

*Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin  
Hunter Brown, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona**TRANSCRIPTION**

**Hunter:** Hello. My name is Hunter, and this is *A Virtual Little Library for Staying Connected*, created by Dr. Taucia González and myself. Our library is a collection of picture books read aloud by community members that we would like to share with you. These read-alouds are a way for us all to stay connected while also supporting our children while they are unable to attend school. The books and community members we've chosen show the diversity of our schools and communities. We would like to thank our readers and their guests for participating, as well as the Midwest & Plains Equity Center for supporting the project. We hope you enjoy.

**Mary:** Hi, everyone. Our read-aloud today is from a children's book called *My Deaf Friend Can Do Anything You Can Do!* And we have the author here today, who is Tanesha, who is going to talk a little bit more about the book.

**Mary:** Hi, my name is Mary Johnson and some things that are really important to know about this book: it's about deafness, it's about sign language, and it's also about hearing friends.

**Mary:** So first, I want us to do this sign. So we're going to be doing signing. We're going to be using our hands. And the first sign for deaf is this: deaf. So deaf people, they don't depend on their ears and the sounds that come out of our ears to communicate. Actually, they use different forms of expression. And also, there's like Deaf culture. Also Deaf community, as well. That's really important. And so some of my other friends are going to talk about some of those other important things that are important for this book.

**Tanesha:** Okay. So hello. My name is Tanesha A. Ausby. I'm the author of *My Deaf Friend Can Do Anything You Can Do!*

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**Tanisha:** And I'll be teaching you what sign language is. So sign language, that's the way deaf people communicate with each other by using their hands and different facial movements so they can communicate with each other.

**Tanisha:** So the three words? There are three words that I'll teach you today. So the first word that I'll teach you, that's inside of the book...one second. The first word is "talk with". So when you're talking with someone: talk with. So for example, if you're talking to your parents or your friends you will be talking with them.

**Tanisha:** The next one is "go." So if you're going somewhere, you say, "I'm going to go to the store."

**Tanisha:** And the next one is "know,"when you know something. Know.

**Mary:** And I have three words that I want to share with you all, as well. So it's three words that are in the book.

**Mary:** So the first one is "live." Live. Live. So I live in my home. I live with my mom. I live with my dad.

**Mary:** The second word is "where." Where? Where is my friend? Where is the phone?

**Mary:** And that gets us to our third word, which is "phone." So phone call. Or I'm on the phone with my friend. My mommy's on the phone with her friend. Those are my three words.

**Tae:** Hi. My name is Tae and I'm hearing. And what that mean is I use my ears to hear people talk, to hear school buses, and to hear school bells.

**Tae:** And the three words that I learned from this book is "I love you." The second word is "sorry." And the third word is "friend."

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- Mary:** Okay. So thank you. We're going to get into our book and the beautiful illustrations in this book. All the beautiful pictures. And again, the title is *My Deaf Friend Can Do Anything You Can Do!*
- Mary:** Serenity and Richelle have been friends since they were tiny babies. Richelle is deaf. Deaf means that one is unable to hear. Serenity is hearing. Richelle has hearing parents and Serenity has a deaf mother and a hearing father.
- Mary:** Once Richelle's parents discovered that Richelle was deaf, they took it upon themselves to learn sign language. Then, they taught Richelle, so they would communicate with each other. Serenity's parents began to teach her sign language at a young age, so she can communicate with her mother.
- Mary:** They all lived in Baltimore, MD in the same neighborhood together.
- Mary:** We all live in Maryland, too. All my friends live in Maryland.
- Mary:** Richelle and Serenity would sometimes have play dates and watch their favorite cartoon together.
- Mary:** Richelle and Serenity would call each other to catch up whenever there was a rainy day and they couldn't play outside. They would communicate by phone, through a service called VRS, a video relay service, or simply by text.
- Mary:** We love to communicate with our friends and tell them how we feel. Tell them what happened today.
- Mary:** They both enjoy playing basketball.

