

I breathed in water when I was being born, so I had to be hospitalized in an oxygen chamber for about two and a half weeks, causing me to have hearing problems. My parents did not realize that I was hard of hearing until I was about three years old, and they had to adjust accordingly. Not only was it an obvious struggle for me, but also a major struggle for my parents, my siblings, everyone else. They had to adjust to raising their voices in order for me to hear properly. I had to adjust to wearing hearing aids, something that I had absolutely detested in the first year or so of having them. It is not easy at all to have a hearing impaired child when you have not had any experience in the situation, for there are major struggles. If I was born deaf, my family would have been forced to learn sign language, something that, if you are not around it all the time, can be hard to pick up at an older age. As someone who grew up hard-of-hearing, I've noticed the struggles of the deaf population. We struggle to get through everyday in the hearing world and it's hard. It's hard to have to adjust to being around hearing people because they often speak too fast when we depend on reading lips in order to understand them properly. It does not always have to be that way, there are solutions available. We could start involving sign language in everyone's lives, making it a part of our daily routine to communicate with each other through the hand movements. Sign language could easily be a universal language.

The deaf community is growing, quicker than many truly realize. There are far more deaf and hard-of-hearing people enrolling in public schools every year. These students are struggling to get through their day-to-day education, to do well in college after graduation, and then to be successful in the workforce, along with many other struggles that come with being a hearing impaired person in the hearing community. There is a massive language barrier that is causing the deaf community to fall short of the expectations of the hearing community and struggle with their education. I used to go to a deaf school and the financial strain added on with being away from family and the distance became too much and I had to go back to attending a public school, which was a major adjustment. I loved being at the Louisiana School for the Deaf, it was really nice to learn sign language, to be a part of the deaf community, and to not struggle so much with what is going on around my surroundings. My parents, instead, had to settle for sending me to a school in which the teachers have no certified knowledge of sign language and with hardly any experience in accommodating them. They had to settle for knowing that I am capable of making good grades but will still struggle with school, simply because of the lack of proper services.

Honestly, public schools should implement sign language into their curriculum, starting with grade schools. Sign language is just as essential as Spanish is considered to be in the foreign languages aspect because the deaf population is growing in a similar manner as the hispanic population. The implementation of sign language curriculum would benefit merging cultures together, effectively creating an environment in which both—those who are able to hear and those who can not hear—will thrive in. There is a whole other aspect in learning sign language and breaking down that intangible barrier preventing the deaf community from proving their full worth to the hearing community.

It is embarrassing to have an interpreter follow you around everyday at school, translating what you're saying to your *friends*. I would prefer to communicate with my friends without having to utilize the knowledge an adult has in their language. I'd rather be silent and unheard than to have to think about what they say and do, as

having an interpreter is essentially a chaperone who translates your language into English. This fosters a negative environment in the case of the hearing impaired student, causing the student to not have a proper sense of community, something that humans naturally crave.

The efficiency of work environments would increase as language barriers are breached. A friend of mine, who works in a fast food restaurant, managed to pick up enough sign language to help a deaf woman who was attempting to place an order. This woman was struggling because she only knew sign language and could not speak, so the cashier could not understand her, and she was getting frustrated as a result of this. My friend, however, noticed this and went up to the front to help with the communication of the cashier and this woman. She managed to earn the appreciation of the woman. This incident strongly suggests that learning sign language could help in service jobs, medical fields, areas of hospitality and tourism, and in others instances that involve customer relations. It creates less frustration and more positivity, giving both parties a sense of community. It does not have to be required that all workers learn sign language, you only would need a few employees who have some knowledge of the language in order to better the environment of the clientele.

In short, both the hearing and deaf communities would benefit greatly, should the hearing community venture to learn sign language and cross that barrier that has been up between these two communities since the concept of hearing impaired first occurred. I am raising my voice to be heard in this subject, in the intermingling of hearing impaired and hearing people amongst the others that are calling out for political correctness, the discrimination of technology, and so many other issues.