

Veditz Chapter of American Sign Language Teachers Association (VASLTA)

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January 2004 Issue

President's Corner

Happy New Year!! I hope that all of our VASLTA members and friends had a wonderful Holiday, full of good cheer (and good food). My holiday was quiet and restful, so now I am all geared up for a new year of great VASLTA events!

Be sure not to miss our upcoming workshop on February 7th on "Birthplaces of Clerc and Berthier and Deaf Movement," given by VASLTA member Patti Raswant. It is sure to be a fascinating presentation. Her previous presentation on ASL History was very interesting and I learned a great deal of our language's history from even before LSF and the Abbe de l'Epee. Wow!

Also, we've got some interesting statistics and other information on high school ASL programs in Virginia, so check out Deborah Pfeiffer's article, based on her doctoral dissertation. The new high school teachers' group is going strong and we have had some interesting meetings at various members' high schools. Our next high school teachers' meeting will be on February 4th at South Lakes High School in Herndon, where our hostess, Susan Lane, teaches.

Our Silent Blitz was very successful this year although we did not have many participants. Many of our teachers from the Blitz are interested in helping again next year, so we are having a meeting on April 30th to start planning for next year's event early. Anyone who is interested in helping to plan the Blitz is welcome to attend.

Last, but not least, make sure to mark down May

24 (tentative) as the date for our next Annual General Meeting, which will be at NVRC. A topic has not been chosen yet, but you can be sure that it will be an interesting one!

Have a great 2004, and I look forward to seeing all of you at our exciting VASLTA events!

Adele M. Polk
President, VASLTA

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, February 04, 2004

High School ASL Teachers Meeting
Time: 7:00PM Location: South Lakes HS
Contact: Adele Polk at ampolk@staffnet.com

Friday, February 06, 2004

Board Meeting at 7:00PM in NVRC
Contact: Adele Polk at ampolk@staffnet.com

Saturday, February 07, 2004

Workshop: "Birthplaces of Berthier and Clerc" and "Deaf Movement" by Patricia Raswant
Time: 9AM (registration at 8:30AM)
Location: NVRC
Flyer enclosed

Friday, April 30, 2004

Blitz Committee Meeting at 7:00PM in NVRC
Contact: Adele Polk at ampolk@staffnet.com

Monday, May 24, 2004 (tentative)

Annual General Meeting at 7:00PM in NVRC
Guest Speaker: TBA
Contact: Adele Polk at ampolk@staffnet.com

VASLTA Board for 2003-2005

The 2003-2005 officers of VASLTA are:

President	Adele Polk
Vice-President	Deanna D'Arcy
Secretary	Jill Moebus
Treasurer	Sandy Wise
PDC	Patricia Beech
Members-at-large	Sharon Bailey Kris daCosta-Warshauer Barbara Stansbury
Ex-Officio	Patti Raswant
Blitz IV	Sandy Wise
Newsletter	Patricia Beech
Web	Patricia Beech



The newsletter was created using a Macintosh PowerBook. The desktop publishing software used is "Ready,Set,Go!"

To place an advertisement in future issues, please send your advertisement in electronic format. JPEG format is preferred, but we will consider other formats.

1/4 page	\$25.00
1/2 page	\$60.00
Full page	\$100.00

Send articles or advertisements to Patricia Beech at pgbeech@aol.com.

High School ASL Teachers

At long last, the high school ASL teachers have started meeting on a regular basis to discuss issues and share ideas specifically for the high school teaching level. Adele Polk, president of VASLTA and a teacher at Woodbridge High School, has been coordinating the meetings.

Teachers from Loudoun County, Fairfax County, Prince William County, and Falls Church have been among the attendees, and there has been interest shown from Stafford County and the Winchester area. Issues under discussion have been certification, classroom management, materials and curriculum, as well as administrative support.

Our last meeting in November was at George Mason High School in Falls Church, where our hostess, Kris daCosta-Warshauer shared some of her materials and teaching strategies with us. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, February 4th, at 7:00 pm, at South Lakes High School in Herndon, hosted by veteran high school teacher Susan Lane.

For more information, or to have your name and e-mail address added to the list, please contact Adele Polk at polkam@pwcs.edu.

Top 10 Reasons For Learning Sign Language

The Virginia Association of the Deaf, Inc. (VAD) is selling ASL short-sleeved T-shirts for kids and adults, long-sleeved T-shirts and sweatshirts for adults, magnets and mugs to raise money for the VAD Leadership Training Program. Printed on the front of the items is the ILY logo, on back are "Top Ten Reasons for Learning Sign Language." All come in different sizes, colors, and prices. Prices include shipping and handling. Some of the Top Ten Reasons printed on the mentioned items are:

You can sign with your mouth full.
Sign language is a 3-D language.

