



## **Experience Report: student exchange at the CSD – California School for the Deaf**

“I would like to study at the CSD for a whole year!” – “Can’t we stay longer?” – “We are going to see the Golden Gate Bridge tomorrow. Can’t we participate in their lessons a little bit more?”

We heard these or similar statements from our students during and after our two weeks exchange in October 2019 at the CSD, even though for some of our students it was their very first flight and they were pretty nervous about the whole trip.

*We* are a school for the hearing impaired in Bremen, Germany, called “Schule an der Marcusallee. Schule für Hören und Kommunikation”. Our students have different hearing disabilities, some are deaf, some are hard of hearing, and some have an Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) that affects the way their brains process auditory information. Even though it was only six students from our school who could participate in the exchange we had students throughout the whole spectrum of hearing (dis)abilities.

Living at cottages of the CSD, and participating in their lessons, showed us that the diversity we thought we had was minimal compared to that seen at the CSD. All students, teachers and supervisors accept and embrace ethnicity and cultural diversity to a much greater extent than what is seen in Europe.

Students and staff at the CSD were very welcoming and open-minded towards us, a German group of students and teachers who can speak German Sign Language (GSL) but not (except for one of us) American Sign Language (ASL), the language CSD uses for any communication. All people at the CSD, including students, teachers, supervisors of the cottages, and any other staff we encountered were very professional, communicative, patient, friendly and helpful towards us. Any problem or question we had during, before, and after our trip was discussed and solved within seconds.

Because of this our students didn’t have any fear of contact, and they could participate immediately in the lessons at the CSD, but also in all the other activities that were provided for the students: sport games (baseball, basketball, volleyball or cheerleading) in the evenings, pool or darting during their free time, or just chatting during breakfast, lunch or dinner breaks.

After having experienced the way of life and teaching at CSD, we believe that the CSD should be a role model for deaf schools around the world. They offer suitable learning opportunities for all ages, starting in very early childhood and early education, with children aged three up to eighteen. All students take responsibility in making CSD a community, this is exemplified by sporting events or the spirit week being organized and carried out by students.