Dear Classroom Teacher: You have a student with hearing loss

Each Fall, teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing scramble to contact each of their student’s classroom teachers about the impact of hearing loss on educational performance and what the teacher needs to do to accommodate the student’s unique learning needs.

Without inservicing the teachers, it is likely that they will believe:
(1) hearing devices will ‘fix’ all of the listening issues,
(2) the student will ask when they missed something or didn’t hear completely,
(3) the student is distractible or inattentive, does not pay attention during class discussion
(4) the student may have a learning disorder because they don’t seem to be able to follow directions and get to work like other students,
(5) they do not participate equally in group activities, letting their peers do most of the work

Students with hearing loss don’t know what they didn’t hear because they didn’t hear it, yet they are routinely held accountable for information that they never perceived. A student will not receive equal access to classroom communication unless the teacher is aware of the impact of the hearing loss and what is required to ‘level the playing field’ for these students.

With sizable caseloads across a number of schools, getting to all of the teachers before the year starts or during the first week of school for a face-to-face meeting can be impossible.

How can the itinerant teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing more effectively contact classroom teachers early in the school year?

INTRODUCE THE STUDENT HEARING ISSUES AND NEEDS VIA EMAIL

• When you send out an email to the teacher, if possible, set it up so that you receive a receipt when the teacher has read the email. This identifies a good window to follow up quickly with the teacher while the information is still fresh in her mind. A lack of a receipt also lets you know those teachers who have not read the information and will need another email contact or personal visit.

• In the email, give the teacher a ‘heads up’ that you will be contacting her to spend some time talking about the students needs. An example of this ready-to-go letter has been included: Dear Classroom Teacher (Word / PDF).

• Once you meet with the teacher, you can further share a general description of the impact of the hearing loss, such as the Relationship of Hearing Loss to Listening and Learning Needs or the NEW inservice handouts now available (see below).

• Share the SIFTER checklist the previous year’s teacher completed in May, with the new classroom teacher. Include the LIFE-R results as well if possible. This will prepare the teacher to expect to fill out these checklists about one-month into the school year. Summarize other test results, like the Functional Listening Evaluation, Listening Comprehension Test, or examples from observations of the student in previous classrooms.

• Alternately or additionally, provide a brief description of the results such as:

Through the use of the Listening Inventory For Education checklist, John identified that he has significant difficulty hearing class discussions, social interactions, and communication when there is any noise in the classroom. He is challenged when the teacher moves about the classroom as it prevents him from speechreading, which improves his understanding. Last May, this student’s third grade teacher identified that John continues to perform lower academically, has periods of inattention due to listening fatigue, hesitates after directions, and rarely participates during class discussion. Thus, his hearing loss impacts his ability to fully participate and perceive communication in the classroom environment. John has IEP goals related to developing self-advocacy skills as he has identified that he mainly waits for teacher clarification rather than letting the teacher know, or otherwise getting assistance when he does not completely hear class instructions.

• Some teachers benefit from receiving a link to YouTube videos that describe general information teachers should know when supporting a student with hearing loss in their classroom (example 1, example 2, example 3, example 4, example 5, or search yourself – there are lots of videos available!).

• Alternately, you or your DHH Team can prepare your own brief YouTube videos. Use a private YouTube channel to ensure that no confidentiality questions arise. Develop videos for alike student groups, such as unilateral hearing loss, mild loss with consistent hearing aid use, mild hearing loss with challenging hearing aid use issues, etc. Emphasize educational performance issues (what the teacher will SEE and how it relates to the hearing loss), legal requirements (ADA access, equipment monitoring), and necessary teacher/instructional accommodations.

• Develop a YouTube video that shows what the teacher needs to do to appropriately use and maintain the student’s hearing assistance technology.

• Share equipment cheat sheets (example). Tech Talk of the Teacher Tools e-magazine provides wonderful resources.

**USING THE TEACHER INSERVICE COMBO TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION!**

For students who have used hearing aids (consistently) since infancy it is no longer most appropriate to share descriptions of the impact of the hearing loss levels with teachers, as the students are actually functioning based on their hearing ability while aided. Due to consistent aided hearing and in recognition of frequent non-use by students with mild hearing loss, there are four versions of this new inservice handout: 20-25 dB, 25-30 dB, 30-35 dB, and 35-40 dB. For other types and degrees of hearing loss the freely available *Relationship of Hearing Loss to Listening and Learning Needs* still remain relevant.

**What makes this new **Impact of Hearing Loss on Listening, Learning, and Social Interactions** handout different from the old/free *Relationship of Hearing Loss to Listening and Learning*?
1. The sections of possible impact on understanding, possible social/emotional impact, and potential educational accommodations have been thoroughly revised.

2. Audibility of speech sounds for soft speech (35 dB), conversational speech (45 dB), and teacher speech (50 dB) have been included. A percent audibility is specified as are missing or audible speech sounds.

3. An example of fragmented listening is provided via a paragraph of instructions with parts of speech eliminated based on decreased audibility.

4. Possible listening challenges in school have been included, derived from the LIFE-R Student Appraisal. You can either check off the items that the student has identified as challenges or leave them as is to raise awareness of difficult listening situations.

5. The footnote contains a check off of important teacher accommodations that you can review to reinforce the necessary accommodations specified in the student’s IEP or 504 Plan.

6. An instruction sheet has been included with suggestions for use with TODAY’S STUDENTS WITH HEARING LOSS!

All 12 Inservice-related Materials in DIGITAL DOWNLOAD Format
for only $39.00 on SALE through September for $30.00

The $99.00 license for use of these materials by up to 5 professionals is still a fabulous deal!