



# The Road to Kindergarten Readiness

## UNDERSTANDING HOW TO DO IT

LANGUAGE POLICY FOR DEAF CHILDREN AGES 0-5

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Language Policy for Deaf Children Ages 0-5



California Association of the Deaf

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Report available at:

<https://www.cad1906.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CAD-Language-Policy-for-Deaf-Children-Ages-0-5.pdf>

# The Problem?

- ▶ Concerned about underachievement of K-12 DHH students
- ▶ In 2007:
  - ▶ Language Arts: only 8% Deaf and 15% HH students scored Proficient or Advanced.
  - ▶ Math: 10 percent deaf students and 18 percent HH students score proficient or advanced.
- ▶ In 2008: scores remained the same
- ▶ Now 2017: still no scores

# The Problem?

## Why?

- ▶ Language Deprivation Syndrome
  - ▶ “single greatest risk to Deaf Babies and children” (Gulati, 2003)
  - ▶ “medical and educational practices worsen [syndrome] rather than ameliorating” (Gulati, 2016)
- ▶ State departments of education
  - ▶ Not tracking K-12 students’ academic outcomes
  - ▶ Scores lumped with Special Education

# The Problem?

## Why?

- ▶ Deaf babies not getting ASL services after newborn diagnosis
- ▶ Few DHH students use ASL in classrooms
- ▶ Most DHH students are mainstreamed using interpreters or amplification

# Executive Summary:

- ▶ Hearing Technology = Language Acquisition? Not
  - ▶ Not enough for full language access for most DHH children
  - ▶ Too few children successful with hearing technology
- ▶ Interventional services: focus on weakest sense –hearing
  - ▶ Services focused on speech development instead of language development
  - ▶ Services not focused on Deaf babies' strength: visuality
- ▶ Parents not informed of difference between speech & language.
- ▶ When parents realize child is not speaking, it's too late.

# Executive Summary: (continued)

- ▶ Learning ASL -> English literacy
  - ▶ Large body of research showing effective bilingual strategy
  - ▶ So, why deprive DHH babies of ASL?
  - ▶ Reason for our CAD Language Policy report

# 1964 - 2016: four major policy reports

## 55 Years Later...Still Failing... When will we change our focus?

- ▶ 1964 Babbidge Report
- ▶ 1988 Commission on Education of the Deaf (COED) Report
- ▶ 1989 California Department of Education (CDE) Superintendent's Task Force Report: Restructuring Deaf Education:
- ▶ 2016 California Legislative Affairs Office Report: Improving Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in California:

# 55 Years Later...1964 Babbidge Report

- ▶ “The American people have no reason to be satisfied with their limited success in educating deaf children and preparing them for full participation in our society... “
- ▶ “Without such early attention, the deaf child's difficulties in acquiring language, the indispensable tool of learning, are greatly increased.”

# 55 Years Later...1988 COED

- ▶ “The present status of education for persons who are deaf in the United States, is unsatisfactory. Unacceptably so.”
- ▶ “Do we have at hand the knowledge it would take to improve the situation significantly, even dramatically? The answer is a resounding Yes.”
- ▶ “The inclination in education of persons who are deaf has been one of reaction rather than action, of remediation, not prevention...”
- ▶ “But in all honesty, we must point out that the actual implementation of these initiatives has been inadequate and sometimes misguided, and that progress has at best been spotty and sporadic.”

# 52 Years Later...1989 CDE Task Force

- ▶ “Communication and educational growth depend on a language-rich environment, one with ongoing, direct, and age-appropriate language opportunities.
- ▶ “We take it for granted that hearing children will be in such an environment.”
- ▶ “Too often, the deaf or hard-of-hearing child sits alone in a classroom, unable to communicate effectively with peers and teachers...”
- ▶ “The unique and historic difficulties faced by deaf and hard-of-hearing children have been analyzed in detail, and recommendations have been made by national and state blue ribbon committees, task forces, commissions, and study groups. Unfortunately, little has changed to improve the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students over decades.”

# 52 Years Later...2016 LAO Report

- ▶ “Despite California’s long experience with and relatively large expenditures on DHH students, these students continue to lag far behind their hearing peers on statewide assessments of reading and math...”
- ▶ These [language] delays tend to be more pronounced in DHH children born to hearing parents, as hearing parents tend to be less familiar with modes of communications (*sic*) that help DHH children develop in their early years.

