

More Tips for Itinerant Teachers



Itinerant teachers must be ready for anything. Many itinerant teachers have evolved into their role, rather than trained for it. The transition from classroom teacher to traveling teacher meant altering my expectations and constantly redefining my role in my students' education. Frustrating as it may seem at times, I find the role of itinerant teacher to be the most fulfilling.

Just as “deaf children are not hearing children who cannot hear”, itinerant teachers are not simply classroom teachers with cars. Itinerants are also consultants, technology experts, cultural attaches, collaborators, and communicators. Itinerants know that planning and preparation are essential; we also know that all the best planning and preparation can be thwarted by traffic, weather, illness, changing schedules, miscommunication, fire drills, field trips, and heaven forbid—car trouble. Supporting our low incidence students so that their needs can be met in the inclusive classroom takes knowledge, heart, and stamina.

Tips and tricks learned through the years:



Show, don't tell. When it comes to discussing the educational impact of hearing loss, it can be more effective to show, rather than tell. A five-minute video or a few seconds of an audio clip demonstrating what a child's hearing level sounds like can be more effective than anything I have to tell them or any handout I can provide. These demonstrations are very helpful when you are asked the inevitable question, “So what or how much can he/she actually hear?”

- a. Links to audio and video demonstrations have been collected on the following Supporting Success webpage: <https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/for-professionals/demonstrations-simulated-listening-with-hearing-loss-devices/>
- b. Links to videos - <https://www4.esc13.net/rdspd/video-library/> A library of well-produced videos from Region 13 out of Austin, Texas that designed for teachers new to deaf or hard of hearing students in their classrooms.
- c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwWAHyD0f4w> another good resource for general education teachers.
- d. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITog8keMKrA> An alternative with cartoon-like characters.
- e. FM information and simulation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNzxOJKUug>
- f. Find links to hearing level simulations and cochlear implant simulations can be found [here](#).



Pace yourself. It is the beginning of a new year, and we teachers are all regaining our stride after the summer break. Avoid the temptation to save time by distributing a year's worth of knowledge on hearing loss to school staff in one sitting. In my experience, this information goes unread, buried under piles of other paperwork, or lost. [Weekly tips for teachers](#) is a great resource for sending important tidbits that can be digested easily and quickly.



Be succinct. Whatever you have to say or show teachers or administrators, make it short, and make it specific. Be respectful of your schedule and theirs.



Be prepared to check hearing technology. As an itinerant teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing I am used to transporting a multitude of supplies. One thing I try never to be without is my bag of hearing technology paraphernalia. I have a small bag with monitor earphones, a “wand”, extra batteries of all sizes, a hearing aid stethoscope, alcohol wipes, a hearing aid multi-use tool, FM lapel mike clips, and scissors. It has repeatedly saved time for me and my students.



Keep accurate records. This is much easier said than done, but it is so important. I am often asked when I last saw a student; What was said at the meeting with ___’s teacher?; Have I talked to the interpreter, parent, audiologist about....?, What did you find when you assessed....?; What are is ___’s reading level, strengths? What data are you basing your decision to...? and the list goes on. Data is the driving force for all we do. It is not only essential; it is difficult to refute.



Collaborate in small groups. Itinerant teachers have knowledge about issues affecting learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. General education teachers have knowledge of their grade-level counterparts. Finding time to collaborate can be extremely difficult, but it is worth the effort. When discussing a particular student or group of students, I find that discussion by two to three educators in a group can produce great results. More than four people at the table, and collaboration can become a tedious, overwhelming experience.



Develop a routine. Paperwork such as lesson plans, reports, and mileage can quickly become a monumental task when not done in small steps and when it is fresh on your mind. I strive to take good notes as I am visiting a classroom or seeing a student and not wait “until I have time” to do it. Details have a tendency to be forgotten when I wait until the end of a session or the end of the day. As for mileage, choose a day to input mileage at the end of each week. You will thank yourself when the end of the month arrives.



Make use of driving time. So much of our day can be consumed by driving. I recently began calculating my average daily time on the road. I have found (and have data to prove it) that I can spend an average of 90 minutes per day traveling between campuses. This time can be made useful for all sorts of tasks such as making phone calls (hands free), confirming that students are present at your next campus, mentally preparing for my next assignment, or as a time to reflect.



Make things easy on yourself. Fill up your gas tank on Sunday. Keep a stash of edibles in your car. Input all the phone numbers of the schools you currently visit and could potentially visit in your cell phone contact list. I also have hearing aid and FM system helpdesks, my school’s administration, transportation, and IT support in my phone contact list. With their permission, I also collect as many teacher’s phone numbers as possible. This is a great help when I need to send a message to someone quickly.



Develop a rapport. Learn the names of all the receptionists, principals, educators, janitors, and support staff with whom you come into contact. This comes from introducing yourself and being seen or heard periodically throughout the school year(s). These are the people who can help you help students and in turn can make your life so much easier.

These are tips gleaned from years of past successes and failures. Tools and resources for itinerant teachers are evolving and improving daily, giving us better ways to communicate and help our students reach their full potential. Itinerant teachers dedicate much of their adult lives to improving the futures of students with hearing loss. It is a passion and an incredibly satisfying vocation. Providing support to students who are deaf and hard of hearing as an itinerant teacher is an experience I continue to enjoy. Wishing **YOU** a great year ahead!

Resources

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This article was written by itinerant teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing, Brenda Wellen. Brenda has a wealth of experience in working with students with hearing loss and school staff. She began as an aide in a Deaf Education self-contained classroom (5 years). Her first assignment as a teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing was a middle school self-contained classroom for 5 years after which she moved to an elementary self-contained classroom for 8 years, then back to middle school for 3 years as the students were gradually mainstreamed and the job transitioned into itinerant services. She has provided itinerant services for 9 years, working with all ages of children with roles as a parent-infant advisor, itinerant for D/HH students from 3-22, and as a "Supporter" for a adult with hearing loss who is a former student. Brenda is an invited contributor for Bimonthly Update articles.