

Kids in the Middle

“Kids in the middle” refers to students who may not be served in traditional delivery models for deaf and hard of hearing students. Therefore, the resulting services may, or may not, adequately address the communication, social, and academic needs of these students. Examples of students “in the middle” include:

Kids on 504s

- Kids who neither have a 504 Plan nor an IEP
- Kids on an IFSP or IEP who are served by teachers/providers other than teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing
- Kids whose needs are more therapeutic than educational
- Kids who are educated in rural areas of a state
- Kids who do not have sufficient communication access and therefore are falling behind
- Kids whose parents opt out of special education services

Guiding Questions: What do you do when...

You have a DHH student on a 504 Plan?

- Who/how is student identified on the 504 Plan?
- Who develops the 504 Plan?
- What services do you provide via a 504 Plan? How is this distinguished from service provided by an IEP?
- Who delivers the services?
- How are services delivered?
- What is the accountability? Who manages/monitors the services to insure they are implemented appropriately and that the student is making expected progress?
- How are 504 services integrated with RtI?

You have a student with a hearing loss who qualifies for neither special education nor a 504 Plan?

- What is the evidence that led to this decision?
- What assessments were completed? Were they of sufficient depth to identify underlying gaps in language or other skills areas?
- What is the accountability to ensure that this student’s progress continues on a trajectory that is the same as typical hearing peers?
- How might RtI support this student to avoid a failure-based model?
- You have a DHH student whose needs are more therapeutic - e.g., related to communication skills or social/behavior skills, than educational?
- Was assessment sufficient to identify academic deficits?
- Is the student eligible for special education?
- Was assessment sufficient to identify therapeutic services?
- Who provides the therapeutic services?
- Is the provider qualified and/or experienced to work with DHH students? If therapeutic services are not available locally, what is the process for identifying appropriate service providers?
- Where/when are the services provided to minimize removal from the general education classroom experience?
- When is removal from general education warranted?

You have a DHH student in a rural area; the student is eligible for services but there is not a DHH provider available to provide consistent services?

- Is there a teacher in a neighboring region/district that can be contracted to provide services?
- Is there a center-based program in a neighboring region/district where the student could attend?
- Is there an outreach teacher from the school for the deaf or other private program who can be contracted with to provide services?
- If the contracted services are limited, can other special education teachers in the school building (e.g., LD teacher) provide services with consultation from a deaf education specialist?
- What are resources available?
- What other school placement options (e.g., other school districts, school for the deaf) are available?

You have a DHH student using spoken language that is behind and not making expected growth (minimally 1 year's growth in one year as the target)?

- Is progress monitoring data available?
- Have you identified the reasons why the student is not making progress?
- How do you determine whether lack of communication access or other issues is the problem impeding the student's growth?
- When do you add other types of communication support be it sign or cued language?
- How do you support the student to learn other types of communication in this transition?
- How do you support the family to learn other types of communication in this transition?
- If communication access is not the problem, how is appropriate instruction being addressed?

You have a DHH student who requires communication access support (e.g., educational interpreter, spoken language specialist) or other specialized related services?

- How was this need identified?
- Are there qualified educational interpreters available (RID, EIPA, licensed)?
- Do you have access to a spoken language specialist? What are the qualifications you require for this position?
- Who inservices the school staff and classmates about interpreters?
- Who provides the audiological assessment and support? Is the assessment educationally relevant reflecting the functional listening needs of the students in their classroom?
- Who trains teachers and students regarding their hearing and hearing assistance technology?
- Is there a monitoring plan, as required by IDEA, which ensures the hearing devices worn by students are functioning properly?

You have a DHH student who meets eligibility but parents refuse special education services?

- Why do parents refuse special education services?
- Is 504 Plan an acceptable support?
- What accommodations will be provided?
- What supports are available through RtI?
- How will the student's performance be monitored? By whom?
- Is there a plan to negotiate services in the future based on the student's performance?