Project 2 Rough Draft

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ENG 102

Have you ever been given an opportunity to learn American Sign Language? If you answered yes, it most likely wasn’t in a public-school setting. If you answered no: well neither were we.

Students work every day to increase their knowledge, expand their thinking, and better themselves for their future. Not everyone is privileged enough to attend a private school or decent public schools. Some people were never and will never be privileged enough to go to school at all. For those of us who are lucky enough to be given the opportunity for an education, the students who take advantage of it are almost always looking for a way to squeeze everything out of their education. Public schools almost always offer the same courses and classes to their students. Having a lot of schools in the same state that are offer the same things causes them to be viewed as equal in quality. That’s what’s wrong with the curriculums.

Abington School District is a large school with a large and diverse student population. Having experience in these schools, it was very easy to see the divide between students who can hear and those who rely on American Sign Language to communicate. Such an unnecessary divide is caused by there not being a type of urgency to teach hearing students how to communicate with those who cannot speak or hear. Not only was there a divide between our students, but a lot of students who were and are interested in learning American Sign Language either must find funding to learn it outside of school, or must wait until they attend college, which still does not guarantee the opportunity. Simplifying the search for students to study ASL would improve a lot of things all at once such as the schools and the students’ results after graduation.

Even though this sounds like a long process to solve, there are multiple solutions that could start the fix. If finding funding is difficult, schools could simply find a fairly cheap computer program or book set that would teach just the basics for the students that showed interest. The problem with this is that there would be no hands-on educating, nor would the students have a credible or knowledgeable resource to rely on. A better option would be to reach out to the deaf community educators and ask for volunteers that could come and teach some basics once a week or every other week. Unfortunately, having such a large school district would cause a lot of students to miss the opportunity to gain any knowledge from the volunteers. The final and best solution would be to find the funds to afford two or three teachers. Students would either be offered the basics as a requirement in the lower level schools, or they could be offered ASL as a language in the upper level schools. This would allow all students to know the basics of ASL to help them communicate at a lower level at least, or it would allow the students who are very interested in the language to take it in depth. A past student who has now graduated and studies ASL in college says, “I think it should be put in both lower and upper level education. In lower level, it would be helpful for the kids to learn the very basic elements of it. In upper level education it should definitely be offered as a language option. It would spread more awareness about the language and culture and give more students the opportunity to learn while in high school” (Schrecengost).

Though seemingly difficult, the best solution could prove significant in parts of our community never thought to be affected. Luckily, a school district such as Abington, is very involved in their students and making sure they succeed. As their curriculum site says, “The mission of the Curriculum Department is to assist in providing each student with appropriate instructional materials and strategies in order that the student may achieve proficiency and reach his/her potential in a well-rounded educational program” (Abington.k12.pa.us). Areas of our community like our public spaces could become more welcoming to those who may find it difficult to go because they may not be able to communicate. Places such as our malls, parks, or recreational facilities could grow. An overall connection in our community could help families choose to move to Abington over another district that could seem similar. On a less personal aspect, having our students learn ASL could make the community grow and become a better and more well-known town.

Biased, the idea seems fool proof, but there will always be a counter argument that is posed. The most significant rebuttal would be the issue with financing. This could be a large expense for a public school, which would either cause the money to be taken from another program, or it would increase the taxes for the district. Tax-payers who are living without any connection to the public schools could be bothered by having to pay a higher amount for an additional program. There are many responses to this argument though. Students need to grow and learn more so they can surpass prior generations and become better and more knowledgeable (Ladd 6). Students will use this skill to become better and more aware of the outside world. If the tax for Abington school district increases for the program, it may be a slight nuisance, but the benefits of it in the end would be well worth it. If the quality of the town one lives in goes up because of it, it’ll justify the increased tax rate. Another point that would help settle the issue, is that the people that come from the public schools, are sculpting the future, and the better these young people are, the better the community could be. “In a sense, curriculum always has, and always has had, some kind of future orientation” (Moore 4). An additional concern could be finding the proper educators to hire for the school district. Finding ASL educators could be a challenge. Most ASL educators study to help those who rely on it. What could be done to help with this would be to connect the deaf community to the public schools and create a foundation that combines students learning ASL and the deaf community so there is a strong bond and a good relationship.

Though this seems like a challenge, the end results seem well worth the struggles. Every positive in the process allows everyone in the community to benefit from the addition of ASL into our public schools. The pros completely overweigh the cons, making this a project that hopefully can be proposed to the school board and the curriculum creators.

References

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