Ideas for ASL Teachers

Instead of assigning your students the usual “Interview a Deaf Person” or “Attend a Deaf Event” projects – which many in the Deaf community has come to abhor. Give them these assignments that can actually help them understand Deaf Culture and to become better allies.

A List of Activities to Understand Deafness & Deaf Culture:

1. Show a full video or show without sound or captions – have students write out what they believe the story was about, character names, etc.
2. Have a Panel of different Deaf people (in-person or online) to share their experiences in different situations – work, education, family, etc. Show the real-life nitty gritty details and not the “cleaned up” media representation.
3. Have students check their place of employment, local businesses, hospital, etc. for how “Deaf-friendly” it is – do they provide interpreters, what kind of access do they provide, what kind of sensitivity training do they have, are the televisions have captions on all the time, do Deaf people work there?
4. Reserve books at your college library (or check my Memoirs list in the downloads) Books written by Deaf and Hard of Hearing people about their lives – write introspectives into these lives and compare with their own hearing lives.
5. Have them attend a Deaf event with you – Have them observe but not intervene with the Deaf “process”. You’re there to guide and explain. Do not send them off on their own blindly.

A List of Activities to become Allies with the Deaf Community

1. Typing transcripts of spoken videos or lectures for Deaf or DeafBlind Access
2. Providing ASL access to spoken videos.
3. Providing voiceover of ASL videos.
4. Provide ASL translations of various written information – Medical Information, mental health information, social awareness information, and everything that the general public should know – for many Deaf people, English is a second language so written information isn’t quite accessible as ASL is.
5. Search across social media for people actively doing “cultural appropriation” – hearing people profiting off of teaching ASL or selling Sign Language products. Call them out and explain why it’s wrong.
6. Advocate for interpreters in public places – theaters, town halls, concerts, lectures, etc.
7. Follow Legislation that affects Deaf and Hard of Hearing people – discuss with the Deaf community how they feel about these laws and help advocate or repeal it.
8. Push for more Deaf representation in Interpreting bodies, interpreting programs, and licensing boards.
9. Become volunteer one-on-one interpreter for a Deaf participant at a casual event
10. Train to become an SSP (Support Service Provider) for DeafBlind individuals – guide, interpret visual information, and interpret casual conversation.