To see the rest of the Top Ten Reasons and the pictures of the items, please visit our web page at <http://www.vad.org/tshirt.html>.

Only personal check or money order will be accepted. Please make them payable to VAD, and mail to VAD, c/o Jill K. Moebus, Sales Coordinator, 1025-A Margate Ct., Sterling VA 20164. For more information, contact Jill Moebus at work (703) 648-4369 TTY, home 703-404-4012 TTY, or email stjilly777@mac.com (home) or jmoebus@usgs.gov (work).

ASL Blitz IV

- by Keith McDonald -
NVCC ASL III



On Saturday, November 1, 2003, I ventured into the “ASL Blitz.” This was an event to give individuals who are studying ASL the chance to be completely submerged in the language for an entire day. As soon as I heard the name, “ASL Blitz,” I was intrigued and challenged. I knew I had to participate.

It was set up like a day in high school. In fact, the event was even held in a high school! As soon as I walked in, I felt like I was transported back in time. When I entered the building, I immediately encountered a small registration table manned by two people. I waited while they finished assisting the person ahead of me. When it was my turn, I stepped up to the little table to get my

name tag. A man behind the table signed a question to me. “You a teacher or student?” I responded that I was a student and then surprised myself a bit with how easily I was able to read what was being signed to me (even though it was quite a simple question). My confidence level crept up a bit. I just might be able to do this! I reflected on the fact that it usually takes me a few minutes to get my brain in gear to start interpreting someone’s signs to me. It is almost like I have to remind my brain that I recognize those “manipulations” coming at me and that they have a meaning attached to them so **START INTERPRETING!!**

We were all instructed to go into the cafeteria until we would be escorted to our “homerooms” where we would meet our homeroom teachers. Again, I am flashing back to my high school days! As I approached the cafeteria, I could see other “students” already in there. Since all voices had been banned, everyone was communicating in ASL. Hands were flying, facial expressions communicated emotions and enthusiasm. I felt like the new kid in school walking into his new class for the first time. I sat down at one of the cafeteria tables and was quickly pulled into a conversation with the others sitting at the table. Very quickly, I became less aware of any nervousness or inhibitions that I may have been feeling and just lost myself in the enjoyment of speaking in the language that I have been studying. I may not have understood every single sign but I understood the context of what was being said, and therefore, I was able to follow the conversation. I would take some new signs away with me, I was certain of that.

The school was divided into four levels or “classes.” There was kindergarten, second grade, sixth grade and eleventh grade. I was placed in the sixth grade. I was escorted out of the cafeteria with the other



Sandy Wise, Chair
Patricia Beech, Assistant Chair



Registration
Cheri Martinez and Patrick Sullivan



Door Prize Winners
Annette Bosley (T-shirt), Karen Seeley (pen),
and Kristen Schraml (tote bag)

ASL Blitz IV (continued)

sixth graders by a Woodbridge Senior High School student who was part of their ASL club. I remember feeling a bit envious that they had an ASL club and I didn't when I was a high school student. We entered our homeroom and met our homeroom teacher. She explained to us what we could expect throughout the day and then put us through some games to help us loosen up a bit and get acquainted with each other.

Through the course of the day we spent about 45 to 50 minutes in each class learning about a different topic relevant to ASL and the deaf community. We learned about classifiers in one class, (my favorite), and CODAs and NRDA's in another. In another class we discussed stereotypes the hearing community holds with respect to deaf people and discussed how the deaf have been portrayed in movies and books. In yet another class we talked to members of the deaf community who shared personal experiences with us.



VAD Store
Jill Moebus with a Blitz participant

Each class went by so fast. We moved from class to class as a group. As the day wore on, we "bonded" with our classmates. We helped each other understand those signs we missed, we shared laughs and promised to meet to go to silent suppers together.

Before we knew it, it was the end of the day. We all filed back into the cafeteria for our "graduation." I proudly accepted my graduation certificate with my name neatly printed on it. I realized that I was actually quite proud of myself! As I left the building, I felt quite the sense of accomplishment. I also had a realization that I have had before....if I just relax, I communicate in ASL so much better than I do when I am all uptight about missing a sign or having to ask someone to repeat themselves. The reinforcement of that lesson is probably the most important thing I will take away with me from this whole experience.



VAD Store
Liz Sale, Gary Viall, Jill Moebus,
and Steve Williams



Deaf Artist
Marjorie Winsor

ASL Blitz IV (continued)

- by Annette L. Bosley -

We were in 6th grade once again ... that was our assigned grade for the day (anyone in ASL 3).

