

## Better Together: Deaf Culture

Welcome to our family night. It's a little bit different if you were at our December Signing Santa family night. We've got some members from the community in here, other organizations it sounds like, so let's start in a little bit different way and go around and just introduce ourselves so that we know who's all in the room. I don't know if you all know each other. The people from the Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss, or CDHL, we're a state agency. Krissy and I, our office is in Vancouver. Carol in the back is in Ellensburg, as is Jer, and we have other people who work statewide. We've got the School for the Deaf in Vancouver and then we also do outreach services throughout the state. But these family events, very exciting that they've started in Walla Walla. It is a partnership with CDHL, with the school district, and Walla Walla Valley Disability Network, and I told Libby before the first one that I was really impressed that the community came together so quickly, that we could start providing these. So, it's great to have our second one. We had to cancel, when was that, in February because of snow - no surprise. So just before we move to introductions I'll just give you a little layout of what tonight's going to look like. After introductions then we're going to have a little mini deaf panel with Krissy and Jer and they'll introduce themselves. I'm going to ask them some questions and you can be thinking about questions that you might like to ask yourselves so when I'm done, or if you think of something raise your hand, but there will be opportunity to ask also. Depending on how many kiddos we've got to show up, I know that there's some craft activities or some kind of kid activities, and then Krissy, we're going to close with a story book in ASL. So even for adults, I myself am very guilty, I'll go in to observe a classroom and then there's ASL story time and I'm engaged just as much as the kids are. So it's a great opportunity to really have that pure native ASL in story because it's a very visual language, and to attach that with pictures. So we probably will not, I don't think we had an interpreter interpret while you were doing the story last time. And we'll just enjoy it in pure ASL and you can look at the pictures and everything. And then we'll wrap up and go home. So, I'm Kris Ching, I'll start. I'm the Outreach Director for Birth to Five for the state, and I love coming to Walla Walla.

Ok. So, I'm going to start using ASL because we're going to start the panel. One thing that I want to point out is that access is very important for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and deaf blind. So in this situation we want to make sure that she has access to what is happening here tonight. So it is the same thing for our deaf or hard of hearing students in school. It doesn't matter if they're using hearing aids, or cochlear implants, or signing, or talking, or a mixture of both. We want to make sure that the environment allows for access for learning, for socializing, and for communicating. So, that is part of showing respect to everyone to make sure that we have access. An example, for those of you who do not know sign language, we have interpreters here so that you can have access to what's being said tonight. Ok. So let's get started with the questions. So this interpreter, Shelley, over here now, I want to check and see how we're doing.

- So, so far has that been clear? Or so-so?

Ok. She says wonderful.

- So if it gets off, you can just let us know. Just tell me.

- Can each of you please briefly explain your family, your growing up experience, your family history. Whoever would like to go first can go first.

Krissy: It doesn't matter. We're the same here this evening. So do you want to start, Jer?

Jer: I was born in a hearing family, with an older sister. I was born in the town of Wenatchee. When I was 2 my parents realized, found that I was deaf, so we decided to move to Seattle. I went to an oral school, an oral program. My communication with my parents was like, my mom, she signed later. My dad he just gestured or wrote back and forth, and that was about it.

Krissy: I have a deaf family. I'm the 3rd generation deaf in my family. My great-great grandfather was deaf and we didn't realize that the person was deaf, but they talked about mental retardation and I counted that as deaf because often in the past they would consider someone mentally retarded who was actually deaf. So there's my dad, and then there's me, and then my children are the 4th generation. I went to a deaf school my entire educational experience. I grew up in a deaf program.

Jer: Talking about families, family history, there is no one deaf in my family except for me and maybe a grandmother and a great grandfather on my father's side. And the grandmother lost her hearing with age as she got older, so she was considered hard of hearing. There were no hearing aids. This was back in the 60s. So I don't believe there's any generational deafness and so I think I was just born deaf.

