

Section IX
Personal Development

Avenues to Literacy: Our Stories, Our Visions

Coordinator:
Barbara Boyd

Panel Moderators:
Beth Peters
Lauren Teruel

Panelists:
Dan Girard
Julie Hochgesang
Erika Leger
Nan Zhou

A Panel Presentation by Students Who
Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
From California State University,
Northridge

Coordinator: Barbara Boyd, Ph.D.

Panel Moderators:

Lauren Teruel, B.A., English, from Chicago, Illinois, and Beth Peters, B.A., Liberal Studies, from Pleasanton, California.

Panelists:

Dan Girard, Senior Psychology Major from Boston, Massachusetts; Julie Hochgesang, graduated with a B.A. in English, from Chicago; Erika Leger, freshman Liberal Studies major, from Boston, Massachusetts, and Nan Zhou, graduated with B.A. in Psychology, from China and San Francisco.

Lauren: Our presentation is concerned with literacy. The most simple definition of literacy is the ability to read and write. Today, literacy means far more. Literacy is the ability to read and write so that we have the competency to carry out the complex tasks of the world of work and life outside the classroom.

Beth: Ideas and ideals from past culture define and shape society. Literacy allows us to see and experience the different facets of society through the eyes of myriad persons, allowing us to reshape and redefine society as we know it today. The definition of literacy has broadened to include so many more forms: computer literacy, math literacy, science literacy, art literacy, cultural literacy.

Lauren: Paolo Freire, the Brazilian educator, wrote: "On the basis of the social experience of illiterates,

we can conclude that only a literacy that associates the learning of reading and writing with a creative act will exercise the critical comprehension of that experience, and without any illusion of triggering liberation, it will nevertheless contribute to its process." The task of liberation is in the hands of what Freire calls "the oppressed." He further explains that only when the oppressors stop "making pious, sentimental and individualistic gestures and risk an act of love" can the liberation process succeed. Freire's intent is that we must move beyond tokenism; we must hear and we must see the messages of the *true* professionals in our field, the students whom we serve every day.

Beth: Last Wednesday evening during the opening plenary session, Annette Reichmann from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the United States Department of Education was addressing the decline in the number of vocational rehabilitation cases that are closed. Ms. Reichmann posited the theory that one reason for this might be due to the fact that better literacy and math skills are required in work settings, due possibly to the fact that literacy requirements are increasing. Our panel of students from California State University, Northridge, will address literacy; we will discuss the ways in which we have incorporated literacy in our everyday lives, how we initially developed the ability to read and write, how we carried the learning of our elementary and secondary schooling into our college careers.

Beth: Emergent Literacy is always the first crucial stage in learning to read and write. This begins when we are infants, when reading and writing and

vocabulary development start, when parents communicate with their children. This first stage includes—for some of us starting school early and — for others, learning pre-reading tasks in the home. Dan, you went to college long before you went to elementary school! Tell us about your parents' involvement in your preschool education.

Dan: I was in preschool when my parents found out that I was deaf, when I was six months old. They sent me to Emerson College for preschool. After school, when I arrived home, my parents shared stories with me. They had pictures of cookies, for example, and then they showed me the sign for cookie and associated that word with others such as milk. (We were all learning American Sign Language). So, words were drilled into me every day as I developed language and the vocabulary that was appropriate for me at that age. And it was done in a fun way.

Lauren: Erika, you started school at the age of two. Tell us how your mother used dolls to introduce you to literacy.

Erika: When I was very small, I loved dolls. My mother gave me dolls and asked me to create a story about the dolls. Mother would then write my story and ask me to read, voicing and signing the story at the same time.

Beth: Nan, would you give us a brief summary of how you started learning and how you learned your first word?

Nan: I was born in China. My parents are deaf. So of course our native language was Chinese Sign Language at home. I remember in the first grade I was seven years old, and the teacher approached me and showed me a card at the desk where I was sitting. I didn't know exactly what was going on. The teacher then asked me to copy that word. I did, and she said, "Do you know what that word is?" I said, "No." And she then told me, "This is your name." Until then, I had no concept of associating names with their written counterparts. That is how I developed a vocabulary; it was the initial experience in my acquisition of literacy.

Lauren: Julie, you had an older sister with whom you competed. How did that competition influence your motivation to learn?

