

**THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY  
LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE L'OUÏE**



**Response of the Canadian Hearing Society  
To the Ontario College of Teachers**

**Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow Initial Teacher Education in Ontario**

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## INTRODUCTION

Founded in Toronto in 1940, The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) is a community-based, multi-service, non-profit agency serving the needs of the deaf, deafened and hard of hearing communities. It is the largest agency of its kind in Canada. It employs approximately 450 people, including deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing and hearing individuals, in 13 regional offices and 15 sub-offices. A significant part of CHS's early mandate continues to this day, namely, advocating for and promoting the rights of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing consumers.

CHS has submitted several briefs on Deaf education to the Ministry of Education since the Ministry's Deaf Education Review was conducted in 1989. These briefs include:

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|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 1989      | Minister of Education's Advisory Committee on Deaf Education for Review of Ontario Education Programs for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students. |
| May 1990      | Minister of Education's Francophone Advisory Committee Concerning French-Language Services to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students.             |
| December 1991 | Report of the Review of Student Care at the Provincial Schools for the Deaf and Blind and Demonstration Schools.                             |
| August 1992   | Second Report of the Francophone Equivalent to Provincial Schools to the Minister of Education.                                              |
| August 1993   | Minister of Education's Advisory Committee on Deaf Education (Anglophone).                                                                   |
| May 1994      | Future Directions for the Provincial and Demonstration Schools: A Report to Stakeholders.                                                    |
| June 2000     | Provincial and Demonstration Schools' Council on Future Directions for the Provincial and Demonstration Schools.                             |

CHS has participated in many government consultations regarding to Ministries of Education, Training, Colleges and Training, Citizenship for Disability Issues and Ontario Human Rights Commission and government initiated reviews. Reports have been submitted with recommendations concerning the prevention and the removal of barriers. Much time, expertise and expense has gone untapped.

CHS has prepared this brief to assist the Ontario College of Teachers in its deliberations on *Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow: Initial Teacher Education in Ontario*. In response to the following questions,

**Domain 1. What content do you feel is needed in initial teacher education programs in order to address Ontario's future needs? A) Foundation courses should include the following:**

1. It is critical for student teachers to study "Linguistics and Human Rights Issues: Education Rights for Deaf Children". A foundation course this topic is important for all teachers to learn more multicultural and accessibility issues
2. It is very important for student teachers to be aware of changes, trends and current issues with respect to Deaf Education issues, which have undergone considerable change over the past decades. In part, this situation reflects the evolution of understanding concerning deaf people and American Sign Language. The magnitude of this change, however owes much to progress in pedagogy, developmental psychology, psycholinguistics (including language acquisition), and other related fields
3. Teachers need to be aware and understanding of the implications and benefits of various educational placements. For example, Deaf children are usually placed in programs where American Sign Language (ASL) is the language of instruction only after failing academically in oral (i.e. auditory-verbal based) programs. By then, the critical years of language development and acquisition have past- and a window of opportunity is missed. **The result? These Deaf children have neither a command of ASL nor English- and the long-term results are devastating!** Appropriate exposure to both languages during the formative years will ensure that Deaf children develop a strong foundation in the language skills
4. It is highly recommended that teachers who pursue to study to become teacher of Deaf., taking American Sign Language courses should be required prior to enroll into Teacher Preparation Program in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
5. It is important to note that any general B.Ed students to take ASL courses if they decide to work in the field of Deaf Education. They should take ASL proficiency (i.e. ASLPI proficiency) (or equivalent of Level Four ASL courses).
6. It is critical that student teachers and current teachers understand current trends and issues relating to the benefits, limitations and possible risks of their language and communication options. The teachers need to be kept abreast of the various assistive devices, visual technological developments, communication strategies, language, and accommodation options which are key to improved communication for all students and teachers who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing.
6. Student teachers need to include anti-discrimination training. Attitudes towards deaf and hard of hearing individuals or groups has historically been based on an "audist" view of deaf and hard of hearing people as "audiologically handicapped." Systemic audism is embedded with organizational and institutional structures and programs as well as within individual thought or patterns.

They need to be knowledgeable, think and behave appropriately in order to have proper attitudes toward deaf and hard of hearing issues when teaching and interacting with students who require effective communication accommodations.

