



Mainstream News

Information about hearing loss for students, families and educators

READY, SET, GO: 3 Ways to Get Your Classroom Ready for Success

Sponsored by



"For students with hearing loss, success in the classroom is largely dependent upon how well they are able to access the curriculum."



The first few weeks back at school can be difficult for students who are deaf or hard of hearing as they adjust to listening demands in the classroom. Whether they spent the summer at camp or home with their family, the demands placed upon them during that time in terms of listening skills were significantly reduced. Now that they are back in the classroom, it's important to create realistic strategies, which can get them quickly back into a listening routine.

1. Classroom Success Is Built Upon Access

For students with hearing loss, success in the classroom is largely dependent upon how well they are able to access the curriculum. Research suggests that in a typical kindergarten classroom 50 percent to 70 percent of a child's day is spent in listening mode. This expectation to

"sit and listen" only increases as students move into higher grades.

Learning can be slowed if the student is unable to process information because it is presented in a way that it is difficult for them to interpret. For children who are deaf or hard of hearing, information primarily delivered through lectures and classroom discussion requires a substantial amount of energy to process.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Excellent Apps: Kid Tested, Teacher of the Deaf Approved
- The Power of Words: Young Children with Hearing Loss Learning New Vocabulary
- Just for Parents: Building Word Power at Home.
- You've Got Mail: Starting a Pen Pal Program with Your Students

Published by



Clarke Mainstream Services

“Hearing loss is a communication access issue,” says Karen Anderson, a childhood hearing loss consultant and Director of Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss. “It can cause challenges in learning at the same pace as students with typical hearing. The idea of access can be tricky, because functional performance in the classroom is so much more than what it says on their audiogram.”

Teachers can improve access by:

- Making sure that all new directions, concepts, and information are presented from the front of the room during rug time, rather than when walking between desks, or during noisy transition times.
- Providing multiple opportunities for students to absorb information and practice new concepts and ideas.
- Ensuring that acoustics are a minimum of 35 dBA in unoccupied classrooms. Apps such as Decibel 10th and Sound Meter make it easy to estimate background noise level.

2. Hearing Fatigue is Often Overlooked

During the course of a busy classroom day, hearing fatigue can easily be overlooked and significantly impact a student’s learning. Children with hearing loss often have to allocate a greater amount of their limited pool of cognitive resources to listening tasks. As a result, fewer of these resources are left for other processes, such as taking notes and integrating new information. This means that children with hearing loss may fall behind in classroom discussions or miss important information while they’re in the process of trying to understand what they’re learning (Bess, Gustafson, & Hornsby, 2014). Some signs of hearing fatigue include:

- Inattentiveness or difficulty concentrating on work
- Giving up easily as tasks become more difficult
- Low frustration tolerance level
- Mood changes

It is important to help your student understand hearing fatigue and how it can impact their learning. Some ways to help your student address hearing fatigue include:

- Help students understand that being tired is okay.
- Try building some listening breaks into their day. They either have the opportunity to go to a quiet place for a period of time, or they can take a walk for a drink of water.
- Help students develop confidence to make adjustments to their environment, and be receptive as a teacher to any changes that may be needed.
- Help other students develop communication awareness.



3. Establishing Classroom Routines Early is Critical

Classroom routines can help lessen the anxiety a student might feel at the start of a new school year. It’s natural for new students, particularly with hearing loss, to have many questions: where to keep their FM equipment, when they should put their FM receivers on, who is responsible for charging the FM unit and where is the best spot to sit during classroom discussions. Lunchroom and playground routines are also important to consider. It can be helpful to have a walk-through of the cafeteria at a quiet time so the student can meet the staff and get a better understanding of procedures.

Not all students will speak up if there is a problem or if something isn’t working well for them, so it is important to identify their questions and establish routines early. Note that none of these routines should be written in stone. It might be necessary to change them as the year goes on simply because of changes in the environment or the needs of the student.

