



Captioning in the Classroom

My child can't keep up with what is said, but the school said that they wouldn't provide captioning...

Why would captioning be needed? Hearing loss decreases the amount of speech that is perceived, especially in large group listening environments like classrooms. Even with the most up to date hearing technology, normal hearing – or 20:20 hearing – is not restored. This puts students who are hard of hearing at high risk for increasing gaps in vocabulary and challenges keeping up with what their abilities would predict them to be able to perform in school.

Legal Case: Providing captioning of verbal communication that occurs in school is one way that we can use to close the typical 'listening gap' of students who are hard of hearing who have sufficient language and reading fluency skills to benefit from captioning services. In 2013, two high school students who with hearing loss brought a [suit against the Tustin Unified School District](#). The students had IEPs under IDEA but were not provided captioning services as part of their educational plans. The findings of the case were that, while IDEA and ADA are similar statutes, "the ADA requirements regarding students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing are different than those imposed by the IDEA." Under ADA the district had an obligation to provide effective communication under Title II of the ADA.

Digging Deeper into this Case: The two high school students wanted a word-for-word transcription so that they could fully understand the teacher and fellow students without undue strain and consequent stress. In both of these cases, the school district denied the student requests but offered other accommodations. In the case of student K.M., even though the teachers felt that the student participated in classroom discussions comparably to peers, she emphasized that she could only follow along in the classroom with intense concentration, leaving her exhausted at the end of each day. The other student, D.H. felt that she needed captioning in order to have equal access in the classroom, even though she was making good academic progress. The school's finding that "D.H. hears enough of what her teacher and fellow pupils say in class to allow her to access the general education curriculum" and "did not need CART services to gain educational benefit" was sufficient to meet their obligations under IDEA as the IDEA does not require that services be provided to maximize achievement, but this finding was insufficient for fulfilling the effective communication obligation under ADA. Public entities must furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in, enjoy the benefits of, as service, program, or activity conducted by a public entity. Furthermore, in determining what type of auxiliary aid and service is necessary, a public entity shall give primary consideration to the requests of the individual with disabilities.

Considerations – Will the student be able to benefit? Just as with other accommodations, captioning will not necessarily meet the communication needs of every student with hearing loss. Families and school teams should consider whether a student has the skills necessary to benefit from word-for-word captioning.

Information and a [checklist](#) to help guide these considerations can be found [here](#). The [Placement and Readiness Checklists \(PARC\)](#) includes within the suite a Captioning/Transcribing Readiness Checklist.

Some of the considerations are:

- Reading fluency rate of 100-130 words per minute, which is the average speaking rate. This is typical of an average rate for a 4th grade student.
- Language ability and/or language processing ability to comprehend text that appears at a rate of 100-130 words per minute.
- Tolerance for delay. CART transcription by a captionists has a 2-3 second delay. Automated captioning systems have a delay of about 1 second.
- Tolerance for error. An accuracy rate of 98% has been found to be adequate for captioning services. Whether automated captioning or CART services, there will be some inaccuracies due to difficulty to transcribe words that are not said loudly enough, or clearly enough, for fully accurate captioning.
- Ability to split attention from 2-way communication to 3-way. Attention and focus is needed by the hard of hearing listener to be aware of when a comprehension issue occurs, access the captioning, and revert back to listening and speechreading.
- Student motivation to utilize captioning if it is provided.
- In the case of remote CART or automated captioning, teacher willingness to use the microphone appropriately, and ensure use of the microphone in student discussions, so that accurate captioning can be provided.

Students who do not have the language ability or reading fluency to benefit from captioning at the typical speaking rate could benefit from captioning that is not word-for-word, such as [TypeWell](#) or [C-Print](#).

Is the student really benefitting from having captioning available? A communication accommodation is only effective if it truly allows the user better comprehension during communication. No one communication accommodation is a perfect fit for all communication situations. [This page](#) has some ideas for gathering pre-test and post-test information to assist in determining the degree the student is benefitting from captioning. The page includes [Assessing Auditory Comprehension with and without Accommodations](#) which provides a process for gathering this data.

Summary: Due to typical gaps in listening comprehension, students who are hard of hearing often can benefit from having captioning available to them in the secondary grades. Families and school teams should consider if the student has the ability to benefit from captioning. If it appears this is possible or likely, a trial period to gather data supporting level of benefit should occur. Successful use of captioning relies on student ability and motivation, teacher compliance, and appropriate use of transcript and/or transcription technology. High quality automated captioning systems, such as [Streamer](#)TM, allow students and families to trial use of captioning in home communication environments and are a good way to prepare a student for eventual use of captioning in the school setting.

Relevant References:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/dei.262>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21941878>