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## Social Emotional Learning Curriculum And Manipulatives Designed For Deaf Hard Of Hearing Students From Diverse Home Languages

Meghan O'Donnell

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SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM AND MANIPULATIVES  
DESIGNED FOR DEAF HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE HOME  
LANGUAGES

by

Meghan O'Donnell

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University  
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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

For the past two years, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with many professionals to best help my students. My school has a large student population of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners as well as Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) students. Many of the students that have all or at least some hearing loss are from homes that speak a language other than English. Providing services to students has been difficult as the departments for ESL and DHH do not have similar criteria so legally providing services to students has been challenging. It has become difficult for our school to decide which services that are legally required for these students, because both the ESL and the DHH departments have not had the proper professional development or adequate time to collaborate with each other. This has baffled both ESL and DHH department leads as well as my school's administration, which has led me to my research question: *How can ESL teachers best instruct students that are both hard of hearing and have diverse home languages?*

### Chapter Overview

In this chapter, my personal and professional journey will be described for arriving at this research question. It will also provide the context and rationale for this capstone, and discuss the stakeholders and significance of this project. I believe that after this capstone project, I, as well as both the ESL and the DHH departments at my school and district level, are more educated about the available resources and of the students that are deaf or hard of hearing with diverse home languages, and how we as educators can best support them.

## **Journey to my Research Question**

After graduating from the University of Nebraska- Lincoln with a classroom teaching license for grades kindergarten through sixth grade, I moved to Minneapolis and worked for four years at a charter school in North Minneapolis. I was first a classroom teacher that taught both kindergarten and 3rd grade at some point. This charter school served predominantly East African students that received ESL services throughout the day. I quickly became passionate about these students that were learning English as another language, and decided to pursue a second teaching license in ESL while still teaching full time.

While finishing my ESL license, I moved to a different school with a large population of ESL students, as well as special needs and DHH scholars. I had the opportunity to work in a kindergarten classroom where there was one student, S, that had zero receptive hearing skills, which means that she could not hear anything, and was also from a home that spoke Somali. Since S had a language other than English marked on her Home Language Questionnaire, I was told she was an English learner (EL) and I needed to consult with her DHH case manager about what ESL needs this student needed to work on.

I had a great relationship with the case manager, but I did feel a bit uncomfortable showing her my lessons for the other EL kindergartners in S's mainstream classroom. The case manager explained to me that this student did not have any receptive hearing skills, and could not hear any sounds before coming into our school and getting the proper hearing devices. My small group that included S was with 4 other students that were EL but not DHH, but there was still a interpreter that could explain my lessons. However, I did feel as if my lessons did little to benefit S. I was focusing on sentence structure and sounds in the

classroom, while the DHH teacher was teaching S necessary vocabulary in American Sign Language (ASL).

This year, my school has revamped the ESL push in/pull out model where the ESL teacher has a small group in the mainstream classroom or can pull students out into a different space for more sheltered instruction. The multilingual department also created assessments that help show the growth of EL students throughout the year. They were created for grades kindergarten to fifth grade, so the entire ESL team gave these to every student that was said to be EL, which would include S. S finished kindergarten and moved on to first grade, and she was still labeled EL. Her new EL teacher was a well educated and experienced ESL teacher. The teacher did not feel comfortable assessing S's EL skills since she could hear few sounds, and was only able to communicate with an interpreter in sign language.

I talked to her old case manager and soon found out that our school has had multiple experiences where DHH teachers believed students on their caseloads were mislabeled as EL, since they did not have a first language from home other than some form of sign language. The entire DHH department had felt as if their expertise on DHH students was not being valued respectfully on this matter. There have been a few instances where the DHH case managers talked to the ESL teachers about their professional opinions why they believed a DHH student should not be labeled as an English learner, yet there was no plan given to any teacher on how to correctly label the student, or how to best support them if they were correctly classified as both DHH and EL.

This year I have two students that are DHH who have home languages that are not English. I was very apprehensive about testing these students without talking to the DHH



case manager first. When I told the case manager that I needed to test these two students, she became very frustrated and decided to talk to the ESL lead. The DHH case manager and I had a discussion after she spoke with the ESL lead, but there was still so much that was unclear to both parties about what support would look like for the student. I too became frustrated because even after years in school and in the education field, I had no course, resources or professional development about how to best help these students.

### **Context and Rationale**

At my school, many of our staff have expressed feeling inadequately trained to work with this population of students at my school. After deciding upon my research question, many of my colleagues were very excited to learn more information about students that are labeled both ESL and DHH.

Currently our school has 599 students. Fifty percent of those students are currently enrolled in the ESL program. As well, there are 15 students in the DHH program. Fifty percent of those in the DHH program have a home language that is not English. There are ten teachers in the ESL department and eight teachers in the DHH department. There is a speech language pathologist as well as four ASL interpreters at our school that are working with students in multiple classrooms and specialist rooms throughout the day.

This project is designed to benefit any educator who works with students that are DHH with diverse home languages. Before I began my research, but had decided on my research question, several of my colleagues were very interested in learning about my findings on how to best support students with hearing deficits and language differences. Our school has had students open enroll from around the district with severe hearing loss because of our incredible DHH staff. Additionally, our ESL population has been a large proportion of

the school for the past decade. The DHH EL population has always been prominent in our school, yet we are not servicing them correctly. Our school needs to have more resources on how to work with students that are both EL and DHH available in order to support teaching staff and benefit this unique population of students, especially when instructing on personal feelings and regulating them, or social emotional learning (SEL).

### **Capstone Significance**

After finishing my research and speaking to many educators, there was an overwhelming consensus on the need to create a Social Emotional learning curriculum that helps DHH/EL learners. These students have a hard time communicating at their home as well as with their peers. Because of this, the DHH teacher might be one of the only people in their life that can understand their emotions. Families and other students need access to manipulatives, visuals, and other resources that can help them communicate with DHH and EL students.

The purpose of my capstone is to collaborate with DHH case managers to create a curriculum unit on social emotional learning (SEL). The curriculum is specifically designed for students that have had multiple years in the school's DHH program so they have more hearing and communication abilities than before. This curriculum includes lessons that encompass reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. After finishing this capstone project, I will collaborate with other educators and create other lessons that would benefit students that are EL and DHH so that other grade levels will have more resources to help this specific group of students.

