



Mainstream News

Information about hearing loss for students, families and educators

Charting a Course for Success

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The most important quality a teacher can have is to be “open to change and feedback.”

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NEW COLUMN

Dear Wil

See page 7.



Kelly Carpenter identified factors that contributed to success. As school teams set sail this fall, their advice is pertinent whether one or several students with hearing loss will be on board.

Get to know your student

Though these students entered Hampshire Regional as a group, it was important to Dr. Hodgdon to personalize the experience for each student and to understand who they are as individuals. “I really got to know the four students,” she said. She attended each student’s IEP meeting and other meetings that were held on their behalf. Reaching out to families early on, advised Dr. Hodgdon, helps gain the confidence and trust of parents in a school’s readiness—and willingness—to meet the needs of their children. Dr. Hodgdon also met quarterly with Clarke teacher of the deaf Ashley Kachelmeyer. Their collaboration deepened her understanding of the issues students with hearing loss can encounter and the protocol for working through them.

Choose teachers who are receptive and reflective

There is risk taking involved in teaching, especially for those who have not worked with a student with hearing loss before. Selecting teachers who are “leaders in their own right, people who are receptive and reflective,” noted Dr. Hodgdon, will provide the best learning environment for these students and their peers.

History teacher Kelly Carpenter stated that one of the most important qualities a teacher can have is to be “open to change and feedback. You have to not be afraid to ask questions.” This includes being open to having a teacher of the deaf in one’s classroom for regular observations, which Ms. Carpenter appreciated. It allowed her to ask, “Am I doing this right?” She and Ashley also met weekly to discuss what went well, what they needed to address the following week, and the best way to do so.

Because hearing loss is a low-incidence disability, school teams may feel they are venturing into uncharted territory. As a crew from Hampshire Regional High School will tell you, supporting students with hearing loss is a journey rich in opportunity for the entire school community.

Last fall, this western Massachusetts high school welcomed four graduates from Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech into its ninth-grade class. Through a partnership with Clarke Mainstream Services, a full-time teacher of the deaf is on-site. This allows for regular observation and coaching in their mainstream classes, along with individual support one period each day. In addition, the teacher of the deaf is a consistent resource to staff, providing trainings and consultation throughout the year.

Reflecting on the program’s “maiden voyage,” Principal Dr. Laurie Hodgdon and history teacher

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Clarke Mainstream Services

From the set-up of the classroom to standards for communication, the experience requires teachers to look at things “through a different lens,” said Ms. Carpenter. For example, the number of desks in her classroom made creating a circle impossible for class discussions and break out groups. With the support of administration, they were able to furnish her classroom with tables instead of desks. This allowed them to make a horseshoe arrangement, providing her students with hearing loss with better visual access to peers during whole class and small group work.



Advice from the Hampshire Regional students:

To teachers:

- Give us notes.
- Write on the board.
- Make sure you look at us.
- Make sure we're on point.
- Don't talk too fast.
- Talk clearly.

To other students with hearing loss:

- No one is going to judge you if you just be yourself!
- Having conversations allows other students to understand your communication needs.

To classmates with typical hearing:

- We're just both nervous.
- We need to stare at your face so we can read your lips. We are not staring at you because we are mad at you!

A teacher also needs to be able to maintain high standards for communication in a positive, natural way, explained Ms. Carpenter. Reminders like, “I can't hear you, please speak up; please move your hands away from your mouth; or please turn and look at the class, you're projecting to the wall,” benefit everyone and are essential for students with hearing loss to be able to access their peers.

Communication standards also apply to how teachers present information. Making sure directions are clear, giving assignments verbally and in writing, having information typed up and ready to go on the Smart Board, confirming captions are available on a DVD—all of these things are important and often require advanced planning. “The mindset of a teacher has to be one that recognizes that this is the best thing for these kiddos,” Ms. Carpenter said. It doesn't mean you can't do the activities you want to do, she explained, it just means making sure your bases are covered.

Provide strong professional development and resources for staff

Participation in Clarke Mainstream Services' annual fall conference reinforced to Dr. Hodgdon that the best practices for students with hearing loss are best practices in education. She encourages administrators to provide professional development opportunities for everyone involved so that these practices become “embedded in the culture and community” of a school. Sending teachers to day-long conferences, arranging on-site trainings with the teacher of the deaf and building time into schedules for teachers to collaborate are all ways principals can support current teachers, as well as those who are next in line to work with a student(s).

