

Essential Principles for Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing¹

All Together Now NH



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PRINCIPLE 1: Considering the Unique Needs of Each Student

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are diverse, encompassing a wide range of abilities, learning styles and often co-occurring disabilities. Schools are required to make available a full continuum of services individualized to the needs of each student for full engagement in all the school's programs, including educational and extracurricular activities.

This area considers how the school recognizes that reduced hearing of any level can result in language, learning, social, emotional and/or communication access barriers and understanding how these factors interact with one another. The recognition of each child's unique situation is paramount to appropriate assessment and services.

Indicators:

1. Is the impact on language, learning, social, emotional and/or communication access of each student's hearing/listening status considered?
2. Are the cultural values and goals of the student and his/her family represented and integrated in the services and programs that are determined?
3. Are educational services available to students who are deaf or hard of hearing-
 - a. to support individual language and communication modes?
 - b. to address the unique ways that students learn?

PRINCIPLE 2: Expectations, Educational Programming, and Future Employment

When children who are deaf or hard of hearing are provided access to appropriate language, learning and academic opportunities that are designed to enhance their abilities, they can -- and do -- attain high levels of achievement that also increase later employment opportunities.

This section examines how programs and staff facilitate student learning. Expectations for student achievement, how programming is determined and delivered and how progress is monitored are key components.

Indicators:

1. Are students who are deaf or hard of hearing actively engaged in their own transition planning?

¹ Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Educational Service Guidelines, Third Edition, (2018). National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).

2. Is instruction determined by the individual student's profiles, the IEP, and modified based on the student's progress, and instruction subsequently modified to meet the student's needs?
3. Is there an expectation for data-driven instruction and evidenced-based practices?
4. Do opportunities exist within the school district for specialized instruction in areas unique to deafness and reduced hearing (e.g. literacy and academic content, communication and language development, auditory and listening skill development, use of technology, self-determination and self-advocacy, social skills, deaf studies, transition)?
5. Are supports in place for underserved populations, e. .g., students with additional disabilities or challenges, from non-English speaking homes, from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, from rural areas) or for children who are struggling learners?
6. Are universal design for learning strategies employed that result in accessible assessment, instruction and activities for all students regardless of their communication mode or learning style?
7. Whether provided through the local school district or another agency, are providers of early intervention services for children and their families 0-3 knowledgeable in early childhood deaf education, including assessment of language and communication development and strategies for developing skills in these areas?
8. Are developmental milestones, including language, assessed at regular intervals in the early intervention program?
9. Are the quantity and quality of the assessments at transition from Part C to Part B thorough enough to identify gaps in language, listening, communication and learning skills?
10. Do transition services from Part C to Part B inform and enable families to support their children?
11. Are preschool services structured to provide the specialized support necessary?
12. Does your school district provide supports for pre-school children who were eligible for early intervention services but are transitioning out of that program and are not eligible for Part B services, e.g., providing supports under the ADA or 504?
13. Are teachers and specialized instructional support personnel provided professional development opportunities and ongoing mentoring regarding the variety of needs of and appropriate practices for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, including those students with co-occurring disabilities?
14. Are teachers and specialized instructional support personnel provided support for implementation of curricular and instructional practices?
15. Are students who are deaf or hard of hearing, who are not eligible for special education, supported in their general education classrooms through an appropriate 504 Plan?
16. Are all students supported by the "effective communication" provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act?
17. Are post-high school transition supports and services available that are specialized for students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

PRINCIPLE 3: Families as Critical Partners

High levels of family involvement contribute to positive results for children. Parents have the right to be informed and engaged participants in their child's educational program as well as being respected for their preferences and choices. Transition from early intervention to school age services, elementary to

middle school and from high school to post-secondary training and education are particularly vulnerable times.

This area addresses practices that include parents in all levels of planning and decision-making, including providing accessibility for parents who require accommodations. Opportunities for parents to meet and share experiences, as well as the availability of specific parent counseling and training services through the IEP, are important components of educational programming for students.

Indicators:

1. Are specific strategies used to include parents in all levels of planning and decision making for their children?
2. Are parents' preferences and choices valued throughout educational planning?
3. Are specialized activities and programs available for parents e.g., meeting other parents, social events for families, transition support?
4. Are parent counseling and training services routinely provided through the IEP to assist parents to support their child's language development, literacy development, communication ability, social-emotional development, academic progress, and post-secondary transition skills?
5. Are parents and families involved in discussions about a student's eligibility for obtaining a regular diploma, or lack thereof, at IEP meetings before and during high school?
6. Are specific strategies used to include parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing in general school activities?

PRINCIPLE 4: Language and Communication Access

Early language development is critical to cognition, literacy and academic achievement. Language competence, whether spoken and/or signed, is the foundation upon which social-communication and social-cognitive skills are developed. While development begins at birth, it continues through preschool, elementary school and beyond as academic and social language skills evolve. Even if language ability is on target at age three when children typically transition into preschool, attention must be maintained through these critical and vulnerable years so that consistent, full access to language is provided and gaps are immediately identified.

