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FROM DEAF SCHOOLS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

THE RISK OF LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION

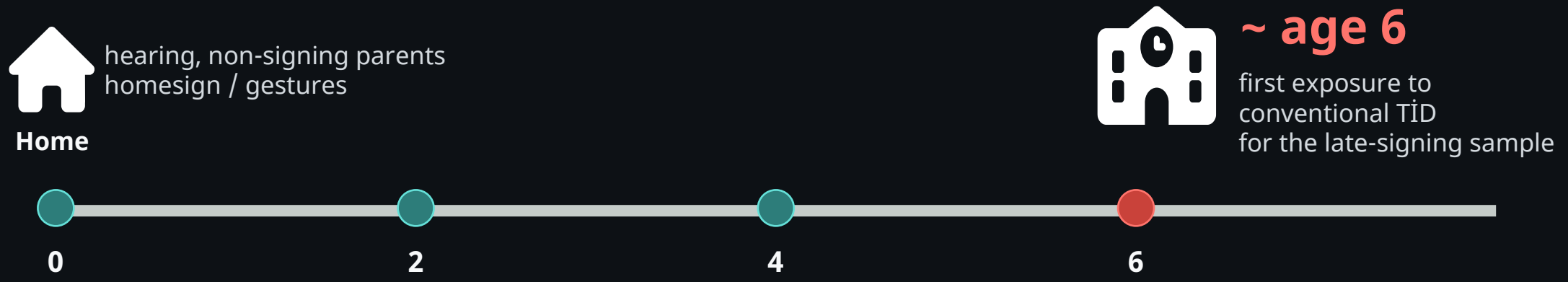
WFD panel on language deprivation

A Türkiye-focused overview of how policy, school placement, teacher preparation and TİD access intersect.

01 THE LANGUAGE CLOCK

For some deaf children, school came before full language access

Evidence from late-signing TİD users in Türkiye



Key point

Late access does not affect every linguistic domain equally — but it can leave durable differences in complex language development.

Source: Karadöller, Sümer & Özyürek (2021), Language Learning and Development 17(1), 1–25. DOI: 10.1080/15475441.2020.1823846

A century of changing ideas about deaf education

The policy story matters because it shapes where TİD can live



The decisive question is not whether TİD is visible in policy — but whether it is available as a full language of learning.

Source: MEB history of TİD; Kelepir et al. (2020) SIGN-HUB grammar; MEB 2015 TİD curriculum; Anadolu University teacher-program history.

TİD in a school is not the same as education through TİD

A language can be present socially, yet absent as the instructional medium

TİD AS A SUBJECT

- 2015–16: introduced in deaf primary schools
- Grades 1–3
- 2 hours per week
- Vocabulary, dialogues, activities

Important progress

TİD AS THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING

- Maths • Turkish • Literacy (..etc)

