

# Empower Deaf Students, Says NTID/RIT Leader

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Establishing high standards and expectations for deaf students, as well as empowering them to take an active role in planning their own futures are critical to student success, said the renowned deaf education leader Robert R. Davila, Ph.D., at a recent conference for educators.

Davila, CEO for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology, addressed the attendees at the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf in Fremont, Calif.

Davila stressed the importance of deaf students having a broad assortment of skills, which should be fostered over time in collaboration with school personnel, the family and community.

"We are in the dream business," Davila said. "We make our living helping students and their families realize their dreams."

Davila also spoke recently at the Postsecondary Education Programs Network conference in Kansas City, Mo. PEPNet supports colleges and other postsecondary educators who are serving deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Davila told the PEPNet audience that a person--regardless of his or her disability--should be able to leave school with independent living skills, employment readiness and a set of "learning how to learn" skills.

"For many people with disabilities," Davila said, "these goals remain the ultimate, but unrealized, dream. Recent research reveals that more disabled people are presently unemployed than before the Americans with Disabilities Act became law."

While deaf and hard-of-hearing people have made tremendous strides in upward mobility, he added, there are many areas of the country where some deaf children are floundering.

Widely known and highly respected for his dedication and accomplishments in education, Dr. Davila has spent a career that spans 50 years, working to open doors of opportunity for millions of people. The first deaf leader of NTID, Dr. Davila's efforts have resulted in new educational policies, significant scholarship funds, as well enhanced technology, research and support programs. He has traveled and presented to government officials and education leaders around the world, inspiring deaf and hearing people wherever he goes.

Dr. Davila earned his bachelor of arts degree in education at Gallaudet University, District of Columbia; a master of science degree in special education at Hunter College in New York; and a doctorate degree in educational technology from Syracuse University. He has also received honorary doctorates from RIT, Stonehill College in Massachusetts, Hunter College, and Gallaudet University. He was elected to the Hall of Fame for Persons with Disabilities in 1997 and to the Hunter College Alumni Hall of Fame in 1991.