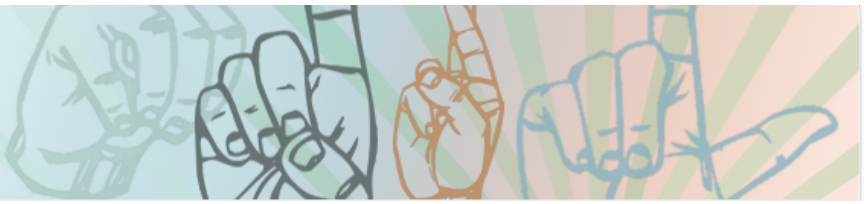

TIPS FOR TEACHING A STUDENT WHO IS DEAF/HARD OF HEARING

1. Equipment Use:

- *Support proper and consistent equipment use:*
- *Hearing aids and cochlear implants should be worn all day.*
- *Extra hearing aid batteries should be kept in the school.*
- *Ensure use of FM system:*
  - *In all classes*
  - *During small group or partner work*
  - *During assemblies*
  - *On field trips*
  - *By visitors and special presenters to the school and classroom*
  - *By classmates when they are making presentations or taking turns reading aloud.*
  - *Your student should be able to plug his/her FM directly into audio visual equipment (computers, CD players etc.)*

WHY: Hearing aids/cochlear implants amplify all sounds giving increased, although not complete, access to sounds around the student. The personal FM system transmits the speaker's voice directly to your student's hearing aid and will further amplify the voice of the person wearing it. The microphone should be worn approximately 12-15cm below the chin. The personal FM system will help reduce (although not eliminate) the negative effects of background noise and distance on hearing in the classroom.

2. Seating:

- *Ensure the student has preferential seating in your classroom. Preferential seating for _____ in your current classroom seating arrangement would be*

  _____.

WHY: A student who is deaf or hard of hearing will require classroom seating based on a variety of factors and may not necessarily need to be in the front row. For example, a student who is watching a sign interpreter would need a different seat than a student listening through hearing aids.

3. **Distractions:**
    - *Ensure your student is free from distractions.*
    - *Seat away from sources of background noise (pencil sharpeners, fans, open doors to hallways)*
    - *Ensure an unobstructed line of sight between student and interpreter/teacher/board*
    - *Repeat instructions that occur in background noise*
    - *Reduce visual distractions*
    - *Allow your student's group to work in a quieter location outside the classroom.*

    WHY: Sounds that are closest to the student wearing hearing aids will be loudest and will make it more challenging for the student to hear and understand what the teacher is saying. Students who are watching an interpreter are easily distracted by motion, even with peripheral vision. Deaf/hard of hearing students will use speechreading and other classroom visual supports to assist with their understanding.

4. **Communication:**
    - *Ensure the student has access to information:*
        - *Face the class whenever you are speaking.*
        - *Ensure all students in your class take turns when speaking.*
        - *Avoid standing in front of a window.*
        - *Avoid giving extra information while writing on the board.*
        - *Cue the students/interpreter that you are about to speak.*
        - *Address the signing student directly - not the interpreter.*

    WHY: Students who are deaf/hard of hearing need to use extra visual information from lip-reading, gestures and background information. As well, interpreters can only sign one message at a time. When a class discussion becomes too fast or with many people speaking at once, comprehension of the full information is impossible.

5. **Handouts and Notes:**
    - *Provide written copies of information presented during lessons, field trips, special guests/presentations, and announcements.*

    WHY: Visual representation will help support what your student is hearing. Example:
    a) writing the announcements on the board or providing them in text form will allow the student who is deaf/hard of hearing to be informed and participate in school activities outside of the classroom.

b) new words and numbers can be easily confused and/or misunderstood – writing them on the board will help clarify this confusion.
c) The student who is Deaf/Hard of Hearing uses his/her eyes and ears to listen. It will be challenging for them to write notes while they are listening as they must divert their visual attention from the teacher (for reading lips) or the interpreter (to see sign interpretation) and will miss some of what is being said.

6. Vocabulary:

- *Pre-teach/preview curriculum vocabulary and concepts*
- *Provide material to interpreter ahead of time*

WHY: Background knowledge of vocabulary, academic language and figurative language (such as idioms) will vary among students who are deaf/hard of hearing. In order to follow the lesson and classroom discussion at the same time as their peers, learning the keywords ahead of the lesson is essential.

