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Getting Help in High School and College

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Using interpreters in high school

The reason why I stayed at my deaf school throughout high school was because my school had four interpreters, all good ones. (We had no real-time captioners.) Some other hearing impaired students at my school attended my school just because they couldn't find interpreters for their hometown mainstream schools. Having a good interpreter for a full time mainstreaming hearing impaired student was problematic in my region!

Getting help in college

As for college, I am currently attending a mainstream one with a big hearing impaired support program. The program has a network of interpreters, notetakers, C-printers, and real-time captioners (some of the service providers are college students themselves).

Unlike most of my deaf peers, I sometimes used to want to go without any service provider in my chemistry, math, and physics courses. It depended on the professor's teaching style. I used to dislike having interpreters in these types of classes because I would often look down and work things out on my own-sort of like critical thinking. Another problem was that I sometimes had interpreters who didn't have enough background knowledge and they just confused me. Well, I later found myself needing service providers for my upper division chemistry, math, and physics classes. Fortunately, I am able to request a specific interpreter, who also tutors math and is very good at holding the important information when I look down at my notes and the textbook. I don't always get him, but often enough to keep me happy. I rarely use a notetaker in those three types of classes because I am able to write my own notes pretty well. Even with an interpreter...as long as the interpreter was able to "hold" the important stuff I could otherwise miss when looking down.

Using C-print or real-time captioning

For my biology courses, I love to use either the real-time captioners or the C-printers because I then can directly learn and read the biology vocabulary in the lectures. Also, I can look down and whatever I miss will still be on the screen for me to catch up on. I could use an interpreter, but the biology lectures have more words per minute and it would be painful if I was looking away. Also, if I used an interpreter, I would need to plant the biology vocabulary into my head on my own time in order to pass the exams. Since the Biology courses have more words per minute, I also use a volunteer notetaker from within the class because they are usually the ones with biology background. I also write my own notes, but they are often very messy due to the speed of the class.

Working with volunteer notetakers

When picking a volunteer notetaker at the beginning of the semester, I often don't know who may write more than what is on the board. Furthermore, I want notes that are as good as the ones I can take in my chemistry, math, and physics classes. Also, I know I need a good back up notetaker in case the one I pick happens to not show up once in a while (the service provider office would pay \$50 to only one volunteer notetaker per class). So, what I do is to inform the professor, then walk up to the front and ask for candidates. Usually between 2 to 5 students come forward. I will try out all the candidates for a couple of days then pick the primary and the back up. For the back up one, I usually give him/her a gift at the end of the semester — not \$50, but something. It depends on how often I have to use the back up one.

For the general education courses, I use any interpreter and also request a notetaker from the service provider program. I sometimes write my own notes, sometimes I don't. These general education courses are normally easy and not of importance to me. I would rather save my energy for the courses I enjoy taking!

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/deaf/mavis/help.jsp>