



Evidence-Based Literacy Interventions for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Introduction

Literacy in school is critically important for students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). While essential literacy structure and language skills might not always be robustly or comprehensively accessible to children who are DHH before entering PK-12 programs, this circumstance can serve as an opportunity for growth. Well-developed literacy skills are necessary for students to actively engage and fully participate in classroom learning (Luckner et al., 2006). Yet, students who are DHH often experience notable disparities in performance compared to their hearing peers in the area of literacy (Luckner et al., 2006; Marschark et al., 2009; Easterbrooks & Beal-Alvarez, 2012; van Staden, 2013). The journey to bridging the achievement gap between students who are DHH and their peers without disabilities becomes evident through the thoughtful consideration of standardized assessment scores in English/Language Arts. The diverse factors contributing to this situation reflect the unique nature of each student, highlighting the importance of tailored approaches to teaching and learning. Embracing innovation and change in literacy instruction for students who are DHH is key to unlocking their success and ensuring they have equal opportunities to become lifelong readers and learners.

Federal and State Compliance

The need for evidence-based literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading is supported by both federal and state initiatives. Laws and statutes regarding this need apply to all students, including those who are DHH, though the approaches are often highly specific due to the nature and severity of various hearing levels. The highly-specialized and unique needs that manifest with hearing-related disabilities must be adequately addressed to provide this low-incidence population with equitable access to literacy instruction.



Federal Guidance

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) “challenges state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) to improve student outcomes by addressing the student-, teacher-, and school-level factors that drive achievement gains.” ([Florida Center for Reading Research, n.d.](#)).

The ESSA “emphasizes the use of **evidence-based** [emphasis added] activities, strategies, and interventions” to drive educational achievement ([U.S. Department of Education, 2016](#)). The U.S. Department of Education (2016) has provided further guidance titled “[Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#)” on the term “evidence-based” and using evidence-based interventions, activities, and strategies as found in ESSA. Part 77.1 of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) states, “**Evidence-based** [emphasis added] means the proposed project component is supported by one or more of strong evidence, moderate evidence, promising evidence, or evidence that demonstrates a rationale.” ([34 CFR § 77.1](#)).

Florida Guidance

The [Florida Center for Reading Research](#) (FCRR) outlines information on “ESSA Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement Guides” on their [website](#). For more information on the science of reading and evidence-based practices, please refer to [Evidence-Based Reading Interventions](#) on the Florida Department of Education site. Districts may also reach out to [Just Read, Florida!](#) for further guidance.



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Evidence for ESSA

The Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University School of Education offers guidance on ESSA evidence-based programs, interventions, strategies, and curricula on their website [Evidence for ESSA](#), in their [Best Evidence Encyclopedia](#), and their [Best Evidence in Brief newsletters](#).

Rationale and Resources

Each child, regardless of their hearing status, has the right to equal access to the classroom and all learning activities, including evidence-based literacy instruction. Students who are DHH often need highly-differentiated, explicit, and specially-designed instruction in literacy with strong emphasis on continuous language development throughout the process.

In the consideration of evidence-based literacy strategies or interventions specifically designed for students who are DHH, the empirical evidence is scarce. More research is needed on instructional methods specific to means of auditory access and communication modality. While awaiting the development of a comprehensive research foundation, it remains essential for educators to apply the evidence-based interventions designed explicitly for students who are DHH that are currently available. With that in mind, it is imperative that educators consider that students who are DHH are unique in their learning needs. Relying solely on evidence-based interventions or curricula that are normed for students without disabilities may prove insufficient to adequately compensate for the lack of access to communication and specialized instruction in literacy. Careful consideration of a student's individual needs must be taken into account when selecting evidence-based interventions or curricula specifically for students who are DHH or their peers without disabilities in order to close the achievement gap and optimize student outcomes.



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Evidence-Based Interventions

The following are evidence-based interventions and curricula rooted in the science of reading and designed for the specific task of improving literacy for learners who are DHH. The highly-specialized needs related to language needs of students who are DHH are key components of each of these programs. Districts may apply the guide “[Implementing Evidence-Based Literacy Practices](#)” (Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast, n.d.) to determine which of these programs might be appropriate for students who are DHH.

- [Bedrock Literacy - Sight Word Strategy](#)
- [Explicit Contextualized Vocabulary Instruction for DHH \(ECV-DHH\)](#)
- [Fairview Learning](#)
- [Fingerspelling Our Way to Reading](#)
- [Foundations for Literacy](#)
- [Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction \(SIWI\)](#)
- [Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons paired with Visual Phonics](#)
- [Visual Phonics](#)

For more information or technical assistance for the interventions listed, please contact RTMC-DHH at info@rmtcdhh.org.



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34 CFR Part 77

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