

JOINT TASK FORCE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING EDUCATION OPTIONS

95th General Assembly
HJR 1 & SJR 26



EDUCATION REPORT

December 2008

Acknowledgments

The members of the Joint Task Force on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Options expresses sincere gratitude to the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission, the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Early Intervention, and the Illinois State Board of Education for supporting the creation of this report.

Table of Contents

Letter from the Director	1
Introduction.....	2
Summary of Early Intervention Report	3
Recommendations for the Education System.....	5
Members.....	11
References.....	inside back cover



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December 31, 2008

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH
GOVERNOR

JOHN MILLER
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Members of the Illinois General Assembly
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To the Honorable Members of the Illinois General Assembly:

In accordance with HJR 1 and SJR 26 Joint Task Force on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Options and on behalf of the Joint Task Force, the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission would like to submit this Education Report. This task force was formed as a result of the Communication Options Committee Report of January 2005. The purpose of the Joint Task Force was to “undertake a comprehensive and thorough review of education services available to the deaf and hard of hearing children in Illinois with the intent of making recommendations that would recognize communication as fundamental to a deaf or hard of hearing child’s most basic of needs; ensure communication driven service delivery of the early intervention system and the public education system.”

The Joint Task Force submitted a report addressing recommendations for the Early Intervention System in December 2007. Attached please find the recommendations for the Education System. The Joint Task Force looks forward to working with the General Assembly to make the recommendations for both the Early Intervention System and the Education System to become a reality.

Sincerely,

John Miller
Director

cc: The Honorable Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Mark Mahoney, Clerk of the House
Deb Shipley, Secretary of the Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center
Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission – Commissioners

Introduction

The Joint Task Force had the responsibility of reviewing and making recommendations regarding two primary State systems – Early Intervention and Education. Given the size of the task before us, the members of the Joint Task Force spent the initial year (2007) focusing on recommendations for the Early Intervention System. Throughout 2008 the Joint Task Force reviewed the Education System. Some of the Joint Task Force recommendations can be initiated at once, others will take time; all will take energy, determination, and resources. Accordingly, the Joint Task Force urges the review of these recommendations and appropriate actions taken so that the outcomes for infants, children and youth with hearing loss in Illinois are consistent with their abilities, hopes, and dreams.

The Joint Task Force was established in 2005 as a direct response to concerns expressed by parents, educators, and the community of Illinois citizens with hearing loss. The 94th General Assembly created HJR 43 which required the Joint Task Force on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Options to submit a report to the General Assembly by December 31, 2007. Later that same year, the House and Senate passed HJR 1 and SJR 26 which extended the due date of the report to the General Assembly no later than December 31, 2008. The Joint Task Force conducted “...a comprehensive and thorough review of education and services available to the deaf or hard of hearing children in Illinois with the intent of making recommendations that would recognize communication as fundamental to a deaf or hard of hearing child’s most basic of needs; ensure communication-driven service delivery of the early intervention system and the public education system with programs and services addressing the unique communication needs of each child through communication assessment, development, and access; establish uniform methods and procedures within the early intervention system and the public education system that shall be non-biased and well-informed when sharing information with children and their families on the available communication options and community resource awareness...”

The 94th General Assembly appointed state agencies, individuals with hearing loss, and parents of individuals with hearing loss, members of the Illinois House of Representatives, early intervention and educational professionals to be members of the Joint Task Force.

The following four education issues have been reprinted from the Early Intervention Report of December 2007. Additional recommendations for the Education System begin with Issue V.

Issue I

Law and policy currently do not ensure that communication and language assessment, development, and access are mandated elements of any deaf or hard of hearing child's Individualized Education Program or Section 504 plan.

Goal: Every student who is deaf or hard of hearing will have a Communication Plan as either a required component of the Individualized Education Program or concurrent with the Section 504 plan.

Objective

The Communication Plan for each student who is deaf or hard of hearing will address but not be limited to:

1. Primary expressive and receptive communication modes;
2. Opportunities for direct communication with peers and staff;
3. Student communication and language proficiency;
4. Classroom listening environment;
5. Classroom lighting environment; and
6. Identification of accommodations and supports.