7. Special consideration should be given for Deaf candidates with ASL skills and B.A degrees to enroll into Teacher Preparation Program in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. (Please refer to articles on *Issues and Practices in the Recruitment and Retention of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teachers* written by Judith Coryell, Robert T. Mobley, Thomas K. Holcomb, and Charles Katz and *Deaf Professionals in Deaf Education* by Jean F. Andrews) Please refer to Educational Enhancement for the field of Deaf Education can be found at [www.deafed.net](http://www.deafed.net)

### **Domain 1 (b) pedagogy courses (principles, theories and methods of instruction)**

1. Appropriate language and communication access need to be addressed in pedagogy courses. For example, a clear program with professional standards and monitoring of the communication-based system for deaf and hard of hearing children to ensure appropriate assessments and communication supports are in place to meet the actual language and communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing children, including the following consideration:
  - a) Communication Assessment of the Child's Communication Language Mode and Skill Level
  - b) Appropriate language and communication development
  - c) Appropriate language and communication access
  - d) An effective, communication-based delivery system
2. If students do not understand language of instruction by teacher, then the teacher cannot be effective. If the teacher cannot sign, he or she will not be able to communicate effectively with many students, or will not be able to communicate in the language the student uses most fluently. If you cannot communicate, you cannot teach.

### **Domain 1 (c) subject methodology**

1. If teachers with appropriate ASL skills, they can teach effectively any subject using visual modes and nonverbal language. Being aware of the attitudes of students can be a helpful adjunct to evaluating knowledge and skills. There are many nonverbal behaviours that may indicate motivation and enjoyment of learning, including attention and eye contact, note-taking, manipulation of objects, and leaning forward in their seats. One of the most important indicators is the student's willingness to interact with teacher. Knowing how students feel will help the teacher plan motivating lessons.

2. With regard to their learning styles, deaf and hard of hearing students alike dependent learners, meaning that they need teachers who provide structure and organization to the presentation of material, a characteristic which seems likely to generalize across other age groups

**Domain 1 (d) particular areas of focus within the program (for example, special education, assessment and evaluation, the integration of computer technology, literacy, numeracy)**

1. It is important to focus shift from special education to minority education and bilingual education for deaf and hard of hearing students.
2. It needs to address to include three levels of literacy (functional, cultural and critical thinking in areas of focus within the program
3. Deaf students with special needs(i.e. learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, gifted and visual limitations such Usher's Syndrome need to be addressed and considered in their accommodation requirements for learning process and participation in the classroom.
4. Communication access and communication technologies such sign language interpreters, real time captioning, blackberry text pager are frequently used by deaf and hard of hearing individuals in workplaces and deaf and hard of hearing students need to be taught about these communication accommodations.
5. Career education, including career guidance and support needs to include foundation course for student teachers to understand the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students who prepare for school to work and school to higher education transitions. These students need appropriate career guidance and encouragement from student teachers who wish to pursue to be career education specialists in schools

**Domain 1 (e) the practicum**

1. For those who wish to pursue to be teachers of deaf, it is highly recommended that teachers have an opportunity during their general education training to have a practicum in the Teacher Preparation Program in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. This way it will provide teachers in training to consider whether they may be interested in studying to become a teacher of deaf and ensure that they need to take ASL courses so that they will have the pre-requisite skills to enter in the Teacher Preparation Program in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
2. For those teachers who plan to become Auditory Verbal Therapy teacher of deaf would still be required to take ASL courses and attend Provincial Schools for the Deaf if they decide to work in the field of Deaf Education so that they have a holistic education and understand the benefits of bilingual education (i.e. ASL and Spoken and Written English)

**2. What should the relationship be between the component parts of initial teacher education programs? ( for example, between pedagogy courses and practice courses)**

Teacher education need to include focus on knowledge, skills and performance based on the application of what is learned and understood (knowledge) language acquisition principles, three levels of literacy and have been involved in attitude planning for accessible educational environment; skills, having the language proficiency to apply it to conversational and academic discourse with students, to apply language learning principles, and metal linguistics to the three levels of literacy and attitude to have high student expectations and the skill to facilitate achievement of those expectations; and performance, having the language competency and apply pedagogical principles effectively in their classroom performance

**3. Are there specific grade groupings that initial teacher education programs should prepare candidates for? If so, what are these grade groupings? If no, please go on to question 5.**

It is very common that many deaf and hard of hearing children arrived school without any foundation of their language. Teachers should be able to identify if each child actually has language competence appropriate for their age and are responsible for following up to ensure they progress appropriately in their primary language of use in the early years. They require some Early Childhood Education, (ECE) knowledge, language evaluation and developmental milestones pertaining to language acquisition in the early years. It is very important with teachers of deaf students from K-Grade 3 to have a firm background in this ECE area o that they have expectations that are on target for the students that begin with K-3 and do not let students slide because of low expectations in the early years

**4. If you have answered positively to the above (yes), should grade group specific programs have a particular focus or emphasis? If so, what should that focus or emphasis be?**

Teachers need to be aware of the importance of early childhood education and the necessity of a fully accessible language for children potential linguistic development as the above explains details.

