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Hands & Voices of Oregon

Hands & Voices OR March 2011

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www.handsandvoicesor.org
www.ndepnow.org

"Deafness is a sensory difference. It only becomes a disability when the educational system fails the child and family."

--Christine Yoshinaga-Itano, Ph.D.

Oregon School for the Deaf's Annual Middle School Conference is being held April 19 - 22nd at Oregon School for the Deaf! It's a free conference for students 11 - 15 years of age. They stay in the dormitories over night, partake in workshops to develop leadership skills and get to meet other deaf or hard of hearing students their age from all over Oregon. Signers, non-signers - all are welcome! For more information go to www.osd.k12.or.us

Dear Hands & Voices Family,

Happy Spring!! It's a great time of year to breathe in the change in air, look for new blooming flowers daily and rejoice in the ability to play outside!

It's also the time of year for conferences and training's. Our annual Guide By Your Side training is next weekend. As part of this years training, the Guides will receive more in-depth training on working with their families and they will also receive more in-depth advocacy and IFSP/IEP training. Why is this important to you? As a parent your parental role also becomes a role as ambassador for your child when you learn of their hearing loss. Initially you may be advocating for good hearing tests, hearing aids, cochlear implants, communication options.... Then as your child enters school there are a whole host of things to advocate for. The skills your Parent Guide learns are passed on to the families we work with so their child will succeed in school and life. For our professionals a trained Parent Guide is important because you know that the information imparted to the families you work with are based on the laws, facts, and case studies. In paraphrasing several educators and professionals across the state, an educated and supported H&V family is important and invaluable to you; your jobs are easier and parents can ask for things on an IEP that you are not always able to request for them.

Federally and within the state of Oregon our kids are in jeopardy of losing many needed services. Unfortunately we won't know anything for awhile but know that H&V is staying current and is involved locally and nationally with committees and other organizations to ensure the future of all of our kiddos!

I hope to see you all at the Run/Walk on May 14th. This

is a fundraiser you can all participate in that will make a huge difference for you and hundreds of deaf/hard of hearing children around the state. It'll be a fun way to spend some time with your family and friends!

Remember, clocks move forward next weekend! Enjoy this change in season with your kiddos!

Regards,
Helen Leiser
Executive Director

Run for Hands & Voices May 14, 2011

Join us for our first annual Run for H&V! We are going to run in Champoeg State Park and enjoy an out and back course along the beautiful bike trails. Check www.reasonatorun for more information and to register today!

Use this event as a goal to start your summer or fill in your training for a summer marathon. If you are starting out running or walking as part of a more active lifestyle or using the baby jogger to hit the trails or roads, come and join us. Better yet, if you just want to support H&V come out and have some fun! All proceeds supports H&V's efforts to support deaf/hard of hearing children around the state and their families. The run/walk is open to anyone and everyone! Bring your friends!

Interested in being a sponsor? Individuals and businesses are welcome to sponsor. Contact Helen at helen@handsandvoicesor.org for more information.

Champoeg Park

8:30am start

1 mile family run, 5K, 10k

FAPE vs. BEST: Oops! Someone used the word "BEST"

By Janet DesGeorges

For parents who are trained to be effective advocates for their children in the educational system, one of the first rules they learn is to omit the word 'best' from their vocabulary when seeking to implement a service or support in their child's IEP. Why? The Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that special education

provide a Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE). If you mention the word 'best' in your child's IEP meeting (i.e. "We only want what's best for Janie") you will probably hear the statement, "Gee, we wish we could provide that service, but we can't provide 'Cadillac Services'. We are only obligated to provide an appropriate amount of services". Case law has backed this up as well, with courts drawing a sometimes subjective line between what is 'appropriate' and what would be considered 'over the top'. (Read Board of Education vs. Rowley) As so aptly discussed on www.wrightslaw.com in an article entitled, "Four Lessons About FAPE" it reminds parents, 1) Your child is NOT entitled to the BEST special education. 2) Parent testimony carries little weight in the eyes of judges. 3) School staff will testify that their program is appropriate 99.9% of the time. 4) Parents must have strong knowledgeable experts in special education litigation - and experts must never use the terms "best" or "maximizing potential." This is important for parents and advocates to understand.