This new DHH EL SEL curriculum has also been created for teachers that are working with students that have home languages of Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Amharic or

Oromo. There are flashcards representing emotions and possible solutions to the student's emotion that have the student's home language, an American Sign Language translation, and the word in English. This is aimed to help DHH EL students communicate more with their peers and families. Students might behave because individualized tools is not available at home and school. These tools are designed to be manipulated to work for each student. Additionally, if a teacher has a student with a different home language, they will be able to use the manipulatives created as a template and can translate the feelings and action steps. That way, more DHH EL students can better communicate with families and friends (Minnesota Department of Education, n.da).

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explained my research question, the reasons I have become interested in ESL students that are DHH, the stakeholders that are affected in my school and community, as well as my capstone project. In chapter two, I will be conducting a literature review of topics that include state requirements for both groups, environmental factors that hinder their learning, family resources, and teacher education/professional development to help create a curriculum that uses researched strategies for these dual eligible students. Chapter three will be a detailed explanation of the project. Finally, chapter four will be my reflection on the unit I co-created with DHH educators.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

My research has been directed by the question, *How can ESL teachers best assist students that are both hard of hearing and have diverse home languages?* In both the personal conversations with colleagues, as well as the research I have found, there seems to be a consensus that these students that are Deaf Hard of Hearing English language learners (DHH ELs) have a difficult time expressing their emotions to people from home as well as at school. This is important because educators do not have the resources or time to educate these students currently who have social emotional deficits.

I started my research looking at the criteria for DHH ELs. This needed to be broken into three different groups: the criteria for ELs, the criteria for DHH, and then the criteria for DHH ELs. Many pieces of legislation and policy have helped to develop clear parameters around who is included under the umbrella of an EL or DHH student. However, due to lack of research and attention to the issue, the same cannot be said for classifying DHH EL students. There is not yet an agreed upon definition that districts use across the country for this particular group of learners. Even when talking to other educators, there seems to be a bit of a gap on who exactly is a DHH EL, which is why I chose this topic. This chapter will define and explain the criteria for each group separately, and then the students that fit both groups (Becker and Bowen, 2018). This chapter will also analyze the one case study found of a student that is both DHH and EL (Baker & Scott, 2016), which illuminates just how little research has been done on this population.

There seem to be multiple factors that make traditional education in the mainstream classroom more difficult for students that are hard of hearing with a diverse home language. For one, it is necessary for many of these students to use their hearing device at home, and some families do not understand how important it is that students use their hearing device daily (Sandy, 2016). Another is how deafness is viewed differently by some cultures. Some see deafness as a negative and almost evil trait (Quiñonez-Summer, 2015). I will break this topic down to life at home, life at school, and how to communicate between the two environments (Steinberg et al., 2003). This is also the section that will discuss the students social-emotional learning and what environmental factors may contribute to it.

In the research I have found, there were multiple ideas on best practices for DHH ELs, including professional development (Baker & Scott, 2016). I spoke to a few educators around the metropolitan area to see how other schools decide best practices for DHH ELs, and all of them stressed the importance of collaboration (personal communication, 2018). I also looked at testing best practices for these students, but have ended up focusing on Social Emotional Learning best practices. All of these sections have helped me create a curriculum unit for this population.

### **Criteria**

There are multiple criterias to assess if a student is a DHH EL. This section will focus on what criteria shows that the student is an EL, the criteria that shows if the student is DHH, and then how both of those criterias can be used to see if a student qualifies as a DHH EL.

**EL criteria and students.** Each state has slightly different assessments and tools to help decide which students will receive services. In their article *Assessment Accommodations for English Language Learners: Implications For Policy-Based Empirical Research*, Abedi,

Hofstetter, and Lord (2004) explained how most states have decided to look at summative assessments of the English language such as the ACCESS, (23%). Other factors include the amount of time the student has spent in English speaking schools (18%) and looking at formative assessments of their English language (14%).

In Minnesota, families take a Home Language Questionnaire where they are asked about their native language (Minneapolis Public Schools, n.d.). If the family says yes to any questions that involve a language other than English, then the student takes the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Screener, which determines if the student receives EL services. This is similar to 36 states as well as the District of Columbia that are members of the WIDA Consortium (WIDA, 2019).

The English learner (EL) population in the US has been growing rapidly. According to Kindler (2002), the EL population has grown by 105%, whereas the overall school population has increased by only 12% (as cited in Abedi et al., 2004, p. 4). Since the amount of ELs is increasing, there has been a substantial increase in support for student's native language in the assessments that teachers can look at. This helps educators assess the student's first language proficiency (Abedi et al., 2004).

The goal of ESL teachers is to help increase their students' English proficiency so they can flourish in the mainstream classrooms where the content is only in English (Watkins & Liu, 2013). The U.S. Department of Education (2004) identified that English language learners (ELs) are the most likely to drop out of high school, live in poverty, and have the lowest achievement scores in standardized tests (as cited in Lovett et al., 2018). This means that EL students need more support and resources in order to excel in mainstream classrooms.

**DHH criteria and students.** Most DHH criteria is assessed outside of the classroom, and at an early age. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders (2018) reported that about two to three in 1,000 children born in the United States are born with a degree of severe deafness. The utilization of universal newborn hearing screener has been able to screen 95% of children quickly after birth, and has improved the identification of children with hearing loss early on. This means that families are usually aware of the disability early so they can support the child right away.

The advancement in technology has helped DHH children immensely. Rufsvold et al. (2018) explained the equipment that DHH students can receive. This is important because the technology can drastically increase the student's hearing abilities. Children that have a severe hearing loss receive access to sound only after they regularly wear their amplification gear. The gear is available for children that are at least a year old, which can cause a year of language delay for them since they do not have the ability to hear before they are a year old (Rufsvold et al., 2018). This delay can have a dramatic effect on the students education, especially for students that have more than one disability.

Gallaudet Research Institute (2013) reported that 41.4% of students who are deaf or hard of hearing have at least one other disability (as cited in Pizzo & Chilvers, 2016). The Office of Special Education Programs found that 86% of deaf and hard of hearing students are in public school programs where they spend over 80% of the day with their hearing peers (as cited in Benedict et al., 2011). This means that a large proportion of a DHH student's day is spent in large groups and most likely not receiving sheltered instruction.

**DHH EL criteria and students.** There is not a national definition for a DHH EL in 2019. In *Service providers' perspective on the education of students who are deaf or hard of*

*hearing and English learners*, Becker and Bowen (2018) defines DHH EL as “students having a hearing loss that adversely affects educational performance and who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse active learners of the English language and may benefit from various types of language support programs” (p. 357). This definition is best because it discusses how the student has hearing loss, and also comes from a multicultural home.