Actions

1. The Illinois State Board of Education rules will require a Communication Plan as part of the Individualized Education Program of every child who is deaf or hard of hearing.
2. The Illinois State Board of Education rules will require the development of a Communication Plan for any child who is deaf or hard of hearing and has a Section 504 plan.

Issue II

Students rely upon the visual sense as an important input for education. Current lighting within many classrooms across the state does not provide adequate support for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to access education.

Goal: Provide appropriate lighting in all public educational learning environments across the State of Illinois.

Objective

Illinois will establish standards for classroom lighting environments.

Action

The Illinois General Assembly will require the establishment of a task force to review the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America guidelines in the development of state standards for classroom lighting environments.

Issue III

“It is well recognized that the acoustical environment in a classroom or other educational environment is a critical variable in the academic, psychoeducational, and psychosocial development of children with normal hearing as well as children with hearing loss and/or other disabilities (e.g., auditory processing disorders, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders). Inappropriate levels of reverberation and/or noise can deleteriously affect speech perception, reading/spelling ability, classroom behavior, attention, concentration, and educational achievement. In addition to compromising student function, poor classroom acoustics may also negatively affect teacher performance and increase vocal pathologies and absenteeism. Thus, all educational settings have an incentive to develop acoustical conditions that meet national standards. For children with hearing loss and/or other disabilities, the acoustics of the proposed educational setting(s) should be considered and addressed during the determination of a child’s educational needs and placement.” (ASHA 2005)

Goal: Provide appropriate listening conditions in all public educational learning environments across the State of Illinois.

Objective

All new and renovated educational learning environments must meet or exceed the requirements of the classroom acoustics standard, ANSI S12.60-2002, Acoustical Performance Criteria, Design Requirements, and Guidelines for Schools.

Actions

1. State funding of school construction and renovation must be linked to a requirement for a public report of post-construction compliance with acoustical standards.
2. The Communication Plan for children who are deaf or hard of hearing must address the classroom listening environment.
3. A legislative mandate enforcing Acoustical Performance Criteria, Design Requirements, and Guidelines for Schools (ANSI S12.60-2002).

Issue IV

Most school districts in Illinois do not have access to administrators with expertise in the unique needs of this population. As a result, standards and continuity of programming lack consistency. Strong state leadership is vital to ensuring equal educational access to the children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Current leadership, technical assistance and support at the state level are insufficient at only .25 FTE.

Goal: Illinois will have strong leadership in the area of deaf education at the Illinois State Board of Education.

Objective

An individual certified in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students will provide leadership at the state level.

Action

The Illinois State Board of Education will employ a full-time (1.0 FTE) individual to provide leadership, technical assistance and support for the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Issue V

Various student data systems exist on both the national and state level. In addition, communication and exchange of data is limited. Due to the lack of streamlining, system accountability is difficult to achieve. This in turn, affects the abilities of the educational system to provide eligible and appropriate services to students with hearing loss.

Goal: Student information regarding educational needs will follow students throughout their educational careers which can begin with early intervention.

Objective

Illinois will establish required guidelines for the tracking of all students with hearing loss, to ensure the education system is accountable for the consideration of services.

1. Appropriate changes will be made to the formatted Individualized Education Program so that each disability the student has is recorded.
2. Each student who has a Speech & Language Delay will be evaluated to determine if a hearing loss exists.
3. All students with an Individualized Education Program and/or 504 Plan will **also** have a Communication Plan.

Actions

1. The Illinois General Assembly will require all educational institutions identify students with hearing loss through the use of the Gallaudet Research Institute's Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth.
2. The Illinois General Assembly will require appropriate agencies, not inclusive of Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services-Early Intervention, etc. to articulate with each other and exchange information regarding the identification of students with hearing loss whether it is a primary or secondary disability.
3. The Illinois General Assembly will require all school districts to report any child with a hearing loss to an approved (identified) state supervisor. The term "approved" is defined as a person with a degree in the area of deaf/hard of hearing education.