- So, Kris has a follow up question for you.

Kris: You mentioned about growing up and going to an oral school. Does that mean that you were using your speech? When did you start learning ASL? When did you start to learn to sign?

Jer: So, you're asking me questions about my education now, right?

Kris: Well, I just wanted to know when you started to learn ASL.

Jer: So, the oral school I went to was from the age of 2 until 10 and then my mom decided to send me to the deaf school, the Washington School for the Deaf, and I started learning sign language there. And I wouldn't say learning in class, I just was living there, picking it up. It wasn't formally, I just didn't understand what was going on. There was a teacher and there were students who were patient with me and I built that from there on until I graduated. So I felt like maybe I became comfortable signing maybe after 2 years. It maybe took me about 2 years.

- So, the next question is: Do both of you have children yourselves? Your kids, where have they gone to school? And why or how did you decide which school to place your children in?

Krissy: So like I just mentioned, I was in a deaf school growing up so I had my children there as well at the Washington School for the Deaf. And the reason why for me is just that socialization piece. That's where I feel like the children learn more from socializing with peers and when you get older you feel like, They've already gotten a lot of language from home so I decided to put them into a mainstream school which was more challenging. They could learn how to face the hearing world because the hearing world is so big and the deaf world is much smaller. And I wanted them to have experiences in the hearing world. They were in a mainstream program so they had hearing friends and interacted with them. Then later on they asked me, "I want to go back to the Deaf school" because I just find, and that was totally worth it. I was happy for them and they were involved in sports, cheerleading, all kinds of events they offered there at the school. And they graduated and went to Gallaudet. So my first child is hearing, the only hearing in our whole deaf family. All of us - the nieces, the nephews, the whole extended family, except for the one - my one hearing child - so that child already has deaf culture in

them from being with a deaf family. So how's the interpreter doing? Sometimes I sign too fast. The interpreter has to catch up so I'm making sure that you're doing okay. My second child was in a deaf program and a third one is hard of hearing, so went into a mainstream program, already was a good signer so went into a mainstream program. In 8th grade, wanted to go to a deaf school so I'm like, "Sure, go for it." So my third child graduated there from the State School for the Deaf of Washington in Vancouver.

Jer: I have 2 deaf sons. Now, I am not the biological father. I am the legal guardian, and I've had them since they were little. Their family history is an all deaf family, multi-generational, so I had to care for these children. They were in the deaf school and I wasn't satisfied with the challenge they were receiving there. The older son is deaf and already had Autism inside of him and I didn't know what he needed, but asked for some support and the deaf school wasn't supportive of that so I put that son into a mainstream school. I found "Oh, really they're hard of hearing." So then before I became the legal father, I decided to give him the best of everything so I thought that if they're hard of hearing that they needed to have hearing aids and maybe get some speech as well. So we went like that. So he went to an oral school but at home we kept the ASL going. ASL is the first language so there is communication access at home and added the speech component in school. And then probably, the 2 of them, their senior year - oh sorry - in their teenage years they decided that they wanted to go to the deaf school so they did, and graduated from there - the Washington School for the Deaf.

- Ok. Thank you. So I would like to point out that the stories they've shared about their children - for people here in the audience who are parents - to help for you to know that life is a journey and the two of them have been willing to be flexible, make different decisions based on what their kids want, what really will support their children. Sometimes parents feel like they have to make one decision and stick with it the whole way through, and that is really not required or necessary. Really, it's more like life has a journey and you have to stay flexible and you really have to learn how to follow your child's lead. So, both of you as deaf adults, from your perspective, what do you think is essential for hearing parents who are learning about raising a deaf or hard of hearing child? What information do you feel is critical or essential, something that would be important for them to know?

