**1. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when teacher is talking in front of the classroom:**

If the student in your class is having difficulty hearing in the most “optimal” teaching and listening situation, this student will likely need a specific and structured IEP/accommodation plan. Some students who have hearing loss also have a language deficit, which will effect what he understands in the classroom. It is appropriate for a professional (educational audiologist and teacher of the deaf) to be involved in developing the student’s educational and communication plan. Here are some suggestions to get started providing appropriate accommodations in your classroom:

* Be aware of where you are standing in the classroom. The student will benefit from extra visual cues such as lipreading.
* Be conscious of backlighting; if you stand in front of the window and speak, the student will have difficulty seeing your face clearly.
* Reducing the level of noise and reverberation in the classroom is important and can be accomplished by adding carpet and/or other sound absorption materials in the room.
* Anything that you can do to minimize extra environmental noise is helpful (close door and windows, seat student away from heating/ventilation systems).
* Classroom set up and seating is also important. Consider a U-shaped classroom set-up and using round tables to facilitate understanding during group discussion.
* Repeat and Rephrase comments. It is unlikely that the student will be able to completely hear and understand the answers provided by peers. His/her only access to this information may be from your repetition or summary.
* Similarly, if the student looks confused or requests clarification, rephrase the information rather than just repeating it verbatim. He may have not fully understood vocabulary or complex grammar structure of what you said.
* Be empathetic. Listening with hearing loss takes extra effort and concentration.

**2. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when the teacher is talking with his/her back to the student**

As a teacher, there are going to be situations when you need to turn your back while teaching. A student with hearing loss in your classroom may rely on lipreading and facial expressions in order to “fill in gaps” of spoken language. If you need to turn your back to write, it is important to wait to make comments while your back is turned. A personal FM system will help give the child access to your voice; however, the student may still need the visual cues of lipreading. If you are using a SMART board or similar technology, you can enhance student learning by providing a copy of the notes to the student ahead of time.

**3. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when the teacher is talking while moving about the classroom**

As a teacher, you are typically not “glued” to one location in the classroom when you present information. The student with a hearing loss using hearing aids and/or cochlear implants will lose part of your voice signal the further you are from him. Environmental noise in the classroom also affects his ability to fully perceive what is said by you or class peers. Depending on the degree of hearing loss, a personal FM system or Classroom Audio Distribution System is an important accommodation that will bring your voice directly to the student no matter where he/she is sitting in the classroom. Positively embracing this hearing technology may relieve you of some of the responsibility for continuous repetition and rephrasing while benefitting the student with hearing loss by presenting your voice as though you are sitting next to him. .

**4. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when a student is answering from across the room during class discussion**

In any classroom, teachers value classroom participation. A student with hearing loss is likely to have difficulty hearing peer responses, especially at a distance. . In order for the student to understand and hear their peers, it is important for the teacher to repeat the comment/answer into the FM microphone. It is recommended that you use a pass around microphone or pass the FM microphone that you use in order to enhance the student’s voices for clearer understanding by the student with hearing loss. In addition, the classroom seating arrangement can enhance the student’s ability to hear and understand his/her peers. A U-shaped arrangement is ideal.

**5. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding directions when they are given only once or twice**

Instructions for homework and classwork are important information for any student to clearly hear and understand. Many times this instruction is given during a transition time when extra noise is present in the classroom. To ensure that the student with hearing loss in your classroom understands directions, here are a few suggestions

* Write down all assignments on white board.
* In the lower grades, use the buddy system with a peer that can help.
* In the lower grades, a communication notebook between the parent and teacher is helpful to record homework.
* Use a homework schedule that you review daily to provide the student with the needed support.
* If the school has a homework “hotline”, ensure that the parents and students are aware of how to access the hotline.
* Always repeat and rephrase key points.

**6. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when other students are making noise within the classroom**

Students in your classroom can also add “extra” noise that interferes with learning. Any noise will be a major distraction for a student with hearing loss. It is helpful to have a “no tolerance” policy for extra noise in the classroom. As the teacher, encourage the student with hearing loss to utilize self-advocacy strategies such as:

* Asking the students around him/her to quiet down.
* Switch his FM system to the FM-only program on his/her hearing devices so he will only hear what comes through your microphone transmitter. Close the classroom door when noise is evident in the hallway.
* Utilize strategic seating in the classroom (student moves to find a seat away from noise and/or with better visibility).

**7. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when there is noise in the hallway or audible from other sources outside of the classroom**

Environmental noise in your classroom can interfere with learning, which will be a major distraction for a student with hearing loss. It is helpful to have a “no tolerance” policy for extra noise in the classroom. As the teacher, encourage the student with hearing loss to utilize self-advocacy strategies such as:

* Switch his FM system to the FM-only program on his/her hearing devices so he will only hear what comes through your microphone transmitter.
* Close the classroom door/windows when needed.
* Utilize strategic seating in the classroom (student moves to find a seat away from noise and/or with better visibility).
* Be conscious of HVAC systems in the classrooms, especially as the weather changes.

**8. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding audio input from a media source**

Playing videos/media and music in the classroom enhances the learning experience for all students. A student with hearing loss would benefit from the following suggestions:

* Turn on closed captioning turned on each time TV or a video/DVD is played to ensure that the student is able to access the information.
* Provide a written summary or script of the video (especially if captioning is not available).
* Connect the microphone of the personal FM system directly to the media source. If this is not an option, place the microphone near the speaker of the media source.
* Provide access to the video at home to preview/review material.
* Be conscious about turning the lights back on if you are going to comment/discuss the video/media to enhance the student’s ability to lipread and thereby fully access your comments.