I had a conversation with an educator of DHH students named Ricky Micksch. He works at a district that teaches many students who are hard of hearing and come from multilingual homes. He explained that DHH educators collaboratively decide which schools each teacher works with, and this frequently changes based on numbers. However, some of these teachers have worked with students for multiple years (R. Micksch, personal communication, 2018). The school that this thesis is based on has mostly instructs students who have severe hearing loss, so many of them are not capable of hearing their home language. If educators are using the definition that Becker (2018) proposed, Micksch as well as other DHH educators at my school believe that only two of the students at our building would fit the criteria of a DHH EL student with the definition listed above.

However, Cannon and Luckner (2016) explained how the population of DHH EL does not have a strong definition, which makes it difficult to attain the population’s information: “We were disappointed at the paucity of experimental evidence on how to teach literacy to English language learners and were quite tentative in our claims, based upon so few studies” (August & Shanahan, 2010, p. 344). DHH EL research is thus lacking, and it is difficult to find solid research that was solely about the DHH EL community.

The only case study found was about a young girl with the pseudonym named Maria. Baker and Scott (2016) discussed how the teacher of deaf or hard of hearing (TODHH)



received the assessments, but the assessments did not help lesson preparation. Conversations about how to best instruct DHH ELs like Maria were mostly about what the teachers observed. The only accommodations made for Maria were ones that DHH students usually receive, such as small group testing, extended time, and interpreted questions.

Looking at the different criteria for EL students as well as DHH students helps educators understand the strengths and needs of the students that are DHH EL. However, criteria is not the only factor that influences DHH ELs.

### **Environmental Factors**

There are multiple environmental factors that influence DHH ELs. Some large factors include the student's home life, communicating between home and school, as well as the resources parents know of and use (Sandy, 2016; Quiñonez-Summer, 2015; Baker & Scott, 2016; Pizzo & Chilvers, 2016).

**Home life.** One environmental factor is the student's home culture. Sandy (2016) discussed how a culture's belief about a disability such as hearing loss can influence the parents of DHH ELs. Two prominent views about a child's disability are very prevalent around the world. The first is that the disability is negative and a punishment from a higher power. The other is the opposite, where it is an award from the higher power (Quiñonez-Summer, 2015). The first explained view is prevalent in Latin America. Steinberg, Bain, Li, Delgado, and Ruperto (2003) reported that 63% of Hispanic families in their study said that their religion influenced their decisions on their actions for their DHH child. This is very important because educators need to understand what factors seem to be prevalent in the families decisions. Educators need to respect and work with experts in this field to talk about the possible resources the students and families have. Another way that would help these

students is to educate the student in both English and their native language so they can better communicate with their families.

It is important to educate DHH ELs in English, ASL, and their native language (Baker & Scott, 2016; Pizzo & Chilvers, 2016). Espinosa (2005) discussed that many children from diverse home languages do not go to schools where their home language is used to promote their academics. Rufsvold et al. (2018) conducted a study which reported that there is a positive relationship between a high amount of adult language exposure and their child's comprehension of vital concepts as well as vocabulary. This shows that students increase their understanding of concepts when they have exposure to their native language. This can be difficult, but some families use technology to help bridge the gap.

Qi and Mitchell (2011) explained how DHH EL students have even more limited access to spoken English because they cannot learn from many everyday outlets that other students have, such as spoken conversations, television, and radio. Arellano (2014) talked about how DHH ELs who have more hearing abilities have more possibilities to listen to their native language, while others can only learn from print-based outlets. If a student can only understand the print-based of their native language, they need to have lessons on reading in that language. Schools should use and understand the student's native language as well as culture as much as possible to help them learn. Pizzo and Chilvers (2016) explained that educators need to understand the child's home language before figuring out how to best help the student. This is important because there are differences between all languages, and each student has a different understanding or gaps in their English language proficiency.

**Technology.** There has been a increase in technology to help close these gaps. Digital applications (apps) have helped translate languages (Baker & Scott, 2016). The case study of

Maria reported that she communicated with her family and friends with text messages that were translated between English and Spanish since her family only knew Spanish and Maria only knew English. This example illustrates one of the reasons why it is difficult for some students to communicate with both home and their school. If the student can only communicate in English, and their family can only communicate in their native language, there needs to be some type of bridge between the two. “The challenge is that home/school communication is hindered when the language at school differs from the language at home and when the student lacks proficiency in either or both of those languages” (Becker & Bowen, 2018, p. 364). This can be very difficult for DHH EL students, since they may have few receptive skills in their native language as well as English and need to be able to communicate between home and school.

**Communicating Between Home and School.** Becker and Bowen (2018) conducted a study where the families as well as professionals discussed the need for a prominent language, since many DHH ELs in their study used multiple languages, such as ASL or their native sign language, English, and French. Most of these students, however, did not have a strong foundation in any language. Gerner de Garcia (1995) found that DHH EL students need to acquire proficiency in at least two to four languages once entering their new cultural environment (as cited in Espinosa, 2005, p. 79). This is a large issue because these students do not receive enough support learning their home language as well as English and ASL. Wong, Ching and Whitfield (2018) reported that teenagers who are DHH who have better language skills feel more confident and able to communicate efficiently with their family. However, the family culture and the school culture can be drastically different for these

students because they might need extra support in understanding how to communicate between the two cultures:

In addition, anecdotal records revealed that sociocultural issues were ever present, such as the mismatches between the home culture and the school culture and between home languages and school languages, cultures of poverty, transportation issues, and her parents' low educational and literacy levels. (Baker & Scott, 2016, p. 49)

Baker and Scott (2016) conducted a study where they talked to teachers of DHH ELs. The teachers explained that these students need more time to work with deaf adults than what their school could arrange. Some believed that a one-on-one bilingual educator would be the best option for these students. In the case study with Maria explained above, Baker and Scott (2016) observed that since the program was heavily faith driven and had a director that spoke fluent Spanish, Maria and her parents felt comfortable. However, Maria did report that high school was less enjoyable because of peer and social problems she experienced. This is because there is a large amount of social emotional needs for DHH EL students.

Social-emotional learning is important for every person. Kawachi (2001) explained that social relationships are thought to act as a buffer against stress, illness, and psychological distress. These relationships provide support, as well as coping strategies. Social-emotional development provides the foundation for how people feel about themselves and how they experience others. Hintermair, Sarimski and Lang (2016) discussed how social-emotional development helps the student increase his or her empathy as well as his or her self confidence and can help the student make stronger relationships with peers and adults. "The laying of this foundation begins the day a child is born and continues throughout the

lifespan” (p.143). Each person has different social-emotional needs and could need different resources to be more successful.

