



## *Bridge of Signs:*



Toth©2001

### *Can Sign Language Empower Non-Deaf Children to Triumph over their Communication Disabilities?*

Report of the Project Director  
Dr. Anne Toth, R.S.W.  
November, 2004

Since my last report for the CAD board, the Bridge of Signs project has been presented at the CAD national conference in Winnipeg and the REACH international conference on Deafness and mental health in Ottawa. A further invitation has been accepted to present the model at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf on November 4, 2004. Received with enthusiasm, further development has taken place in terms of completing the requirements of our submissions for permission to conduct research, the development of the model for DVD and manual production, and the preparation for training our partners. In keeping with the goal of examining the use of sign language as a communication tool for non-Deaf children between the ages of 0-6 who have developmental disorders, children who have been diagnosed with such disorders as Autism, Downs Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and learning disabilities have been targeted for inclusion in this study. With the assistance of professionals in the field, *Bridge of Signs* will design and implement a model program that will teach children, as well as those who work with them, sign language—both ASL and LSQ. For those of you who are new to this project, the attached brochure will provide you with the background and overview of the project since its initiation, January 2004.

In the midst of this work, has come the need to support and change our project team as both our research assistant, Tamara Witcher, and our Executive Director, Jim Roots, have required medical leaves. While we have been fortunate that both have been able to return to their positions, we have had to say good-bye to Stephanie Duguay as she has left her position to pursue studies that will lead her to become a teacher. In that absence, we have been pleased to welcome Christina Hodgins as project assistant and she has already shown her interest and ability to work with the project coordinator, Michel Lelievre, and the research assistant. In addition to our project team, efforts have

fostered new partnerships across Canada and we look forward to confirming our working relationships with those in provinces and territories alike.

For the purpose of supporting submissions made to school boards, three additional documents have been produced. The first has been a paper, "Why Teach ASL/LSQ?", that explains the purpose behind the use of sign language as opposed to a coded symbolic system. The second has been a literature review supporting the methodology with the third document being an executive summary of the literature review. Each document is available in electronic form for the asking.

In terms of the project methodology, the project coordinator has worked in collaboration with the project director to develop a research process, a training model and other project related materials. As indicated in the attached files, the model has reached a point where it has been created as a DVD with an accompanying manual. A sign bank of vocabulary in ASL and LSQ forms the first DVD; the second DVD provides a visual and audible overview of the training model. In keeping with the objectives of the project, all materials will provide information in ASL/English and LSQ/French.

As we have moved toward confirmation of acceptance of our submissions, we have also moved ahead with planning for the training of our partners of the children we hope to include in our study. Training will take place in two phases, the first occurring in Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 26-7, 2004. This first phase will include one teacher, one resource person and one parent from each selected project site. To support the training that will be given, Deaf CAD Board members and mentors will be invited to lend their support as ASL and LSQ are taught to children in their respective sites.

The second phase of training will take place in the various regions where the remaining parents will come together to receive direct instruction and support with the teachers, resource personnel and disability association representatives in their area. We anticipate the second phase training to take place within four weeks of the conference so that participants will be prepared for formal implementation of the project, January to June 2005.

For any persons wanting to receive a copy of the report presented at the CAD Deaf Canada Conference by e-mail, please contact me at the address below.

Thank you for your continued interest in Bridge of Signs. We look forward to our future work together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anne Toth, R.S.W.,  
Project Director, Bridge of Signs,  
Canadian Association of the Deaf.

Bridging Worlds,  
Bringing People,  
Together...



Faire le pont entre les mondes,  
rassembler.  
les gens ensemble...