



The Expanded Core Curriculum For Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing



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What a good curriculum should include in deaf/hard of hearing education?

Audiology

Students are empowered when they understand their hearing loss. "The key to helping a child understand his or her deafness is to expose the child, as early as possible, to information about it" (Grunblatt & Daar, 1994, p. 112). Information to be learned includes: the anatomy of the ear; etiology of hearing loss; diagnostic tests and what they mean; interpreting audiograms; how amplification devices and cochlear implants may help in various situations; and managing the environment to improve auditory and visual information.

Amplification devices and cochlear implants provide improved access to sound; however, they do not make hearing normal like eye glasses make sight normal.

Factors that limit access to auditory information include: poor environmental situations, poor room acoustics, more than one person talking at a time, inadequate lighting, etc.

Speech and Language Therapy

This is a crucial component of language development that curriculum must address. People who give this service are called "speech language therapists". Speech and language therapists play a role in the identification, screening, assessment, and rehabilitation of individuals with hearing loss and refer individuals suspected of having hearing loss to an audiologist for a complete audiology assessment. Professional roles and activities in speech and language therapy include clinical/educational services, prevention and advocacy, education, administration and research.

SLTs have the specialist skills and training to address communication effectiveness, disorders, differences, and delays that result from a variety of factors, including those that may be related to hearing loss. Speech and language therapists have the knowledge and skills to address the complex interplay of the areas of listening, speaking, signing, reading, writing, and thinking. Furthermore, they understand how skill expansion in one of these components enhances performance in another area, ultimately contributing to the overall development of literacy and learning.

In the context of an integrated curriculum and appropriate roles for speech language therapists working with deaf children include:

Enabling parents to make informed choices. Offering informed choice to families of deaf children means that they are better placed to make decisions which reflect their own culture, values and views and meet the needs of their child. Such an approach is based on access to comprehensive, unbiased and evidence-based information about the full range of possible options. Informed Choice is not seen as a one-off decision but as an ongoing process which should be capable of responding to changing circumstances. Families' decisions are to be respected and upheld by those working with them. ([NDCS Position Statement on Informed Choice](#), 2007).

Issues to be considered include:

- mode of communication
- therapy approach - natural oral, auditory verbal, bilingual, BSL, total communication
- hearing devices - digital aids, bone anchored hearing aids, cochlear implants, auditory brainstem implants
- type of educational placement - mainstream, hearing impairment unit, language unit, school for the deaf
- equipping parents with the skill they need to maintain and troubleshoot their child's hearing device(s) in order to ensure s/he is getting the best access to sound possible
- providing individualised assessment, diagnosis and intervention to the child in partnership with his/her family. This should reflect the choices the family have made regarding communication mode and habilitation approach
- providing family-centred therapy that focuses on the child's learning needs and potential, in addition to the diagnosis and the degree of deafness.

Main focus on:

- optimising access to speech information and environmental sounds through rigorous audiological management and excellent management of the listening environment. This includes troubleshooting the child's hearing device and evaluating functional hearing in each ear, aided and unaided; use of assistive listening devices and management of the acoustic environment
 - developing functional communication
 - accelerating language development in order to reduce and/or eventually close the gap between the child's chronological age and language age
 - improving speech intelligibility
 - reducing the negative impact of difficulties with communication caused by deafness
 - identifying any specific language or learning difficulties existing over and above the impact of deafness
- liaising closely with the child's Teacher of the Deaf and Audiologist if any issues arise around speech, language and communication in relation to the child's hearing responses and functional listening skills.



+Communication Skills Development

All children, including children who are deaf or hard of hearing, have the right to an effective and efficient communication system. These communication systems include non-verbal, oral or sign systems. A solid communication base is a precursor to language development. Therefore, curriculum must address proper communication skills development for deaf and hard of hearing students. The communication and language needs of students vary depending on factors such as: age of identification, age of amplification, etiology of hearing loss, presence or absence of additional disabilities, family dynamics, etc.

Luckner, Sebald, Cooney, & Muir (2006) found that students with a hearing loss progress through similar language stages as students without a hearing loss, but need more opportunities for direct instruction and time to practice the new skills. Instructional strategies such as rehearsal and intensified instruction have been found to support the students' development. In addition, teaching students how to gain knowledge about new vocabulary through contextual cues will provide them with the skills to learn independently (deVilliers & Pomerantz, 1992). Unfortunately, the field of deaf education does not have access to a large body of evidence-based research in which to support literacy development (Luckner, et.al., 2006). Therefore, it is important to monitor the progress of a student through all communication areas for strengths and areas of need. Progress monitoring and skill building is important to the natural use of effective communication (Robbins, Koch, Osberger, Zimmerman-Phillips, & Kishon-Rabin, 2004).

"Effective communication is an important ingredient of healthy psychological functioning" (Marschark, Lang & Albertini, 2002, p. 60). All students must have a rich language base and develop a strong communication mode that allows them to have reciprocal interactions with peers, family members and professionals. The ultimate goal is for the student with a hearing loss to become a successful and contributing member of society.



