The National Agenda:
Moving Forward on
Achieving Educational Equality
for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

National Association for State Directors of Special Education
Concurrent Session
Minneapolis, Minnesota
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What is the National Agenda?

• Parents, professionals, and Deaf adults who have a passion for making education services for deaf and hard of hearing children better

• A journey with a destination but without a complete roadmap
Why we need it

- Status quo is unacceptable
- De-fragmentation of delivery systems
- Evolution of the profession and views on language and culture
- Quality of life issues
- Accountability element
- Supplemental services
- Language and communication driven system
- Equal opportunity
- Benefits of synergy
Need for a *whole* child system

- Socio-cultural
- Psycho-social
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Linguistic & Communicative
National Agenda Core Values

• Language and communication access and development is central to learning and the well being of deaf and hard of hearing children (Preamble, NA)
• Children don’t fail, systems do.
• With parents, professionals and consumers as partners we do have the power to change the educational landscape for deaf and hard of hearing children
Background (2001)

- A Call To Action (based on NASDSE Guidelines and COED Report)
- A letter to CED Organizations proposing concept of NA
- A topical meeting in Phoenix
- A steering committee and advisory committee formed and met at national conferences and meetings
- 8 Draft goals and outcomes are written
- Posted a “work in progress” for public comment www.deafed.net
Background (2001)

- Presentations on the National Agenda at conferences and workshops
- Data from over 40,000 comments reviewed by goal leaders and Steering Committee
- Eight goals are re-drafted based on reviews by professionals, parents, and consumers
- National Agenda established
Snapshot of NA Structure

- Steering Committee
- Advisory Committee
- Goal Leaders (for development)
- CED Organizations and State Departments of Education Reps.
- Parents, Professionals and Consumers who helped build it
National Agenda At-A-Glance

8 Goal Areas
1. Early Childhood Education
2. Communication, Language, and Literacy
3. Collaborative Partnerships
4. Accountability
5. Placement and Programs
6. Technology
7. Personnel Preparation
8. Research

Political Vehicle
Inclusive Unifying Structure
Vision for the Future
National, State & Local Strategies
Living Resource Document
Eight Goals of the Agenda
(2001-2005)

Goal 1: Early Childhood Education
Goal 2: Communication, Language and Literacy
Goal 3: Collaborative Partnerships and Transition
Goal 4: Assessment and Accountability
Goal 5: Programs, Placement and Services
Goal 6: Technology
Goal 7: Personnel Preparation
Goal 8: Research
Sample Goal

Goal 4: System Responsibility: Accountability, High Stakes Testing, Assessment, and Standards Based Environments

To Insure that the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children is Based on Sound Systemic Procedures and Standards.

Goal Statement

Deaf and hard of hearing students are entitled to an educational program in which system-wide responsibility is clear and involves procedures for accountability, high stakes testing, assessment, and standards. Accountability measures must include examination of programs and services on a local and statewide basis. High stakes testing must be based on and fully incorporate the child’s communication and language needs. Assessment of deaf and hard of hearing children must be comprehensive and include testing and evaluation of the child’s communication, linguistic, academic, cognitive, psychology, physical and all other areas pertinent to the child. The entire educational delivery system for deaf and hard of hearing children must be based on clear standards or “best practices,” which reflects the best thinking regarding educational programs and services and the relationship of communication and language to literacy and educational growth.
Sample Goal

Goal 4: Background

Deaf and hard of hearing children have not systemically been provided an educational system with a well-reasoned and clear accountability process, assessment procedures, fair high stakes testing, and well-articulated standards. Historically state educational agencies have not had sufficient resources and in some cases a complete understanding of the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children needed to develop affective procedures for assessing and measuring all programs in their states and creating. Because deaf and hard of hearing children have truly unique communication, language and educational needs, all these areas of system responsibility must reflect the best thinking of educators, parents, and consumers and have sufficient resources to establish affective accountability and standards. Instruction for students who are deaf and hard of hearing must be data-driven, focus on multiple measures of student performance, including authentic assessment in a variety of disciplines, and lead to a diploma consistent with the student’s IEP and/or all state graduation requirements.
Sample Goal

Proposed sub-goals

• 4.1. Assessments of deaf and hard of hearing students must be child-centered, focus on all areas of the child’s profile, and employ multiple measures that include criterion-referenced tests, standardized tests, teacher and student accountability records and other appropriate assessment tools. Assessments must take into account and reflect the child’s communication and language preference, need, and expressive and receptive skill levels.
  – Rationale: Like all children, deaf and hard of hearing students must have well-reasoned, child-centered and objective measures for determining their levels of cognitive, psychological, emotional, linguistic, educational and other skills.