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- Mary:** One day, they were playing outside and noticed a new family who just moved into the neighborhood, and saw children the same age as them. They were super excited! New friends! New friends! New people coming into Maryland!
- Mary:** Later that day, the new children came out to play. They noticed Richelle and Serenity signing to each other. They yelled, "Hey! What are you all doing?"
- Mary:** Richelle noticed that Serenity stopped signing.
- Mary:** Serenity, exclaimed, "Hey! We're doing sign language." Using their hands to communicate and using their facial expressions.
- Mary:** Richelle curiously asked, "What did they say?"
- Mary:** Serenity interpreted to her what was being said. The kids said, "Okay, I guess. But it looks kind of weird. Why don't you talk normal?"
- Mary:** Serenity always made sure she signs what's being said, so that Richelle doesn't feel left out of the conversation. Serenity explained to them that Richelle is deaf, and sign language is their main way to communicate with each other.
- Mary:** The new kids remarked, "Well, she won't be able to play with us if she can't hear what we're saying."
- Mary:** Richelle frowned. She did not like that people thought that because she was deaf that she's not able to do the same thing that hearing people can do.
- Mary:** Serenity yelled, "Yes, she can! She can do everything we can do!"
- Mary:** The new neighbors just didn't want to believe it. They yelled, "We will see. How about we play tag?"

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- Mary:** Serenity signed to her that we're going to play the game Tag with a smirk as if they already played this before. They enjoyed a successful game of tag.
- Mary:** The kids were amazed and suggested, "Okay. Let's play another game. Hide and Go Seek."
- Mary:** They played Hide and Go Seek and had tons of fun. Playing outside is really fun.
- Mary:** After the game was over, Richelle signed to Serenity and told her she had fun playing the games, but did not appreciate them making fun of her, and assuming she didn't know how to do anything. Serenity signed to her and admitted that she understands. Serenity suggests that they didn't have to play with them anymore if Richelle was uncomfortable.
- Mary:** One weekend, Serenity's parents had a holiday cookout, and invited Richelle and her family. There was lots of food and loud music playing.
- Mary:** The new kids in the neighborhood walked by and noticed everyone talking to each other using sign language. One of the children by the name of Jeremiah recognized Richelle dancing to the music. Remember Richelle is deaf.
- Mary:** He asked Serenity, "How does she know how to dance so well if she cannot hear the music?"
- Mary:** Serenity explained, "She can feel the vibrations and feel the beat to the music."
- Mary:** Jeremiah yelled, "That is amazing! She really can do anything!"
- Mary:** He displayed a surprised look on his face. He confessed, "I'm really sorry for making fun of her being deaf and thinking she wasn't able to do anything. Do you mind teaching me sign language?"

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- Mary:** Serenity encouraged, "I think you should apologize on your own. Then, I'll teach you how to say. 'I'm sorry,' and to teach me sign language, so that you can talk to her on your own. She's happy and willing to demonstrate."
- Mary:** From that day on, Jeremiah would come out and play with Serenity and Richelle. He was even able to have small conversations with them after a while. After the new kids started noticing Jeremiah learning sign language, they'd continue to ask how to say different things in sign language. So now everyone's learning sign language.
- Mary:** After a while, they were able to sign to each other using sign language. The new kids learned that deaf people can do anything. They also realized that sign language is a great language to learn.
- Mary:** I think so, too.
- Mary:** They all became great friends.
- Mary:** And that is the end of the book. Yay!
- Mary:** And so now I want to ask...have some time for some of my friends to talk about their experience with some of the things that Serenity and Richelle were dealing with in the book.
- Mary:** And first I want to ask Tanesha, who is the author of the book, the person who created this book for us to read. Can you tell us one, why are you passionate about Deaf culture or Black Deaf-hood? What is your experience growing up as a young child with this?

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- Tanesha:** So the reason why I'm so passionate about this is because one, I have a deaf mother. So throughout the story, it's really revolving around my family and even my family and my mom and her friends. So I'm extremely passionate about this because I feel like this needs to be taught towards the hearing community. Because a lot of people, the things that are in the story, a lot of people don't know. So I would always get a question about my mom. Or how did she do this? Or how did she do that? And it's like, deaf people could do anything you can do.
- Mary:** Can you explain to us what is a CODA? And also, for some of the children who might have CODA friends and just like them to learn like what that actually means for them maybe in our schools.
- Tanesha:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). So Coda, C-O-D-A, that means Child of Deaf Adult. So for example, my mother is deaf and I'm her child, so that considers me to be Child of a Deaf Adult. Even if you have one deaf parent or both of your parents are deaf, you're considered a CODA, which is Child of Deaf Adult. So if you have parents or if you know someone in your family, that's deaf, you're considered a CODA.
- Mary:** Thank you. Can you tell us your favorite part of the story that you have for us?
- Tanesha:** So my favorite part in the story is when Richelle is dancing to the music. The reason why I say that is because it reminds me of my mother, who is deaf. She can dance very well. And I always get the same question, "How can she dance so good? It just doesn't make sense. How is she...it just doesn't--," so I always explain to them, "it's the vibration of the music."
- Tanesha:** Kids, if you sit down and actually put your hand on a speaker, you can feel the vibration of the music. You can feel the beat. So that's how deaf people are able to enjoy music and is able to dance.

