The St. Paul Technical Institute Program for Deaf Students

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PROGRAM FOR DEAF STUDENTS

GERHARD W. NELSON

For each, the hand of destiny sets the stage, for none can choose his or her place of birth, nor can any of us change the color of our hair, eyes or skin. Some are born to wealth and others see the first light of day from very lowly surroundings. To some are given special gifts—the artist, the singer, the scholar and individuals who dedicate themselves to the service of helping their fellowman. You, as a group, have shown this dedication or you would not be here in Hot Springs. You as human beings, have had the ability and opportunity to help change, shape and improve education and rehabilitation services for the deaf persons over hundreds of years with your accumulated time. I, as a vocational educator, have less time in the field of rehabilitation and training of the deaf than any person here. So if I may be presumptuous and lean on my experiences in vocational education, I would like to charge you with some of my thoughts on what I feel can be done to help in the total field of education of the deaf person.

Since the Vocational Act of 1963 and the Subsequent Act of 1968 many people view the field of vocational technical education as a panacea for all problems. If there is no other answer or no college openings, then refer the student to vocational education. After twelve years of general education, the educator states, “If we cannot get a student to conform “to our” standards, he should then go into vocational education and let these people solve the problem of educating this per-

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son or place him in an on-the-job training program.” As those of you who are educators of the deaf hear this terminology, doesn’t it strike you as a parallel type of statement you have heard so many times? When he graduates from high school, put him on the job or even more bluntly, thank goodness Johnny has graduated.

In this the way that we, as educators, lend dignity to honest labor and encourage the young people to do their best in their chosen field? This, from my observations has been a pattern of many non-knowledgeable persons working, not only with the academically handicapped, but also with deaf persons. They do not understand the problems and are afraid to get more than their little toes wet. This has also been a problem of vocational educators, so how can they be made to wade in with both feet and communicate with the educators who are specialists in the field of deaf education such as the people at this convention? I think there are two ways that we can help solve these problems—(1) national awareness and (2) local awareness.

I am sure that at many of your meetings that you have spoken of national awareness in the training of deaf persons. Let me make two or three suggestions. Has any of this group ever appeared at the American Vocational Association Convention which has over 4,000 top vocational educators across the Nation; or at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention which has thousands of representatives at their convention; and last, the Convention for the Council of Exceptional Children and specifically in Special Education, the area relating to remedial reading?

On the local level in a city of 350,000, and a greater metropolitan area of one million plus, I have been in vocational education for 18 years. I was never aware that there was a problem in training deaf persons. How true is this of vocational educators across the nation? If vocational educators are not aware of the necessity of this program, how then can we be condemned for not doing the job that you would charge us with? Other disciplines on the local level—How much work has been done with the remedial reading specialists? How
much work has been done for career consultants working with normal hearing students?

I have referred to a career consultant working with normal hearing students. In an exemplary program that has been submitted rather than thinking in terms of vocational counseling, it has been proposed that a career consultant should be employed and work closely with guidance departments of several large high schools to more effectively let young people know what is going on in the world of work. This person is to work as a catalytic agent to develop new realizations relative to what is going on in the world of work and in technical, vocational education. This individual will have several specific duties and I will only mention a few at this time:

1. To establish a bank of career information such as a list of job qualifications, training required, location of training, entrance possibilities and advancement potential.
2. To cooperate with the school staff to seek out students who are in need of oriented skills and knowledge.
3. To utilize professional personnel in career planning centers and to assist youth seeking or needing help.
4. To develop goal orientation curricula in board clusters of jobs and occupations to help integrate with post high school programs and to correlate these curricula with entry level job market and on-the-job training programs.

There are many other specific duties that this person should perform and you may want to think in terms of this type of a person who could be utilized in residential schools along with your guidance staff.

How many counseling programs in the local high schools are aware of these problems? How many people here have appeared and directed before other directors or counselors in your local vocational schools? And, how many here have been bird dogs? This is a person who brags about how many people he has gotten scholarships for in college, but seldom men-
tions the people he has worked with, unless they are going for a baccalaureate degree.

There are several problems that are similar that plague both educators of the deaf and vocational educators:

1. Career guidance and orientation is needed by everyone of all ages.

2. Vocational guidance needs a regular place in the high school curriculum whether it is for the deaf or hearing students.

3. There can be no set career guidance without vocational guidance whether it is for hearing or deaf students.

Let's for a moment enlarge on these three concepts. First, vocational guidance is needed by all the students with college counseling and the classifying and grouping of students as average I.Q., A.C.T., M.S.A.T., and G.A.T.B. The grouping of deaf and the grouping of high school students has produced a caste system of education. This classification has produced by production of visualization about groups and has detracted so students are grouped into stereotype. The worst feature of this is that vocational guidance imposes a negative stereotype which leads directly to the best kept secret in Minnesota — Minnesota has 26 area technical vocational schools, primarily post-high programs offering over 400 major areas with St. Paul TVI being only one part of this larger program.

St. Paul has been established as one of the three programs funded to improve vocational, technical, and academic opportunities for deaf persons. St. Paul has offered vocational education for 47 years. The present building is three years old and if it were replaced at this time, the building and equipment would cost from 16 to 18 million dollars. The school has 4,000 feet of floor space (over nine acres of floor space) or from another view, the one building has 26 full-time people on the custodial staff.

