

Iowa Family Support Book Club for Tots

Heather Dirks - Family Support Coordinator

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program, Public Health Division, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services



INTRODUCTION

EHDI Family Support programs create opportunities for families to engage with each other and learn about aspects of their child's hearing differences. The Book Club for Tots program allows families the opportunity to learn American Sign Language and connect with Deaf adults in a fun and collaborative environment.

How It Works

- ▶ Trained Deaf Partners sign up for dates to host EHDI's Book Club for Tots
 - Hosts are paid a stipend for every book club
- ▶ ASL interpreters are scheduled for all Book Club for Tots
- ▶ A different book is picked each month and mailed to the first 10 families who register as well as the Book Club Host
- ▶ During Book Club, host reads the story in ASL while the interpreter voices the story in English
 - Iowa EHDI partners with Iowa School for the Deaf to provide either a previously recorded video of that month's book being signed in ASL or will record a video to provide the Iowa EHDI program to share with families
- ▶ After the story is read, the host will teach signs from the story to families and answer questions
 - The host and EHDI Family Support Coordinator provide tips for reading to children who are deaf or hard of hearing based on the 15 Principles for Reading to Deaf Children¹
- ▶ After Book Club, EHDI Family Support Coordinator will email the video of that month's story being signed for families to watch and practice at home



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Iowa EHDI's Book Club for Tots program is important because it promotes reading to children in the early language learning years as well as exposure to both visual and spoken languages that may support language development. Young children who receive consistent reading demonstrate improved language scores earlier.³ Language development has been identified as a predictor of reading skills of both hearing children and deaf or hard of hearing children.⁴

OTHER BENEFITS

Most deaf or hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents who have had little to no experience with Deaf adults, other communication modes, or Deaf Culture. Book Club for Tots introduces successful Deaf adults to families who they can engage with, learn from, and ask questions about their experiences.

Book Club for Tots Statistics

- ★ Book Club for Tots began in October 2021
 - All sessions are held via virtually to make it accessible to families throughout Iowa
- 🏠 Since the start of Book Club for Tots, 84 families have joined
 - There were 3 months where over 10 families registered
 - Most months have an average of 4-5 families
 - Having fewer families makes the conversations deeper and more engaging
- 📖 Families get to keep the books each month so they can continue to practice reading the story together at home
- 🔄 Families often come back for multiple times to keep learning and stay involved
- 🔔 Dates are scheduled 6 months ahead and posted on Iowa EHDI websites and sent in a monthly newsletter for families to register

15 Principles for Reading to Deaf Children¹

1. Translate stories using American Sign Language
2. Keep both languages (ASL and English) visible
3. Elaborate on the text
4. Reread stories on a "storytelling" to "story reading" continuum
5. Follow the child's lead
6. Make what is implied explicit
7. Adjust sign placement to fit story
8. Adjust the signing style to fit the story
9. Connect concepts in the story to the real world
10. Use attention maintenance strategies
11. Use eye gaze to elicit participation
12. Engage in role play to extend concepts
13. Use ASL variations to sign repetitive English phrases
14. Provide a positive and reinforcing environment
15. Expect the child to become literate

DEAF PARTNERS AND TRAINING

Deaf Partners is the term Iowa EHDI uses for our Deaf mentors who work with families who have children ages 0-3 that are deaf or hard of hearing. These Deaf Partners have gone through the Ski-Hi² training previously as well as being trained by EHDI staff on EHDI expectations and non-bias training. All Iowa EHDI Deaf Partners are excellent at providing support in a non-judgmental, safe space for families who have children newly diagnosed with hearing differences.

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REFERENCES

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2. Ski-Hi Institute Deaf Mentor Program <https://deaf-mentor.skihi.org/>
3. Science Daily (Daily, Consistent Parental Reading in the First Year of Life Improves Infants' Language Scores) <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2023/02/230214153903.htm>
4. Education Sciences (Language Development and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1222568.pdf>
5. All images are from Getty Images <https://www.gettyimages.com/>
6. National 2024 EHDI Conference notes, March 15-17, 2023. <https://ehdiconference.org/>

AUTHOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Heather Dirks
heather.dirks@idph.iowa.gov

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