



Evidence Based Consulting

*From the desk of the
Tumbleweed Consultant*

Happy Spring Everyone!

Is it really spring time? For the past month, I have woken up each morning and asked myself the same questions, "Will it be a parka or shorts day?", "Will I use my air conditioner or heater and an ice scraper?" The calendar tells us to expect spring weather. Mother Nature reminds us not to grow too confident in our determinations. Nothing about life is simple, especially when it comes to our ever wonderful and complex students. Autism alone is extremely complex, but what happens when two diagnoses coexist that are typically viewed as distinct entities two diagnoses such as autism and deafness? In the 2006-2007 Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth, conducted by the Gallaudet Research Institute, they found that 1 deaf child in 76 of those surveyed was receiving services for both hearing loss and autism. Dr. Christen Szymanski, estimates that autism occurs in 1 in 59 children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Needless to say, there are many educators out there waking up each morning with their own questions about what the day will be like. The challenge lies in determining strategies that are valid for all layers of a multiple diagnosis. Should our strategies foremost address autism or deafness? Are these students best served in an educational environment suited for the culture of deafness or the culture of autism? Should our communication strategies lean toward those traditionally used for students with hearing loss such as sign language or those picture communication strategies more often used with students who have autism? One answer is that we can not separate autism from deafness within the individual. They are intertwined. We consider the impact of both and must address all layers. We find strategies that rely on visual strengths and structure. Most importantly, we continue to seek answers that will help our students become most independent and most interactive within their community. For my friends out there working with students with multiple diagnoses, every day is a parka and a shorts day. Don't worry, you'll learn to embrace the look!

This month we are featuring two great resources:

1. New Directions in Deaf Education Odyssey volume 9, issue 1, Autism Issue. It is a terrific resource that explores those questions above and many more. This issue is available without cost at <http://www.gallaudet.edu/Documents/Clerc/Odyssey-2008-v9i1.pdf>
2. You may also want to check out this archived webinar presented by Dr. Christen Szymanski: <http://www.gallaudet.edu/x58241.xml>

Happy reading and safe travels!
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