Issue VI

The hearing screening and referral process mandated by the Illinois Child Vision and Hearing Test Act administered by the Illinois Department of Public Health is not clearly understood within the administrative levels of the Illinois school system. This results in a breakdown of follow-up with the appropriate audiological and medical professionals and makes monitoring within the school system difficult.

Goal: Referrals resulting from the Hearing Screening Program will be shared with the appropriate educational/professional/parental entities. The coordination of needed services for those children identified with permanent hearing loss will be completed at the individual school level and the Illinois State Board of Education will monitor coordination of services for these identified children.

Objective

The ultimate objective is to serve the needs of all students with hearing loss in Illinois, without exception and to identify potential areas where needs are currently going unmet. Services provided to children with permanent hearing loss who are identified as a result of the Illinois Department of Public Health hearing screening program will be tracked and monitored within Illinois schools by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Actions

1. The Illinois Department of Public Health will meet with administrative representatives of the Illinois State Board of Education to advise and clarify the Vision and Hearing Screening process to clearly define what family, audiological and medical interventions are to occur pursuant the Illinois Child Vision and Hearing Test Act.
2. The Illinois State Board of Education will require school districts to assign a coordinator to communicate with and educate parents when a student with permanent hearing loss has been identified. The coordinator will assist the parents in making the necessary follow up appointments with the audiologist and other appropriate medical specialist.
3. Each school district will maintain a list of local clinical audiologists and educational audiologists.
4. The Illinois General Assembly will fund five full-time Vision and Hearing Consultant positions for the Illinois Department of Public Health Vision and Hearing Section for statewide coverage.
5. The Illinois State Board of Education – Principal Consultant will consult with parents regarding adequate yearly progress (AYP) of children with permanent hearing loss and the role of educational interpreters as part of the education team.

Issue VII

Institutions of higher education that provide initial teacher certification in deaf/hard of hearing have not provided a curriculum comprehensive enough to meet the language and communication needs of all Illinois students with hearing loss.

Goal: Each institution of higher education providing initial teacher certification in deaf/hard of hearing will incorporate introductory knowledge and experience for languages (American Sign Language & English) and communication modes (including, but not limited to, spoken English, manually coded English, & Cued Speech) used by and with students with hearing loss.

Objectives

1. The Illinois State Board of Education, under the leadership of its Principal Consultant, will convene a group of individuals representing languages (American Sign Language & English) and communication modes used by and with students with hearing loss and individuals from higher education institutions to review current standards and Communication Plan requirements related to language and communication needs of students with hearing loss.

2. Each institution of higher learning providing initial teacher certification in deaf/hard of hearing will provide their enrolled university students with a clear definition of the knowledge and experiences related to language and communication modes used by and with students with hearing loss.

Actions

1. An Illinois State Board of Education appointed group will provide recommendations for revision of current teacher certification requirements reflecting the need for increased knowledge and experience in languages and communication modes used by students with hearing loss.
2. Each institution of higher learning providing initial teacher certification in deaf/hard of hearing will submit documentation of the knowledge and experiences provided to university students enrolled in the program that are related to each language and communication mode used by and with students with hearing loss to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Goal: Teachers serving students with hearing loss in Illinois will continue to expand their knowledge and experience related to the languages (American Sign Language & English) and communication modes (including, but not limited to, spoken English, manually coded English, & Cued Speech) used by and with students with hearing loss.

Objective

Institutions of higher education will provide continuing education and advanced programs to meet the professional development needs of practitioners related to language and communication modes used by and with students with hearing loss.

Action

Resources and funding will be provided to identify and develop continuing education and specialized advanced programs to meet the professional development needs of practitioners in the area of language and communication modes used by and with students with hearing loss.

Issue VIII

Families are the initial, primary, and most important resource for all children with hearing loss. Currently, Illinois lacks a formal parent-to-parent network and family support system which is discipline specific for families of children with hearing loss. Illinois also lacks a system to provide non-biased information on all communication options to families of children with hearing loss.

