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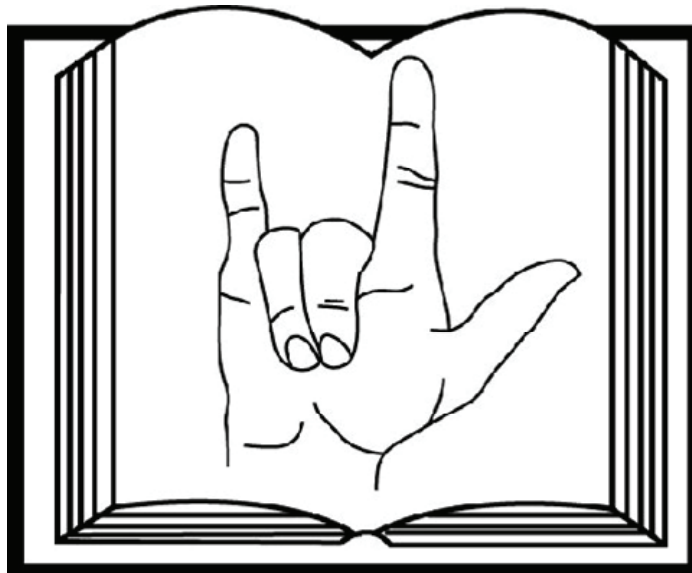


Deaf and Hard of Hearing Readers

Newsletter

May 2011

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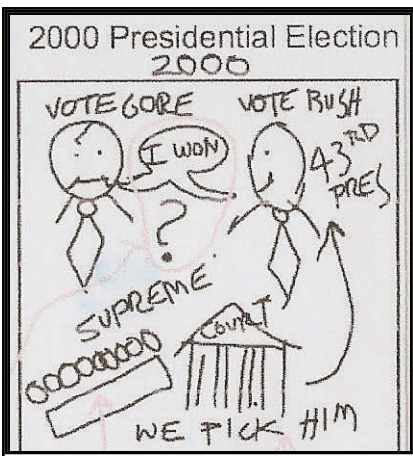
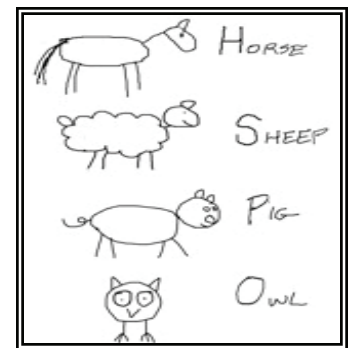


**At the IRA's 56th Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida on Monday, May 9, 2011
in Room W414c of the Convention Center our SIG will present:
"Proven Tools for Inclusive Literacy: Dramatically Amplify Comprehension, Make
Writing Easier; See How Deaf Learners Embrace Groundbreaking Visual Tools
Pioneered By Roger Essley – This Works!"
Presenters: Roger Essley, Adina Schnall and Elizabeth Wenzel**

**Visual Tools in a School For the Deaf-A No Brainer
By Michele Gennaoui**

Of course teachers of the deaf use pictures... visual dictionaries, visual English, visual phonics, we are all things visual...but when I saw Roger Essley present at an IRA convention with Linda Reif and Amy Rocci, I knew we had barely scratched the surface. And so began the relationship between St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf and Scholastic educational author and speaker, Roger Essley. Roger collaborated with teachers and showed us how to apply Visual Tools to reading comprehension, writing workshop and across content areas, in classrooms from pre-school to 8th grade. Roger, a keen observer, sat side by side with students, assessed their work and dove into lab classes innovating as he went. He collaborated with teachers designing storyboards that fit the content and the needs of the students. He researched deaf education and deaf cognition enhancing his intuitive knowledge.

Reading comprehension was the goal in Jessica Taborsky's Kindergarten class. Use of this simple reference chart (right) to retell *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle taught the students how to overcome additional issues and draw clear recognizable pictures of the animal characters. Visual note taking was used in Sean Dennehy's Social Studies class (left) students comprehended dry textbooks, and learned how to make their own visual notes. Math teacher, Marianna Giannelli, created word problems that were more meaningful.

