Educational Services for
Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Children
in Washington State:
Stakeholder Views

Annie Pennucci

with

Theresa B. Smith
Robert I. Roth

June 2007

Washington State
Institute for
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WASHINGTON STATE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2006 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to "hire a meeting facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with a broad group of stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state."[1] The Institute hired Theresa B. Smith, Ph.D., and Robert I. Roth, M.A., to perform this task. A total of 573 individuals, including parents, students, teachers, interpreters, administrators, and deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind adults, were consulted between November 1, 2006, and April 30, 2007.

Background

The low-incidence nature of hearing loss presents a challenge to creating and maintaining "an integrated system of instructional and support programs"[2] for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students. These students face substantial language barriers, have diverse learning needs, and are sparsely dispersed throughout the state, as is professional expertise to serve this population. Most deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students attend local public schools.

Stakeholder Views

Overall, stakeholders view Washington's educational system for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students as fragmented and inadequate. During consultations, stakeholders primarily focused on "what is not working" for this population. Stakeholders collectively described a loose network of school and county-based services supplemented by a small staff of state coordinators with no oversight authority or leverage to improve programming and educational outcomes for these students.

Stakeholders identified the following specific weaknesses in statewide educational and support services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students; these system weaknesses are presented in order of how frequently and strongly stakeholders expressed each view.

- Lack of a coordinated system

- Limited availability of professional expertise and services in most areas of the state

- Widespread use of unqualified educational interpreters

- Isolation of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children in mainstream schools

- Inconsistent provision of information and services for parents of infants and toddlers

- Other issues: special challenges for subpopulations, lack of transition programs, and a disconnect between day-to-day practice and research.

Stakeholders offered many suggestions to address these issues, including: placing authority for system coordination and oversight in a single state entity, developing regional programs,

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[1] ESSB 6386 § 607 (12), Chapter 372, Laws of 2006.
[2] Ibid.

developing teacher and interpreter standards, strengthening early identification and intervention requirements, and expanding resources for technology-based supports.

Institute Recommendation

The 2006 Legislature also directed the Institute to "develop recommendations that would establish an integrated system of instructional and support programs that would provide deaf and hard of hearing children with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to be successful in their adult lives and the 'hearing' world of work."[3]

To strengthen the educational system and reduce the service gaps identified by stakeholders, the Institute recommends that a single state agency be charged with overseeing the quality and outcomes of local, regional, and statewide schools and programs serving deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students.

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[3] Ibid.

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2006 Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to "hire a meeting facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with a broad group of stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state."[4] The legislation further directed the Institute to "develop recommendations that would establish an integrated system of instructional and support programs that would provide deaf and hard of hearing children with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to be successful in their adult lives and the 'hearing' world of work."[5]

This introduction presents data on the population of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind[6] students in Washington State and summarizes key issues that impact the provision of educational services for these students. The next section of this report will describe stakeholder views about Washington's educational system for this population based on a series of meetings, focus groups, interviews, and surveys conducted between November 1, 2006, and April 30, 2007 (see Appendix A for stakeholder consultation details).

How many deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students attend Washington public schools?

Hearing loss is a low-incidence disability. In other words, there are relatively few deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children: in K–12 public schools, these students account for only 0.1 percent of the student population. Exhibit 1 displays the number of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students counted in state databases maintained by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Exhibit 1
**Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Infants, Toddlers, and K–12 Students
Counted in Statewide Databases**

	Deaf	Hard of Hearing	Deaf-Blind	Total
Infants and toddlers in ITEIP*	46	227	0	273
Age 3 to 5 special education students**	46	84	1	131
Age 6 to 21 special education students**	399	832	27	1,258
Total	491	1,143	28	1,662

*Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program. Includes all infants and toddlers, age birth to three, with a medical diagnosis of deafness or hearing loss being served by an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) between June 18, 2006, and June 18, 2007, and entered into the ITEIP Data Management System at DSHS.
**IDEA Part B December 1, 2006 Child Count Report, compiled by OSPI. Includes all special education public pre-K and K–12 students identified as deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in an Individual Education Program (IEP). Excludes students receiving accommodations under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act.

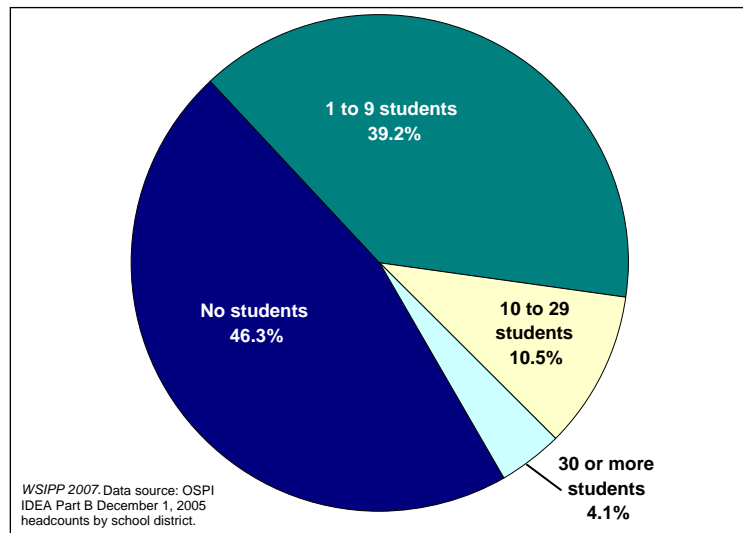[4] ESSB 6386 § 607 (12), Chapter 372, Laws of 2006.
[5] Ibid.
[6] In early consultations, several participants suggested we include deaf-blind children in this study because they are a subgroup within the deaf and hard of hearing population that has unique and intensive learning needs.

The figures in Exhibit 1 are an undercount of students; they exclude the following:

1) Students with multiple disabilities, because the annual headcount groups all students with more than one type of disability into the category "multiple disabilities." A 2002 Institute survey of a sample of public schools estimated that 31 percent of deaf and hard of hearing K–12 special education students may have more than one disability.[7]

2) Students with hearing loss who do not require individually tailored special education services with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). These students receive accommodations (such as sound amplification) or support services (e.g., audiologist) under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act.[8] The number of these "504" students statewide is unknown.

3) Students who attend private schools. A January 2007 Institute phone survey of the three private schools that enroll Washington deaf and hard of hearing students found that approximately 6 percent were attending those schools.[9]

Available data illustrate how the relatively few deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students are dispersed throughout the state. Exhibit 2 shows that most Washington school districts enroll fewer than 10 (39.2 percent of districts) or no (46.3 percent) special education students with hearing loss.

Exhibit 2
**Most Washington School Districts Enroll Few or No
Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind Special Education Students**

1 to 9 students
39.2%

No students
46.3%

10 to 29 students
10.5%

30 or more students
4.1%

WSIPP 2007. Data source: OSPI IDEA Part B December 1, 2005 headcounts by school district.

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[7] B. McLain & A. Pennucci. (2002). *Washington School for the Deaf: Models of education and service delivery.* Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 02-06-2202. The count of deaf-blind students provides an additional example of how many students are not delineated in statewide databases. Staff from Washington Sensory Disability Services (WSDS) at OSPI report there are 228 deaf-blind students age birth through 21 statewide, but only 28 are included in Exhibit 1. Most of the remaining 200 students are counted in the "multiple disabilities" category, according to WSDS staff.

[8] Section 504, U.S.C. 794.

[9] Listen and Talk in Seattle enrolled 37 preschool students; the Northwest School for the Hearing Impaired in North Seattle enrolled 50 students in preschool through grade 8; and the Tucker-Maxon School in Portland, Oregon enrolled five Washington students.

Where do Washington's deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind K–12 students go to school?

Most of Washington's deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind special education students attend local public schools (see Exhibit 3). Over 90 percent of hard of hearing and deaf-blind K–12 students attend local public schools, and less than five percent attend a state residential school (in most cases, the Washington School for the Deaf, or WSD).[10] Deaf students are more likely than hard of hearing students to attend WSD: 20 percent of deaf K–12 students attend WSD, and 79 percent attend local public schools.

Exhibit 3
**Most Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind K–12 Special Education Students
Attend Local Public Schools**

Percent of students attending:
- Local public schools
- State residential school
- Other

Deaf (N=399): 78.9%, 20.1%, 1.0%
Hard of hearing (N=832): 97.6%, 1.7%, 0.7%
Deaf-blind (N=27): 92.6%, 3.7%, 3.7%

WSIPP 2007. Data source: IDEA Part B December 1, 2006 Child Count Report, compiled by OSPI. Includes K-12 special education students age 6-21. Excludes 504 students and students attending private schools. "Other" includes students in short-term detention facilities, correction facilities, in a home or hospital program, or who attend parochial/private schools with basic education services paid through private resources but special education/related services provided at public expense from a school district under a service plan.
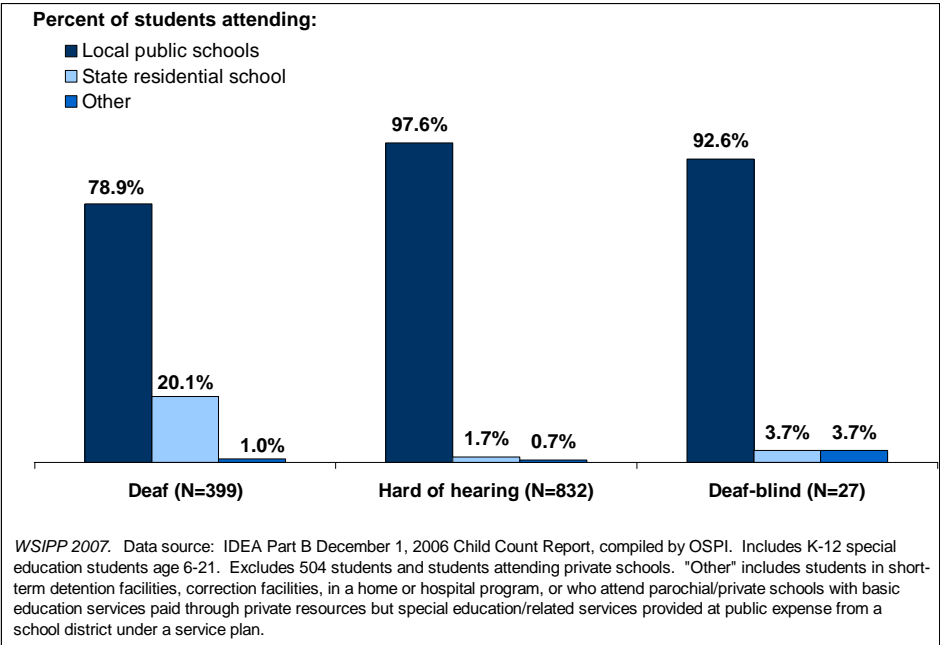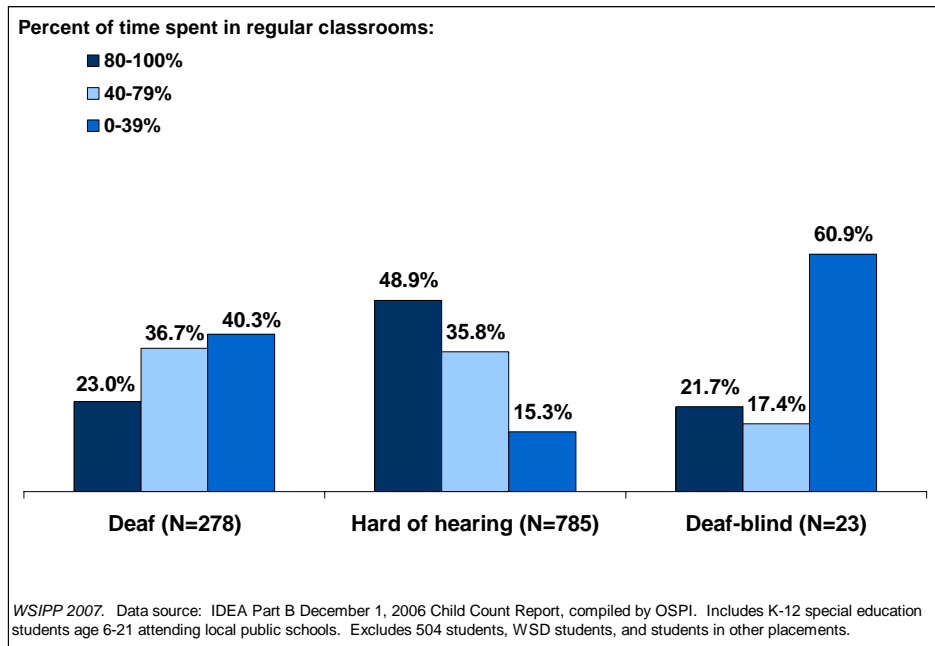
Exhibit 4 provides additional detail about special education students who attend local public schools. Most of these students spend part of the school day in regular classrooms and part of the day receiving specialized one-on-one instruction or in a special education classroom. Deaf-blind students spend less time in regular classrooms than both hard of hearing and deaf students. Hard of hearing students spend the most time in regular classrooms.

