

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to speak at this forum. My name is Anna Krauss. I am a senior at the Eastport South Manor High School in Manorville. I am profoundly deaf. As a Girl Scout, for my Gold Award, I'm here today to give back to my community; specifically for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in New York State who are subjected to all Listening assessments of all State and District exams for a grade. I am currently ranked 3rd (of 307) in my Class of 2013 with a GPA of 104.4. I have always been determined to achieve my full potential. Implementing the appropriate tools for equal access to communication in the mainstream classroom has been an absolute necessity for my success.

Attending school in my district since Kindergarten, I became suddenly deaf in the 3rd grade. New to the Special Education Department, in the 4th grade my parents implemented an IEP for my education. With the exception of a different General Education Teacher each year, the committee members of my CSE have not changed. The Committee Chairperson, having written his thesis at Gallaudet University, a college for the Deaf in Washington D.C., seemed to make the Committee a winning partnership for my educational plan. But for 5 years, up until the 10th grade, every ELA, proficiency exam, State and District test requiring an assessment on a Listening comprehension was administered to me for a grade. I had been subjected to listening without the gift of hearing. Relying on speechreading the proctor and the sign language interpreter, I received the lowest grades of my school record.

It wasn't until I received a response from Governor Paterson in 2009, when an accommodation was added to my IEP allowing me to read transcripts of listening sections- but *only* because I was recently late-deafened. Why is this accommodation restricted to the recently late-deafened? Why can't all students with hearing loss have an available, unrestricted accommodation to read a transcript?

The New York State guidelines [Test Access and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#) has several accommodations for the Deaf test-taker but is clearly lacking the option of reading the recited passage unless recently deafened. State and District assessments are to test the knowledge of English language

comprehension- not the verbal or manual mode in which it is delivered. Not how well they can read an interpreter. Not how good their speech reading skills are. Not how well they can fill in the blanks when they miss a word. Denying a deaf student a written transcript of the passage while verbally reciting the passage to the Hearing creates an unequal barrier to the content of the passage. This barrier is imposed on students with this disability who must 'listen' when deaf.

The spectrum of Deafness is wide. Each year in the United States 12,000 children are born with hearing loss.* Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound and the mode of communication is uniquely individual. Hearing loss encompasses students who are born deaf, late-deafened and Hard of Hearing. Modes of communication can be Oral/Aural, verbal or nonverbal and/ or use one or more of 9 manually coded, visually receptive modes of communication. (show chart)

The use of sign language interpreters to convey true meaning is a controversial issue. It must be understood that the same signed word often attaches different meanings in Sign language. And because Sign Language has its own grammar and syntax, transliterating English word order from **Subject Verb Object** >> to >> **Object Subject Verb** word order, places a burden on the interpreter to convey equal meaning without unintentionally changing in the construct of the passage. ** (give example) Additionally, restricting the use of gesturing, essential to the linguistics of Sign Language to clarify with non-manual aspects of tense, cues, manner, and degrees of intensity and morphological process (one sign for different meanings) creates an extraordinary barrier and is grossly unequal to the information a Hearing student receives. (give example) The intended meaning is lost without gesturing, inhibiting the abilities of the deaf student's comprehension and therefore negatively affects his/her grade and GPA. (show PEPNet video)

<http://www.pepnet.org/resources/testequity/video-discussions>

*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2010

** National Survey of Accommodation & Alternate Assessments for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in the

There might be attempts to claim that providing a written transcript is advantageous to a Hearing student who listens to the passage. My response is that *even with* a transcript, idioms, sarcasm, innuendo and double meaning verbalized in a recited passage is almost always lost among the deaf. The inability to hear emphasis placed on words, innuendo or the slightest sarcastic tone outweighs any argument to an advantage.

Michigan, Florida, Oregon, California and other States have certain exemptions for Deaf test-takers from the listening portion of the exam. *** Many universities exempt Deaf test-takers from having to 'listen'. Countries beyond our borders; United Kingdom, Finland, Norway and Switzerland have recognized and reformed assessments to accommodate hearing loss and its limitations, by exempting or not scoring the listening portion of a test. My intention is not to exempt the Deaf from comprehending an English passage, but to give as humanly possible, equal access to recited passages by providing a text version for the Deaf to read.

A variety of communication modes are accompanied by a variety of testing modifications; separate test location, **'practice'** listening, extended time, and repeating the passage numerous times. I can attest that these accommodations don't help me to hear any better and have actually confused the intended meaning rather than clarifying it. An accommodation that would access the test more equally to an English language-learning deaf student is the unrestricted option of a written transcript for the listening passage.

National reforms in educating the Deaf are a continuing work in progress. The National Association for The Deaf has sponsored a Bill of Rights for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing student in the United States. The National Deaf Education Project, making communication access the # 1 priority, cites reform in Georgia, Michigan, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Louisiana, California, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and Texas- to promote equal access to communication in education. ****

*** Albus, Thurlow / ELP Assessment Accommodation <http://aei.sagepub.com> Pg.163

**** www.ndepnow.org

It is my hope that this commission for New York Education Reform understands that the Deaf need an unrestricted option to read a written transcript when 'listening' to a comprehension assessment of a recited passage. An amendment is needed to the current Guidelines, unrestricted and available transcript for all deaf English language learners is equal and just for communication access. Do not test our knowledge on modes of communication, code switching, its accuracies, our residual hearing or receptive skills. Test our acquired knowledge in the classroom – "the target skill" and goal of the assessment.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Anna Krauss

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