



The Orange County Deaf Literacy Project

The Mission

Our mission is to provide educational resources and supplies to promote literacy among Deaf and hard of hearing students in Orange County. Funds raised will support student efforts to achieve proficiency in English literacy.

The Need

In Orange County, there are over 300 Deaf and hard of hearing students. These students are served by 28 districts county-wide.

Nationwide, the average Deaf high school student will graduate with a 4th grade reading level.

Deaf children can't hear the language in which their books are printed. They acquire language through visual means, not auditory ones, and this discrepancy invariably delays their language acquisition. Research shows that 90-95% of all Deaf children are born to hearing parents. Many hearing parents are ill-equipped to communicate and read to their children because they do not sign, or have just started to learn how to sign. Studies show, however, that the more children are exposed to the printed word, the more readily they will acquire English. This research supports the widely-held contention that reading every day helps children (whether Deaf or hearing) develop literacy skills and succeed in school.

In order to prepare Deaf and hard of hearing students to face the challenges they will encounter after they finish school and join the workplace, our Project seeks to provide books, reading materials, supplemental educational materials, new curricula, incentives and scholarships to students through existing programs.

The Vision

The Project hopes that over the long term, by increasing efforts to promote literacy in the Deaf and hard of hearing student community, it can raise reading scores county-wide. Standardized tests like the California High School Exit Exam determine whether or not Deaf students will receive a high school diploma. A high school diploma is essential for any kind of basic employment. Standardized test scores that measure reading comprehension are also, in some cases, the determining factor as to whether a Deaf student receives financial assistance to go to college. VR, or Vocational Rehabilitation, is a government organization that may pay for post-secondary schooling for Deaf students. However, funding is partially based on minimum reading level requirements. Therefore, increasing the reading scores of Deaf students throughout the county will impact the ability of this community to seek higher education.

The Project is governed by an advisory board consisting of both hearing and Deaf professionals who serve the Deaf community. The Project's fiscal sponsor is Charitable Ventures of Orange County. To donate or receive further information on Project activities, please contact Laurie Drago at mldrago@cox.net.