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Back to School

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Explain the effects of hearing loss to teachers and other school staff
Most people think that once you fit a child with hearing aids the hearing loss should be cured. Hearing aids are not like eyeglasses. They help a lot but they do not solve all listening problems. Teachers need to understand that, even with the very best technology, children with hearing loss will have some problems in the classroom so it is essential that they do their best to maximize function. They need to understand the effects of distance and noise and they need to understand that they need to check that children are hearing all day long.

Strategic seating
Children with hearing loss should be seated where they can both hear and see the teacher. But keep in mind they also need to see and hear their peers. For young children, during circle time, a seat in the middle is ideal. For older students, seating over to the side about 1/3 back from the front will allow them to scan the room and see who is talking in order to move focus. Students should be allowed to move about the room as the teacher moves, or as activities change.

Checking equipment
At the start of the school day and, for young children, at least once again during the day, someone needs to check that all the technology is working. Children, especially young children, are not good reporters. They do not always know when the equipment is not working optimally. Check listening daily when the child can hear but not see the talker.

2. Have the child repeat Ling sounds in random order:
    1. /ah/, /uu/, /eee/, /mmm/, /sh/, /ss/
3. Say some individual words for the child to repeat
4. Ask some questions that the child cannot anticipate. (What color shirt is John wearing?)

Make sure the teacher knows who to call if there is a problem.

Note: give the teacher a listening tube so the teacher can listen to hearing aids to see if they are working if the child does not hear. The problem may be just a dead battery.

Using a remote microphone
Children will hear best when they are close to the person who is talking and when it is quiet. Since students are often not within a few feet of the person who is talking in a classroom and since classrooms are seldom quiet, it is essential that any child with a hearing loss use a remote microphone system for all academic situations. Note: they are also very useful for situations outside of school such as ballet class, sports, religious instruction etc.

Teachers should have the microphone ‘on’ when talking to the student with hearing loss and mute

it when talking to other students in a situation when the child with hearing loss does not need to hear. When possible, there should be a pass microphone which can be used like a talking stick so that other students in the class can speak directly into the microphone. If there is no pass microphone, teachers need to repeat comments of other students so the child with hearing loss can know what is happening in the classroom discussion. Teachers should use the student's name when calling on a student so the child with hearing loss can find the student easily and look and listen. During small group work, give another child in the group the remote microphone or place it in the middle of the table so the child with hearing loss can hear small group discussion.

Check for understanding
It is important to be sure that the child with hearing loss understands classroom discussion. Asking "do you understand" is not enough. Very few children will admit to not understanding. Ask critical questions to confirm understanding.

Keep the classroom quiet
Furniture makes noise. Footies or used tennis balls on legs of all movable chairs and tables will reduce the noise. Windows and doors should be shut to reduce outside noise. Classroom rules should include that only one person talks at a time and that there is no walking around or using pencil sharpeners or other noisy things during lessons.

Cue the student
The teacher should call the student's name to get his attention or to comment on a change of subject. It is also helpful to call the name of a child who is going to make a comment instead as well as pointing so the child with hearing loss can know where to look to see who is speaking.

Provide written instructions
All assignments and homework should be provided in written form so there is no confusion about what the assignment is. During class, if students are being asked to turn to a particular page or book, write that on the whiteboard.

Additional wait time
Children with hearing loss may need additional wait time to help them understand the message. Just give them a few extra minutes.

Testing
Children with hearing loss will benefit from extended test time, usually 1 ½ times the typical test time. In addition, if any information on the test is spoken, it is essential to be sure that they heard it. The teacher should be close by and the room should be quiet. Preferably, testing should be conducted in a quiet room.

Teacher of the Deaf services
All children with hearing loss will benefit from academic assistance. Teachers of the deaf should preview vocabulary of new material before they are presented in the classroom and review the vocabulary and concepts with the student after presentation. In that way children with hearing loss can keep up with their classmates. Do not let a school tell you that because a child is doing "well enough" they do not need preview and review. Every child with hearing loss needs these services. Some may do well with one or two sessions a week and others will need TOD services daily.

Speech-language-listening services

Every child with hearing loss should have speech-language-listening therapy unless there are no areas of weakness. While a child's overall score on a standardized test may be within the average range, if he or she has some areas of weakness in language testing, therapy is still essential. Without it, the child will just drop farther and farther behind. Therapy should include developing listening skills so the child can use audition to learn. Ideally this should be conducted by a therapist skilled in auditory verbal practice.

Educational audiology

Every school should have an educational audiologist who can monitor equipment on a regular basis and who can assist school staff in understanding hearing loss and maximizing auditory performance for children with hearing loss. Depending on the number of children with hearing loss in the school district, this may be a full time or part time person. At least in the beginning of the school year, the educational audiologist should come in on a regular basis, at least every few weeks. If all is well, services may be needed less frequently as the year goes on.

Listening fatigue

It is not easy to listen all day long when you have a hearing loss. Children need listening breaks during the day when it is not essential that they be "on". As the day goes on, listening becomes more exhausting and so, if possible, critical subjects should be scheduled in the morning before listening fatigue sets in. Listening break may be quiet time working at the desk or study time. Lunch is likely not a listening break since they will want to talk to their friends.

High expectations are critical

Everyone working with a child with hearing loss needs to believe that the child can and will do well and work toward that goal. "*It's good enough for a child with hearing loss*" is just not acceptable. Kids with hearing loss can and do very well in school and in life. But that only happens when we all do our part.