Norman and Jamison (2015), noted DHH teachers reported that they spent about 70% of their instructional time on social-emotional learning support. This was because the DHH students were having a hard time understanding and using social language with their peers. Some DHH students tend to seem impulsive (Norman & Jamison, 2015), since their parents quickly agree to the child’s needs or wants, so when in the classroom they tend to have impulsive behavior to get what they want (Marschark, Spencer, & Adams, 2011). This is one of the larger reasons why parents need access to resources. In a presentation, Minnesota Department of Education employee Mary Cashman-Bakken (personal communication, 2018) explained that the department is getting more social emotional questions than ever before. This shows how important SEL instruction is for these students, yet there is little curriculum and tools for these students to be successful in and out of the classroom.

There are many environmental factors that relate to this study, but the most important would be the difficulty communicating between school and home for these students. The student spends about 40 hours a week at school. The rest of the time is spent at home. If the student does not feel confident in both settings, it can drastically influence their confidence and academic abilities. One way that educators can help build the bridge between both is getting families the support they need. This support can help the student and family increase their self-esteem over a short period of time (Lam-Cassettari, Wadnerkar-Kamble & James, 2015).

## **Parental Help and Resources**

There have been numerous reports about the need for families to know which resources are available to them (Sandy, 2016, Baker & Scott, 2016, Wong et. al., 2018, Becker & Bowen, 2018). “The family and professionals work together to help the child reach his or her potential while respecting the diversity of the family and the community” (Sandy, 2016, p. 34). Baker and Scott (2016) reported how teachers believed in educating families about what services should be easily accessible to them. Wong et al.’s (2018) study reported that parents who were marked as empowered and felt that they belonged were more likely to have children that felt the same. They also found that parents were more likely to ask for help or resources when they felt more connected to the child’s school.

In a study by Becker and Bowen (2018), teachers believed that one of the best ways both educators and parents could help each DHH EL student was by including any support from interpreters that know both American Sign Language (ASL) and the student’s home language. As well, DHH EL families value being supported by other agencies, such as refugee agencies that helped families connect to their schools. One of these resources is the Early Intervention program. This program influences the child and impacts the home environment since families have a better understanding of what the child needs. Early Intervention (EI) is federally mandated in the United States under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 (Sandy, 2016). This intervention is made available to young children who have an identified disability or who are at risk of developmental delays. Infants and toddlers who are DHH qualify for services under Part C “because they have a diagnosed hearing loss which, if left untreated, may result in a developmental delay” (Sandy, 2016, p. 33).

Sandy (2016) discussed how EL programs should be explained to parents early on so they can make decisions about their child's language acquisition in both speaking and sign languages. Also, it is extremely important to have the option for the student's intervention plan to be multilingual. However, Sandy (2016) stated how there was a lack of diversity with EL professionals, and how that can be difficult since a large proportion of families they serve are diverse in linguistics, ethnicity, and race. There are other programs that can help families when the child is young.

One of these programs is the Universal Newborn Hearing Screener. Hintermair et al. (2016) explained how the creation of the Universal Newborn Hearing Screener, which has been implemented in many western countries, has helped DHH students have opportunities to develop their language at a similar age to their hearing peers and has brought "parallel improvements in cognitive and social-emotional developmental processes dependent on language" (p. 144). This can be very helpful in preventing developmental delays in the DHH EL population (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders, 2018).

There are different ways in which certain cultures look at resources. Steinberg et al. (2003) discussed how educators have looked at how Hispanic families decide on services for a student that has a hearing loss. Many families seemed to have limited information on what services were available because of language and cultural differences. As well, some of the service workers altered the parent's decisions. In the case study from Baker and Scott (2016), Maria's family listened mostly to the educators that made her Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which also told her the services and her educational needs she received. Sandy (2016) discussed how all providers should be aware of the benefits of bilingualism and be respectful of the choices families make in respect to communication options.

There are many family resources for families that have a DHH EL. The largest issue seems to be that families are not receiving adequate information on how to best help their child before starting Kindergarten. If the family has another child that is old enough to be in school, the teacher of the older child could help get the family information on what DHH resources they are entitled to by communicating with their school.

Baker and Scott (2016) argued that educators need to give parents the opportunity to learn how to communicate with their child in ASL, English, or their first language, and how to better help his or her proficiency in that language. This could be done by video. In 2015, Lam Cassettari, Wadnerkar-Kamble and James created a study where families used videos while they were together to see how it could help family interaction when the student is at-risk for developmental delay, like DHH ELs. These videos were created and viewed at random times to help the child's communication skills and behavior with his or her parents. Families that were more consistent seemed to have an easier time communicating with their child.

These factors can either help or hinder the DHH EL student's understanding of English. The family's perception of the disability, and the communication between school and home is vital for student achievement. As well, the family's use in resources available to them can help the student achieve academic success.

### **Teacher Education**

A teacher's education about English Language Learners is threefold. First, there is university preparation. Then, there is professional development once the educator is out in the field. And finally, there is also the collaboration between professionals that needs to take place, which is especially important for professional educators of DHH ELs.



**College programs.** There are college programs that are solely for Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH) and there are programs for ESL educators, but there is little overlap. The goal of a teacher preparation program is to facilitate the development of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed by teachers to “educate a diverse population of students as well as to collaborate with professionals, families, and community members” (Cannon & Luckner, 2016, p. 95). This way, others can also work together and learn more to help create better curriculum and classrooms for all students. One way to learn more about the unique needs of these population is by taking more classes.

There are online programs which have helped educate teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH) around the globe (Cannon & Luckner, 2016). Gerner de García (2013) discussed how these teachers have to be trained to specifically work with DHH students as well as collaborate and ensure that students are receiving other services such as from audiologists and school psychologists. This helps the student educators have a better background on the other professional resources these students should receive. Benedict et al. (2011) discussed further how important it is to teach these student educators about best practices for collaborating with other professionals to make sure their student is receiving the best education possible. Collaboration is a major part of educating any student, especially a student that works with several educators.

Benedict et al. (2011) also explained that DHH teachers need to feel like they have enough education to be the lead in their school, as well as know intensely what the DHH students need. They also believed that DHH teaching programs need to recruit from general education programs to make sure that the DHH teachers have an understanding of both DHH and general education standards, since the DHH students are mostly in public school

programs. This is similar to the ESL teaching programs where many of the students spend most of their day in the general classroom.

Most ESL programs seem to be post-graduate programs, rather than undergraduate programs. Belinda Flores (2011) described how there is a shortage of English as a second language teachers, especially bilingual teachers. The need is especially large in secondary classes. This impacts students emotional learning because the older students have a harder time communicating with their native peers..

