

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
2020 MIDWINTER MEETING
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
DEAF CULTURE FORUM

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Libraries and Deaf Education: Pre K-12 Education Pennsylvania School for the Deaf

Now, I think we have an opportunity to hear from the people who prepare students for Gallaudet University and other universities. We have Joshua Beckman and Penny Starr-Ashton from the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. Joshua is going to talk to us some about how deeply he has been involved in the deaf community throughout his life, but at home, at school and through the NAD. And Penny is a teacher and manages library services for the Pennsylvania school of the deaf. So, take it away.

>> JOSHUA BECKMAN: My name is Joshua Beckman and you just saw my brother present and we are not twins.

>> PENNY STARR-ASHTON: Hi, everyone. I'm Penny Starr-Ashton. I'm a teacher of the deaf, I'm a reading specialist and I'm also the library manager at Pennsylvania school for the deaf. Welcome to Philadelphia. Our school is about 15 minutes down the road and I'm so happy you are here.

>> NOAH BECKMAN: Yes, now, my position and role is the visual media specialist at PSD previously I was the ASL

specialist which I will talk about. When we hired the new head of school Peter Baily at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. We want to show you a video of Peter that he made for here today, a welcome for us today.

>> PETER BAILEY: Hi, everyone. I'm Peter Bailey, head of school at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. I'm so excited to have our staff joining in on your conference and panel. Libraries mean so much to us here at the School for the Deaf. I can't speak for anyone else, but I'm sure that we share the view that the library is the most valuable asset for our deaf and hard of hearing children. Because of it fostering literacy. Written English that can be translated into American Sign Language. Many people don't realize that our deaf and hard of hearing students are able to access printed English and then envision in their heads various stories and express it best in their native language of ASL, so I always wanted to make sure that libraries continue that viewpoint of accessibility to both languages. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to seeing more partnerships in the future. Thank you. So long.

>> PENNY STARR-ASHTON: At PSD we will be celebrating our 200th birthday. We are the third largest oldest deaf school in America. Right here, we will be having a giant gala. I'm usually very loud. I'm sorry. I'm used to a lot of noise of 3-year-olds. We serve approximately 180 students right now at Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in all varieties of hearing loss, deafness, much the same as you saw on the video. We serve a wide variety of children. I teach in the library, I'm a library manager and I see everyone through early intervention, our 0-3 program through the age of 21. Every class in the school comes to the library once a week, as you can see that's various idea. The 3-year-olds my come for story time and book exploration. We have middle schoolers doing research projects, high schoolers working on resumes, job applications, research projects, looking for jobs, things like that. So, it's quite a busy. It operates like a normal library. We have over 24,000 items in our library. That includes our books and video materials.

We also house a large professional library for our staff, and that contains a lot of Deaf culture items related to teaching of the deaf. We are one of the few schools, deaf schools who have a giant resource in that regard in our professional library for our staff. We serve the entire City of Philadelphia. We also serve five surrounding counties outside of Philadelphia as well as some kids sometimes from New Jersey and Delaware who are placed at the School for the Deaf.

I would be remiss to not mention this right now, but right now at this exact moment, five blocks from here at city hall,

there is a rally to restore Philadelphia school librarians, and I can't express how much 50 percent of me wants to be there right now.

We serve over 200,000 students in the City of Philadelphia. We are down to less than 8 librarians, 8 to serve 200,000 students in this city. We have been decimated. I'm not even included in the 8. It would be 9 if it was me. They are rallying to restore, there is a House and Senate Bill before the PA Legislature which would ask to put a certified school librarian in every public school in the State of Pennsylvania. We are hoping that passes. Pennsylvania school librarians' association, PSLA have been dutifully working on that. But they are rallying at city hall. We have our senator Thomas Mert to note the impact that know libraries have at a city, state and national level. We are depriving kids of literacy at early ages because we do not have libraries in our public schools. Think about that if you can, investigate it further and if you could take it back home just know that in Philadelphia we are desperate for librarians here.

>> NOAH BECKMAN: Ironically ALA was founded here in Philadelphia.

