WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

**Tips and Strategies for Conducting Standardized Assessments
with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

- Use multiple sources of information and multiple sources of data as part of your comprehensive special education evaluation. Standardized tests may not be an appropriate tool for assessing academic skill levels for a population of students that experience high rates of language deprivation. Parent, student and teacher interviews, social and developmental histories, record reviews and observations may be more beneficial to the IEP team in identifying student needs.
- Know the limits of the IEP teams experience and expertise in the area of conducting assessments with students who are deaf and hard of hearing, including:
  - Whether or not anyone on the team speaks the student's (and their parents'/caregivers') first language (i.e., American Sign Language).
  - The level of familiarity and expertise with Accessible Educational Materials (AEM), both in the team members' ability to assess the need for AEM and their ability to teach and assist the student to use it.
- If an assessment can be administered using an interpreter, consider whether reliable and valid results can be obtained based on the familiarity and relationship between the interpreter and student.
  - Interpreters who regularly work with students are likely to have better rapport with an individual student, which may be helpful in reducing anxiety about standardized testing and increase motivation for the student to give their best effort. But they may also invalidate results by inadvertently providing additional information or cues to the student regarding their responses or provide information or instructions that are not part of the standardized administration directions. Test administrators need to be sure to provide the interpreter with explicit directions about not "tipping off" answers to the student, providing feedback regarding whether or not the student provided a correct answer to a test item, and providing the directions to the student in a way that does not alter the standardized test instructions.
  - An interpreter who is less familiar with the student may be less likely to inadvertently provide cues and non-standardized instructions to the student, but is also less likely to have an established relationship that can help encourage the student's engagement and effort during the assessment. In this scenario, the test administrator and interpreter should allow for adequate time to build rapport with the student prior to beginning the standardized assessment.
- Students who are deaf and hard of hearing may perceive (often accurately) that they do not have the same level of autonomy as their hearing peers. Allowing them a voice and choice in the process can build rapport, reduce anxiety, and increase motivation during standardized testing. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
  - Involving the student to the extent possible, in scheduling when and where the assessment will occur.
  - Introducing the student to the testing environment and allowing them time to explore and alter the environment so that it can be free of distracting sensory stimuli.
  - Allowing the student to ask questions about the assessment, materials, and the evaluation process.
- While the DPI does not vet or endorse any specific assessment tools, the list of Assessment Tools for Students who are Deaf and hard of Hearing can assist IEP teams in determining appropriate assessments that may be administered with reliability and validity as part of a comprehensive special education evaluation.
- Use outreach services from the Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach (WESP-DHH).

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