, and siblings' names and ages. It is a good idea to know the student's favorite candy or chip brand name so as to be able to provide a small "happy" on the child's birthday. It is also a good idea to know what adults are living in the household; some students may have grandparents, aunts, and uncles living with them. Often students will refer to these important family members and it helps if you have a reference. Pets are important, too.

The telephone is a good resource. It is important to make an initial call to let the parents know you are pleased to have their child in your class and you look forward to a good and productive school year. Let them know you are there for them and their child. You have now established some rapport with the family. If you should need to call again to report "bad news" regarding their child's achievement or behavior, your call will be better received. Keep a log for an account of whom you have called and how frequently. All of your students' parents should receive a call from the teacher at least once per month.

If you have a small class, a communication notebook might work well. It should be written in daily to report the student's behavior, participation in class, tests coming up, and anything else pertinent to the student such as field trips. The student should show responsibility by getting his parent or dorm parents' signature to indicate the notebook has been read. This process is particularly good for dorm students. On weekends when the parents have read the entries for the week, they then have a good idea of how their child's week has been. Along the same line, it is also a good idea to send all tests home for a parent signature. This process helps the parent to stay knowledgeable about the units their child is studying and how well they are doing with them.

In today's technology-minded world, many families have computers. Use e-mail to communicate with your students' parents. You can send newsletters designed by the class to explain exciting units being taught. You can even use old-fashioned "snail mail" to send thank-you, holiday, and birthday cards to your students.

Don't forget that your parents can be a great resource, too. Use them as guest speakers to enhance your lessons. Also, use them to help with special projects or cooking activities; and they make super chaperones on field trips!

Motivating Hearing Parents to Learn Manual Communication

While assisting co-teachers in an urban, deaf/hard of hearing pre-school room, I learned that many of the students had hearing parents who did not sign. Although these parents were not advocates of the oral approach, they were not inclined to learn any method of manual communication with their children.

Despite efforts by the school (free ASL classes, transportation of parents to classes, child-care, and provision of lunch), parents were still not willing. This was very upsetting to me for obvious reasons. What can be done to increase the motivation of parents to learn and use manual communication with their children who are deaf and hard of hearing? Is this a problem linked only to urban families where issues such as poverty, access to transportation, etc., impede parents' ability to support their children's ability to communicate?

X. Parent Relationships

Motivating Hearing Parents to Learn Manual Communication (continued)

Answer

Those strategies (lunch, transportation, child care, etc.,) are always useful to try and may be helpful in some school environments. However, as you point out, these efforts are sometimes not enough. While some of the challenges result from being in an urban environment and an environment of poverty, this lack of motivation is found elsewhere also. Two additional strategies are worth attempting:

1. Investigate whether a specialist in early childhood education (or yourself as teacher) could make a home visit with some parents to tell them and demonstrate how important it is to try manual communication. This kind of activity would need to be written into a person's job description if it is to be consistent.
2. Investigate the identity of one or two parents in the school who ARE manually communicating with their children and see if they might be willing to become a mentor/partner for at least one parent who is a reluctant signer – the presence of a peer can sometimes go a long way to getting people to participate when other strategies have failed.

Keep trying – this is a very important area.

Conclusion

This is a living document designed to get you to reflect on your chosen field of deaf education. You play a vital role in the lives of your students. You want them to be all that they can be; therefore, you put all you have into making your lessons interesting and applicable. But you cannot do it alone. You are not an island unto yourself.

So where do you go from here? How can you best use the information outlined in these pages?

- Find someone with whom to share it.
- Find a colleague that will be truthful with you. They will share in your successes and those of your students, as well as gently give you constructive criticism when appropriate.
- Reflect on not only your successes but your failures and determine to do better next year.
- Be a life-long learner and demand the same from your students. Encourage higher-order thinking skills.
- Above all, be a role model for your students. Don't expect your students to do or be something you are not willing to do or be yourself.

Education is a great career choice. It is highly demanding but so very worthwhile when you see the light bulbs go off in your students' minds. We commend you for your choice to become a professional in the field of deaf education. You truly do touch the lives of the future.

Please send your feedback on this guide, as well as additional tips or topics for future issues, to the Join Together Project office (catalyst@kent.edu). Your submissions will be forwarded to this Guide's editors.