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[10] Students who are deaf-blind may attend either WSD or the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB), depending on their learning needs and IEPs.

Exhibit 4
**Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Special Education Students
Spend Time in Both Regular and Special Education Classrooms**

WSIPP 2007. Data source: IDEA Part B December 1, 2006 Child Count Report, compiled by OSPI. Includes K-12 special education students age 6-21 attending local public schools. Excludes 504 students, WSD students, and students in other placements.

Who provides early intervention and outreach services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children in Washington State?

Early intervention. The DSHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) administers the federally funded Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP).[11] For Washington children at risk for developmental delays, ITEIP provides early identification and evaluation of disabilities and determines eligibility for early intervention services.

Most ITEIP-funded services are provided through contracts with county-based Family Resource Coordinators (FRCs). FRCs help families develop Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and identify and access needed services.[12] Interventions include communication training for parents and children, support services for children with cochlear implants, hearing aid evaluation and dispensing, or other services. In the past year, 273 deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers were served through ITEIP.[13]

Outreach. In this report, "outreach" refers to a variety of services provided for parents, early intervention providers, preK–12 administrators and teachers, and deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children. Outreach can include technical assistance, such as training and consultation, and direct services to students, such as assessment and evaluation. There are two statewide providers of outreach: Washington Sensory Disabilities Services (WSDS) and the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD).

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[11] ITEIP is federally funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.
[12] For more information, see <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/iteip/>.
[13] Data provided by DSHS to Institute staff via email. The count includes children served between June 18, 2006, and June 18, 2007.

WSDS provides consultation and direct services to parents and school staff. WSDS staff help parents and schools identify appropriate assessments and develop IEPs, provide interpreter training, and educate instructional staff about the needs of children with hearing loss and how to plan programs for them.[14] WSDS is funded by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) as a state needs project using special education dollars.

The WSD outreach program provides technical assistance to parents and schools and direct services to students. WSD's outreach includes academic, psychoeducational, audiological, and speech-language assessments, ASL evaluations and classes, captioning services, educational interpreter training, a Family Infant Toddler Program, and a residential post-high school transition program.[15] WSD also oversees the Shared Reading Video Outreach Project (SRVOP), an interactive teleconferencing reading enrichment program. During the upcoming academic year, WSD plans to provide direct instruction to children in remote areas via distance learning. WSD recently partnered with Listen and Talk (a private school in Seattle) to provide consultative services to educational teams serving children with oral communication needs. WSD is a state agency separate from OSPI that also operates a residential and day school in Vancouver.[16]

What key issues impact the provision of educational services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students?

Language barriers. Children born with hearing losses are not fully exposed to oral language and are vulnerable to substantial language acquisition delays.[17] These delays can lead to poor academic performance and social isolation later in life. Language barriers can also arise for students whose hearing losses occur at older ages; these students may have difficulty hearing faint or distant speech, following classroom discussions, or recognizing subtle language complexities.

Different modes of communication. Whether deaf and hard of hearing children should attempt to learn to speak or use signed English or American Sign Language (ASL) is a highly charged historical debate. Research has not found any one communication or educational placement option to be more academically beneficial than others. There is research evidence, however, that early identification of hearing loss, coupled with interventions to help children develop language, can improve student outcomes.[18]

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[14] <http://www.wsdsonline.org/about/index.html>.

[15] <http://www.wsd.wa.gov/outreach/outreach_home.aspx>.

[16] RCW 72.40 (State schools for blind, deaf, sensory handicapped). The state general fund appropriation for WSD is $8,731,000 for FY 2008 and $9,015,000 for FY 2009. SHB 1128 § 616, Laws of 2007.

[17] Approximately 94 percent of deaf and hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents who speak orally. M. Karchmer & R. Mitchell. (2004). Chasing the mythical ten percent: Parental hearing status of deaf and hard of hearing students in the United States. *Sign Language Studies 4*(2): 138-163.

[18] Based on the Institute's review of the empirical research literature as well as a contracted review performed by a university researcher. See: S. Easterbrook. (2002). Modes of communication and education placement of children who are deaf and hard of hearing: A review of the efficacy literature. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. Available at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/WSD_SE_litr.pdf>.

In Washington State, deaf and hard of hearing students use a variety of communication modes, including ASL, signed English, and oral speech, sometimes in combination with one another.[19] Depending on students' communication preferences, school programs may specialize in a single mode of communication. Some deaf and hard of hearing students require educational interpreters to communicate with teachers, other students, and school staff.

Special education law and policy. Under federal law, educators determine what services special education students need in the Individual Education Program (IEP) planning process.[20] For most special education students, the law is interpreted to encourage inclusion in mainstream classrooms. For deaf and hard of hearing students, however, federal policy guidance directs school districts to provide a range of educational placement options and services to address these students' unique language and communication barriers.[21] School districts are required to provide students access to instruction in whichever mode of communication children and their parents choose.

Costs associated with providing educational services to a small, dispersed population. The small number and dispersion of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind K–12 students makes it difficult for schools to efficiently group students for instruction. In some cases, schools employ specialized staff (e.g., audiologist, speech and language pathologist, interpreter, teacher of the deaf) for a single deaf student. Often, this expertise is not locally available, especially in rural areas.

In addition to having staffing and cost implications, the low incidence of hearing loss causes many deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students to struggle to find a peer group and adult role models. This issue, as well as other challenges to educating deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students, was mentioned frequently by stakeholders consulted for this study, as summarized in the following section.

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[19] A 2002 Institute survey collected information about 776 deaf and hard of hearing students in Washington public schools, including WSD. The percentage of students using each communication mode was as follows: ASL 37 percent, Signed English 6 percent, Pidgin Signed English (a hybrid of ASL and Signed English) 20 percent, Oral English 32 percent, and Combination of speech and sign 7 percent. Deaf students were more likely to use ASL and hard of hearing students were more likely to speak orally. See: B. McLain & A. Pennucci. (2002). *Washington School for the Deaf: Models of education and service delivery.* Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 02-06-2202.

[20] Federal special education law was most recently re-authorized in 2004. *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.* 20 USC 1400.

[21] U.S. Department of Education. (1992). *Notice of Policy Guidance,* 34 CFR § 300.551.

II. STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: SYSTEM WEAKNESSES

This section summarizes the views of stakeholders consulted for this study. As noted earlier, the 2006 Legislature directed the Institute to "hire a meeting facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with a broad group of stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state."[22] The Institute hired Theresa B. Smith, Ph.D., and Robert I. Roth, M.A., to perform this task. Appendices A and B provide details about the meeting facilitators and meetings, focus groups, interviews, and surveys conducted. A total of 573 individuals, including parents, teachers, interpreters, administrators, and deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind adults, were consulted during the course of this study.

The stakeholder views summarized below are organized as follows. Stakeholder-identified system weaknesses are presented first, because participants focused primarily on "what is not working" during consultations. Topics are arranged thematically and in order of how frequently and strongly stakeholders expressed each view. The most commonly identified problems are presented first. Results for specific survey questions are provided in the narrative selectively for illustrative purposes (see Appendix B for all survey questions and results).

How to read this section

    Indented text indicates that the paragraph contains a stakeholder quote or anecdote. Quotes were selected to illustrate common themes in stakeholder consultations. The meetings, focus groups, and interviews are not verbatim. Survey responses are verbatim.

Stakeholders consulted during the course of this study identified the following weaknesses in statewide educational and support services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students:

- Lack of a coordinated system

- Limited availability of professional expertise and services in most areas of the state

- Widespread use of unqualified educational interpreters

- Isolation of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children in mainstream schools

- Inconsistent provision of information and services for parents of infants and toddlers

- Other Issues: Special challenges for subpopulations, lack of transition programs, and a disconnect between day-to-day practice and research.

Each of these issues is described below.

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[22] ESSB 6386 § 607 (12), Chapter 372, Laws of 2006.

Lack of a Coordinated System

Overall, and most uniformly, stakeholders said that there is no coordinated statewide system of educational and support services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children. Parents, teachers, support staff, and educational administrators collectively described a loose network of school and county-based programs supplemented by a small staff of statewide coordinators with no oversight authority.

> [Educational administrator] "What is missing is 'someone in charge': someone ultimately accountable for the quality of the education of all deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children throughout the state."

> [Parent] "There are early programs here in Seattle but what's available in Centralia? There is only one option…so the families are not empowered, and who chooses? There is no oversight. No one! So that is a big problem. No one does quality assessment, oversight, and assurance of the quality of professionals there."

The federal requirement for children to be served by local school districts, without a mandate for statewide coordination and oversight, can result in isolation of students, programs, and staff within those districts, according to many stakeholders. Collaboration among school districts was described by some educators as tenuous and dependent on individual administrative decisions.

As discussed below, stakeholders attributed a number of educational system weaknesses to the lack of a central authority that provides coordination and oversight, including: limited availability of professional expertise and services in most areas of the state; inconsistent provision of information and services for parents of infants and toddlers; isolation of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children in mainstream schools; widespread use of unqualified educational interpreters; and other issues, including a lack of transition programs, special challenges for subpopulations, and a disconnect between day-to-day practice and research.

Limited Availability of Professional Expertise and Services in Most Areas of the State

According to stakeholders, the need for statewide coordination is critical, because whether parents and students receive adequate educational and support programs depends largely on geography—with more quality programs available in urban areas—and individual parent or teacher motivation.

Many participants in this study stated that few instructional and support staff (including classroom teachers, public school administrators, audiologists, and family resource coordinators) in Washington State have sufficient expertise in deaf education. Pockets of resources were mentioned by stakeholders—WSDS, WSD, and isolated local programs such as a handful of local schools, two Educational Service Districts (171 and 112), Children's Hospital in Seattle,[23] and Listen and Talk, a private school in Seattle.[24] Many localities, however, do not have any expertise to address deaf student learning needs. Stakeholders say it is difficult to find qualified teachers, interpreters, and other professionals in rural Washington.

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[23] <http://www.seattlechildrens.org>.
[24] <http://www.listentalk.org/services.php>.

[Interpreter] "[A deaf child recently transferred into the school, and] the school administrators had to do something—the teachers had no ideas. They had to re-invent the wheel. Everyone is just doing what we can with one kid or two kids because they're so spread out, and the teachers have no experience."

[Special education administrator] "There are not enough certified Teachers of the Deaf either for K–8 or high school."