• 4.2. Assessment of deaf students who use ASL and English will include measures of competencies in both languages and will specifically measure expressive and receptive skills in both.
  – Rationale: Deaf students who use both ASL and English as languages of instruction must develop proficiency in both languages. Assessment of functional levels in only one language does not provide a complete profile of the student’s language abilities.
States’ Efforts

A Blueprint For Closing The Gap
Developing a Statewide System of Service Improvements for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- National Summit
- States’ Efforts
  - Colorado
  - New Mexico
  - Pennsylvania

The Report of The Colorado Deaf Education Reform Task Force
Spin-off Projects (examples)

• Join Together Technology Grant
• Responses to No Child Left Behind
• Responses to IDEA Re-authorization
• IEP Documentation of Special Factors considerations for Communication and Language
• Website Development
• Discussions of Quality Indicators for Programs that serve children who are deaf and hard of hearing
Uses of the National Agenda

- Vehicle to garner political support for change
- State planning
- Support for parents
- Organizer for communications, e.g., newsletters to parents, position papers
- A Focus on what unites us
- Organizer for Conferences
- Organizer for Personnel Preparation
Benefits

• Encourages partnerships across the country, within the state, within the LEA, within the special schools and local programs.
• Facilitates parents, professionals and consumers in forming partnerships
• Enhances communications among professionals
• Empowers professionals and parents to make change (when state or government supports are not available)
• Leadership opportunities on national, state and local levels
Critical Issues/Needs and NA

- Uniqueness of Our Students—Preamble
- Best Practices in Reading and Literacy—Goal 2
- Importance of Communication Access—Goal 2
- Highly Qualified Staff Issues including Interpreters—Goal 7
- State Assessments and AYP—Goal 6
- Early Intervention and Families—Goal 1
Critical Issues and NA cont’d

• LRE for deaf and hard of hearing students - Goal 5
• Updated technology - Goal 7
• What are best practices - Goal 8
Improving State Outcomes through Collaborations

• We haven’t been able to reverse the trends operating independently
• We have the options to meet diverse needs
• We understand what communication access means regardless of language or mode
Potential Collaborations

- SEAs
- Regional Programs
- LEAs
- State Center Schools
- VR and
- Special Educators working together could become…

**State Collaborative Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students**
Some Visions of Collaborations from the National Summit

• Coordinated Information services for parents and families
• Special Short Term Programs
• Coordinated Professional Development
• Coordinated Early Identification Efforts
• Coordinated position papers on issues related to highly qualified staff, assessment, etc.
Visions cont’d

- Tracking of Students
- Evaluation of Programs and services
- Coordinated state advocacy, (funding, interpreters, etc.)
- Training for special educators responsible for deaf students
- Collaborative promotion of standards of practice, staffing patterns and caseload recommendations
Visions cont’d

• Agency collaboration to include VR agencies, Department of Health, etc.
• Meaningful involvement of parents
• Accountability, compliance and evaluation components for programs
• Collaboration for special populations (multiply disabled, non-English speaking families, late identified, at risk)
The National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

This agenda is for everyone, no matter where they are positioned within an organization, a community or a family. It embraces college and university presidents, faculty, administrators, consumers, families and government partners. It represents the collective thoughts of a broad range of stakeholders who took time to comment on its message.

Things You Can Do

- Visit ceasd.org or nationalagendadhh.org for the latest version of the National Agenda.
- Share the document with those in your organization and consider implementing some of the recommendations.
- Ensure that your state and local efforts are aligned with the mission and goals of the National Agenda.
- Collaborate and build alliances with your colleagues, families and staff around National Agenda goals.
- Use the National Agenda to conduct assessments of your programs and set targets for improvement.
- Network with other schools, programs, universities and organizations on best practices based on National Agenda goals.
- Engage 10 more interested individuals in the efforts of the National Agenda.
- Have a voice in implementation—Get involved—the more participants, ideas, and energy, the more powerful the message.
Thank You!

Questions