After picking up our name tags we were escorted by our homeroom teacher, Dr. Nina, to our classroom. We played two games in homeroom, one was called “find the leader” which I had never played before. “Find the leader” is a game that helps with receptive skills. While one student left the classroom the others got in a circle and picked a leader. Then after returning to the class the student had to stand in the middle of the circle and try to guess who was leading the rest of us in something like “Simon Says.” We were supposed to copy the leader’s movements/gestures while not staring at the “leader” so we wouldn’t give away who the leader was.

Our last activity in homeroom was to watch a portion of a video tape and our teacher asked us questions about the tape – to see if we understood the signing ... more good receptive and expressive practice.

After a short break we went to our next class and reviewed “Deaf Characters in Films & TV” with Ely Newby as our instructor. He discussed common stereotypes that the hearing world has of the Deaf world. We also watched a clip from a weekly series that is on WB that has a young Deaf woman and shows clearly some of the stereotypes of both the hearing and Deaf population and the interaction between them. After we answered some questions and asked some of our own we were off to our next class.

“Signomics” with Miss DaCosta as our instructor was probably the most challenging course of the day but was an excellent class and much needed! Ms. DaCosta introduced classifiers to us. We practiced using classifiers by telling stories using comic strips (clever I thought!).

Next stop lunch ... After lunch we were off to the Library with Mrs. Williams who gave us information about resources we could find on the internet about Deaf Culture. She also had many books out on display and discussed some of them. As a result of visiting the “library” I now have a few more books on my “TO READ” list.

Next was our class by Mr. “G”, who is a Child of Deaf Adults (Coda). With humor, he shared several stories with us about life as a child of Deaf adults and gave us some acronyms that I had never seen before: OHCODEA – Only Hearing Child of Deaf Adults (brothers & sisters all Deaf) and OCODA –



Rover Gary Viall teaching signs for states, cities, and countries

ASL Blitz IV (continued)

Only Child of Deaf Adults (Hearing but no brothers or sisters). The one that applied to most of the students in the class was NERDA – Not Even Related to Deaf Adults. I had to laugh ... I have asked a couple of Deaf people who said they have never heard that one before.

Next was our class on “World Facts” by Mr. Ross & Mr. Robert. They showed us number signs that are used to describe different sports events such as baseball and football and answered any questions we had. They also gave us some additional web sites that would be helpful with our Deaf studies.

The last activity of the day was the drawing for 3 door prizes and I was winner #2 who got to pick out a “Love Ya” tee shirt with the 10 Reasons to Learn ASL printed on the back! Cool!

I look forward to attending another ASL Blitz, hopefully soon! It was a wonderful day of learning using ASL with NO VOICE ALLOWED!!!



Beginner I
Homeroom Teacher: Julie Greenfield



Beginner II
Homeroom Teachers: Deanna D'Arcy & Jane Harmon



Intermediate
Homeroom Teacher: Nina Moore



Advanced
Homeroom Teacher: Barbara Stansbury

ASL Blitz IV Rovers



Storytelling
Elaine Shaffer and Linda Whitworth



Recipes
Liz Sale and Jill Moebus



World Facts
Robert Gault and Ross Gilson



Sports
Tim Lavelle



Signomics
Kris daCosta-Warshauer



Deaf Characters in Films & TV
Newby Ely



Librarian
Melanie Williams



CODAs
Bert Lensbower



Counselor
Mary Bagby



Fingerspelling
Adele Polk and Kenny Hynes

Historical Linguistics of Sign Language

- by Kris daCosta-Warshauer -
VASLTA Board Member-At-Large

The general population in the Deaf Community knows that sign language in America first originated on Martha's Vineyard with its homesigns. We all know that ASL is a derivative of French Sign Language. We all know that Laurent Clerc learned signs from Abbe de l'Epee. But little did we know about the sign language roots beyond Martha's Vineyard, Clerc and l'Epee.

On a Saturday in October, Patti Raswant surprised 7 participants with unique facts that inspired us more to keep our language – ASL – alive. Patti took us on a time machine trip through a history of the ages, empires, kings, priests, and religious issues that had connection with sign language. Through Patti's discoveries and research, we sensed the fires burning the monasteries, monks being murdered during the religious dissolution in England. And from the Suleyman regime of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, Suleyman appeared to credit deaf people as intelligent, educable, and pleasant workers at the palace. Suleyman was a sultan who embraced mute brothers during his regime, and paintings revealing signs. By the end of her presentation, it left me wondering with what-ifs and a sense of pride in ASL and sign languages universal.

