

## **Diverse Student Populations: 10 Tips for Working with Students Who are Deaf**

by Bronwyn G. Pughe

1. Avoid euphemisms. Most deaf people refer to themselves as "deaf," not "hearing impaired."
2. Acknowledging deafness demonstrates that it is not frightening or even interesting but only a fact.
3. Talk to deaf students, not to their interpreters. (Of course it is polite to acknowledge the existence of the interpreter.)
4. Do not take it as rudeness when the deaf student looks at the interpreter while you are talking.
5. Use your facial muscles when you speak; talking louder is useless.
6. Expect the syntax of deaf students to vary from standard American English, especially in their writing.
7. Keep in mind that the primary language of our local deaf community is American Sign Language (ASL): ASL is a visual language, replete with its own syntax, idioms, humor, and stories.
8. Go ahead and talk with your hands: deaf students know you are not signing.
9. Write on a board a lot; use overheads.
10. Create opportunities for deaf students to interact with other students: they are often isolated. Other students won't try to communicate, and often they won't even sit near them, as if they smell. Interaction breaks stereotypes and perceived language barriers.