

eBook

Preface

My first experience in a deaf education classroom was more than 45 years ago. I was 18 years old and had just started college. I knew I wanted to teach, but I was uncertain about which major to choose. My sister suggested I look into the deaf education program at Fontbonne University. I met with the program director, Sister James Lorene Hogan, who immediately arranged for me to volunteer at St. Joseph Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, so that I could discern if deaf education was the right career for me. I spent that fall semester of 1971 in the art room working under the guidance of Katie Gray, who was both a parent of two daughters who were deaf and the art teacher at St. Joseph. On my first day, and throughout that semester, I discovered

the joy of teaching children who are deaf. I observed eager students participating in hands-on learning, and I noted the enthusiasm and organizational skills of the teacher. I appreciated the opportunity to interact with the students and share ideas with them. As a teacher, I am always excited to see students learn and grow, and I am challenged to discover the best ways to facilitate that learning through engaging and meaningful experiences.

My varied teaching experiences have included teaching students from preschool through post-secondary in public and private programs and

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Susan Lenihan, PhD, Editor



providing early intervention services to infants, toddlers, and their families. I have taught in a variety of educational settings, including general education schools where students who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) are mainstreamed with hearing peers, specialized schools that focus on listening and spoken language, and residential schools. I have had the opportunity to visit and observe in more than 50 programs providing services for children who are D/HH in the U.S., Germany, Costa Rica, Grenada, and Jamaica. During my Peace Corps experience in Kingston, Jamaica, at the

preschool program, I was given the opportunity to work with teachers in deaf education who were preparing for certification examinations. This experience sparked my interest in professional preparation, and for the past 30 plus years, I have had the honor of preparing future professionals, both teachers and speech-language pathologists, for serving children who are D/HH.

Deaf education has changed dramatically since that first day I stepped into the art class at St. Joseph Institute. Advances in technology, especially newborn hearing screening and cochlear implants, have changed the educational experiences of children who are D/HH. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) changed the way teachers and families plan for the education of students who are D/HH. Research on practices for developing communication skills, literacy, and academic achievement has provided evidence-based strategies for teaching students and coaching caregivers. These changes require that professionals prepare to teach by studying current knowledge and strategies and applying that learning under the guidance of skilled mentors.

My desire to disseminate up-to-date knowledge and information led to the creation of this eBook, *Preparing to Teach, Committing to Learn: An Introduction to Educating Children Who Are D/HH*. As I have done so often in my career, I turned to my professional learning community colleagues for collaboration on this effort. My experience writing a chapter for the eBook created by the National Center for Hearing Assistance and Management (NCHAM) served as a model for *Preparing to Teach, Committing to Learn*. My goal for this text is that it provides an open source (free) eBook on deaf education that will be available to students and faculty in professional preparation programs. While the focus is on deaf education teachers providing services to students who are D/HH, my hope is that the text is useful to students and faculty in related fields, including speech-language pathology, audiology, and special education. Because the text is introductory in nature, it covers a broad range of topics and does not replace texts that go into more depth on a particular aspect of deaf education, such as literacy. The text includes appropriate references and additional recommended readings and resources for further study. The text addresses the range of communication options used by students in deaf education; however, the emphasis is on listening and spoken language approaches and strategies that have often been only minimally addressed in introductory texts. We include references and resources for further study of approaches that are primarily visual.

There are many benefits to creating this text as an eBook. The eBook format allows students and professionals free access to the content. The chapters may be used as a whole text or individually for particular topics in a course. I followed the model of the NCHAM eBook in having the pages numbered individually for each chapter (e.g., Chapter 4 is numbered 4-1 to 4-10) to facilitate the use of chapters individually. The content may be downloaded to a computer; thus providing a “green” alternative to paper. Since the text is in eBook format, my goal is to update the text regularly to reflect new research and changes in technology and services. The eBook format also allows readers to explore certain topics in more depth through the embedded links. These links will be regularly monitored and updated as needed. The eBook format also allows for the addition of appendices as needed and for the inclusion of video in the future, which will provide examples of many of the strategies and concepts. We hope to add the first set of appendices very soon to provide information on important topics that are not in the text. I am also considering the addition of

author interviews and questions for each chapter that students and faculty could use to enhance learning. I look forward to hearing from readers with ideas and comments for new content and updates.

The contributors to the book have expertise in the chapter topics. The authors include faculty in higher education programs, researchers, and practitioners in deaf education. Five of the contributors are D/HH, and three more have family members who are D/HH. In a number of the chapters, the authors worked collaboratively, and all of the authors participated in the sharing of ideas with me in my role as editor. Most of the authors are professionals that I have known and worked with for many years, but I was also delighted to have a number of young professionals agree to contribute to the project. To learn more about the contributors, see *Chapter 17: Meet the Authors*.

In deaf education, we are always thinking about language and the words we use, and I spent a fair amount of time considering and conversing with contributors about some of the terminology used in the text. In general, I allowed authors to use the language that they are most comfortable using in regard to usage and terminology. I suggested that rather than using he/she, we vary the gender pronouns used for the flow of the text. In my own writing, I use person-first language, such as “a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.” However, some authors prefer to use “deaf child,” so you will see both. In a commentary by Ellen Rhoades (2010), she addresses the challenges of using appropriate terminology to identify the hearing status of individuals, particularly in a time when a person with “audiological deafness” may function as “hearing.” In most chapters, authors use the abbreviation “D/HH” after initially using “deaf or hard of hearing.” It is my hope that the reader will be assured that the language and terminology used in this text is used respectfully and with positive regard for all individuals.

For readers of *Preparing to Teach, Committing to Learn* who are students in professional preparation programs, I hope that you find as much fulfillment and inspiration as I have found in this wonderful career of teaching. For professionals reading this text, I hope that your career has provided you with many opportunities to learn from colleagues, families, and students, and that you have had a positive impact on many lives.

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Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible if I had not been awarded a sabbatical from Fontbonne University that provided time to complete the work.

hours to discussing, researching, writing, and editing the content. I am forever grateful to them for their willingness to say “yes” to a request of this magnitude. A special thank you to Mary Ellen Nevins who suggested the creative title for the eBook, which reflects that teachers are lifelong learners.

As the editor of *Preparing to Teach, Committing to Learn: An Introduction to Educating Children Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing*, I am keenly aware of the generous support and contributions of so many that made this project possible. My outstanding colleagues at NCHAM, especially, Karl White, Les Schmeltz, Karen Munoz, and Debbie Risk, provided support in conceptualizing, designing, editing, and providing access to the text through the NCHAM website. The authors of the chapters committed endless

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I have learned so much about teaching from my students and graduates, field experience colleagues, and extended professional learning community, especially colleagues at the Alexander Graham Bell Association and the Association of College Educators-D/HH. The opportunity to see them teaching and to share in ongoing professional learning with them is a gift.

I am deeply grateful to my family for the support they have given me in my efforts to teach and to learn.

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