

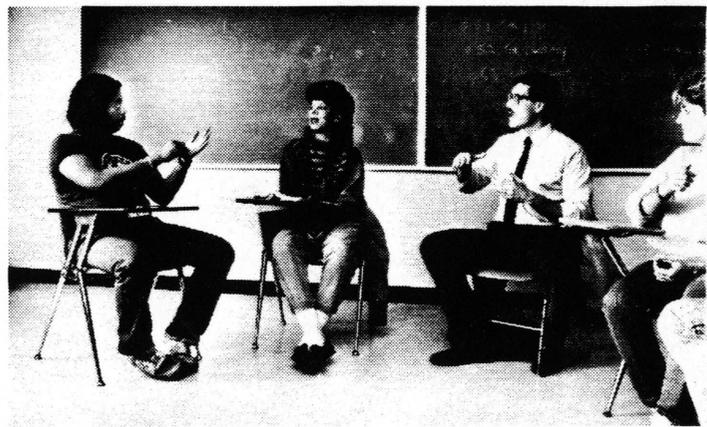
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# andbook For Teachers

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*Of Deaf/Hard-Of-Hearing Students*

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*At LaGuardia Community College*

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Created by Members of the Committee on  
Teaching Deaf Students More Effectively

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Dear Colleagues,

You have in your possession a practical and unique guide which if followed closely, will enable you to work effectively with deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The suggestions and answers to many questions are culled from two important sources: 1) experiences of instructors and 2) experiences of deaf students as learners.

Whether your concerns are related to the use and function of an interpreter, using lip reading to communicate, helpful teaching strategies or American Sign Language, this handbook will provide helpful insights and answers. The section on Helping Students to Become Active Learners in particular should be shared with all teachers regardless of whether their students are deaf or hearing.

I wish to thank Professor Sue Livingston and her colleagues, Bonnie Singer, Alyssa Haywoode, Desiree Duda, and Joann Lanaro, who worked on this project.

Sincerely,

Fern J. Khan, Associate Dean  
Adult and Continuing Education

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been prepared for the LaGuardia Community College instructor who has a deaf or hard-of-hearing student in his/her class. We hope to present some helpful suggestions and answers to many questions about how to manage this unique educational situation. In this book, you will learn about the special attention that should be given to deaf and hard-of-hearing students, the interpreting situation, general pedagogical considerations, and basic communication strategies between deaf and hearing people.

The most important thing to remember when working with deaf students is that they are students before they are "deaf or hard-of-hearing." They come to LaGuardia for the same reasons as others do, to learn. They have the same ranges of intelligence, motivation and scholastic skills. Hearing losses do not affect the mind, only the auditory canal.

The term "deafness" can be more precisely defined by an individual's hearing level. "Deaf" refers to a severe or profound hearing loss where all speech frequencies are inaudible. The term "hard-of-hearing" refers to a mild or moderate hearing loss. A student may be able to distinguish certain speech frequencies and is most likely to be helped by a hearing aid. Depending upon the hearing level and sign language abilities of

the deaf or hard-of-hearing student, he/she will be provided with an oral interpreter (mouths what an instructor says) or a sign language interpreter (uses American Sign Language--ASL) to translate what the instructor says.

Equally significant as a student's level of hearing, is the age of onset of this loss. Those who are born deaf or suffer a hearing loss at an early age (especially in the pre-lingual stage) evidence the most severe disability because they have never heard spoken English. Their impairments generally extend beyond hearing to the reading and writing of English. These students will most likely have not acquired English as their first language. Those students who lost their hearing later in life, most likely have already acquired English as a first language because they have had access to sound and English at an early age.

Deaf students who use sign language to communicate fall within a continuum ranging from American Sign Language (a visual-gestural language with its own vocabulary and syntax) to Signed English (signs using English syntax).

#### **American Sign Language Continuum**

ASL                      MORE ASL-LIKE                      MORE ENGLISH-LIKE                      SIGNED ENGLISH

The language used by the deaf or hard-of-hearing LaGuardia student typifies all aspects of this continuum from strong ASL

users to Signed English users. Some students may not even use sign language and therefore may not even socialize with other deaf persons in their personal lives.

The student's success in acquiring English skills is dependent upon many factors, but basically, the student who has had an early hearing loss and lacks early exposure to English will have a more difficult time communicating in English. Such students do not acquire linguistic competence in any language until formal instruction begins in school.

