

PARENTS' VITAL SUPPORTING ROLE IN DEAF/HARD OF HEARING EDUCATION

DEFINITELY NOT "ONE SIZE FITS ALL"!

Parenting a deaf or hard of hearing child was never simple, but rearing the child with a hearing loss today presents a dizzying array of choices, settings, communication methods, philosophies, and regulatory procedures.

Historically, this rule of thumb always held true: In order to start a particularly vehement argument, all one had to do was give any answer to: "What is the proper way to educate a deaf child?" However, the fault did not lie with the answer, but rather with the question. There IS no one-size-fits-all "deaf education" solution. Resources exist today that allow for educational strategies as unique as each child.



TRUE IN ALL SETTINGS

Supporting a deaf/hard of hearing child's education does not only mean involvement with the child's school structure. Inarguably, "good" parents:

- Provide a stable, loving environment.
- Model desired behavior.
- Require respect, responsibility, and values.
- Emphasize importance of education.
- Arrange study time and space at home.
- Regulate bedtimes, breakfast, clothing, and diet.
- Facilitate physical fitness/game times.
- Coordinate routine health care.
- Monitor prescriptions vital to learning such as asthma, allergy, seizure, and ADHD medicines.
- Make routine trips to the public library.
- Monitor academic progress.
- Actively tutor, one-to-one.
- Teach skills of adult independence.
- Plan cultural opportunities such as lessons, performances, and exhibits.
- Share own cultural heritage.
- Travel to museums, zoos, or historic sites and tours.

DEAF EDUCATION = MORE IS NEEDED FROM PARENTS

But parents of children with a hearing loss, while striving to do all of the above, also need to:

- Learn communication strategies.
- Develop awareness of deaf culture.

- Acquire and use assistive technology.
- Understand special education regulations.
- Evaluate and choose an educational site.
- Take an active role in the governance of their unique child's special needs.
- Become an unflagging advocate for an education to maximize the child's potential.
- Continuously monitor progress.
- Intervene/Problem-solve when needed.

Additionally, it is no longer an issue of choosing either a residential school for the deaf or a mainstream deaf education program through the local public school. Deaf/hard of hearing children are being successfully placed in private/parochial schools, and growing numbers are being homeschooled by their parents. Those parents may join a local homeschool association, enroll in a "distance learning" program, an accredited correspondence school, or provide textbooks, oversight and assistance all from home. There are many varied educational philosophies and methods, and parents must weigh the skills and resources of each setting and all key players to find the best match for their child.

THE DESCRIBED AND CAPTIONED MEDIA PROGRAM SUPPORTS PARENTS

A dependable asset in educating one's child with a hearing loss is the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). Not only can parents of very young deaf/hard of hearing children learn communication strategies, sign language, and parenting skills by watching free-loan, open-captioned media items, they can access information on special education laws, sources of assistive technology, and other resources for education and advocacy.

Parents can receive an orientation to deafness and learn about the culture and history of outstanding deaf individuals in America. Later, when homework becomes a reality, children can receive extra support and help in particular subjects by viewing titles on those subjects at home with parents.



Teacher-originated lesson guides accompanying each educational media item to enhance the use of the title from a *passive* to an *interactive* experience with the class and family. When education is a shared experience at home, just add one family to a showing of one of the DCMP's open-captioned titles for inclusive family fun and learning. (Wise parents don't mention that even purely-for-fun movies, when captioned, provide a boost to developing literacy. In order to keep up with the fun, what must the child do? READ! Shhhh!)

The DCMP supports research findings that show that parents do make a positive contribution to their child's educational achievement. Such research dispels the popular myth that a parent's effectiveness in supporting his/her child's education is dependent upon the parent's level of education, cultural background, or income level. Parents of deaf or hard of hearing children should be assisted in every way possible to create a learning-rich environment and to communicate as much as possible with their children.

Using DCMP resources, parents can address their child's unique learning needs. As that child's skills develop and interests change, DCMP media provides parents the flexibility to utilize media that maximizes each emerging learning opportunity. The DCMP also offers parents resources to help *them* on topics like advocacy, communication, education, technology, and many others in the [Clearinghouse section](#) o the DCMP Web site.

Yes, parents of deaf or hard of hearing children *can* provide the environment needed to allow their child to achieve maximum individual potential, custom-fitted with the help of the Described and Captioned Media Program.

