

LANGUAGE EQUALITY AND ACQUISITION FOR DEAF KIDS (LEAD-K) TASK FORCE REPORT

A Report with Recommendations from
the LEAD K Task Force

Submitted to the

Louisiana State Legislature February 1, 2019

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ACT 455 (2018) TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Act 455 of 2018 establishes a task force consisting of twenty-three members jointly appointed by the State Superintendent of Education and Secretary of the Department of Health. Members were selected through a public nomination process with consideration to the requirements of Act 455 (2018) and the unique needs of the state. The co-chairs, Susannah Boudreaux, and Ariel Bumbala were elected by the membership at its first meeting.

Name	Role
Leslie Kemmer	A parent whose child is deaf or hard of hearing and proficient in American Sign Language and English
Rana Otallah	Parent whose child is deaf or hard of hearing and uses only spoken English
Winona Gibbs	Teacher of children who are deaf or hard of hearing whose expertise is in curriculum and instruction in American Sign Language and English
Beth Ann Johnson	Teacher of children who are deaf or hard of hearing whose expertise is in curriculum and instruction in English
Margaret Berry	Early Intervention specialist who works with infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing using American Sign Language and Spoken English
Ryan Gollner	Administrator of a school age program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing
Christa Foolkes	Administrator of an early intervention program for children who are deaf and hard of hearing
Shelley Chesney	Speech Pathologist with expertise working with children who are deaf of hard of hearing on the development of spoken English, with or without the use of visual supplements
Dr. Frank Gresham	School psychologist with experience working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing and with knowledge in conducting and interpreting cognitive assessments for such students
Cindy Robillard	A representative of an association that advocates to enhance the quality of life for Louisiana children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Fallon Frederick	A representative of an association that advocates to enhance the quality of life for Louisiana children who are deaf or hard of hearing
Paula Rodriguez	Licensed or certified mental health professional who works with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families
Jay Isch	An adult who is deaf or hard of hearing and proficient in American Sign Language and English
Brad Wellons	An adult who is deaf or hard of hearing and uses spoken English without visual supplements
Representative Pat Smith	Member of the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives
Senator Daniel Claitor	Member of the Louisiana Senate appointed by the president of the Senate
Susannah Boudreaux	The director of the Louisiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program or his designee
Brenda Sharp	Representative of the Louisiana Department of Health appointed by the department secretary
Ariel Bumbala	The executive director of Louisiana Commission for the Deaf or his designee
Jamie Wong	The state superintendent of education or his designee
Bambi Polotzola	The executive director of the governor's office of disability affairs or his designee
Kristy Harrell	The outreach coordinator for the Parent Pupil Education Program
John Veazey	Representative appointed by the National Cued Speech Association

INTRODUCTION / REPORT ORGANIZATION

The LEAD- K task force convened 6 times between July 2018 - January 2019 to develop the recommendations contained in this report. The business of the committee focused on the following topics:

Meeting Date	Key Topics Discussed
7/30/2018	Ground rules set for future meeting formats, discussion of the role of the task force, discussion regarding panel meeting dates/objectives, discussion of task force Chair
8/27/2018	Task force meeting schedule, current state structures for delivering services to deaf and hard of hearing children, discussion of tools for assessing language and literacy for deaf and deaf and hard of hearing children
9/17/2018	Task force report structure, additional tools for assessing the language milestones of deaf and hard of hearing children, discussion of SKI-HI Language Development Scale
11/5/2018	Language Milestones, reporting structure and opportunities for feedback and recommendations
12/3/2018	Language milestones framework and criteria, additional tools and resources, recommendations for assessments to be conducted at 6-month intervals
1/17/2019	Structure for reporting progress towards language milestones, discussion of state and local laws and procedures for adequately addressing the language development needs of children who are deaf and/ or hard of hearing, submission of task force report to Legislature

All meetings were held in compliance with Louisiana open meetings laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act. In accordance with requests, American Sign Language, Cued Speech Translators, and Communication Access Real-time Translation services accommodations were provided at meetings.

TASK FORCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Act 455 of 2018 outlines specific duties for the LEAD K task force. The task force considered each of these items and provides a set of recommendations for each.

