

The Deaf Child in the Family and Community: A Worldwide Perspective

Niemann, S., Greenstein, D., and David, D. (2004). *Helping children who are deaf: Family and community support for children who do not hear well*. Berkeley, CA: The Hesperian Foundation. 245 pages. Paperback. \$12.00.

Helping Children Who Are Deaf is a book written primarily for parents and other caregivers of young children who are deaf or hard of hearing. But, as the authors state at the very beginning, it is not intended for parents alone to deal with the needs of their child—it is the whole community's responsibility. This theme of the child's involvement with the Deaf and hearing communities and those communities' involvement with the child is foundational to the conceptualization of each chapter and the goal of making the ideas and recommendations accessible to anyone wanting to become part of a deaf or hard-of-hearing child's life.

An important contribution of this volume to the books-for-parents' literature is its broad perspective. Parents, teachers, deaf adults, and health care workers from around the world—over 17 countries—advised and reviewed draft materials of the book. A very long and impressive list of individuals and organizations from Bangladesh to Zimbabwe are given credit and thanks for sharing their experiences, stories, and knowledge. An especially delightful feature of the book are the illustrations by Heidi Broner, which show children, parents, and other people from many different places and cultures in the world; they remind us that parents and children everywhere face similar challenges.

The first 9 of the 15 chapters focus on hearing, communication, and learning to use and choose a language—both sign and spoken languages. The remaining chapters consider social skills development, working with your community, educating a deaf child, preventing child sexual abuse, supporting parents, and why children lose their hearing. I am pleased to see the

chapter, "Support for Parents and Caregivers," which focuses on the emotional impact for parents, managing stress, parent groups, and planning advocacy action. Appendices to the book cover the areas of hearing aids, cochlear implants, and child development, as well as a section on where to get more information. The information is current and useful, and the authors strive for balance in opinion and ideology in controversial content areas.

The information is presented clearly and without jargon; it is as though the authors are sitting and talking (or signing) with families in their homes. In each chapter, the authors explain the basic principles and rationale for the particular content. This setup provides a substantive framework for the ideas and activities suggested in the chapter. Examples and stories are used throughout the book and are very effective at personalizing the information.

Although the book takes a family- and community-centered approach to "helping" children who are deaf, it also emphasizes the uniqueness of each child and his or her family. It is an important emphasis. Parents are encouraged to respond to their child in a flexible and creative way and to understand the needs of the whole child. I hope *Helping Children Who Are Deaf* is read around the world just as it is intended; children who are deaf will benefit, teachers and health workers will benefit, but most of all parents and families will be far better off for having the information.

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