



New Jersey Working Group on Deaf Education P.L. 2019, Chapter 205 State Report

Executive Summary

On August 5, 2019, Acting Governor Sheila Oliver signed P.L. 2019, Chapter 205 directing the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to establish a Working Group on Deaf Education for the purpose of making recommendations on issues related to the early linguistic development of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing ages birth to five years. This working group was tasked with examining, researching, and making recommendations to the NJDOE and the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) for the development of a parent resource guide, a selection of assessments to evaluate language and literacy development of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and methods to collect and publicly report data on language acquisition and development for children from birth to five years of age.

The working group met six times from February 2020 through December 2020. The first meeting was held in person on February 28, 2020, with the remaining five meetings held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The specific tasks identified in P.L. 2019, Chapter 205 and the resulting recommendations are below. Further details of the working group deliberations can be found in Appendix A.

1. "The development of a resource guide for parents to monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy"

The parent resource guide will:

- include links to existing websites that outline language acquisition for both American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken English in order to assist parents with understanding and tracking the developmental language milestones of children birth to five years of age
- include a glossary of terms
- include a milestone checklist to allow parents to bring the resource guide to child study team meetings to share their observations, as per this legislation
- be translated into several languages



- be available electronically and in print
 - include resources related to raising a child who is Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or Deaf plus
2. “The selection of one or more early intervention assessments to be used by educators to assess the language and literacy development of deaf and hard of hearing children”

The working group recommended a wide, but not exhaustive, selection of evaluation tools in order to support the comprehensive assessment of all facets of the young child’s language development. The matrix of assessment tools recommended include ASL development, functional listening, speech, language, English vocabulary, communication, and curriculum-based assessments. Evaluators are advised to consider the number of tests selected, as well as the frequency and duration of the evaluation process, to avoid unnecessary and/or excessive testing. In addition to the formal assessments, language sampling in both English and ASL, where appropriate, was recommended.

Guidance on assessments should include:

- a statement that evaluator qualifications and fluency of communication with the child are paramount for accurate assessment results
 - a statement ensuring the proper functioning of listening technology during the assessment process.
3. “The development of methods of evaluation to annually collect and publicly report data on language acquisition and developmental progress of children from birth to age five who are deaf or hard of hearing.”
- A rubric is being created as a tool for early interventionists and school districts to annually collect language acquisition data.
 - A means to collect and publicly report data on the language acquisition and developmental progress is under discussion with the NJ Department of Education and the NJ Early Intervention System (NJEIS) at the NJ Department of Health.



P.L. 2019, Chapter 205 Working Group Members

Below are the members of the working group and the role each person represented as required by the legislation.

Ann Lee	A parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and who uses the dual languages of American Sign Language and English.
Michael Lawson	A parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and who uses only American Sign Language.
Jill Chestnut	A parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and who uses only Listening and Spoken Language.
Jennifer Hansbury	A certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students who use the dual languages of American Sign Language and English.
Kim Arrigo	A certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students employed at the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf.
Dr. Maria Hartman	An expert who holds a master's degree or doctorate who researches language outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children using American Sign Language and English.
Dr. Barbara Strassman	An expert who holds a master's degree or doctorate degree who researches language outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children using Listening and Spoken Language.
Noah Buchholz	An expert who holds a master's degree or doctorate who researches language outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children using only American Sign Language.
Rasheda Garcia	A certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students whose expertise is in curriculum and instruction in American Sign Language and English.
Vicki Joy Sullivan	An advocate for the teaching and use of the dual languages of American Sign Language and English.
Dr. Laura McKirdy	An advocate for the teaching and use of Listening and Spoken Language.



- Yvonne Collins An early intervention specialist who is appropriately certified and if required, licensed, who works with deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers using the dual language of American Sign Language and English.
- Amy Andersen A certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students whose expertise is in American Sign Language and English assessment.
- Nancy Schumann A speech-language pathologist with expertise in Listening and Spoken Language for children who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- Dr. Donna Merchant An audiologist who provides direct services in the classroom, including the educational management, verification, and fitting of appropriate amplification including hearing aids and hearing assistance technologies.

Representatives from the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Department of Health included:

- Wendy Eufemia Coordinator of Deaf Education, Office of Special Education, New Jersey Department of Education
- Kara Rogers Educational Consultant for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, New Jersey Department of Education
- Ariel Meltzer Coordinator, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, Division of Family Health Services, New Jersey Department of Health
- Nancy Schneider Audiologist, New Jersey Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program, Division of Family Health Services, New Jersey Department of Health
- Theresa Harp New Jersey Early Intervention System Hearing Consultant
- Barbara Hayes New Jersey Early Intervention System Hearing Consultant



Appendix A

Detailed Summary of the Deliberations on Each Component of P.L. 2019, Chapter 205

Guest Speakers:

Two guest speakers presented information to the working group. During the February meeting, Alexis Zeigler, Acting 619 Coordinator at the New Jersey Department of Education shared information about the Child Outcome Summary (COS) from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA Center) system for state early intervention and preschool special education agencies to report a child's functioning. At the June meeting, Angie Walker, LAP-DHH Coordinator and Education Consultant from the Kansas School for the Deaf shared her experience on Kansas's working group, creating the Kansas Language Assessment Program, and details of the assessment program.

