

The Power of “AND” in Deaf Education

Language and the Brain at Home

Understand “Dinner
Table Syndrome.”



“The brain does not discriminate between visual and auditory modalities; it simply needs and thrives on early, abundant, effortless, and fully accessible language exposure.”

~ Wyattte Hall

Protect your child's
well-being and mental
health with accessible
communication.



See communication
from the child's
point of view.



“Deaf education has long seemed to prioritize (spoken) communication before cognition, but it should be the other way around. If deaf children learn how to think first, they will learn how to communicate in many different ways. All humans learn how to think through full and effortless access to a natural language; for many deaf children, that effortless access first comes through a signed language.”

~ Wyattte Hall

Commit to learning
sign language and
don't stress about
your fluency.



Advocate
for the true
least restrictive
environment

(direct instruction, full
access to adult and peer
social language models).



VLA LAB
Visual Language
Access & Acquisition Lab

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Language and the Brain at Home

Many deaf people experience what is colloquially called “Dinner Table Syndrome,” where as children they miss a lot of direct and indirect conversations that are spoken within the home. Family conversations are powerful contextual learning opportunities for children to learn about the world, their health, and even their own family. Ensuring access to these types of opportunities can impact the overall well-being of your child.

(Hall et al., 2018)



Inclusive communication practices in the home can help improve deaf children's overall health across the lifespan. Adverse Childhood Experiences related to communication (i.e., poor direct and indirect family communication) are associated with worse health in deaf adults, including hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, lung diseases, and mental health.

(Kushalnagar et al., 2020)



Seeing communication through your child's eyes helps build stronger connections and supports healthy development. Increased reports of Adverse Childhood Experiences (which negatively impact adult health outcomes) are correlated with deaf adults who report:

- Being hard of hearing
- Having had no signing access at school
- Having a cochlear implant

(Hall, Dye, & Siddiqi, 2023)



Research shows that:

- Parents beginning to learn signs with their deaf baby can promote timely language development.
- Deaf children who are signers before they receive a cochlear implant outperform non-signing children with cochlear implants.
- Deaf children with hearing parents who receive early and effortless, consistent language access at school (e.g., in a bilingual school for the deaf) show strong and timely academic progress.

(Pontecorvo et al., 2023; Delcenserie, Genesee, & Champoux, 2024; Davidson, Lillo-Martin, & Chen Pichler, 2014; Hassanzadeh, 2012; Finton et al., 2024)



Schools for the deaf often receive their largest group of students as late transfers from mainstream public schools around sixth grade with avoidable language and social delays. Instead, earlier enrollment in language-rich environments maximizes academic, social, and language success.

(Finton et al., 2024)



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Language and the Brain

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