It is important to assist student teachers of deaf to develop their effective teaching skills and effective communication skills by focusing on:

- Increasing effective language and communication strategies as much as possible
- Reducing inequities (lack of access to information and communication for both teachers of deaf/hearing and their children/students who are deaf and hard of hearing

- Increasing preventative measures to reduce barriers and ensure healthy linguistic and mental health for deaf and hard of hearing children/students
- Increasing effective coping skills for teachers of deaf and hard of hearing and their children/students with regard to communication difficulties and related deaf and hard of hearing issues
- Increasing awareness of “the consequences of a mismatch between the student’s communicative needs, and the learning environment’s ability to accommodate those needs.”

**5. Having reflected on the content of initial teacher education programs, what challenges emerge or become apparent for the future preparation of teachers for Ontario?**

**Challenges in Current Educational System Facing Teachers of Deaf and Teachers of deaf trainees**

- Deaf and hard of hearing students are frequently depriving early accessible educational opportunities and facing teachers of deaf with ill-equipped, instructional impaired and ineffective language and communication skills (i.e. lack of American Sign Language(ASL) proficiency skills). In reality, many teachers of deaf are not able to communicate effectively with their deaf children therefore they are not able teaching effectively deaf and hard of hearing children who require ASL in the classroom.
- Many deaf and hard of hearing children and students are educated in school boards and are referred to provincial schools for the deaf after they have not done well in other educational programs. They are also served in the full range of educational programs---self-contained, mainstream, and specialized support in school boards. School board programs may be designed to serve students with disabilities other than those students who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- Current teachers of deaf and teacher of deaf trainees are facing significant challenges in reconciling the actual needs of deaf children/students who need ASL and ASL competence and teaching skills with the standard curriculum offered for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and those Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who have secondary disabilities.
- These educational experiences contribute to the ongoing language and communication problems, lack of development of formal language in either a social or academic context, poor reading levels( less than fourth grade achievement), and poor math and computation skills, and the educational outcomes ultimately becoming the defining characteristics of a deaf or hard of hearing student who is marginalized, poor self-esteem, having learning difficulties, and limited linguistic developments

- The danger of students who are profoundly Deaf being identified in school board programs as low functioning when they in fact have had adequate opportunity to develop English and ASL skills are increased when those students attend a school that lacks expertise in teaching children/students who are deaf. The move toward nonspecialized school services and the potential for inappropriate education programs may increase the number of persons who are Deaf by creating an environment of educational deprivation
- The most critical educational issue is the lack of specialized personnel, which results in the lack of resources and support services. The concept of “critical mass” has been used to identify the difficulty in providing optimal services for Deaf students with specialized needs. By dispersing Deaf students into many schools, no single school has the number of students needed to justify the financial burden of creating a skilled interdisciplinary team. As a consequence the deaf students repeat the pattern of failure in mainstream primary, middle school, and secondary programs, leaving them ill prepared for post-secondary education. Often after years of failure, these students are referred to a provincial school for the Deaf, but it is usually too late for the language deficit to be repaired.

**6. What other comments or observations would you like to make about the content of initial teacher education programs?**

- To date, neither your Ministry nor the Ontario College of Teachers, Provincial Schools for the Deaf, or School Boards, have set standards for sign language competency and communication skills required by teachers of deaf students, or student teachers enrolled in the Ontario Teacher Preparation Program for Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Ontario College of Teachers are responsible for setting standards for the following areas:
  1. Level of sign language competency and communication skill for teachers of the deaf employed by both Provincial Schools for the Deaf and School Boards;
  2. Assessment for criteria for success in spoken language and transition planning for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and students who are not succeeding with spoken language in the classroom;
  3. Policies for protecting the right to access and accommodation among deaf and hard of hearing students who wish to gain

access to learning in a sign language environment or to use sign language as part of their means of communication;

4. Policies to set mandatory staff training in such areas as anti-audism education and anti-discrimination training for teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students in teacher education programs and
  5. Policies and standards for American Sign Language (ASL) curriculum for deaf and hard of hearing students in Provincial Schools for the Deaf and School Boards, serving Deaf and hard of hearing students
- The issues surrounding the contribution and participation of deaf teachers in the education of deaf students have received considerable international attention. Specifically, the recruitment of deaf students into teaching profession was included in the recommendation of the Ontario Ministry of Education's Review of Ontario Education Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, 1989 and the U.S. Congress and the President of United States' Commission on Education entitled Toward Equality, 1988. The recommendation of the Congress Report indicated that the Congress should re-establish federal support for teacher preparation, including the recruitment of highly qualified applicants in the field of education of the deaf. Priority for fellowships to qualified applicants should be awarded to members of minority groups and persons who are deaf.