Jer: To make it simple, in general people have 5 senses - their hearing, their sight, their smell ... and for deaf or hard of hearing children, one of them is not fully functional so that foundation is weak. But the visual one is more than ample, so for the deaf child, they're receiving information should be visually as much as possible, whether it's speech - if they can understand that, that's great - if it's signing. I would recommend signing because it's easier. They can learn the speech later after they've learned the vocabulary through signing, through their first language. That's what I think is the most important - for parents is to communicate through sign language, regardless of whether their signing they feel like it's not awesome and it's not that great of signing. You know, I wanted my 2 kids to be able to say, "I want milk" you know, "I want milk." That's language. That's fantastic. If they don't have that language, then from my perspective that's really important.

Krissy: I agree with that. I work with Birth to Three with families throughout the state and I try to tell them the message that it's okay for your hearing babies to learn to sign because they haven't developed that and it's easier to express with signing and then they can transition to talking after they've developed those vocal skills. And for deaf children it's the same. They have that same learning curve that hearing kids do. So I say give them as many signs as you can. Give them both options -to listen and sign.

And then as that goes along if their speech picks up that's okay because they've still got that base of a signing background. Instead of just focusing all your energy on the speech because if the speech is the only thing you're focusing on then they have a language delay. So I feel like please, please, please spread the news, spread that information to go ahead and sign no matter what. Keep the signing and then both of those pathways to communication will be developed in your child and they'll both take off like crazy and be awesome.

Jer: So my experience with hearing kids and learning speech versus learning sign - so I grew up oral and that's my experience. My parents were also hearing and then later I was taught ASL. So, I was a teacher for ASL. I taught in deaf education for 7 years - preschool through kindergarten - so I have seen how language develops with kids. Deaf parents with deaf children, I've seen that so I have all that experience and I understand why - I know there's political issues about signing and oralism, but for me simply I think signing helps everybody.

- That makes sense. It makes me think about a comical picture that I saw last year or something about equal access. It was a drawing of the front of a school building. It was snowy. There was a bunch of snow outside. The kids were waiting outside because the custodian was ready to start shoveling the path on a staircase and one of the kids said, "Hey, maybe you could shovel the ramp and then we can all get into the school building." So, I think maybe that's a similar story as it relates to sign language as well because we all can go on the ramp of signing. We can all see and access signing. So, for people who are deaf-blind, sometimes they use tactile signing and that's another type of sign language signing with ASL, using ASL.

Krissy: Ok, and I wanted to add - you mentioned tactile - and something that's new, it's called 'pro-tactile' and what that is, is there are regions on the body that get touched. And I'm not good at this. It is very cool. I've seen it and it seems to work well. So like suppose when you just laughed this is the way that you communicate with a person. You kind of grab and tickle on their knee. So if I'm deaf and blind, deaf-blind, then - they're saying today what we're going to do is we're going to go to Walla Walla. We're going to meet with deaf parents. Oh I do know that. Ok. She's showing her on her leg which place and that people are laughing. So this is an interpretation of the information. What the responses are. It's much more visually engaging for the person who's having the pro-tactile. If you laugh, we tickle their knee. Like the sign for father, if dad comes into the room how would you let dad know? How would you let them know father is coming in through the door? To describe like a waterfall I would sign the water falls all over the place. That sign is visual but for deaf-blind people I will show you on your hand, on your arm. Your arm will be the point of reference for the waterfall instead of just showing that sign in the open space. So, I can show that this person's over here, this person's over here. I'm drawing a map of the seating arrangement in the room on the person's back. So it's much more engaged. And then I can know who's talking. This person's making a comment. This person's (mumbled). It's new. But it's access, just like you mentioned at the beginning. It's access so the person feels included, so very smart. Yes, very clever. And that was created in Seattle. That new approach to tactile signing was started in Seattle.

- One thing that I like about the pro-tactile signing is when you're using the person's back like a map - because people who are blind may not have the visual cues to know where to look. And that's just part of our human nature culture to look and see where the person is that's making a comment or speaking. We shift our gaze to different points of reference. So that helps the person to know, you know, where

the message is coming from. It helps them be more involved in the interaction. So, now do you have any questions, any of you?