Unfortunately, there are many myths about deafness that may distort our views of deaf or hard-of-hearing students. The following is a list of some of the fallacies which many people still believe to be true:

- Deaf persons know braille
- Sign Language is universal
- Deaf people do not have voice boxes or vocal chords
- Deaf people have intellectual, social or other physical defects
- All deaf people can lip-read
- Shouting helps a deaf person to hear
- Deaf people can't drive
- Deafness is equated with the term "Deaf and Dumb"

Such attitudes may be innocent, originating from fears, guilt, and inexperience with deaf or hard-of-hearing persons. As a form of prejudice, they can not only reduce your expectations of a student's performance but often result in the humiliation, alienation, and complete withdrawal of a student. These attitudes can be more disabling than any hearing loss.

Worth noting, is that there are many successful deaf adults who have contributed greatly to our society. Among them are famous writers, artists, lawyers, scientists, educators, playwrights, and authors; not to mention Gallaudet University's new President and Emmy and Academy Award winning actresses.

There is no doubt that as an instructor you will be challenged by the presence of a deaf or hard-of-hearing student in your class. In some cases, you may find that changes in your habits will be necessary to reach these students. Please bear in mind that they are eager to learn, and with your help can become valuable members of the community.

If you have any questions, the faculty and professional staff of the Programs for Deaf Adults (PDA) (Center III building, 7th floor) are available to discuss any questions you may have. Please call the general number (ext. 5320) and ask to speak to either the Director, Counselor, Coordinator of Interpreting Services, or the Academic Coordinator.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN TEACHING DEAF STUDENTS**

It is indeed a unique opportunity to teach a deaf student. This uniqueness, however, presupposes certain accommodations which need to be made if teaching and learning are to be as effective as possible for deaf students. Many of the suggestions for accommodations which follow have stemmed from deaf students who have attended committee meetings during the last year and a half and represent real concerns that they felt needed to be addressed. Other suggestions have originated with faculty members who have had deaf students in their classes and who have seen problems that needed attention. As such, they represent the uniqueness of this teaching experience and the results of the thinking of our committee members.

**(I) If students must watch an interpreter, how do they take notes?**

Although there are deaf adults skilled at taking notes as they watch an interpreter, the majority find it difficult at best. The chance of losing information during the head bobbing that occurs between pad and interpreter is far too great for students unskilled at the process as well as unfamiliar with the content of what is being discussed. Using a notetaker allows deaf students to focus their full attention on both the interpreter and the instructor. Considering how important good notes are, committee members suggested that during the first week of classes, deaf students approach their professors to request

that they select a student who they feel is qualified to take clear and complete notes. Deaf students will either provide the notetaker with carbon paper or will ask to duplicate notes taken. The key concern here is that the notetaker be competent, and it was the feeling of the committee that this can best be judged by the professors soon after classes begin.

**(II) Do deaf students need more time to complete in-class writing assignments?**

Simply put, yes! As inexperienced readers and writers, most deaf students require additional time to express themselves in written English. In Basic Reading and English classes deaf students are allotted double time to complete in-class assignments and tests and it was the committee's suggestion to maintain this necessary accommodation in other classes as well. (If you need to arrange for a room and a proctor to oversee the students' as they complete their work, contact Sue Livingston at 5621 or 5625.)

**(III) What other special considerations are advisable when deaf students take final exams or give oral presentations?**

Many times deaf students possess the requisite information to successfully complete exams but are stymied by the questions used to elicit this information. In situations where deaf students are puzzled by what is being asked, we suggest that the class interpreter be allowed to interpret the examination questions for the students.

Also, there might be times when deaf students need to present a report or essay orally to their classmates. In these situations deaf students might wish to use a special interpreter--one that they feel knows their signing style more intimately than others and can thereby provide a smoother, more accurate interpretation. We suggest that for these times the students be allowed to make their presentations on a day that their preferred interpreter is available.

**(IV) Does it matter where deaf students sit?**

Deaf students will most often sit in the front row off to a side directly facing their interpreter. It is suggested, however, that in classes where a large percentage of work is written on the blackboard, that the interpreter, the student, the instructor and the area where writing is being done on the board be in the same line of sight so that students can look up and see signs and writing in one glance as opposed to head-bobbing from side to side to catch signs and writing together.

