

Language Deprivation Conference

Kalamazoo Valley Community College
6767 West O Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Friday, October 24, 2025

5:00pm–8:00pm

Saturday, October 25, 2025

8:30am–9:00pm

Sunday, October 26, 2025

8:30am–1:00pm

Register at cwoodpd.com by October 19, 2025



Presented by:
Dr. Sanjay Gulati
Dr. Wyatt C. Hall
Zaineb Abdulla
Dr. Kim Ofori-Sanzo
Anna Trupiano
Sara Miller
Brandi Czechowskyj
Rex Vernon

Panel Moderated by
Kenya Lowe

Panelists:
Bretagne Whitford
Chase Magsig
Alayna Lail
Teddy Dorsette III

This event is targeted to everyone vested in the success of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children.

CWOOD
Professional Development
ASL/ENG

POLICIES

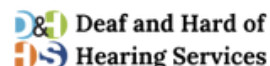
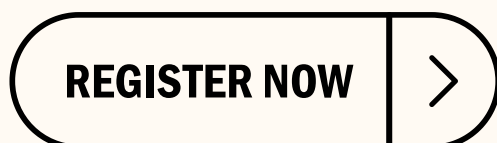
- For any refund requests please contact Cindy Wood at cwoodpd@gmail.com.
- This event will be made accessible in both ASL and spoken English. For other ADA accommodations please contact Jamie Hunerjager at jhunerjager@kvcc.edu prior to September 15, 2025.
- CWood Professional Development promotes a learning environment free from discrimination and bias, and encourages mutual respect for all participants.

PRICING

	Cost	RID CEUs	What You Can Expect	In-person or Virtual?
Friday+Saturday+Sunday	\$205	1.25 PS	Full conference experience, access to all workshops, Saturday gourmet box lunch, and Saturday evening entertainment.	In-person only
Friday+Saturday+Sunday	\$0*	No CEUs	Access to all workshops and Saturday evening entertainment. *Saturday box lunch is not included and can be pre-purchased for \$15 (at-the-door not available).	In-person only
Friday Only	\$50	0.3 PS	Zoom access to the keynote presentation from 5pm-8pm ET on October 24th.	Virtual only
Saturday Only	\$120	0.6 PS	Access to all workshops on October 25th, gourmet box lunch, and evening entertainment.	In-person only
Sunday Only	\$60	0.35 PS	Access to the keynote presentation and panel discussion on October 26th.	In-person only

DETAILS

- **Conference approved for participants to receive up to 1.25 PS RID CEUs.**
- Target Audience: This conference is open to anyone vested in the success of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children.
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services is an approved RID CMP Sponsor for continuing education activities. This Professional Studies program is offered for up to 1.25 CEUs at the Some Content Knowledge Level.



ABOUT THE KEYNOTE PRESENTER: DR. SANJAY GULATI

Sanjay Gulati, MD is a child psychiatrist who lost hearing throughout childhood, eventually becoming deaf and using ASL. His research focuses on Language Deprivation Syndrome. He is co-editor of the text, *Mental Health Care of Deaf People: A Culturally Affirmative Approach*. He is staff psychiatrist for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service at Cambridge Hospital and the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Program at Boston Children's Hospital, and on the faculty at Harvard Medical School.



VIRTUAL KEYNOTE DESCRIPTION: *LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION SYNDROME: HOW LANGUAGE CREATES THE MIND*

This virtual presentation will take participants on a deep dive into research in cognitive science, linguistics, and psychiatric presentations of people who had inadequate exposure to ASL as children. This workshop will discuss the role of language in “building” the brain, far beyond mere communication skills, and explore the challenges faced by those with Language Deprivation Syndrome (LDS) in using interpreters.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to understand the role of language in “building” the brain, far beyond mere communication skills.
- Participants will be able to understand the challenges faced by those with LDS in using interpreters.