In response to a recommendation of the Ontario Ministry of Education Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Report, York University established the Teacher Preparation Programme in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in Fall 1990. Significantly, many Deaf candidates with B.A. degrees accepted into the Teacher Preparation Programme. At that time, York University accepted between 5 to 8 Deaf and Hard of Hearing candidates yearly until 1997. Since 1997, York University accepted one or two Deaf and Hard of Hearing candidate(s) yearly.

Since 1990, the Provincial Schools for the Deaf and School Boards have hired over 100 Deaf and Hard of Hearing teachers and administrators compared to only 8 in the years prior to 1988. Most of these individuals are graduates of the York University program.

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act with focus on employment opportunities will impact on the Ontario Teacher Preparation Program in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to recruit and

accept Deaf candidates with BA degrees instead of B.Ed like what York University did in early 1990s.

- Please refer to attached articles on *Enhancing Diversity, Educators with Disabilities on Issues and Practices in the Recruitment and retention of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teachers* authored by Dr. Judith Coryell, Dr. Robert T. Mobley, Dr. Thomas K. Holcomb and Dr. Charles Katz and *A Deaf American Monograph on Deaf Professionals in Deaf Education* authored by Dr. Jean Andrews, Lamar University, Texas. These articles address Deaf individuals, facing barriers to entering the teaching professions and recommendations for recruitment and retention of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teachers

**Domain 2: How long do you think initial teacher education programs need to be in order to address Ontario's future Needs?**

- It is highly recommended that course content include bilingual and bicultural education in general
- Practicum exposure to Deaf students would be great asset early on so that students can decide whether they would like to consider pursuing to study to become teacher of deaf. If so, they would be able to establish a concurrent ASL linguistics degree so that they could graduate with requirements necessary to enroll into University's Preparation Programme in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Student placements at provincial schools for the Deaf and Metro School for the Deaf and in a bilingual and bicultural environment should be mandatory for those students who wish to become teachers of deaf

**Domain 3: Initial Teacher Education Program Structure: How should initial teacher education programs be designed to structured so that Ontario's future needs are addressed?**

- For those student teachers who wish to pursue to become teachers of deaf, opportunities should be given for candidates to complete a four year B.A. in ASL linguistics (i.e. at York University), concurrent with a B.Ed. program. As well, qualifications of candidates who are deaf and hard of hearing from Ontario with B.Ed and M.Ed credentials in Deaf Education from American universities (i.e. McDaniel College in Maryland, Gallaudet University and National Technical Institute of Deaf(NTID)/Rochester Institute of Technology, (RIT)) are presently not recognized in Ontario. There is a dire need to have articulate agreement between these U.S. universities and the Deaf Education system in Ontario in order to increase a pool of qualified teachers of the Deaf are admitted into Ontario classrooms.

## **Challenges and Obstacles to Employment for Many Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Aspire to Become Teachers**

- We are profoundly concerned that many Deaf and Hard of Hearing students are being inappropriately placed in school boards where they are not being provided with language and communication access needed, including the need for direct and uninhibited communication access, to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills essential for success in Ontario and district-wide assessments
- In the case of many deaf and hard of hearing children, failure to properly apply and adhere to the lack of regulations and guidelines for quality standards for communication access set by the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education that effectively create language and communication barriers that impair meaningful access to the general curriculum, are potentially harmful, and consequently deny many of the children a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment
- Please refer to Ministry of Education's Review of Education Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students under Obstacles to Employment Section, 1989—See attachment for details
- An official, representing the then Ministry of Education and Training, was a member of the advisory board to the Teacher Preparation Programme. He led the board to understand that the Ministry had amended the regulation requiring the Deaf Education Program to change its requirements from a B.A. for admission to the teaching certificate program to a B.Ed. In fact, the regulation (Reg. 184/978, Teachers' Qualifications) is still in place as confirmed by the Ontario College of Teachers. This decision was to discourage Deaf and Hard of Hearing students from entering the Teachers of Deaf Training Program and limit their options to the first going through regular B.Ed program.
- Representatives of the Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf, the Ontario Association of the Deaf and the Canadian Hearing Society expressed grave concerns over the change and were assured by York University that Deaf candidates would be provided with appropriate support services to allow those with B.A. degrees to go through the B. Ed program