SOURCES:

Bess, F., Gustafson, S., & Hornsby, B. (2014), “How Hard Can It Be To Listen? Fatigue in School-Aged Children with Hearing Loss.” *Journal of Educational Audiology*. Vol.20.

Mainstream News

is published three times a year (fall, winter, spring)
by Clarke Mainstream Services, Northampton, MA.

Contact: Clarke Mainstream Services
TEL 413.582.1121
FAX 413.586.6654
mainstream@clarkeschools.org
Claire Troiano, DIRECTOR

Read *Mainstream News* online at
clarkeschools.org/mainstreamnews

Excellent Apps: Kid Tested, Teacher of the Deaf Approved



Thanks to the rapid growth and sophistication of technology, we have an incredible amount of resources right at our fingertips. Apps have expanded the repertoire of student-friendly tools that educators, therapists and parents can utilize. Whether working with children on speech, language and listening skills, social conversation or organization, there is an abundance of excellent options.

Apps can be a fun way to provide supplemental practice—both in therapy sessions and at home. Because there is such a sea of choices, it can be hard to sift through and determine which are really worth the download. **Beginning with this issue we'll highlight apps recommended by Clarke staff, all of which are kid tested and teacher of the deaf approved!!**

Read&Write

by texthelp.com

SUGGESTED AGES:
Preschool through high school and beyond.

COST: Basic version is free; Premium is \$645.00; Teachers are eligible for free premium version.

OVERVIEW: *Read&Write* offers a variety of powerful support tools to help students gain confidence with reading, writing, studying, and researching. The most important tool for students who are deaf and hard of hearing is the *Speech to Text* function. It enables the teacher to speak into a microphone, which in turn sends the sound directly to the student's computer. The program enables students to hear passages or entire documents read aloud, and simplifies and summarizes text on web pages. *Read&Write* is an add-on for multiple devices and can be downloaded from the Chrome webstore.



Hear Coach

by Starkey Laboratories



SUGGESTED AGES:
Elementary school

COST: Free

OVERVIEW: *Hear Coach* is a collection of listening games that are designed

to challenge a student's cognitive and auditory skills. The app's goal is to provide auditory training activities to sharpen listening skills by improving their speech understanding when there is background noise. *Hear Coach* allows students to track their progress and performance. Each game has multiple levels of difficulty, and as the student improves their score they are able to unlock higher levels. The three games include: Word Racer (the student listens for the last word in each sentence and then builds the word); Word Target (the student taps on the word they think they hear); and Repeater (the student listens to a series of numbers and taps the numbers in the exact order in which they hear them).

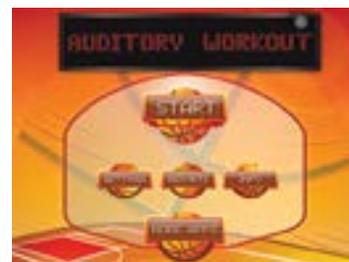
Auditory Workout

by Virtual Speech Center, Inc.

SUGGESTED AGES: 4-12

COST: \$24.99

OVERVIEW: *Auditory Workout* is a research-based auditory processing program designed by a speech language pathologist. The program aims to help students with their language comprehension skills, auditory processing, and following directions. The app allows for scoring and data tracking; group sessions (with an unlimited number of students); and the ability to use different types of background noise. Plus, there is a really fun basketball game that students can play as they collect points during the tasks.



THE POWER OF WORDS:

Young Children with Hearing Loss Learning New Vocabulary



Children who begin kindergarten having heard and used thousands of words, whose meanings are already understood, classified, and stored away in their young brains, have the advantage on the playing field of education. Children who never have a story read to them, who never hear words that rhyme, who never imagine fighting with dragons or marrying a prince, have the odds overwhelmingly against them.

Strategies That Work

A child with hearing loss needs extra exposure to new words and concepts before they are able to identify and understand them. But Lois Heyman, director of the Shelley and Steven Einhorn Communication Center in New York City warns that, “Handing a vocabulary list to an itinerant teacher (or working through a set of flashcards) and having them introduce the word and definition won’t help

the child be able to identify the word. This way of doing therapy works for a child with a language impairment, but not a child who has hearing loss.”