Family Education

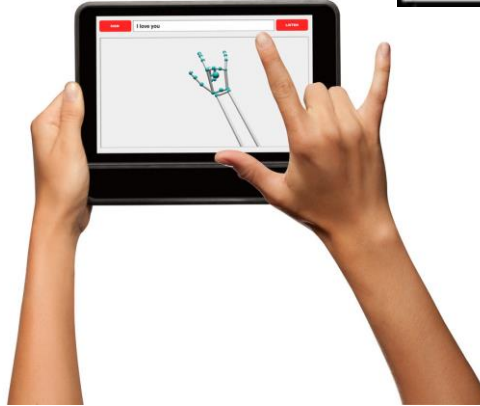


Families of children who are deaf and hard of hearing face many unique challenges: diagnosis and acceptance of hearing loss and a myriad of decisions concerning amplification, communication, language, and educational services. Because of their experience and the knowledge they have of their child, parents are a valued member of the educational team. Research indicates there is a strong correlation between parent involvement and academic success (Calderon, 2000).

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing and identified as an eligible child for special education services, parents are included and involved in the educational planning as a member of the IFSP or IEP team.

Families often find themselves in the role of advocate for their child early in the education process. Despite their knowledge and expertise, there may be times when a parent is in need of additional training, support and/or information. Part of the IEP team's role is to assist parents with this process. The Iowa Administrative Rules of Special Education (2010) notes that related services may include parent counseling and training. According to the National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students (2005), mutually respectful partnerships must be established between and among educators, families, and institutions in order for the child/student to be served effectively.

Functional Skills for Educational Success



Students who effectively use a planner to organize school assignments, learn how to take effective notes, and use reliable ICT sources to obtain information tend to be more successful than those who don't. "Teachers need to model how to structure and organize daily activities" (Anday-Porter, 2000, p. 24). Therefore, a curriculum must address these issues.

The functional skills are integrated into the general education curricula; however, students who are deaf or hard of hearing focus on the content information therefore missing out on these "how to" skills. Many general education students internalize study and organizational skills through incidental learning in the classroom. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing often need direct instruction in these skills in order to help them be successful. Some examples are supplementing the general curricula by pre-teaching vocabulary, clarifying concepts, accessing and organizing information, and expanding background knowledge (Luckner & Muir, 2001). "The crucial factor that promotes or hinders success in today's society is the ability to access, understand, and use different types of information. Our job as educators is to help students develop the appropriate attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will enable them to become proficient readers and writers" (Cooney, Good-Muir, Luckner, Sebald & Young, 2005-2006, p. 456). Students with hearing loss need to have the time and appropriate models to learn how to organize their assignments, schedules, contacts and events.

Self-Determination and Advocacy



As students mature and become more independent, they begin to advocate for their needs. Each student begins to engage in self-exploration about their identity as a person with a hearing loss. This self-exploration may entail direct instruction of skills to help students find out about themselves and who they want to become. Therefore, curriculum must include proper educational activities to boost self-determination and advocacy for students with deafness and hearing impairment.



The goal is to make students more self-aware of their unique hearing and communication needs and how to take care of those needs. Additionally, as students who are deaf or hard of hearing become active members of their community, they need to be able to advocate for their needs in the community appropriately and effectively (e.g., requesting an interpreter for medical appointments). They need to know about Deaf Culture as well as laws that influence their rights. Therefore, in the curriculum, these issues must be taught.



Also, self-determination and advocacy skills help prepare the youth for the transition to the workforce. "Providing feedback after a task can begin to link cause and effect, and model the ability to evaluate one's own work" (Hands & Voices, 2004, p. 1). Thus, in the school and home settings, it is important to facilitate suggestions for improvement on their actions so that the student can learn consequential effects. Additionally, unlike the IEP where the team members, including the participating student, identify the accommodations and modifications needed for the student's school success, when transitioning out to the workforce or postsecondary setting, the student becomes responsible for advocating for his or her own needs (Bowe, 2003).



INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)

"Technology changes daily. As such, so does the manner in which technology can enhance the lives of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing" (Luckner, J., 2002, p. 5). According to the Iowa Administrative Rules for Special Education (2010) an "assistive technology device" means "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such device." In order to fully understand how to use technology, the student needs to be taught about the various types, how to properly use, maintain and troubleshoot, and where to obtain the technology. These skills must be learned and mastered to maximize their use of technology and to gain access to all areas of their life. In order for students to master these skills, there needs to be instruction and service in the area of technology.

The type of technology an individual may need depends on their degree of hearing loss, individual needs, and the setting. Many devices are covered under the umbrella of technology, including computers, text messaging/instant messaging, alerting devices (vibrating alarm clock, doorbell lights, etc.), closed captioning, video relay services, etc. Technology is always changing and improving. It is important to maintain a partnership with different agencies/ resources that are able to provide the most up-to-date information on the latest technology available.



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The EU Project Website: http://www.voiceofvoiceless.net/index_ing.html