

CHAPTER 205

AN ACT concerning the early language development of deaf and hard of hearing children and supplementing chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes and P.L.1993, c.309 (C.26:1A-36.6 et seq.).

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.18A:46-2.10 Working Group on Deaf Education.

1. a. There is established in the Department of Education a Working Group on Deaf Education for the purpose of making recommendations on issues related to the early linguistic development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

b. The working group shall consist of 15 members appointed by the Commissioner of Education including:

(1) a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing who uses the dual languages of American Sign Language and English;

(2) a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing who uses only American Sign Language;

(3) a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing who uses only Listening and Spoken Language;

(4) a certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students who use the dual languages of American Sign Language and Listening and Spoken Language;

(5) a certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students employed at the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf;

(6) an expert who holds a master's or doctorate degree who researches language outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children using American Sign Language and English;

(7) an expert who holds a master's or doctorate degree who researches language outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children using Listening and Spoken Language;

(8) an expert who holds a master's or doctorate degree who researches language outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children using only American Sign Language;

(9) a certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students whose expertise is in curriculum and instruction in American Sign Language and English;

(10) an advocate for the teaching and use of the dual languages of American Sign Language and English;

(11) an advocate for the teaching and use of Listening and Spoken Language;

(12) an early intervention specialist, who is appropriately certified and, if required, licensed, who works with deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers using the dual languages of American Sign Language and English;

(13) a certified teacher of deaf and hard of hearing students whose expertise is in American Sign Language and English language assessment;

(14) a speech-language pathologist with expertise in Listening and Spoken Language for children who are deaf and hard of hearing; and

(15) an audiologist who provides direct services in the classroom, including the educational management, verification, and fitting of appropriate amplification including hearing aids and hearing assistance technologies.

c. Appointments to the working group shall be made within 30 days after the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of the working group shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made.

C.18A:46-2.11 Duty of the working group.

2. a. It shall be the duty of the working group to examine, research, and make recommendations to the Department of Education and the Department of Health for:

(1) the development of a resource guide for parents to monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy;

(2) the selection of one or more early intervention assessments to be used by educators to assess the language and literacy development of deaf and hard of hearing children; and

(3) the development of methods of evaluation to annually collect and publicly report data on language acquisition and developmental progress of children from birth to age five who are deaf or hard of hearing.

b. The working group shall issue a report, including its recommendations, no later than one year after the working group organizes.

C.18A:46-2.12 Development of parent resource guide.

3. a. The Department of Education, in an effort to assist deaf and hard of hearing children in becoming linguistically ready for kindergarten and in consultation with the Department of Health, shall develop a parent resource guide for use by parents of deaf and hard of hearing children.

The parent resource guide shall:

(1) help parents monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy by presenting language developmental milestones;

(2) be appropriate for use, in both content and administration, with deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to five years of age, who use both or one of the languages of American Sign Language and English;

(3) be written for clarity and ease of use by parents;

(4) be aligned to existing instruments used by school districts to assess the development of children with disabilities pursuant to federal and State law;

(5) include a statement that the parent resource guide is not a formal assessment of language and literacy development, and that a parent's observations of his child may differ from formal assessment data collected as part of a professional evaluation; and

(6) include a statement that a parent may bring the parent resource guide to a child study team meeting for purposes of sharing observations about the child's development.

b. The department shall incorporate the recommendations provided by the working group established pursuant to section 1 of this act into the parent resource guide.

c. The department shall make the parent resource guide developed pursuant to this section publicly available on its website.

C.18A:46-2.13 Development of guidance regarding early intervention assessments.

4. a. The Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Health, shall, after consideration of the recommendations provided by the working group established pursuant to section 1 of this act, develop guidance regarding early intervention assessments to assess the language and literacy development of deaf and hard of hearing children. The guidance shall include information regarding the development of deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and the developmental stages toward English literacy of children who are deaf and hard of hearing, and shall be appropriate for the assessment of children from birth to five years of age.

b. The department shall disseminate the guidance developed pursuant to this section to school districts.

C.18A:46-2.14 Implementation of methods, collection, reporting of data.

5. The Department of Education and the Early Intervention Program in the Department of Health shall implement the methods developed by the working group pursuant to section 2 of this act to annually collect and publicly report data on the language acquisition and developmental progress of children from birth to age five who are deaf or hard of hearing.

6. This act shall take effect immediately and the working group shall expire on the 30th day after the submission of its report.

Approved August 5, 2019.