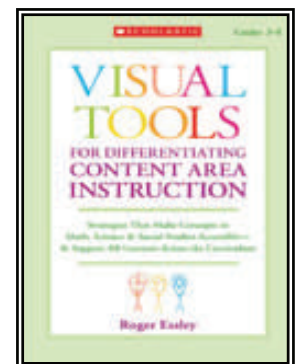
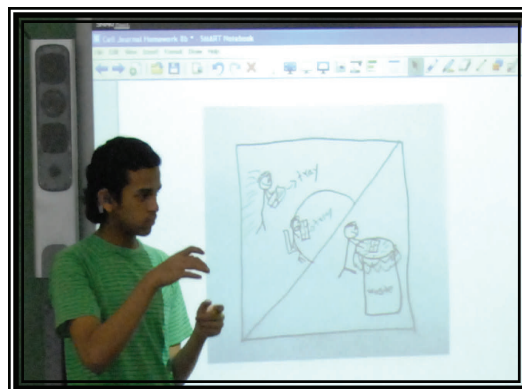
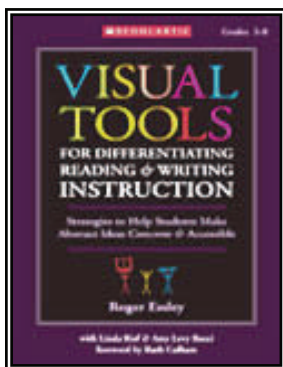


Sean Dennehy's Social Studies class (left) students comprehended dry textbooks, and learned how to make their own visual notes. Math teacher, Marianna Giannelli, created word problems that were more meaningful.

Visual Tools allow students to work on grade level content without the barrier of below grade level reading and writing skills. The achievement of our students has shown that these seemingly simple tools allow students to make remarkable progress. Roger's collaboration with St. Francis has elevated the power of visuals far beyond our expectations.

At our SIG meeting Roger Essley will present Visual Tools with two teachers. Adina Schnall will show how visual tools empowered her 4th grade students across ability levels and curricula. Elizabeth Wenzel will demonstrate how her 8th grade students used visual science similes and addressed complex topics with visual lab reports.

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Elizabeth Wenzel - ewenzel@sfdesales.org**



Accessibility for ALL!

By Sandy Huston

Since 1931, Congress has made provision for the development of accessible books and materials for individuals who are blind. In 1966, Public Law 89-522 was enacted to amend the March 1931 laws to authorize the furnishing of books and other materials to other handicapped persons. This bill recognized the need to provide books published in raised character, on sound recording or *in any other form*. Funding has been available for Braille texts, sound recordings, and even print readers for both those who are blind and for individuals with a variety of learning and/or physical disabilities; however, needs of individuals with significant language disabilities and no access to auditory input have been vastly overlooked. From a language perspective, individuals with hearing loss have had limited benefit from the accessibility laws that have been enacted throughout the years. Even closed captioning, though it has had some benefit, has not been able to close the language gap.

Children with hearing loss, whose primary access to language is through a visual mode (sign language), must have early and consistent exposure to language. Most parents, who communicate primarily through a verbal English mode, are not equipped with the dual language skills to provide the needed exposure that these children need to develop the language capacity necessary to develop a solid foundation for cognitive and academic growth. Additionally, most parents do not have ready access to fluent sign language models to develop their own sign skills that would enable them to create a language rich and open communication environment in the home.

Furthermore, our education programs are often limited in their ability to provide extensive accurate models of American Sign Language paired with rich educational materials. The broad quantity and depth of access to academic material required in an education setting often outpaces the abilities of a staff who may not be fully bilingual in either English or American Sign Language.

In order to meet these critical needs, the *Accessible Materials Project* (AMP) was established in November 2010 through a School Improvement Grant at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf. The goal of this project is to develop quality educational materials to meet the varied language and literacy needs of children with hearing loss. By combining the use of technology with ASL translation the AMP team is creating a wide-range of accessible texts in a highly appealing, visual mode. At present, the project focus includes the following: classic children's literature, guided reading instructional materials, classic literature, content texts, multi-lingual teaching tools, assessment materials, etc.

