

# DEAF STUDENTS, INTERPRETERS AND PROFESSORS IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

By

Professor Lisa Stefani

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## Famous Words From Helen Keller



## Americans With Disabilities

As mandated by section 504 of the Rehabilitation act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Colleges are supposed to accommodate the academic and support needs of students with disabilities.



# How can I help my deaf students?

- ▣ First, we need to get a small glimpse of what life is like as a deaf person.
- ▣ Second, we need to know how to work with the deaf student and the interpreter in the classroom.
- ▣ Finally, we could benefit from taking a “crash course” in signing.
- ▣ LET’S GET STARTED!

# Connecting With your Deaf Student



# A Day in the Life of A Deaf Person By Amanda Harris

- ▣ [A Day in The Life](#)



# A Day Through A Deaf Person's Eyes

- ▣ [by Rachael Soudakoff](#)



## Step Two

- ▣ Now that we have got a tiny glimpse of what it is like to be deaf, let's look at how we can work with the deaf student and the interpreter in the classroom.

# Students and Interpreters in the Classroom

- ▣ How to Work With a Deaf Student and an Interpreter in the Classroom



# Students and Interpreters in the Classroom

- ▣ Working With Interpreters in the Classroom



# Interview with Denise Robertson

- ▣ Denise Robertson, M.S., CRC; RID CI/CT; NAD IV
- ▣ Interpreter Coordinator / Real-time Captioning Services
- ▣ Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSPS)
- ▣ Grossmont College
- ▣ 8800 Grossmont College Drive
- ▣ El Cajon, CA 92020
- ▣
- ▣ Cell: (619) 933-8191 cell/text
- ▣ Desk: (619) 644-7499 v. // Front Office: (619) 644-7112 v.
- ▣ Video Phone: (619) 567-4269
- ▣ E: [denise.robertson@gcccd.edu](mailto:denise.robertson@gcccd.edu)

## From a College perspective, what should faculty members know and or do when they have a deaf or hard of hearing student in their classroom?

- Key importance, instructors need to keep in mind that a student with a hearing loss may not be a student enrolled with DSPS and *may not want to be*. Many people have a hearing loss but do not use sign language or access services from DSPS. Know that each person who cannot hear or cannot hear well is unique. Everything depends on when the person lost their hearing (born deaf or became deaf after acquiring spoken language). People who are born deaf and grow up using ASL are part of the Deaf Community. People who born hearing but become Late-Deafened may have speech ability but cannot hear anything.
- What is helpful to students is to make sure all YouTube Clips and multi-media are captioned (to standard not some random person on the internet creating “captioning”) and accessible. Offer to share Power Point slides (if possible) or paper copies of the PPT slides. **Realize that not all people with hearing loss can read lips.** Be approachable. Encourage the student to let you know what s/he needs. Check in with the student once in a while. Some hard-of-hearing (HOH) students use Assistive Listening Devices. Be willing to wear a lapel mic so the student with a hearing loss can understand you better. **Be aware that the mic will not pick up other speakers in the back of the classroom.** You may have to repeat the questions or summarize what was just said. Be open and willing to accommodate this need.

From a general perspective, what should faculty members know and or do when they have a deaf or hard of hearing student in their classroom?

- ▣ **Be mindful of visual limitations and eye fatigue.** Turn and face the class when speaking. Do not write on the board and speak towards the board. Write and then face the class to speak. Be sure there is adequate lighting. Do not speak in a darkened classroom describing slides or points during a video – the student cannot see your face or your mouth. All of who you are as an instructor is used to help with understanding information. You may have to turn on the light and talk about scenes and then lower the lights again. Make a conscious effort to accommodate. Most of all, be aware that Deaf/HOH students cannot look at multiple visual input and write. For example, instructors tend to talk to their classes about future assignments while the class is copying lecture notes or overhead information, and filling out surveys etc. (this is hearing culture). The Deaf student cannot watch the interpreter for spoken content while deciphering information on the board or on a survey at the same time. This is counter to Deaf Culture customs where everyone can see each other, take turns, and make sure all understand (Collective Society).

## How should faculty members help the other students in the classroom integrate/connect/communicate with the deaf or hard or hearing student?