Despite the ongoing controversy with ASL and deaf education, I vow to keep ASL from perishing to ash. What if the Benedictine Order allowed evil spirits to interfere with body soul and let the body speak through voice, neglecting signs? What if Abbe de l'Epee failed to convince Napoleon to change the monastery into school for the deaf and educate them through signs? What if King Henry VIII of England did not oust the Catholic Church? What if the people, in search of escape from religious persecution, decided to flee elsewhere instead of New England and eventually to Martha's Vineyard?

Imagine yourself being treated with respect, equally recognized, and considered a member of the family (with no blood ties) ... these deaf people were servants at the Topkapi palace in Istanbul during the Ottoman Empire. The palace required sign language as second language for a certain group of people who lived there. The

Sultans also signed.

If this is intriguing enough, be sure to catch Patti's presentations. Her genuine interest and ongoing research (yes, historical accounts of sign language origins is incomplete – unearthed discoveries hidden in many publications) keeps you captivated and in awe.

Veditz ASLTA is delighted to host Patricia Raswant again on Saturday, February 7 from 9 am to 3 pm at the NVRC for her workshops "Birthplaces of Berthier and Clerc" and "Deaf Movement."

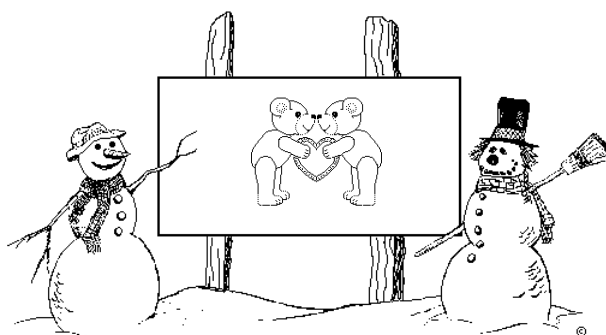
Editor Position or Staff Member

How are your computer skills? Are you interested in taking over the position of Newsletter editor for VASLTA? I would like to "retire" from this position. I have been doing this since 1995. I usually put out newsletters around Dec/Jan, May/June, and Aug/Sep.

Let me know if you are interested in becoming Newsletter Editor for VASLTA. If not, how about becoming a part of the Newsletter Staff? The staff can use writers, columnists, photographers, proofreaders, advertisements, etc.

Thanks,

Patricia Beech
Newsletter Editor
1995-1999 and 2001 to present



American Sign Language Programs for Foreign Language Credit in Public Secondary Schools: A Dissertation Study

- by Debbie Pfeiffer, Ed.D. -

There is a growing trend toward acceptance of American Sign Language (ASL) for foreign language credit at the secondary (high school) level (Foreign Language Association of Virginia, 1997; Kreeft Peyton, 1998). A problem exists in that there is little research contributing to the body of knowledge to provide background information on the implementation and administration of these ASL programs. The purpose of the dissertation study conducted by Pfeiffer was to describe practices used to implement and administer ASL programs offered for foreign language credit in public secondary schools.

This was a mixed method descriptive study. The sample studied consisted of the 14 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia that offered ASL for foreign language credit during the 2001-2002 school year. The study utilized survey, interviews, and document analysis to collect quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (descriptive, narrative) data to describe why and how ASL programs were implemented, pertinent issues regarding the general administration of ASL programs, qualifications of secondary level ASL teachers, and characteristics of ASL curricula that were being used.

In its initial phase, telephone surveys were used to collect information from division level supervisors of all ASL programs in the Commonwealth. The instrument used was an adaptation of Cooper's (1997) questionnaire used to collect information from administrators of post-secondary sign language programs. Response rate was 93%. Data gathered from the survey guided the second qualitative phase of the investigation. Six programs were chosen for site visits. During the visits in-depth interviews were conducted with key participants in the ASL programs including ASL teachers, building-level administrators, guidance counselors, and other foreign language teachers. Content analysis of relevant documents contributed to triangulation of research.

Results of the data analyses indicated that the momentum to develop ASL programs came from almost as many sources as there were divisions offering it. Policies and procedures followed to implement ASL programs also varied greatly, but generally followed the same process as for other new courses of study in each division. The greatest reported obstacle to implementation was finding a qualified teacher.

Finding and hiring qualified ASL teachers was the most problematic issue for administrators, and funding the programs did not present a problem. The most important skills for those administering ASL programs at the division level, as identified by individuals in that role, were, surprisingly, "knowledge of Deaf culture and Deaf issues" (54%) and "public relations skills" in advocating for and disseminating information about ASL (38%). ASL teachers did not think it was important for division-level ASL supervisors to know ASL, but believed it was critical for them to have knowledge about ASL and support it as a language equal to other foreign languages. They also depended on the ability of the supervisor to teach them strategies for teaching foreign languages.

