

Education Policies

Not long ago, children who were deaf or hard of hearing attended specialized schools. Today, 96% of babies born deaf are learning to listen, to speak and attend mainstream schools in their communities. But this is only possible with access to state-of-the-art communication technology and VOICE programs aimed at teaching children with hearing impairments “to hear, listen and speak for life.”

VOICE actively supports parents and educators in their goal to make education accessible for children with hearing loss, from helping parents with their child’s IEP (Individual Education Plan) to publications for teachers that give them the tools to make their classrooms inclusive.

VOICE Education Goal

When VOICE was established in the early 60’s by a group of parents, it was a key goal of these parents that their deaf and hard of hearing children could be educated alongside their hearing peers in regular schools. It is through their hard efforts and the continued efforts of VOICE families today that deaf and hard of hearing children do have a choice and that the Provincial Ministry of Education and Training supports this choice.

Educational Goal Statement

To improve the integration of deaf children into the education system. VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children has developed the following policies to support its goal to improve the integration of deaf children into the education system.

Educational Policy Statement

The following policies have been drafted to reflect VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children’s goal to improve the integration of deaf children into the Ontario educational system and its goal to expand access to auditory-verbal therapy in Ontario.

Placement

- As the first option, VOICE advocates integration with appropriate special education programs and services for oral deaf students.
- Through consultation with educators and parents/guardians, full integration may not be the appropriate choice for an individual student. Accordingly, VOICE supports a continuum of services based on an individual student’s needs.
- VOICE supports Regulation 181/98 of the Education Act which states in Part IV Section 17, that “when making a placement decision on a referral under section 14, the committee shall, before considering the option of placement in a special education class, consider whether placement in a regular class, with appropriate special education services (1) would meet the pupil’s needs; and (2) is consistent with parental preferences.”

Testing

- VOICE supports the testing of deaf and hard of hearing students, applying the same standards and expectations of their hearing peers, with provision for appropriate accommodation as set out in the student's Individual Education Plan.
- Accommodation may include, but need not be limited to: more time for completing the test requirements, question clarification, individualized interpretation of instructions, a quiet testing environment.
- VOICE recognizes exemption of testing as defined in government policy may be appropriate, provided exemption is with the express approval of parents/guardians on the advice of the Principal.

Auditory-Verbal Therapy

- VOICE advocates access to regular Auditory-Verbal Therapy by certified Auditory-Verbal Therapists.
- VOICE encourages and supports auditory-verbal certification of Teachers of the Deaf, resulting in equitable access to Auditory-Verbal Therapy.

I.P.R.C. (Identification, Placement, Review Committee)

- VOICE supports the identification of all deaf and hard of hearing students. It is through this process that Individual Education Plans may be developed to define the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing student and to develop strategies to meet those needs.

Preschool Services

- VOICE advocates preschool services as an essential developmental intervention for children with hearing loss. VOICE maintains that preschool programs need to incorporate auditory-verbal intervention for deaf and hard of hearing children in an integrated setting with hearing peers to enable access to age-appropriate language and behaviour models.

Special Education Advisory Committees

- VOICE endorses participation by its membership on Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) throughout the Province of Ontario and encourages participation by its local chapter members, as required by Subsection 206 (2) of the Education Act. VOICE is represented on the Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEACs).
- VOICE provides support to its member SEAC representatives through the dissemination of educational information.

Cochlear Implants

- VOICE supports a deaf child's right to access to Cochlear Implant technology and the fundamental right of choice to his/her parent/guardian.
- VOICE advocates access to essential post-surgical Auditory-Verbal Therapy.

Equitable Support

- VOICE maintains that accommodations and services for deaf and hard of hearing children should be consistent and equitable across the Province of Ontario.

- VOICE endorses accessibility of support services in the official language of choice, for both francophone and Anglophone students, as well as support for deaf and hard of hearing Native Canadians.