(Audience): I just have a comment and I wish I could sign well enough to talk to you. I'm sorry that I'm not...but I grew up with a brother who is deaf and it's only oral and I just want to support what the two of you are saying about language. Then I became a speech language pathologist and it's a long time ago, and specialized in working with the deaf and what to (???) model secondary school adapted and learned to sign for the first time and interacted with - this was 30 some years ago - sorry, don't sign that - but anyway the students of deaf parents had language that was so profoundly advanced compared to my brother, who was only taught oral. At the time this was the 60s and it was like, you know, the oral method was (???) He was the first to be mainstreamed, but unfortunately language, he had a deficit, and I just want to support what the two of you said, that it's so profound to - language first then, you know, like, yeah, so thank you, thank you so much. It's wonderful to hear that from both of you. Thank you.

Jer: As a sign language teacher, you do not have to apologize for forgetting sign - I want to tell you that you use signs when you need it back in, when you need it that time, and if you've forgotten it and if you practice you'll remember it again and if not well you might forget. But the important part is the heart and the attitude. You know, maybe their signs aren't so great. You may ask the interpreter, "Hey, can you help me out over here?" and that is fine. But thank you for your comment.

(Audience): I think as a child of deaf parents, I'm embarrassed that I don't know it very well, so that's hard.

Jer: I think, you mentioned being embarrassed, and I think, like, deaf people expect something and some may say, "Oh," but other people (???) have got high expectations - you have deaf parents, why aren't you signing better - and that's the same thing with hearing people. You'll encounter a variety of attitudes from people.

Krissy: And I want to add to that. In the 1950s and 60s, yes it was embarrassing at the time because people weren't proud of being deaf even though they do feel proud being deaf, but in public - no. They tend to sign smaller, tend to make their comments out of sight. At home, with a deaf family they were signing all the time and I didn't realize that. I thought the whole world was deaf, honestly, when I was little. And then when I was 5 they said, "No. Everybody else is hearing," and I was bummed, I was depressed about it because I thought that I could communicate with my neighbor, and my neighbor was deaf too so it was just different back then than it is now.

(Audience): Tell us a couple of cool things about your culture - different than hearing culture.

Krissy: Ok, again, I come from a deaf family so, my goodness, I've had such a rich experience. We went to deaf houses, different deaf houses every month, had movie nights with this giant army, colored thing that we would put the movies up with - we would watch movies every month. We chatted with lots of adults and kids all interacting, and so I had that initial learning occurring by incidental, incidental learning by the stories that were told. I got to interact with the kids. The stories my parents told me I got to share with other children, so it was just a wonderful cultural experience. It wasn't formally taught to me, and now when I learn about it I'm like, "Oh, yeah, this and this and this were part of my cultural upbringing." Does that answer your question?

- I just want to know a few cool things about deaf culture.

Jer: It's silent. You don't have to worry about being interrupted. I mean, the thrill! It's beautiful. Beautiful! One thing that is maybe cool about being deaf, you can talk from further away from one another - from a distance. Sometimes deaf people who are driving in cars talk through the windows. They do. Another benefit - the peripheral vision - that is a safety thing, and you have more skills because you're using your peripheral vision more. Hearing people will be like, "Oh my goodness! How did you see that? Where do you see that?" and I'm like it's just naturally me. I grew up with that, so that's a benefit. That's pretty cool.

Krissy: Sign language itself is very visual so our stories are very 3 dimensional. English seems kind of flat. The voices maybe go up and down, and that may be beautiful. I understand that, but signing - just, it's got so much more to it. I think it's so cool and our storytelling just has all this expressive dimension to it and children love it.

Jer: We're always expanding on information visually. Hearing people don't seem to do that very much. I don't know. I've noticed that, they don't seem to do it nearly as much. Ok, good. So far these are good questions. Bring them. I want more questions.