Value the role of the teacher of the deaf

Dr. Hodgson explained that Ashley has been instrumental to their team because she is both “positive and constructive.” To be able to really help, she said, the teacher of the deaf needs to be forthcoming with suggestions as much as she celebrates progress with the team.

A teacher of the deaf can be most effective when a team also understands that support goes beyond academics. The coaching and self-advocacy Ashley incorporates into her daily work with these students is evident. “Their voices are louder, they have opinions, they are Hampshire students and proud of it,” said Dr. Hodgdon.

“It is a work in progress,” said Ashley. “They need time to have conversations, time to connect with one another, time to work on the language involved in a variety of situations.”

To do this effectively, stressed Dr. Hodgdon, a teacher of the deaf and her students need to have their own space within a school, a place where students feel safe venting and problem solving. This holds true whether a teacher of the deaf is at a school every day or once a month, and working with one or a group of students.

The students themselves are quick to emphasize the benefits of having teacher of the deaf support. When asked how Ashley helps them, their responses included:

- “She helped us get ready for the IEP meeting.”
- “She helps clarify information from classes.”
- “She changes words we don't know into words we understand.”
- “She helps teachers understand what we need.”

Introduce hearing loss to the school community

Dr. Hodgdon took great pride in describing Hampshire Regional as a community that “cares about the kids who come here.” From the outset, she knew it would be just as important to teach the other students about deafness as it would be to teach these four students about their new high school. In the classroom, teachers can begin, as Ms. Carpenter did, by being open about differences and disabilities in general. It was important to her that her students were not afraid to ask questions. She advises teachers to find out a student's comfort level in discussing their hearing loss and communication needs first, so that sharing information with the class is a positive experience.



For this group, it was most comfortable to disclose information gradually. “They were going through a ton of change [with the transition to high school],” said Ashley. “I wanted to let them get comfortable first.” They began by inviting a few classmates to Ashley’s classroom for a “meet and greet.” This progressed to a mini-presentation in history class, and then in January the group made a video about themselves and their hearing loss, which was shown to the entire school. [Their video, “True Life: Deaf Kids Shining Bright in High School,” is available on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).]

This project made a lasting impression on the school community and opened the floodgates to deeper understanding and extensions of friendship. Students made comments like, “I knew you were deaf, now I just see you as people,” and “I wish we had some classes together.” Many reached out with texts and invites on social media.

Dr. Hodgdon’s “a-ha moment” came when a senior told her that meeting Ashley and this group of students made her want to be a teacher of the deaf. “We’ve given [this student] an opportunity and experience that she can build on,” said Dr. Hodgdon.



The Hampshire Regional students begin the second leg of their journey through high school this fall. As with all students, the year will bring new challenges, new adventures and encouragement to reach further outside their comfort zones. When school teams have the structure and collaboration in place to support a student with hearing loss, there is no limit to what can be discovered!

10 Tips for Preparing for a Substitute Teacher

Sooner or later, there will come a time when a teacher will need to be absent and a substitute will be called in. Careful preparation is wise whether or not there are students with special needs in a classroom. It makes for a better experience for the students, as well as for the substitute. For a student with hearing loss, it is all the more important. Left to chance, communication access is more likely to be compromised, which can lead to feelings of isolation and confusion. Working together, administrators, classroom teachers, and teachers of the deaf can ensure these days go well for everyone.

Our teachers of the deaf recommend the following:

1. Designate a second adult who can be a point person for listening checks and oversight of the student’s hearing devices when the classroom teacher is absent.

2. Embed in lesson plans left for substitutes the most important accommodations for your student.

Providing extensive technical information is likely to overwhelm a substitute. Instead, choose a few key strategies to highlight and make note of your student’s comfort/ability level in fielding questions about his or her hearing loss and listening devices (*e.g. Ally is an expert! Feel free to ask her questions about her FM system. Or, please be sensitive to the fact that Joey does not like attention drawn to his hearing loss.*) Whenever possible, ask your student to help identify the most important tips to share. A list might include:

- Look at the class when speaking.
- Write all instructions on the board.
- Repeat/paraphrase comments and questions offered by all students.
- Public address announcements must be repeated.
- Keep background noise to a minimum.
- Check in with the student to make sure instructions are understood.

3. Ask your student’s teacher of the deaf for a separate handout to share with substitutes that covers the basics of how to use the student’s FM system, where supplies are kept, and whom to contact with questions.