Goal: Every parent of a child with hearing loss will have access to another parent of a child with hearing loss for peer support. The support will be provided by formally trained, monitored and compensated parents of children with hearing loss. In order to maintain support and allow for professional growth, an annual conference is needed for the community of trained parents of children with hearing loss.

In addition, parents of children enrolled in Early Intervention, Early Childhood and K-12 will receive early, balanced and comprehensive information. This information will assist individuals/families in making appropriate language, communication and educational decisions.

Objectives

1. A formal parent-to-parent network of trained, monitored, and compensated parents will provide a significant number of contact hours with parents seeking support at times of their child's identification or transitions (0-21 years of age). An annual family and consumer conference will be made available to all parents, family members and caregivers of individuals with hearing loss. The conference will also include consumers with hearing loss so that family members have the opportunity to interact with adults who have hearing loss.
2. The trained and monitored parent-to-parent network will support and assist families regarding their language, communication, social and emotional concerns. The family-driven program will address but not be limited to:
 - Providing language and communication choices in an unbiased manner;
 - Offering social and emotional support;
 - Introducing cultural and linguistic competency and sensitivity;
 - Encouraging parent and professional collaboration;
 - Providing outreach to underserved geographical areas in Illinois;
 - Being family driven;
 - Ensuring all parent liaisons will be trained and monitored; and
 - Disseminating scripted information/resource kits including all language and communication options for children with hearing loss and their families.

Actions

1. Resources and funding will be available to support the creation of the parent-to-parent network, provision of initial and on-going training, service provision and an individual and family support conference.
2. Resources and funding will be available to support the creation, dissemination, and updating of information packaged as "communication kits."
3. The Illinois Newborn Hearing Program in collaboration with Hearing and Vision Connections and the Illinois State Board of Education will conduct family and provider quality assurance surveys regarding the benefits of the communication kits.

4. A trained, monitored, and compensated parent-to-parent network will be available to connect a parent of a child with hearing loss with a parent of a child who is newly identified or in transition. Upon request, the trained parent network can also connect new families to adults with hearing loss.
5. The Illinois Newborn Hearing Program, the Hearing and Vision Connections and the Illinois State Board of Education will collaborate regarding the training for parent to parent liaisons. The information will be non-biased and culturally sensitive to support families regarding language and communication choices, assistive technology or educational programming, and model parenting strategies that address the unique needs of a child with hearing loss.

Issue IX

During the Joint Task Force discussions, it became evident that further research and work is necessary relating to improving communication access and considering Deaf Education reform. The Joint Task Force was impressed with the work of the National Deaf Education Project (NDEP) which involves representatives from leading national organizations concerned with the education and well-being of children and adults with hearing loss. NDEP's *National Agenda* is a document developed for states considering deaf education reform. In addition, the Joint Task Force felt that the role and quality of educational interpreters in inclusive educational settings warranted further inquiry.

Goal: Establish a statewide committee or task force to:

1. review the National Deaf Education Project's *National Agenda* and how it has served to implement Deaf Education reform in other states such as Colorado, California, and Pennsylvania;
2. review school district guidelines regarding job duties, and methods for quality assurance for educational interpreters working with students with hearing loss; and
3. review the Illinois State Board of Education's policies and procedures for enforcement of current requirements for Educational Interpreters and the communication access.

Objectives

1. Review the eight goals from the *National Agenda*, and determine their relevance to Illinois.
2. Develop an Illinois Agenda for students with hearing loss.
3. Review school district guidelines regarding job duties of educational interpreters.

**JOINT TASK FORCE ON
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING EDUCATION OPTIONS**

95TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HJR 1 & SJR 26

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REFERENCES

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National Deaf Education Project (2000). The Statement of Principle for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University.

The National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. (April 2005).

The Pennsylvania Agenda for Students Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing Material Format Guides File Attachment(s): View Resource Online (PDF format 297KB).

Child Vision and Hearing Test Act, 410 ILCS 205/et seq.

Child Vision and Hearing Test Act, IL Administrative Code Title 77, Part 675 (2008)

<http://www.isbe/net/rules/default.htm>

