



Library Services and Early Literacy Approaches in Public Libraries for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

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Abstract

Children's librarians are challenged to provide inclusive programming in today's public libraries. There is a current trend in public libraries to provide special needs programming for children. This poster focuses on library programming for deaf and hard of hearing (D/HoH) children who visit U.S. public libraries. The American Library Association (ALA) states that hearing children need to know six pre-reading skills to be ready to read; however, some of these pre-reading skills focus on singing or rhyming, which are difficult for D/HoH children.

This grounded theory research studies the programs, services, and story times that are implemented and modified for D/HoH children in U.S. public libraries. This study began with sending out a recruitment script and questionnaire, which reached nearly 500 medium to large sized U.S. public libraries. Fifteen participants volunteered to be interviewed, and eleven were interviewed. Interviews were analyzed using open and axial coding, which is typical in grounded theory. Preliminary data and a review of literature on literacy acquisition for D/HoH children suggested that D/HoH children do not progress in four of the pre-reading skills outlined in the ALA's early literacy program, Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR), in the same way that hearing children do. Phonological awareness is largely not utilized by D/HoH children in learning to read. D/HoH children are also likely to build vocabulary, develop print motivation, and approach narrative skills differently than hearing children.

This grounded theory research developed the model of successful library services and modifications for D/HoH children to explain which services, early literacy instruction, staff training and programs public libraries provide to children who are D/HoH. This research project also inquires about what kinds of modifications are made to serve D/HoH children and what the impetus was for providing library services to deaf children. The first stage of the model highlights staff attitude as being warm and welcoming, taking initiative, and not seeing D/HoH as a disability. The second stage described the impetus for providing services as encountering a D/HoH patron in the library, knowing a disabled person in a librarian's personal life, or by encountering a nearby agency that serves D/HoH. In the third stage, librarians made accommodations by being inclusive in programming, providing ASL programming, or facilitating visual phonics instruction in place of phonological awareness instruction. In the fourth and final stage, this model reported outcomes such as educating both hearing and D/HoH individuals and building a sense of community.

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