- Review and make recommendations relative to existing tools or assessments for educators to use to assess the language and literacy development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Determine how often the tools or assessments reviewed should be used for children from birth to age five
- Identify language milestones for children who are deaf or hard of hearing by consulting with professionals trained in the language development and education of such children
- Identify procedures and methods for reporting language acquisition, assessment results, milestones, assessment tools used, and progress of such children to parents and teachers and other professionals involved in their early intervention and education
- Make recommendations relative to ensuring that state law and state and local policies are adequately addressing the language developmental need of such children

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Responsibility	Review and make recommendations relative to existing tools or assessments for educators to use to assess the language and literacy development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
Considerations	Task force members were asked to submit tools for consideration by the full task force. Eleven members submitted recommendations for consideration. The task force considered tools with a variety of criteria including language assessments, comprehensive assessments, standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced scales, skills checklists and curriculum-based assessment tools. The tools were divided into two categories; comprehensive tools and language specific tools. Tools listed under the comprehensive section are tools that assess various domains of child development. They have language components but are typically used to gauge progress toward multiple domains. Tools listed under language-specific tools are those that are only looking at some component of language. Many of the tools considered require specific training and expertise to administer and interpret results.

Comprehensive Tools

- Battelle Developmental Inventory
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming for Infants and Children (AEPS)
- Center for Disease Control Milestone reference materials
- My Individual Growth and Development Indicators

Language Specific Tools

- Receptive-Expressive Emergent Language Test (REEL)
- Systematic Analysis for Language Transcription (SALT)
- Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist
- Kendall Conversational Proficiency Levels
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
- SKI-HI Language Development Scale
- Test of Early Language Development (TELD)
- Test of Language Development (TOLD)
- Preschool Language Scales (PLS5)
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Preschool (CELF-P)
- Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)
- Cottage Acquisition Scale of Listening, Language, and Speech (CASLLS)
- Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales (CSBS)

Of the tools reviewed, the SKI-HI Language Development Scale is the only instrument designed for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. It focuses on expressive and receptive language development from ages birth to five. During the August 2018 meeting, the task force voted to explore the SKI-HI tool in greater depth at the next convening. Some members expressed concern that the SKI-HI instrument may not be standardized and norm-referenced, and therefore may not satisfy the criteria established in the task force's charge. During the September 2018 meeting, the National LEAD-K Director, Sheri Ann Farinha, provided a virtual presentation on SKI-HI to the task force, in particular addressing concerns about the tool. Ms. Farinha explained the SKI-HI Language Development Scale is based on norms for hearing children according to age groups. In an early study of its reliability and validity (in which internal consistency, interrater agreement, and test-retest rater agreement were estimated), Tonelson (1978) reported that the SKI-HI Language Development Scale was a valid instrument for measuring language development in the population with hearing loss and is criterion-referenced with high validity and reliability with norm-referenced assessments. Through deliberations, the task force determined that a particular strength of the SKI-HI Language Development Scale is that it is able to measure both signed and spoken language in receptive and expressive development.

Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Louisiana should use the SKI-HI Language Development Scale to assess the language milestones of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. ● Louisiana should produce a resource document that outlines tools available to measure language skills, requirements for administration of each tool, and the ability to be administered in spoken English and/or American Sign Language.
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Responsibility	Determine how often the tools or assessments reviewed should be used for children from birth to age five.
Considerations	<p>During the December 2018 meeting, task force discussed the process and frequency of data collection. Some members felt that data should be collected as frequently as possible since the information is central to designing lessons and implementing strategies to help a child learn and to support their growth. The task force discussed various time frames for conducting assessments and agreed that assessments should be conducted as needed to gauge a child’s progress and to guide teaching strategies. The task force also agreed that a minimum frequency should be established. Members of the task force shared concern that if data were collected too frequently it would present a burden to the providers.</p>
Recommendations	The task force recommends that assessments should be completed and reported every six months to ensure ongoing monitoring of language development.