One weakness is that these programs have little overlap to be efficient in working with DHH ELs. Ayantoye and Luckner (2016) reported that there is a shortage of diverse TODHH. Many DHH ELs do not see teachers that look like them, or speak their native language. Cannon and Luckner (2016) explained how important it is that every teaching program must incorporate information on DHH ELs in order to have inclusive classrooms and practices. This will allow more educators the opportunity and background to collaborate and help make better educational plans for each student.

Espinosa (2005) argued that teachers and administrators must be prepared to develop approaches for all young children, especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds. This means teacher preparation programs must teach skills and provide classes that focus on working with diverse communities. This does not only have to be in undergraduate classes, but can continue throughout a teacher's career and include substantial professional development to help work with this specific population.

**Professional development.** Teachers need to have continuous development that discusses how to best help DHH ELs. Baker and Scott (2016 ) believed that schools need to provide training to all teachers on appropriate accommodations and strategies to support

DHH ELs in the classroom, including bilingual teaching strategies, advocacy, and testing accommodations. Espinosa (2015) stated how important it is to have culturally responsive curriculum. This is important to continuously discuss in professional development all educators at school will have the chance to look at their curriculum and see if it is culturally responsive.

Norman and Jamison (2015) reported that the DHH educators express the need for more instructional development with a focus on student SEL skill development. DHH educators wanted more assessment tools to help see the student's SEL needs and strengths. They also wanted ongoing training with observations designed for DHH students in mind. Norman and Jamison (2015) explained how the DHH case manager might be the only person in the building that understands the student's hearing loss needs, and can give insight on how to best support these students, including their SEL needs. A possible way to help this student throughout their entire school day is by having educators collaborate together frequently.

**Collaboration.** Norman and Jamison (2015) found out that many DHH educators felt that there has not been adequate support from colleagues.

There appeared to be a consensus among the participants regarding the lack of resources to meet the specific needs of students who are DHH EL. When they were asked about resources they used when educating students, a positive response was collaboration and working together as a team (Becker & Bowen, 2018, p. 365).

Micksch (2018) expressed that there is room for improvement in teaching DHH ELs. This includes co-planning with classroom teachers as well as ESL educators to see how to help the students gain knowledge in both English and their home language. These students

also have a lack of exposure, and need a very individualized learning plan to help them become fluent in multiple languages. Teachers can create this by learning about the best practices for these students.

### **Best Practices**

There are multiple best practices for DHH EL students. Educators need to help students with both summative and formative assessments. These assessments need to be helpful in understanding how to best help educate these students. There are also different ways to help these students throughout their educational career and help structurally adapt lessons in the classroom, which includes their social-emotional learning.

**Testing.** There are a few largely known assessments for DHH ELs. The EL test is the ACCESS from WIDA (Wida.wisc.edu, 2019). For DHH, there were two different assessments. One is the Stanford Achievement Test (Qi & Mitchell, 2011). The other that is prevalent for Special Education students in Minnesota is the Bergance (Curriculumassociates.com, 2019). As well as these two summative tests, educators often give formative assessments throughout the year to measure the student's growth.

The WIDA Consortium also offers a multiple language assessments designed specifically for bilingual learners. Pizzo and Chilvers (2016) explained how two major sections of this assessment are the speaking and listening parts, which focus on the student's spoken-English skill. This can be a challenge or even impossible for DHH EL students. However, the test can be translated into ASL so the student can show their language skills, as well as have the students only take the Reading and Writing sections.

There are also assessments for DHH students. Luckner and Bowen (2006) conducted a study with DHH teachers, and the participants in the DHH assessment survey reported that

statewide academics that are aligned with content standards have become pivotal in helping teachers develop appropriate curriculum for their students. One assessment that is used is the Bergance. In a personal interview with Jackie Larson-Knott (personal communication, 2018), she discussed how her large district uses it for Special Education students. This large assessment helps educators see if a student has a learning disability,

The California Department of Education (2007) reported that only 8% of deaf students and 15% of hard-of-hearing students scored proficient or advanced on the California Standards Test for English Language Arts (as cited in Qi & Mitchell, 2011). That is substantially low. Qi and Mitchell (2011) explained that there is not just one assessment that can accurately show the growth and teaching that is going on. Norman and Jamison (2005) interviewed teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and they expressed how there is a lack of assessments to see the student's social functioning and emotional capabilities.

Students are assessed at least at the end of curriculum units, which happens often. Mahoney and Macswan (2005) recommended that schools should not assess student's native language ability frequently. This should be done when educators believe that there might be in need of special education services, and need to know his or her academic knowledge in his or her native language. This can help educators know about their academic abilities in both English and his or her native language.

***Accommodations for testing.*** Many educators have looked into multiple accommodations for students that do not speak English as a first language. However, there is not a large amount of research that discusses effective accommodations for DHH ELs. Looking into the information about the DHH EL population, it seems to be reasonable to look at the accommodations that have worked for both groups.

Abedi et al. (2004) explained that most educators use a simplified English text for some curriculum that is given to ELs around the country. Even though this does not happen in every state, the ELs that had it available to them preferred and did better when using the modified English version. This helped close the gap between native and non-native English speaker's test scores.

Another common accommodation is giving students extra time on assessments (Abedi et al., 2004). This allows educators to keep the test as is, and allows the DHH EL's time to understand the test's language. As well, when working with students that are not able to read in English as well as listen, an adequate accommodation would be to orally administer the test in English. This would help educators accurately assess the student on the content, rather than solely on their reading skills (Abedi et al., 2004).

Translating English assessments to student's native language does not seem to help students if the content has been instructed in English. Abedi et al. (2004) described a study where Hispanic English learners that received mathematic instruction in English scored higher on the math test in English than their peers who also received mathematic instruction in English but were given the same test in Spanish.

Thurlow, Lazarus, and Thompson (2005) discussed how there have been several states that have added student emotional anxiety in assessments as a criteria. This has helped make tests more acceptable for diverse groups, and allowed more accurate reports and grades for students with anxiety. Unfortunately, this is not the norm for the country.

**General practices.** There seems to be a few tools that can help DHH EL students achieve the best education possible. There is a Functional Listening Evaluation that helps teachers understand the student's listening function. It sees how the students listening

abilities is affected by noise, distance, and visual abilities in a typical classroom environment (Johnson, 2013). There is also a visual tool for educators called the banana (UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, n.d.) that has a spectrum from visual to auditory that shows how students can receive input (personal communication, 2018). Both of these tools are a valuable resource that has helped educators understand how to better instruct DHH ELs.

