



Cochlear Implant Education Center

Cochlear Implants and Sign Language: Building Foundations for Effective Educational Practices

Evolving Trends and Practices



LAURENT CLERC
NATIONAL DEAF EDUCATION CENTER



Evolving Trends and Practices

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Evolving Trends and Practices


Debra Nussbaum, Coordinator, Cochlear Implant Education Center, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center

Debra Nussbaum, coordinator of the Cochlear Implant Education Center at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, spoke on evolving trends and practices in the field. The following highlights were shared:

- A. A review of issues shared during the 2002 CIEC conference: "Cochlear Implants and Sign Language: Putting It All Together," including general participant support for the following:
 - Children obtaining cochlear implants are diverse in characteristics specific to each child and family. This diversity makes it impossible to design and implement a single approach for all children using a cochlear implant.
 - With appropriate planning, sign and spoken language can support each other in the learning process for children with cochlear implants.
 - It is important to enlist the support of the medical community and the broader educational community in promoting approaches inclusive of sign for children with cochlear implants.
 - It is important to counsel families regarding realistic expectations from the use of a cochlear implant-expecting enough, yet not too much.

- B. Noted trends between 2000-2009:
 - There are increasing numbers of children with cochlear implants in the mainstream. Many of these students continue to require support services provided by auditory and speech professionals, itinerant teachers of the deaf, and sign language interpreters.
 - There is an observed increase of children with cochlear implants in schools for the deaf, which is driving many programs to evaluate and modify their philosophy, beliefs, and practices in regard to the use of spoken language in these schools. A survey completed in the winter of 2009 by the Texas School for the Deaf documented the following trends in schools for the deaf:
 - Children have more sophisticated aural/oral skills than children previously enrolled in schools for the deaf.
 - More school programs are establishing formal programs for children with cochlear implants.

- Many programs have increased auditory and speech habilitation services for children with cochlear implants (especially for new implant users).
 - Many school programs are increasing classroom opportunities to use spoken language throughout the school day.
 - More schools have mapping and troubleshooting services for cochlear implants.
 - School programs are establishing support groups for children with implants within their programs.
- There are increasing numbers of professionals working with implanted children; however, many admit to not having prior expertise in working with this population of children.
- C. Recommendations of the Cochlear Implant Education Center
- Look beyond the use of cochlear implant technology when considering language and communication approaches and educational placement.
 - Recognize that the definition of “success” for each child with an implant will vary.
 - Acknowledge a cochlear implant as establishing greater “potential” to develop spoken language skills, but not a “guarantee” that a child will develop full spoken language competence.
 - Design educational programs with flexibility that allows for the unique characteristics of each child with an implant.



The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center is comprised of two federally mandated demonstration schools for students from birth through age 21 who are deaf. Located on the campus of Gallaudet University, these schools work in collaboration with a national network of exemplary programs and professionals to identify, research, develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovative curricula, materials, educational strategies, and technologies for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Clerc Center also provides training and technical assistance to families and programs throughout the United States, and serves as a model individualized educational program, working in close partnership with its students and their families.

Working for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Throughout the United States



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