



“Expanding” Instruction for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Deaf education is more than academic instruction.

While the supports given to students by teachers of the deaf in the K-12 framework undoubtedly support the acquisition of academic skills, educators in the field of deaf education are responsible for teaching students who are deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) the skills and strategies for acquiring access and using alternate methods to gain the skills so often presented auditorily. Students who are D/HH require instruction that removes barriers to content area standards and allows them to be well prepared competitors in academic, postsecondary, employment, and/or community pursuits. The Expanded Core Curricula and interventions provide students with hearing-related disabilities instruction in the skills needed to access and advocate the learning environment while preparing them for life.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2018) outlines the importance of providing instructional services to students who are D/HH to meet their unique needs in [Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Educational Service Guidelines](#). “When knowledge and skills are developed in these expanded core curricular areas, students and their families have a greater understanding of the implications of their hearing status and students are better able to access the general curriculum and be full participants in the classroom and school.”

The unique needs of students who are D/HH “may also include specific interventions to respond to social, health, emotional, physical, and vocational needs. A child’s unique needs should be revealed through current, relevant and appropriate academic and functional data sources that may be formal and/or informal.”
(NASDSE, 2018)

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has developed a set of state standards for a course in Expanded Skills Standards. The standards, and their subsequent courses, are broken down into [pre-k and elementary](#), [middle school](#), and [high school](#) standards. The [Resource Materials and Technology Center for the D/HH \(RMTC-D/HH\)](#) curates resources and lesson plans related to teaching the [Expanded Skills Standards](#) on their website for access by all professionals in the field, both in Florida and across the nation. On this web page, visitors will also find state and national resources by field experts related to the instruction of Expanded Skills Standards and the Expanded Core Curriculum.

*The purpose of the Expanded Skills Standards for students who are deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) is to enable them to apply concepts, knowledge, and skills related to their individual hearing levels in educational, home, community, or employment settings. **These standards were developed for students who require specially designed instruction to address the unique needs resulting from their individual hearing levels and access to communication.** Instruction in these identified needs promotes student success in standards-based instruction. Teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing (ToDHHs) are key IEP team members and play a critical role in developing these skill sets among students in this population. This instruction is provided in a variety of settings and may be delivered in student specific communication modalities (for example, American Sign Language, Cued Speech, spoken language, and/or sign-supported English). (RMTC-D/HH, n.d.)*

It is important to start with assessing students' needs. Teachers and other service providers can then use the assessment results to develop annual goals for the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and deliver quality, data-based specially designed instruction (SDI) targeting skill deficits in order to alleviate barriers to instruction and foster academic, social, and independent success.

Teaching of these skills is individualized and varied based on each student's unique presentation. This includes communication modality and history of communication access, hearing assistive technology (HAT) usage, familiarity and comfort with self-advocacy skills, parental involvement and support, cultural characteristics, and much more. Some tools for gathering data to plan instruction include: [Steps to Assessment](#), [Map It](#), [Deafverse](#), and [Avenue PM](#). Resources such as [Advocacy in Action](#) and [Building Skills for Independence in the Mainstream](#) are great for developing lessons for the Expanded Skills Standards or Expanded Core.

It's imperative the instruction of these skills is included in the student's IEP. Justification for the instruction can be included in the effects of disability and priority educational needs. The instruction should be outlined in the specially designed instruction (SDI) and there should be annual goals and benchmarks (as applicable) which guide the SDI. The instruction in the skills is setting neutral and can happen anywhere on campus or in the community, giving teachers of the deaf many options for delivering and practicing instruction in these critical skills. Progress toward mastery of these goals not only allows teachers to know when the goals are met, but also allows for data collection to help guide new goal development and instructional design.

Follow the links for more information on [specially designed instruction](#) and [progress monitoring](#), subscribe to the RMTD-D/HH newsletter [Tech Notes](#), or join us for our monthly webinar series, [TA-Live!](#) The 2021-2022 TA-Live! series is focusing on the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and CEDAR Center's publication, [High Leverage Practices in Special Education](#). In this series, RMTD-D/HH publishes a series of videos on each of the high leverage practices and their relationship to the education of students who are D/HH and then hosts regularly scheduled virtual meetings where participants can ask questions and share resources related to the high leverage practices, many of which lend themselves to conversations surrounding the instruction of Expanded Skills Standards.

RMTD-D/HH staff members serve teachers in the state of Florida as part of the Florida discretionary project network.

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