

Text description: Applying Research to Practice: Kindergarten Readiness for Deaf Children. Presented by Tim Riker

Image description: A white male with short reddish blonde hair, beard, and moustache, wearing a royal blue dress shirt and navy blue blazer, in front of a brown silk screen, presents in American Sign Language (ASL) throughout the video.

Text: Unless otherwise specified, white text is presented on the top, left side of the screen.

In America, hearing children enter Kindergarten ready to learn because they have a strong first language. At home, their parents predominantly use spoken language to communicate, which is accessible for them to acquire language. After acquiring language, they can develop their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), within 6 months to 2 years, which is important to play, interact, and socialize with other children and adults (Cummins, 1979). [Text: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)] With a strong BICS foundation, the child can enter school ready to learn and acquire academic skills such as literacy and math, also called Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), requiring 5 to 7 years to develop (Cummins, 1979). [Text: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)] Deaf children with hearing parents do not have the same access to spoken language used by their parents at home and have not fully acquired language, developed their BICS, nor do they enter school ready to learn. The children start school at a disadvantage because they need to learn both BICS and CALP simultaneously. Research in 1995 shows that children without a strong first language require 7 to 10 years to catch up with where they need to be (Collier, 1995). Nationally, Deaf children on average have a 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, which is a challenging issue to address (Allen, 2002; Musselman, 2000; Marschark & Harris, 1996; Conrad, 1979). However, research shows that Deaf children of Deaf parents acquire language and enter school ready to learn because their parents use an accessible, visual language in the home, which provides them with the foundation needed to develop their BICS and succeed academically (Strong & Prinz, 1997; Meadow, 1968; Stuckless & Birch, 1966; Stevenson, 1964; Quigley & Frisini, 1961). Research shows that Deaf children of Deaf parents have similar academic achievement as hearing children (Vohr, Moore, & Tucker, 2002).

Many research shown here have found a strong relationship between ASL proficiency and English literacy skills. [Presenter presents with his hand a list of research in text on left side of screen: Freel, Clark, Anderson, Gilbert, Musyoka, & Hauser, 2011; Hermans, Knoors, Ormel, & Verhoeven, 2008; Hoffmeister, 2000; Hoffmeister, DeVillers, Engen, & Topol, 1997; Mayberry & Chamberlain, 1994; Padden & Ramsey, 1998; Singleton, Supalla, Litchfield, & Schley, 1998; Strong & Prinz, 1997, 2000] In 2011, a group of researchers recruited 55 Deaf participants from Washington, D.C., who were mostly undergraduate or graduate students at Gallaudet University, and tested their ASL proficiency and English literacy skills

(Freel, Clark, Anderson, Gilbert, Musyoka, & Hauser, 2011). They found a strong positive relationship between ASL proficiency and English literacy skills.

Many researchers will use strategies that are successful for teaching literacy to hearing children with Deaf children who are struggling to develop their literacy skills when they should instead be replicating the conditions in which Deaf children of Deaf parents successfully develop their literacy (Mounty, Pucci, & Harmon, 2013). Research shows that Deaf children of hearing parents can successfully acquire language and develop literacy skills if they are exposed to Deaf adult signers and taught using ASL and English bilingual approaches (Easterbrooks & Baker, 2002; Singleton, Supalla, Litchfield, & Schley, 1998). Also, in 2013, a group of researchers interviewed 12 teachers and parents who have Deaf children with strong literacy skills to identify the following conditions required to replicate their success (Mounty, Pucci, & Harmon, 2013). [Text: ASL is a visual, accessible language] Deaf children need to be exposed to a visual, accessible language such as ASL to acquire language. [Text: ASL can be used to teach English literacy] ASL as a strong first language can serve as a bridge for learning English literacy skills. [Text: Use fingerspelling with young children] Fingerspelling should be used with children, regardless if they are very young, to encourage them to acquire the fingerspelling skills early and can be a tool to teach them literacy. [Text: Create a print culture in the home] In the home, a print culture should be created using books and pictures with text to introduce children to literacy. [Text: Read often with children] Also, parents should read with their children often, regardless of what they are reading, so they can instill desire in their children to become literate. Schools and teachers are encouraged to respect ASL and English equally [Text: Respect ASL and English equally] by providing K-12 ASL instruction in addition to existing English instruction [Text: K-12 ASL and English language instruction]. [Text: Challenge students with reading above their level] Also, they should challenge students with reading that is above their reading level so they will strive to develop higher literacy skills. [Text: Use ASL/English bilingual strategies for teaching self-correction of errors] In addition, they are encouraged to teach ASL and English strategies for children to self-correct their errors.

With the knowledge that ASL proficiency is critical for Deaf children to develop their English literacy skills, support and services need to be provided to parents as early as possible. Many advocates promote requiring an ASL language specialist [Text: ASL Language Specialists] at every IFSP [Text: Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)] and IEP [Text: Individualized Education Plan (IEP)] meeting so they can advise and provide recommendations to the parents. [Text: Assess Deaf children's ASL and English language] Also, Deaf children's ASL and English language skills should be assessed and compared to benchmarks to ensure they develop their BICS and enter school ready to learn. [Text: Track children's academic progress to ensure success] After Deaf children start school, their achievement should continue to be assessed and tracked to ensure they thrive academically.

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