Language Rich Environments for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Least Restrictive Environment for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing is one that is a Language Rich Environment. *Incidental learning is the main way that we develop vocabulary and learn about language. Of the thousands of words we know, very few have been directly taught to us. As much as 90% of what a person with typical hearing learns is from incidental learning. Only 10% is learned from direct instruction. A significant way to learn incidentally is to learn by overhearing. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing have fewer opportunities to learn by overhearing. If spoken or signed language is not directed specifically to a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, [they] may not get the message. This means that [they] can miss out on an opportunity to learn.* Communication Considerations, Hands & Voices, Alberta Chapter

A LANGUAGE RICH ENVIRONMENT:

★ Ensures full development of language for the child

★ Enhances the child's cognitive, social and emotional development

★ Is based on the language of the child

★ Offers direct language and communication access with adults, including teachers and other professionals

★ Has a sufficient number of age-appropriate and level-appropriate peers who share the child's language and communication preferences

★ Takes into consideration the child's hearing level and access

★ Is staffed by certified and qualified personnel who are trained to work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing

★ Provides access to the general education curriculum with modifications in pedagogy to account for the child's unique language, learning and communication needs

★ Provides full access to all curricular and extracurricular offerings customarily found in educational settings

★ Has an adequate number of role models who are deaf or hard of hearing, including adults

★ Provides full access to support services

★ Has the support of informed parents

★ Is equipped with appropriate communication and learning technologies (National Association of the Deaf, National Association of State Directors of Special Education)

Indiana Department of Health

Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education

LANGUAGE-FOCUSED EDUCATIONAL PLANNING DISCUSSION TOPICS

★ How do the child's hearing levels impact language access/development?

★ What support has the child received to date?

  ★ How has it proven to be effective?

  ★ What supports need to be continued/dismissed?

  ★ What supports need to be increased/decreased?

★ Has the [Considerations of Special Factors](#) been completed/reviewed and documented as appropriate in any proposed Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the child?

★ What do functional listening/visual evaluation(s) and/or speech perception assessments indicate about the child's access to various educational environments?

★ Is the student's access to language and communication effective, considering hearing levels, age of identification, present language levels and preferred communication mode(s)?

★ What are the child's current skills regarding:

  ★ Asking/responding to questions?   ★ Reading comprehension?

  ★ Classroom/home routines?   ★ Self-advocacy?

  ★ Figurative language?   ★ Social interactions?

  ★ Following directions?   ★ Vocabulary?

  ★ Listening comprehension?   ★ Writing?

★ How does the child's language/communication impact the child's social, emotional, attention and executive function development?

★ What [accommodations](#) help the child access their educational environment?

★ How does the child's language impact the ability to process, organize and retrieve information and problem-solve?

★ How will the child access large and small-group instruction in educational environments with or without background noise?

★ How will the child access social opportunities in general education, special education, special area classes, outdoor, cafeteria and non-academic environments?

★ What is the level of training and expertise in working with children who are deaf and hard of hearing for all the professionals providing service to the child? (Consider familiarity with various hearing devices, visual communication, etc.)

  ★ What additional training is needed?