Example: The word 'evaporation' has likely been overheard by hearing students hundreds of times since it is used by meteorologists when reporting the weather on the radio or television. Although they may not know the exact definition, they will have a general idea so when it is used in the classroom during a lesson about the water cycle they will be able to follow and learn just fine. The student who is deaf/hard of hearing will likely be encountering it for the first time.

7. Use of Visuals:

- *Ensure access to instruction and discussion by using visuals.*
  - *Write new and key vocabulary and concepts on the board.*
  - *Draw diagrams, and pictures, graphs.*
  - *Provide real objects.*
  - *Use graphic organizers.*
  - *Write page numbers and assignment details.*

WHY: Visual representation provides verification of what was heard and can also provide ongoing reference during class. If the student is using an interpreter, remember they must shift their eye gaze between the visual supports and the interpreter. Provide a moment for this to occur.

8. **Paraphrase and/or repeat peer questions and comments:**

WHY: The student with hearing loss using an FM system will hear the person wearing the microphone best. The words of peers asking questions or providing comments will not be heard clearly or at all. If you are working with an interpreter, be aware that he/she will interpret the questions or comments of the other students.

9. **Comprehension Monitoring**:
    - *Monitor your student's comprehension of information provided in class.*
    - *Ask open-ended questions to check comprehension*.

WHY: During classroom discussion, misunderstandings can occur due to multiple speakers, topic switching, unfamiliarity with topic and vocabulary, as well as use of formal register. If asked, "Did you hear/understand me?" students who are deaf/hard of hearing are likely to answer "yes". Asking open-ended questions will reveal misunderstandings and provide the opportunity for clarification.

10. **Fatigue**
    - *Monitor and help reduce fatigue -*
        - *Signs of fatigue – rubbing eyes, laying head down on desk, headaches, excessive fidgeting, etc.*
        - *Provide breaks for the student.*
        - *Plan schedule to ease fatigue. For example, try to have Social Studies and English in different semesters.*
        - *Monitor homework level.*
        - *Use FM equipment as prescribed.*

WHY: Hearing aids will make both speech and environmental sounds (including background noise) louder. Auditory fatigue due to listening all day through the hearing aid gradually builds up over time and is not easily apparent. Students who rely on their eyes to watch sign all day will also have fatigue since they must spend the day quickly shift their eye gaze back and forth between the signer and the speaker, the textbooks or handouts, the whiteboard or smartboard, etc.

11. **Supporting Sign:**
    - *Support sign language interpretation.*
    - *Provide material to the interpreter ahead of time so that he/she can prepare to sign. (This will include video material).*
    - *Make time to discuss the interpreting process (what works) and the student's comprehension with the interpreter.*
    - *If necessary, provide time for the interpreter to conduct tutorial sessions (previewing material and new signs) with the student.*
    - *Provide space in class for the interpreter to place or store materials.*
    - *Be aware that the interpreter:*
        - *may position him/herself in close proximity to you when you are teaching.*
        - *will promote a direct communicative relationship between you and the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student. This relationship is essential to your understanding of the student and his/her capabilities.*

- *is not a disciplinarian in your classroom.*
- *will interpret questions and comments of the other students and the comments of the signing student.*
- *will adjust interpreting style and level to suit your student's language needs and will provide repeat and reinforcement of concepts.*

WHY: The interpreter is an important and integral member of the school team. He/she will need to plan for the interpreting process. The interpreter may also conduct pre-teaching and review sessions with your student to cover vocabulary and concepts and corresponding signs used in class. He/she may also provide in-class assistance to your student. In addition, he/she will be able to provide invaluable information to you about your student's ability to comprehend course material and the amount of assistance required.

12. Peer Support

- *Allow for student buddy or peer partner.*
  - *Give the student permission to clarify classroom information with a reliable peer seated in close proximity.*

WHY: Students often feel more comfortable clarifying information with a buddy or peer rather than raising their hand and asking the teacher. Typical clarifications are checking for page numbers, names spoken in an announcement, and due dates.

13. Use of Audio-Visuals:

- *Use audio-visual equipment to provide equal access for all students.*
- *Use the closed captioning feature when showing videos.*
- *Allow the interpreter time to prepare to interpret the video.*
- *Preview the video ahead of time*
- *The personal FM system can be jacked into the Smartboard /video equipment or the microphone can be placed adjacent to the speaker.*
- *If using the Smartboard and discussing material simultaneously, be aware that the student still needs to see the speaker or signer.*
- *Do not dim the lights; this will make visual access very difficult.*

WHY: The use of audio-visual supports are as helpful for your student who is deaf or hard of hearing as for any other student. It is important to provide access to the content.