

VR: Faces of Deaf Consumers

An Overview of Deaf Education:

This presentation provides a brief overview discussion about Deaf Education. The lecture is approximately 17 minutes long and is provided in ASL. Clicking on the link will take you to a new page.



To access the video, click on the link below:

<http://bit.ly/Faces-DeafED>

Introduction:

Presumably, all students taking this module have already completed a Deaf History and/or Deaf Culture course. If so, this information will provide a brief overview. If, however, students have not had this exposure, this content will provide a primer into the complex options found in Deaf Education. It should be sufficient for the purposes of this module. Students are encouraged to approach their instructors to discuss other opportunities to learn more about this topic.

This discussion will focus on Deaf Education in the United States. Occasionally you will encounter Deaf individuals in VR settings who are immigrants. The availability and quality of Deaf Education differs from country to country. Developed countries often have advanced approaches that include oral and the use of signed language in the classroom. Developing countries may have only one option or, sadly, no formal

educational options for deaf children. Consider this factor when encountering a Deaf individual who is from another country.

History:

In the United States, Deaf Education can be traced to the founding of the American School for the Deaf in 1817 in Hartford, CT. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet sought out best practices in Deaf Education in Europe and found a model program in Paris, France. There he met Laurent Clerc, a Deaf educator, who agreed to accompany him to the US. Together they launched the development of multiple schools for the deaf through alumni from ASD.

In 1864, Abraham Lincoln, signed the documents establishing what is now known as Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. It remains the only liberal arts college for the Deaf in the world. Though a remarkable breakthrough in itself, it should be noted that Deaf individuals were not eligible to earn graduate degrees from Gallaudet until well into the 20th century.

While educational approaches using signed language in the US proliferated, things were different in Europe. A widespread movement that emphasized aural/oral approaches to education known as the Oral Method dominated Europe. In 1880, an international conference on Deaf Education in Milan, Italy declared that the Oral Method was preferred. Subsequently, the use of signed language for instruction diminished, not just in Europe but in the US as well.

In the US, Deaf Education was characterized by state residential schools for the Deaf where the oral method was used in the classroom and signing was permitted in residential settings. It should also be noted that there was a significant commitment by the Catholic Church to provide Deaf Education in the past. A few Catholic Schools remain, such as St. Rita's School for the Deaf in Cincinnati, OH.

This approach persisted until the 1970s when two factors coincided to have a marked impact on Deaf Education. The first development was a tentative step to bridge the differences between the Oral Method and the use of signed language in the classroom. It should be noted that this does not mean that American Sign Language was found in the classroom but sign systems based on English. This hybrid was known as Total Communication. It caught on fairly quickly and involved the manually coding of English while speaking. It is still found in many settings.

The other development was passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142) that was landmark legislation. This law is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Until this time, Deaf children and children who were blind had educational opportunities described above, mainly state residential schools. Children with other disabilities were often denied educational opportunities. Passage of 94-142 required that all children receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the

least restrictive environment (LRE). This law turned Deaf Education on its head.

Many school districts interpreted the LRE to be the local public school. This placement may have been appropriate for children who could speak and hear their peers but for deaf children, the local public school setting was perhaps the most restrictive setting due to an inability to interact with peers and teachers. As large numbers of deaf children were moved into neighborhood schools from residential schools, the need for educational interpreters rose dramatically. So did the variety of educational settings.

Settings:

Today there are a variety of settings where a deaf child may be educated. Those settings include: residential schools for the Deaf, Oral residential schools for the deaf (there are very few), Day Schools with only Deaf students which are mainly found in urban areas, and mainstream programs. Mainstream programs fall into two broad categories. Inclusion programs tend to include one or few deaf students directly into the classroom for all academic and non-academic subjects. Mainstream programs tend to include larger populations of Deaf students who may be integrated into classrooms for academics but more likely are taught academic subjects in a self-contained classroom with a Deaf Educator and mainstreamed into non-academic subjects. Mainstream programs rely on interpreters.

Communication Methods:

Federal law, IDEA, clearly states that a variety of communication methods must be available to suit the needs of deaf children. Commonly, the following communication approaches can be found in Deaf Education: the Oral Method which relies on residual hearing through natural hearing ability, hearing aids or cochlear implants and lipreading; Cued Speech which depicts sounds and speech patterns with manual cues; Manual Codes for English (MCE) which depicts English manually through contrived codes intended to display English manually including Signed English, Signing Exact English and others; and, MCE combined with speech which is the continuation of the Total Communication method initiated in the 1970s. It is reported that 67% of students in Deaf Education are in programs that use this approach.

Educational Approaches:

In addition to Manually Coded English, another approach to Deaf Education must be noted here. The Bilingual/Bicultural approach to Deaf Education employs American Sign Language as the language of instruction in the classroom. Using ASL allows Deaf children to be exposed to a natural, visual language. English instruction is achieved through the approach of teaching the reading and writing of English as a second language. The Bi-Bi approach is found, generally, in schools for the Deaf as opposed to mainstream programs where, generally, Total Communication approaches are more prevalent. It should be noted that the Bi-Bi approach is available in some but not all

schools for the Deaf.

Resource:

<http://www.listen-up.org/edu/options1.htm>

ACTIVITIES:

Use this prompt in a discussion forum: Describe the educational programs for Deaf children that are prevalent in your community. What implications for interpreting between a graduate of each of these programs when meeting with a VR counselor who can hear?

After reading the summary and viewing the PPT, choose one Educational Approach: Bilingual-Bicultural, Total Communication or Oral/Aural and describe the possible positive and negative consequences of this approach for a young Deaf adult seeking VR services.

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