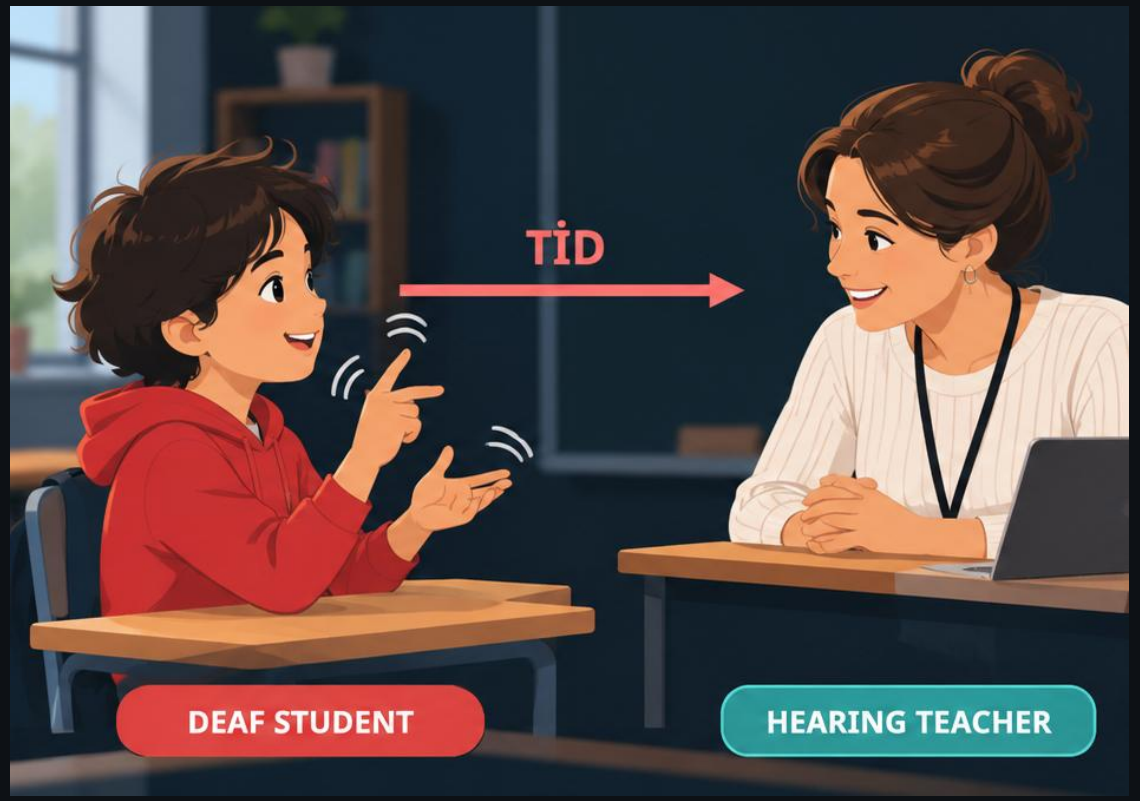
Teacher explanations, questions, feedback and peer discussion are directly accessible in TİD.

Not yet guaranteed

Source:
MEB (2015/2016) TİD course: 2 hours/week in grades 1–3;
Yazçayır & Holmström (2026) report limited instructional use due to teacher fluency and speech-first norms.

What happens when the child is teaching the teacher the language?

A recent Türkiye case study documents this directly



> **“These children are teaching sign language to their teachers.”**

The same study reports teachers being appointed to DHH schools without prior TİD proficiency, learning from students, and struggling with subject-specific vocabulary.