Instead, Heyman suggests, a young child who has hearing loss should approach vocabulary building using Erber’s four stages of auditory skill development. These four stages allow for different access points for a child to process auditory information:

- Detection (the ability to hear the sounds)
- Discrimination (the ability to discriminate between various sounds)

The more words a child is exposed to the greater likelihood they will be strong communicators and readers (Hart and Risley, 1995). Children with hearing loss require three times the exposure to new words and concepts as compared to their typically hearing peers, simply because hearing loss reduces auditory access and overheard (or incidental) learning capacity (Flexer, 2009). Additionally, most students with hearing loss must be intentionally listening in order to have full access to communication. They do not “overhear” conversations which is how students with typical hearing learn and pick up on so much information.

This reduced auditory access means that most kids with a hearing loss begin school with some type of literacy gap. This is due to the fact that language development is about more than simply having the ability to hear sounds; it’s about making the connection that these sounds have meaning—a critical distinction.

The more words a child hears and begins to attach meaning to, the stronger the foundation for learning as they move through school. Cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Maryanne Wolf sums it up beautifully in her book, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*:

September is National Literacy Month.

Vocabulary development is one of the ways that students who are deaf and hard of hearing can be successful in the classroom. Use this article as a resource and send it home to your parents as a way to keep the home-school connection strong.

- Identification (the ability to identify different sounds)
- Comprehension (understanding the meaning of the sounds)

Erber's four stages are really just a fancy way of saying that learning new words is much more than simply handing your child word lists to memorize, and that kids with hearing loss do best when they are exposed to the sounds of the word first. Children with hearing loss are fully capable of acquiring new vocabulary with structured and well-organized support.

The more words a child hears and begins to attach meaning to, the stronger the foundation for learning as they move through school.

Suggestions for Vocabulary Building

While there are plenty of vocabulary apps available (along with other “vocabulary boosting” materials) there is no need to purchase anything. The best thing about vocabulary building is that words are everywhere, so you don't need to invest in any special materials.

The important thing is to keep words flowing—not only in the early years, but throughout the child's education. Language-rich classrooms and homes where the adults intentionally expose children with hearing loss to vocabulary are ideal.

Suggestions for Building Words

These suggestions are just for starters. If you are looking for some more in-depth ways to work on building words we highly recommend *Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain*, by Dr. Dana Suskind.

Just Talk: Research shows that children thrive when they are exposed to adults who provide running commentaries of the experiences that surround a child. In her book, *Raising Lifelong Learners*, Lucy Calkins suggests that these types of commentaries give children the opportunities to engage successfully by providing their own narratives or recounts of personal experiences.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

JUST FOR PARENTS

Building Word Power at Home.

Mind the Gap. The more your child knows about their world the stronger their vocabulary will be. A knowledge gap begins to grow between children who understand basic concepts and those who have not had prior exposure. The more opportunities your child has to explore using all five senses—touch, hearing, sight, taste, smell—the more familiarity they will have with the world around them. The best thing is you don't even need fancy materials to provide these opportunities. Think funnels and strainers for water or sand play or going on nature walks to collect materials such as leaves and stones that can be sorted at home.

Find ways to move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Building vocabulary provides many opportunities for your child to begin to name and organize the world around them. Use familiar words and experiences that your child already knows to help them begin to understand the idea of comparison and contrast. Look for opportunities to provide new experiences. For example, have your child eat a meal with chopsticks and then compare the experience to eating with a fork. What's the same? What's different?

Provide opportunities for choice making and problem solving. If there is a way to let your child be involved in making a choice, let them have the chance. This way they can begin to identify problem solving words and understand the process they need to go through in their thinking to arrive at a solution. For example, if your child comes home from school upset about an argument they had with a friend involve them in the problem solving process: What seems to be the problem? Is there someone else you should talk to about that? What can you do? What can we do together?

