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"GUIDANCE LIAISON" SERVICES IN A PROGRAM FOR GRADUATES OF A SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF*

JOHN P. CARROLL

This paper describes a follow-up program in guidance initiated at the Boston School for the Deaf designed to provide meaningful educational and vocational guidance services to young deaf graduates. The position of "Guidance Liaison" was created as a result of a large number of graduates planning to attend schools for hearing children. Of the thirty-three graduates of the class, nineteen entered schools for hearing students, five entered out-of-state high schools for the deaf, six entered the world of employment as trained key punch operators, one student entered employment as an office clerk and two students were accepted by local business schools as key punch operator trainees. During the academic year, several changes occurred with regard to the placement status of these students. As liaison officer, I assisted in each of these changes or transfers during the year.

The primary function of the liaison officer is to assist in the successful transition of the student from the sheltered and restrictive environment of the school for the deaf into the fast-moving and complex life of the "hearing world." This function was accomplished by regular visits to the schools and places of employment into which our graduates had

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been placed. Less frequent visits were made to out-of-state schools for the deaf in order to determine the extent to which the graduates had adjusted and progressed in a school using the combined method of teaching and communication. (Massachusetts schools for the deaf do not use sign language or fingerspelling). In addition to the periodic visits, there was continuous correspondence by mail to the schools, places of employment, families and students. Through this means of communication, the liaison person was kept informed of the status of a student at any given time during the year. Also, the problems and difficulties of students could be dealt with immediately. The most important and time-consuming activities in the program include the following:

1. Regular visits to schools (average of seven visits during the school year).
2. Regular visits to places of employment (average of four visits).
3. Communication with student and family.
4. Counseling sessions, when possible and where necessary, within the school for hearing students.
5. Recommending worktexts and supplemental reading materials.
6. Providing teachers with helpful teaching hints.
7. Informing teacher and student groups about the nature and problems of deafness.
8. Individual hand-written letters of encouragement to students.
9. Obtaining tutorial assistance from agencies such as the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Department of Special Education.
10. Providing information about other schools and possible employment opportunities.
11. Showing films about the problems of deafness to such groups as teachers, students, parents and speech therapists.

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In providing these and other related services, the objectives of the program were designated as follows:

1. To assist the deaf student to successfully cope with his new school environment, both academically, and socially.
2. To assist teachers and employers in understanding the limitations which deafness imposes on learning, communication and social interaction.
3. To assist hearing students in gaining a better understanding of the nature of deafness.
4. To outline programs by which hearing students could be of assistance to their handicapped peers.
5. To assist in the formation of a united and cooperative effort on the part of teachers, counselors and students to minimize the learning and adjustment problems of the deaf student.

Few professional people working with the deaf would question the need for an effective guidance program at all levels along the educational scale. Myklebust et al., (1962) outline both specific problem areas for guidance and factors with which the guidance counselor must be familiar. One specific problem is the discrepancy between the parent's expectations and the actual abilities of their child. Others include poor achievement in light of good potential for learning, lack of success in language and speech and inadequate personal-social relationships with those of his own age. In developing a guidance program, it is important to consider that deafness may cause greater dependence on others and certainly limits communication ability. Hoemann (1964) points to the need for an effective guidance program being available to deaf students everywhere "taking into account the fact that deafness will present an information barrier to the pupil and will insulate him from many experiences with jobs and with working people." Shaffer (1964) states that the total amount of experience that a deaf subject has with his environment is so small that he has a severe lack of knowledge

on which to base educational or vocational training choices. Frequently, the decision to continue studies or seek employment after graduating from the school for the deaf is made by the parents of deaf students. This is supported by the Boatner, Stuckless and Moores study (1964). While it is true that most educators of the deaf agree on the need for effective guidance services, it is unfortunately true also that effective measures in this area are rare. This is particularly true of programs involving deaf students in schools for hearing children. The effectiveness of this program of guidance liaison services derives from the fact that services were provided directly to deaf students attending classes with normally hearing students.

For many years, it has been the policy of Massachusetts schools for the deaf to provide a primary school education for its deaf children. The usual procedure is to graduate students from the eighth grade in the hope that they will be able to attend schools for hearing students. Little evidence exists regarding the relative success or failure of such policy. The choice of activity following graduation presents a major problem to these youngsters and their parents. The alternatives available for the students are: (1) Continue studies in a school for hearing children in either vocational or academic areas (2) Continue studies in an out-of-state-school for the deaf in either vocational or academic areas (3) Job selection (or as is usually the case—placement) (4) Formal acceptance to a rehabilitation facility for educational and vocational evaluation.

The choice of alternatives for each member of the graduating class was made by the student and his parents, usually contingent upon the advice or recommendation of the student's teacher or teachers. When a decision was reached, the parents made the formal arrangements for their child with occasional assistance from the principal or teachers. None of the students entered a rehabilitation facility. The six students trained in key punch operation were placed in their jobs by their teacher, the director of an I.B.M. training school.