- ▣ Instructors set the tone in the classroom. If the instructor is welcoming to accessibility issues, so follows the class. Treat moments when dealing with students with disabilities or accessibility issues as an opportunities to **teach about diversity**. General population students in the classroom have an opportunity to learn how to cope with differences and appreciate diversity by working with students with disabilities. **This prepares them for the working world and life**. Instructors who marginalize the Deaf or Hard-of-hearing (HOH) student with apologies, but still carries on showing movies without closed captions violating accessibility laws only teaches this to students. **These behaviors perpetuate oppression**.

## What should a faculty member expect from the interpreter?

- The ASL-English Interpreter (usually nationally certified and highly educated) is a colleague in the classroom to facilitate communication between the D/HOH student and the instructor. The D/HOH student is your student, not the interpreter's. The interpreter is a resource to bridge the cultural gaps between the hearing world and Deaf Culture (American Sign Language users). Expect the interpreter to interpret your information faithfully and accurately as they are bound by Code of Professional Conduct with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Interpreters are held to confidentiality and will not answer personal questions about the Deaf/HOH student. Direct your questions to the D/HOH student. During lectures, the interpreter may tactfully interrupt for clarification or may ask to have something repeated. The interpreter may request prep materials, handouts, and access to Blackboard to prepare for the class. This makes interpreting go smoother with less interruptions for clarification. The interpreter will sit up front with the Deaf student to establish a clear line of sight for the student to see the interpreter, information on the board, and the instructor's face/ body language.
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- If an instructor ever has concerns about an ASL Interpreter's behavior in the classroom – please contact the DSPS Interpreter Coordinator.

## What can a faculty member do to help the deaf or hard of hearing student succeed in the classroom?

- Ask the student what works best for him or her. Provide visual materials. Communicate important facts, dates, or deadlines in writing on the board. Leave this information up in the corner of the board to be seen, and refer back to it. Be sure all multi-media is accessible with closed captioning. If movies are not closed captioned then find an alternative movie that is captioned that will support the concept being taught. Do not exclude the Deaf student from classroom content or tell the student s/he won't lose points, but just sit tight.
- **Be aware that group work is difficult for Deaf/HOH students when trying to follow multiple speakers.** The D/HOH student may need to be a member of a smaller group and realize that the group may need to go outside for a short time where it is more quiet. Loud group work dynamics presents huge challenges for HOH students who do NOT sign (the noise level overwhelms their hearing aids) and even the interpreters struggle to hear clearly.
- **During student group presentations – require hearing students accountable to provide captioned videos** or movie clips that they choose and use during their presentations. Accessibility laws apply to everyone. This is a learning opportunity about diversity and inclusiveness. Monitor the speed of these presentations and clarity – can the interpreter keep up and understand clearly? Groups tend to speak too fast and the Deaf/HOH student is lost.
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## What can a faculty member do to help the deaf or hard of hearing student succeed at home with homework?

- Understand that Deaf individuals who use ASL are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Deaf students may struggle with their ability to write clear, grammatical English. Ask the student to explain what he/she wrote with the interpreter present if there is an issue. Recommend the Writing Center or the Assistive Technology Center (tutors there too) for proof reading and help. Deaf students should meet the same expectations for homework completion as other students.

## What can a faculty member do to help the deaf or hard of hearing student succeed on exams?

- ▣ Realize that it may take the Deaf student longer to take an exam. Encourage the student to contact DSPS and set up taking the test at the Testing Center with extra time. If the student is HOH, then the student may need a more quiet place to take an exam (no backpacks being zippered up and doors slamming). Recommend DSPS too. **An instructor is not responsible for providing extended test time or in a separate area.** For Deaf students who use ASL sometimes the English vocabulary can be confusing, or English words could have multiple meanings depending on the sentence. Consider allowing the interpreter to interpret the test questions to the student in class or at DSPS. Interpreters are held to the CPC and are bound not to give Deaf students answers.

What differences in writing and grammar can a faculty member expect from a deaf or hard of hearing student? How should the faculty member approach grading written work in consideration of these differences?

- ▣ As mentioned, Deaf students who use ASL are ESL learners. Their written English grammar will look similar to the grammar and syntax of ASL, which is entirely different than English. Use your discretion. If knowledge is the goal of an assignment or test and not writing ability, and the writing of the Deaf student is hard to understand, perhaps arrange to have the Deaf student express his/her answers in ASL through an interpreter. This could be arranged during office hours if necessary. Depends on the class subject and the instructor's curriculum standards.