- I have another question. If you could go back in time, is there anything that you would change -

Krissy: Do you mean personally or just more in general?

- Um, I think personally. Maybe as regards to your family - if there was anything that you could change about how things went in the past?

Jer: Well, if I go back I think there's 2 different things. My parents have passed away, but I wish - you know, I think that they were dumb enough that they believed what the doctor said - that we had to go to an oral program. Now this was in the 1950s and so there wasn't nearly as much information. I think it's better now.

Krissy: Honestly, I think technology has helped make our lives so much easier. In the past that was, we did not have those types of things. So that's a personal thing, but in general, I wish that all, they were all required to learn to sign, period. I just wish it was a law - a legal requirement. Why to have to have so many barriers to it - why make it so hard? I just wish that there were no barriers. It would be so much easier. You know, once a child's deaf they just went with it and signing was just a part of it. There's still - it's 2019 and we still have barriers and we still have to fight for our language still.

Jer: In Japan, children are required to learn English. Why not here, why not ASL here? Ok, so I see a hand raised back there.

(Audience): As the Director of Special Education for the school district here, what would be your advice, both of you, in working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing. We don't have a huge community. It's hard to get services here, but if you could give, say, "These are a few things that you absolutely can do even if you're lacking some services, what would that be?"

Krissy: That is a good question. This is a small town, so that is a challenge for deaf people. Even if me, if I lived here I think I would be lonely. I need to have a community that I can socially enter. Like that incidental learning I was talking about, you learn that from your friends. You hearing people every day

all day long are hearing things from the bathroom, in the restaurants, everywhere that you go there's information coming into you through your ears, but that's not happening for deaf people and we get all that from social media - that's one avenue - and friends, socializing with friends. So, for deaf children, wow, I would want my - I would really want to have a deaf teacher there with my child. Not someone who just had picked up signs recently, that to me - I would want someone with many years. A person who's either deaf or a very fluent signer. I would prefer a deaf teacher with my child in that class. (???) 2 or 3.

Jer: You're talking about taking in information. You know, you can only pay attention to just a person in front of you instead of everybody that's around you so my advice...wow, I've been involved with education for a long time and first of all we have the laws. So people can follow the laws. It's always a challenge to get resources, and I know that, I understand that. Especially as far as getting interpreters. That is a big challenge, and hopefully that will change within several years. You know, if they start up an interpreter training program - if more of those get started, I hope that that will happen soon. I think that will help to be able to have more interpreters available. And I'm retired but my biggest concern is finding a person who is willing to live in Ellensburg with, you know, there's 8 deaf people there. And so, I'll tell you, I'll give you a picture about what Ellensburg looks like. You know, I'll tell somebody that and then the person would say, "Oh, I have other choices," but when they move here they're like, "Where's Walmart?" "Where's Target?" You know, because we don't have that in Ellensburg. Those things aren't in Ellensburg. If you explain it to them like, "Oh, I grew up in a rural area. I don't mind being here." So I think you have to be up front with them so that they can know what it is they are getting into. And then I think that would be fine. It depends - some schools you're not allowed to ask questions. Like, I can't ask, "Are you deaf or hearing?" That's not an option. At the university where I work, that's not a permitted question, so that's a challenge. If they could change the rules, that might be helpful, as far as hiring and staffing.

Krissy: You can, you know, hire people to come in and work and be there all day and make sure there are videos - captioning access. Maybe the student isn't ready to read, but to just make sure that they're included in what's going on.

Jer: You know that CDHL has great resources now here - Carol and Kris.

(Audience): And I use them all the time.

Krissy: Perfect. Perfect.