And so, as parents, we have been taught to bury the standard of wanting what's best for our kids. We are sunk into conversations at our child's IEP annual meeting about 'appropriate' services, which in effect, are usually sub-standard, bare-boned, minimal types of supports for our children that often don't meet their most basic communication needs. The result of these conversations is evident when we look at the historic academic outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children. (Do we need to say it again? Our children our graduating at a 3 rd grade reading level)

Parents do need to be objective and realistic about what they can advocate for on behalf of their child's educational services. There is a long history of reasons why it has been difficult for deaf education services to provide an appropriate, communication driven system: Shortage of qualified staff in deafness, lack of funding, no universal standards of practice, lack of access to a critical mass of deaf/hh students in a geographical region, just to name a few. Over the years, many organizations and agencies have compiled their lists of the complex issues that face education of students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Because of the complexity of the issues, the answers will require the expertise and collaboration of many stakeholders. Meanwhile, does that mean that you shouldn't ask for a video to be closed-captioned for your child? Let's get real!

Don't be afraid to envision the best

Write it down.. Think about it.. Do some research. Talk to other parents. Talk to deaf/hh adults (**outside** the IEP Team meeting). What would be the perfect environment, supports, and services for your child? We so often start at the bottom of the barrel in terms of support, that we don't even think about what would really meet our child's needs. Instead of thinking 'bottom up', create the perfect vision of an excellent education for your child who is deaf/hh. Closed captioning, acoustical adaptations, up-to-date technology, instruction from a teacher in your child's primary mode of communication, authentic peer relationships, a certified, qualified sign language interpreter. whatever it is. Think of your child's education as if it were completely communication driven. Remember that the language of IDEA supports the consideration by IEP teams of the communication needs of deaf/hh students. (see www.handsandvoices.org for more information on this subject)

Begin to prioritize in order to negotiate

Now that you have your list and ideas, begin to prioritize in terms of what are the most important aspects of communication access for your child. Be prepared to discuss your child's needs at the IEP meeting by having a well thought out, documented, research based plan of supports and services that you feel your child needs in order to get an effective, appropriate education. If you have a list of 20 ideas about what your child needs and prioritize them, you are more likely to be able to advocate for the 'most needed' items. What are the bottom four items on your list that you would be willing to 'negotiate away' in order to get the top four items on the list? Maybe you don't have to 'throw away' the lowest priorities, but you might hold off on those things until the next year's IEP review.

Now they've done it.. The Feds have used the word, 'best'

Sue Heath, the research editor for www.wrightslaw.com , noted in an article, "NCLB News: Something Fairly Amazing Happened on December 9" the use of the word 'best' in the Federal Register notice for the new regulations for the No Child Left Behind Act. ".Several critical elements in title I as amended by the NCLB Act ensure that schools are held accountable for educational results, so the **best education possible** is provided to each and every student. (emphasis added) Three critical elements - academic content standards, academic achievement standards, and assessments aligned to those standards - provide the foundation for an accountability system ensuring that students with disabilities reach high standards. State assessments are the mechanism for determining whether schools have been successful in teaching students the knowledge and skills defined by the content standards. States are required to held all students to the same standards except that these regulations permit States to measure the achievement of the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities based on alternate achievement standards." While the IDEA reauthorization continues over the next several months, as well as the ongoing implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act - several questions remain unanswered. Will current law (NCLB) and reauthorization efforts (IDEA reauthorization) bring about real and lasting changes for our population of kids? Will laws ever be able to produce the standard for excellence in education that parents and committed educators can and should maintain? The answers remain to be seen.