Accessible texts in American Sign Language are not a new phenomenon. Since the advent of film and George Veditz's famous proclamation in 1913, individuals have been following his call to "love and guard our beautiful sign language"; however, for children, schools, and families resources have been less than ideal. The costs have often been prohibitive, and the available materials have not covered the vast realm needed to support language and literacy development in children. In addition, even though free resources are available on-line, wading through these resources can lead to frustration as well as inaccurate translations.

The time has come for professionals in the field of deaf education to pool our resources to produce reliable, core-curriculum based, easily affordable materials that can change the face of education for students with hearing loss. Our hope is that the Accessible Materials Project can become a part of a larger effort to organize a vast pool of materials into an easily accessible, affordable format and continue creation of materials that support children, families, and schools in the acquisition and modeling of language in bi- and multi-lingual formats. The Accessible Materials Project team looks forward to meeting with you next year at the 2012 International Reading Association Convention. For further information on this project, contact Sandy Huston at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf at shuston@doe.k12.ga.us.

**Sandy G. Huston, Accessible Materials Project Manager, Tina Caloud, Accessible Materials ASL Specialist and Michael Clegg, Accessible Materials Video Editor will present
"Using Accessible Digital Media to Promote Academic Success Among Students with Hearing Loss"
at our SIG In Chicago at
IRA's 57th Annual Convention in 2012.**

Second Novel for SIG Member Michael Milone

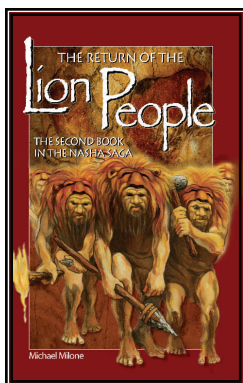
By Michael Milone

Although his day job is as a research psychologist, SIG member Michael Milone has written two novels for young readers. *Nasha: The First Dog* was published in 2009, and the sequel, *Return of the Lion People*, came out in 2010.

Nasha is the story of the girl who adopts a wolf pup, and it becomes the first dog. The story is set around 15,000 years ago in the area of central Asia and the northern Middle East where wolves were first domesticated.

“Both stories are based on many of the historical facts we know about the time,” says Milone.

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“Both stories are based on many of the historical facts we know about the time,” says Milone. “Kids enjoy the stories, and they learn an awful lot about the history of our ancestors. They were pretty clever people, a lot smarter than most of us think.”

Both books have important characters with disabilities. Checo is a blind storyteller who first appears in *Nasha*. In *Lion People*, he shows a surprisingly contemporary martial arts ability that young readers will enjoy. A remarkably resilient and capable deaf woman, Vica, and her two daughters are introduced in *Lion People*. Her oldest daughter introduces Vica to the Wolf clan with these words: “Mother cannot hear,” she said. “Nor can she speak. She understands many things, and she uses hand movements with us. Do not think she is stupid, as some people have. She is the bravest and wisest woman I have ever known. I am Tali, my sister is Dani, and our mother is Vica.”

“It has long been assumed that ancient humans simply abandoned children with disabilities or they perished from natural events. I find this difficult to accept because humans 15,000 years ago were so much like us today,” admits Milone. “The notion of abandoning a child would be impossible for most of us, and I have no doubt that many disabled young people survived to adulthood and contributed to the society in which they lived. And as for Vica’s use of Sign Language, it is likely that our ancestors were using gestures to communicate before they could speak. This use continued through the development of our species because gestures have very high evolutionary value as a communication method for hunters and gatherers.”



Milone delivering “books by bike” to Dan MacEachen principal of Placitas Elementary School in New Mexico



Another fascinating aspect of both books is the role of females and young people in prehistoric clans. Many of the discoveries that occurred during the Great Leap Forward, a period starting around 70,000 years ago, were probably made by females or young people. Men were the primary hunters and protectors. Women and teens had a little less stress in their lives and were responsible for the domestic actions around the living space. “Take the basket,” suggests Milone. “If you and your fellow hunters are trying to bring down a mammoth, your primary concern is staying alive. If you are gathering plants to eat and share with the rest of the clan, you are more likely to have observed a bird’s nest and tried to imitate it to make your task more efficient.”