- To date, since 1997, many Deaf applicants with B.A. degrees and some with M.A. degrees were rejected by York University's Teacher Preparation Programme in the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing were rejected by the Teacher Preparation Programme. The Programme had accepted one or two Deaf candidates with B.Ed. degrees every year. There have been several reports of systemic discrimination and inaccessibility raised by Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, candidates and staff. Several have approached the Ontario Human Rights Commission to file a complaint against the Teacher Preparation Programme
- Provincial Schools for the Deaf, School Boards' Special Education Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students and others across Ontario, experience some difficulties and they are not able to recruit and hire skilled and qualified deaf or hard of hearing professionals requiring post-secondary education for teaching professions.
- 2000. The Canadian Association of the Deaf's Report on Deaf Work: Challenges and Opportunities reported that York University's Deaf Education Program had changed its requirements from a B.A. degree for admission into the teaching certificate program to a B.Ed. This additional degree will create difficulties for some Deaf students who need to return to school to get the B.Ed. before applying to become a teacher of the Deaf. Making it more difficult for Deaf people to become teachers results in fewer and fewer Deaf educators of the Deaf.
- There is clearly a grave concern about the decline in the enrollment of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ontario post-secondary students at both Ontario universities and out of province universities. One of the effects of this decline is that, provincial schools for the Deaf and School Boards are extreme difficulty recruiting qualified Deaf and Hard of Hearing graduates to fill staff teaching positions
- There will be a large number of educators of deaf in both Provincial Schools for the Deaf and School Boards' Special Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing programs, who are expected to retire this year and more to come for next two years from now. This will lead to a very serious shortage of teachers of Deaf, including deaf and hard of hearing professionals that are not able to meet the demands as required by both Provincial Schools for the Deaf and School Boards.

#### **Domain 4: Initial Teacher Education Program Prerequisites/Co-requisites**

- It is highly recommended that teachers who wish to pursue to become teacher of deaf, should have ASL or LSQ skills-ASLP level 3 as pre-requisite to enrolling into any Deaf education teacher preparation program in the province. Hopefully, this will become a requirement for all teachers

entering in the field of Deaf Education regardless of whether they plan to work with AVT or in ASL. For these reasons, a spoken language should not preclude a signed language. Currently the field of deaf education assumes that if a deaf child has some proficiency in a spoken language that should be “good enough”—there is not the attitude that full access is essential to a full education. Secondly, currently the field of deaf education assumes that exposure to a signed language will impact the development of spoken language negatively even though there is much research to suggest positive impact of signed languages on spoken language development.

- It is important for student teachers to understand that many parents of Deaf children have the hope that an oral program will work for their children and render ASL instruction unnecessary. However, the facts speak otherwise. Consider the results of an Ontario study by Akamatsu, Musselman and Zweibel (2000) that showed that 93% of all Deaf preschool aged children are typically enrolled in auditory-verbal based (oral) programs. By the end of preschool however, 67% are able to remain in the program; by elementary, 58% still remain, and by adolescence only 31% actually complete it.
- Clearly – almost two-thirds - 62% of Deaf children move from oral to ASL-based programs at some point between their preschool years and adolescence. This highlights the inappropriate early placement of Deaf children away from signing programs in the first place.<sup>1</sup> This inappropriate placement has an enormous financial cost, and of course a cost in terms of English literacy and eventual employability; additionally, we are saddened to note, it also has an emotional cost. We see many Deaf people as clients of the Canadian Hearing Society’s CONNECT Mental Health Services, General Support Services, and Employment Services and Literacy Programs.
- Systemically imposed isolation and barriers to participation are key human rights violation themes for deaf and hard of hearing children/students. Isolation is the result of unaccommodated communication and language needs. An inability to participate fully in society is the reality for many Deaf people. Systemic discrimination against deaf and hard of hearing deaf children/students creates complex quality-of-life and independence issues. Only the deliberate proactive change of attitude and action supported by policy, can address the potentially devastating reality of disempowerment and isolation.
- All Deaf children have the right to exposure to a full visual language as well as the majority language of the country they live in. By only requiring

ASL/LSQ for some teacher we deny that right to many deaf students throughout the province. If all teachers working with deaf students gain ASL proficiency we finally have the hope of breaking down the divisions in this field, breaking down the competition between languages and exposing our teachers and their deaf students to an enriched education that is their right.

- Student Teacher needs to be aware of policies to set criteria for success and transition planning for deaf children who are not succeeding spoken language programs and to put in place preventative mental health strategies
- Student teacher needs to be aware of their liabilities and understanding of policies for protecting the right to access and accommodation among deaf and hard of hearing deaf children/students who wish to gain access to learning in a sign language environment or to use sign language as a part of their means of communication.