ABOUT THE KEYNOTE PRESENTER: WYATTE C. HALL, MA, PHD

Dr. Wyatt Hall is an Assistant Professor of Public Health Sciences at the University of Rochester Medical Center. He directs the NIH-funded Visual Language Access and Acquisition Lab, which focuses on the relationship between early childhood experiences and quality of life outcomes across the lifespan in deaf populations; his work especially examines the social epidemic of language deprivation. Dr. Hall also is director of the Language Deprivation track under the Deaf Child Resilience Center at Gallaudet University. Separately, he is co-director of the NIH-funded Future Deaf Scientists program which is a STEM internship experience for deaf high school students. Dr. Hall has over 40 publications and book chapters, has given over 150+ public and invited lectures, and is co-editor of the volume “Language Deprivation and Deaf Mental Health.”



KEYNOTE DESCRIPTION: *DID WE EVER LEAVE 1880? A DISCUSSION OF LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION IN 2025*

This presentation will cover the current landscape of deaf education and health as it pertains to early childhood language experiences. We will cover research on a variety of topics ranging from neurodevelopment to deaf education. There will also be a discussion about historical influences that continue to impact modern-day policies and practices with deaf children and adults.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to define the neurocritical period of language acquisition.
- Participants will be able to recognize current, general research with signed languages and cochlear implants.
- Participants will be able to describe the current landscape of mental health and quality of life outcomes for deaf people.

ABOUT THE KEYNOTE PRESENTER: ZINEB ABDULLA

Zaineb Abdulla is the founder and president of Deaf Defy, an international NGO providing humanitarian aid to Deaf children in refugee camps and areas of conflict. Through a medical mission model, Deaf Defy provides hearing tests, fits hearing aids and, most importantly, teaches sign language to children with little or no other access to language. To date, Deaf Defy has served over 1,000 patients in over 30 refugee camps and isolated villages across the Middle East and Africa. In Chicago, Zaineb works with marginalized communities, including adults with special needs, refugees, and at-risk youth, ensuring equitable access to communication, education, and advocacy. Her work is grounded in a commitment to ending language deprivation and creating sustainable, community-based systems of support for Deaf individuals worldwide.



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: *BUILDING LANGUAGE FROM THE GROUND UP: A MESSAGE OF HOPE*

In this powerful and eye-opening workshop, participants will explore the impact of language deprivation on Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, and learn practical, everyday strategies to help build rich language environments in their lives. Led by Zaineb Abdulla, who has traveled across the globe to work in communities where Deaf children face the most profound language deprivation, this session will share moving stories and lessons from her experiences. Through these stories, participants will witness the transformative hope that emerges when children's worlds are opened to language, and gain insight into the critical role that parents, educators, and other stakeholders play in fostering communication and connection.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to identify at least three key effects that access to language has on the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to describe a minimum of four strategies stakeholders can use in daily life to promote language access and growth for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children.
- Participants will be able to explain how real-world examples from global contexts, as shared by Zaineb Abdulla, illustrate the transformative impact of providing language access to children.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER: ANNA TRUPIANO, M.S.ED, EIPA 4.6, NIC

Anna Trupiano, M.S.Ed, EIPA 4.6, NIC is a Deaf Education teacher who has 10+ years of experience working as an interpreter primarily in elementary education settings. She has taught in a wide variety of educational settings including schools for the Deaf, mainstream settings, early intervention settings, and most recently a bilingual classroom for language deprived students. She received her AA in Sign Language Interpretation from Lansing Community College, M.S. Ed in Deaf Education from Saint Joseph's University, and is currently pursuing her Special Education Administration Certificate from Grand Valley State University.