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- Mary:** And can you tell us what are some of the, maybe like misconceptions? Or things that people don't know about Deaf culture or Black Deafness that you're hoping that folks take away? Or that the children take away from this book?
- Tanasha:** So what I hope that children, or anyone, take away from this book is to realize that deafness is not a disability. We all are the same. If you notice in the book, where they're watching TV and you see the closed caption on there, where it says, "We are all the same"? I purposely put that in there to express that we are all the same. Deaf people are no different. They can do anything we can do. They can drive. Everyone always has that question. Like deaf people can't drive? They can drive. They can listen to music. They can do anything.
- Mary:** And what are some other projects or things that you are working on? And where can we find this book?
- Tanasha:** So once I reach my certain goal as far as *My Deaf Friend Can Do Anything*, I plan on publishing a coloring book so that children can learn the alphabet in sign language and also have an activity to do in the book as far as coloring and learning the alphabet, as well. And you can find my book at [www.tclovinghands.com](http://www.tclovinghands.com). It's also available on Barnes & Noble's website. And other sites, Books-A-Million. And you can find us at TC Loving Hands on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. So feel free to follow and like us.
- Mary:** And my second friend that we have here—I think is really important for people who are not CODAs or who are not deaf—I really want to bring their perspective in to how they think about this book. And our friend who is beginning to learn about deaf culture and the deaf community. And so Tae, can you just tell us a little bit about yourself and just your experiences of learning about deafness or deaf culture?



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- Tae:** Okay. So I'm a creative skater. I skateboard, I draw, and I make music. And my experience is, as far as coming across a situation with a deaf person, I was skating in Washington D.C., and I found a place, a skateboard park, next to Gallaudet University, and that is a school for deaf people. And I always wondered, "hmm, is there deaf skaters in this area?" Or, "how does that work out?" And I always wondered. It always just struck my interest of becoming more interested in the deaf community and the deaf culture.
- Mary:** And can you tell us, what is your favorite part? What did you enjoy about learning? Or what did you learn in this book? And what was your favorite part of the book?
- Tae:** Well, I did learn those three new signs I love you, sorry, and friend. And my favorite part of the book was when Jermaine spoke to Richelle and said that he wanted to apologize for being mean. And I thought that was really cool because it does show that we're able to communicate as a people and no one is left out. So we are all in this together.
- Mary:** And can you just tell us, is there any words that you have to encourage other people who might be like you? To learn sign language and just your experience of learning sign language?
- Tae:** Yeah. Something that I can encourage is to don't worry about the differences. There's nothing different. There's nothing special. Like Tanesha said, or disability. So they're people just like anyone else and they can do the same things that everyone else can do.
- Mary:** Thank you. And I just want to thank you all for being a part of this. And thank you Tanesha, for bringing this work to us, for us to think about it. All of us being hearing people. And then also as we, from our own vantage points, from our own

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lived experiences, are beginning to learn the importance, the beauty, the brilliance of Blackness, deafness, sign language, deaf culture. All of those things that us, as hearing people, that we have to do the work to really learn and to grow together with our deaf friends, our deaf mothers, our deaf fathers. All of the things that are already being done in the deaf culture.

**Mary:** So we just thank you so much. And we hope that, today, that you take away, that you maybe try some of these signs that you've seen today. Even if it's just three signs that you are able to do. But use those in your homes. Use those in your schools. Use those in your communities. And let's begin to sign more and be in more in communication with the deaf community. Thank you.

**Tanesha:** Thank you.

**Tae:** Thank you.

[End of Audio]