**9. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when there is a fan noise (projector/ heating or ventilation system)**

Noise from a projector, fan or heating/ventilation unit may be unavoidable in your classroom. Normal hearing listeners typically have the ability to “tune out” this noise. Hearing aids and cochlear implants may further amplify the noise , making it more difficult to “tune out” the noise. As the teacher, you can be aware of the noise and encourage the student with hearing loss to utilize self-advocacy strategies such as:

* Switch his FM system to the FM-only program on his/her hearing devices so he will only hear what comes through your microphone transmitter.Close the classroom door/windows when needed.
* Utilize strategic seating in the classroom (student moves to find a seat away from noise and/or with better visibility).
* Be conscious of excess noise produced by classroom heating and ventilation systems in the classrooms, especially as the weather changes.

**10. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when there is a simultaneous large and small group discussion**

Team teaching in the classroom enhances the learning of all children. In order to maximize the benefit of team teaching when you have a student with hearing loss, here are a couple of suggestions:

* Make sure the teacher who is instructing the student with hearing loss is using the FM microphone.
* Ensure that the student with hearing loss is seated close to the teacher providing large group instruction and has good visual/lipreading access.
* Provide the student with notes whenever possible.
* Consider using a CADS system with dual microphones in order to provide enhanced signal to noise ratio for each teacher.

**11. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding during cooperative and/or small group learning activities**

Cooperative learning groups are important educational strategy and widely used in classrooms. A student with hearing loss may have difficulty following group discussion, especially as the number of people participating in the small group becomes greater and the overall noise level of the classroom increases. In order to help the student with hearing loss be a fully engaged participant in cooperative learning environments, consider these suggestions:

* Allow the student to use the personal FM system microphone as a small group microphone (set in center of table; pass the microphone from student-to-student).
* Encourage the student’s group to move to a quiet room/hallway to work.
* If working at a table, try to use a round table or have the students arrange their chairs in a circle so the student will be able to lipread and better follow the discussion visually.
* Assign one member of the group to be the “secretary”. If the students are older, one group member may be able to use a laptop to take notes. Encourage the student with hearing loss to sit next to the “secretary.”
* Establish ground rules for ALL of the cooperative learning groups (being conscious not to draw attention to the student with hearing loss). These rules may include: only one person speaks at a time, using student names when asking a question, asking for clarification when needed, repeat key comments.
* Expect one member of each group to record important points on chart paper .
* Use technology to record small group collaboration.

**12. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding what was said during school announcements**

Students with hearing loss will generally have difficulty hearing all of the announcements due to distortion and the lack of visual cues. If there is something important that is being said over the announcements, you can repeat/rephrase what was said or write it on the white board. Also, ask if the office can post the written version of the announcements somewhere accessible in the building and encourage the student with hearing loss to read them daily.

**13. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding in a large room (auditorium, lunch room, gymnasium, etc. )**

Any situation such as a school meeting or assembly generally has increased noise and reverberation. To ensure that the student with hearing loss is a participant in these school activities, consider the following suggestions:

* The student will be expected to wear the personal FM system and the assembly speaker will use the FM microphone/transmitter.
* An overview of the topic or program should be provided in class PRIOR to the assembly.
* The key points of the assembly or school meeting should be repeated/rephrased.
* Make sure the student is sitting close to the person speaking to enable lipreading.
* Encourage the student to move around if the initial seat is not working.

**14. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when communicating with others when outside**

Hearing and understanding outside for gym class and field trips can be stressful for the student who has a hearing loss. The bus is often especially difficult for students who have hearing loss. Here are some suggestions that may help improve listening and reduce stress

* Give directions before going outside.
* If going on a field trip, let the students know the order of events and expectations BEFORE getting on the bus.
* Use the personal FM system throughout the field trip. The FM can also be used during gym but function may be affected in settings in which the student is perspiring heavily.
* Inform a tour guide/guest speaker about using the personal FM prior to the start of the field trip.
* Use the “buddy system” so the student can ask a peer for repetition of instructions or schedule of activities.
* Tap the student’s shoulder/make sure the student is paying attention before you give additional instructions.
* If going on a field trip, make sure the student with hearing loss and “buddy” are sitting at the front of the bus and at the front of the line during the field trip experience.

**15. Challenges hearing/listening/understanding when communicating with peers during informal social interactions**

Remember that the student with hearing loss is a PERSON first. He/she has feelings and wants to “fit in” socially with others. Sometimes students with hearing loss have trouble “overhearing” conversations and therefore miss important social cues. This can result in the student being left out and greater difficulty making friends. Here as some suggestions that you can do to help.

* Ask an educational audiologist or professional in the field of speech and hearing to be a guest speaker in your classroom to talk about hearing and communication. You may want to discuss this with the parents and student first. It is helpful to approach this in a positive way.
* Consider integrating self-esteem building and self-advocacy expectations into your curriculum for all students
* Teaching about bullying prevention and what to do if someone is bullying.
* The student may benefit from individualized social skills development that includes role playing. This could be done by the counselor, speech-language pathologist, or other professionals in the school.
* If you notice signs of sadness/depression in the student with hearing loss, talk to the parents and school counselor.
* Provide opportunities for meeting and networking with other students who are deaf or hard of hearing.