4. Convey to both the student and the substitute that the FM system is not optional. The student—or the substitute—may be tempted to say, “We don’t really need to bother with it today.” This attaches negative feelings to the FM and increases the risk the student will miss key instructions.

5. When media will be shown, captions MUST be set up ahead of time.

6. Choose substitutes carefully.

Administrators are encouraged to get feedback from teachers and students and select, as often as possible, the substitute who has been the best fit for this student and his or her class. If there is a substitute(s) whom the school uses often, consider inviting this person to trainings on hearing loss that are held for school staff.

7. When an absence is planned, give the student a “heads-up” that there will be a substitute.

The student should know what his or her job is in assisting this person. By first grade, most students should know how to put the FM on, turn it on and replace the batteries. With support from an appropriate adult, students should practice how to explain their hearing loss and use of their FM to an unfamiliar person so they are comfortable doing so when the need arises.

8. Identify a peer who is willing to learn the basics of the FM system.

This encourages students to share responsibility and advocate for one another when an unfamiliar adult is in charge.

9. Check in with the student to see how the day went with a substitute.

In the upper grades, this also includes making sure the student received class notes. Feedback from the student will help identify any changes that need to be made in the information that is left for the next substitute.

10. When a situation requires a long-term substitute, it is best to provide this person with an orientation on hearing loss and more details on the specific needs of the student.

Encourage the student to be a part of this process. Arranging time for the substitute and the student to meet makes for a smoother transition.

Sound Advice

Information related to the audiological management of students with hearing loss in mainstream settings

Battery Power: What You Need to Know to Stay Strong All Day Long



Hearing aid batteries may be the size of your average pencil eraser, but they are packed with power. While you—and hopefully your student—know the battery basics (what size battery fits your student’s hearing aid, the correct way to put a battery in and take it out), there is a bit more to batteries than you might think. Dr. Amy Catanzaro, an audiologist with Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech, updated us on some facts and key steps to incorporate into your hearing aid maintenance routines.

No more mercury

Though mercury was banned from household alkaline batteries in 1996, hearing aid batteries were exempt because mercury-free designs were not yet available.¹ Since then, much progress has been made and hearing aid batteries are now mercury-free. Dr. Catanzaro explained that consumers have reported some issues with mercury-free batteries, and she has noted similar happenings in her work. Although the average battery life is still roughly five days to two weeks, there is a slight reduction in voltage in mercury-free batteries and they may die a bit more quickly. Other factors that impact battery life include the specific hearing aid being used and how it is programmed, the size of the battery, and FM use in conjunction with the hearing aid. Battery drain will increase by about a third when an FM receiver is coupled with a hearing aid, so you can expect to replace batteries more often during the school year if an FM system is being attached to a hearing aid.

It is also important to note that even though batteries no longer contain mercury, Dr. Catanzaro encourages schools and families to continue recycling batteries rather than throwing them away when they have run out of power. Batteries still have chemicals in them that can pollute the environment and poison animals that find them in the trash or rummaging through a landfill. Until they can be recycled, it is worth hanging onto

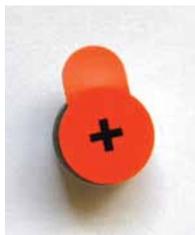
batteries that have been removed from a hearing aid and placing them in a separate, labeled container.

Let them breathe

Today’s hearing aid batteries are “zinc air” batteries, meaning that they are activated when zinc inside the batteries makes contact with air. Batteries are packaged with small stickers adhered to the back of each battery. When the sticker is removed from a battery, air is allowed in and activation begins. It is important to allow proper wait time for this to happen. **After removing the sticker, a battery should be allowed to breathe for 60 seconds before placing it in a hearing aid.** In addition to batteries needing time to activate, hearing aids are much more moisture resistant than they used to be. This is excellent in terms of protecting the internal components of the hearing aid, but it also means less air is getting to the battery compartment in newer hearing aids than was allowed in older hearing aids, making this wait time even more essential. If a sticker is pulled off and the battery inserted right away, the hearing aid might not work, or it might work briefly but shut off within minutes or hours. This can lead to a false assumption that the hearing aid is broken when in fact the battery was simply not allowed to breathe long enough.

Once a sticker is removed, the battery remains activated and cannot be deactivated by putting the sticker back on. An eager child or adult may be tempted to open new packages of batteries, remove all of the stickers and place them in a container for use at school. This will result in a container of dead batteries and a team wondering why a hearing aid will not work even though they are changing the batteries on schedule.