Julie: Yes, there was sibling rivalry. My sister is five years older than I. She seemed always to get our parents' attention by showing off her ability to read. And I wanted that attention, too. So I worked, and I read things, and when I could understand something, I went to my mother and

showed her that I could do as much as my sister. That competition provided me with the motivation. My sister is a brilliant writer now; she was my model for the future.

Beth: Lauren, how did the use of cards and words help you to develop literacy skills?

Lauren: My mother is an artist as well as a professor and is very creative when she teaches. So my mother made these activities for me rather fun. She gave me pictures of my father, who was typically out of the house. He worked all day long for very long hours. So I was constantly thrilled to see my father when he came home. We would cut out the shape of my father from pictures, and we glued them on very brightly colored cards. Then my mother would ask me: "What is Daddy doing? What's Daddy doing in this picture that's in front of you, Lauren?" I looked at the pictures, and I said, "Daddy is looking," and my mother wrote on the card exactly what I gave her. Then I could make the connection between activities as well as the printed word on the card and the action verbs associated with what my father was doing – talking, looking, and so on.

Beth: I work with children today teaching them to read. It is a constant struggle. But there are so many, many different strategies that can be used. Not only do I develop those strategies, I also share and learn from others. One wonderful strategy that I've learned is to have a parent tell stories to their child, either a published story or one that they create themselves and write. Read the first part of the story, stopping midway or enough to stimulate the child's curiosity. When the child wants to know the end of the story, the parents say, "You read the story... and that is how you find out what happened." So the child then begins to understand that the book is a story and that there is a plot that develops; the story has people. In terms of books and literacy, for the twenty-first century, another activity which fosters the development of literacy skills is engagement, meaning students are actively involved in their learning; they're not just passive readers and learners. Rather they are doing, and they are connecting the print with the activity and making that association.

Lauren: In elementary school, we make the shift to a more involved type of reading. Not only are the parents educators in the home but also the teachers in the elementary school setting. Nan, what's your experience in elementary school?

Nan: Yes, there was a time when we were asked to bring pictures of our families, and I brought a picture of my parents. I learned their names and made the connection between the written name, the signed name, and the person. We had pictures of animals, and we made the same connections. From all these pictures and words we developed and wrote stories that became increasingly complicated. We learned grammatical syntax and identified nouns and verbs. In sum, we learned language. Children are curious by nature. Once we learned to read and write in the classroom, we were more interested in the world around us, and that motivated us to read the print that was in our environment.

Beth: When I was a little girl, I was captivated by books. I wanted to read everything. I was hungry to read. One day my mother saw me looking at the newspaper, and she thought, "That's appropriate; Beth is reading the comic strips or whatever." But I wasn't. I had discovered a statement in the Business Section of the newspaper that had captured my attention. And my mother wondered, "Why is my daughter reading the Business Section?" The headline had something to do with Santa Claus. That was enough to spur my curiosity and get me reading. How cool that I was reading about Santa Claus and had been exposed to the Business Section of the newspaper.

Lauren: That shows what a diligent reader Beth was and is today. And we have a lot of diligent readers on our panel. Erika, tell us about reading and how you became a voracious reader.

Erika: From the age of five, I went to the library near my home every week and got a stack of books. Then I'd sit in the car on the way home from the library, reading. I read all the time. I'd get through that stack of books so quickly we'd have to make another trip to the library. My mother, I guess, got tired of taking me back and forth to the library, but I think she was glad I liked to read so much.

Julie: My mother would also take us to the library every day. And I would be there, thinking, I'm going to read this because my sister has read it. Then I would go on a search of my own; I wanted something that would be to my taste and something new, so I looked in the stacks, and I would gather more and more books, and I thought some of these books were difficult, but I would get my 12 to 20 books and take them up to the librarian. And she would say, "Oh, another 20 books—eh, Julie?"

And I would do that every time. Eventually, my mother got a little tired of it. One day, she said to me, "Quit reading! Go play!" I was so disappointed because I wanted to keep on reading.

Lauren: You are a parent's dream child. It's difficult to get a child to read that much, so that's nice. That internal curiosity that children have is a wonderful gift. How do we foster that? How do we encourage it? Do we provide rewards to the child?

Erika: In the third, fourth, and fifth grades, I had the same teacher who gave us excellent lessons. We had to do creative book reports every Friday. Sometimes we created a play and sometimes a written summary or poster. I enjoyed my projects, my book reports. So, every week I looked forward to doing my reports. And of course I'd read three books in that time. So I would always have the longest reports. But I loved it. There was a program called "Book-It!" We read maybe 25 books a month and received a certificate for free pizza. I'd read 25 books a week. Friday was the best day of the week for me because of the book reports and pizza.

