



Belize & United States: Comparison of Deaf Reality

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Deaf Culture in the United States

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YOU'RE
INVITED



Linguistic Minority Status

The greatest barrier for deaf people is the inability for others to communicate with them.

Deaf gain and the concept of the positive side of being deaf--gaining deafness instead of losing hearing (Bauman & Murray, 2014)

Speech is not synonymous with language. Speech is one modality of communication (writing and signing are others)

Communication is a two way process.



Legal Right to Accessible Communication

National/Federal Laws:

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)

IDEA (K-12)

Americans with Disabilities Act

Court Interpreters Act

State Laws

Florida: Only regarding court/legal settings and access to interpreters

29 states have some licensure; 22 do not but may have protections for legal settings. Some have protections in K-12 but not the norm





Research in Deaf education...

- The deaf students who perform best academically usually are the ones **whose parents have effectively communicated with them from an early age.**
- Children who sign early on generally outperform those who do not sign during their early school years.
- Early language skills—both American Sign Language and spoken language—correlate with reading ability, with no evidence that one is necessarily better than the other.

Issues that Deaf learners experience

- Most deaf students' difficulties in reading are mirrored by difficulties in understanding sign language.
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing children entering school often are lagging behind hearing children in their knowledge of the world, number concepts, and problem-solving skills, not just in language.
- Deaf students do not always learn, think, or know in the same ways as hearing children.



Deaf Education in America

K-12: Public schools, 52 state schools for the deaf (residential),

Gallaudet University (Washington, DC) is the only liberal arts college in the world that is designed for deaf students.

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (Rochester, NY)

Interpreter Education Programs (83:AS, 56:BS, 4:MS, 1:PhD)



Advocacy Organizations in the Deaf Community

American Association of the DeafBlind

Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults

National Alliance of Black Deaf Advocates

National Asian Deaf Congress

National Association of the Deaf

National Council of Hispano Deaf and Hard of Hearing

National Deaf Center

LEAD-K (Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids)



What is culture? How do you define it?





Deaf Culture Activity

1. Complete the quiz on your own--don't think too much about it!
2. Break into small groups and discuss your answers--collectively decide which answers are correct

Answers and discussion for the quiz...

1. What is American Sign Language?
2. Historically, ASL is related to:
3. Approximately what percent of deaf people marry other deaf people?
4. ASL is traditionally handed down from generation to generation through:
5. Among ASL users, fingerspelling is mainly used in what ways?
6. Which of the following are considered rude by deaf people?
7. In general, the least effective communication strategy between deaf and hearing people is:
8. Which of the following are valued in the Deaf community?
9. Other than the word Deaf, a culturally appropriate way to identify deaf people would be to say they are:

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Deaf in Belize



Deaf in Belize

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Belize

- Belize is located in Central America and is bordered by Mexico to the northeast, Guatemala to the west, and the Caribbean Sea to the east.





Disability in Belize

- The 2000, the Belize national censuses reported that the disabled population numbered 13,774 people (5.7% of the population).
- 10.3% (roughly 1,419 people) of that year's disabled population reported significant hearing loss (International Disability Network 2004).



Deaf Access and Rights

- Employment opportunities for deaf people are very limited and many employers are wary of hiring deaf people due to communication barriers.
- Belizeans who are deaf mainly work in stocking shelves at grocery stores, driving a taxi/trucks, catering, teaching, mechanics, cooking, woodworking, and hairdressing.



Deaf Access and Rights

- In Belize, legal support for Special Education is founded in the following:
- Education Act 2000, Part VI – Section 25-1:
“The Education system shall ensure equitable access for both genders to all educational levels, shall be sensitive to the particular needs of the female gender and shall cater to the special needs of challenged pupils.”



Deaf Access and Rights

- Education Act 2000, Part VI – Section 25-2: “ Schools shall be free of gender, racial, or other biases, and shall be maintained in such a way as appropriate.”
- Education Act 2000, Part VI – Section 28(c): The Chief Education Officer in consultation with the council shall with respect to government and government-aided preschools, and primary schools and secondary schools -: approve or permit the managing authorities of such schools to approve alternative areas of study in lieu of or in addition to the prescribed areas of study



Special Education

- A Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education was established in Belize in 1991. The name was changed in June 2007 to National Resource Center for Inclusive Education (NaRCIE).
- NaRCIE supports inclusive education, integrating deaf and disabled children into regular classrooms with support services so that all children can learn together.



Special Education

- There are 12 Special Education Officers working at NaRCIE providing support to the schools in all six districts.
Corozal: 2, Orange Walk:2, Belize: 3, Cayo: 2, Stann Creek: 1, Toledo: 2
- Teachers have limited options for training in special education in Belize. Some go to Cuba, the Caribbean or to the United States to obtain special education degrees and then return to Belize to serve in the schools and MOE.



Deaf Education

- Although deaf children attend primary school, very few have the opportunity to attend secondary school or obtain a university education.
- In 2013 the MOE started paying Educational Sign Language Interpreters for students attending high schools.



Deaf Education

- There are 10 special education classrooms that provide educational services for students with disabilities and 2 special schools in Belize.



Communication

- Most of the deaf community use ASL as a means of communication.
- There are some that use gestures and lip-reading to communicate with family and wider community.



Services

- The Inspiration Center provides hearing screening for babies from 0-5 years.
- The NaRCIE provides free hearing screening for children and general public referred by healthcare practitioners (6 years and up).
- The NaRCIE provides teacher training and parent sensitization sessions in special education.
- Basic and intermediate sign language is offered to general public.



Services

- The NaRCIE partners with Belize Mission and Therapy to provide services to hearing impaired community.
- Belize Mission: Group of audiologist visit to conduct hearing test and provide free hearing aids to those in need. Free batteries are provided year around to clients.
- Therapy Abroad conduct evaluations and provide speech and language therapy to students.



Deaf Association

- The Belize National Association for the Deaf had been dormant but this year they have been working in reviving the association.
- In June of this year, the Regional Secretary of Mexico, Central America and Caribbean for World Federation of the Deaf and another member of the Mexico, Central America and Caribbean for World Federation of the Deaf visited Belize to provide guidance and support to the Deaf Association of Belize.

Conclusion and Review

What are some needs that are unaddressed?

Where do you see gaps in the system?

Who are the deaf leaders in Belize?

How can we collaborate in this discipline?