# What we know:

## Disabling our DHH children through language deprivation

“The basic deprivation of deafness  
is not the deprivation of sound;  
it is the deprivation of language.”

–Kathryn P. Meadow, 1980,  
Deafness and Child Development (p.17).

# What we know:

## Disabling our DHH children through language deprivation

- ▶ Services focused on auditory/oral skills excluding ASL.
- ▶ Hiring early interventionists with no ASL skill or background in Deaf culture

# What we know:

## Disabling our DHH children through language deprivation

- ▶ Early childhood = pivotal period for language acquisition
- ▶ As result of language deprivation syndrome, Deaf children at Kindergarten without language
- ▶ Full access to language = human right
- ▶ ASL recognized as one of world's languages.

# What we know:

## Disabling our DHH children through language deprivation

- ▶ Deaf babies & toddlers = typical babies that can learn easily IF have language development.
- ▶ The system of interventional systems disables them.
- ▶ Impacting their cognitive, social, and emotional skills.
- ▶ Also impacting opportunities for higher education, employment and pursuit of happiness.

# The Current System

## From birth to early intervention

- ▶ Many school districts not equipped to deal with Deaf babies & toddlers and their families. They lack expertise in Deaf education and language acquisition.
- ▶ Quality of educational services varying wildly from one district to another.
- ▶ Many teachers are credentialed for Deaf education ages 0-22
- ▶ BUT lack knowledge or training in 0-5 language acquisition focused on bilingual capabilities.
- ▶ No or poor language skills during critical period ages 0-5 = greater potential for K-12 academic failures

# The Current System

## From birth to early intervention

- ▶ When Deaf child either is delayed or failed speech development, he/she is
  - ▶ Labeled behavior problem
  - ▶ Labeled to have cognitive or additional disabilities
  - ▶ Blame on parents for being compliant.
- ▶ Typically put in Total Communication or SEE programs after failing oral program.
- ▶ No data on Deaf children ages 0-5
- ▶ Till SB210 that will have mandatory language assessments and data required to be reported.

# American Sign Language (ASL)

- ▶ ASL benefits ALL children regardless of hearing levels.
- ▶ ASL children perform equally or better than hearing children
- ▶ Promoted as a communication tool for hearing babies!
- ▶ Neuroimaging tests show brains do not discriminate “language” in any modality.
- ▶ Children whose parents sign ASL most likely to achieve English skills
- ▶ Proficiency in ASL = predictor of English reading comprehension

# American Sign Language (ASL)

- ▶ Need more bilingual educational programs and services for parents.
- ▶ Child's need should be prioritized.
- ▶ Professionals need to communicate to parents importance of language acquisition.
- ▶ Their brains' optimal time is between ages 0-3.
- ▶ Even cochlear implant proponents acknowledge Cis do not ensure language acquisition.
- ▶ We are gambling with Deaf children's lives.

# Barriers to Kindergarten-Readiness

- ▶ Medicalization (Maudlin, 2016)
  - ▶ Services are medicalized and provided through medical professionals
  - ▶ Working towards correcting their hearing and speech deficiency
  - ▶ Impacted professionals working with families and their Deaf children
  - ▶ Create ignorance of difference between language and speech
  - ▶ Need a more holistic approach centered on Deaf child's linguistic needs.
- ▶ Lack of Deaf Adults, Community, and Professional Involvement
- ▶ Ableism
- ▶ Audism

# Barriers to Kindergarten-Readiness

- ▶ Lack of Deaf Adults, Community, and Professional Involvement
- ▶ Ableism (Hehir, 2002; 2007)
  - ▶ Devaluation of disability; create sense that it is better to be able-bodied using their social norms for normalcy.
- ▶ Audism (Humphries, 1977)
  - ▶ A belief system that being hearing is superior or having some hearing is superior.

# Recommendation

- ▶ Include ASL services as provision of interventional services for families and their children
- ▶ Employ professionally qualified Deaf specialists to provide ASL services as part of interventional services.
- ▶ Establish a statewide Deaf Mentor Program
- ▶ Restructure California Departments of Education and Health Care Services
- ▶ Regionalization of educational programs

THANK YOU...

Any Questions?

Town Hall Presentations Available

If interested, please contact:

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