Arellano (2014) talked about how schools need to embrace and value the cultures in the class by allowing the students to learn their heritage language. This can help make connections with families, and helps the child gain confidence in their ethnic identity. Becker and Bowen conducted a study and looked at what support a group of educators wanted for their DHH ELs,

There appeared to be a consensus among the participants regarding the lack of resources to meet the specific needs of students who are DHH EL. When they were asked about resources they used when educating students, a positive response was collaboration and working together as a team. (Becker & Bowen, 2018, p. 365)

Pizzo and Chilvers (2016) suggested that teachers and other professionals who work with students that are DHH EL should create a language profile for each of the students that includes his or her language strengths and areas of growth. This would help make sure that educators instructing the student have the resources on the student's needs. Espinosa (2005) explained that teachers need to have curriculum that is culturally responsive. This would include knowledge of the student's home culture, family values and a collaboration between the school and family. It would also allow the students to have small group activities and extra instructional adaptations.

There has not been a large amount of research on what best helps students that are DHH ELs. Marschark, Spencer, and Adams (2011) reported that there have been a few interventions studied, such as shared reading (parents and children read the story together), have only been looked at from children that can hear. Lovett et al. (2008) expressed the need for explicit phonology based instruction, such as word identification and decoding when working with students that are EL and have a language delay (LD). Espinosa (2005) also described other important parts of a curriculum where it focuses on first language fluency while learning about the alphabet, phonemic and number skills as well as story structure:

Based on the best evidence available, the long-term goal of educators should be to help children maintain and build the first language while adding fluency and literacy skills in English, not replacing the child's home language with English. (Espinosa, 2005, p. 844)

This is important to note because there are several points that educators need to teach to help DHH ELs succeed.

There are also numerous accommodations that have been used for DHH students. Some of these are presenting, setting, and response accommodations (Thurlow et al., 2005). Any of these could possibly help DHH ELs complete assignments and master the standards necessary to move on to the next grade.

Espinosa (2005) explained how even when a student's teacher does not speak their home language, teachers can still support their primary language development with extra first language literacy support, such as access to stories in student's first language. Kronberg (2013) wrote how important it is to understand the linguistic needs and disability-related



needs for ELs with a disability. Because of this, teachers need to be aware of the academic language necessary to understand the content.

***SEL strategies and instruction.*** Baker and Scott (2016) interviewed teachers and what they believed were the bigger difficulties for DHH EL students. One major issue was a small number of qualified interpreters. An interesting point from the interview was that the teachers did not believe their knowledge of these DHH EL students' social-emotional needs was an issue (Baker & Scott, 2016). However, when speaking with DHH educators, a large proportion of their time is spent on their student's SEL needs.

Norman and Jamison (2015) discussed how SEL teaching is not usually recognized to be in the DHH teacher's instructional role. This could make it more difficult for the DHH students to get their SEL needs met, since a large amount of time TODHH have with their students is used to express their emotions. "Thus, competency in SEL skills is critical to overall development and may have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on academic, social, and emotional development" (Norman & Jamison, 2015, p. 275). Wolters-Leermakers (2016) also discuss how there needs to be continuous attention to and practice of DHH children's social competence. There does not seem to be a universal curriculum for these students, but many districts have created their own tools.

In a personal interview with Micksch, he gave some of the tools that his district is using right now with their DHH EL students' social and emotional needs. One of the tools they are using is a compensatory checklist for both personal and interpersonal skills, created by the Minnesota Department of Education (n.d). There are different checklist for different ages. Each checklist includes sections that determine if the student looks at others while speaking, understands inflections while speaking, as well as sarcasm. Currently Micksch

works at a district where teachers use a program from Kuypers (2011) called the Zones of Regulation.

The Zones of Regulation was created by Kuypers (2011), who was an Autism Spectrum Disorder Resource Specialist. She saw that many students with a disability had a difficult time self-regulating, whether it was shutting down, exploding, or getting distracted. She started teaching self-control lessons where students recognized their emotions, and figured out how to get back to a calm state whether in or out of the classroom. As well, the curriculum discusses how important it is that students understand that their feelings are valid and that every zone is acceptable to be in. She started teaching the students during social groups as well as occupational therapy sessions.

The Zones of Regulation program uses four colors (green, blue, yellow, and red) to help students classify their feelings:

- Green- means students are ready to learn. They are focused, calm and content.
- Blue- usually means students feel sad, tired, or sick.
- Yellow- right next to the green zone. It means that the student is not ready to learn. Some feelings that are in the yellow zone include nervous, anxious, confused, or silly.
- Red- Farthest away from the green zone. The student usually goes from yellow, to red when they are not able to calm down. Some feelings that are in the red zone are frustrated, angry, or upset.

In the Zones of Regulation curriculum (2011), there is a large amount of lessons that focus on what tools students can use to self regulate. Some possible options might be to take

a break, express the emotions to a teacher or a trusted adult, take ten deep breaths, or ask for help.

### **Summary of Literature**

There are many factors involved in answering the question how ESL educators can best help DHH EL students. Understanding the criteria of DHH ELs as well as the environmental factors that these students deal with on a daily basis is very important. Teachers need to be aware of the resources and practices that best help these students so that these students can hopefully gain English as well as their native language and sign language skills. The DHH EL population interacts with many languages in a single day, and it is apparent that many of these students do not have an adequate foundation in their first language. Teachers need to provide substantial accommodations in both testing and general lessons to help support DHH EL student and assess their growth.

In the next chapter, the findings from this literature review are used to guide the creation of my capstone project. Chapter three will provide the details of my project, which will develop a SEL curriculum intended to support DHH EL students. This will include the explanation of the intended audience, the curriculum framework, and the timeframe in which this project will be done.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

My project is a response to the question, *How can ESL teachers best assist students who are both hard of hearing and have diverse home languages?* Through the personal conversations with colleagues as well as the research I have reviewed, there is a consensus that students who are Deaf Hard of Hearing and English language learners (DHH ELs) have a difficult time expressing their emotions to people at home as well as in school. I have decided to focus on creating a social emotional learning (SEL) unit to help students express and understand their own emotions, and learn how to best help themselves and others in stressful situations. This unit helps bridge the conversation gap between the home language and ASL for families. The lessons include dozens of visuals and translations on feelings and action steps, so teachers and students can better communicate their emotions to each others. As well, families can use the flashcards provided to close the communication gap with their children when at home.

#### Theories

There are multiple theories that have helped me create this curriculum and understand best practices for DHH ELs. Espinosa (2015) stated how important it is to have culturally responsive curriculum. Throughout this project, I have utilized many people from the diverse language backgrounds of my students, as well as ASL interpreters to ensure that this project has accurately translated ASL pictures as well as accurate translations of five different languages of words so every student has equal opportunity to understand the lesson topic.

