

Guide for Teachers

Working with Students Who Are Hard of Hearing

During this period of physical distancing and the shift to teaching through technology, it is important to be mindful of the access needs of students with hearing loss. We hope that this brief guide will be useful for classroom teachers who have students with hearing loss in their class.

1. Understand

- Hearing, listening, and understanding are very different concepts. Sounds that are audible are not necessarily intelligible to students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Learning online will require the information to move from one mechanical device (computer) to another mechanical device (hearing aid or cochlear implant); this will create a more challenging listening environment for the hard of hearing student. Compatibility is sometimes an issue. Quality amplification is important.
- Multiple factors will affect the hard of hearing student's ability to access online learning.

2. Consider

- Does the student have assistive listening equipment (i.e., hearing aids, cochlear implants, a bluetooth streamer, or a personal FM system)?
- Is the assistive listening equipment being used regularly? Is it in good working order? Are there fresh batteries in the hearing aid or cochlear implant? Is it compatible with the technology in use?
- What type of technology does the student have access to? Is it possible to patch or pair their assistive listening equipment to their technology? Can the student use external speakers or headphones to enhance the quality of their listening experience?
- Does the student have a quiet location to work at home or is there competing noise?
- What is the student's hearing level and experience as a listener?
- What is the student's language ability?
- Is the student able to gain information from print material, such as captioning? Can they read large quantities of text (captions) and process them?
- Does the student have additional learning or sensory challenges?
- Is there a parent or older sibling who can assist during the lessons (i.e., repeat/paraphrase information, or write down key points)?
- Is the student able to identify communication barriers or breakdowns and use appropriate communication repair strategies as needed?

3. Suggestions

- Encourage consistent use of assistive listening devices (i.e., hearing aids, cochlear implants, bluetooth streamers, or personal FM systems)
- Check for comprehension:
 - Avoid asking “Did you hear?” or “Did you understand?”, because hard of hearing students will frequently respond “Yes”.
 - DO—ask the students to repeat part of the instructions; ask WH (Why? How?) questions to ensure comprehension
- Encourage the hard of hearing student to identify communication barriers and breakdowns.
- Encourage the hard of hearing student to develop and use communication repair strategies.
- Implement as many visual aids as possible into online teaching.
- Emphasize key words and key points; provide key vocabulary in print prior to a lesson.
- Provide an outline of the lesson so the student can follow along.

Please contact the consultant for Deaf and hard of hearing students in your area if assistance is required.

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