

# Hearing Loss



**Students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing have a diagnosis, from an audiologist, which identifies the presence and degree of hearing loss. The Canadian Academy of Audiology defines hearing loss as mild (26–40 decibels), moderate (41–55 decibels), moderate to severe (56–70 decibels), severe (71–90 decibels) or profound (90+ decibels). The degree of hearing loss does not predetermine how students function in auditory, educational and social situations. Students with a moderate hearing loss may function as deaf, but with current technologies, students with severe to profound hearing loss may function as hard-of-hearing.**

## Implications for Planning and Awareness

- Meet with the student and parents prior to the school year to discuss how the school can support this student's needs related to hearing loss. This could include finding out about:
  - the student's strengths, interests, areas of need and method of communication
  - technology/equipment and support, including amplification
  - language development
  - deaf and hard-of-hearing specialist involvement
  - successful communication strategies used at home and in the community that could be used at school
  - monitoring and troubleshooting amplification.
- Collaborate with the parents and student to consider if, and how, they would like to share specific information on hearing loss with peers.
- Learn as much as you can about how hearing loss can affect learning and social and emotional well-being. Reading, asking questions and talking to qualified professionals, such as an educational audiologist and a teacher with a specialized degree in the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students will build your understanding and help you make decisions to support the student's success at school.
- Access input from an audiologist to determine the appropriate communication technologies, such as a classroom sound field system or personal FM system.
- Review recent assessments to identify possible delays and/or gaps in language development (e.g., extent of vocabulary development, appropriate use of vocabulary reading, writing).
- Collaborate with the school, school jurisdictional team and community partners to identify and coordinate supports and services, such as a teacher with a specialized degree in the education of students with hearing loss.
- Develop a system for sharing information with relevant staff members about the student's hearing loss and successful strategies.

Your awareness needs to begin with conversations with the student's parents.



## Implications for Instruction

- Set up the classroom with attention to light source, room configuration and student placement. Consider sight lines (well-lit but free from glare) to the teacher, classmates and board.
- Set up the classroom with attention to acoustics (e.g., reduce ambient noise from furnace fans, open windows, florescent lighting; reduce hard surfaces, such as floors and walls). As much as possible, place the student away from any remaining ambient noise.
- Support daily use of the student's prescribed amplification.
- Establish eye contact before speaking or signing directly to the student. If a sign language interpreter is required, talk with the interpreter about appropriate interaction practice.
- Provide a variety of visual aids to support learning.
- Allow extra time for the student to process and respond to information.
- Use strategies to ensure that questions or discussion from peers is understood, such as repeating what is said, and using appropriate technology and/or planning with the interpreter.
- Plan and provide consistent, targeted teaching in the chosen language(s) of instruction (e.g., American Sign Language [through an interpreter], and/or English and/or French).
- Teach students how to recognize communication breakdowns and implement strategies to repair communication.
- Provide assistive technology support, such as close captioning on DVD or Internet programs.
- Use strategies to assist the student in accessing information in class, such as providing notes and/or a buddy system. Ask the student to demonstrate/ verbalize understanding of concepts and language.
- Check with the student to determine the need for rest breaks after long periods of speech reading or instruction in sign language.

## Implications for Social and Emotional Well-being

- Be aware of student–peer relationships and provide support and guidance, when necessary. Some students with hearing loss may be unaware or misunderstand incidental information and social nuances.
- Promote social interaction and reduce isolation for students who use sign language by:
  - establishing a sign language instruction club for hearing peers, staff and, possibly, community members
  - providing opportunities and/or information to parents regarding opportunities to interact with other signing students and adult role models via Skype or videoconferencing.
- Provide communication support during extracurricular activities, field trips and assemblies.
- Foster students' understanding of their interests, strengths and areas of need, and promote self–advocacy skills so students can ask for what they need.

Parents know their children well and can offer insights on how to support their social and emotional well-being. There is strength in collaborating on strategies that could be used at home, at school and in the community.



**As you consider the implications for this disability, think about the following questions:**

1. Do I need further conversations with the parents to better understand this student's strengths and needs?  Yes  No
2. Are further assessments required to assist with planning for this student?  
If yes, what questions do I need answered?  Yes  No
3. Do I need targeted professional learning?  
If yes, what specific topics and strategies would I explore?  Yes  No
4. Is consultation with jurisdictional staff required?  
If yes, what issues and questions would we explore?  Yes  No
5. Is consultation with external service providers required (e.g., Regional Educational Consulting Services, Student Health Partnership, Alberta Children's Hospital, Glenrose Hospital)?  
If yes, what issues and questions would we explore?  Yes  No
6. Is service to the student from an external provider required?  Yes  No  
If yes, what outcomes would be anticipated?

**Links for further information:**

Alberta Education. *Essential Components of Educational Programming (For Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing)*.

[https://education.alberta.ca/media/385136/ecep\\_deaf\\_or\\_hard\\_of\\_hearing-2006.pdf](https://education.alberta.ca/media/385136/ecep_deaf_or_hard_of_hearing-2006.pdf)

British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Hard of Hearing and Deaf Students: A Resource Guide to Support Classroom Teachers*.

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/hearimpair/toc.htm>

Manitoba Education. *Educators Resource Guide, Supporting Students Who Are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing*.

[http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/dhh\\_resource/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/dhh_resource/index.html)

**Please note:**

These websites are for information only and the user is responsible for evaluating the content and appropriate uses of the information.