**(V) Are deaf students provided with special services other than interpreters and notetakers?**

Yes. Deaf students at LaGuardia are fortunate to have special sections of CSE 098/099 (Basic Reading) and ENX 098/099 exclusively geared for their needs. Classes are limited to deaf students and an experienced educator of deaf students teaches both classes. In addition, deaf students are offered special tutoring by tutors who are competent both in sign and in the content area in need of assistance. It is strongly suggested

that faculty members encourage deaf students to make use of the tutoring services available to them. Perhaps encourage is too mild a word here. What we feel are needed are additional assignments that supplement class instruction for those students who are having difficulty keeping up. Although creating these assignments and monitoring them mean more work for you, in the end it will mean a more successful experience for the deaf students in your class.

**(VI) How do deaf students follow discussions that move quickly or students who may sometimes talk at the same time?**

Although most interpreters can keep up with the quick pace of conversation, when they can't, they will interrupt and request that the discussion be slowed down a bit. When students speak at the same time, however, it becomes impossible for the interpreter to interpret what both students are saying and therefore imperative that only one student speak at a time.

**(VII) How shall I best communicate with deaf students?**

Some faculty members have said that, when possible, they prefer to communicate directly to deaf students without the use of an interpreter (perhaps with a student who has some residual hearing or is a proficient lipreader) as a way of truly gauging a student's strengths and weaknesses in communicating. Although there is nothing wrong with this we caution that you check what the student has understood from the conversation by perhaps having him briefly repeat the important aspects of what was

covered. We have found that too often some deaf students say yes when asked if they understood something when in fact they became confused way at the beginning of the conversation. If you choose to use an interpreter for a conversation between your deaf students and you, look directly at the student when you talk and not the interpreter. Avoid asking the interpreter to ask the student a question ("Ask her/him")--instead ask the question directly to the student yourself.

**(VIII) If I am planning a special trip with my class, will the interpreter come as well?**

When special trips are planned, it is best to contact the Coordinator of Interpreter Services to arrange for an interpreter to accompany you. Most interpreters who work at LaGuardia work several classes back-to-back and therefore will miss a scheduled class if they are "off campus."

**(IX) How might I go about getting background information on a deaf student e.g., when did the hearing loss occur and what is its extent?**

Questions of this nature can usually be answered by the counselors in the Programs for Deaf Adults who work intimately with all deaf students on campus.

## **THE INTERPRETING SITUATION**

### **What is an Interpreter?**

An interpreter is a professional who facilitates communication from one or more individuals who share a common language to one or more individuals who share a different common language. A Sign Language interpreter performs this task between the hearing English-speaking community and the signing (and oral) deaf or hard-of-hearing community. Since deaf or hard-of-hearing students may communicate in different ways, the interpreter will interpret in the mode used by that student.

Teaching is a process. When you are teaching a deaf or hard-of-hearing student, the interpreter is an important part of that process. Together with the interpreter and the student you become an educational team in the classroom. By working together closely, the team can manage the teaching process effectively. What are some tips to help each member of the educational team function most effectively?

### **Classroom Management**

If a student needs an interpreter for class, (s)he should request one at registration through Interpreter Services. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the interpreter before class to discuss technical vocabulary and the signs used. While in class, the student is responsible for all the material and

assignments required for the class. However, if a student is late or misses a class, the interpreter is not responsible for supplying the missed information.

The interpreter is responsible to attend every class (s)he is scheduled for. If (s)he is unable to go to class, the interpreter will inform the Coordinator of Interpreter Services as soon as possible. A substitute interpreter will be assigned if one is available. The interpreter will wait twenty minutes for the student to arrive (or thirty minutes if the class is longer than seventy minutes) and then call the Coordinator of Interpreter Services for re-assignment. The interpreter will become familiar with the vocabulary so (s)he can interpret correctly. Any problems that may happen in an interpreting situation should first be discussed among the student(s), instructor and interpreter. Contact the Coordinator of Interpreter Services if the problem can't be resolved.

The instructor should handle any problem that happens in the classroom i.e., a deaf or hard-of-hearing student's disruption (talking or signing) during the lecture. The instructor should not rely on the interpreter for teaching the content material, introducing new vocabulary and explaining difficult concepts. Interpreters are not teacher aides. The instructor is responsible for monitoring students during tests. If (s)he steps out of the room, the interpreter is only responsible for

facilitating communication and not supervising students. If handouts will be discussed during class, try to make one available for the interpreter to refer to.