To give a panoramic view of the program that is planned at the St. Paul Technical-Vocational Institute, I would first
like to give you the purpose. The project will provide technical, vocational education, and counseling for post-secondary deaf youth residing in the VI United States Civil Service Region, surrounding regions, and Canada as appropriate. We plan on exploring in depth how the deaf person can more easily reach his optimum potential if given adequate technical vocational training in specific areas using a multi-variate media in an existing facility and as a result, be employed at a level commensurate with his ability.

The time has arrived when nearly every high school graduate will need specialized education beyond high school. The courses offered at the St. Paul Area Technical-Vocational Institute prepare students for entry employment in particular trades, service, or technical areas. Flexibility and adaptability are essential characteristics in planning and teaching the curricula of the Technical-Vocational Institute. The changing needs of a dynamic industrial city and state requires constant interaction between the business and industrial communities and the teaching staff.

The programs of study offered may be:

a. Short and intensive to meet specific needs for job entry or promotion.

b. Extensive in terms of providing a foundation of skills and technical knowledge for the beginning worker.

c. Broad in terms of related studies that enlarge the appreciations and understandings of the specialist.

Decisions about technical vocational education reflect the three basic responsibilities of the Institute:

a. Preparing youth for initial employment.

b. Upgrading the skill level of persons already employed.

c. Retraining technologically displaced workers.

I. Preparatory and Basic Skills Intensification

The preparatory and basic skills program will be an adjustment period prior to entry into the more formalized train-
ing program. It is designed to provide transitional experienc-
es bridging the gap between the student's home and commun-
ity and the metropolitan and technical vocational atmosphere. 
This program will include group lecture and counseling ses-
sions plus a highly individualized approach to provide the nec-
essary guidance supportive needs demanded by the student's 
environmental background.

The objectives of this type of preparatory and basic skills 
intensification phase are herein outlined:

a. Providing counseling and guidance services to the deaf 
students who are immature and who may have been over-
protected.

b. Instituting a transitional program of experiences design-
ed to facilitate adjustment from the home and community 
into the environment of an integrated technical vocational 
institution.

c. To expose the students to the multi-variate characteris-
tics of their world of work.

d. Providing laboratory services to reinforce and remedia-
tion of areas stressed in the regular training program.

e. Augmenting the social adjustment of the deaf students 
by making them an integral part of the hearing student 
body through recreational, educational, social, and ath-
letic activities.

The preparatory and basic skills program will include in-
struction in career planning through a survey of vocational 
interests; remedial mathematics; upgrading of communica-
tion skills; and industrial relations. This curricula will em-
phasize the individual and his place in the technical-vocational 
institute, the world of work, plus developing the necessary 
 basic skills to implement his training in the institution. Multi-
variate training media will be employed both in and out of 
the classroom.

Career Planning will be an investigation of the student's 
vocational interests, aspirations, values, and hopefully will 
lead to a realistic choice of study for each individual. Explo-
ration will be the watchword.

*Remedial Mathematics* is a course designed to orient the student in the kinds of mathematics that will be a part of his major training. Perhaps some of the students will need assistance with their basic mathematics skills. These kinds of services will be provided for each student on the basis of need.

*Communication Skills* will provide the deaf student a chance to upgrade his reading level and to learn the vocabulary and phraseology used in his major training area. The student's language improvement will be of major concern. This class will be taught by a teacher who has had training in deaf education. Both manual and oral communication skills will be stressed.

*Industrial Relations* is a part of the regular program for all students at TVI. The deaf student will attend this class with the hearing students. They will receive the same instruction from the instructors and will take part in the classroom discussions through reverse interpretation by qualified interpreters. The course will consist of a survey of the world of work, including a review of basic job families, job requirements, job applications, job analysis, on-the-job interpersonal relationships, the function of the labor unions, and field trips to various industries and businesses throughout the Twin City Metropolitan area. Tutorial teaching will augment classroom instruction as needed.

II. Major Areas of Study

There are thirty-four major areas of study at St. Paul TVI. The major areas are changed with the needs of industry. There are twenty-six area schools in the State of Minnesota, each school offering some programs not offered in the other schools. Deaf students are eligible to participate in any of the area technical vocational schools in the state. There are over 200 major areas of training available.

III. Available Resources

A. *School Ancillary Services*

The following student services of Technical-Vocational Institute are available:
1. Athletic Programs — inter-shop competition
2. Social Activities
3. Student Health Services
4. Testing Services

B. Community Ancillary Services
   1. Health Services
   2. Psychiatric Services
   3. Deaf Community Organizations
   4. Religious Activities

IV. Student Population:

It is anticipated that the initial student population will be fifty (50) students. The second year of the project, an increase to seventy-five (75) students is planned. Program capacity will be reached during the third year at one-hundred (100) students. Students will matriculate on an individual basis, with certain students completing a course of study in six months, while other students may continue two or more years. One of the proposed concepts, as an example, would be in the area of Auto Mechanics, where a student would receive in-depth training in one facet of the total course, such as brake repair. After actual work experience, the same student might return to the program for a course of study in wheel alignment, thus increasing his areas of vocational specialization.

I would like to conclude that there are three basic groups of individuals that must have a total awareness of the problems that exist in the training of deaf people:

(1) The educators of the deaf with vocational educators.
(2) The vocational educators with educators of the deaf.
(3) Educators of the deaf and vocational educators to spread the story to industries, general educators and to all persons until we are neither deaf or vocational educators, but are accepted in as a common stereotype and when all the people we serve will have the same opportunity for vocational technical education and will take their place in society with dignity and pride.