The Role of the Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf and Hard Of Hearing

Early interventions resulting from universal infant hearing screening and early access to technologically advanced hearing aids and cochlear implants are resulting in significant demographic shifts in the deaf and hard of hearing student population and their corresponding needs. There is an increasing demand for access to itinerant teachers who are both knowledgeable and skilled in the areas of listening, speech, language, and auditory-verbal approaches that support a challenging curriculum. Research acknowledges that integration is facilitated when there is a partnership between families, professionals, communities and children. Itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing are best able to provide support services to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. Students should receive the amount and type of support deemed necessary, through consultation and collaboration with other team members, to foster successful academic progress and social integration. Factors to be considered will include degree and type of hearing loss and other possible mitigating challenges. Each child, school, family and community is unique, and itinerant teachers will best recognize and appreciate the individual strengths and needs of the students with hearing loss they serve.

The Itinerant Teacher's Role is multi-faceted and includes:

- Advocating for and encouraging self-advocacy by students with hearing loss throughout their school years.

- Providing regularly scheduled, direct withdrawal instruction in the development of auditory skills, speech and language, as required, including the pre-teaching of classroom curriculum.

- In-servicing school teams, including classroom teachers, on the educational impact of hearing loss and making suggestions about classroom acoustics. In-servicing students’ peers, as appropriate.

- Liaising effectively with teachers, parents and support staff, such as educational assistants, deafblind intervenors, interpreters, and notetakers.

- Developing strategies with classroom teachers to most effectively enable the student to access curriculum. Communicating goals and strategies to parents as educational partners.
- Remaining current in knowledge of technological advancements. Understanding and monitoring the use of all amplification equipment and technical devices and assuring its timely availability through consultation with an Educational Audiologist.

- Remaining current in grade level curriculum and incorporating such curriculum in the development of foundational speech and language skills.

- Attending team meetings, I.P.R.C. meetings, and helping to collaboratively develop and implement the student’s IEP. Having direct contact with audiologists, physicians and other allied professionals, as required.

- Providing regular student progress reports, including up-to-date assessment information on hearing loss, cognitive, speech, language and auditory skills development of the student for the benefit of educators and parents.

- Fostering emotional well-being and encouraging social interaction with hearing peers within the school community. Providing opportunities, where possible, for social interaction among peers with hearing loss.

- Providing information on transitional needs for students with hearing loss.

- Monitoring the academic progress of students using amplification who are not receiving direct withdrawal support through routine contact with classroom teachers.