[Deaf adult] "I think everybody knows sign language and oral interpreters, but a lot of people don't know about FM [frequency modulated] systems and CART [computer assisted real time captioning/transcription].[25] That needs to be emphasized…not just ASL. If they want to do that, that's fine. But they need to know about these FM systems or they need to know there's CART."

Stakeholders expressed concern that affluent, urban parents are able to find and pay for private schools focused on teaching deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children, but rural families have no options other than to move, which not all families can afford.

[Special education administrator] When asked what she would do if she had a deaf child, she replied, "Move to Vancouver, and if I had means, I'd hire private tutors."

[Survey participant] "…as a former teacher I would flatly refuse to live in rural areas which means no support…shortage of qualified interpreters is a factor…school administration may mean well, but resources are scarce period."

Some stakeholders reported that occasionally professionals overstep their bounds (e.g., give advice in areas outside their expertise), with good intentions but lacking the understanding to be effective.

[Educational professional] "Often audiologists tend to see the deaf child first and give educational advice, but they're not trained for that. Hospitals should have deaf professionals meet parents, not audiologists, [who] give advice about what they don't know. Audiologists say 'Don't sign.'"

Some stakeholders, particularly deaf individuals, expressed concern that due to lack of expertise, deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children's educational progress and learning needs are inappropriately assessed or not assessed at all.

[Deaf adult] "There is no data on how the deaf kids are doing in mainstreaming. I want to make sure that the deaf kids are not waived from WASL. They tend to get waived because they pull down the scores of the hearing kids in the school. So what! I want to know how deaf children do in mainstreaming. We should have data, the same as for the hearing children."

[Deaf professional] "The WASL has really lowered the bar. The deaf kids are normed with disabled kids, and this all bleeds into the IEP process. If there were deaf adults involved in the classroom … it would be a huge improvement. There are 5th grade deaf children reading at a 1st grade level and that's seen as 'fine.' It's NOT fine."

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[25] Real time transcriptions of what is being said, often projected onto a screen in the front of the room or to an individual's laptop.

Some stakeholders stated that educators frequently have inappropriately low expectations for children with hearing loss.

> [Deaf-blind adult] "I volunteered for 2 weeks in a mainstream school as the teacher's aide. It was a deaf classroom and it really bothered me that the teacher treated the kids like babies. She let them interrupt a lot; they had parties and ice cream several times a week. They were being spoiled, not taught. It was fun but it was not education… This is not an isolated incident. I've discussed this with other deaf people who were mainstreamed, and they say that they've had that same experience."

> [Deaf-blind adult] "My own English was way below grade level when I was with the other deaf children in a self-contained class and that was frustrating, because I thought it was at grade level, and that my English was equal to that of hearing children. Then one time I asked my mom to help me write [a] 'thank you' letter to Grandma, and it struck her that my English was so weak, and she talked with me about why I didn't use proper grammar (this is when I was in high school). I told her 'That's what I learned in school,' so mom went in to talk with the people at school. She was upset because I'd been getting good grades. They responded that the policy was to set 6th grade level as the goal. Mom had me transferred to [a] hearing high school with a tutor, and my English improved. I still have to work on it, but English is important and I think the standards they have in deaf ed fails to teach the children English."

> [Mother] "We are currently in the IEP process with our school district, which is overdue because they cannot figure out what they are doing. … The goals for our IEP (draft) were written offensively low to me... They do not expect [my child] to succeed and they are not willing to push him so that he will be ready for kindergarten. They have written him off before they even begin with him."

Many parents and program administrators said that local school staff misunderstand the learning needs of hard of hearing children; these stakeholders believe that hard of hearing children are more likely to be overlooked or misdiagnosed by educators. Hard of hearing children are sometimes perceived as "slow to respond" when called on, or "slow to catch on" to what people are talking about, because they can hear some, but not all, of conversations. As a result, educators may unconsciously begin to think of the hard of hearing children as stubborn, slow, or recalcitrant.

> [Deaf educational professional] "The hard of hearing children are mislabeled as learning disabled or as having a behavior disorder. By the time the hearing loss is correctly identified…it's 'too late.'"

> [Educational administrator] "We feel that parents and teachers should be well informed about behavioral actions of children in the home and classroom that would be indicative of hearing loss. As far as we know, there has been no effort to require speech teachers in educational teacher training to spend time on the effects of hearing loss upon the behavior of students. Maybe some school teachers should help develop some brochure or training program that would help both parents and teachers identify hearing disabilities much earlier than at present?"

Similarly, deaf children with cochlear implants can hear better in most cases, but these children still function as hard of hearing and need language training and technical support for the implant. Stakeholders said that parents and educators sometimes do not understand this need, and, in these cases, the child may not receive adequate support.

> [Deaf educational professional] "A cochlear implant does not give a child normal hearing no matter how effective it is. This is not generally understood."

Some stakeholders discussed deaf and hard of hearing children who face additional disabilities such as blindness, motor function impairments, autism, health problems, behavioral issues, or other conditions. Children with additional disabilities often need specialized programming.

> [Teacher of the Deaf] "Deaf-blind children [have particularly intensive needs.] There needs to be a system to explain and work with the physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, etc. There are more professionals involved. Deaf-blind children do better when the professionals all understand the deafness part."

> [Deaf-blind adult] "For children with Usher Syndrome,[26] there is a big change over time in what they are able to do in terms of vision. As young kids, they can see well, but as they grow older, they can't see at night, they can't see on the sides,[27] and the children themselves and their classmates adapt. But the system doesn't get it. The children are labeled deaf, and there is no way currently for the system to continuously adjust for the continuum of needs. The children are effectively 'tracked' one way and there they stay."

> [Deaf-blind adult] "In 2005, I worked as an employment placement specialist and had a deaf-blind client who wanted to work as an assistant in a classroom for deaf-blind children. The person was fully deaf and blind, and the school was very resistant. I didn't understand that. Why could they not take advantage of his expertise? For example, we met a little deaf-blind girl with [cognitive] disabilities…but no communication. The deaf-blind adult suggested tactile cues, taught the professionals gestures, etc. The teachers really didn't have a clue. They tried to teach the children all the regular activities like music, etc., but there were no detectable vibrations. My point is that the teachers did not understand what tactile means."

Additionally, many teachers are, according to some stakeholders, not as fluent as they should be in ASL, Signed Exact English (SEE), or other communication methods used by deaf and hard of hearing students.

> [Deaf adult] "We need teachers to have fluency in ASL. Some states have an evaluator who tests teachers' ASL, but we do not have that. … Teachers must be able to understand their students. If not, the children are evaluated based on their speech skills only. There are many high expectations from teachers but not regarding their own language fluency."

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[26] A genetic recessive trait causing both hearing loss and vision loss. There are several clinical types and children may be born profoundly deaf and then gradually lose their vision, or be born hard of hearing and gradually lose more hearing and vision.
[27] Progressive loss of retinal cells causes a loss of night vision or the ability to adapt to changes in light levels and a gradual loss of peripheral field of vision.

Widespread Use of Unqualified Educational Interpreters

According to stakeholders throughout the state, and especially in rural areas, there are multiple critical issues that combine to make educational interpreting for deaf and hard of hearing students almost universally inadequate. These issues are as follows:

- No standards for interpreter qualifications or performance
- Insufficient numbers of certified/qualified interpreters
- Insufficient pay to attract and retain qualified interpreters

No standards for interpreter qualifications or performance. Stakeholders repeatedly cited the lack of standards for interpreters for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children as a major failing in Washington's educational services. Participants in focus groups and interviews cited lack of skill, lack of training to work with children, poor professional boundaries, and a tendency to simply do the work for the children. Over two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that establishing statewide definitions and standards for educational interpreters is a very high priority (52.7 percent) or important (17 percent).

> [Deaf-blind adult] "As a client advocate, I've been involved in some IEP meetings and, from my experience, the biggest problem is quality of interpreters. ... It's not fair to deaf or hard of hearing students, because [interpreters] lack the skills to do the job. Beyond this, they have no professional sense of boundaries and frequently step over the line. They mother the children."

> [Deaf adult] "The interpreters are not qualified. They don't know their role. They function as an interpreter [and as a] teacher's aide, or they work with the hearing kids half the time, so they're not available to interpret. They don't have enough skills to really interpret."

> [Deaf educational professional] "The interpreter should not be giving input during the IEP about the child's education. They're using the interpreters to assess the deaf child's progress."

Some interpreters reported that regular classroom teachers may not fully understand the role of the educational interpreter for deaf and hard of hearing students.

> [Interpreter] "The issue of interpreters is a mess. For example, there was the high school teacher who decided that the deaf kids needed to be weaned off the interpreters—she thought the interpreter was a 'crutch.' It was a total lack of understanding of what it means to be deaf and what the function of an interpreter is."

Insufficient numbers of certified/qualified interpreters. There are not enough trained educational interpreters for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children in Washington to meet demand. As of June 2007, there were an estimated 270 interpreter positions in Washington's public schools and few qualified individuals to fill them: there are only 193 certified interpreters statewide and most of these individuals work in community settings with adults.[28] Interpreters are hired to work in colleges and universities, at professional conferences, workshops and

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[28] Estimates provided by WSDS staff.

meetings, in courts, at hospitals, and increasingly for the video-relay-service (VRS) or phone interpreting. In the online survey 46.7 percent of respondents cited the availability of qualified educational interpreters as a significant problem and an additional 16.8 percent cited it as somewhat of a problem.

Because of the shortage of qualified interpreters, stakeholders report that schools hire who they can and group the children to use the interpreters "more efficiently."

> [Interpreter] "The interpreters are marginally qualified, or qualified for something else. Some of the interpreters are with the same kid for 10 years.

> [Special education administrator] "My biggest struggle is finding interpreters and staff to work with the deaf and hard of hearing kids. There are just not enough interpreters, especially at the elementary level, but there we can group them. But later they're spread out and you can't really group them. … So, we need more training programs and on-going training for interpreters."

> [Regular classroom teacher] The "interpreter" for the deaf child in her room sat in the corner studying the sign language book because she did not have a large enough vocabulary to interpret what this 2nd grade teacher said to the children.

Insufficient pay to attract and retain qualified interpreters. Certified interpreters in the community (hospitals, courts, etc.) are paid $50 to $60 per hour, compared with $11 to $22 in local schools. Educators say that schools cannot compete with this pay, and some qualified interpreters say they would prefer to work in schools if it offered a professional salary.

> [Interpreter] "I was probably as qualified as a person could be to do this work but was unable to do so in Washington because I could not earn a decent living. This is a problem."

> [Interpreter] "Of course, I have to say the pay of interpreters isn't working. In many situations the pay deters very skilled interpreters because of the opportunities to make a lot of money elsewhere, and school districts are left with interpreter shortages and are forced to hire interpreters with [fewer] qualifications because they are willing to accept a lower standard of pay."

Isolation of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Children in Mainstream Schools

Virtually all deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind adults who participated in stakeholder consultations, many parents, and over half of survey respondents emphasized the need for children with hearing loss to have a peer group and adult role models.

> [Deaf student] "My age is 13 years old. I was born in Ukraine and my mom adopted me. I don't have hearing until I was 4 1/2 years old [when I received a cochlear implant]. I went to Northwest School for five years and I [attended] Northwest School because many deaf friends and teachers to teach me English. Then we moved to Oak Harbor. And I mainstreamed for four years. It's hard to be the only deaf boy. I saw two closed-captioned movies and many not captioned. Some teachers don't like my interpreter, because they think it bothers the other kids. There are not enough good interpreters. The teachers do not know what to do and how to teach and help me. My interpreter had to teach me and plan and teach me. I don't like school because there are bullies who

think I'm dumb because I'm different, because I have different speech. I am home schooled now."

