

Chapter 8

Lessons Learned From Preservice Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students During a Pandemic

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic caused some educators of preservice teachers of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students who had been using a face-to-face instructional delivery platform to abruptly change their methods of teaching. This affected preservice teachers who had been thriving in professional preparation and learning through traditional pedagogy. This study discusses the revision of programming to improve preservice teacher practices in an online format, and examines participation in prescribed activities in the following areas related to DHH education preparation: 1) American Sign Language acquisition 2) vocabulary development 3) QR code development 4) closed-caption development, 5) children's literature applications. Participants explored instructional strategies and activities designed to aid in their learning and professional preparation, and rated the effectiveness of activities in reference to their professional growth. Data showed the need for personal mentoring, even in a virtual environment in order for continuity of professional learning to be most effective.

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INTRODUCTION

University teacher preparation programs have evolved over time to stay abreast of innovative instructional practices, ever-changing trends in the field, and to ensure the implementation of researched-based pedagogy. Currently there are 30 undergraduate and 39 graduate teacher preparation programs in the United States which provide training for future teachers of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students. Of these programs, roughly 13 offer a bilingual (American Sign Language and English) approach, 25 offer a comprehensive approach, and 8 offer an oral/listening and spoken language approach (Gallaudet University Press, 2022). Many of these programs provide highly specialized training in areas such as language development, audiological impact to learning, Deaf culture, and offer unique styles of instructional delivery. These programs also provide instruction regarding classroom accommodations and modifications for DHH students. The assimilation of these practices allows the students of these preservice teachers of DHH students to gain access to the general education curriculum through effective instruction addressing DHH students' language needs.

A face-to-face university program preparing DHH education teachers recently conducted an extensive curricular review for the purpose of program restructure to explicitly address how teachers of DHH students should support and scaffold language with academic concepts. This review resulted in changes in coursework as well as in pedagogy prompted by the pandemic. Program reviews are often conducted based on feedback from teachers of deaf (TOD) students, university students, university faculty, and current educational trends; however, an extensive review was necessary to consider the new norm in deaf education to equip preservice teachers. The new digitization of education caused all educators to change sustainable teaching practices prompted by the rapid changes in which university programs began to do systematic reviews to address current teachers' needs (Crawford & Cifuentes-Faura, 2022). Accessibility for DHH students became an outcry by their parents during remote learning (Alford et al., in press). Professors put energy in analyzing how to effectively instruct online as the university revamped their traditional face-to-face courses to follow the protocols that were in place for online coursework.

The new interactive and engaging courses allowed preservice teachers to gain confidence in their teaching delivery with language scaffolding and accessibility using digital resources. Program enhancements included increased rigor in instructional foundation and instructional methods courses. In addition, an increase in the number of American Sign Language (ASL) courses was necessary to bolster the linguistic knowledge of preservice teachers to be able to establish linguistic skills needed for the bilingual methods courses and/or future employment in ASL- English bilingual/ multilingual programs. Another area of focus in the new program was

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