Deaf Culture Question of the Week – June 7 – 11, 2010
Bill Newell, Principal Washington School for the Deaf

NAD releases video urging dictionary publishers to include the word "Audism".
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFpUT5qmgUM

This week I refer you to a major announcement coming from the NAD which you can view at the YouTube link above. The NAD is calling on dictionary publishers to include the word Audism in dictionaries of the English language. To date major dictionaries have not included this word although it is widely used within the Deaf community and among scholars of Deaf Studies. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, NAD President, presents compelling arguments why this word should be included in dictionaries and explains the NAD's campaign to have this word be included in newly published dictionary editions.

I refer readers of DCQW to a previous issue in which the term audism was explored. Check it out in the DCQW archives here:

January 19-23, 2009
The term coined by professor Tom Humphries in 1977 indicating "the belief that life without hearing is futile and miserable, that hearing loss is a tragedy and a scourge on mankind, and that deaf people should struggle to be as much like hearing people as possible."

Teachers,

Deaf Studies Lesson Idea

Why not use this re-cycled DCQW in a Deaf Studies unit with your students and show the excellent video by Bobbie Beth Scoggins as an example use of Academic ASL for persuasive purpose.

Language Arts Lesson Idea

Explore with students how words get into dictionaries and what it means to have a word included in a dictionary. Of course words are created by language users. In this case Dr. Tom Humphries first used the word "audism". Then other users of the language begin using the word. If the word catches on and becomes widespread, is used in newspapers, magazines, and in the through-the-air communication between members of the language group, and when

dictionary publishers decide that the word is used widely within the language community it makes its way into the dictionary.

You could also explore how signs are created and make their way into common usage within the signing community. This is a complex topic that I may tackle in an upcoming edition of DCQW. Basically however signs make their way into the formal vocabulary of ASL in the same way as words in any language do, through creation by language users and spreading within the language community. There isn't a "committee" somewhere that "invents or creates" the signs or words of any language. Users of a language determine what the words or signs of the language are, what they mean, and which words/signs are acceptable in the language.