Norman and Jamison (2015) explained that Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH) do not have adequate time for nurturing students' SEL needs. If other educators had tools to help students work on their emotional needs while away from the TODHH, then hopefully the DHH EL student would have more time mastering academic standards while at school. Wolters-Leermakers (2016) stated that there needs to be continued practice of DHH students' SEL needs. This shows that there is a large need for curriculum that help support these students' SEL needs. Also, DHH EL students often only express their feelings with their TODHH because they are the one person the DHH EL student can accurately communicate with both in school and at home (Norman & Jamison, 2015). For that reason, a tool is needed for students to communicate with other peers and adults in their lives.

The tool that I, with the help of various members of the community, have created is 16 emotion word flashcards with the English word, as well as pictures of the American sign language translation, and translations of the five largest language populations for the Twin Cities metro area which are Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Amharic and Oromo. In addition, there is a page that has visuals on what the student might need to manage their emotional state (time, space, a hug, or to talk) which is also translated. This will help the students communicate with their families back home, and will hopefully then allow the TODHH to focus on teaching classroom content instead of spending most of their time addressing the student's SEL needs.

Becker and Bowen (2018) discussed how important it is to collaborate with the educators that work with DHH EL students. This unit and tools were created with EL, TODHH, and mainstream educators. Each educator brought their own lens and ideas, which has made the project accessible for not only DHH ELs, but for all students in the classroom.

## **Design Framework**

The framework that I have selected is the Zones of Regulation by Leah Kuypers (2018), which is one tool that my district is using right now to help students identify their own feelings. I created a unit that includes six 30 minute lessons. The unit focuses on speaking and writing about SEL needs. There are pictures with every feeling word, and each picture also includes the ASL sign for each feeling.

After teaching students the different feelings, we discuss what we can do to help moderate our feelings when in these different zones, and make sure that students understand that their feelings are valid and that every zone is acceptable to be in. Additionally, we talk about the different zones of regulation. The “green zone” means students are ready to learn. They are focused, calm and content. The “blue zone” usually is where students feel sad, tired, or sick. The “yellow zone” is where the students are not yet ready to learn, but they are close to reaching the “green zone”. Some feelings that are in the yellow zone include nervous, anxious, confused, or silly. The “red zone” is the farthest from the “green zone”, and means that the student is not able to calm down quickly. Some feelings that are in the red zone are frustrated, angry, or upset.

After the group discusses the emotions and learn the ASL sign, there are visuals and some steps students can take to help them get back in the “green zone”, or where they feel more regulated, that will also include a visual. The aim is that students can learn their native language translation of these feelings at home with family members if possible, and that families might also use ASL to support and communicate with students.

Later on in the unit, the students explain to partners about the feelings and action steps they can take to help get back to “the green zone.” Then they decide one of the action

steps that someone can take when they are in that zone in a writing assessment. This helps focus on speaking and writing and seeing if students can express some of the options students have. This repeats everyday until students have completed one of these worksheets for every zone of regulation.

The final week in the unit is where students listen (or see the ASL translation) to different scenarios that include a child and an event that expresses a type of emotion. The students have four different feelings to pick from, and they can decide what feeling that student is most likely feeling and will then write down something that the child could do to get back into the “green zone.” I use this final writing document as a formative assessment to see if students understand the different types of feelings.

In addition, there are flashcards for families to help communication between the student and families. There is a thermometer that was an existing tool that my co teachers used in classroom, but this one has each emotion translated so the parents can have a visual about the Zones of Regulation, as well as a page that has visuals of some things that the student might need. Additionally, Each emotion has its own card, English translation, ASL sign, and home language translation.

### **Project Setting**

The setting for this capstone project is an urban elementary school within the Twin Cities metro area that currently serves 599 students. Fifty percent of those students are currently enrolled in the ESL program. There are also 15 students in the DHH program. Fifty percent of those in the DHH program have a home language that is not English. There are ten people in the ESL department and eight people in the DHH department. There is a speech language pathologist as well as four ASL interpreters at our school that are working with

students in multiple classrooms and specialist rooms throughout the day. The lessons will be taught in groups (maximum of eight) so the focus can be on each student's speaking (or signing) and writing production on the topic. The students in the group are all ELs, most of whom are not DHH. There is an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter that is present during the lessons when there is a student that needs them. I worked with the DHH educators, mainstream teachers, as well as other ESL teachers and bilingual educators to collaborate on the unit and made sure that I implemented the correct translations and other needs for this project. I have taught the actual lessons, and have given the manipulatives to the other educators that work with the DHH EL students so that each student can use them throughout the day at school. I also provided the flashcards to the families so they can better communicate with their child.

### **Project Audience**

This curriculum is geared toward kindergarten through 3rd grade students that are DHH EL. However, the curriculum can be a resource for teachers that are educating all students at this age level since it was collaboratively created by TODHH, EL and mainstream educators.

It has also been created for teachers and families that are working with students that have home languages of Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Amharic or Oromo. However, if a teacher has a student with a different home language, they will be able to use the manipulatives created as a template and can translate the feelings and action steps. That way, more DHH EL students can better communicate with families and friends.



## **Timeline**

I started working on the project in the beginning of December. I connected with TODHHs first to see what resources they already had, and what they believed was needed for these students. After hearing about primary problems from them, I then started with the flashcards for the families, first just creating the basic outline of the English translation of the emotion, and then looking at the ASL translation. I also put the 16 emotions on a thermometer to show which emotions in color order so the student can point to where they were in relation to each zone. After that, I used Google Translation to translate the emotions in the 5 most frequent languages in the Twin Cities metro.

After I had a basic translation, I connected with bilingual educators at my school to check on my translations. Sure enough, each person explained to me that these translations were not completely correct, and how it was not as simple to translate a language, since many students come from different regions and have a different dialect. For example, most of the Spanish speakers came from Ecuador, so their translation might be different than the translation provided by the Spanish speaker from Mexico. The same concern was expressed from the bilingual Somali speaker that said he only spoke the Northern dialect, but many students at my school came from the South and did not speak the same dialect as him. This seems to be a frequent problem when translating information in print, but the project did not include the ability to translate all dialects that are prevalent in the Twin Cities metro area.

After I consulted with the bilingual educators, I created the small unit for mainstream and ESL educators. I already had the basic template that I made for these lessons, but I added the ASL pictures from the flashcards to make sure that they were the same. I then had a mainstream kindergarten teacher as well as ESL colleagues look at the unit and received

constructive feedback on if the lessons were accurate and would help meet the needs of the students.

