

Legislative Report

Language and Literacy Development for Learners
who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Ages 0-8 Years,
2024-25



Department of Education



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Language and Literacy Development for Learners who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Ages 0-8 Years

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 years.

The report contains two distinct areas of data—demographic and language and literacy—and also includes 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 DHH learners served in early intervention and/or special education, the number of DHH learners with a 504 plan and the number of DHH learners not eligible for special education services. This report also includes data about the language and literacy assessments administered to DHH learners ages 0-8.

Demographic Data

During the 2024-25 school year, the following information was gathered 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.

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 individualized education program (IEP), an individualized family service plan (IFSP), a 504 Plan or no plan identified for Section 504 or special education services.

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

Location	Total Learners	IFSP	IEP	504	Without Plan
Central Rivers	384	13	217	15	139
Grant Wood	370	33	211	16	110
Great Prairie	147	8	97	8	34
Green Hills	191	9	121	8	53
Heartland	885	33	378	78	396
Keystone	122	11	85	1	25
Mississippi Bend	259	16	193	2	48

Location	Total Learners	IFSP	IEP	504	Without Plan
Northwest	404	12	207	5	180
Prairie Lakes	145	8	99	2	36
Iowa School for the Deaf	91	0	89	1	1
Des Moines Public Schools	269	9	170	15	75
Out of State	2	0	2	0	0
Total	3,269	152	1,869	151	1,097

Source: ACHIEVE

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 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	IFSP	% on IFSP
Central Rivers	14	13	93
Grant Wood	33	33	100
Great Prairie	8	8	100
Green Hills	10	9	90
Heartland	33	33	100
Keystone	11	11	100
Mississippi Bend	16	16	100
Northwest	12	12	100
Prairie Lakes	8	8	100
Iowa School for the Deaf	0	0	N/A
Des Moines Public Schools	9	9	100

Location	Learners Ages 0-3	IFSP	% on IFSP
Out of State	0	0	N/A
Total	154	152	99

Source: ACHIEVE

Language and Literacy Data

Language assessments are administered by early intervention professionals, educators, speech-language pathologists and teachers of the DHH to meet the requirements of Iowa Code 256.106.7. The determination of which language 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. The 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)
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children, Third Edition (AEPS-3)
- 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 3,269 Iowa DHH learners counted, 1,824 were ages 0-8 years. 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 2024-25 school year, the Department collected language achievement data from July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025. Table 3 displays the results of those assessments.

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

Result	0 Yrs.	1 Yr.	2 Yrs.	3 Yrs.	4 Yrs.	5 Yrs.	6 Yrs.	7 Yrs.	8 Yrs.	Totals
Above Average Skills	1	11	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Average Skills	10	18	9	1	1	2	3	0	1	45
Below Average Skills	10	24	28	9	3	4	1	2	2	83
Complex Communicator	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	6

During this time, 156 DHH learners were administered a language assessment from the approved list. Of the assessments administered, 59% were LDS, 21% were DAYC-2, 7% were AEPS-3, 4% were CELF-5, 3% were Communication Matrix, 2% were VCSL and 1% were REEL-4, PLS-5, ASL-EST, ASL-RST. P-Levels were not reported in this data collection. 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 (Iowa Administrative Code 281.41.304).

Of the learners who were administered an identified language assessment, 14% scored above average, 29% scored average, 53% scored below average and 4% are considered complex communicators. Compared to the 2023-24 school year, the percent scored above average increased by 12.5%, the percent scored average decreased by 18% and the percent scored below average increased by 9%. A complex communicator is a learner who is on his/her own course of development, and for whom it would be unfair to compare them to their typically developing peers. Iowa's participation rate for DHH learners ages 0-8 was 9% from July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025.

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 the initial meeting was held in September 2021. The DHH Advisory Group has met twice during each subsequent school year.

During the 2024-25 school year, the DHH Advisory Group met on October 18, 2024 and May 2, 2025. Presentations to the group included topics about or from:

- ASK Resource
- DHH Database in ACHIEVE
- Demographic data
- ACHIEVE Family Portal
- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

Members

Members of the DHH Advisory Group engage in activities and discussions in order to share their perspectives on education for DHH 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, 2024-June 30, 2025. Fifteen members of the DHH Advisory Group are adults who are deaf or hard of hearing, or family members of learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. These individuals are indicated by * following their names.

- Jessica Beal*
- Angie Breitbach
- Polly Brekke*
- Kensie Channon*
- Heather Dirks*
- Sarah Harms
- Jennifer Herzog
- Sarah Hill
- Nichole Jergens*
- Sarah Johnston*
- Chris Kaftan*
- Vania Kassouf*
- Matthew Larrison*
- Betsy Lin
- Carol Manning*
- Cindy Miehe*
- Mike Miehe*
- Tammy O'Hollearn
- Alyssa Ottmar
- Anne-Michelle Pedersen*

- Shandra Sarasio Meyer
- Nicole Smart*
- Shayla Stater
- Karen Thompson
- Robert Vizzini*
- Elizabeth Walker