

# Deaf Education at a glance...



KANSAS SCHOOL  
FOR THE DEAF  
OUTREACH

*“Children who are D/HH should have access to direct communication and instruction as well as incidental learning that happens in and out of the classroom to enable them to develop a strong sense of self as well as independent skills that will serve them as they exit the educational system.”*

*KSDE Guide to Education of Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, p. 6-1 at [www.ksde.org](http://www.ksde.org)*

*“Through this exposure [to incidental learning] a person develops metacognitive awareness and in particular, self-esteem, which is crucial.”*

*Incidental Learning with Deaf Students: Is There a Role for Sign Language Interpreting?*

at

*[www.streetleverage.com/2016/03/incidental-learning-deaf-students-role-sign-language-interpreting/](http://www.streetleverage.com/2016/03/incidental-learning-deaf-students-role-sign-language-interpreting/)*

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## THE CRITICAL ROLE OF INCIDENTAL LEARNING

Incidental learning is learning that takes place as the result of another activity. It happens in natural, informal interactions and activities, and it is unintentional and unplanned. It happens through observation of others, overseeing/overhearing conversations, repetition, social interactions, problem solving, even reading books and watching TV. Incidental learning is essential to how children learn their language, their culture, learn how to communicate with peers and adults, and develop knowledge about the world. In fact, much of what young children learn they learn from incidental learning as opposed to direct, explicit instruction.

The key to incidental learning is having access to the information. In other words, incidental learning cannot happen if a child cannot see or hear what is happening around them. Thus, it is crucial for family, friends, and professionals who interact with deaf/hard of hearing children to understand the importance of incidental learning and what can be done to ensure children have access to it.

In order for children to reap the benefits of incidental learning, they need complete access to language. This includes using accessible language not only when communicating *with* a child, but also when communicating *around* the child.

If your child uses sign language as their primary means of communication, this means that all conversations at home and in school should be signed for your child. That is the only way to ensure your child has full access to incidental learning. If your child uses spoken language as their primary means of communication, this means that all communication should happen within a 3-6 foot radius and with visual access to the speaker's face and mouth. Conversation happening beyond that point will need to be explicitly presented to your child.

### Tips

- ✓ Describe activities and actions as opposed to quizzing your child on knowledge. For example, state, “Oh, you’re playing with a blue car” instead of “What color is your car?”
- ✓ Avoid using phrases like “I’ll tell you later,” and “Never mind, it’s not important” because too often, “later” never comes.
- ✓ Recap your conversations when your child enters the room so they know the topic. If you sign with your child, continue to sign when he/she is present even if you are not directly talking to them. Teach other children in the home and classroom to do the same.
- ✓ Provide explicit instruction for things deaf/hard of hearing children may have missed incidentally.

**KSD Outreach Mission:** To provide the highest quality of services, resources, and support to children ages birth-21 who are deaf/hard of hearing by collaborating with their families, their communities, and the professionals that serve them.