



A QUICK START GUIDE - PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM TEACHERS AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROVIDERS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF/HARD OF HEARING

CREATED BY THE WYOMING EARLY INTERVENTION INITIATIVE (WEII) FOR FAMILIES AND THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING (D/HH)*

Understand and Support the Critical Impact of Full-time Use of Hearing Devices

- Full time use of hearing devices gives the child critical access to spoken language and learning.
- Collaborate with the child's family to ensure that the child arrives to school with hearing devices on and functioning appropriately.

Ensure Amplification Devices are Working Properly

- Complete a daily check of hearing devices (Hearing Aid, Cochlear Implant (CI), BAHA).
- Complete a daily check of Remote Mic (RM), Personal Frequency Modulation (FM) System, and Classroom Soundfield System.
- Position the microphone (use a clip/lanyard) no more than 8 inches below the mouth of the person speaking.

Make Transitions Overt

- Provide a visual cue with each transition, such as flicking the overhead light on/off.
- The use of a visual classroom schedule is beneficial. Consistently engage children with the visual schedule at each transition throughout each day.

Restate and Rephrase Adult and Peer Comments/Questions

- It is difficult for children who are D/HH to hear peer or adult voices in group settings, large rooms, gyms, outside, and in all noisy environments.
- Children who are D/HH don't have access to incidental learning at the same rate as their hearing peers.
- Restating adult and peer comments/questions gives the child who is D/HH critical access to language that is beyond their listening bubble.
- Start with the name of the person who spoke, ex: "Jenny said....." (This strategy also helps the child who is D/HH learn peer names).

Make/Gain Eye Contact with the Child Who is D/HH

- Prior to speaking/signing to the child
- Prior to giving group directions
- Prior to initiating transitions
- Avoid turning away from child who is D/HH during group activities (i.e. circle time). This provides the child with consistent visual information.

Provide Visual Access to the Face of the Person Speaking

- Avoid covering or putting things in front of the mouth.
- If masks are used for any reason, they should be transparent if possible.
- Avoid turning your back when speaking to the child.
- Make sure your face is well lit, not in front of windows with backlighting.

Check with the Child to Ensure Understanding

- Ask the child who is D/HH open ended questions - avoid yes/no questions.
- Instead of "Do you understand?" ask, "Tell me what will happen next."
- Beware that it may 'appear' the child understands' when he/she may not.

Use Horseshoe Arrangement for Large Group Seating

- Place the child who is D/HH at the top of the curve.
 - This allows visual access to peers and the teacher.
- When appropriate, allow peers to use the Remote Mic (RM), Personal Frequency Modulation (FM) System mic, and/or Classroom Soundfield System mic when speaking (ex: during sharing time).

Support the Use of Sign Language

- When family is using sign language as a communication approach:
 - seek training for staff sign language development
 - incorporate sign language in your classroom

Be Aware of the Negative Impact of Distance on the Child's Access to Sound/Speech

- 3 feet of distance or less between the person speaking and the child who is D/HH optimal for access to sound, speech and learning.
- For every 3 feet the person speaking is away from the child, the volume of the person's voice decreases by 6 decibels of loudness. This means, the further away you are from the child, the more your voice is heard as a whisper.
- The adult is responsible for closing the distance gap in preschool.

Be Aware of and Reduce Background Noise

- For example noise generated by electronics, heating and cooling systems, fans, classroom chatter, hallway traffic, open windows
- When not in use turn off electronics, close doors/windows if possible etc.
- Use carpet and other sound absorbing items in the classroom to absorb excess sound.
- Noise generated by multiple small groups can negatively impact the child's auditory comprehension.
 - Idea: move the group to a quieter location, distance groups/tables further from each other.
- Listening with hearing devices is hard work - hearing fatigue is real. Background noise compounds listening fatigue. A child who is D/HH might exhibit different behaviors due listening fatigue (off task behaviors, temper tantrums, headaches, irritability, sleepiness, moodiness, zoning out, unable to communicate their needs, decreased/increased sensitivity etc.).

Use Strategic Seating

- Point to and say the name of the peer or adult speaking, ex: "Mr. Jones, our custodian, said the toilet is broken."
- Give the child who is D/HH time to locate the person speaking to gain visual cues.
- Children who are D/HH often require extra support to learn people's names and their roles.

Utilize Pre-teaching/Post-teaching

- Pre-teaching of vocabulary and concepts helps children who are D/HH gain prior knowledge for increased success in the preschool classroom.
 - = Examples: explicit previewing of books, songs, concepts, vocabulary, games, etc.
- Post-teaching helps children who are D/HH gain extra practice and fill in missed information.
 - = Examples: explicit reviewing of books, songs, concepts, vocabulary, games, etc.
- The family and educational team can make decisions as to how and when the pre/post teaching will occur.
 - Families can be involved in pre and post teaching.

Support Theory of Mind Development

- Children who are D/HH often need extra input to understand the thoughts and feelings of others.
- Use language like, "He's thinking that..." and "She feels _____ because..." to help children who are D/HH understand inferential thinking and point of view.

Support the Use of Sign Language When the Family Has Chosen This Communication Mode

- Seek training for staff and family sign language development.
- Encourage all staff members to learn sign language.
- Consistently incorporate sign language in your classroom.
- Encourage peers to learn and use sign language.



*Members of the WEII include representatives from the following: Wyoming Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program; Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices, Guide By Your Side (GBYS); Wyoming Department of Education, Outreach Services for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH); Wyoming Department of Health, Early Intervention and Education Program (EIEP); University of Wyoming, Communication Disorders Division; Child Development Services of Wyoming; and The Marion Downs Center. If you are interested in additional information, support, or training provided at no cost regarding this quick start guide, please contact the Wyoming EHDI Program at (307) 721-6212, info@wyomingehdi.org for an appropriate referral.

Use Verbal Strategies to Support the Child's Understanding

- Develop the habit of rephrasing and repeating spoken information from both peers and adults.
- Use a variety of intonation and pitch patterns to acoustically highlight target vocabulary
 - Purposeful pausing
 - Increased repetition
- Provide increased wait time for responses from the child who is D/HH.
- Using a slower rate of speech provides the child who is D/HH easier access to speech and language.
- Note: avoid slowing down so much that it distorts speech.

Point to and Name the Person Speaking

- Point to and say the name of the peer or adult speaking, ex: "Mr. Jones, our custodian, said the toilet is broken."
- Give the child who is D/HH time to locate the person speaking to gain visual cues.
- Children who are D/HH often require extra support to learn people's names and their roles.

Support the Development of Self-Advocacy Skills

- Foster the child's independence with the use of hearing devices.
- Support the child to alert adults when the batteries are dead or the device is not functioning.
- Support the child to independently put on hearing devices.
- Encourage the child to use the correct term for the hearing device such as hearing aid, cochlear implant, etc.
- Foster the child's independence when there is a communication breakdown (i.e. child uses repair strategies or independently requests clarification of information when needed).