

Teaching sign language to everyone in an entertaining way

Israel – Access Israel

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The focus of the project is to increase awareness of the needs of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, most importantly by teaching sign language to the public, thereby acquainting hearing people with deaf culture.

“Pay It Forward in Sign Language”

- Mr. Sar-el Oren Ohana, Access Israel

FACTS & FIGURES

- 4,400 people have completed the course since the start of the project, and programme graduates have reached out to approximately 10,000 additional people.
- Approximately 880 courses have been offered to date, and 30 deaf programme instructors are currently employed by the project.
- In July 2015, some 1,400 students were exposed to the programme in summer camp.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Since only a relative few people know how to communicate in sign language, persons who are deaf or hard of hearing struggle with isolation and stereotypes, which further hinders their inclusion in society and in the work force. In addition, schools in Israel do not provide the means to increase awareness of the needs of people who are deaf.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Learning sign language, forming relationships, and becoming familiar with deaf culture in an affirmative, enjoyable, and fascinating way is at the heart of the project’s approach. The project provides basic courses in Israeli sign language taught by deaf instructors, thus opening channels of communication between hearing and deaf people and enabling the hearing to familiarize themselves with deaf culture. The success

of the programme led to the expansion of the project, and to offering additional basic and advanced courses. From the beginning, the course was handled by volunteers and was offered free of charge. In 2015, however, Access Israel began charging a nominal fee to pay the instructors' wages and to cover the costs of the expanding project. Consequently, the project now offers both rewarding employment and a decent income for deaf people. Access Israel also developed a complementary free cellular app that offers extra practice and vocabulary. As part of the learning experience, participants produce short videos with multiple participants to convey the meaning of a song in sign language.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The model is based on a convenient, clear, and easy-to-learn course that can be readily adopted and implemented at minimal cost in other countries and by organizations that aim to open communication channels between people with disabilities and able-bodied people. Due to increasing demand for advanced courses, Access Israel is in the process of expanding the project by providing nationwide courses in various levels, and by creating additional employment opportunities for the deaf. Access Israel and this popular project also fights stereotypes and helps to overcome the shared difficulties of people with various disabilities.

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