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The program began in the fall following the graduation of the students from the school for the deaf. Working from a list of their names and locations, letters were directed to parents of all the students, and phone contact was made with all the schools and places of employment. Basically, this was to make known to all concerned the services available from the guidance liaison. A file was organized for each student which included all information and impressions gained from each visit. Prior to the close of the academic year, a questionnaire form was sent to all the schools for hearing students in which the graduates were enrolled. The completed questionnaire form was included with other information pertaining to the student's progress and adjustment and the completed material was forwarded to the Director of Special Education during the summer. The questionnaire form is included with this paper.

This program of guidance services proved to be an effective avenue in which the relevant needs of the deaf student could be met. Because of the limited geographical area to be covered, it was possible to make repeated visits to a given school when the situation warranted such visits. Representative of the problems which arose and could be dealt with immediately were: change of subject or course of study by the student, inability to understand or be understood by the teacher in the classroom, desire to have tutorial assistance, or inability to read required textbooks or outside readings. On one occasion, the liaison officer was asked to interpret an I.Q. score of 45 received by a deaf student, who had a moderate hearing loss, showed evidence of brain damage and was asked to take a verbal I.Q. test with the rest of his class. Of course, a low and invalid test score was the result. On another occasion, the liaison person was informed by a guidance counselor that a student wanted to quit school. A brief investigation disclosed that the student merely wanted to change his vocational course from printing to cabinet making. During the visit to a large city high school, the liaison person was given the opportunity to show the film, *Silent World, Muffled World* to a student body of approximately 1,000. A question and

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answer period followed the film in which both the student body and the entire speech therapy department of the city participated. The principal, guidance director and many of the teachers indicated that they had more of an understanding of the problems imposed by deafness following this presentation.

The main criterion for the success of this program during its initial year was that all the students remained in school and were promoted to the next grade. While it is probably true that a few students received "gift grades" and received social promotions, it is also true that most of the students enjoyed the challenge of the classroom for hearing students. Most of the students earned satisfactory grades. A more complete evaluation of the program can be made only when the students complete their high school work.

In conclusion, providing liaison guidance services to deaf students entering public schools at the post-primary level appears to be an effective means of assisting these students during the difficult first year of adjustment in these schools. Visiting public schools on a regular basis and providing many types of relevant services to these students eases the critical transitional period and helps the deaf youngster to integrate successfully in the hearing classroom. Also, the teacher in the public school has a better understanding of the limitations which deafness imposes on learning and communication. Consequently, he has a better frame of reference from which he can work to meet the needs of the deaf youngster. If deaf students are to attempt integration with hearing students, a relevant program of educational and vocational guidance services must be provided to assist the transition.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: Please fill out all items. If one teacher has the student for more than one class, please fill out the questionnaire for the other class or classes.

Student's Name _____

Teacher's Name _____

Subject Taught _____

No. Times Class Meets Per Week _____ Grade _____

Type of Program (College Prep,
Vocational, General, etc.) _____

No. Pupils in Class _____ Student's Individual Class Rank
(10th of 30, etc.) _____ Expected Average Grade

For Year (Numerical or Letter Grade) _____

Type of School (Public, Private, Parochial, etc.) _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Attendance Record _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Class Participation _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Attitude Toward School Work _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Homework Completeness _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Homework Accuracy _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Behavior _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to Communicate Through Speech _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to Understand Oral Directions _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Able to Understand Written Directions _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

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Able to Socialize and
Integrate With Hearing
Students -----

Able to Adjust to Regular

Classroom Schedule -----
In my opinion, deaf children DO NOT belong in regular
classes.

AGREE DISAGREE COMMENTS _____

Plan a five instead of a four year high school curriculum for
deaf students?

AGREE DISAGREE NOT FEASIBLE COMMENTS

(Page 2)

NOTE: Please answer the following questions as honestly and
objectively as you can. Your comments are invited and
encouraged.

1. Have you noticed any improvement in the student's speech
and/or communication ability since September, 1967?

2. Do you feel that the student has progressed at the same
rate as that of his hearing peers during his year at
school? _____

3. Do you feel that he is working at the approximate grade
level as *Most* of his hearing peers? _____

4. Have you learned anything about the nature or problems

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of deafness, yourself, during the past school year?_____

5. In which area(s) do you feel the student is strongest?

6. In which academic area(s) do you feel the student is lacking? _____

7. Do you feel the student was *adequately prepared* for entrance into your school?_____

8. Do you feel the child has the *ability, motivation, and home backing*, to successfully complete high school?_____

9. Were there problems of any kind regarding the social adjustment of this child?_____

10. Would you feel better equipped to teach another deaf student at some time in the near future?_____

11. Do you feel the liaison visits have helped the student to adjust to his new school environment?_____

12. Do you feel the liaison visits have helped you to better understand the problems of deafness?_____

13. Do you feel that the student could progress faster with continued help from a tutor?_____

14. Do you honestly feel that the student will find a suitable job of his choice after graduating from high school, because he has been adequately prepared by your school?

15. Did you consider having this student in your classroom "A CHALLENGE"? _____