

Proactive Preparation for Deaf Students Entering the Mainstream

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DESCRIPTION

The public education system typically prepares deaf students to enter the K-12 mainstream environment. This preparation is often provided in the form of school tours, school faculty introductions (e.g., classroom teachers and guidance counselors), educational team meetings, and general new student orientations. However, systemic gaps in preparation and support for deaf students remain unaddressed. For example, deaf students fail to receive guidance on navigating the mainstream environment. In particular, for deaf students who use interpreting services, a standardized and formal orientation should be provided to teach them how to use interpreting services and work with interpreters.

In the article "Deaf Student-Interpreter Relationships and Feedback Practices in K-12 Mainstream Deaf Education," readers catch a glimpse of what it looks like for deaf students and interpreters to work together in mainstream classrooms, gaining insight into the gaps in preparation and support for deaf students that still exist. In addition to the recommendations suggested in the article, more can be done to prepare deaf students to navigate the mainstream setting and work with interpreters.

Professional development for mainstream faculty

Support for deaf students can start with education through professional development opportunities for mainstream faculty and administration. For example, the educational team (e.g., classroom teachers and administration) can receive an orientation to Deaf Education, which could include information regarding interpreting services.

Topics to include in faculty and administrative orientation:

- Deaf culture & Deaf community (including information about ASL and basic signs)
- Interpreter's role and responsibilities
- Interpreters as members of the educational team
- Teacher-interpreter collaboration and interpersonal communication

- Communication between administration and interpreters
- Interpreting service etiquette
- Tips for working with deaf and hard-of-hearing students

Preparation for deaf and hard-of-hearing students

The article offers insight into the significance of the deaf student-interpreter relationship and its impacts on student engagement and participation in the classroom. Thus, it is essential to consider the deaf student-interpreter relationship in conjunction with orienting deaf students to the mainstream system. As such, support for deaf students should include an orientation to interpreting services led by a Deaf and Hearing Interpreter team.

Topics to include in student orientation:

- Learning through interpreted instruction
- The interpreter's role and responsibilities
- Student-interpreter collaboration and interpersonal communication (e.g., feedback between student and interpreter)
- Introduction to the educational team
- Student's role and responsibilities

Along with the suggested orientation sessions, the educational team (parents, teachers, interpreter, and administration) can meet to ensure everyone understands the interpreter's roles and responsibilities. Before working together, deaf students and interpreters should have dedicated time scheduled to familiarize themselves with each other's language style and develop rapport. Also, the educational team (including the deaf student) should meet to clarify members' roles and responsibilities. For example, the student should learn who is responsible for monitoring and redirecting inattentive behavior in the classroom, discipline, answering content questions, and addressing interpreting and accessibility service concerns.

Another proactive measure public schools can take to ensure deaf students are prepared to enter mainstream classrooms is to educate them about feedback. In particular, introduce students to feedback's role in interpreting (i.e., feedback as part of the interpreting process and collaboration with interpreters). Deaf

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students must know they can ask interpreters to change how they interpret (e.g., fingerspell the word first, then show the sign or vice versa) to ensure the information is received how the student understands it. Deaf students must also know they can share their preferences (e.g., sit or stand, what to interpret), and make suggestions to optimize their experience. Specifically, deaf students must learn that feedback is about the interpreted product (e.g., interpreted content) and interpreting situations (e.g., partner/group work, social times, class discussion), not the interpreters themselves. In other words, feedback does not reflect how deaf students feel about an interpreter. Instead, it reflects how interpretations and interpreting situations impact students' engagement, understanding, class participation, and social interactions.

Additionally, the mainstream setting should provide opportunities for deaf students and interpreters to engage in feedback conversations. Just as students' schedules have time allocated for services such as speech or resource room, they should

also have time scheduled for deaf students and interpreters to discuss their work (e.g., comprehension and interpreting preferences). However, deaf students must also know whom to contact for additional support when interpreting concerns occur. As previously mentioned, the role and responsibilities of each educational team member must be agreed upon, explained, and understood.

CONCLUSION

In summary, providing proactive and systemic preparation services for deaf students will support their success in navigating the mainstream setting. In addition, these proactive measures (i.e., orientations, conversations about roles and responsibilities, and feedback conversations between students and interpreters) will bolster the deaf student-interpreter relationship, positively impact the mainstream experience, and provide a blueprint for more standardized and inclusive practices.