Use every day language. Building and expanding your child's vocabulary is important, but at the same time don't overlook common expressions. Don't assume that your child has an understanding of common slang expressions that people use, including idioms. This language is needed to help him fit in with his peers and improve reading comprehension. Sayings like, “it's a piece of cake”, “don't bite off more than you can chew”, or “you better hit the books” are difficult to understand. Have your child draw out the literal meaning of the saying and then use the intended meaning in a variety of ways that relate to his personal experience. “You'd better *hit the books* since you have a science test coming up on Friday” or “Playing soccer is a piece of cake for you.” Books such as, *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* and *The King Who Rained* have funny illustrations and can help spark discussion about word meanings.

Have Lots of Conversations: Conversations provide children the space to develop thoughts, observations, and opinions. It may seem that you do nothing but talk to your students during the day, and it's easy to get caught up in the "business talk" of running a classroom ("Please come to the carpet." "Keeps your hands to yourself." "Put your coat on for recess.") Engaging in meaningful conversations, and modeling and exposing children to vocabulary and language is vital.

Engaging in conversation is a two-way process. Start by using open ended questions such as, "What do you think happens next?", "Why do you think that happened?", or "That's really interesting, can you tell me more?" Give children enough time to respond and really take the time to listen. Having these deeper conversations expands a child's use of language and helps them learn to solve problems and extend their thinking.

Use a Mystery Word: When reading with your students, stop and choose an unfamiliar word and give them time to try and figure out the meaning from the words that are around it. Guessing what a word means from the clues around it is one of the best strategies to help discover the meaning of a new word. This helps a child build and develop the skills needed for understanding words when help is not available.

Play Their Way: Play provides a stress-free environment to introduce new language. Whether you are spending time turning a cardboard box into a castle, or kicking the soccer ball around outside, specific activities have specific vocabulary; so don't hesitate to find ways to help your student expand their knowledge.

Connect Home and School: Stay connected with your student's family by providing information about the vocabulary being used in the classroom. Parents can plan an activity or outing at home that can reinforce the vocabulary and concepts being learned in school. For example, if a child is doing a bird study at school, she can teach her family some of the vocabulary and what it means. Families can go on nature walks or to a local museum to learn more about bird habitats; view websites together where they can listen to bird-calls and try to test themselves on distinguishing between the different sounds.

Dig for Words: Do fun activities with word retrieval to help a student access the words they already know more readily. Make it a part of the day: "I see the light just turned yellow. Can you name three things that are also yellow?" Or "I had pancakes for breakfast; can you name five other things people like to eat for breakfast?"

All this talk begins to give the young child exposure to word knowledge (vocabulary) and world knowledge (exposure to different experiences)—both of which they need to be successful language learners. Vocabulary needs to grow as the child grows. It is easier to attach meaning to a word that children see in print for the first time if they have been exposed to that word before by having heard it or used in spoken language.



How to Set Up a Successful Pen Pal Program:

- 1 Think about what kind of pen pal experience will work best for your student. Consider age, interests, social skills and writing strengths and challenges.
- 2 Students should write to each other using a letter style format, rather than the informal writing often used in texting and emailing.
- 3 If there are specific IEP goals you are working on with each student, make sure they are aware of what they need to include or work on with each letter.
- 4 Make time in your weekly session with each child for them to work on their letters. This is especially important in the beginning so that your students get into the rhythm of writing and responding to letters.
- 5 Be patient. There might be some resistance at the beginning, but before you know it your students will be enthusiastic about writing to someone that understands what they are going through.

You've Got Mail:

Starting a Pen Pal Program with Your Students

“When can I stop wearing my hearing aids?” That was a question from Dylan, my second grade student, during one of our pullout sessions. Dylan has a mild hearing loss, and needless to say, he was not a fan of having to wear an amplification device. As his newly assigned teacher of the deaf, one of my goals was to help him develop an understanding of how his device and Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) system could be helpful to him in the classroom.

