When Trauma Disrupts Learning

A Neuroscience-Based Approach to Deaf Education

Language access and classroom support

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THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What changes when a child cannot fully access language?

Language access shapes participation from the earliest years.





Language Deprivation

A CORE CONCEPT

Early language access supports learning and connection.

Learning

Memory and sequencing may need support.

Connection

Fewer chances to name feelings and feel understood.

Stress

Unclear communication can increase uncertainty.

THE NEUROSCIENCE

Stress and Access to Learning



Threat

Uncertainty can feel threatening.

→



Stress

The body prepares to protect itself.

→



Learning

Attention and planning get harder.

Clear communication reduces uncertainty.



A CLASSROOM EXAMPLE

“The lesson moves faster than she can follow. Her hands become still and her eyes drop. She stops participating.”

THE SHIFT

Regulate, Relate, Reason

A framework for supporting participation

REGULATE

Calm support

RELATE

Trusted adult, shared language

REASON

One manageable learning step

THE PRACTICE

Everyday Classroom Practice



Language access

Visual language in every subject.



Calm adult support

A slower pace and visual grounding.



Predictable routines

Visual schedules.
Clear sightlines.



Family & community

Family sign coaching.
Deaf role models.

A CALL TO THE WORLD

Education Priorities



- Include local sign languages and Deaf communities in education planning.
- Invest in sustained teacher training led by Deaf professionals.
- Share specialists and accessible resources across the region.
- Support early language access and family sign coaching.

BEFORE WE CLOSE

Key Takeaways



Behavior offers clues

Check language access and stress.



Early language access

Full access and support at every age.



Shared support

Families, schools, Deaf communities

