Five Key Points

- Many children who are deaf or hard of hearing lag behind their typically hearing peers in a mainstream setting.
- Teachers working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing need to continuously assess the students to ensure their rate of progress is adequate in order to decrease their delay and reach their individual potential.
- Both standardised and functional assessments are required to complete a student’s current level of functioning profile. Standardised testing typically occurs once a year or less. Frequent up-to-date data is essential to ensure that a student progresses at the necessary rate.
- Consistently using functional assessments helps to provide comprehensive information for each student. This information can then be used to compare standardised testing data and note correlations or discrepancies.
- Adaptations to the student’s program can be made in a timely manner once a student’s current level of functioning is tracked and the rate of progress noted.

Mainstream Delay

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing tend to lag behind their typically hearing peers in the core language-based subjects. Research has shown that educational outcomes for children with hearing loss have not been parallel to those of their typically hearing peers (see Braden, 1994; Moores, 1978 & 2001; Paul, 1998; Schirmer, 2000).

Educational studies showing that the reading comprehension and literacy of children who are deaf or hard of hearing children are generally significantly lower than their hearing peers (Chamberlain & Mayberry, 2000; Moores, 1978; Strong & Prinz, 2000). Many children had significant deficits in pre-reading skills compared to their typically hearing peers in the mainstream.

Continuous Assessment

The federal and state governments in the USA have passed legislation requiring teachers to provide evidence of individual student progress (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004). “Effective teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing have always understood the link between evaluation and instruction that results in increased learning, however, never before have these teachers faced the current level of mandates related to measuring their students’ academic achievement levels, rate of progress” (Rose, 2008).

Assessing students both formally and informally with standardized tests and functional assessments allows teachers to find and to address gaps in the student’s skills. Documenting a student’s progress consistently and reliably allows teachers and parents to make desired changes to a child’s program and decreases the amount of time wasted when a program is not meeting a child’s needs.

“Assessments conducted for educational planning purposes include a variety of assessment procedures that may or may not include traditional norm-referenced, standardized
assessments, direct observation, and progress monitoring procedures. The role of informal assessments:

- Confirm or dispute information obtained from formal assessment procedures.
- Collect data not addressed or available through formal assessments.
- Determine student’s functional skills relative in familiar and unfamiliar environments.” (Rose, 2008)

Informal and functional measurement protocols help a specialist teacher or therapist working with children that are deaf or hard of hearing. Both pre-verbal and verbal functional assessments are used to determine a child’s current level of functioning and to subsequently monitoring their individual rate of progress. The rate of progress systems also facilitate the planning of long term goals for each student to establish a comprehensive program. These protocols help to ensure that each child is continuously improves and works toward their potential.
References


