Turning the Tide: Making Life Better for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Schoolchildren

Gina A. Oliva
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First, a bit about me

Bookworm from the word “GO”  High School Graduation
Audiogram - Elementary Years
Audiogram – High School/College
But why me?

My Dad – “Hard of Hearing”
Help Needed....Rescued!!

• Middle and High School Woes
• Washington College
  – Sitting in Cafeteria
  – A strange sight emerges
  – A young person’s realization
• Gallaudet College
  – Senior Year -- Yearbook photo
  – “Group Conversation Heaven”
  – “Mom, I’m not coming back home after all”
Fast Forward

Author 2004

Co-Author 2014

Alone in the Mainstream
A Deaf Woman Remembers Public School
Gina Oliva

Turning the Tide
Making Life Better for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Schoolchildren
Gina A. Oliva & Linda Risser Lytle
My Co-author

- Linda Risser Lytle, Ph.D.
- Professor, Dept. of Counseling, Gallaudet U
- Private Practice 30+ years
- The first Gallaudet person to congratulate me
Our Goal: Broad and Deep awareness

• Of the issues faced by DHH Schoolchildren from the perspective of adults who have “been there done that”
• Of our responsibility to create policies and practices that will engender equitable educational experiences for DHH Schoolchildren
• Broad in the sense of the overall system
• Deep in the sense of the daily experiences of DHH Schoolchildren
Our Research Methods

• Focus Groups
• Online Survey
• Interviews with K-12 interpreters, teachers of the deaf, school administrators, and policy makers
• Readings and Conferences and Conversations
Every Parent, Interpreter, Teacher, Etc. Needs to Know...

• What DHH adults say about their K-12 years
  – (while “alone in the mainstream”)
• The evolution of policy & practice since 1970s
• The perspective and activities of advocates for DHH children since the 1970s
• Strategies for Making Life Better for today’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing Schoolchildren
First half of the book: What our informants said about their K-12 experiences

• Friendships/Social Access: Outside Looking In
• The Struggle to Shape an Identity
• K-12 Interpreters
Friendships/Social Access: Outside Looking In

– Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: "What! You too? I thought I was the only one."
  
  -C. S. Lewis

– Lack of Access to Incidental Learning
  
  Mindy Hopper’s study (tomorrow)
  
  We need many more such studies
The Struggle to Shape an Identity

• Living up to “the Hearing Standard”
• In limbo – a very hard place to be
• Isolation from other DHH
  – Internalized oppression
  – Limited awareness of full social engagement
K-12 Interpreters

- Not the same thing as interpreters for adults
- Best friend, worse enemy
- Too much or too little
- Lack of real understanding of the dynamics until one reaches adulthood
Specifics about K-12 Interpreting: Our eyes opened

- Evolution within the field of interpreting
  - Our perspective as consumers of interpreting services
  - Ambiguous Terminology (Educational vs “K-12”)
  - Levels of competence (low pay and status)
  - Dearth of Research related to K-12
  - Scattered and Disconnected (“Alone in the Mainstream”) = “Heartbroken and gagged”
  - Perception of “Everything is Fine”
Inclusion Evolution

- Residential School for the Deaf
- Self-Contained classroom
- Neighborhood school
Unfortunately

• We have traded one set of problems for another, and perhaps even more challenging to remedy –
• “Reading your chapter made me so mad but I didn’t know who to be mad at!”
The Result: Madness in the Mainstream
(Thank you, Mark Drolsbaugh!)

• Feds – aggregated data
• States – “We have to comply”
• Teachers – OMG!! Help!!!
• Parents - ???
• Deaf Child ???

• Who benefits?
  – CI Companies, Audiologists and SLPs
  – Interpreters and Text Transcribers
  – School Districts (??)

• Who suffers?
  – Deaf/hardofhearing child
  – His/her family
  – Deaf Schools, Programs, Community as a whole
Second half of the book - HOPEFUL MESSAGES

• Scholars, Parents, Advocates, and Allies
  – Their activities tell us what’s “missing”

• Making Life Better Today:
  – In Neighborhood Schools
    • Bridging Social Capital
  – Weekend & Summer Programs
    • Bonding Social Capital
What have advocates for DHH children been doing since the 1970s

What has been happening to stem the tide?

- Proliferation of Weekend and Summer Programs
- Deaf Professionals involvement with EHDI
- Social Media Activity
- National Agenda and Spin Offs
- Child First Initiative: Alice Cogswell/Anne Sullivan Macy Act
- Rallies to keep Deaf Schools open
- ASDC, Hands & Voices, “Lead-K”
Summer and Weekend Programs

• So important! Short term/immediate solution!
• Know as much as you can and pass on to parents, students, teachers, everyone
• Why?
  • Friendships with “kids like me”
  • Identity Development
  • Social Capital as a whole – for life!!
“My New Life in the Mainstream”

- See what can happen in a summer program!!
  - And this is just a day camp!!
- Self-Discovery AND sharing
- Thrilled to have this on our cover

ORIGINAL SOURCE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=126&v=dvilM8wmc0
Summary of Strategies for Making Life Better

- Social Capital with hearing peers and DHH peers
  - Recognition of DHH as equal/contributing MEMBERS in schools
  - Art, Theatre, Music that engenders learning and respect
  - Access to ongoing conversation – shared responsibility and incorporate as a learning activity for all students
  - DHH experts greater presence in general education settings

- Social Capital with hearing peers and DHH peers
  - Summer and weekend programs that bring together DHH children and adults regionally, statewide, nationally
  - Develop more of these and include specific curriculum related to surviving/thriving in school environments
  - Consider events for the whole family and design curriculum for all
ALONE IN THE MAINSTREAM & TURNING THE TIDE – A DECADE APART

It’s nice to know that we solitaires are united, even tho we are separated by miles and years

Gallaudet U Freshman, 2005
Separated by Miles and Years: Lessons from Reality Television

Anyone still watch this?  Anyone remember this?
Separated by Miles and Years: Lessons from Reality Television

The Judges

“That Deaf Girl”
Separated by Miles and Years: Lessons from Reality Television

Here we are in 2015

The “model of marginalization”
For now and Later

Questions????
Comments????
More specifics tomorrow

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