



Early Childhood Programs
F.I.R.S.T.
Family Instructional
Resource Service Team

The Family Instructional Resource Service Team (F.I.R.S.T.) of certified educators at Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD) are equal partners with families in Monroe and surrounding counties, providing their deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers with critical access to language, social-emotional, physical and cognitive skills, through American Sign Language and English.



Building Futures ...since 1876



At Rochester School for the Deaf, our Early Childhood Programs support families with deaf and hard of hearing children, newborn to age 5, in ways that effectively help them to succeed.

RSD teachers and support staff provide comprehensive evaluation, diagnostic and educational services to help develop an individualized plan to meet the social and academic needs of each child in our program.





What is F.I.R.S.T.?

RSD's Family Instructional Resource Service Team provides complete access to daily communication, early childhood education and social-emotional development, through interactions that consistently include American

Sign Language (ASL), English, and visual supports. Young students are taught to use language and explore curriculum topics, to gain general knowledge, demonstrate their own thinking and develop positive relationships with peers and adults. Their families receive support and guidance to continue promoting successful development at home as well.



What unique and comprehensive services does F.I.R.S.T provide?

- Bilingual, ASL and English, educational programming.
- Collaboration with Early Intervention (EI) to develop a comprehensive program.
- Individual home visits in Monroe and surrounding counties for children, newborn to 18-months and up to age 3, as appropriate.
- Transportation to and from the RSD Early Childhood Center (ECC).
- Center-based programming for children age 18-months to 3 years.
- On-site audiological services.
- Shared Reading Project Program.
- ASL classes for parents and family members.
- Opportunities to network with other families of deaf and hard of hearing RSD students, and the RSD learning community of teachers and support staff.
- Access to an array of community resources.



We Recognize and Value

- Parents and their intimate knowledge of their child
- The importance of educating deaf and hard of hearing children as well as members of their family
- Collaborative partnerships between teachers, therapists, specialists, and families
- Parent's rights to make informed decisions about appropriate educational options for their child
- Opportunities for parents to network with each other through workshops and school activities



What is a bilingual program and how will my child benefit?

An ASL/English bilingual program meets the needs of diverse learners by providing young deaf and hard of hearing children with full access to communication and language.



A bilingual program:

- Provides critical access to early language experiences.
- Respects individual language development strengths and needs.
- Recognizes language as the foundation for cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

How is ASL development addressed in a bilingual program?

Children are exposed to consistent American Sign Language models, including adults and peers, to facilitate optimal visual language development, usage, and fluency.

How is English development addressed in a bilingual program?

Children are provided opportunities to use English in a natural context with adults and peers, to facilitate the development and use of listening and speaking, reading, writing, and speechreading skills.



Being bilingual, in ASL and English, is beneficial for deaf and hard of hearing children for establishing communication with their parents, developing their cognitive abilities, acquiring knowledge, communicating fully, and acculturating into the world for hearing, deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

(Grosjean, 2008)

With Regents-level educational programs, outreach services, and cultural support, RSD is one of America's premier schools specializing in the education of children with hearing loss. Since 1876, RSD has built successful futures for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families in Western and Central New York State.



ROCHESTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

1545 St. Paul Street

Rochester, NY 14621

585.544.1240 (Voice/TTY)

www.RSDeaf.org