This area addresses how individual language and communication needs are considered and accommodated in the student's learning environment, including the application of the "special factors" or the Communication Plan. Universal design, classroom acoustics, instructional technologies and other access requirements are included in the considerations.

Indicators:

1. Does your school collaborate with the local or state early intervention program to ensure the early intervention program is meeting the language and communication needs of the children and their families?
2. Is the assessment of language at the time of each transition (e.g., from early intervention to preschool, kindergarten, middle school, high school, post-secondary education and employment, and all other times, comprehensive to identify all gaps?

3. Regarding the language and communication needs addressed in the IEP: according to the requirement of IDEA, are the child's language and communication needs considered?
4. Regarding the language and communication needs addressed in the IEP: according to the requirements of IDEA, are opportunities for direct communication with the child's peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode considered?
5. Regarding the language and communication needs addressed in the IEP: according to the requirements of IDEA, are the child's academic level and full range of needs considered?
6. Regarding the language and communication needs addressed in the IEP: according to the requirement of IDEA, are opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode considered and implemented?
7. Regarding the language and communication needs addressed in the IEP: according to the requirement of IDEA, are the student's needs for assistive technology devices and services considered and provided, where appropriate?
8. Are communication opportunities available in each student's language and communication mode?
9. Are communication opportunities flexible based upon the access needs of each classroom or activity?
10. Is there a continuum of placement opportunities available for students whose language and/or communication mode(s) cannot be met within available school services?
11. Are specific strategies used to ensure full communication access in the classroom? Outside the classroom (at school)? In extracurricular activities?
12. Are staff familiar with the principles of universal design for learning and specific strategies that support students who are deaf or hard of hearing?
13. Do classrooms meet the ANSI S12 acoustical recommendations for noise and reverberation levels in classrooms?
14. Do schools comply with the "effective communication" provisions of the American's with Disabilities Act?
15. Does the IEP transition team include members who have specialized knowledge of the unique communication and language challenges of deaf and hard of hearing students encounter in postsecondary education, employment, and independent living settings? Can these IEP members contribute ideas, strategies and resources to help teach students to successfully navigate these communication and language challenges?

PRINCIPLE 5: Individualized Specially Designed Instruction and Evidenced-Based Practices

Instruction and accommodations should be individually designed to help students use their strengths to become confident and independent. Assistive technologies provide critical access that can mitigate the effects of deafness or reduced hearing. Although students who are deaf or hard of hearing have diverse needs, there is a growing body of specific evidenced-based practices as well as practices utilized in general education and special education that can be modified for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Use of evidenced-based practices increases accountability for instruction and learning.

This area addresses how staff determine its approaches to instruction, use of curriculum and assistive technologies, and how progress is monitored to ensure the effectiveness of instruction. Support for

general education teachers and specialized instructional support personnel to understand the language, communication and literacy needs of their students is also important to ensure the IEP goals and accommodations are implemented as intended.

Indicators:

1. Are decisions about programs and strategies that are used with students guided by recent research and evidence-based practices?
2. Is training provided to general education teachers, specialized instructional support personnel and others to understand the language, communication and literacy needs of their students?
3. Are classroom technologies used to enhance instruction?
4. Does the use of assistive technologies include a functional evaluation as to whether the technologies are appropriate, effective and beneficial to the student, both in the classroom and in other environments?
5. Do parents and students have a voice and choice in the assistive technologies and accommodations that are recommended?
6. Is there a monitoring plan to ensure that hearing aids, cochlear implants and other hearing assistance technologies used by students are working consistently as required by IDEA?
7. Is there an annual budget to purchase hearing and other assistive technologies so that they can be replaced as technology advancements are made?
8. Is training provided to the student, staff and parents on the use of the technologies and accommodations?
9. Are general educators and other staff trained and supported so that technologies and accommodations are implemented as intended?
10. Are instructional supports and accommodations available and provided to students on 504 Plans?
11. Is there a person on the educational team responsible for monitoring 504 plans? If so, do other school personnel know who this person(s) is?

PRINCIPLE 6: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The LRE is driven by a student’s language, communication, academic and social needs. Full inclusion may not be the LRE for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. An environment is restrictive unless it provides full, direct and clear access to meaningful language, communication, instruction and social opportunities. Decision makers must be knowledgeable about the full continuum of available options, including special schools for the deaf on a full or part-time basis.

This area considers appropriate components of an LRE for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Indicators:

1. Are decision makers aware of the unique language, communication, academic and social needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing?
2. Are decision makers aware of all educational placements in the state that are available to students who are deaf or hard of hearing? If an appropriate placement is not available in the state, are decision makers aware of possible out-of-state placements?

3. Are relevant school staff knowledgeable about strategies for addressing the requirements of the IEP, including full access to instruction? (see #4 above, Language & Communication Access)?
4. Does the recommended placement provide full, direct and clear access to meaningful language, communication, instruction and social opportunities?
5. Do funding mechanisms support placements in the appropriate settings?
6. If a student is placed in a specialized setting, is transportation provided on an equitable basis?