Continued on next page

Although the books were written for young readers, typically between 8 and 14 years old, a “stealth” audience has discovered them. “Baby boomers and beyond love the books, as do dog lovers of any age. They are very comfortable reads, with no teenage angst, heaving bosoms, or vampires. Although there are conflicts and suspense in both stories, there is no gratuitous violence. And even though it’s a spoiler, I make it a point to tell potential readers that the wolves are not harmed in the stories. I’m one of the millions of kids who were traumatized by the ending of *Old Yeller*, and I’m not going to put my readers through the same thing.”

Nasha and *Return of the Lion People* are available at amazon.com and academictherapy.com (800-422-7249). All the proceeds from both books go to animal welfare organizations, school programs, libraries, and such, including the Wanagi Wolf Fund (wanagi-wolf-fund.org) and WildEarth Guardians (wildearthguardians.org). If your students become wolf lovers, both organizations would love to hear from them. Maybe they can adopt a wolf or an acre of wolf reserve. The Web site for *Nasha* is nashathefirstdog.com, where you can read the first two chapters for free. Here’s the best news. Michael has made arrangements with the publisher to send a free copy of each book to any program for deaf students that requests them. If you want more copies of the books, you can purchase them from the publisher at a special price. Just send your request to Michael Milone (MMilone@aol.com) and he’ll take care of it.

You can also drop by the Academic Therapy booth at IRA 2011, sign up in person, and maybe score some additional free or discounted display materials.

SAManimation – Stop Action Motion Makes Lessons Come to Life

By Marianna Giannelli, Melissa Rosenman and Michele Gennaoui

Another contribution Roger Essley made to St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf was introducing us to a cool new technology. SAManimation uses a computer connected to a plug and play web camera, which allows users to make stop motion animation. Melissa Pickering, founder & CEO, is a former Mechanical Engineer for Walt Disney Imagineering. Inspired by her own experiences with project-based learning, she launched www.icreatetoeducate.com to address the need to give students an opportunity to express, engage, and be excited about learning. Melissa visited St. Francis and demonstrated how easy it was to animate concepts. Melissa Rosenman, the 7th and 8th grade Language Arts and Social Studies teacher and Marianna Giannelli the 5th grade teacher were among the first to bring SAM to the classroom

Marianna Giannelli writes: SAM Animation is a program which has literally brought life into my classroom. This program has allowed my 5th grade students to create a variety of projects, while in turn making these projects more meaningful to them by actually demonstrating what it was my students have been working on. To date I have used this program in a variety of ways. My students’ first experience with SAM Animation was in creating a movie about Penguins in Science. At the time, my students were learning about and the different environments, some of them live in. Prior to our introduction to SAM, each student created a diorama of the penguin they were researching. With the help of Melissa Pickering and SAM Animation, my students were able to create a realistic movie showing their penguins in their environment and demonstrating how they would hunt for food, or hop from stone to stone. My students were so excited to see their work literally “come to life”, it has sparked a desire for them to want to continue exploring new topics and bringing them to life as well. In addition to the penguin project, my students also covered a unit on poetry. My students were very eager to learn about this topic and have as much fun with it. Each student created a variety of poems and then chose which one’s they wanted to animate. A great deal of planning went into deciding what props the students would need, deciding what they wanted their props to look like, and then making them. Once all of this was done the students had a lot of fun making their movies and watching them come to life. They especially enjoyed sharing these movies with other students and teachers, sparking a desire for other students to want to create movies.

At this time, I am continuing to use SAM Animation. I am currently working solving word problems in Math with a 6th grade class. The goal for this class was to choose a poem which can also be used as a word problem. The students first solved the word problem to be sure they understood the question. They then went on to plan how they would show this word problem in movie form. These students were expected to plan and make their own props, and then use these props to make the movies. Within this class of higher functioning students, one student is working on very basic math skills. Although her math skills are not comparable to those of the other students, this student was able to complete this task as well, and was able to gain a visual concept of the poem/word problem.