Is the tide turning? Deaf Education Reform is happening

In some states, deaf education reform has been talked and written about. In other states, like Colorado, deaf education reform is beginning to be implemented in exciting ways. Professionals and Parents from all over the country are having discussions beyond the 'listing' of concerns and possible solutions, to the beginnings of implementation that could change the future of deaf education. For cynics who feel like they've 'heard it all before' - without seeing any fruits of real change, it is time to consider a new element that may not have existed previously..

The Educated Parent

While the Deaf Education Reform movement is seeking to make systemic changes in the way education is being delivered to deaf and hard of hearing students, parents from all over the country are beginning to stand up for the communication rights of their children in IEP after IEP. A grassroots movement of families has been spurred on by changes in the way we receive information and make choices (more information via internet etc.; ability to make communication decisions based on the needs of the child vs. philosophical methodology decisions; more information from a variety of sources). Early Identification of hearing loss is beginning to erode the old 'delay is inevitable' paradigm. Parents are beginning to question and demand more than the 'bottom of the barrel' for their children. Many professionals throughout the country are standing up to the status quo, and seeking to look at alternative solutions to age old problems.

For many, the hope of a brighter future is emerging for our children who are deaf and hard of hearing. It is still true that parents and advocates need to refrain from using words like 'the best' and 'maximizing potential' in the context of IEP development. However, we all strive for the day when we can confidently say, "Our children deserve the very BEST, and that is exactly what we are giving them."

Taking a Picture Walk By Ellen Milne

What is a picture walk?

A picture walk is a shared activity between an adult reader and child or group of children before reading an unfamiliar story. In its simplest terms, it is previewing the pictures in a storybook to familiarize the child with the story prior to introducing the text.

Why do a picture walk?

Taking a picture walk assists a child with literacy growth in many of the ways mentioned in the Recommended Practices in Deaf Education for literacy. "Walking through the storybook pictures" with an adult prepares a child for reading the story and teaches the use of visual cues as a reading strategy. It allows the child to get a feel for where and when the story happens, the characters in the story, and what might happen in the story. Picture walks spark interest in the story and set the purpose for the child to read and learn more about the story. Picture walks can help a child connect the visual images in the story to their own experiences and activate prior knowledge. They can give children a tool to organize the information in the story, increasing the child's comprehension of the story. The child is able to make predictions about what might happen in the story and how the story might end. Picture walks can also serve as an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary to a child so the story can be read with more fluidity and fewer breaks for explanations. Picture walks can be especially helpful for a

deaf or hard of hearing child who may find it difficult to simultaneously attend to both the pictures and the words of a story that are being read or signed. Once a child is familiar with the pictures he/she can focus on what is being read or signed and not have to make a choice about what to attend to.

How are picture walks done?

Chose a book you feel the child will enjoy. Look for books with lots of interesting and detailed colorful illustrations that relate directly to the text. Explain that before you read the story, you and the child will look at the pictures together to see if you can guess what the book is about. Then you will read the book together to see if your guesses were correct. Start by looking at the cover of the book. Ask the child what he/she sees on the cover. Ask what he/she thinks the story might be about. Proceed through the pages of the book, in order, looking carefully at the details in each picture. Ask the child who, what, where, when, why and how questions about the pictures such as "What is the boy doing?" "How do you think the dog feels?", "Where do you think the man is going?", "Why do you think the girl looks so excited?", "What do you think will happen next?" If the child is reluctant to provide information about the pictures you can model the strategy yourself by thinking out loud and saying something like "Hmm. I am looking at the mother's face (point to the face in the picture and imitate the facial expression.) I think she looks mad. Do you agree with me? Why do you think she is mad?" It may take several picture walk sessions with this kind of modeling before the child begins to add his/her own insights. Acknowledge any input the child gives with vague responses that don't give away whether or not the child is correct. You can do this by simply restating what the child has said such as "You think that the dog will hide in the girl's backpack and go to school. That's possible. I can't wait to see if you are right!" Once you have completed this process with all the pictures, read the story with the child. Stop when appropriate to discuss whether the child's predictions were right. Discuss why the prediction was correct or incorrect using information from both the pictures and the text. ~

Educational Interpreters Unplugged

In a recent exchange on a yahoo listserv of educational interpreters from all over the country, one member put this challenge out to the rest of the group to finish the statement, "What I want others to know about interpreting..." The following is a compilation of responses that come from the heart, and show us a snapshot of some of the issues facing educational interpreting services in the classrooms of America.