Lauren: Tell me about the book you wrote in 4th grade.

Erika: In the 4th grade I wrote a book about dolls, of course, and I drew the pictures, too. It was an illustrated book. Then I went to this big conference and read it aloud to the audience. I loved doing that. That was a validating, motivating, and confidence-building experience for me.

Lauren: Dan, while we're on the subject of school, please tell us about your apples.

Dan: As I said before, after school my parents would help me with language and mathematics. My father is an electrician, and he was into chemistry and so forth. I recall an instance when I had a hard time with math. What he did was get different kinds of fruit, but most of the time it was apples. Then he proposed a question: how many apples are there? I responded, "there are five." Subtract two. So I took away two. He led me through that process that there were now three, then he put the problem into the equation form, "five minus two equals three." He did the same with the addition principle. There were five, and we added three. So then we got more apples and changed the mathematical concepts to dividing and multiplying. And that was my experience with math and fruit, and I thank my father for that.

Lauren: Our student panelists have been sharing positive experiences that have taken place in the home and in the classroom. However, I'm sure we've had experiences that have inhibited us. I went to a very good school. My teachers spoke and signed at the same time. I did not need interpreters. I was very lucky. However, I was required to also take speech therapy on a daily basis. And you might ask, where did I find the time for that? They actually would take me out of my history class and put me into speech therapy. So essentially, from elementary school to junior high school, I didn't take history classes. And to this day, if you were to ask me questions regarding Christopher Columbus, such as when he came to America. I wouldn't be able to answer that for you.

Julie: Your experience was much like mine with speech therapy; I was in a mainstreamed environment and the only deaf person in that setting. The school personnel would put me in speech therapy and take me out of classes; this was a negative experience because I could not stay with my peers. I couldn't be at the same level, having been deprived of the information they were getting. I think it did hinder my progress. On the positive side, though, I found the means to overcome problems.

Beth: Our panelists have their own ways of being involved in their learning. Julie, for example, could go to the library and choose her own books. Dan experienced both visual and tactile learning and visually learning with his apples, a technique that fostered reading, writing, and mathematics literacy. When I was in the 5th grade I remember very clearly how I learned to prepare for tests. We were taught to write out facts, create stories, talk to the computer. At all times, we were given the freedom to choose what we wanted to do. In the 6th grade, Dan learned idioms in a creative fashion.

Dan: My teacher started the week with fun activities. You know how it is the morning of the first day of the week. You come in to class, tired, and you need something energizing. So we would do skits or dramatizations of idioms. Prior to these experiences, I had no exposure with idioms. I remember distinctly one time when "kick the bucket" was the idiom of the week. Up went my hand, and I proudly declared, "I think I know what this means. I'll act it out." So two of my classmates went with me out of the room to plan our strategy for acting it out. Back in the room, my friend laid on the floor, and I kicked him really

hard. And I said, "That's what that means." So we had a discussion about it... our perception was to kick the person, and the teacher explained in more depth and with greater precision for us. Since that time, I've been fascinated with idioms.

Beth: Julie, when did you separate the influence from your teachers and take a more active role in your own learning?

Julie: With reading and writing, like I said before, my sister and I were competitors. Everywhere in our house were books—the kitchen, the living room, the bedroom, everywhere. It was fantastic. We moved to a new house with a basement. Books had been left in the basement. I relished this chance to catch up with my sister, finding this cache of books in the basement.

With writing, as I said before, I was mainstreamed and was the only deaf person in the class. And I wasn't all that happy. I didn't think I had enough interaction with the other students. So my escape was in writing. I wrote journals and showed them to my teacher. In his wonderful way, he wrote comments and told me I had excellent ideas. He praised me and gave me feedback. So it was the combination of those things that encouraged my acquisition of literacy skills.

Lauren: I had a similar experience. I had the same teacher for three years. My teacher noticed that I had some issues with grammar and syntax, the word order in sentences. So my teacher decided to start a journal process between the two of us, just the two of us. This process of journal writing became an intimate exchange for us; it was not graded, but the teacher would correct my grammar and give me feedback on my sentence structure. Of course she used a red pen! I told her of my experiences, and she shared hers; I thrilled to know more about her. We did this over a span of two years, and the "blood" on the paper became less and less as this journaling process went on.