## From the deaf or hard of hearing student perspective, what would make for an ideal classroom, teacher, and instruction?

- Deaf students have reported the most satisfaction with instructors who attempt to interact with them as they would with any student. Deaf students are thrilled with an instructor who can sign or who attempts to sign even a little. Avoid Deaf jokes or hearing jokes that are based on words sounding similar. Deaf students (ASL users) may not have experience with speech differences and do not understand syllables, rhythms, or cadences in speech. Some instructors like to tell stories while lecturing, which can confuse ESL-type students. Be sure to explain how the story supports the class content or point. Emphasis on speech and hearing being connected to intelligence (audism), or to succeed in 'the working world' is insulting to Deaf/HOH people, and a potential discrimination lawsuit.
- Students with a hearing loss who do not know ASL have reported great satisfaction with instructors who try to accommodate them by **managing the classroom environment**. For example, making sure a seat near the front stays open for the HOH student, helping to find a volunteer student note-taker or offer extra credit to incentivize volunteers, staying in one place while lecturing and not speaking/ walking simultaneously (makes it hard to follow the instructor's mouth and hear at further distances), writing on the board but turning to speak to the class, sensitive to light issues during movies and not speaking while the class is dim or dark, monitoring the noise volume level during groups or presentations – reminding other students about inclusiveness, and providing as many visuals as possible.

□

## What campus resources are available to assist faculty when they have a deaf or hard of hearing student in their classroom?

- ▣ Campus resources are available at Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS), the Assistive Technology Center (ATC), and at Alternative Media. DSPS Counselors or the Interpreter Coordinator at DSPS are a resource about Deaf/HOH issues, closed captioning technology/compliance issues, and interpreters and Real-time Captioning services / RTC service providers. DSPS has Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's) on loan for deaf/HOH individuals who qualify.

## Please add any additional information that you feel might be helpful.

- ▣ There were no questions about **Real-time Captioning (RTC) services** for deaf/HOH students. These services are for a student who cannot hear, may have speech ability, but does not sign. A service provider (Captioner or Transcriber) will come to the classroom and set a compact stenograph to provide a spoken speech-to-text service for the deaf/HOH student. This can be a live feed to a lap top in front of the student, or simply giving the student a transcript later. The transcript will be about EVERYTHING spoken in the class. This transcript is an accommodation for the deaf/HOH student and is not to be shared with other students as per an agreement form that the student signs. **Instructors need to know that RTC services do not infringe upon Academic Freedom in the classroom.** Instructors can teach as they like. These services are confidential.
- ▣ For students who use ASL, remember if the Deaf student is signing during your lecture content then that student is 'talking.' The classroom is your teaching platform. Ask the Deaf student to share his or her thoughts because you saw them signing. Deaf students need to be accountable for talking too. The interpreter will not interfere or stop students from signing.

# Great Resources Below Provided by Denise Robertson

- <http://www.pepnet.org/equitable-access>
- <http://www.pepnet.org/resources/deafhoh/Hard%20of%20Hearing>
- <http://www.pepnet.org/resources/deafhoh/Late%20Deafened>
- <http://www.pepnet.org/resources/additional-resources/Recommended%20Readings>

# Step Three

- ▣ Now that we know a bit about how to work with the deaf student and the interpreter in the classroom, let's jump into a "crash course" in signing so that we can use some basic signs with our deaf and hard of hearing students.

# Beginning Basics in Sign

- ▣ Learning Sign Through Children Learning Sign
- ▣ Starting with some kid songs!



# Beginning Basics in Sign

- ▣ Baby Signing Times
- ▣ 87 videos by Rachael Coleman – creator of Signing Times



# Just for Kids Sign

- ▣ In the Classroom



# Beginner Words and Phrases

- ▣ Beginner Conversational Words and Phrases



# ASL Lesson 1

- ▣ [A First Lesson by Katee Marie](#)



# Getting Serious with Dr. Bill

- ▣ [Bill Vicar's Sign Lessons 1 - 19](#)



# Dr. Bills Playlist

- ▣ Dr. Bill's Video Play List for Signing



# The Alphabet

- ▣ My Smart Hands and the Alphabet



Thanks for viewing this “crash course”