What I want others to know about interpreting...

"...understanding the whole child is imperative for success in the classroom, it is much more than chronological age!"

"...the teacher needs to understand that THEY are the one who can control student behavior, not the interpreter."

"...whatever the teacher would do for a hearing student, the same should be done

for the deaf student."

"...classroom educational interpreting is like a dance that involves the ever changing dance partners of the educational team including the deaf students and parents."

"...I AM a member of the Educational Team

...Just like teachers, interpreters all have different styles. Working together, we will make sure that YOUR student(s) get the absolute best possible access to the information available."

"...when we ask for copies of lesson plans (or notes, etc), it is not to give teachers 'just one more thing to remember' but it is to be able to prepare ourselves for the lesson just as they need preparation time. And that copies of anything are usually better received AT THE VERY LEAST the day before class, not the moment class starts (but I will take them however I can get them!)"

"...as professionals, we are an equal and intricate part of the educational team with the same desires for the student's academic success. We are not overpaid babysitters."

"...parents are given very little information of the limitations, expectations, relationship building required -- for full utilization of interpreting services in the classroom."

"...students need to be trained to use interpreting services! Competencies of the student needed to fully utilize educational interpreting services are very often not understood, assessed, or addressed through skill building goals in the IEP."

"...make sure that interpreters (through mandated policy in the IDEA) are meaningful participants in the IEP process and have a way to connect to parents so they can be better advocates!"

"...there is a thing called lag time. I need time to interpret the message, time for the student to process it and to time to answer with interpretation. It is not as fast as you think it should be but it is the way it is. Please give us the time needed for the student to truly participate in your class."

"...movies need to have closed captioning, and that when teachers have "down-time," usually the interpreter does not."

"...It is surprising how difficult it is for others to understand the concept of 'one thing at a time'! Teachers are so used to teaching with students multi-tasking that even with reminders they can't quite understand why deaf students can't do it all!"

"...students belong to the teacher not to the interpreter. Ask the interpreter what they need from the teacher in order to do their job. Prep time and materials are essential."

"...when school districts are using interpreter agencies as substitutes in the educational setting... make sure that the agency interpreter knows what Educational Interpreting is!"

"...deaf students cannot take notes while watching a lecture and/or a video."

"...help teachers of the deaf understand the role of educational interpreters. Often they like to put our educational interpreters in the role of teacher or do other duties assigned to signing aides (such as bus or lunch duty)."

"...It is critical that the IEP team understand the reading and grade level of the student using interpreting services, particularly in the high school setting where curriculum can be quite challenging."

"...teachers...we understand that we work in your classroom - that you have 20-100

students and a tremendous amount of responsibility and we respect that. We are not asking you to do our work. Share your lessons plans and your goals for the class and like you, we will prepare with needed concept, clarity, vocabulary needs..... because of this working relationship, just like your hearing students, your deaf students will enjoy and learn the lesson. We make an awesome team."

What's the take-away here? Parents and teachers can use this information to inform IEP team discussions about the improving the efficacy of mainstreaming, getting an interpreter adequate preparation through vocabulary lists, teacher notes, textbook readings, discussing how a student can fully participate under special circumstances such as auditory tasks, "racing to answer" tasks, group discussions and presentations by other students. The need for notetaking services came up several times in the comments. Encouraging a general education teacher to take full ownership of their deaf or hard of hearing students is a common theme in the mainstream environment as well. Let's give those special considerations their due problem solving time in a child's educational planning that they merit. ~

Mahatma Gandhi said "We must be the change we want to see in the world." What is happening here is not the result of a bureaucracy at work. It is the hard work of many individuals who have recognized that we must honor children and families and create a better life for children as they learn and grow. We are talking about a diverse statewide community where all children can thrive. ~

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