A total of 30 people taught ASL full-time and 7 taught it part-time for foreign language credit in Virginia's high schools. Only one individual was the graduate of an ASL teacher training program. Twelve (32%) were graduates of training programs for teachers of deaf students. Nine of the ASL teachers (24%) were themselves deaf or hard of hearing. Five of the instructors held ASLTA certification, 4 provisional and 1 qualified, and many more were working toward provisional status. Two teachers held interpreter certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and 8 (including the two RID interpreters) had Virginia Quality Assurance Screening levels. None of the teachers had experience teaching other foreign languages.

Though 92% of administrators stated that proficiency in ASL was the most critical qualification for ASL teachers, methods used to measure the prospective teachers' proficiency in ASL were inconsistent.

A Dissertation Study (continued)

Professional development opportunities specific to teaching ASL were not offered by most school divisions, and administrators and ASL teachers expressed frustration over the lack of support and mentoring available to ASL teachers.

The process of developing an ASL curriculum varied widely on a continuum from a single ASL teacher developing it to several committees working over time to develop the ASL curriculum and gain the approval of other committees. Most utilized the Framework for Instruction in American Sign Language in Virginia's Public Schools (American Sign Language Task Force, 1998) as a guide, and many borrowed from the curriculum developed by the longest standing ASL program in the Commonwealth. Administrators and teachers responded that it was easy to align ASL instruction with the five organizing principles identified by the National Standards in Foreign Language Project (1996). Vista's Signing Naturally (Smith, Lentz, & Mikos, 1988) series was the most commonly used instructional material.

Data from this study may assist secondary level administrators in deciding whether or not to implement an ASL program in their division or school, and may support the standardization or upgrading of existing programs. Recommendations were offered for future action and research.

One recommendation for future action involved VASLTA. Secondary ASL teachers would benefit a great deal if local divisions of ASLTA would include the supervisors of foreign language programs in their area on their mailing list, so that they are informed about training events. A special networking session and training for secondary teachers of ASL could be included in the annual ASLTA conference, and a listserv could be developed to assist them in sharing information with other secondary ASL teachers.

If you are interested in reading this dissertation study in its entirety, its title is "The Implementation and Administration of American Sign Language Programs for Foreign Language Credit in Public Secondary Schools," author Deborah Laurie Pfeiffer. It has been published by:

Proquest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road
PO Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI, 48106-1346
(800) 521 - 0600
www.il.proquest.com

References:

1. American Sign Language Task Force. (1998). *Framework for instruction in American Sign Language in Virginia's public schools*. Virginia Department of Education.
2. Cooper, S.B. (1997). *The academic status of sign language programs in institutions of higher education in the United States*, Dissertation Abstracts International (UMI No. 9735644)
3. Language Association of Virginia. (1997). *Framework for foreign language education in Virginia*. Virginia: Author.
4. Kreeft-Peyton, J. (1998, Fall). *ASL as a foreign language*. K - 12 Foreign Language Education, 6 (1), 1 - 3.
5. National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996). *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century*. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.
6. Smith, C., Lentz, E.M., & Mikos, K. (1988). *Signing Naturally*. Berkeley, CA: Dawn Sign Press.

Directions for NVRC

DIRECTIONS

to 3951 Pender
Drive
Suite 130
Fairfax, VA
22030

From 1-66

Take Exit 57A (US 50-E)
towards FAIRFAX

Merge onto US 50 East
(Lee Jackson Memorial
Highway)

Turn LEFT onto Waples
Mill Road

Turn RIGHT at first light
onto PENDER DRIVE

Proceed as indicated **

From Annandale / Burke / Springfield Area

Take Braddock Road
WEST

Cross Rte 123

Turn RIGHT onto Shirley
Gate Road

Shirley Gate will cross
Less Highway and be-
come Waples Mill Road

After Crossing Rte 50,
make a RIGHT at the first
light onto PENDER DR

Proceed as indicated **

From the Capital Beltway, Route 495

Take the I-66 WEST Exit
49, towards Manassas /
Front Royal

Take 66 WEST to US-50
East (Lee Jackson Memo-
rial Highway)

Proceed as from I-66
and **

** Make a RIGHT at the 3rd sign for the "Chef's Café" (5th driveway), drive straight ahead past the 3-story building on the right. Make a RIGHT at the one-story building ahead, which is 3951 Pender. NVRC occupies the right half of that building. There are two entrances: one directly into the office and one (handicap accessible with handicap parking and ramp) directly into the meeting rooms.