PRINCIPLE 7: Educational Progress, Accountability and Oversight

Language, literacy, academic progress and social emotional wellness should be monitored frequently and reported according to the same requirements for all students. For most students who are deaf or hard of hearing, goals and services should minimally result in one year's growth in one year based on relevant assessment and progress monitoring tools.

This area considers the knowledge of the responsible administrator(s) regarding deaf education issues, the knowledge of staff in current practices and how they work together to support each other and ensure appropriate services within the program, including student assessment and progress monitoring, and program development and evaluation. Appropriate accountability and oversight measures are essential to ensuring that the findings of a self-assessment are analyzed and discussed with the goal focused on high quality educational opportunities for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Indicators:

1. Does the program/school administrator(s) have knowledge of best practices in deaf education, educational interpreting, educational audiology and other practices specific to students who are deaf or hard of hearing?
2. Does the program have a mechanism in place to evaluate providers of services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing such as sign language interpreters?
3. Is the administrator(s) committed to high quality programs and services to meet the unique needs of its students?
4. Are efforts in place to maximize the use of funds to support services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing?
5. Is the district/school aware of the availability of Medicaid funds to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing? If so, are the funds being accessed and used to support these students?
6. Are programs and services routinely evaluated? Is there an on-going process and are there resources for reviewing student outcomes, developing, recommending, implementing and monitoring individual student and district-wide service improvements?
7. Is statewide assessment data disaggregated by disability to track and analyze performance of students to inform program and service improvements?
8. Do teachers and administrators have high expectations for all students?
9. When students are not achieving progress on their benchmarks, how is the situation evaluated? Are IEP modifications made to the services, placement or other facets of the program?
10. Is the IEP developed based on individual student needs rather than available services?

11. Is common planning time available for school district or agency-wide programming, including placements and disciplines to establish common knowledge, maintain communication and ensure continuity of services?
12. Is the deaf education team provided opportunities to meet periodically to discuss roles and responsibilities, share ideas and current practices and to attend training specifically related to their professional capacity?
13. Does the supervision process include individuals with expertise in the same areas as the service providers being supervised and evaluated?

PRINCIPLE 8: Access to Peers and Adults who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Children and youth need ongoing access to students and adults like them. If students use ASL, signs or cued speech, fluent adult and student signers with whom they can communicate effectively are especially critical. Adult role models are beneficial to self-awareness, social communication and overall social and emotional wellness as well as learning about access and other personal technologies.

This area considers program considerations to promote peer and adult interactions.

Indicators:

1. Are opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode, as required by IDEA's Special Factors requirements, documented in the IEP?
2. Are peer social opportunities with similar age and grade-level students who are deaf or hard of hearing provided and supported? Consider:
 - a. How often?
 - b. With whom (with the school district, with other schools, regional)?
 - c. Who organizes?
 - d. What types of activities?
3. Is access to professional personnel provided in the child's language and communication mode provided?
4. Are adults who are deaf or hard of hearing utilized as mentors? If so, consider:
 - How often?
 - What type of training do they receive?
 - Who organizes?
 - What types of activities?

PRINCIPLE 9: Qualified Providers

Early intervention providers, teachers of the deaf and specialized instructional support personnel are the primary providers supporting students throughout their developmental and educational programs. These providers must meet professional standards that include minimal qualifications and ongoing performance evaluations and be provided relevant professional development opportunities.

This area considers staffing and staff shortages as well as specific efforts to recruit and retain them.

Indicators:

1. Are all staff (e.g., early intervention providers, teachers of deaf/hard of hearing students, educational audiologists, educational interpreters, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists) associated with service delivery to students who are deaf or hard of hearing appropriately licensed/certified and trained regarding the unique needs of this population?
2. Is relevant professional development available to all staff on a regular basis?
3. Are all providers appropriately evaluated by a professional from their field?
4. Are efforts being made to recruit and retain early intervention providers, teachers of deaf/hard of hearing students and specialized instructional support personnel? Are there any special provisions or incentives for these providers?
5. Are additional supports provided to staff who serve students in rural areas to address their travel, working in isolation and other conditions unique to rural settings?

Principle 10: State Leadership and Collaboration

Strong state and local leadership with effective collaboration among key stakeholders (parents, deaf and hard of hearing consumers, state and local educators, university teacher preparation programs and advocacy organizations) is key to successful systems of delivery of programs and services. To provide a perspective on how students who are deaf or hard of hearing are performing from year to year, the state department should report annual student assessment results for language and literacy.

This area considers components of various collaboration efforts.

Indicators:

1. Do the various state agencies, programs and schools for the deaf collaborate to provide a seamless continuum of placements, services and supports for children and their families through age 21?
2. Is there a core group of strong deaf education leaders and parents in the state to promote high quality educational services?
3. Does this group of leaders consider the state's unique context, student assessment performance and other key indicators when addressing issues and providing guidance to the state, local school districts, teachers, professionals and families?
4. Does the school district maintain connections with the state department of education, schools for the deaf, and entities that provide professional development in deaf education and associated areas?
5. Does the school district collaborate with advocacy and other family support organizations for information that can lead to successful administrative, procedural and legislative changes to improve outcomes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing?