

2025 Legislative Report

Language and Literacy Development for Learners
Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Ages 0-8



State of Iowa
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Introduction

Purpose

This legislative report has been prepared to meet the requirements set forth in Iowa Code 256.106(7), requiring the Iowa Department of Education (Department) to annually compile and publish a report specific to language and literacy development in learners who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), ages 0-8.

The report contains two distinct areas of data: demographic, and language and literacy, including information about all DHH learners ages 0-21. The demographic data covers all area education agencies (AEAs), the Iowa School for the Deaf and Des Moines Public Schools. This data reflects the number of learners served in early intervention and/or special education, the number of learners with 504 Plan accommodations and the number of learners not eligible for special education services. This report also includes data about the language and literacy assessments administered to learners who are deaf or hard of hearing ages 0-8.

Biannually, the Department will include additional data such as learner achievement results (Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and transition (graduation, post outcome)) and engagement (attendance and senior survey). Each of these data points corresponds to those collected and reported by school districts and nonpublic schools for the general education population.

Demographic Data

During the 2023-24 school year, the following information was gathered from educational audiologists who work in Iowa and verified by the Department. Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, the Department's verification process will occur through the statewide ACHIEVE system by using the newly developed Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database. This tool is a statewide database containing information about DHH learners and all learners from birth to 21 years old who have been screened or tested by an audiometrist and/or audiologist. The database also captures language assessment data for DHH learners ages 0-8. The tool is available in ACHIEVE and accessible to most ACHIEVE users.

During the 2023-24 school year, educational audiologists identified Iowa-resident DHH learners ages 0-21. Table 1 shows the total number of learners found within each AEA, Des Moines Public Schools, the Iowa School for the Deaf and those attending school out of state. It also displays how many DHH learners were eligible for an IEP, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a 504 Plan or were not identified as eligible for Section 504 or special education services.

Table 1. All DHH Learners in Iowa Ages 0-21

Location	Total DHH Learners	Learners on an IFSP	Learners on an IEP	Learners on a 504	Learners without a Plan
Central Rivers	405	12	177	30	186
Grant Wood	384	19	157	38	170
Great Prairie	158	4	79	26	49
Green Hills	204	6	90	38	70
Heartland	929	25	329	136	439
Keystone	109	8	58	9	34
Mississippi Bend	248	12	140	23	73
Northwest	223	8	106	10	99
Prairie Lakes	175	9	93	25	48
Iowa School for the Deaf	94	0	92	1	1
Des Moines Public Schools	250	8	128	30	84
Out of State	4	0	0	0	4
Totals	3,183	111	1,449	366	1,257

Source: ACHIEVE Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database and educational audiologists in Iowa

Table 2 represents the total number of DHH learners ages 0-3 found within each AEA, Des Moines Public Schools, the Iowa School for the Deaf and those being served out of state. It displays how many DHH learners were enrolled with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), how many were not enrolled with an IFSP and the overall percentage of enrollment. At this age, learners diagnosed as DHH are automatically eligible for Early ACCESS. However, families have an option to consent to those services. Early ACCESS is Iowa's system for providing early intervention services through an IFSP, and consenting families partner with Early ACCESS professionals to identify, coordinate and provide needed services.

Table 2. All DHH Learners in Iowa Ages 0-3

Location	Learners Ages 0-3	Learners on an IFSP	% Learners Ages 0-3 on an IFSP
Central Rivers	15	12	80%
Grant Wood	29	19	66%
Great Prairie	4	4	100%
Green Hills	8	6	75%
Heartland	38	25	66%
Keystone	8	8	100%
Mississippi Bend	13	12	92%
Northwest	10	8	80%
Prairie Lakes	10	9	90%
Iowa School for the Deaf	0	0	0%
Des Moines Public Schools	11	8	73%
Out of State	0	0	0%
Totals	146	111	76%

Source: ACHIEVE Deaf and Hard of Hearing Database and educational audiologists in Iowa

Language and Literacy Data

Language assessments are administered by early intervention professionals, educators, speech-language pathologists and audiologists to meet the requirements of Iowa Code 256.106(7). The determination of which assessment to administer is based on family requests, IFSP team decisions and/or IEP team decisions. During the 2022-23 school year, the Department convened a team of professionals and experts in language assessment administration and scoring to compile the list of accepted assessments. These assessments were chosen based on criteria such as: quantifiable, domain and composite scores available, reliable, valid, available for purchase and provide an overall designation level that can be used for comparison. The following assessments were selected by the team and will be reported to the Department:

- American Sign Language: Expressive Skills Test (ASL-EST)
- American Sign Language: Receptive Skills Test (ASL-RST)
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Fifth Edition (CELF-5)
- Communication Matrix
- Developmental Assessment of Young Children Second Edition (DAYC-2)
- Kendall Conversational Proficiency Levels (P-Levels)
- Preschool Language Scales Fifth Edition (PLS 5)
- Receptive-Expressive Emergent Language Test Fourth Edition (REEL4)
- SKI-HI Language Development Scale 3rd Edition (LDS)
- Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist (VCSL)

These assessments reflect the overall language skills—expressive and receptive—of learners in spoken English or American Sign Language. The results of these assessments help educators and families understand each learner's area(s) of strength and area(s) needing support.

Of the 3,183 Iowan DHH learners counted, 651 were ages 0-8. Iowa Code requires the Department to annually share language scores if an approved language assessment was administered to DHH learners ages 0-8. For the 2023-24 school year, the Department collected language achievement data from January, 2024 through June, 2024. Table 3 displays the results of those assessments.

Table 3. DHH Language Assessment Data for Learners Ages 0-8

	0 Years	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years	6 Years	7 Years	8 Years	Totals
Above Average Skills	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Average Skills	20	13	20	4	2	1	0	2	0	62
Below Average Skills	8	9	19	9	3	6	1	3	0	58
Complex Communicator	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	1	3	10

During this time, 132 DHH learners were administered a language assessment from the approved list. It is important to note that teams are not required to administer these specific language assessments. The IFSP/IEP teams and other qualified professionals are responsible for the selection and administration of assessment tools that help determine the educational needs of the learner (281 - Iowa Administrative Code 41.304).

Of the learners who were administered an identified language assessment, 1.5 percent scored above average; 47 percent scored average; 44 percent scored below average and 7.5 percent are considered complex communicators. A complex communicator is a learner who is on his/her own course of development, and for whom it would be unfair to compare to their typically developing peers. Iowa's participation rate for DHH learners ages 0-8 was 20 percent from January, 2024 through June, 2024.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Group

Purpose

The Department brings together a group of individuals specifically identified to represent a variety of perspectives in deaf education to form the DHH Advisory Group. This group meets biannually to analyze data, share perspectives and develop recommendations for quality services for all Iowa DHH learners. The Department created this group in the spring of 2020 and had scheduled a meeting for May of that year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial meeting was postponed until September 2021. The DHH Advisory Group met twice during each subsequent school year.

During the 2023-24 school year, the DHH Advisory Group met on October 25, 2023 and May 8, 2024. Presentations to the group included topics about or from:

- AEA's
- Iowa School for the Deaf
- Demographic data
- Department priorities
- Family Support Mentoring Program
- Iowa Deafblind Project

Members

Members of the DHH Advisory Group engage in activities and discussions in order to share their perspectives on education for deaf and hard of hearing learners in Iowa. They include parents/grandparents, siblings, educators, Deaf community members and/or other professionals. DHH Advisory Group members are selected by the Department to represent a variety of perspectives. There are no term limits. The following list contains the advisory members from July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Jessica Beal*	Ivan Gentry	Cindy Mieh*	Shayla Stater
Joni Boone*	Sarah Harms	Mike Mieh*	Monica Stone
Angie Breitbach	Jennifer Herzog	Tammy O'Hollearn	Samantha Teed*
Polly Brekke*	Sarah Hill	Alyssa Ottmar	Karen Thompson
Tina Caloud*	Nichole Jergens*	Anne-Michelle Pedersen*	Maranda Turner
Kensie Channon*	Christopher Johnson*	Katy Ring	Michelle Vaccaro*
Amber Cooke*	Sarah Johnston*	Heather Russell-Schroeder*	Tanya VanVoorst
John Cool	Vania Kassouf*	Shandra Sarasio Meyer	Jame VanWinkle*
Cara Di Giovanni*	Amy Knupp	Nicole Smart*	Robert Vizzini*
Heather Dirks*	Susan MacDonald*		Elizabeth Walker
Eric Evans			Elissa Wenthe

Note: Twenty-three members are adults who are DHH, or are family members of learners who DHH. These individuals are indicated by * following his/her name.