Responsibility	Identify language milestones for children who are deaf or hard of hearing by consulting with professionals trained in the language development and education of such children.
Considerations	<p>During the September 2018 meeting, the LEAD K task force discussed using the California Language Milestones as a framework for Louisiana. Members spent the month of October reviewing the California standards in depth and providing specific feedback on how those standard could inform the development of Louisiana-specific milestones. Task force feedback collected in advance of the November 2018 meeting highlighted the following points to be considered in the development of Louisiana-specific language milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Milestones should not replace formal assessment of a child's development of language and literacy and may produce different results than the formal assessment conducted as part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) process. ● Progress towards milestones should be considered in the IEP or IFSP planning process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific milestones are needed for the following age groupings: 0-3 months, 4-6 months, 6-9 months, 9-12 months, 12-18 months, 18 months to 2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, and 4-5 years. ● Prior to age one, general language acquisition milestones may be used; after age one separate expressive and receptive milestones should be delineated. <p>During the November 2018 meeting, the task force members provided additional feedback and continued to deliberate on the development of Louisiana-specific language milestones. The task force continued this discussion in the December 2018 meeting and proposed forming a subcommittee to finalize a Louisiana-specific language milestone document that provides milestones in both American Sign Language and English for children ages birth to five for use by families, service providers, and educators in Louisiana.</p>
Recommendations	The task force recommends the formation of a subcommittee to develop a Louisiana Milestones document that focuses on nationally accepted milestones while also featuring milestones for American Sign Language and English.

Responsibility	Identify procedures and methods for reporting language acquisition, assessment results, milestones, assessment tools used, and progress of such children to parents and teachers and other professionals involved in their early intervention and education
Considerations	<p>Task force members deliberated this charge during the December 5th, 2018 meeting. The task force recommended that staff from Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) and Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) discuss agency systems and capacity to collect data relative to language acquisition of children who are deaf and/or hard of hearing and share information with the task force at the January meeting.</p> <p>During the January 17, 2019 meeting staff from the LDH and LDOE discussed current programs, for children ages birth to age five, that collect information around progress and development. Feedback was additionally collected from task force members in advance of the January 2019 meeting for further discussion and deliberation. The task force discussed features of current state</p>

	data collection systems and noted that there are multiple systems that collect important data but there are also gaps.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The task force recommends that the state’s data system to support the monitoring of language acquisition include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ date of identification ○ person who made identification ○ type, degree, and configuration of hearing loss ○ basic demographic information (including history of deafness or hearing loss) ○ mode of communication and language used at home ○ other diagnosis ○ information dissemination to families, ○ child progress towards milestones, assessment results ○ any technology used ○ language of choice ○ mode of communication ● Additionally, the task force recommends that the designated data system allow authorized providers to input assessment results and other necessary information. ● Lastly, the task force recommends that the data system allow for state agencies to analyze data to identify systemic trends.

Responsibility	Make recommendations relative to ensuring that state law and state and local policies are adequately addressing the language developmental needs of such children
Considerations	<p>Task force members deliberated this charge in all meetings. During the January 17th, 2019 meeting specifically, the LDH and LDOE presented a synopsis of the feedback from task force members relative to state law and state and local policies. The task force’s feedback encompassed potential recommendations for the Legislature, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and LDOE. The task force as a whole deliberated on the following considerations that had been submitted by one or more members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A recommendation that BESE should review all policies and ensure there are no unnecessary barriers for establishing teacher of the deaf preparation programs or obtaining teacher of the deaf certification. ● A recommendation that the Louisiana Legislature should encourage all

	<p>Louisiana Universities to open teacher of the deaf training programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recommendation that LDOE and the LDH should jointly produce a report using existing data to report on language and literacy development of deaf and hard-of-hearing children from birth to five years of age in comparison to their peers who are not deaf or hard of hearing. <p>The task force did not generate specific recommendations in the course of the concluding meeting.</p>
Recommendations	<p>The task force recommends that the group continue to discuss state law and state and local policies. The task force recommends that they be able to submit additional information as to if state law and state and local policies are adequately addressing the language developmental needs of children who are deaf and/or hard of hearing prior to the bill filing deadline for the 2019 regular legislative session.</p>