Hard of hearing children were described by stakeholders as frequently overlooked. The fact that they can hear some masks what they miss. They often cannot hear the announcements over the public address system in the schools, the rapid-fire conversations of peers on the playground, or what classmates say in response to teachers' questions. Some adults who are hard of hearing report having felt they were the only ones making mistakes, because they did not have access to what the teachers said to the other students.

[Moderator] So you were the only one [hard of hearing child in the class]?
[Hard of hearing adult] "I think most of us were [solitary], probably, from kindergarten to the end of college."

[Deaf adult] "I never felt like I belonged. Every time I spoke with or without an interpreter, one word or many, it was like stopping traffic—unwanted excessive attention."

[Deaf adult] "The deaf kids are in the mainstream but they don't socialize with hearing kids. Deaf kids are 'odd'—social outcasts like the kids who use drugs. If you have a really large group [of deaf kids] and a lot of diversity otherwise, then the kids tend to be more broadminded, accepting of diversity in general, less judgmental."

Many parents, educators, and deaf and hard of hearing adults emphasized the role of socialization and deaf role models in language learning and academic success.

[Deaf graduate student] "Deaf kids need to learn social skills and you do that through socializing. … They need a place where they can really be involved with each other, on their own, as cheerleaders, athletes, in the academic bowls. … You need a critical mass to do that. So, all the way through K–12 the groups need to be big. They need to have Deaf teachers and administrators. They also need an education. It needs to be a good school. If not, then there's no motivation. After I left [high school] ... there were fewer deaf kids in the program and you could watch them be dispirited. They were too isolated and there was less motivation to succeed. Peer groups build excitement and spirit. It affects achievement."

[Survey participant] When asked if social integration was a problem, the participant responded, "YES, YES!!! Being the ONLY deaf child with [only] adult interpreters to interact with is NOT a good idea."

[Deaf-blind adult] "I've had all the different school experiences offered for deaf children. I have been in a mainstream program with other deaf and hard of hearing children, I've been alone, the only deaf person in the school. I've gone to a deaf school, to an oral-only program, and to a deaf program. Learning directly from the teacher, you learn more. Whether the person is deaf and signs or communicates orally (I can't lip-read now because I'm blind) but direct communication works best. It's important that deaf children learn from their friends too (signers) deaf to deaf. The point is that communication is there and thus an opportunity to participate fully in school, to be involved in sports, to develop leadership skills, to be involved in drama or theater. With deaf teachers and peers it works."

[Deaf adult] "We went to ODAS [Oral Deaf Adult Society] functions in California …Alexander Graham Bell Association gatherings. That was a blast. That was really fun. We [would] go to these potlucks sometimes once a month. And there were a lot of other oral deaf kids and adults there and I remember it being just really relaxing and fun. Because everybody was lip-reading and everybody was talking up a streak and everybody made sure everybody else could hear what was going on. It was fun."

[Mother] "So, I'll just make a comment about the social aspects of deafness. And that's been the most heartbreaking part of raising—for me—raising my children, because they have been alienated and isolated only because of their disability. They are wonderful, dear, sweet kids. It's heartbreaking."
[Father] "Which is why the Deaf culture says you should be in the Deaf culture, not in the hearing culture. … Because [the deaf children] will not be socially isolated, they will be accepted. And we have known people who took their children for that reason out of schools, public schools, and sent them to Vancouver so that they would not feel isolated and be a part of a social world."

[Deaf adult] "Having deaf people in the classroom (e.g. as a teacher's aide) especially in rural (eastern) Washington [is key]. The children need role models. The parents need to see a deaf adult and be able to talk with deaf people adult to adult."

[Deaf adult] "There are not enough role models. There is not enough direct communication with adults and peers. ... It creates the belief that the deaf child is broken and cannot achieve—it puts the blame on the child rather than the setting."
[Having deaf role models is important because] "it reduces the fear…role models provide knowledge, [and] information."

[Deaf-blind adult] "In the mainstream program the thing that saved me as a deaf person was that the school I attended had a deaf teacher there, and I had a deaf brother. That meant that I had access to ASL and to communication there. The deaf teacher was not my teacher but he provided a role model, a language model. If I had had more of that maybe it would have been different for me. Because if the deaf child gets equal access to information, equal and direct communication, if there is a solid core of deaf to deaf communication and connection, if there is opportunity to communicate ASL to ASL, then the deaf child can learn English."

[Teacher of the Deaf] "The children in mainstream classes are isolated—this causes a language delay—a learning delay—and decay. They never develop critical social skills. It affects their self-esteem."

[Deaf adult] "If there are deaf adult role models, then the kids don't have to wait for their parents to learn sign language to have a language model. Parents can see the difference between fluent sign language and the kind often used by interpreters—they can see how important it is to be visual, to use their faces to communicate."

[Survey participant] "Social thinking and academics cannot be separated. In order to understand a character's perspective in a book, a student must also be able to understand their peers' perspectives in times of social conflict, etc."

Other stakeholders raised concerns about inappropriate age grouping of children, because there are so few to spread among available professionals such as interpreters and Teachers of the Deaf.

> [Teacher of the Deaf] "I'd like to see children grouped appropriately because then the children get a better education."

> [Deaf adult] "There seems to be a shortage of interpreters. I realize that problem is common. What bothers me about this is that they [put] different aged kids in the same classroom. Deaf children don't benefit from that…. In [one rural eastern Washington district's] schools there are two deaf kids of different ages that are put together with one interpreter. That's not good! That's really bad! I understand people talking about the need for deaf educators and interpreters, but where do we get those people in Yakima? The resources are thin. It's a challenge to meet those needs."

Parents of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children value connections with families facing similar challenges.

> [Mother] "…one of the most powerful things for us was parent-to-parent interaction. More important than any professional that I met were parents with kids older than my kids who had been doing it for a number of years … there couldn't be a group of parents who would be happier to talk. Since we've been through it, we have so much to share … That doesn't cost anything except a pot of coffee, maybe."
> [Father] "I totally agree … The best resource is that there are people who have been through it. And the experience we had at John Tracy [Clinic], in California…was one of the afternoons was spent with a panel of parents…. We were all with…young children, and questions [were] asked, and the information that those parents gave us went a long way to assuring us that we still had normal children, and that they would grow up and be able to drive, and…the things that you're told or you think can't happen, the parents can tell you will happen."

Inconsistent Provision of Information and Services for Parents of Infants and Toddlers

Many stakeholders, particularly parents and providers of early intervention services, emphasized the importance of providing early intervention—language development training in particular—as early as possible to improve student outcomes. These individuals identified the following as weaknesses in this part of Washington's educational system:

- Lack of comprehensive, unbiased information and service referrals
- No consistent follow-up after diagnosis
- Non-mandatory newborn hearing screening

Lack of comprehensive, unbiased information and service referrals. Many stakeholders, particularly parents, stated that comprehensive unbiased information about communication options and available services is not consistently available to parents of children with a newly identified hearing loss. Stakeholders frequently reported that they received incomplete or biased information in favor of a certain mode of communication. Two-thirds of survey respondents cited this issue as either a significant problem or somewhat of a problem.

[Deaf education professional] "Parents hear about the choices but are not really given the information they need about the implications [of each choice]. The emphasis on speech sometimes creates serious delays in cognitive and intellectual development and an image of deaf people as being unable to learn."

Many parents consulted for this report believe that service providers' personal biases in favor of a particular mode of communication determined what options they learned about. Some parents who chose to teach their children oral English reported having been steered towards ASL by service providers. Some who chose sign language reported having been steered towards cochlear implants and training in speech and listening.

[Teacher of the Deaf] "From 1980–2006, I was an early intervention teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students, and one of the frustrations I had was that the communication options available for students were totally dependent on where they lived. Families who chose ASL in the areas of larger cities could usually access those programs, but sometimes oral students and students with cochlear implants were directed to ASL classrooms. Other families were directed to developmental centers where no one was trained to work with deaf children. It all depended on where the families lived and whom their school districts contracted with. I feel that we need to be sure that families are given all the options for their children, and that they have access to professionals who are knowledgeable about hearing loss, hearing aids, and cochlear implants."

[Survey participant] "…I am concerned that the only option parents may be offered are solutions that do not include the community and culture of Deaf people. Because implants even in very young children are successful only 40% of the time, if parents are not given a well rounded list of options and support contacts we are neglecting 60% of deaf children for whom cochlear implants don't work."

Lack of follow-up services. Once the diagnosis is made, there is no consistent follow-up to ensure families connect with appropriate services, according to many stakeholders consulted for this study. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that lack of follow-up is a significant problem or somewhat of a problem. For example, three families in Sunnyside said they have done everything they know how to do to help their children (including surgery to implant cochlear devices), but the parents remain unable to communicate with their children and do not know how or where to find help.

A lack of comprehensive information and available support services was reported by stakeholders regardless of what kind of method of communication is preferred, including Signed Exact English, American Sign Language, oral English, or other methods. Individuals who attended town halls or focus groups in rural Washington especially emphasized this issue.

The following quote presents one educator's list of what parents and children need from educators:

> [Teacher of the Deaf] "Parents need:
> - To be a part of the educational team,
> - Opportunities to learn together with the professionals about the [their] child and about other deaf children
> - To see and meet deaf adult role models
> - A safe place to talk about it all
> - Home visits from Teachers of the Deaf
> - Counseling
> - Hearing teachers [that] model respect and acceptance of all ways of communicating
>
> The deaf children need:
> - Birth to three support (opportunities to learn language directly, i.e., not through an interpreter)
> - Experienced teachers
> - Transition to pre-school (support)
> - Good pre-schools
> - Transition from pre-school to school"

Because these supports are not available statewide, many stakeholders commented that deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children are not prepared to enter school on a par with their hearing peers. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents cited preparation for entering school on an equal footing with hearing children as a significant problem (45.7 percent) or somewhat of a problem (18.5 percent).

> [Survey participant] "How can we expect deaf, HOH [hard of hearing] and DB [deaf-blind] students to have equal footing without access to language development?"

> [Survey participant] "Let's be real here…those who are born deaf or have deafness from early childhood are not going to have much luck catching up with language THEY CANNOT HEAR!!! It takes not only a good teaching team, but VERY dedicated parents!"

Early intervention specialists and parents who have successfully accessed quality services are, compared with the stakeholders quoted above, more optimistic. These stakeholders described recent improvements in technology, data, research, and service coordination and believe that these steps will improve student outcomes in the future.

Hearing screening. Newborn hearing screening is not mandated in Washington, although screening rates have improved in recent years and as of 2005, 94 percent of infants were screened for hearing loss.[29] However, stakeholders stated that some screening, when it occurs, sometimes produces inaccurate results. Some stakeholders reported that babies are not consistently identified as having a significant hearing loss until after they have missed significant language learning time. A few parents reported great difficulty getting a clear diagnosis.

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[29] Screening rates improved from 4 percent of newborns in 1998 to 88 percent in 2004 and 94 percent in 2005. D. Doyle. (2007). *Universal newborn hearing screening in Washington State.* Kent, Washington: Department of Health, Genetic Services Section, p. 3. <http://www.sboh.wa.gov/Meetings/2007/03_14/Documents/Tab06c_HearingNBS_DOHReport.pdf>.

[Focus group couple] "…what really needs a lot of attention is diagnosis. We wanted to check [our son], and they said…he was fine…. My mother would say something's not right, check his hearing. We said he had it checked and it was okay. And, because he was so alert or responsive…it caused us to delay accurate diagnosis. And when...he was [finally] diagnosed, I called the university research program that he was in and [told them that] clearly, they were wrong."
[Wife] "He was three standard deviations away from the mean. But they said that was normal in a three-month-old."
[Husband] "Well, they said it wasn't reliable."
[Wife] "But they never even told us, hey, watch it."