My central rule for the letters, was that both boys were required to ask self-advocacy questions, so that they could practice explaining how their technology worked and how they felt about using it.

Another goal was to help Dylan become more comfortable with his hearing loss inside *as well as* outside the classroom. To do so, Dylan needed a role model—someone who felt comfortable using technology, and who he could relate to on a personal level.

This is a typical issue for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the mainstream. Often, they are the only student with hearing loss and have no peers to connect with about such a big part of their life. Some programs like Clarke Buddies and Clarke Summer Adventure Camp address this common concern, but often, they are too far away or otherwise inaccessible. As teachers of the deaf, in order to ensure that our students remain and thrive in the mainstream, we need to become even more creative and resourceful.

So that's just what I did!

I also work with Carl, a fifth grade student, who shared many of the same interests as Dylan. I came up with the idea of facilitating a pen pal relationship

between the two boys. Sure enough, I became a mailwoman, ferrying letters back and forth between both! My central rule for the letters, was that both boys were required to ask self-advocacy questions, so that they could practice explaining how their technology worked and how they felt about using it.

For Dylan, only a second-grader, these self-advocacy questions were relatively new. By learning new vocabulary and phrases, and having a friend to practice

with, the task became more fun and less work. Because Dylan's main IEP objective was to work on self-advocacy skills, I would often write for him, allowing him to focus on answering the questions instead of the process of writing. As the weeks continued, he was successfully able to explain how his hearing aids work, even drawing a picture for his new friend.

The pen pal relationship was beneficial to both of my students. After a few months of corresponding, Carl asked his younger friend how he felt about the HAT system. Dylan responded, “I don't like it when it doesn't work, but for the rest of the time, I like it.” He had come a long way since our work together. Just a few months earlier, he questioned the importance of the HAT system, and now he readily said he enjoyed using it. He also began to relate his own ways of describing his hearing aids: one week drawing them, another week, describing them; “The color of my hearing aids are purple, blue, and white.” He was also curious, and asked his pen pal “What color are

your processors going to be?”

This relationship was important for Dylan as well. The letters provided him with the opportunity to develop language to talk about his hearing aids and exposed him to a peer using cochlear implants. Carl benefited from the opportunity to practice explaining his cochlear implants



and HAT system, and enjoyed being a language role model. He became motivated to improve his grammar and spelling, as he would independently edit his letters, and use a checklist of errors to flag. By the end of the school year, he was able to self-correct his written work and stayed motivated to do so. His significant progress allowed me to address this in his student IEP goals.

Over the course of a few months, the two boys connected on a more personal level discussing iPads, new movies, being on the football team, state testing, family vacations, and various other experiences. They anxiously awaited letters from each other and writing to each other became their favorite activity. I'm happy to report that both students look forward to continuing their pen pal relationship during the coming school year!



45 Round Hill Road
Northampton, MA 01060

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech
provides children who are deaf or hard of
hearing with the listening, learning and spoken
language skills they need to succeed.

Boston
Jacksonville
New York
Northampton
Philadelphia

clarkeschools.org



Mainstream News

This issue sponsored by



www.oticonusa.com

Oticon, Inc.
580 Howard Avenue
Somerset, NJ 08873

peditrics@oticonusa.com

Mark your calendars!

**Clarke Mainstream Services' 37th Conference on
Mainstreaming Students with Hearing Loss
"Speaking Up for Self-Advocacy"**

OCTOBER 13 & 14, 2016

Marriott Hotel, Springfield, MA

This conference offers educational support and information, helping parents and professionals gain the knowledge they need to foster success with the children and teens they work with. We hope you will JOIN us!



The second day of the conference features the 14th annual **"Making Connections!" program designed for students with hearing loss who currently attend a mainstream school in grades 7-12.** Leaders with hearing loss serve as role models to the students who attend.

Visit clarkeschools.org/mainstreamconference for more information.