

Grade Expectations: Educating Deaf Students in the Mainstream

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Since 1975, deaf education has seen a massive shift in academic placement for deaf children. In the United States, for example, approximately 85% of deaf students are educated in local public schools, and almost half spend their full school day in a mainstream classroom. To-date, however, there has been relatively little information available about how we can optimize deaf students' performance in public school classrooms, and there is only limited evidence concerning who succeeds there and why. This situation derives in part from the fact that, traditionally, language and educational placement for deaf children have been tightly intertwined (if not confused). Only recently have we also begun to pay attention to the foundations of learning by deaf and hard-of-hearing children, how they might be related to language, and how these might differ from hearing peers. We are now on a threshold with regard to deaf education, a point at which we really are beginning to understand relations among language, cognitive development, and academic achievement – and how these might be affected by early intervention, cochlear implants, and educational placement (among other factors).