[Deaf-blind adult] "There are three deaf-blind offspring in my family (three out of five) and our parents still do not sign. When my oldest deaf-blind brother was born he was clearly deaf, but the experts did not recognize his vision loss and decided the issue was cognitive. They diagnosed him as mentally retarded and that perception impacted all three of us. My parents accepted the diagnosis and moved on. They believed the doctor, and treated us all accordingly. My brother started out in classes for mentally delayed children in the public school system, but the teacher recognized that he was just deaf, that was all. Unfortunately, the damage to him emotionally was awful and somewhat for us too, but less so. In public school they recognized that still, there was something else wrong. Because of the misdiagnosis there was no focus on language development."

Other participants in consultations reported similar experiences.

[Survey participant] "Only because we were in Oregon [where hearing screening is mandated] at the time of our first child's birth did we catch this. Her loss (at the time) was mild to moderate, so it could have been a very long time until we caught it. And then how far behind would she have been? I shudder to think. The early screening has saved us untold amounts of time, grief, worry, anxiety and money."

[Survey participant] "In our case both my children were below their peers when entering school. My son was not diagnosed until 5 years of age, and little was known when he was put in a mainstreamed kindergarten class and entire school year without any services. My daughter's speech was significantly delayed and still is at age 7."

While some stakeholders identified non-mandatory hearing screening as a problem, 20 percent of respondents to the online survey indicated that this is not a problem at all. Some participants may have indicated that the lack of mandatory screening is not a problem because many believed that newborn hearing screening is already mandatory in Washington State.

Other Issues: Special Challenges for Subpopulations, Lack of Transition Programs, and Lack of Connections to Research

Other issues less commonly mentioned by stakeholders include special challenges for non-English speaking and American Indian families, a lack of transition programs for high school-age students, and a disconnect between research and practice.

Special challenges for students from diverse cultures. The unmet needs of children from Spanish-speaking families were mentioned by stakeholders in Vancouver (the parent group), staff at WSD, town hall participants in Ellensburg and Pasco, and professionals in the Tri-Cities. During the focus group with Spanish-speaking families in Sunnyside, the parents emphasized how much they wanted to learn sign language to communicate with their children. The mothers had traveled an hour each way, once a week, to Yakima to take sign language classes but this was not enough to become proficient, and fathers who were working during the day could not attend.

A few stakeholders noted that Russian immigrants compose a significant minority of the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children in the greater Seattle area.

Some stakeholders raised concerns that American Indian deaf and hard of hearing children in particular receive inadequate or no services.

> [Educational professional] Concern was raised about reaching American Indian children who are deaf, particularly those who live on reservations outside of the public K–12 system: "How do we access that part of the population?"

Lack of transition programs from school to employment and/or college. The transition from high school to college, or directly to work, is a challenge, and post-high school transition programs specialized for this population should be more widely available, according to a few stakeholders.

A disconnect between day-to-day practice and research. According to one stakeholder, one result of the failure to coordinate expertise statewide and nationally is a disconnect between research and practice.

> [Teacher of the Deaf] "Unless you have the structure, there is no systematic way to connect the researchers and the practitioners— there's no way to request research, to ask pertinent questions, and no coordinated way to promote results. If it were coordinated, it would be inspirational to the teachers. Teachers need that inspiration to educate themselves and each other, to utilize current research."

Some stakeholders also stated that there is a lack of appropriate university training within the state for both interpreters and Teachers of the Deaf.

III. STAKEHOLDER VIEWS: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND CURRENT SYSTEM STRENGTHS

While parents, educators, interpreters, administrators, and current and former students all primarily focused on Washington's educational system weaknesses during consultations, they also identified some system strengths and had suggestions for improving educational services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students statewide.

The topics discussed below are arranged thematically and in order of how frequently and strongly stakeholders expressed each view. The most commonly identified strategies are presented first. Results for specific survey questions are provided in the narrative selectively for illustrative purposes (see Appendix B for all survey questions and results).

How to read this section

> Indented text indicates that the paragraph contains a stakeholder quote or anecdote. Quotes were selected to illustrate common themes in stakeholder consultations. The meetings, focus groups, and interviews are not verbatim. Survey responses are verbatim.

Stakeholder-Suggested Strategies to Improve Educational Services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Students

- Charge a single entity with authority for coordinating services and overseeing program quality and outcomes

- Develop regional programs

- Develop statewide teacher and interpreter standards

- Strengthen early identification and service requirements

- Expand resources for technology-based supports

Charge a single entity with authority for coordinating services and overseeing program quality and outcomes. Stakeholders uniformly described the deaf education system as fragmented and inadequate. Several stakeholders recommended that the state develop and maintain stronger linkages among the various agencies and schools that provide educational and support services to deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children. In the online survey, 79 percent of respondents named continuous program support from birth through K–12 as a very high priority. This item was the highest rated priority on the survey.

> [Survey participant] "Before we mandate, we have to devise a system and plan how to implement follow up services. We need to learn from other states—most have

mandated services, then found intense struggles they did not foresee. Let's plan and build to ensure success. It will require a lot of coordination."

[Deaf educational professional] "There should be an advisory committee to OSPI or to the legislature—perhaps a commission—[to provide] some oversight and a way to set minimum standards."

[Teacher of the Deaf] "It needs to be coordinated. Arizona sets a good example. There is the Arizona School for the Deaf (ASD), Phoenix School for Deaf Children, a center at Flagstaff and one more on the Navajo Reservation. It's all a part of one system. Then they know how to vet professionals. They organize the services; it's coordinated… Individuals have tried but these efforts have been disorganized and that is dispiriting. Who is there to take leadership? We need leadership. We have had excellent individual professionals, teachers, but they have not had any support. They've had to go it alone and eventually some get discouraged or burned out. Parents, too, there are good parents who fight for their kids and get services provided but when the kids leave the school the program deteriorates."

While many stakeholders agreed that a central authority over deaf education is needed, there was not agreement regarding where oversight authority should be placed or how enforcement of program quality and outcomes should be implemented. Three possibilities were identified during stakeholder consultations: (1) the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) through Washington Sensory Disability Services (WSDS); (2) the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD); and (3) a new special state-level commission with representatives from various parts of the educational system.

Exhibit 5 on the following page summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the first two options that were discussed during stakeholder consultations. Some individuals suggested that a partnership between the two agencies could build on the strengths of both agencies. Many stakeholders said that any state-authorized oversight agency should be prohibited from promoting one communication method over another. A few stakeholders further suggested that the oversight agency should have enforcement authority so that is it not simply another layer of bureaucracy for parents, students, and educators to navigate.

Exhibit 5
Stakeholder Views Regarding Two Options for
Deaf Education System Oversight

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Washington Sensory Disabilities Services **(WSDS, at OSPI)**	✓ OSPI implements state educational policy ✓ OSPI has frequent, regular communication with school districts ✓ WSDS has expertise in deaf education ✓ WSDS provides technical assistance to parents, interpreters, and schools	✓ There are many competing priorities within OSPI ✓ OSPI and WSDS do not provide direct services to students
Washington School for the Deaf **(WSD)**	✓ WSD has expertise in deaf education ✓ WSD provides technical assistance to parents, interpreters, and schools ✓ WSD provides direct services to students	✓ WSD is not part of the K–12 system under OSPI ✓ WSD has historically focused on ASL-based communication

Develop regional programs. Some stakeholders suggested that the state mandate "regional" strategies including regional instructional centers, placement of regional coordinators at Educational Service Districts (ESDs), and/or cross-district collaboration. A few educational professionals also suggested that the state figure out how to offer incentives for district administrators to collaborate: to pool children and professional resources and provide instruction of deaf children in larger groups.

> [Deaf educational professional] "There's a need for centralization, regionalization, for community. It makes sense, because that way you can distribute the professional resources much more efficiently and effectively."

> [Interpreter] "It would be wonderful to have a regional program. That would be healthier. You'd have the numbers—for students, for staff, for interpreters. Edmonds was a wonderful example of how it can go. Here in our [rural] area of the state, it feels like choices are WSD or isolation in a mainstream program."

> [Teacher of the Deaf] "… the teachers inspire each other. They can share strategies. The district can hire skilled interpreters. The children with implants are better able to get support and therefore better able to use their implants. Parents will not have to fight because it will be understood."

> [Deaf adult] "The issue was paying so many different interpreters and speech therapists. There are so many different professionals. It's better to pull them together in one program rather than having them separate to manage the money."

> [Deaf adult] "Birth to three children must have language! Now, the kids who live in Federal Way can't go to Highline because Federal Way set up their own program last

fall. But if the family wanted ASL or a bilingual program, it was impossible because of district boundaries."

[Deaf adult] "WSDS has been working with interpreters on strategies for improving educational interpreters in public school. The council has agreed on a regional strategy with a regular manager in each region to assure communication is appropriate, that the interpreters are qualified, and that there is a match to the kid. We do not think that having a separate, school-by-school, or district-by-district approach works."

Some stakeholders believe that creating sustainable regional programs is a second step following the establishment of a clear statewide authority for deaf education.

Develop statewide teacher and interpreter standards. One interpreter summarized frequently expressed views about how to improve educational interpreting in Washington State.

[Interpreter] "The interpreter classification at all school districts should be changed from classified to certified and more expectations for education should follow. Second, the pay for all interpreters in educational settings should come from a state or national fund so individual schools aren't punished for having deaf students. The quality of interpreters that school districts are able to hire depends often on where a school is and how much money they have, leaving rural schools with little to no options for hiring. And finally, standards and expectations for deaf and hard or hearing students need to be raised substantially, and there needs to be educators working directly with this population, skilled and knowledgeable to give students the tools they need to achieve these standards."

There is also, several stakeholders emphasized, a need for standards and training for Teachers of the Deaf. Stakeholders want training specifically focused on the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children, not special education in general.

Stakeholders described a need for services that span all communication strategies. Educational programs, stakeholders said, should not have a bias; ideally, teachers would be prepared to work with all kinds of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind children, regardless of parents' choice of communication method (including fluency in ASL, SEE, and support for oral children with cochlear implants).

Some stakeholders reported that they have heard that a program to train Teachers of the Deaf will be established in Vancouver. A few raised concerns that there will not be sufficient preparation in ASL and SEE as well as the oral approach in this program.

Strengthen early identification and service requirements. Many stakeholders suggested that the state strengthen early intervention for deaf and hard of hearing children through the following actions:

- Offer in-home instruction in communication and education strategies for families with birth to five-year-old children;
- Increase funding for statewide outreach programs; and
- Mandate early hearing screening and follow-up services for newborn babies.

Many families consulted during this study, particularly those who speak Spanish as a first language, expressed a desire for communication training provided in the home.

> [Survey participant] "We had decided to use sign with our children following our daughters' hard of hearing diagnosis (both our kids are hard of hearing). Both children accelerated fast. Once we learned the basics finding a sign class locally and affording one was a significant problem and still is today. Not only for our family but for many families in our area."

> [Survey participant] "Despite there being programs like PIP,[30] MANY parents of deaf children that sign never learn sign themselves. After the child is 3, there is no longer even the option of PIP. Then the only way to learn is to pay for classes. Children need to have communication at home, for their emotional, spiritual and physical growth."

> [Survey participant] "Where can we get this? I can find classes for adults but not for the family."

> [Survey participant] "Options are limited to high population areas."

> [Survey participant] "Early is okay but we need more in-home things."

> [Survey participant] "I would love more for the birth-3 age in terms of opportunities to be immersed in sign language classes or groups."

Some stakeholders specifically suggested that the state increase funding for both WSDS and WSD outreach services and early intervention. Others suggested the state needs to increase resources for educational services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students in general. Just over half (51 percent) of survey respondents indicated that budgeting of sufficient funds for deaf education is a significant problem.

