



And What Do YOU Do?

How often have you gone into a school as an itinerant teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing only to be met with, “And what do YOU do?” With only 1 out of 100 IEPs being for students qualified as deaf/hard of hearing it is common for school staff to be unaware of the needs of our students, and what the teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing can do to support the student’s success. This article will share information about the role and duties of itinerant teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing. See how you measure up in your current teaching position. **Read more.**

THE REALITY

There is no recognized scope of practice describing the unique role and duties of the itinerant teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing (TODHH). A recognized [Expanded Core Curriculum for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#) has only been in existence for about 10 years. Many itinerant teachers started with their own class of students who are DHH and moved from that setting to the itinerant model. Within the last decade there has been much change in the field of deaf education as adjustments were made for graduates of newborn hearing screening, new hearing technologies, the expanded core curriculum, the move toward full inclusion in the classroom, and the growth in the number of *itinerant* teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing.

ROLE CONFUSION

Educators with no background in the field of deaf/hard of hearing often mistake our students as being ADHD, learning disabled, speech disordered, or even with some social issues that make them question an autism component. The low-incidence of students with adverse educational effects due to hearing loss means that:

1. The impact of hearing loss on communication and learning is not fully recognized.
2. Professionals with expertise in the educational impacts of hearing loss are few and all too often spread very thin.
3. When school teams meet, they think first of their building personnel – the special education teacher and the speech language pathologist – as case managers.
4. The itinerant continually needs to assert themselves as a direct service provider with UNIQUE skills and knowledge to appropriately support the learning of students who are deaf/hard of hearing.
5. Without a scope of practice, it is no surprise that there is ‘role creep’ with other educators trying to provide services for which the TODHH is truly the highly qualified provider.



IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS

People who understand what the itinerant TODHH is trained to do are much more likely to recognize when they need to be involved, and to let them provide appropriate services. If you are starting in a new school,

make an appointment to introduce yourself and discuss your role with the school principal. This can set the tone for the whole school year and as many years as you are supporting students in that building.

The easiest way to understand something new is to compare it to something already understood. Starting the conversation with the principal, or any administrator or school staff, could involve using [Role Comparisons: Supporting Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#). Roles differ somewhat based on the skill, knowledge, and experience of the teaching team in each school.

Example Activities / Responsibilities	Educator of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Educational Audiologist	Speech Language Pathologist*	Special Educator	Educational Interpreter
X = primary role, O = secondary role, i.e., providing relevant information, daily carryover, etc. * = appropriate if specialty training for educating students who are DHH has been received					
Observe classroom and school environments to evaluate communication access issues	X	X			O
Educate school staff about impacts of hearing loss and use of hearing technology	X	X	X*		O
Inservice classroom teachers about required daily monitoring of amplification	X	X			
Appropriately select, set, validate, manage implementation of hearing assistance technology		X			
Gather information to determine if amplification is fit optimally	X	X	X		

Another approach is to provide a summary of what makes learning with a hearing loss unique. For this you may wish to use [Why Involve the Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing on the Assessment Team and the IEP?](#) This handout includes a bulleted list of areas of learning most likely to be impacted by hearing loss. Be prepared with an ‘elevator speech’ to discuss the unique needs of students who are DHH and your typical areas of focus. To fully access instruction and participate in the classroom our students need to learn how their hearing loss impacts them, communication repair, self-advocacy, along with closing any gaps in language due to challenges learning most vocabulary indirectly, as typically children do. There are numerous videos and other resources available for inservicing staff about impacts of hearing loss. See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) for examples.

SPELLING OUT YOUR DUTIES

As a teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing, you have training that is different from any other teacher. Just as you may not fully understand the specialized knowledge of the learning disabilities teacher, or other educators, it is likely that they do not understand your areas of specialized expertise or when they may be needed. This is where a comprehensive job description can be helpful.

Thanks to the 317 itinerant TODHH that responded to the Supporting Success Job Duties survey in May, 2022, we have been able to compile a generic job description for itinerant TODHH. Items included were those that 75% or more of respondents to the survey indicated that they are expected to perform as part of their itinerant teacher duties. See the [Job Description – Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing](#).

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

Review the [Job Description](#) and [Role Comparison](#) documents with your own duties in mind. If you find duties YOU do not perform, who IS performing these tasks? If these others are performing the duties, do they really have the knowledge to provide appropriate supports or instruction to meet our student’s unique needs? If you feel as though there are areas where you could perform the duties but do not have the knowledge/skill, then what is your plan to expand yourself in these areas? Be sure to keep [Supporting Success Courses](#) in mind!

**It is never too late to set the stage for success – your own and for your students!
Let them know what you CAN do!**