


Chapter 5

Effective Administrative Support for Early Childhood Deaf Education


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ABSTRACT

The authors of this chapter make the case for equipping administrators in the field of early childhood deaf education with proven practices and approaches to support educators, students and families. This chapter examines the essential components of effective early childhood deaf education beyond the classroom; discusses best practices for family engagement in education; identifies strategies for community outreach; reports professional development opportunities and supports for early childhood deaf educators; describes means to strengthen assessment and evaluation; and provides tools for designing programs that support family access to deaf adults. Effective administrative support for early childhood deaf education is critical

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to the success of pre-service teachers, educators, providers, and families. While resources, knowledge, and skills instilled by administrators increase commitment and encourage a flourishing learning environment among educators and families of very young deaf and hard of hearing children, academic research and writings regarding these vital topics are sparse.

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this chapter, early childhood is defined as spanning from birth through third grade (around 8 years old). For clarity throughout this chapter, the term “children” will refer to DHH children in any setting (birth to eight years old), while “students” will specifically refer to those in educational settings, typically starting at age 3 years old. It is important to note that some programs may use these terms differently depending on the services they provide. This framework underscores the current state of early childhood deaf education and highlights the critical need for effective administrative support. Strong administrative leadership is essential for fostering environments where educators, providers, and children can thrive, emphasizing collaboration, shared leadership, and informed decision-making based on the latest research and practice.

Key components of effective early childhood deaf education are explored, including the importance of educator and provider preparation, family engagement, community partnerships, and ongoing professional development. Preparation programs are highlighted as foundational, with a focus on coursework, field experiences, and mentoring to equip educators and providers with the skills needed to meet the unique needs of deaf children. Successful practices from other educational settings are also discussed, as well as how these practices can be adapted to support deaf children, underscoring the importance of flexibility and inclusivity in addressing the diverse needs of this population.

Equally vital is the role of families, with strategies for fostering strong school-community-family partnerships, such as regular communication, family workshops, and community events. Also discussed in this chapter is leveraging community resources and outreach to advocate for deaf children. Assessment and evaluation methods, including standardized tests and feedback from stakeholders, are presented as tools for improving educational programs. Lastly, this chapter offers practical guidance for designing deaf adult-to-family initiatives aligned with the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) law (EHDI, 2017). These programs provide invaluable support by fostering understanding, offering guidance, and building strong connections between families and the deaf community. Together, these elements

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