>> PENNY STARR-ASHTON: Power library is our portal for all state of PA libraries. We have a huge museum at PSD that houses a lot of our history and also relative to Deaf culture and just the history of our school. We have everything from year books to sports memorabilia to old pictures and it's a beautiful museum. The problem is no one sees it but us.

So, we would love to digitize it. The way we would digitize it is through Power Library in the State of Pennsylvania. Power Library feeds documents through a PA photos and docs which goes to PA digital library then goes to digital Public Library of America. We would love something like what Maryland has -- Deaf Culture Digital Library. We would love to be a part of that too. I will be talking about it at the PA State Librarians Conference.

>> JOSHUA BECKMAN: I wanted to talk about my role as the visual media special list. Not many schools for the deaf have this particular position in place. I'm one of very few people in this kind of position. I work with institutional advancement. We do a lot of public relations in regards to the school. What I have done historically is to make digital and print materials. I'm responsible for all of the social media, the website, and everything that happens behind the scenes, technology-wise. I work with the teachers and the staff. I support them and I support some projects with the library as well.

I look at screening and developing databases, whatever it is that we might need for DVDs or VHS tapes, I create a database

of what those documents or those particular files that we have. And also making sure that students have access. VHSs and DVDs are becoming obsolete and we don't have the right resources available, so we have to make sure that our students have access. I used to work in our early childhood education center as an ASL specialist. We needed to have ASL videos that were available through websites, unfortunately sometimes those were locked and children and parents weren't able to access them so we created an internal system through Google Drive and all videos are available based on whatever particular theme might be whether poetry or story telling those things can be translated into ASL and teachers can use those for instruction for children in the classroom. It's a great benefit. Unfortunately, what happens is that many books are not necessarily translated into ASL or other sign languages and we want to make sure that students have a full access to a visual language that is their native language.

>> PENNY STARR-ASHTON: One of the things I have done with Josh over the year is many of our little children want to be story told, and I'm only one person. So, when you have a group of them who want to read different stories, how would I ever get them to read very hungry caterpillar if I was the only person reading to them. What I did was I did a high school project with high school seniors and juniors we picked out children's book, Corduroy, Very Hungry Caterpillar. I had them ASL tell the stories, we videotaped them, made it into a QR code and put it on the book. The kids can take the iPad, snap the QR code and sit and be story told. That could be standard, you could do QR codes on many, many books but kids love it. They will take a picture of the QR code and they will sit and listen to the story. And as you know, they want to hear the story again and again and again.

So, they can keep going. They can keep going and hear the story again and again, but it's one way to make our books accessible instead of just hand it to a deaf adult and ask to be story told. Find a deaf adult, find someone who knows sign language to tell a story. It's a way for kids to be independent, much like hearing kids go on and have a story told to them in audio version. So just something to consider.

>> JOSHUA BECKMAN: 90 percent of deaf children come from parents who are hearing, and 90 percent of that population doesn't often communicate effectively with their child. You can do the math and that leads to an easy answer as far as language and parents have to work, they have to earn money to take care of their family so communication or learning sign language may not be a priority for them. We understand that that's an issue, but this is our library. The professional library is located

here.

>> PENNY STARR-ASHTON: You will see in the middle of the library we have a video screen that runs all of the time, the library loop, it's pictures of events but two-minute stories that go up on there. So, if you are passing through the library, you can hear a story. You can hear a story visually. You can always catch some story happening. That might be a wonderful way for me to promote ASL, but that's always happening and there are lots of visual reminders about where things are in our library, because if I want them to ever get to a Public Library, they have to come to my library first and learn about how a library works and then they will go to a Public Library and then they will be in the University Library. I try to teach them the ways of being in a library and where things are. We do regular library classes so they can go to Gallaudet University library and find what they need and go to a Public Library and find what they need.

>> JOSHUA BECKMAN: Thank you for letting us present today. We are getting close to our 200th anniversary celebration for the Pennsylvania school of the deaf coming up in April and we are looking forward to continuing the tradition of being the third oldest deaf school in America.

(Applause).