A few stakeholders recommended that the legislature mandate infant hearing screening in hospitals throughout the state; others indicated that mandated screening is only useful if there are adequate follow-up services. Many stakeholders consulted believed, however, that this screening is already mandated in Washington, and 21 percent of survey respondents indicated that newborn hearing screening is "not a problem."

Increase resources for technology-based supports. Some stakeholders, particularly those from rural areas, expressed the view the state should provide increased resources to school districts to expand technology-based support services, such as the Shared Video Reading Online Project (SVROP). Other ideas mentioned by stakeholders included ensuring that each school building has video-conferencing capability, FM equipment, other assistive listening devices, and accessible media (e.g., DVDs and videos with captioning).

> [Survey participant] "There are some wonderful programs and classes at the Washington School for the Deaf, but the services should be expanded and increased."

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[30] Parent Infant Program at the Seattle Hearing Speech and Deafness Center.

Stakeholder-Identified System Strengths

The following resources were cited by stakeholders as strengths in the current system of education for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students.

- The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD)
- Shared Video Reading Online Program (overseen by WSD)
- Washington Sensory Disabilities Services (funded by OSPI)
- Individual Education Programs, motivated parents, and individual professionals
- Options (where available)

The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD). In every town hall meeting and some focus groups and interviews, the state residential school was mentioned as a valuable resource in the state system. Families in rural parts of the state especially identified WSD as beneficial for their children, both academically and socially. Some parents noted that their children's growing desire for a peer group as they reached adolescence contributed to their decision to place their children at WSD.

> [Mother] "My son is a junior, and this is his second year at WSD. It's been a life-saving place for him. He was ostracized in mainstream and brutalized in public school."

> [Mother] "I have a deaf son who is 15. He just started his first year at WSD. He loves it and had been mainstreamed his whole life. In mainstream, he was pushed to the side and stuck in a room with a bunch of other deaf children. Every time I walked in, they were chit chatting and messing around. I'd get IEP reports and his reading skills and math skills were very low! He isn't disabled in any other way. He just can't hear. I didn't understand. He doesn't have a mental disability. Because he can't hear, why can't he do what other children do in mainstream. … It took me this long to let go. The changes I've seen are remarkable. He's in a community of people he's comfortable with."

> [Deaf-blind adult] "It was not perfect, no, but I went to a regular public school with no interpreter up until 6th grade. What worked for me there? Nothing really, until I also went to the deaf school. Then I began to get an education. They allowed me to go to the nearby mainstream program, with an interpreter, and a note-taker, but for everything else I was able to be with other deaf children. So, the point is that what works is a combination of deaf school social life, role models, and direct communication with public school curriculum, time to be in the mainstream. That way, the deaf children have time with peers in the dorm, social life, and can participate in sports in addition to an appropriate level of academic challenge in the public school."

Shared Reading Video Outreach Project (SVROP). The SVROP uses a videoconferencing system in local school districts and educational service districts to offer a reading enhancement program to deaf and hard of hearing children, their families, and educators. Students, parents and teachers who had access to this program were universally positive in stakeholder consultations conducted for this report.

Washington Sensory Disabilities Services (WSDS). WSDS is described by stakeholders—particularly local school teachers and administrators—as a valuable statewide program. Their

work was cited by some teachers as direly needed, but inadequate, because the small staff and limited funding are spread too thinly. Additionally, a few stakeholders mentioned WSDS-organized weekend retreats for families and community members as one of the most important programs provided by WSDS.

> [Deaf-blind adult] "What works happened just this past fall. It was the Usher's Family Retreat. Families from all over the west coast, aged eight to adults, gathered for a long weekend. The point is that everyday the children with Usher Syndrome were with their peers. It let the children understand what Usher's means and that they need not fear it. In just one weekend, all the emotions about becoming blind could be expressed; it increased their awareness, their understanding, and all their communication needs were met. It was a very short three days but powerful!"

Individual Education Programs (IEP), motivated parents, and individual professionals.
Some parents described the IEP process as helpful, saying it provides a regular opportunity for parents and professionals to meet with the child and discuss plans for each school year. Some parents felt this gave them a valuable opportunity for input, believing that without the IEP process, parents might not have any input or as much information about school programming for their child. Many stakeholders described education for deaf and hard of hearing children as dependent on this individualized approach, relying on the motivation of individual parents and professionals.

Options (where available). One of the most valued policies for parents consulted during this study is the ability to individualize education for their child and choose the communication method used. Many parents indicated that fundamentally, their children need early intervention, pre-K, and K–12 programs locally available in whatever communication option they choose. The challenge for the state is how to provide a full range of options to a very small and dispersed population.

IV. INSTITUTE RECOMMENDATION

The 2006 Legislature directed the Institute to "develop recommendations that would establish an integrated system of instructional and support programs that would provide deaf and hard of hearing children with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to be successful in their adult lives and the 'hearing' world of work."[31]

During consultations, stakeholders throughout Washington State identified many challenges to improving the educational system for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students. The clearest finding from these consultations is that, while some isolated programs are viewed as effective, there is currently no systematic way to ensure that all deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students have opportunities to develop language skills and achieve academic success in K–12 education. Stakeholders reported that many of these children receive inadequate educational services and have poor academic outcomes.

Therefore, the Institute recommends that a single state agency be charged with overseeing the quality and outcomes of local, regional, and statewide schools and programs serving deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students. This entity could coordinate the multiple and varied service providers, including hospitals, DSHS and county ITEIP services, WSDS and the special education department at OSPI, local public schools, the state school for the deaf, and private programs as well. This recommendation represents the consensus of stakeholders.

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[31] ESSB 6386 § 607 (12), Chapter 372, Laws of 2006.

APPENDIX A. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The 2006 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to "hire a meeting facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with a broad group of stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state."[32]

This appendix provides descriptive information about the meeting facilitators and the meetings, focus groups, interviews, and online communications with stakeholders that were conducted for this assignment.

Meeting Facilitators

The Institute contracted with Theresa B. Smith and Robert I. Roth to conduct the series of meetings with stakeholders.

> ***Theresa B. Smith, Ph.D. in Socio-Cultural Anthropology, University of Washington (1996).*** Dr. Smith has been an interpreter educator for over 30 years. Currently, she is the Executive Director of the American Sign Language Interpreting School of Seattle (ASLIS). Her credentials include a Bachelor's in Education with K–12 teaching credential from Seattle University, a Master's degree in Counseling from Seattle University, and a doctorate in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from the University of Washington. Her interpreting certificates from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) include a Master's Comprehensive Certificate (MCSC) and a Specialist Certificate in Legal Interpreting (SC:L).

> ***Robert I. Roth, M.A. in Art Education, California State University (1983).*** Rob Roth has over 20 years of experience working in non-profit programs, 12 as an executive director. From 1998 to 2005, he was the Chief Executive Officer of the Deaf Counseling Advocacy & Referral Agency (DCARA), of the San Francisco Bay area. Prior to that, from 1993 to 1998, Roth was the Executive Director of the Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Seattle. Currently, he manages programs in leadership and non-profit management at Gallaudet Leadership Institute, and computer education at the University of Washington.

Meeting Details

The following three exhibits provide information about the meetings, focus groups, interviews, and online consultations performed for this study, as well as descriptive information about participating stakeholders.

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[32] ESSB 6386 § 607 (12), Chapter 372, Laws of 2006.

Exhibit A-1
Stakeholder Consultation Details

Type of Consultation and Location	Date	Participants
Town Hall Meetings		
Ellensburg	11/1/2006	49
Lynnwood	11/20/2006	66
Pasco	2/12/2007	21
Focus Groups		
State and regional social service agency directors (Seattle)	11/3/2006	8
Parents of deaf and hard of hearing students (Vancouver)	11/26/2006	7
WSD teachers (Vancouver)	11/27/2006	8
Deaf and hard of hearing adults (Seattle)	12/7/2006	5
WSD Board of Directors (Seattle)	1/23/2007	5
Spanish-speaking parents of deaf and hard of hearing students (Sunnyside)	2/13/2007	5
Deaf-blind adults (Seattle)	2/22/2007	6
Washington State Association of the Deaf Board of Directors (Seattle)	2/24/2007	14
Deaf and hard of hearing students (Vancouver)	3/27/2007	6
Parents of deaf and hard of hearing students (Seattle)	4/24/2007	5
Interviews, Emails, and Online Communications		
Interviews	various	41
Emails	various	6
Online "Issues" survey responses	12/15/2006 – 3/31/2007	184
Online "Strategies" survey responses	12/15/2006 – 3/31/2007	93
Online "Discussion Forum"	12/15/2006 – 3/31/2007	43
Total Participants		**572**

Exhibit A-2
Participating Stakeholders' Self-Reported Descriptive Information

	Deaf	Hard of Hearing	Deaf/Blind	Parent	Education Professional
Town Hall Meetings					
Ellensburg	24.5%	4.1%	2.0%	22.4%	28.6%
Lynnwood	39.4%	3.0%	1.5%	30.3%	48.5%
Pasco	19.0%	19.0%	0.0%	33.3%	47.6%
Focus Groups					
State and regional social service agency directors (Seattle)	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	75.0%
Parents of deaf and hard of hearing students (Vancouver)	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	14.3%
WSD teachers (Vancouver)	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%
Deaf and hard of hearing adults (Seattle)	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%
WSD Board of Directors (Seattle)	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%
Spanish-speaking parents of deaf and hard of hearing students (Sunnyside)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20.0%
Deaf-blind adults (Seattle)	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	66.7%
Washington State Association of the Deaf Board of Directors (Seattle)	92.9%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	64.3%
Deaf and hard of hearing students (Vancouver)	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Parents of deaf and hard of hearing students (Seattle)	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	20.0%
Interviews, Emails, and Online Communications					
Interviews	17.1%	4.9%	2.4%	12.2%	78.0%
Emails	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	50.0%
Online "Issues" survey responses	29.3%	7.6%	0.0%	63.0%	52.7%
Online "Strategies" survey responses	30.1%	4.3%	0.0%	65.6%	59.1%
Online "Discussion Forum"	16.3%	4.7%	0.0%	79.1%	60.5%
All Participants	**31.6%**	**5.9%**	**1.2%**	**56.1%**	**52.4%**

Exhibit A-3
Self-Reported Cities of Participating Stakeholders

City	#	City	#
Arlington	5	Pullman	1
Auburn	1	Puyallup	4
Bainbridge Island	3	Redmond	1
Battle Ground	3	Renton	3
Bellevue	7	Richland	3
Bellingham	9	Ridgefield	4
Benton City	3	Sammamish	1
Blaine	1	Seattle	96
Bothell	5	SeaTac	3
Bremerton	6	Selah	6
Brier	2	Shelton	1
Burlington	4	Shoreline	14
Camas	3	Snohomish	10
Cle Elum	6	Snoqualmie	4
East Wenatchee	1	Spanaway	2
Easton	1	Spokane	2
Edmonds	23	Sunnyside	3
Ellensburg	13	Suquamish	1
Everett	14	Tacoma	18
Federal Way	5	Tumwater	1
Ferndale	1	University Place	1
Fircrest	2	Vancouver	73
Fox Island	1	Vashon	2
Gig Harbor	1	Wapato	6
Graham	1	Wenatchee	3
Grandview	2	West Richland	2
Greenbank	2	Woodinville	7
Hansville	2	Yakima	11
Highline	1	Zillah	2
Kelso	1	Total Washington	518
Kennewick	13		
Kent	2	Bethel, AK	2
Kirkland	3	Fremont, CA	3
Kittitas	1	Laguna Hills, CA	3
La Center	2	Los Angeles, CA	2
Lacey	6	Lady Lake, FL	1
Lake Stevens	2	Atlanta, GA	2
Lakewood	1	Middlesboro, KY	1
Longview	2	Glenn Dale, MD	2
Lummi Island	2	Faribault, MN	1
Lynden	1	Grain Valley, MO	1
Lynnwood	26	Reno, NV	2
Maple Valley	3	Beaverton, OR	1
Marysville	4	Clackamas, OR	1
Mercer Island	1	Hillsboro, OR	1
Monroe	1	Medford, OR	1
Montesano	2	Portland, OR	6
Mt. Vernon	2	Salem, OR	1
North Bend	1	Sioux Falls, SD	1
Oak Harbor	4	Houston, TX	1
Olympia	7	Total other states	33
Othello	1		
Outlook	2	Location unknown	22
Pasco	13		
Prescott	1		
Port Townsend	1	Grand total	573

APPENDIX B. ONLINE SURVEYS

The 2006 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to "hire a meeting facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with a broad group of stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state."[33]

As part of this assignment, the meeting facilitators[34] created two online surveys to solicit input from individuals unable to attend meetings in person. The first survey (the "Issues" survey) asked respondents to indicate to what degree certain issues are a problem in the state of Washington. The second survey ("Strategies") asked respondents to place a priority level on various strategies to improve education for deaf and hard of hearing students. The surveys were available at www.dhhedwa.org from December 15, 2006, to March 31, 2007.

