

Creating an Optimal Learning Environment for a Hard of Hearing Student

Hard of Hearing (HI) students work very hard to understand what is said in and out of the classroom. Listening requires their full attention, auditory and visual. They can't half listen or let their minds wander. They have to fill in and guess at times. This creates fatigue and stress and some misunderstandings. The effort listening requires day in day out is often taken for granted.

These strategies will enhance understanding, facilitate learning, and reduce stress & fatigue:

1. USE THE FM SYSTEM

- *Clip microphone on before class, wearing it about a fist width away from your mouth and avoiding wearing jewelry or anything that might bang against it.

- *Turn microphone on when you are speaking to the class as a whole, a group including the HI student, or the HI student individually.

- *Turn microphone off when you are not speaking to the HI student, especially when you step outside the classroom or are speaking to another teacher, parent or student.

- *Encourage guest speakers, students making presentations, etc. to use the microphone.

2. ENHANCE VISUAL INFORMATION

- *Seat the student so your face can be easily seen for speechreading.

- *Face the student when you talk. Do not hold books or papers in front of your face and do not talk while writing on the board.

- *Put as much information as possible in writing.

3. REDUCE CLASSROOM NOISE

- *Seat this student away from potential sources of noise such as fans, vents, open windows, pencil sharpeners, noisy students, etc.

- *Do not play background music while students work at their desks.

4. CHECK/ENHANCE COMPREHENSION

- *Do not ask "did you hear?" or "did you understand?". The hearing-impaired student has no way of knowing if they understood everything that was said.

- *Ask the student specific questions related to the material, have them repeat information or instructions, or observe their work to check for comprehension.

- *Pretutor new vocabulary and new units prior to the initial classroom presentation.

5. MAKE CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS MORE ACCESSIBLE

- *Slow down the pace - pass an object from speaker to speaker

- *Seat the students in a semi-circle

- *Repeat or paraphrase what was said

6. OTHER ISSUES

- *Note taking - student needs to look at the speaker and cannot look down to write notes.

- *Films - turn on the captions or English subtitles for all films.

- *Avoid oral tests

- *May miss what is said in the background - announcements, classroom jokes, etc.

- *Assemblies - speakers should use the FM mic

Audrey Chumley, Educational Audiologist