Beth: Tell us about the sign on your door, "No little sisters allowed."

Lauren: My older sister, my arch enemy essentially, had a plaque on her door. I didn't understand the message. What it said was, "No Shoes Allowed." And I thought perhaps this was an idiom I wasn't catching. And my sister said, "The real meaning behind this is 'No Little Sisters Allowed.'" And for years I honestly believed her. Sometimes I still think "'No Shoes Allowed' actually means no little sister can be in the room."

Beth: How did your father encourage your learning?

Lauren: My father recognized my interest in books. He gave me an autobiography about a woman living in Mexico, a woman who was trapped there for years and years with her family. She was deaf as well as blind; she did not have a very nice life. And I was captivated by this book. That summer my father told me that we were going to take a family trip to Mexico, to the very southern part of Mexico, to a small town called San Cristobal, which was actually the setting of that book. It was a wonderful connection for me to make in terms of reading and then visiting the city and seeing the places that had been mentioned. This type of learning experience stays with us long after the event has passed.

Lauren: We have talked about junior high school where we begin to develop our own self-assertiveness, getting ready to move into high school. Julie, share with us your experiences in high school writing.

Julie: I focused on liberal arts in high school, where I was in the honors program. I progressed just fine, but I wasn't truly happy. Approaching my teacher, I asked: "What's wrong? I'm not doing so well." And the teacher said, "You're one of the best writers in my class." And I felt angry about that. Why hadn't she ever told me? I would have been more motivated. In my senior year I was in an Advanced Placement class in preparation for college; I had a phenomenal teacher, Mr. Roz, one of the best teachers I ever had. And he had a phenomenal influence on me. We just had that bond. He understood what I wanted and needed. He would challenge me, saying I could do better, and he would say something about a book that would relate to me. And he'd say, "I know you'll like this book." So, I'd go home and read it, and think, "Wow, he was right." So, that was such an inspiration. He was a fantastic, wonderful inspiration. Mr. Roz, wherever you are, thank you!

Lauren: The transition from junior high to high school is always a challenge, but never more so than for Nan. Tell us what it was like moving to America.

Nan: My education up until Junior High was in China. We left China just as I was to start high school and came to the States. In America, everything was brand new. The biggest barrier for me was the English language. I took the standardized

test for math and English, and that had to be translated for me because my first language is Chinese. I scored at the 11th grade level for reading in Chinese. So I was going to be placed in the 11th grade. But, instead I was placed in a lower grade because of my English. I was not pleased with this. I had to start all over learning a new language with pictures and vocabulary. I wanted to express myself in my own language. As a high school sophomore, I took English as a Second Language. Again, as Julie said earlier, the teachers really make the difference. They told me to bring my favorite book from home. In class the teacher suggested that if I didn't understand vocabulary, then I should not use the dictionary, just keep reading and take in the big picture and try to figure out the word's meaning from the context. So, I'd do that and after finishing the story, I'd look up the words in the dictionary. And we practiced spelling and writing and reading. I bought a Chinese/English dictionary; that was my true passport.

Lauren: You had the foundation of your native language, Chinese. You could read Chinese, write Chinese. Were there other students in your school at the International Studies Academy who had issues in developing English because they didn't have that native language foundation?

Nan: Yes. My peers were from South America, Central America, and other nations; they had no or little foundation in a first language. Some came to the States with no language at all at the age of 16 or 17. Yes, I do consider myself very fortunate that I was literate in my first language. I built a strong foundation that way. And then I think it was much easier learning a new language.

Lauren: Your parents made the decision to move to America from China to improve your educational opportunities. What influence did they have when you were in high school?

Nan: Yes. In China we had lengthy discussions about what we should do. My family is deaf; we thought about educational opportunities in China. The States seemed to be the best option. I was a self-motivated student. My parents are blue-collar workers, but they were very supportive of me and wanted me to learn English, knowing it was my biggest barrier and that I had to overcome that obstacle in order to attend a university. Again, they supported me in every way as much as they could.

Lauren: Did your parents know English?

Nan: No, not at all. They still do not use English.

Lauren: Dan, please tell us your high school experiences in the Honors Program.