This appendix contains a summary analysis, a copy of the survey questions, and results for each question. The Issues survey begins on page 4 of this appendix and the Strategies survey on page 10.

Summary Survey Results

This summary of survey results presents the issues and strategies that survey respondents identified as the top five: "significant problem," "not a problem," "high priority," "good idea but not a priority," and "not a good idea."

Exhibit B-1
Top Five "Significant Problems" Identified in Issues Survey

Issues Survey (N=184)						
Top Five: "Significant problem" (question number)	**Significant Problem**	**Somewhat of a Problem**	**Not a Problem**	**No Opinion**	**Skipped This Question**	**Total**
(33) Budgeting of sufficient funds for the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students is a:	**51.1%**	8.7%	2.7%	6.0%	31.5%	100%
(20) The availability of qualified educational interpreters is a:	**46.7%**	9.8%	8.2%	9.2%	26.1%	100%
(11) Preparation of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children to enter school on an equal footing with hearing peers is a:	**45.7%**	18.5%	4.9%	4.9%	26.1%	100%
(14) Regular classroom teachers' preparation about how to effectively educate deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children is a:	**45.7%**	16.8%	2.7%	6.5%	28.3%	100%
(27) Geographic distribution of qualified professionals across the state (e.g., interpreters, teachers of the deaf, and speech & language professionals) is a:	**44.6%**	9.8%	2.7%	13.6%	29.3%	100%

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[33] ESSB 6386 § 607 (12), Chapter 372, Laws of 2006.
[34] Theresa B. Smith, Ph.D. and Robert Roth, M.A. See Appendix A for more details about the contracted meeting facilitators.

Exhibit B-2
Top Five "Not a Problem" Identified in Issues Survey

Issues Survey (N=184)						
Top Five: "Not a problem" (question number)	**Significant Problem**	**Somewhat of a Problem**	**Not a Problem**	**No Opinion**	**Skipped This Question**	**Total**
(6) Availability of hearing screening for infants is a:	15.2%	25.5%	**20.7%**	17.4%	21.2%	100%
(16) Availability of assistive listening devices (e.g., classroom FM, loop, etc.) is a:	14.1%	21.7%	**17.9%**	20.7%	25.5%	100%
(9) Availability of early sign language training for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind infants, toddlers, and pre-school children and their families is a:	32.1%	23.9%	**16.8%**	7.6%	19.6%	100%
(10) Availability of early auditory and speech training for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind infants, toddlers, and pre-school children and their families is a:	22.8%	24.5%	**14.7%**	18.5%	19.6%	100%
(19) The availability of qualified audiologists, speech language pathologists, and other specialized professionals is a:	21.2%	26.6%	**10.3%**	15.2%	26.6%	100%

Exhibit B-3
Top Five "Very High Priorities" Identified in Strategies Survey

Strategies Survey (N=93)							
Top Five: "Very high priority" (question number)	**Very high priority**	**Important**	**Good idea but not a priority**	**No opinion**	**Not a good idea**	**Skipped This Question**	**Total**
(8) Provide continuous program support for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children from birth until they begin their K–12 education.	**79.6%**	11.8%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	100%
(7) Mandate post-screening follow-up services that include provision of full, unbiased information about intervention strategies, instruction, and support for both babies and their parents.	**75.3%**	16.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	6.5%	100%
(6) Mandate early hearing screening for newborn babies.	**71.0%**	19.4%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	100%
(20) Set statewide standards for educational interpreters.	**52.7%**	17.2%	7.5%	5.4%	1.1%	16.1%	100%
(21) Establish credentialing standards for teachers of the deaf.	**52.7%**	25.8%	6.5%	2.2%	0.0%	12.9%	100%

Exhibit B-4
Top Five "Good Idea But Not a Priority" Identified in Strategies Survey

Strategies Survey (N=93)							
Top Five: "Good idea but not a priority" (question number)	**Very high priority**	**Important**	**Good idea but not a priority**	**No opinion**	**Not a good idea**	**Skipped This Question**	**Total**
(27) Establish a mechanism to teach American Sign Language to K–12 students who can hear.	14.0%	24.7%	**38.7%**	2.2%	6.5%	14.0%	100%
(17) Pilot experimental instructional programs to test new theories in the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children.	15.1%	21.5%	**31.2%**	10.8%	5.4%	16.1%	100%
(24) Establish an electronic library of relevant video-based materials that can be viewed and downloaded.	18.3%	39.8%	**26.9%**	3.2%	0.0%	11.8%	100%
(23) Create programs to bring diverse families together to share experiences and network (such as programs targeting Spanish-speaking families, families with deaf-blind children, and/or families with deaf multi-handicapped children).	26.9%	26.9%	**25.8%**	4.3%	2.2%	14.0%	100%
(18) Collaborate with local universities to promote best practices through research, peer review, publication of results, and in-service instruction to appropriate professionals.	19.4%	39.8%	**18.3%**	4.3%	3.2%	15.1%	100%

Exhibit B-5
Top Five "Not a Good Idea" Identified in Strategies Survey

Strategies Survey (N=93)							
Top Five: "Not a good idea" (question number)	**Very high priority**	**Important**	**Good idea but not a priority**	**No opinion**	**Not a good idea**	**Skipped This Question**	**Total**
(22) Require that every deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind K–12 student be taught by a qualified teacher of the deaf.	51.6%	16.1%	10.8%	1.1%	**8.6%**	11.8%	100%
(27) Establish a mechanism to teach American Sign Language to K–12 students who can hear.	14.0%	24.7%	38.7%	2.2%	**6.5%**	14.0%	100%
(17) Pilot experimental instructional programs to test new theories in the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children.	15.1%	21.5%	31.2%	10.8%	**5.4%**	16.1%	100%
(15) Establish and maintain at least one comprehensive teacher of the deaf preparation program that includes the full range of communication and instructional methodologies (i.e., oral-aural–to ASL).	51.6%	22.6%	6.5%	2.2%	**4.3%**	12.9%	100%
(16) Increase availability of visiting/itinerant teacher support and mentoring for regular classroom teachers.	38.7%	30.1%	9.7%	4.3%	**3.2%**	14.0%	100%

Issues and Challenges in the Education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Children in Washington

Dear Reader:

This is a survey with 33 questions to identify issues and gaps in the education of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind children in Washington State.

Following this survey is a second survey that asks you to help us identify and prioritize strategies to help solve these issues to improve the education of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind children.

We also invite you to share your thoughts, opinions and experiences. There is an option to provide comments after each question in both surveys.

Finally, you may want to discuss a few or all of the issues and strategies with other people here on this website. Please join our online discussion group at www.dhhedwa.org/yabb/YaBB.pl to add issues and strategies of your own, to discuss the reasons for your choices, or to provide more details. We welcome your stories and experiences.

This survey is part of a study funded by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy at the request of the Washington Legislature.

Responses to Issues Survey N=184	Number	Percent
1. Please provide your:		
Name	118	64.1%
E-mail	121	65.8%
2. Your city, state:	184	100.0%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
3. Are you:		
Deaf	54	29.3%
Hard of hearing	14	7.6%
Deaf-Blind	0	0.0%
Hearing	116	63.0%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
4. Are you a professional working with deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind children?		
Yes	97	52.7%
No	87	47.3%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
5. Are you a parent of a deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind child?		
Yes	59	32.1%
No	119	64.7%
Skipped This Question	6	3.3%

Responses to Issues Survey N=184	Number	Percent

6. Availability of hearing screening for infants is a:

Significant problem	28	15.2%
Somewhat of a problem	47	25.5%
Not a problem	38	20.7%
No opinion	32	17.4%
Skipped This Question	39	21.2%

7. Availability of early and on-going support for parents as they make difficult and complex decisions is a:

Significant problem	67	36.4%
Somewhat of a problem	51	27.7%
Not a problem	14	7.6%
No opinion	16	8.7%
Skipped This Question	36	19.6%

8. Availability of accurate, neutral, and comprehensive information about communication and educational options for parents is a:

Significant problem	77	41.8%
Somewhat of a problem	45	24.5%
Not a problem	11	6.0%
No opinion	13	7.1%
Skipped This Question	38	20.7%

9. Availability of early sign language training for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind infants, toddlers, and pre-school children and their families is a:

Significant problem	59	32.1%
Somewhat of a problem	44	23.9%
Not a problem	31	16.8%
No opinion	14	7.6%
Skipped This Question	36	19.6%

10. Availability of early auditory and speech training for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind infants, toddlers, and pre-school children and their families is a:

Significant problem	42	22.8%
Somewhat of a problem	45	24.5%
Not a problem	27	14.7%
No opinion	34	18.5%
Skipped This Question	36	19.6%

11. Preparation of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children to enter school on an equal footing with hearing peers is a:

Significant problem	84	45.7%
Somewhat of a problem	34	18.5%
Not a problem	9	4.9%
No opinion	9	4.9%
Skipped This Question	48	26.1%

Responses to Issues Survey N=184	Number	Percent

12. Availability of accurate, neutral, and comprehensive information about programmatic options for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind K–12 students is a:

Significant problem	71	38.6%
Somewhat of a problem	38	20.7%
Not a problem	8	4.3%
No opinion	19	10.3%
Skipped This Question	48	26.1%

13. School administrators' understanding of parents' communication and educational placement choices for their child is a:

Significant problem	68	37.0%
Somewhat of a problem	39	21.2%
Not a problem	9	4.9%
No opinion	16	8.7%
Skipped This Question	52	28.3%

14. Regular classroom teachers' preparation about how to effectively educate deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children is a:

Significant problem	84	45.7%
Somewhat of a problem	31	16.8%
Not a problem	5	2.7%
No opinion	12	6.5%
Skipped This Question	52	28.3%

15. Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students' general level of academic achievement is a:

Significant problem	76	41.3%
Somewhat of a problem	28	15.2%
Not a problem	8	4.3%
No opinion	23	12.5%
Skipped This Question	49	26.6%

16. Availability of assistive listening devices (e.g., classroom FM, loop, etc.) is a:

Significant problem	26	14.1%
Somewhat of a problem	40	21.7%
Not a problem	33	17.9%
No opinion	38	20.7%
Skipped This Question	47	25.5%

17. Accessibility of technology and its technical support is a:

Significant problem	36	19.6%
Somewhat of a problem	46	25.0%
Not a problem	18	9.8%
No opinion	34	18.5%
Skipped This Question	50	27.2%

