“It’s All About Expectations”

Omni Hotel - CNN Tower
Atlanta, Georgia
February 21, 2011
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ALTERNATE TITLE:
HOW TO BREED DEAF LAWYERS

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A short story about me…
EXPECTATIONS FOR DEAF CHILDREN

- WHY ARE WE HERE?
  - To ensure success of deaf children

- HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS?
  - Measured by choice of profession?
  - But not everyone wants to be a lawyer or doctor!

- SUCCESS = EQUAL OPPORTUNITY?
  - Measured by equal results
BEYOND THE DETECTION

- Early detection is the start, but the proper educational intervention is the real future for every deaf child
- When parents find out their child is deaf, expectations typically drop. It’s time to raise expectations!
- How do we get past the low expectations?
A STORY ABOUT LOW EXPECTATIONS

- Once upon a time, a long long long time ago, there was a class of deaf children
- A school staff person asked them what they wanted to be…
- As each child signed their dream job…
- Let’s look at some fun anecdotal “evidence”
BLAST FROM THE PAST!
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Our Gang 1973-1974
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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS GROUP?

- Some success stories
- Could argue that all children in this group are successful (productive, independent)
- Need to look at the average educational achievement in this program as a whole
AVERAGES IN THIS GROUP

- Average of group’s reading levels were either on par with or slightly below the norm of hearing peers

- But is that how we measure success?

- Do we look at their reading levels? Their careers? Other factors?
CAN WE LOOK AT DEAF SUCCESSES FOR CLUES?

- Average educational achievement within the entire program is a crucial factor.
- But other indicators of success may reveal clues on how to improve the average.
- While lawyers are not the embodiment of success, you’re stuck with my profession for today!
ATTORNEY ANECDOTES

- What are the common elements of all deaf attorneys?
  - Language?
  - Methodology?
  - Type of School?
  - Support System?
  - Early Intervention?
  - Family Business?
  - Other Factors?
ANCIENT HISTORY OF DEAF ATTORNEYS

- 1829: First Deaf Barrister in England (John William Lowe)

- Individual deaf attorneys after Lowe:
  - 1870’s: Archibald & Duncan MacLellan brothers (Canada)
  - 1896: Theodore Grady (California)
  - 1904: B.F. Round (Wisconsin)
  - 1908: Roger D. O’Kelly (Connecticut?)
  - 1912: Henry C. White (Arizona)
RECENT ADVENT OF DEAF ATTORNEYS

- 1960’s: Number of Deaf Attorneys = 1
  (Lowell Myers)
- Late 1970’s: Number ≈ 5
- 1980’s: Number ≈ 20
- 1992: Number ≈ 30
- 2006: Number ≈ 100+
- 2011: Number ≈ 200+
POSSIBLE REASONS FOR HUGE INCREASE IN DEAF ATTORNEYS

■ 1973: Rehabilitation Act
  ■ Required Federally funded colleges, universities and law schools to become accessible

■ 1975: P.L. 94-142 (now IDEA)
  ■ Established Free Appropriate Public Education to deaf/HH children

■ 1992: Americans with Disabilities Act
  ■ Required ALL colleges, universities & law schools to become accessible
  ■ Also required access to legal profession (law firms & courthouses)
BUT WHAT WERE THE COMMON ELEMENTS FOR DEAF ATTORNEYS?

- No scientific study
- Two listserv groups for deaf attorneys & law students
- Based on the biographical information of attorneys on these two listserv groups...
NO OBVIOUS COMMON ELEMENTS

- All kinds of methodologies
- All kinds of schools
- Most had significant family support & varying levels of early intervention
- Most faced some degree of doubt from educators or other professionals
- Main commonality = high level of literacy & exposure to role models
SUCCESSFUL DEAF CHILDREN: WHAT DO I THINK?

- LITERACY, LITERACY, LITERACY!
- How do we promote better literacy in deaf children?
  - Many ideas
  - My love for reading came from…
    - Comic books!
    - Television (captions)
WHAT ELSE DO I THINK?

- Not only literacy, but also communication & social skills
- Communication at school & home & everywhere else
- So much secondary learning and cultural knowledge comes from outside the classroom
- Need both a sense of identity and ability to interact with others
FINAL THOUGHTS

■ ROLE MODELS!

■ How my Jewish mother succeeded in elevating expectations for me

■ Raise hopes & expectations

■ Not only within deaf children

■ But also parents and teachers

■ Even if the child does not succeed in reaching the dream, striving for it will usually raise the bar.
GO FORTH AND BREED…

- Entire classes of successful deaf students
- Encourage reading
- Maximize communications all around
- Raise expectations
THANK YOU

- For listening to a lawyer from Chicago…
- And for all that you do to ensure the success of our deaf children! Keep up the hard work!
- Do not despair when they end up suing the school district!