



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™*

**Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

## **Children with Hearing Loss: Guidelines for Schools**

Some children are born with a hearing loss. Others may develop one due to injury, infection or even loud noises. Children with hearing loss can do well in school, but they often need extra help to learn at their full capacity. Every child is different. This handout can help schools find ways to meet the needs of the child with a hearing loss.

### **Teaching a child with hearing loss**

Children with hearing loss may benefit from all or just a few of these tips to help them learn. It is important for the school and the family to work together to decide what is best for the child.

- Pause during lessons. Take time to be sure the child understands what was said.
- Repeat and/or rephrase information when needed.
- Talk slowly and clearly. Use a comfortable volume.
- Change your speech pattern, rhythm, stress and tone. This shows that you are excited about what you are teaching. Children hear it in your voice. Make lessons predictable by repeating the content. Pre-teach new words before the actual lesson. Review lessons that were taught earlier.
- Use visual models and cues.
- Provide a peer note-taker or lecture outlines to help with understanding what the lesson was about. It may be hard for a child with hearing loss or an auditory processing disorder (APD) to take notes while listening. This is because it is hard to watch the teacher's face for visual and speech cues while trying to listen and take notes.
- Be aware of how close you are to the child. The closer you are, the better they can understand what you are saying.
  - Face the child when speaking. Do not turn your back and speak while writing on a board.

- Teach in a well-lit area. This helps the child see speech signals on your lips and face. The light should be on your face, not in the child's eyes. Do not stand in front of a window or bright light.
- Seat the child where they can easily turn and follow classroom discussion or allow them to move to other seats, as needed, for demonstrations, discussions or other activities.
- Arrange chairs in a circle. This allows the child with hearing loss to interact well with other classmates.
- Do not hold your hand over your mouth or near your face when speaking

## **Classroom acoustics**

The classroom setting is not always easy for children with hearing loss. Poor sound (acoustics) can be caused by background noise in or out of the classroom, echoes from hard surfaces, such as walls, and the level of the teacher's voice compared to background noise.

### **Poor acoustics can make it hard to:**

- understand
- pay attention
- reach educational goals
- focus and stay on task
- read

### **Ways to improve classroom acoustics:**

- Close the classroom door.
- Cut an 'X' in tennis balls and place them on classroom chairs and table legs.
- Place the students' desks as far away as possible from sources of noise. This includes audio-visual equipment, HVAC systems, pencil sharpeners and open windows.
- Modify the classroom. Consider putting carpet, permanent walls or sound panels on the walls. Use an FM system.
- Fix squeaky doors, windows and fans.

## **FM systems**

An FM (frequency modulated) system helps a person with hearing loss listen in noisy places, such as a classroom. There are two main parts of this system:

- the microphone (transmitter) unit worn by the teacher and
- a receiver used by the student to pick up the teacher's voice.

The child's audiologist can help select the best FM system for the child based on their learning needs.

## **IEP and 504 plans**

Hearing loss is legally considered a disability. Children with hearing loss may benefit from being placed on an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or a 504 Plan. An IEP is a document that identifies what special education services a child must receive. A 504 Plan is for any child with a disability that does not need special education services. Both allow the school and parents to work together, discuss and monitor classroom performance and prepare the school environment.

A Multi-Factored Evaluation checks to see if the child is eligible for special education services. It is typically recommended for all children with hearing loss. Children with hearing loss are at high risk for speech and/or language delays, educational and learning problems, behavior issues and attention deficits. It is best if an educational audiologist helps write the child's IEP or 504 Plan. The child's clinical audiologist at Nationwide Children's Hospital can also provide helpful information and recommendations.

Nationwide Children's is here to partner with the school and the family. The Audiology Department can be reached at 614-722-3951, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30p.m. Please note that the child's parent or guardian must sign a release of information before we can talk to the school about a child.

For more information, you can log onto our websites at [nationwidechildrens.org/audiology](http://nationwidechildrens.org/audiology) or [nationwidechildrens.org/ear-nose-throat](http://nationwidechildrens.org/ear-nose-throat).