



Personnel Preparation of Teachers of the Deaf: Shortage Needs to be Addressed

Numbers

Number of deaf and hard of hearing students age 3-21 served through IDEA: 74,000 ¹	Total students age 3-21 served by IDEA: 7,134,000 ²	Percentage of IDEA-served students whose primary label is deaf or hard of hearing: 0.01, or one in a hundred ³
Number of students in elementary and secondary public education: 48.1 million ⁴	Percentage of students in elementary and secondary public education who are IDEA-served and whose primary label is deaf or hard of hearing: 0.001, or one in a thousand ⁵	Deaf and hard of hearing are few and far between, and the personnel needed to support their academic success are few and far between as well.

Why do deaf and hard of hearing students need a teacher of the deaf?

Deaf and hard of hearing students are not simply “hearing children who can’t hear.”⁶ They come to school with unique strengths and challenges that often are overlooked in the general education setting. However, teachers of the deaf are specially trained to address the language development and academic needs of this vulnerable population.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics: Students with disabilities, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>
² *Ibid.*

³ Percentage obtained by dividing 74,000 by 7,134,000.

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics Fast Facts, Back to School Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>

⁵ Number obtained by dividing 74,000 by 48.1 million.

⁶ Marschark, M. (2014) Center for Education Research Partnerships, Raising and Educating Deaf Children, <http://www.raisingandeducatingdeafchildren.org/2014/07/01/deaf-children-are-not-hearing-children-who-cant-hear/>

According to the Council for Exceptional Children, credentialed teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing are critical to:

- Providing appropriate evaluation
- Effective educational programming and planning
- Providing student-centered instruction in academic, linguistic, and social-emotional content
- Meeting the requirements of [the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] and [the Americans with Disabilities Act]
- Securing positive outcomes for students and schools
- Providing specialized instruction and support to meet the specific language, communication, academic and social needs of students who are [deaf or hard of hearing].⁷

How many teachers of the deaf are needed?

A recent survey found that the field of deaf and hard of hearing special education demonstrated “considerable shortages” at both the university training level and the school district level. Sixty-four education fields were asked about in the survey. Out of the 17 fields experiencing “considerable” shortages in school districts, deaf and hard of hearing special education ranked fourth. In addition, this field was one of the least offered programs in the universities surveyed.⁸

While the exact number of teachers of the deaf needed has not been identified, a recent survey performed only among schools for the deaf projects a current demand for at least 500 teachers of the deaf in these schools.⁹ However, the majority of deaf and hard of hearing students attend school in the mainstream, therefore this number greatly underestimates the number needed.

How many teachers of the deaf are in the pipeline?

Rather than meeting current demand, teacher education programs are shrinking or closing. An informal survey among teacher education programs found:

In 2016-17 there were 556-557 graduates.

In 2017-18, there were 452-462 graduates.

In 2018-19 there will be 482-492 graduates.

In 2019-20, 489-500 graduates are expected.

In 2020-21 587 graduates are expected.

In 2021-22, 590-620 graduates are expected.¹⁰

Therefore, there is a need to increase the federal investment in personnel preparation, section 662 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

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⁷ Council for Exceptional Children Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness (2017). Teachers of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Critical Resource Needed for Legal Compliance, https://dcdec.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/2017_dcdd_position_statement_todhh.pdf

⁸ American Association for Employment in Education. Educator Supply and Demand Report 2020-21.

⁹ Fischgrund, J., & Tucker, J. (2017). Future Needs at CEASD Schools for the Deaf. CEASD Annual Conference, St. Augustine, FL.

¹⁰ Marsha Gunderson, Iowa Deaf Education Consultant, personal communication, February 11, 2019.