The whole project took about three months to complete. The hardest part was connecting with the dozen of professionals to receive their feedback on the unit and flashcards; then once edited, it was necessary to show the improvements to them again.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter three provided a detailed description of the curriculum I have created, as well as multiple sources of research that defend the need for DHH EL SEL curriculum. I have also explained the setting and participants of this capstone project, and the steps that needed to be taken in order to effectively create this curriculum. In Chapter four, I will provide my reflection on the design and outcome of my capstone project.

## CHAPTER 4

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

The purpose of this project was to help answer the question, *How can ESL teachers best assist students who are both hard of hearing and have diverse home languages?*

Chapter one focused on my educational background and how I got to this question. Chapter two reviewed several dozens of documents that pertained to topics such as criteria for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) and English learners (ELs), environmental factors, teacher education, and best practices. Chapter three described the unit and flashcards that were created to help families, teachers, and peers communicate more effectively with DHH ELs about their emotions. Chapter four reviews my major findings from the project, provides an overview of the literature, and describes the implications, limitations, and further recommendations for this project.

#### Major Findings

Throughout this experience, I have read the research and met many professionals and have realized how difficult it can be to implement new policies and make drastic change. Since there is little research on the population of DHH students that come from multilingual homes, I wrote and met with many people from the Minnesota Department of Education, as well as many teachers that work with DHH students. There are many issues that need to be tackled to better instruct these students, but multiple professionals and researchers expressed the need for social and emotional lessons to help these students express their emotions with people around them.

While creating the project, I also realized how important it is to work with others. I connected with mainstream teachers, English language teachers, teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH), and bilingual professionals to create manipulatives that students and adults can use to help express emotions with American Sign Language (ASL), English, and the five home languages most prevalent in the Twin Cities metro area other than English. This would not have been possible without collaboration.

This project helped shed light on the need for more research as well as the need for more communication between professionals to help educate this unique population of DHH EL students. There has been some literature on this community, but I believe there should be more research. This would include how families have been communicating with each other, and what resources those families need. As well, there should be more policy created for this population so that all educators are more prepared to support and instruct them.

### **Review of Literature**

While looking for information to help create this project, I realized how little research has been done for this population. I searched relentlessly to find documents that only pertained to DHH ELs, but I mostly found information that was about DHH students, or about EL students and how beneficial it is for the educators that instruct this population to work together (personal communication, 2018). It showed how much more research needs to be done to meet the unique needs for this specific population (Pizzo and Chilvers, 2016).

There was a consensus that families need to be supported and gain information on how to best help their child (Norman and Jamison, 2015). Educators are a great resource for families, however there is a small amount of adequate information given to educators throughout their professional development to support this specific group of students (Baker

& Scott, 2016). As well, it was explained that there is a need for social-emotional instruction for this population, and how educators need more materials to help instruct students (Baker and Scott, 2016).

This capstone project fits the need for more materials for educators and families to communicate effectively with DHH ELs. Even before this project has been fully finished, educators have been able to use sections of it.

### **Implications**

My capstone project has mainly had an impact on educators so far, with hope that in the future it will become a useful resource for families of DHH students from multilingual households. I collaborated with ten other educational professionals to make sure that my curriculum and flashcards were accurate and useful for as many people as possible. I am also teaching this unit at the beginning of the next school year, so that all of the kindergarten students at my school can communicate their emotions with each other more effectively.

This unit and flash cards can be used with many different families from diverse home languages. I have made the flashcards easy to translate into other languages. The educator only needs to switch the language that they are translating. The signs and English translations can stay the same, as well as the color behind it. The unit that was created should be easy to use with students that have any home language.

This project has allowed educators to work together and create a unit that is beneficial to everyone. The kindergarteners at my school will be instructed on this unit at the beginning of next year so that they can better express their emotions with their teachers and their peers. The unit and flashcards can help families communicate with their child, as well as give visuals to help the student express their emotions.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations of this project. Some of the largest limitations revolved around how the flashcards are especially limiting. First, they had to have a picture of the ASL sign, rather than a video or interactive way to show families the sign. Also, the translations of the five languages were of certain dialects that the bilingual professional spoke. The translation does not work for every student and family that speaks the language. Even given these barriers, I, along with my colleagues, believe that this project did help lessen the barrier between DHH ELs speaking to their families, as well as make the relationship between the DHH and EL departments at my school stronger.

There are many other needs for the DHH ELs that have not been addressed. This includes how to make sure students are receiving legal minutes of instruction, accurately test their home language, and create a definition that is used nationally. However, this project was an important one that helped the DHH ELs communicate with others about their emotions. I believe that this project has showed how important it is to support this community as well as develop more research so that they can receive the instruction and resources they deserve.

There are several limitations of this project. First of all, the flashcards are not accurate for every student's native language, and they do not have a perfect ASL translation since it is not a video or a human representation. There are also additional needs that have not been addressed for DHH ELs, such as a national definition, accurate testing of their home language, as well as facilitating instructional minutes, but it has helped shed light on how much more needs to be done to meet their unique needs.

## **Future Recommendations**

After finishing this project, I have decided to look more into how I can help these families communicate by having ASL classes translated in the predominant languages spoken in my district. This would be where families would come to the school and learn ASL from a translator, while other translators of Somali, Hmong, Spanish, Amharic, and Oromo are translating the English definitions. I talked to one of my colleagues, who said that she used to write grants for these type of ASL translated classes, but it became more and more difficult, so she stopped. I want to look more into writing these grants, as well as look at the educational policies in place and help advocate for translated ASL classes to be district provided resources for families of DHH ELs.

Furthermore, it is clear that there needs to be more collaboration between the EL and the DHH departments. There are many instances where these students are not receiving legally mandated services due to many factors including the fact that this group is so unique and many educators do not have the tools and education necessary to instruct them. DHH and EL teams can work together to help advocate for DHH EL students and their families.

There are many recommendations that have been brought to my attention once this project was finished. Families need to have free translated ASL classes so they can better communicate with their child where they can have access to learning ASL translated in their native language. There also needs to be more communication between the DHH and EL departments at school. This can be done by having clearer guidelines around instructional best practice for these students and mandated education policies.

## **Conclusion**

This project helped demonstrate the need for more research and support for the students that are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and that come from Multilingual homes. There is a need to collaborate with other professionals, as well as create materials that are made specifically for each student, because they all have different needs. Educators have an obligation to support this community in any way possible. It is this author's hope that the research and tools developed by this capstone project can help spread awareness to the issues that DHH ELs face in our schools, and help promote further development of educational tools, strategies, and policies that can provide a better educational experience for this unique population.



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