I have enjoyed using SAM Animation throughout my teaching this year and I plan to continue using it, and building on it in any way I can in order to make teaching and learning more meaningful for my students.

Melissa Rosenman writes: As soon as I saw a demonstration of this technology, I saw how versatile it could be in the classroom and I immediately wanted to try it out with my students. At the time, I was focusing on the topic of idioms in my language arts classroom and thought we could be very creative in showcasing our understanding of what the true implication of an idiom means. The first example my class focused on was the idiom “Bug Off”. I had one half of my class making their short animation about what the words themselves imply, such as trying to get a bug off of your body and the other half making their movie about telling somebody to go away. Right off the bat, the students were motivated to make these animation movies and the process became an excellent way to assess their true understanding of the idioms at hand. Another wonderful plus was that since the students had to plan out their movies in advance, they used the writing process which involved drafting their plan in a storyboard format, and then editing and revising. However, the revising did not stop there. As the students progressed to the actual stop animation part of the project, they noticed certain changes that were important to make, which led to spontaneous revision of their writing. This was a very pleasant surprise to watch students revise in this way. I especially enjoyed watching the noticeably less motivated students, now actively enjoying the writing process. I must bring up some downfalls of this project though, such as the huge time commitment involved. Originally, my students were making paper props that could easily be moved and produced but not only did this take a large quantity of time drawing and cutting out the figures but then we noticed some of the revisions were due to certain props needing to be altered because of size and clarity. We are currently still working on this project but have recently decided to experiment with real props, such as Barbie dolls and various toys. This seems to be a much quicker process, however if you do not have a large quantity of toys at your disposal it may be an inconvenience to go on a prop hunt. Overall, this new technology has been not only a great deal of fun for the students, and myself, but it has been a nice change from the normal writing process routine. Students were able to show off their creativity, while still demonstrating their Language Arts knowledge in a concrete manor. Since we teachers are always trying to find ways to make learning more enjoyable and motivating for the students, it is always wonderful to find new technology that can be mainstreamed into the classroom with ease in a meaningful way. I for one am motivated by this technology and am curious to see what other subjects and topics this equipment can be applied to. Only time will tell!

For more information check out <http://www.icreatetoeducate.com>



ALSO OF INTEREST

The Special Interest Group for Deaf Readers has the archives of the SIG newsletters and the information about the next convention online at www.sfdesales.org. Click on the [IRA link](#) and you can view the previous newsletters.

Deaf Characters in Adolescent Literature <http://pajka.blogspot.com>
Sharon Pajka is still blogging about great books with deaf characters.
Her reviews, interviews with authors, and secrets revealed are worth checking out.

Become a member-It's free!

IRA has been supportive of deaf education issues. Become a member of the SIG to keep issues of deaf and hard of hearing literacy in the forefront of IRA. The current number of members allows IRA to provide the SIG a meeting of an hour and 15 minutes at the annual convention. Increased membership will increase our meeting time. Please become a member and encourage membership among your colleagues. You must be a current member of the IRA (reading.org) in order to be a member of the SIG. Submit your IRA membership number on our membership form or contact the SIG chair or secretary, e-mail addresses are on the cover page. Jennifer Storey is continuing to compile a database of email addresses in order to publicize the SIG to interested educators.

IRA provides Sign Language Interpreters

It is the policy of IRA to provide sign language interpreters if deaf convention attendees make this request on their registration forms. All sessions can be accessible to deaf and hard of hearing participants.



Save the dates! April 29 - May 2, 2012

IRA's 57th Annual Convention will be in Chicago, IL

**The Special Interest Group for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Readers
will present:**

**"Using Accessible Digital Media to Promote Academic Success
Among Students with Hearing Loss"**

**Sandy G. Huston, Accessible Materials Project Manager,
Tina Caloud, Accessible Materials ASL Specialist and
Michael Clegg, Accessible Materials Video Editor
from the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf**