

Literacy for Life: More than Words on a Page

"Literacy arouses hopes, not only in society as a whole but also in the individual who is striving for fulfillment, happiness and personal benefit by learning how to read and write. Literacy... means far more than learning how to read and write... The aim is to transmit... knowledge and promote social participation."

- UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg, Germany



As part of its ongoing mission to *invest in the future of Arizona's blind and deaf children*, Arizona Blind and Deaf Children's Foundation assesses programmatic needs, brings together collaborations of related organizations, serves as an information source to blind- and deaf-serving agencies and the general public, and incubates, develops and funds programs which encompass experiential learning.

For both blind and deaf children, literacy cannot be accomplished in schools alone, and requires additional resources. Families that get involved in their child's literacy learning greatly improve the odds for success. However, most parents do not know sign language or Braille, and most do not know how to begin to assist their child in developing literacy.

That's why many of the programs supported by the Foundation focus on connecting both students and their families to needed assistance. Literacy for Life programs launched by the Foundation include:

- **The Shared Reading Project** teaches hearing parents and other caregivers how to read to deaf children, aged 0-5 years, using American Sign Language with proven book-sharing strategies. Developed at Gallaudet University, the project has been successfully implemented at the Center for Hearing Impaired Children (CHIC) on both Tucson and Phoenix campuses of Arizona Schools for the Deaf and Blind.
- **The Portfolio Project** supports deaf pre-schoolers and their parents by establishing journals which document students' language progress. These portfolios are useful reference tools for hearing parents learning to more effectively communicate with their youngsters.
- **A Parent Sign Language Library** was established at CHIC in Phoenix to assist parents of deaf pre-schoolers in learning ASL. To date, dozens of parents have benefited from the tutoring and support available through this library.
- **Reading for Success** supports high school students at Arizona School for the Deaf who are reading two or more grade levels below their peers. By providing additional instruction and testing through a reading lab focused on reading strategies, the program has helped 20 students annually become lifelong readers.
- **Digital Book Project** provided an opportunity for students to produce their own books outlining what they'd learned in a variety of academic subjects, emphasizing how they applied the lessons they'd learned. Student authors were presented with awards for their achievements, and digital copies of the books reside in the library of the Tucson campus of Arizona Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

For more information, or to contribute to Literacy for Life programming, contact Arizona Blind and Deaf Children's Foundation, 520.577.3700, or e-mail info@azblinddeafchildren.org.

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