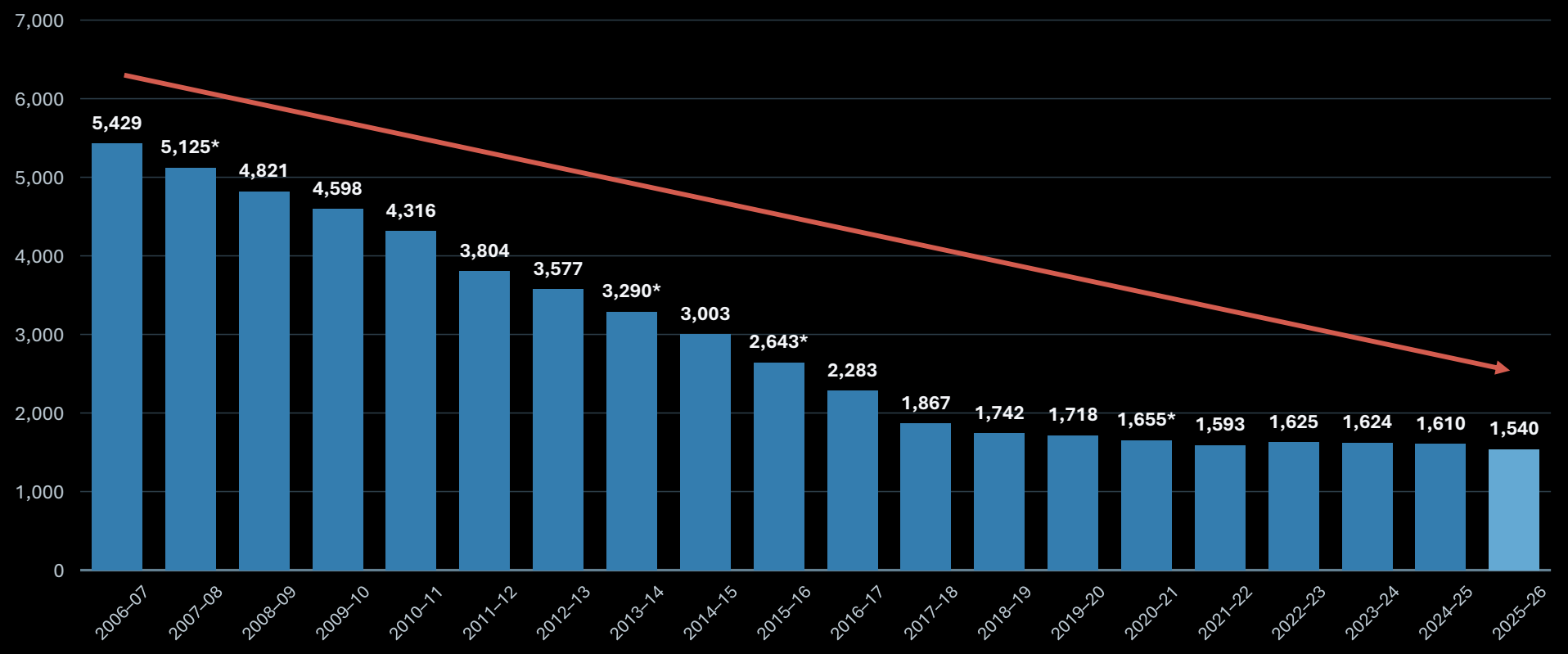
Observed in Turkish cases

Source: Yazçayır & Holmström (2026), Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, DOI: 10.1093/jdsade/enag033.

05 A SYSTEM IN TRANSITION

Deaf-school enrolment has fallen sharply

Students enrolled in schools for Deaf children · Türkiye



STUDENT ENROLMENT

−72%

5,429 → 1,540

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

−37%

49 → 31

2006–07 to 2025–26

* Years without a published yearbook (2007–08, 2013–14, 2015–16, 2020–21): average of the previous and following year.

Student totals: primary + lower secondary (before 2012–13: basic education, grades 1–8). Vocational high schools and Deaf students in mainstream (inclusive) settings are not included. School counts: primary + lower secondary schools (49 in 2006–07; 31 in 2025–26).

Source (student enrolment): Ministry of National Education (MEB). Prepared by Caner Doğan. School-count figures: provided for this slide.

Placement decisions can shape language access before the classroom

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Educational assessment (RAM)
Educational needs, performance and development are assessed.

DEAF VOICE

TRANSPARENCY GAP

Community reports raise an important question: how do CI / hearing-aid status, communication profile and diagnostic labels affect educational placement in practice?



Design: Seyhan Öztürk

Sources: MEB Special Education framework / RAM guidance;
Selvi (2020); Yazçayır & Holmström (2026). Community-reported mechanisms are presented as questions, not established policy rules.

Five questions for Türkiye

These are measurable — and they turn the debate from ideology into evidence

WHEN?	**At what age does each deaf child gain reliable access to a full language?**
HOME?	**Can families access sustained, high-quality TİD support from infancy?**
TEACHER?	**Are teachers fluent enough to teach academic content through TİD?**
PEERS?	**Does the child have a signing peer community — in special or mainstream settings?**
CURRICULUM?	**Is TİD only a subject, or can it function as a language of instruction?**

Source: Synthesis of the Türkiye evidence reviewed in this presentation; questions align with WFD language-rights framework and CRPD Article 24.

8 A LANGUAGE ACCESS MODEL

What would a safer pathway look like?

Build access before school — and sustain it across every educational setting



Detection
full information

Family
funded TİD support

Deaf adults
role models + language mentors

Early years
language-rich preschool

School
fluent TİD teachers

Curriculum
bilingual materials

Peers
signing community

The principle: no child should have to wait for school to meet a fully accessible language.

Source: WFD: families/carers should receive sign-language support from infancy; CRPD Article 24: sign-language learning, Deaf linguistic identity, qualified teachers.



Thank you!

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