### **Seating and Lighting**

The student should find a seat that is a comfortable distance from the interpreter. (S)he should be seated where (s)he can easily see the blackboard, the teacher and the interpreter. It is both the student's and interpreter's responsibility to take care of any special seating arrangements.

The interpreter should sit where there is sufficient light, no glare from the window and no other "visual noise" (environmental noise from the hall, adjoining classrooms or offices) to interfere with communication. This will enable him/her to see and hear all the information that is communicated, including input from other students in the classroom.

The instructor should let the interpreter know what the class format will be; i.e. movies, presentations, discussions, room changes, etc. If a movie will be shown, ask Media Services to bring a light for the interpreter along with the other equipment. Try not to walk in front of the interpreter and block the student's view.

### **Communication**

The student should sign and fingerspell clearly so the interpreter can easily understand him/her. If the student doesn't understand the subject matter, it is his/her responsibility to ask the instructor, NOT the interpreter. (S)he

may ask the instructor or other students to slow down or speak louder if the interpreter is having difficulty hearing or understanding the speaker.

The interpreter will interpret everything that is spoken or heard in the classroom including private conversations if they are audible. (S)he will not tutor, edit or alter conversations, express his/her opinion, participate in discussions, answer questions for students or instructors, or have his/her own conversation with instructors or students during the interpreting process. The interpreter may ask the instructor or students to slow down or speak louder if (s)he can't hear or understand the speaker.

The interpreter is a knowledgeable professional who can be helpful on matters relating to the interpreting process, but (s)he won't mind being ignored on a personal level. It's a tribute to his/her skill if you forget (s)he is there.

The instructor should speak directly to the student in a natural way. Do not speak slowly or with exaggerated mouth movements. Address the student directly; do not say to the interpreter "Tell him/her...." Try not to engage the interpreter in conversation during class; you can always have a private chat before or afterwards. If reading directly from a text or notes, try to speak slowly; we all have a tendency to speak at a more rapid pace when reading. If you want to let the student participate, observe the interpreter to see when the appropriate

time is to solicit student input. If the student doesn't understand, try rewording the question. In a group discussion, encourage your students to speak one at a time. It's difficult for anyone to hear more than one speaker at a time. When other students speak or ask questions, indicate who is talking by saying his/her name; this way the interpreter can indicate to the deaf/hard-of-hearing student who the speaker is.

**Where can I go for additional help?**

If you have a question, problem or need more information regarding your interpreting situation you can contact the Coordinator of Interpreter Services in Room C-731, Center 3 Building. The Coordinator is responsible for scheduling interpreters for LaGuardia classes, special events and other related activities.

If you want to speak to the student after class and would like the interpreter to stay, ask the interpreter if this is possible ((S)he may have another interpreting assignment.). If it is not, an interpreter can be provided for a separate meeting with the student. Sufficient notice (generally one week) is necessary in order to schedule an interpreter.

If it is not possible to schedule an interpreter for your class, here are some accommodations that can be made:

- The deaf/hard of hearing student(s) should sit in an accessible location.
- The instructor should speak more slowly or write important information on the board.
- Other students should speak one at a time.

If the student feels (s)he cannot benefit from the class without an interpreter, (s)he and/or the instructor must make a decision regarding how to handle the "absence."

## **TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING**

Listed below are some classroom suggestions that have been used by experienced teachers of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. This section is divided into two parts: tips for communicating with deaf and hard-of-hearing students on a one-to-one basis and tips for communicating with deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the classroom.

### **Communicating on a One-to-One Basis**

You can communicate with a deaf/hard-of-hearing student in several ways. Some students use speech only, or a combination of sign language, fingerspelling and speech. You can use speech only, writing or you can enlist the aid of an interpreter. The key is to find out which combination of techniques works best with the student. Keep in mind it is not HOW you exchange ideas but that you DO.

When using writing as a form of communication with a student, take the following points into consideration:

1. Keep your message short and simple. Establish the subject area, avoid assumptions, and make your sentences clear and concise.
2. It is not necessary to write out every word. Short phrases or a few words often are sufficient to transfer the information.
3. Do not use yes or no questions. Open-ended questions ensure a response that allows you to see if your message was received correctly. For example, avoid saying, "Did you understand the paragraph?" It would be better to say, "Tell me what this paragraph means."