Responses to Issues Survey N=184	Number	Percent
18. The availability of specially trained, qualified Teachers of the Deaf is:		
Significant problem	80	43.5%
Somewhat of a problem	32	17.4%
Not a problem	12	6.5%
No opinion	9	4.9%
Skipped This Question	51	27.7%
19. The availability of qualified audiologists, speech language pathologists, and other specialized professionals is a:		
Significant problem	39	21.2%
Somewhat of a problem	49	26.6%
Not a problem	19	10.3%
No opinion	28	15.2%
Skipped This Question	49	26.6%
20. The availability of qualified educational interpreters is a:		
Significant problem	86	46.7%
Somewhat of a problem	18	9.8%
Not a problem	15	8.2%
No opinion	17	9.2%
Skipped This Question	48	26.1%
21. Support for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students' transition from school to employment is a:		
Significant problem	55	29.9%
Somewhat of a problem	26	14.1%
Not a problem	6	3.3%
No opinion	49	26.6%
Skipped This Question	48	26.1%
22. Social integration in the classroom for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students is a:		
Significant problem	52	28.3%
Somewhat of a problem	46	25.0%
Not a problem	10	5.4%
No opinion	19	10.3%
Skipped This Question	57	31.0%
23. Support for inclusion of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students in after-school activities is a:		
Significant problem	55	29.9%
Somewhat of a problem	28	15.2%
Not a problem	9	4.9%
No opinion	36	19.6%
Skipped This Question	56	30.4%

Responses to Issues Survey N=184	Number	Percent
24. On-going instruction in various communication options for parents and siblings is a:		
Significant problem	65	35.3%
Somewhat of a problem	34	18.5%
Not a problem	5	2.7%
No opinion	26	14.1%
Skipped This Question	54	29.3%
25. The opportunity for children to meet and learn from deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind adult role models is a:		
Significant problem	62	33.7%
Somewhat of a problem	42	22.8%
Not a problem	11	6.0%
No opinion	13	7.1%
Skipped This Question	56	30.4%
26. Availability of appropriate support for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children with emotional or behavioral problems is a:		
Significant problem	68	37.0%
Somewhat of a problem	23	12.5%
Not a problem	6	3.3%
No opinion	34	18.5%
Skipped This Question	53	28.8%
27. Geographic distribution of qualified professionals across the state (e.g., interpreters, Teachers of the Deaf, and speech & language professionals) is a:		
Significant problem	82	44.6%
Somewhat of a problem	18	9.8%
Not a problem	5	2.7%
No opinion	25	13.6%
Skipped This Question	54	29.3%
28. Availability of support for immigrant of non-English speaking families is a:		
Significant problem	57	31.0%
Somewhat of a problem	19	10.3%
Not a problem	5	2.7%
No opinion	48	26.1%
Skipped This Question	55	29.9%
29. Availability of support (e.g., interpreters) for parents who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind for inclusion in school activities (e.g., parent-teacher conferences) is a:		
Significant problem	35	19.0%
Somewhat of a problem	33	17.9%
Not a problem	18	9.8%
No opinion	42	22.8%
Skipped This Question	56	30.4%

Responses to Issues Survey N=184	Number	Percent
30. Availability of a range of programmatic and communication choices (including but not limited to oral, bilingual-bicultural, cued speech, mainstreaming, residential, total communication, etc.) is a:		
Significant problem	59	32.1%
Somewhat of a problem	29	15.8%
Not a problem	14	7.6%
No opinion	23	12.5%
Skipped This Question	59	32.1%
31. Standards for educational interpreters is a:		
Significant problem	64	34.8%
Somewhat of a problem	21	11.4%
Not a problem	9	4.9%
No opinion	32	17.4%
Skipped This Question	58	31.5%
32. Application of research results to the classroom is a:		
Significant problem	43	23.4%
Somewhat of a problem	17	9.2%
Not a problem	8	4.3%
No opinion	58	31.5%
Skipped This Question	58	31.5%
33. Budgeting of sufficient funds for the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students is a:		
Significant problem	94	51.1%
Somewhat of a problem	16	8.7%
Not a problem	5	2.7%
No opinion	11	6.0%
Skipped This Question	58	31.5%

Possible Strategies for the Education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Children in Washington

Dear Reader:

This is a survey with 29 questions that focus on identifying possible strategies for improving the education of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind children in Washington State, and to prioritize them. These are strategies that people in our state have suggested. Do you agree? Which do you think fit the needs of our state now?

We invite you to expand on your thoughts and opinions after each question. You may want to comment on a few or all of the strategies listed. You may also want to join our online discussion group, the Forum, at www.dhhedwa.org/yabb/yabb.pl to discuss refinements to these strategies, or to suggest new strategies.

This survey is part of a study funded by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy at the request of the Washington Legislature.

Responses to Strategies Survey N=93	Number	Percent
1. Please provide your:		
Name	57	61.3%
E-mail	60	64.5%
2. Your city, state:	93	100.0%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
3. Are you:		
Deaf	28	30.1%
Hard of hearing	4	4.3%
Deaf-Blind	0	0.0%
Hearing	61	65.6%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
4. Are you a professional working with deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind children?		
Yes	55	59.1%
No	38	40.9%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
5. Are you a parent of a deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind child?		
Yes	30	32.3%
No	63	67.7%
Skipped This Question	0	0.0%
6. Mandate early hearing screening for newborn babies.		
Very high priority	66	71.0%
Important	18	19.4%
Good idea but not a priority	2	2.2%
No opinion	0	0.0%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	7	7.5%

Responses to Strategies Survey N=93	Number	Percent
7. Mandate post-screening follow-up services that include provision of full, unbiased information about intervention strategies, instruction, and support for both babies and their parents.		
Very high priority	70	75.3%
Important	15	16.1%
Good idea but not a priority	1	1.1%
No opinion	1	1.1%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	6	6.5%
8. Provide continuous program support for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children from birth until they begin their K–12 education.		
Very high priority	74	79.6%
Important	11	11.8%
Good idea but not a priority	1	1.1%
No opinion	0	0.0%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	7	7.5%
9. Provide support (e.g., communication strategies and skills) to siblings of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children.		
Very high priority	48	51.6%
Important	25	26.9%
Good idea but not a priority	13	14.0%
No opinion	0	0.0%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	7	7.5%
10. Establish a state-level Commission on the Education of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Children to focus on educational issues and systems such as those identified in this survey.		
Very high priority	41	44.1%
Important	29	31.2%
Good idea but not a priority	7	7.5%
No opinion	4	4.3%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	12	12.9%
11. Require oversight of the statewide system of education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students by qualified deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind representatives.		
Very high priority	44	47.3%
Important	23	24.7%
Good idea but not a priority	10	10.8%
No opinion	3	3.2%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	13	14.0%

Responses to Strategies Survey N=93	Number	Percent

12. Create regional educational centers that group deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students for instruction and serve as a source of expertise, information, support, and mentoring for professionals and families in the area.

Very high priority	40	43.0%
Important	19	20.4%
Good idea but not a priority	13	14.0%
No opinion	4	4.3%
Not a good idea	3	3.2%
Skipped This Question	14	15.1%

13. Establish a centralized statewide hub to coordinate and provide outreach services to regional and local programs.

Very high priority	43	46.2%
Important	25	26.9%
Good idea but not a priority	14	15.1%
No opinion	0	0.0%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	11	11.8%

14. Require schools and educational agencies to obtain input from professionals with a variety of perspectives, opinions, and backgrounds.

Very high priority	31	33.3%
Important	33	35.5%
Good idea but not a priority	10	10.8%
No opinion	7	7.5%
Not a good idea	1	1.1%
Skipped This Question	11	11.8%

15. Establish and maintain at least one comprehensive teacher of the deaf preparation program that includes the full range of communication and instructional methodologies (i.e., oral-aural–to ASL).

Very high priority	48	51.6%
Important	21	22.6%
Good idea but not a priority	6	6.5%
No opinion	2	2.2%
Not a good idea	4	4.3%
Skipped This Question	12	12.9%

16. Increase availability of visiting/itinerant teacher support and mentoring for regular classroom teachers.

Very high priority	36	38.7%
Important	28	30.1%
Good idea but not a priority	9	9.7%
No opinion	4	4.3%
Not a good idea	3	3.2%
Skipped This Question	13	14.0%

Responses to Strategies Survey N=93	Number	Percent
17. Pilot experimental instructional programs to test new theories in the education of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children.		
Very high priority	14	15.1%
Important	20	21.5%
Good idea but not a priority	29	31.2%
No opinion	10	10.8%
Not a good idea	5	5.4%
Skipped This Question	15	16.1%
18. Collaborate with local universities to promote best practices through research, peer review, publication of results, and in-service instruction to appropriate professionals.		
Very high priority	18	19.4%
Important	37	39.8%
Good idea but not a priority	17	18.3%
No opinion	4	4.3%
Not a good idea	3	3.2%
Skipped This Question	14	15.1%
19. Set statewide standards for special education administrators overseeing programs for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children.		
Very high priority	39	41.9%
Important	22	23.7%
Good idea but not a priority	13	14.0%
No opinion	5	5.4%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	14	15.1%
20. Set statewide definitions and standards for educational interpreters.		
Very high priority	49	52.7%
Important	16	17.2%
Good idea but not a priority	7	7.5%
No opinion	5	5.4%
Not a good idea	1	1.1%
Skipped This Question	15	16.1%
21. Establish credentialing standards for Teachers of the Deaf.		
Very high priority	49	52.7%
Important	24	25.8%
Good idea but not a priority	6	6.5%
No opinion	2	2.2%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	12	12.9%
22. Require that every deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind K–12 student be taught by a qualified teacher of the deaf.		
Very high priority	48	51.6%
Important	15	16.1%
Good idea but not a priority	10	10.8%
No opinion	1	1.1%
Not a good idea	8	8.6%
Skipped This Question	11	11.8%

Responses to Strategies Survey N=93	Number	Percent
23. Create programs to bring diverse families together to share experiences and network (such as programs targeting Spanish-speaking families, families with deaf-blind children, and/or families with deaf multi-handicapped children).		
Very high priority	25	26.9%
Important	25	26.9%
Good idea but not a priority	24	25.8%
No opinion	4	4.3%
Not a good idea	2	2.2%
Skipped This Question	13	14.0%
24. Establish an electronic library of relevant video-based materials that can be viewed and downloaded.		
Very high priority	17	18.3%
Important	37	39.8%
Good idea but not a priority	25	26.9%
No opinion	3	3.2%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	11	11.8%
25. Establish a web site with accurate, up-to-date, unbiased, and comprehensive information for parents of newly identified children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.		
Very high priority	42	45.2%
Important	32	34.4%
Good idea but not a priority	7	7.5%
No opinion	2	2.2%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	10	10.8%
26. Establish a statewide budget to purchase, distribute, maintain, and replace instructional technology related to deaf education.		
Very high priority	36	38.7%
Important	31	33.3%
Good idea but not a priority	13	14.0%
No opinion	4	4.3%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	9	9.7%
27. Establish a mechanism to teach American Sign Language to K–12 students who can hear.		
Very high priority	13	14.0%
Important	23	24.7%
Good idea but not a priority	36	38.7%
No opinion	2	2.2%
Not a good idea	6	6.5%
Skipped This Question	13	14.0%

Responses to Strategies Survey N=93	Number	Percent
28. Provide funding for research-proven programs for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students.		
Very high priority	37	39.8%
Important	23	24.7%
Good idea but not a priority	16	17.2%
No opinion	3	3.2%
Not a good idea	0	0.0%
Skipped This Question	14	15.1%
29. Pay educational interpreters competitive salaries to recruit and retain qualified interpreters.		
Very high priority	48	51.6%
Important	25	26.9%
Good idea but not a priority	5	5.4%
No opinion	3	3.2%
Not a good idea	2	2.2%
Skipped This Question	10	10.8%