Dan: I started as a high school freshman in a self-contained class with other deaf and hard of hearing students with direct communication. I worked at my grade level. After my sophomore year, I was advised to take Honors English in a mainstream class. I thought, "Oh, my gosh, I don't want to leave my peers, my deaf peers. I don't know if I'm ready." Well, the teachers advised me, "I think you're ready." So I decided to go with that recommendation. My teacher had graduated from Harvard; she brought to our school many of the standards she had experienced in college. It mattered not to her what language we spoke, or whether we were deaf or hearing, or what our native languages were. She started us in writing, and her requirements were far stricter than what I had experienced before. So, I went home and did my best on that first paper. A couple of days later, I got it back – marked with a score of zero. So I went to the teacher and said, "You know, I can't do this. ASL is my native language, and English is my second language, and I'm really upset." The teacher would not accept that. "No, you can do this. You have me, and you have many resources. Take advantage of them." Once again, I went home and wrote my paper again. I went to the English Lab and worked with someone who corrected my paper and explained essay format and the need for an introduction, body and conclusion. I moved up to a B on the paper, and that increased my confidence. I did a lot of that same type of work, analyzing my topic, the structure of the paper, the grammar, that sort of thing. We did that on a weekly basis. This was not an easy time for me. So the third term of my junior year, I got a paper back that I had written twice. Much to my surprise, I got the highest grade in the whole honors class. This continued through the year; I had never worked so hard on English in my life. My teacher saw me during office hours and told me, "I have seen the improvement that you've made over this term." Near the end of the year, I was called to go to the auditorium. I showed up at the auditorium, not knowing what was happening. And my friend said, "You got a letter to receive an award." And I said, "No, I didn't get any letters." So they went on with the awards presentation, and my English teacher went on stage and started to describe one student's success. She mentioned that this student had received a zero at the very beginning of the term. She talked about the student's progress and how he had inspired her,

how he'd never given up, and at the end of the class, received the highest grade. That's how I received the Honors English Award my junior year.

Beth: As you can see from our panelists comments, three concepts are important: communication at home, language whether it's oral, sign, PSE, SEE, or Cued Speech, and thirdly high but reasonable expectations. These truly do foster literacy skills. Erika, how did you learn to read and write well enough to succeed in an American University?

Erika: I was really very highly motivated, and I practiced writing and read often. I was in the same school as Daniel; I had the same teachers. Their expectations and demands resulted in my feeling ready for college. I am glad that I did all the work they asked of me, because it paid off in the end.

Beth: Nan, how many languages do you know, and how do those multi-language skills help you achieve in a university setting?

Nan: I know five languages... my native language is Chinese Sign Language which we use at home. Then I know the Chinese language, American Sign Language, English, and now I'm learning Australian Sign Language. I was able to pick up ASL based on my foundation of CSL. I still struggle with English. In my first years at the university, I struggled; my constant companion was my Chinese-English dictionary. By the time I had graduated last year, though, I was pretty fluent.

Lauren: I have a question. In retrospect, what do you wish that high school teachers or even elementary school teachers had done to better prepare you for college?

Nan: I recall during my freshman year at Cal State Northridge, I took freshman English. In this class, I developed the analytical skills; we had to write and then look at a story, read a story, interpret a story, and write stories about my experiences. I wish I could have done that type of analysis in high school.

Lauren: Erika, can you tell us about your experiences in being a TA?

Erika: I am currently a Teaching Assistant for Freshman Composition. I'm helping teach grammar. In high school my teacher made grammar so "un-fun." Now, it's different. I'm learning every day and beginning to appreciate grammar as I work with freshmen students in writing.

Julie: What do I wish I'd learned in high school? I majored in English and graduated with that major, but I wish I'd learned how to critically analyze

literature. To really get into it. And analyze all the features, not just to know the name and the author and simple interpretations, but to really, truly, and critically analyze it. When I got to college, I was expected to do that. I had to write a paper about the significance of a “red tree” in a story we were reading—the symbolism, the possible interpretations. Having that in high school would have been helpful to me in college.

Lauren: But in Dan’s case, he was very lucky. Please tell us why, Dan.

Dan: Yes, I consider myself to be very fortunate. All through high school I had teachers from Harvard and Boston College, and they were demanding. And they told us: “Yes, this is hard; I mean it’s hard, yes. But you have to prepare yourself. This is high school; in college, it’s harder.” So the teachers had that perspective. “It’s my job to educate you and prepare you.” And they would say, “Trust me; later you will thank me.” And now I can say, YES. I mean, I’m not perfect, but the culmination of all these experiences that I have had have really led me to success. I have learned so much, and all experiences build upon the others. So I am very fortunate because my high school teachers were also college professors.