4. Face the student after you have written your message. If you can see each other's facial expressions, communication will be easier and more accurate.

5. Use visual representations if you are explaining specific or technical vocabulary to a deaf/hard-of-hearing student. Diagrams, e.g., help the student comprehend the information.

### **Communicating in a Classroom Situation**

Provide difficult or technical vocabulary in advance, if possible. It is difficult, if not impossible to lipread and read the fingerspelling of unfamiliar vocabulary. If new vocabulary cannot be presented in advance, write the terms on paper, a chalkboard, or an overhead projector. If a lecture is to be given or a film shown, a brief outline or script given to the student in advance helps in following the presentation.

If the student is lipreading, avoid unnecessary pacing and speaking when writing on a chalkboard. It is difficult to lipread a person in motion, and impossible to lipread one whose back is turned. When using the blackboard, write on the board then face the groups and explain the work. If you use an overhead projector, do not look down at the projector while speaking.

In question-and-answer periods, the student may raise his/her hand and sign the question to the interpreter. The interpreter will verbalize the question to the instructor and the class, and then sign the response back to the student. Be sure to allow time for this to occur.

Please keep the following point in mind when having a deaf/hard-of-hearing student read in class. Since the student is looking down and reading, he/she cannot hear you when you resume your lecture or give special instructions. The student cannot receive any information while reading from a textbook or a computer screen. Hence, the instructor should signal the student when he/she resumes his/her lecture.

Review the student's progress as frequently as possible and direct the student to the necessary support services he or she may need to pass the course. If you need to know what services are available, please call the Program for Deaf Adults Counselor.

## HELPING STUDENTS BECOME ACTIVE LEARNERS

### Introduction

Incorporating a deaf student into a hearing classroom does not involve an extensive modification of teaching style, but rather an awareness of how to help such students perform well within the existing class structure. While this section suggests ways to enhance the learning process of deaf and hard-of-hearing students, the suggestions described below are equally useful in helping hearing students to become better learners.

### I. Setting the stage

Providing the students with a focus or orientation for each lecture can improve student performance by helping them to anticipate and target/recognize key concepts during the lecture. Directing students attention to relevant material can be facilitated by:

1. Beginning each class with a brief overview of the day's lesson
2. Providing a brief summary of the previous class and its relationship to the present lecture. This can help student put the lesson in context and may correct misunderstandings.
3. Posing specific questions at the beginning of the class, and instructing students to listen for the answers during the lecture.

### II. Presentation

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students can benefit from visual reinforcement of lecture content. Use of the following can

provide a visual dimension to the classroom work:

1. An overhead projector
2. A list of key concepts and vocabulary on the chalkboard which can be referred to during the lecture
3. A follow along outline of the lecture which students can fill in as the class proceeds
4. When possible link course material to information students may already know. The more students can relate what they are learning to what they already know, the better they will remember the material.
5. Listing important information, such as assignments or schedule changes, on the blackboard will help to insure that students are informed. You may also want to develop a means of notifying the student of class cancellations, so that he/she can inform interpreter services.

### III. Be Specific

Students often perform below their ability because they do not clearly understand what they are expected to do.

1. Indicate clearly, concretely and specifically what you are looking for on exams, term papers, and homework assignments (i.e., spelling counts).
2. Use specific examples. For example, instead of saying "Notice how Fitzgerald uses symbolism in this story," point out the specific details, "Notice how Fitzgerald uses the automobile as a symbol of recklessness in the lives of the wealthy." Or "Watch how the acid turns the blue litmus paper red" rather than "Watch this chemical reaction."
3. Providing frequent oral and written feedback can help students to understand and improve incorrect assignments, perceptions and working habits, in addition to providing them with the motivation to do better.
4. When a student gives a puzzled look or halting reply to a question it may help to rephrase the question in more direct terms.

#### IV. Examinations and study guides

1. Review old examinations with students
2. Consider allowing partial credit on tests and assignments, or using partial knowledge demonstrated on a test as a springboard to help students improve in weak areas.
3. Ask clear specific questions on examinations. Complexly phrased questions can confuse students and prevent them from responding to the best of their ability.
4. When student performance on essay examinations is consistently poor, an oral (signed) examination or interview about course material may be more useful in assessing a student's knowledge.