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: *INTERPRETING FOR LANGUAGE DEPRIVED STUDENTS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS: A CONVERSATION STARTER*

This workshop critically examines why traditional educational interpreting models fall short in addressing the needs of language-deprived students in mainstream classrooms and presents an innovative, learner-centered alternative. Participants will learn to identify students experiencing language deprivation, become familiar with essential terminology related to interventions and linguistic development, explore foundational concepts of language acquisition, and engage with real-world examples that illustrate interpreting techniques designed to promote language growth within educational settings for students struggling with language deprivation.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to correctly define four terms commonly used to discuss language deprivation in educational settings.
- Participants will be able to accurately explain the current shortcomings of traditional interpreting models in supporting students with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to state three strategies for interpreting for a child with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to advocate for language rich and developmentally appropriate support within the educational setting.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER: KIMBERLY OFORI-SANZO, SLPD, CCC-SLP, BCS-CL

Kimberly Ofori-Sanzo is a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who has experience working at a school for the deaf, as well as presenting and publishing on topics related to language acquisition, bilingualism, and language deprivation. She earned her B.A. in Psychology and in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Vermont in 2010, her M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology from Gallaudet University in 2012, and her Doctor of Speech-Language Pathology (SLPD) in 2022. She is a board-certified specialist in child language (BCS-CL) through the American Board of Child Language and Language Disorders and is co-founder of the American Board of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialists (ABDHHS).



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: ASSESSING LANGUAGE IN STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION: INFORMAL TOOLS AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

This presentation will introduce a handful of informal assessments and dynamic evaluation methods designed to gather meaningful insights into how Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students with language deprivation are using signed language. Participants will learn how to interpret assessment data to inform goal development and guide their intervention. The presentation will also provide an overview of language sample analysis, including practical examples of assessing a language-deprived child's language in American Sign Language (ASL), as well as effective strategies for eliciting and documenting language samples.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to identify at least two informal or dynamic assessment strategies appropriate for evaluating language use in DHH students with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to analyze assessment data to inform the development of targeted, linguistically appropriate IEP or therapy goals.
- Participants will be able to apply effective strategies for eliciting, documenting, and analyzing language samples.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER: BRANDI CZECHOWSKYJ

Brandi Czechowskyj is the Program Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Total Communication Program of Kent ISD, located in the Northview Public School District. Czechowskyj started as a resource room teacher at Northview, but has been working with DHH students for the last twelve years after returning to school for her DHH endorsement in 2013. She has worked as a DHH preschool and resource room teacher at the elementary level and is currently in her third year in her position as Program Coordinator.

Czechowskyj earned her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and a Master's Degree in Special Education (LD emphasis), both from Grand Valley State University. She completed her DHH Endorsement in 2017, and is currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership Program at GVSU.



ABOUT THE PRESENTER: REX VERNON

Rex Vernon is the principal at the Michigan School for the Deaf. As the child of Deaf adults, he has worked for 17 years as both a teacher and an administrator at the Michigan School for the Deaf. His work has included classroom instruction, building school/families partnerships, working with school partners across the state, and extensive work within the Deaf community. He holds an undergraduate degree from Michigan State University in Special Education-Deaf Education, and a graduate degree in School Administration from Central Michigan University.



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: *DETERMINING THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS*

Determining the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students requires more than placement decisions, it demands a deep understanding of language development, communication access, and equity. In this engaging and practical workshop, participants will explore the nuanced process of identifying appropriate educational settings that truly support the linguistic, social, and academic growth of DHH students. Presenters will examine how factors such as language deprivation, communication modality, amplification use, and peer interaction impact educational placement decisions. Through real-world strategies and resources, attendees will leave equipped to advocate for language-rich environments and more equitable educational opportunities for DHH learners across a range of placements.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to define the concept of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in the context of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, including how it aligns with IDEA requirements.
- Participants will be able to recognize the impact of language access and deprivation on academic success, social-emotional development, and communication modality preferences in DHH students.
- Participants will be able to analyze the components of the LRE decision-making and develop a stronger understanding of how to guide teams through this process.
- Participants will be able to identify and apply at least three strategies for creating and advocating for language-rich environments across a continuum of educational placements.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER: SARA MILLER

Sara Miller is the founder of Language Priority and the content creator behind the @adventuresindeafed Instagram account. She uses her business and social media platforms to raise awareness about deafness, language deprivation, sign language, accessibility, and the Deaf community. With a bachelor's degree in Deaf Education and a master's in Educational Leadership, Sara brings over a decade of classroom experience to her work in supporting Deaf children and their families.