Lauren: I wish that I didn’t have to fight for the foreign language requirements. I went to a residential school for the deaf, and they were associated with a local public school. I was able to take classes there. And the teacher there refused to teach me Latin, because they felt that I couldn’t learn because I’m deaf. In my last year of high school, I was finally allowed to take a foreign language.

Beth: My experiences in high school were positive. My teachers challenged me to take the AP classes, just like the rest of our panelists. And the teachers didn’t let us have any restrictions. We were free to write also. I wrote so much I didn’t have to focus much on the grammar, whether it was all right or not. I had writing and immediate feedback, and it was critical for me. The fact that it was AP English challenged me and prepared me for college.

Lauren: Let me now ask the panelists what being a deaf or hard of hearing college student means to you?

Dan: What being a deaf college student means to me is independence and responsibility and proceeding on my own. In high school I had parents there to constantly remind me, “Do your homework.” When I went to college, it was up to me to prepare for the real world. And I am thankful for

all my experiences growing up which have made me what I am today. I’m facing the real world.

Erika: In high school, my parents really had to fight for me to get services such as interpreting. In college, I fight those battles. My parents are 3,000 miles away and I can’t call and say, “Mom, I have problems. Come and solve them for me.” So I’m becoming more independent and taking responsibility for myself.

Nan: I would say the college experience for deaf and hard of hearing students has been very important to me. In China people think deaf people are incapable of going to college. By moving to America, learning a new language, and graduating from college, I have proven something that continues to be a myth in China. And so that is a tremendous accomplishment for me.

Julie: I have to explain again the influence my older sister had on me. We have that life-long competitiveness. When I graduated from college my sister said, “I guess we’re in the same boat now.” And I thought, “Finally!” I have reached that pinnacle, being at the same level as my sister.

Beth: Not only are you a successful graduate of CSUN, Julie, you now are teaching English at Cal State Northridge. What do you see as the greatest determinant of success as a writer at CSUN?

Julie: I teach Developmental Writing to eight students. They have some natural skills and can hold their own in most areas of the university experience. They’re extremely motivated to question and investigate whatever I assign. It’s a phenomenal experience, and they’ve just improved so much. And that’s what teachers like to see, students who are thrilled and motivated. We work on their writing skills, and practice helps; but, motivation is the key. These students have become better writers as a result of their motivation.

Lauren: Before we close, I want to pose one more question to our panelists. What is your favorite book, the best book you’ve ever read, regardless of the age you read it?

Julie: Mr. Roz was my teacher. He showed me the book, *The Stranger*, by Albert Camus. I read it and it was phenomenal. A wonderful book for me, *The Stranger*.

Nan: *Anna Karenina* by Tolstoy. I remember my aunt watching the movie on television, where a woman was hit by a train, and I remember seeing this on television and wondering, “What’s going on?” Then I read the novel and made the connections.

Erika: I have two favorites – one is *Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger and my second favorite is *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë.

Dan: I had two favorites, also. Both were from high school—*Rebecca*, and then *The Great Gatsby*. My teachers assigned us wonderful novels; they inspired motivation by asking us to act out chapters and envision events. Those were my two favorites.

Beth: You read my mind... that's my favorite as well, *The Great Gatsby*. To this day I remember the exquisite details of the novel.

Lauren: My all time favorite book from a long list, the one that comes to mind right now, is *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo. I just made an instant connection with that book. It allowed me to see war through another person's eyes; I became more sensitive to other cultures. I had the opportunity to form a vision and get an idea of who I am and how I fit into today's society and what that means for me individually.

Beth: From the stories we have shared today, we recognize again that what's important in success is more than just language used. It's parental involvement and the fact that communication does take place in the home. It's an ambitious school program that wants students to be challenged and plans lessons and activities that facilitate learning. It's the belief that deaf students can and will succeed.

Lauren: We began this discussion by citing the work of Pablo Freire, and I will conclude with another of his basic beliefs that when people speak their own true words, they engage in dialogue capable of transforming and humanizing the world. Freire wrote that "faith in people is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, and trust is established by dialogue." It has been our privilege to dialogue with you, and it is our fervent hope that you will now take the task further and initiate dialogue among yourselves and with us, as we all strive together to create "Avenues to Literacy" everywhere for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.