

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders
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Texas Woman's University Deaf Education Teacher Preparation Program

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Philosophy of Education Statement

Role of English

We recognize that English is the primary language of commerce and as such it is critical that children with a significant hearing loss have experiences that lead them to competence in English. We believe much of the communication in a classroom and in the homes of deaf children can easily be communicated in a manual system that accurately reflects English, and that it is only through receptively and expressively using English that English competence can be acquired. For these reasons we are eager for educators of the deaf and speech-language pathologists to have functional command of "signed English", particularly the English sign system(s) that are predominantly used in the public schools.

Role of American Sign Language

Additionally, we recognize that Deaf community and American Sign Language (ASL) play a significant role in the lives of adults who have a severe to profound hearing loss. American Sign Language and Deaf community can also play a significant role in the lives of children who have a significant hearing loss as they strive to acquire a strong self-image and competence as a communicator. For these reasons we are eager for educators of the deaf and speech-language pathologists to have skills in ASL and appreciate Deaf community. In striving to meet the needs of deaf/hard of hearing children and their families, we believe it is the responsibility of informed, skilled and sensitive professionals to determine the appropriate and proportionate blend of usage between the American Sign Language and Signed English relative to their usage within the classroom

Philosophy of Instruction

We teach a comprehensive philosophy of instructing deaf children that includes the use of manual communication, speech, and audition based on the individual needs of the student. We believe that educators of the deaf must use all available resources to communicate effectively with deaf children, including but not limited to sign, speech, gestures, and fingerspelling. We believe that

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communication should be student-driven, not teacher-centered in terms of the approach used, and that educators must strive to help deaf children maximize their potential to learn and interact in both the Deaf and Hearing worlds.

Student Needs

All children, regardless of condition or handicapping situation, can learn at their own level when provided appropriate and meaningful instruction by individuals who care about the total well-being of the students in their charge. While academic norms can and should be established for the general student population, achievement goals for those students enrolled in special education programs must not be based on collective norms, but the physical, mental, and academic needs of each student.

Core Ideas

This philosophy centers around three core principles.

- First, there is no single method or approach to teaching that fits all students, especially those enrolled in special education programs. Special educators are ethically and legally obligated to meet the individual needs of students by exploring and employing a variety of approaches to classroom instructional challenges. As such, we are required to investigate the unique needs of our students and develop a strategy to meet each of those instructional needs.

As a member of a team, special educators must incorporate a variety of tools and resources into their classroom environment to help meet the individual academic needs of all their students. While the use of manual communication with children who are deaf should be the first consideration, one must consider the individual traits of the child as a whole in order to appropriately develop an instructional strategy for the child. Residual hearing, age of onset, the presence of a cochlear implant, additional handicapping conditions, and home language must also be considered when developing an appropriate educational approach for a student. Educators of the deaf cannot allow their own professional biases to interfere with academic judgments that must be made in the best interest of the individual students.

- Classroom instruction and content provided must be both meaningful and conveyed in a readily comprehensible mode. Educators must facilitate learning, encourage academic and emotional growth, and promote investigation and exploration as lifelong intentions. Expectations for

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student performance should be high, and deaf students should be expected to meet as many of the behavioral norms of hearing peers as possible.

- Finally, educators must demonstrate their trustworthiness so that their students will follow their lead through the academic challenges to be faced during the school year. Both students and their teachers are to be accountable to each other and their community for their work and growth. Classroom educators must continually demonstrate their effectiveness and determination to those charged with their supervision. Students must also demonstrate their progress and growth through a variety of accountability standards, such as appropriate academic testing, performance tests, and diagnostic tools. Teachers must facilitate scholarship in a variety of formats, and students must eventually accept that learning occurs within and that ultimately they are responsible for taking ownership in their own education.

An educator of the deaf who approaches teaching with such perspective will equip students with the tools necessary to become productive and successful individuals in their own right.