



2/17/2016

Re: Testimony in opposition to SB 444

From: Kristin Pedersen (President of KSHA) & Susie Ternes (Executive Director)

Dear Chair Abrams and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address Senate Bill 444.

The Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA) is the state professional association of over 1000 speech-language pathologists and audiologists. **We oppose this bill as currently written, but we are willing to work with all interested parties to develop a comprehensive proposal. We would respectfully suggest that the committee holds SB 444 until we have had an opportunity to sit down with the sponsors of this bill and attempt to resolve our differences.** While KSHA supports appropriate language assessments and services for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, the following concerns about this bill have been raised by our membership:

- 1) We are concerned about the establishment of the Committee/Advisory Board without having received input from the various groups involved in the delivery of services to this population. It seems that the various professionals who work with this population should convene to discuss ideas and come up with a comprehensive approach. As far as we know, KSHA has not been contacted about this bill, despite SLPs being integral providers of services to deaf and hard-of-hearing children.
- 2) It is within the scope of practice of Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) to conduct assessments in the area of language yet SLPs are not mentioned anywhere in this bill. This is one of the primary roles of an SLP. See Scope of Practice for SLPs, from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (<http://www.asha.org/policy/SP2007-00283/>)
- 3) SLPs must work collaboratively with teachers of children who are deaf and hard of hearing yet no mention of the role of SLPs in this program or advisory committee is mentioned.

“It is the position of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the Council on Education of the Deaf (CED) that the development of communicative competence (the ability to understand and use one or more languages effectively in a variety of sociocultural contexts) of children who are deaf or hard of hearing is best facilitated when the **speech-language pathologist (SLP) and teacher of children who are deaf and hard of hearing (Teacher) work collaboratively** to optimize each child's potential. This collaboration requires (1) an understanding and respect for the unique background, educational preparation, knowledge, skills, and experience of participating professionals; (2) a recognition and appreciation of the shared knowledge, expertise, and responsibilities of the professionals; and (3) a consideration of programming and service delivery systems that stimulate the development of interpersonal communication skills and literacy.

*From the Joint Committee of ASHA and the Council on Education of the Deaf

- 4) It is concerning that this advisory committee will be making determinations on who conducts assessments, how assessments are provided and how such information is included in a child's IFSP or IEP when this is covered under the scope of practice of an SLP. Not only should SLPs be on the advisory committee, but other professionals should not be making determinations for an SLP to carry out.
- 5) This bill is written with a strong bias toward American Sign Language. Many parents of children who are deaf/hard-of-hearing do not choose ASL as part of their communication plan. Children should NOT be assessed in ASL if this is not their primary (or even secondary) communication modality. For example, children who use only listening and spoken language should NOT be assessed in American Sign Language. Furthermore, children who use another sign language system, such as an English-based sign system, should NOT be assessed in ASL. According to IDEA, it is a parent's right to choose communication modality and this bill is influencing schools to incorporate mandatory ASL assessment for all children who are deaf/hard-of-hearing. This is not appropriate.
- 6) The bias toward ASL as the only sign language system available to parents is noted in the six appointed advisory committee members. This is NOT representative of the many other modes of communication that are available to parents of deaf/hard-of-hearing children.

Pg 1, Line 26:

(A) One member shall be a credentialed teacher of the deaf who uses both ASL and English during instruction;

(B) one member shall be a credentialed teacher of the deaf who has expertise in curriculum development and instruction of ASL and English;

- (C) one member shall be a credentialed teacher of the deaf who has expertise in assessing language development in both ASL and English;
- (D) one member shall be an expert on language outcomes of children who are deaf and use ASL and English;
- (E) one member shall be a parent of a child who is deaf and who uses both ASL and English; and
- (F) one member who is an advocate for teaching and using both ASL and English.

6) The wording of this suggests that **ALL** children who are deaf/hard-of-hearing have the goal of ASL **AND** English literacy. This is biased and not inclusive of other communication choices.

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(2) language assessments conducted in accordance with standardized norms and timelines in order to monitor and track language developmental milestones in both receptive and expressive language acquisition and developmental stages towards ASL and English literacy for all children who are deaf or hard of hearing from birth to the age of eight;

7) We disagree with the definition of "Language" used on Pg. 4, Line 9: "Language" means the cognitive ability to learn and use systems of complex communication, separate from modality employed to communicate.

One's cognitive ability should not be part of the definition. Language is a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns.

Sincerely,

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KSHA President

Susie Ternes, Au.D., CCC-A
KSHA Executive Director

*Joint Committee of ASHA and the Council on Education of the Deaf (2003). Position Statement: Roles of Speech-Language Pathologists and Teachers of Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Development of Communicative and Linguistic Competence.