1. "The development of a resource guide for parents to monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy"

Comments:

- Several online resources to assist parents with understanding developmental language milestones of children ages birth to five years of age were recommended.
- References related to raising a child who is Deaf or hard of hearing were suggested.
- Too many resources would be overwhelming and only a few robust references should be included.
- There were varied viewpoints regarding the format of the parent resource guide.
 - create one document outlining receptive and expressive language acquisition for both asl and English
 - develop parallel documents based on language and mode of communication.
 - incorporate milestones based on listening age for children with cochlear implants
 - seek tools to monitor language acquisition of children utilizing various forms of listening technology
- The final decision was to create a single parent resource guide as it would be most useful given that some parents decide communication modality at varied times and this decision can change over time.
 - The guide should
 - be organized in chronological order
 - include a checklist for milestone tracking
 - include resources for the children who are deafblind and deaf plus



- include a glossary
 - be available electronically and in print
 - be translated to multiple languages
- Guidance should be included for families to understand that the developmental charts of the early stages of language at the younger months contain limited measurable milestones and often do not differentiate between children who are Deaf or hard of hearing from others. The differences and deficits typically appear later.
 - Collaboration with audiologists who provide services for children from birth to 5 years of age that will have access to information in the parent guide was recommended.
 - Include the Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE) and the NJDOE online resources for special education in the resource guide
2. “The selection of one or more early intervention assessments to be used by educators to assess the language and literacy development of deaf and hard of hearing children”

Comments:

Discussion concerning assessment tools included:

- Research and gather information regarding existing assessments tools and resources
- Avoid outdated assessments when possible
- Include assessments of
 - American Sign Language development
 - functional listening
 - speech
 - language
 - academic readiness language
 - English vocabulary
 - Curriculum-based assessments
 - Communication for children who are DeafBlind or with complex needs
- Do not limit the number of assessment recommendations. This list of evaluations can be narrowed later if needed. At its conclusion, the working group decided to leave the recommended list of evaluations intact
- Recommended assessments should include tools that include the evaluation of pragmatics
- Language sampling in ASL and/or English should be included in the recommended assessments tools
 - language sampling should occur across varied settings such as academic, social, and functional



Perspectives on formatting the assessment guidance document included:

- Recommended assessments should be presented in a chart for easiest accessibility
- The assessment chart should include:
 - assessment name
 - area that is being assessed
 - population that is being assessed
 - age range of the children for whom the assessment is appropriate
 - type of assessment- checklist or assessment
 - if the assessment was normed, and if so, for whom
 - qualifications required of the evaluator
 - method of assessment- observation, parent report, or both
 - result obtained- age level or skill level
- The recommendation to include a column pertaining to the time that should elapse between the administration of a test was reviewed. Due to the limited guidance from test manufacturers, it was decided to instead include a statement to refer to the examiner's manual to garner this information.

Assessment administration guidance discussion included:

- Children should be evaluated to gather a complete overview of the many facets of language development; however, caution not to assess excessively should be stated.
 - Fluent signers should be utilized for direct communication
 - Sign language fluency of the evaluator should be demonstrated by attaining designated scores on one of the identified assessments
 - Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)
 - American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI)
 - Educational Interpreter Certification (EIPA)
 - Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) certification
 - If it is necessary to use an interpreter:
 - consider using a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI)
 - child should have experience using an interpreter
 - interpreter should be trained on interpreting evaluations
 - A statement regarding the assessment of children who use sign systems that are not ASL should be included
3. "The development of methods of evaluation to annually collect and publicly report data on language acquisition and developmental progress of children from birth to age five who are deaf or hard of hearing."



Comments:

- The New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) at the New Jersey Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Education are working collaboratively to establish a potential rubric/ratings chart to be used across departments to provide consistency in data collection and reporting
- the sample ratings rubric for the teams working with the children who are Deaf or hard of hearing to report on children's developmental progress was reviewed
- a means to collect and publicly report data on the language acquisition and developmental progress of children from birth to five years of age is under discussion within the respective Departments.

Upon the publication of the parent resource guide, the assessment matrix, and the determination of a method to collect and report data on the language acquisition of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing ages birth to five years, training will be provided for professionals who work with children.