As a Deaf Latina, Sara communicates using American Sign Language and spoken/written English. She currently utilizes a hearing aid and a cochlear implant which she received as an adult. After working for 13 years as a Teacher of the Deaf, she transitioned from the classroom to full-time entrepreneurship. Through Language Priority, Sara creates community-centered apparel and merchandise, teaches online ASL classes, and presents on critical topics related to deafness and language access.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: *HELPING DEAF CHILDREN THRIVE: IDENTIFYING & ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF LINGUISTIC OVERPROTECTION*

Linguistic overprotection can occur when well-meaning adults unintentionally limit a Deaf child's language exposure or opportunities to use language fully and independently. This workshop will explore what linguistic overprotection looks like, why it happens, and how it can hinder language development and autonomy. Participants will learn to recognize signs of linguistic overprotection and leave with practical strategies to support rich, empowering language experiences for Deaf children—both at home and in educational settings.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to recognize and describe linguistic overprotection.
- Participants will be able to utilize strategies to combat linguistic overprotection.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER: MEGAN WARD

Megan Ward is a Deaf Education teacher with over a decade of experience. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Deaf Education from Bowling Green State University and a Master's degree from Gallaudet University, specializing in the Education of Deaf Students with Disabilities. In her current role teaching 5th and 6th grade, Megan manages a caseload of students and provides direct instruction in Bilingual Language Arts and Math. She also supports the development of content-specific knowledge by partnering with mainstream teachers and educational interpreters, blending immersive and mainstreamed education. In addition to her classroom experience, she has taken on a leadership role, supporting colleagues in developing more meaningful and compliant IEPs. Her work focuses on creating comprehensive IEPs that support Deaf students with language deprivation.



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: *BEYOND COMPLIANCE: DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL IEPs THAT EMPOWER DEAF STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION*

An IEP should serve as a powerful roadmap for a student's growth and success—not just a document created to check compliance boxes. This workshop will provide a step-by-step guide to developing IEPs that are both effective and meaningful for Deaf students experiencing language deprivation. Together, we'll explore accommodations, goals, related services, and other supports tailored to the unique needs of these learners. Designed for parents, advocates, teachers, interpreters, and anyone engaged in the IEP process, this session will equip participants with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for IEPs that truly reflect each student's strengths and potential.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to describe the value in creating a meaningful IEP that meets the unique needs of students with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to identify at least three accommodations for students with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to list three considerations for goal development for students with language deprivation.
- Participants will be able to outline at least one goal for themselves to become stronger advocates during IEP meetings.

ABOUT THE PANEL MODERATOR: KENYA LOWE

Kenya Lowe is the Director of the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. For more than two decades, she has worked to advance equity, accessibility, and language access while empowering families and uplifting underrepresented voices. As panel moderator, Kenya brings both lived experience and seasoned leadership to guide honest, meaningful dialogue on language deprivation.



PANEL DESCRIPTION: A *DEAF-CENTERED CONVERSATION ABOUT LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION AND ACCESS*

In this dynamic panel discussion, Deaf community members and professionals will share their lived experiences and insights into the causes, consequences, and challenges surrounding language deprivation. Through honest conversation and real-world perspectives, the panel will explore how language access shapes identity, learning, and connection. Whether you're an educator, interpreter, parent, or advocate, this session offers a unique opportunity to listen, learn, and reflect on how we can create more inclusive and language-rich environments for Deaf students.

PANEL EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to recognize how language deprivation affects a Deaf individual's academic progress, social-emotional development, and long-term cognitive and mental health outcomes.
- Participants will be able to critically evaluate the responsibilities and limitations of educators, interpreters, and school systems in addressing and supporting language-deprived students, including effective strategies and supports.
- Participants will be able to identify key interventions, community roles (especially Deaf professionals), and policy recommendations that help prevent language deprivation and promote linguistic equity in educational settings.