(Audience): And so I, one of the things that I have tried to do - I've had a really hard time with interpreters. And so, I have someone who has an Associate's in ASL, that I hired, so we are trying to grow our own because we can't find people to come and move to Walla Walla, and she's here so we're supporting her with a mentor and taking classes and paying for her testing and those kinds of things. So, we're trying to do that. Right now we only have one, but that's a good start. I am contracting with Kris and Carol for teacher of the deaf services. They're not every day, all day, but I'm getting as much as I can. So those are things. You know, I'm willing to contract with Pasco, with their program because they actually do have a full-time teacher of the deaf, but not all parents want their kids to be driven an hour each way to school. So, I'm constantly in contact with Kris and Carol, trying to find more, more, more. I came from a big community on the west side and it was hard, but not as difficult as it is here.

Jer: I would say about the commuting back and forth, like suppose I had a kid from here, from Walla Walla, going to Pasco. You could sign to pay for a bus to transport them. Like, in general, kids are pretty patient with a one hour ride on the bus, wouldn't you say?

Krissy: The Washington School for the Deaf has a limit for the bus - it's 1 hour. Now, the bus doesn't just go there. The parents have to bring the student to like a midpoint. I'm not exactly sure if I've got this right, but there's a meeting place where the bus then will transfer the students to WSD, so maybe you could have like a half way agreement, you know, to meet. But 6 hours every day interacting with deaf children in a deaf ???, I think that's where the parents could feel like, "Oh my goodness, that's a lot." But that's an investment in your child - to give them those 6 hours a day of interaction in a sign environment is key.

- So when we were discussing about how to support preschool students, one deaf or hard of hearing student who was in a room with all hearing students - we were talking about how to provide something that's more inclusive. So one thing that we talked about was teaching all of the kids their ABCs, and then, you know like in circle time, and each kid can finger spell, you know "my name is" and practice finger spelling their name and some basic signing so that it's benefiting both the hearing kids and the deaf kids too, showing them that ASL is a valid language. Also, I wanted to mention about the movies. I'm curious about your opinion about the movie "Through Deaf Eyes" - that movie. It's a documentary.

Krissy: Oh my goodness, I forgot that. It was a long while back.

- That movie, that documentary, I think that it shows a good history of deaf people and ASL in our country. It's a documentary across the US. It shows the struggles, the oppressions that people have experienced in their communities over time. And the thankful thing is that things have changed. I think that ASL was not recognized as a valid language until the 1960s.

Krissy: It wasn't, actually, really in the 70s is when William Stokoe...

Jer: But in the colleges it has not been recognized as a foreign language until the 80s. I would say more in the 80s that that happened.

- So, anyway, if you can find something, you know, on YouTube or whatever, I highly recommend that you watch that movie. It will help you just to have a better understanding of the history of deaf culture and deaf people in our country - "Through Deaf Eyes."

- Also, I want to mention people talked about Gallaudet University and so, I don't know, do you know about Gallaudet University? Yes, yes, most of you do. It is the only, well it was the first deaf university in the US, and it's in Washington, DC, and it's very famous. I don't know when it started.

Jer: 1864. 1864.

- So a really long time ago. Many of the deaf schools were set up in the 1800s as well - many of our deaf schools. So deaf culture is really established here, but the medical authorities have really influenced, have an influence on our country's culture as a whole - it's been influenced by the medical profession. So it's just fascinating to learn about the different small groups of people who are Americans - those microcultures.



Jer: I want to make a related comment to one of your - I don't know where that lady went - oh she went to the restroom - but I had a roommate who was hearing, who didn't know anything about deaf culture and I ended up teaching that person, and he was a teacher, went to a hearing school and decided to start using sign language with his students. This was a 3rd grade classroom. So when he would go to an assembly his class was the most well behaved. And the reason was he was able to...the students were able to use signing and instantly pay attention. And so when it was time to line up, the teacher signed "line up" and all the other people were going crazy, and they were lining up properly. When it was time to sit down, the teacher signed "sit" and they all sat down. And also, there was more empathy with deaf people. They had a much more empathetic heart toward helping deaf people. So like you were saying, I wish everybody knew sign language and everybody learned that in school. I think it would help a lot. You don't have to wait to get the resources, you know, people would be there and helping one another.

