**Educational Options for the Deaf**

Making educational decisions for a child is a very personal decision and takes a lot of thought and discussion with professionals that have specific knowledge of the services available in that area. There are many different education options to explore. As a parent, you will need to determine what is the best fit for your family.

**Residential Schools**

A residential school is an institution where students typically go and live full time while attending. These can be private or state schools. The state school in Florida is the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind known as FSDB. All the students in the school are deaf or hard of hearing. They are often educated by deaf teachers or teachers who are trained in deaf education. Some residential schools offer day-only options for students that are able to commute from home.

**Oral Day Schools**

Oral Day Schools focus more on auditory and oral skills; their focus is on listening, learning and spoken language skills students will need to succeed. They do not incorporate sign language. These schools are day schools and the students return home each day. These schools tend to only go to a certain age, most often around the age of 7. The nearest Oral Day School in Jacksonville is Clarke School for Hearing and Speech.

**Mainstreaming (Public School)**

Mainstreaming is when a deaf or hard of hearing student attends a local public school with hearing students. The experience can vary greatly depending on the support services the school has to provide and the needs of the student. Because deafness is considered a “low incidence disability” by government education code (meaning there isn’t a large number of deaf children in a concentrated area), there is limited funding available and every school district handles it differently. Here are some examples of how mainstreaming can vary:

* **Regular Classroom** The student is in a regular classroom with hearing students and all instruction is from the classroom teacher(s). There are little to no additional support services provided for the deaf or hard of hearing student.
* **Regular Classroom with additional support services** The student is in a regular classroom with hearing students, however, there is some support in addition to the classroom teacher(s). The support may come from an additional teacher, teacher consultant, teacher of the deaf, speech/language specialist, or interpreter inside or outside the classroom.
* **Resource Room** The student is in a regular classroom with hearing students, however, they leave the classroom for designated periods to receive special instruction.
* **Self-Contained Classroom** The student is in a class, separate from the regular classroom, with a teacher for the deaf.

With resources being shared across school districts, students are often bused to one central location where they are with a group of deaf and hard-of-hearing students as well as hearing students, yet they may also have a self-contained classroom that they can go to throughout the day for additional support. In Duval County, the two high schools that fulfill this role are Atlantic Coast High School and Ed White.

**Making Education Decisions**

The best thing to do: RESEARCH! Every child is different – with different learning styles, different personalities, different strengths, and different levels of hearing loss. Remember, education quality varies from school to school.

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