



DEAF-CENTERED PRACTICE OVERVIEW GUIDE

A strong approach to program identity development is intentional, affirming, and embedded across the school environment. Program identity is not taught through a single lesson or event—it is shaped over time through representation, language access, relationships, and meaningful participation in the Deaf community. Schools play a critical role in creating conditions that support students' sense of belonging, pride, and self-understanding as Deaf individuals.

1. Representation of Deaf Role Models

- Students regularly see Deaf adults in meaningful, visible roles within the school community. Deaf role models—including educators, staff, leaders, and community members—demonstrate a range of identities, careers, and lived experiences. Representation helps students envision possibilities for their own futures and affirms that Deaf people are leaders, professionals, and contributors.

2. Incorporation of Deaf Culture and History in Shared Spaces and Schoolwide Programming

- Deaf culture and history are visible beyond individual classrooms. Hallways, common spaces, assemblies, and schoolwide events reflect Deaf stories, milestones, and contributions. Deaf culture is presented as an integral part of the school's identity, not an occasional celebration or isolated activity.

3. ASL Recognition and Use Across the School

- ASL is recognized and used as a full, legitimate language throughout the school environment. Students see ASL modeled, respected, and expected in classrooms, shared spaces, and school activities. Language practices across the school reinforce that ASL is central to access, learning, and community—not limited to specific rooms or individuals.

4. Deaf Community Engagement

- The school actively connects students to the broader Deaf community. This includes partnerships with Deaf organizations, events, mentors, and opportunities to interact with Deaf adults outside the school setting. Engagement with the Deaf community helps students build relationships, cultural knowledge, and a sense of belonging beyond the school walls.

5. Student Opportunities for Leadership and Advocacy

- The school actively connects students to the broader Deaf community. This includes partnerships with Deaf organizations, events, mentors, and opportunities to interact with Deaf adults outside the school setting. Engagement with the Deaf community helps students build relationships, cultural knowledge, and a sense of belonging beyond the school walls.