(Audience) - So, my friend's daughter just married a boy whose parents are deaf. So he grew up in the deaf culture, and when my friend met this boy who's going to be her son-in-law, she was very impressed. For example, he was reading a book for school, and she wanted to talk to him, and he closed the book, put it down, and looked at her and gave her his full attention. And she was just impressed, because nowadays with phones and texting, kids usually don't even look at their parents when they're talking to them, you know. Or anybody or any adult. That respect with adults is not so much there, but this boy was very respectful and very, you know, in tune with what they're saying and looking at people's eyes and she was very impressed with this boy. And he's a good boy.

Jer: Wow. I love those questions like that. More questions? Yes?

(Audience) - I had the privilege of meeting you with the signing Santa, you came for the signing Santa and one thing that I didn't know in being ignorant as someone who can hear, was that the radio - I was trying to get Christmas music playing in the background - and how that ran interference with the hearing aids. Is there other tips you could give those of us that are trying to be understanding so that it's not irritating.

Jer: Well, do not apologize. Don't say "sorry." Ignorance is no one's fault until you've learned, and then after that there's no excuse. \*laughter\* So do not worry. You know, I know that you can feel stupid and you're like "oh my gosh!" and that is true.

Krissy: You know, music, you know, put the speakers out there. We can feel the vibrations -- and it can be interpreted. Maybe with hearing aids that may not be so helpful, but yeah. You asked about tips? Help me know exactly more about what you meant.

(Audience) - When we were at this event they also mentioned if you are a hearing parent of a deaf child that using, like lights to transition events - that's something that teachers could also maybe hear and practice in their classroom is using more visual cues on transitioning. Are there other tips?

Krissy: Well, you know, if you've got a window make sure that you're not standing with the light, the glare, behind you from the window because that makes it harder to lip read. Kids who are trying to catch things visually, the light behind you it affects literally the lip read as well as pick up on signs, so you need to move, like we have moved - scooched over - you know, you need to do that so the deaf kids can see. You can flash the lights, you can stomp on the floor to get the kids' attention. If it's formal we'll tap on the table to get attention, to get each other's attention.

Jer: You can wave your hands. The kids will learn how to help each other. When they see something, they see somebody not paying attention, they'll wave at the person and say, "Hey, look over there," and then the person will be directed to look up there.

Krissy: You know, you can tap on their shoulder. If it's an emergency, I'll tap differently. A light tap is one thing, but if I'm firm about it it means there's an emergency - something big is happening. But a gentle tap means you can look - it's time to look over there.

Jer: It's easy, like when they're in kindergarten you may want to pat their head, right, and it's easy to do, but that may be something you probably shouldn't do. And then when I was in a kindergarten, you know, I got to get down, I gotta get down and sign with them at eye level. You've got to do that, you know. You feel like some kind of big old authority if you're standing over them signing. I'm trying to think of tips, any other tips.

- I remember when Shawn and Cathy - they came and did a presentation a training for the school district with the preschool staff. Shawn is deaf himself and was explaining about visual noise and what that means. He was saying that he had a great visual example. He said, "If a person is fiddling - fiddling with their hair, twirling it - that is visually very distracting. Or somebody who's like always constantly bouncing their foot a bunch." Deaf people are visual and if there's something visually distracting it's good to be aware of - us, as hearing people, we're able to ignore those visual annoyances, but it would be as if somebody had a pen clicking, click, click. We would be like, "Oh my gosh! Cut that out!" It's the same thing with your foot kind of bouncing around.

Jer: Communication space with hearing people is like this - no signing, you know. But with, we tend to back up and kind of, we don't want to clash with each others hands so we need a little more space.

Krissy: You know, I don't want to get that close to you like you would hearing people do when they whisper or talk close. We need to have a little bit more space than that. Yet deaf people love hugging. We are touch - we do touch - but when we talk we don't want so close. We want a little bit of space if we're chatting with one another.