ABOUT THE PANELIST: BRETAGNE WHITFORD

Bretagne Whitford is a Deaf associate professor at Madonna University. She studied at Gallaudet University and earned a master's degree in Deaf Education from RIT. Although K12 certified in Michigan with a DHH endorsement, her work has focused on higher education, curriculum development, and expanding pathways for Deaf professionals and children. An active contributor to LEAD-K efforts, she brings a broad perspective to the intersections of language access, education, and equity.



ABOUT THE PANELIST: CHASE MAGSIG

Chase Magsig is a Deaf male who grew up in a hearing family. In school, he was aided, communicated orally and learned in a mainstream setting on the Westside of Michigan near Holland. In high school, he was recruited to play baseball and football at Gallaudet University. This is where he learned ASL and where his Deaf identity flourished. After experiencing the best of both worlds, he has returned to Michigan inspired to help children like him. Currently, he works at Holland Public Schools as a Deaf Language Model with DHH students ages 3-19. In this work he supports their language development, teaches them self-advocacy skills and guides them with their DHH identity. In addition to his work at Holland, he is a baseball trainer and will start teaching ASL classes in GRCC this fall. He is married to his wife, who also teaches DHH children, and they have 3 active sons who keep them busy in their free time.



ABOUT THE PANELIST: ALAYNA LAIL

Alayna Lail is the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Communication Access Specialist of the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing within the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. She has been with the department for ten years and still fighting for accessibility for Michiganders who identify deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing. Alayna is a Chicago native and identifies herself as Deaf. She currently lives in Farmington with her husband and two daughters. Alayna graduated with a Bachelor of Science & Technology in International Hospitality and Food/Travel Management from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. Alayna is passionate about advocating for people who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing and will continue to fight for their equality.



ABOUT THE PANELIST: TEDDY DORSETTE III

Teddy Dorsette III is a Black Deaf filmmaker, social entrepreneur, disability advocate, and fourth-generation Deaf Detroiter. He co-founded TeddyBoy Films & Entertainment and Def Lens Media, both dedicated to inclusive storytelling and accessible media, and also manages Dor'sette Hair Designs VIP, continuing his family's legacy of entrepreneurship.

Teddy has built strong relationships with state legislators and the Deaf community, helping advance major policies such as Michigan's PA 256 LEAD-K bill, HB 4944 and 4963 ("Let My Child Hear"), and the upcoming Michigan Open Caption Bill. He serves as Vice President of the Michigan Coalition for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, President of Detroit Black Deaf Advocates, Midwestern Regional Alt for the National Black Deaf Advocates, and a council member for the MDCR Division on Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

With deep DEI expertise, Teddy ensures diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility shape all his work. He is currently running for Detroit City Council At-Large to expand representation and opportunity for people with disabilities and all Detroiters.



ABOUT THE PERFORMER: SEBASTIEN IANNO

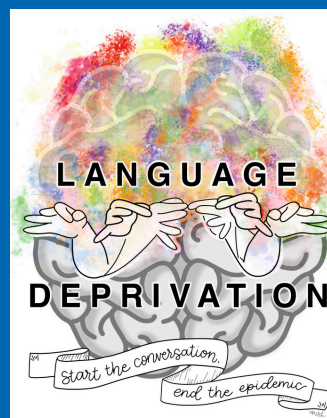
Sebastien Ianno is a Deaf artist from Belgium, now living in Indiana. Through his self-employed, Sebi'Art, he creates LED and fire performances, juggling shows, Visual Vernacular storytelling, and interactive workshops for both children and adults. He also teaches video editing and visual arts.

Alongside his artistic work, Sebastien serves as a Residential Dean at the Indiana School for the Deaf, supporting students from ECE to High School. Inspired by his long journey through Asia that shaped his passion, he brings bright, visual, and interactive performances that connect audiences through creative visual expression. <https://sebi.art>



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REGISTER NOW



Artwork by
Deaf artist
Marina Leja