Jer: As far as cultural things, like suppose if I meet someone and maybe we're not the same - maybe different color of skin or from another country. If we're both deaf we have this immediate bond. Deafness comes first. All the other things about us come secondary. Whereas for hearing people it's the other way around. But with language and using visual language, we don't care about anything else. We just care about communicating with one another as deaf people.

Krissy: Did you follow up? She went to the bathroom. That lady that went to the bathroom.

Jer: Oh. I forgot. Ok. Carol, do you remember what that was? What I had said? You can help her catch up later. So sorry. So sorry. Problem with age. Age-related problem. My problem, on my side. Problem on my side.

- Are there any other questions?

Jer: Oh, there's one right back there.

(Audience): Walla Walla Community College - something I heard here is the lack of services or people that want to learn more - that it's just not here. 13 years ago when I started there they had an ASL class

and it just went away as well as many other plans. But in the last year there's a gal that's taken over Community Education and has really brought that mainstay up. So I think if there is a need, if she's notified - I just messaged her but she's not answering me. I think if there's a need in the community she would be more than happy to work with whoever to put together an ASL class or that type of stuff through the community college.

(Audience): I think with the 3 colleges here it would be nice to utilize some of the students if they offer - I don't know - if Whitman and Walla Walla University, but wouldn't that be a great learning experience for them and for everyone if we could utilize those students - come into the classrooms or even somebody who's needing some.....

(Audience): Yeah, especially because we don't have ASL at the high school. I don't know when that went away, but it was before I was here. And so, I mean that has always been, in other districts that I've been in, one of the most popular foreign language classes, and very practical. And a lot of those students want to go on and learn more and so that was really disappointing for me to know that we don't have that here.

Jer: Yes, it is always popular. Sign language classes are always popular, but technology is better. So now, there's going to be more and more things available online. So that's another benefit to take advantage of if you can't find someone who's willing to teach.

Krissy: And I want to add to be careful what kind of online resources you go to because often they're not great resources online. So you need to ask us, you know, "Which ones are good? What are some good ones?" Then we can give you the right links so that you can learn.

Jer: It's sad, but I was teaching ASL and I noticed that anybody can teach ASL. But qualified - someone who really does know ASL and then it's great if the person is deaf, but if they're deaf and they know how to teach too that's even better! Sometimes they know signing, but they don't know how to teach - which is different. There are hearing people who know how to sign, and if they're hearing I will always say, "Ok, are you hanging out with the Deaf community regularly?" and if they say, "No." You know, your skills are going to go down if you're not hanging out with deaf people. So you need to check in "is this..." and check in with other deaf people in your community too to find out if this is a good person to be doing that.

Krissy: It would be like if you're taking Japanese. Do you want an actual person where Japanese is their first language? Or do you want a second language learner teaching you? And it's the same thing. You want a deaf person where it's their first language. They're more involved in signing rather than someone for whom it's their second language. And I'm not saying to say, "no" to that, but I really want real, authentic language for the person. I want to learn about their actual culture. I think that's a way more authentic experience.

- So, I'm noticing our time. It's starting to run out on us. Ok. So, one of the purposes and goals of family night is to create a sense of community. So that is a perfect example - you know, mentioning that that seems like people here in this room are interested in that. And part of us coming together is sharing information with one another and learning from one another. So I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank - Jer gave me a friendly reminder. If you have not signed the sign in sheet, please do so before you leave. And Libby, Carol, and I will talk about the possibility of another family night.

Unfortunately, not many families showed up this evening. Thank you, thank you to those of you who did come. And we do have another purpose - is to benefit the kids and the families because parents have this opportunity to connect with other parents and it's a real benefit to be able to make those connections. So, thank you to the Walla Walla Disability Network. Thank you to Libby for her partnership with us to be able to provide this family night - "because it takes a village."