After removing the sticker, a battery should be allowed to breathe for 60 seconds before placing it in a hearing aid.



Teaching children about their hearing aid batteries and including them in maintenance routines is essential to their developing independence.

Include students

Teaching children about their hearing aid batteries and including them in maintenance routines is essential to their developing independence. By kindergarten, most children should be able to change hearing aid batteries themselves. Preschoolers may be able to do so with adult supervision, depending on the child.

Students should always have spare batteries on hand, be able to change them independently and learn to anticipate when a battery change will be needed. They also need to learn how to dispose of batteries properly, check expiration dates, and keep batteries organized. Here are some steps to review with your students:

- **Store spare batteries at room temperature where they are easily accessible.** Encourage your student to keep track of the time between changes by placing on a calendar the colored sticker that is removed from the back of a new battery.
- **Keep new batteries in their packaging with stickers left on.** Do not peel off and then re-stick the colored strips. Store discarded batteries separately until you are able to recycle them.
- **Remember to wait 60 seconds for a battery to activate before placing it in a hearing aid.**
- **Like all products, sometimes you just get a bad battery.** If you pull the sticker off and the battery doesn't look clean, it may not make good contact with the hearing aid. You will probably need to try a new one.
- **Check expiration dates.** The shelf life for batteries is about three years. Batteries may still work beyond that, but be mindful of expiration dates, especially when you are buying batteries. Every package has the expiration date printed on it.
- **Handle batteries with clean hands.** Dirty hands can leave material on the batteries that interfere with a good connection.
- **Remember to store hearing aids in a Dri-Aid unit each night.** This product removes moisture from hearing aids (and cochlear implant processors), dries earwax, kills odor and bacteria, and helps avoid corrosion on batteries. Dri-Aids are simple to use and contribute to the longevity and optimal performance of listening devices.

¹⁹Rayovac Explains Mercury Free Batteries." Hearing Loss Web. March 2013. Accessed April 10, 2013. www.hearinglossweb.com/tech/ha/conv/bat/ray2.htm.

Compiled by Melissa Griswold, M.E.D., with special thanks to Dr. Amy Catanzaro for her contribution to this article.

A note about FM system batteries

If your student uses an FM system, the transmitter runs on rechargeable battery power. Your student will need to charge the transmitter at the end of each day. If the FM has not been charged, there are steps you can take before giving up on the FM for the day. Make it a habit to check the FM when you first get to school. If it was not charged overnight, plug it in right away until the students arrive and morning activities begin, and then again during lunch and other times the FM is not being used. Often, this can get a student through the day. Newer FM's have a quick charge time. In one hour they can be 80% charged, and in two hours they can be 100% charged. Check with your student's audiologist to confirm the charging time for your student's particular system. Also, you can expect a rechargeable FM battery to last about one year, so it is a good idea to have the battery be changed when the FM is returned for summer servicing.

Hearing aid batteries



Your student should know the size and color code for his or her hearing aid batteries. Your student's audiologist can recommend the brand best suited for your student's hearing aids. Because the power consumption is greater for cochlear implants, Dr. Catanzaro recommends using batteries designed specifically for cochlear implants. Cochlear implant users may need to change batteries more frequently than hearing aid users. The same procedure of allowing 60 seconds for battery activation applies to cochlear implant batteries.

LET'S TALK

...with artistic kids!

Like their peers, students with hearing loss participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Last spring, we introduced you to students who challenge themselves in the wrestling ring, on horseback, and on the ski slopes. In this issue, we'd like you to meet students with a creative flair. We asked them to tell us what they enjoy about their activities, as well as what they and their instructors do to make communication successful.

Mira GRADE 4

A favorite activity I participate in is: Dance

I love this activity because: You get to do tumbling, acro, hip hop, lyrical, ballet, and tap. You get to dance with friends and go to competitions. I like acro the best.

What I do to make sure I can hear and understand my dance teacher: I use the FM. At the end of school, I take it home. Then I take it to dance and my dance teacher wears the transmitter. I bring it back to school the next day. The teacher mostly faces me. If I don't hear or understand, I ask a friend, or follow other dancers. I can also talk to the teacher after class.



What my teacher does to help me hear and understand: She uses the FM transmitter. She tells us what to do and has one of the girls demonstrate dance moves.

A communication challenge I've faced in this activity and what I did to make it better is: The music can make it hard to hear. The FM helps with this.

Advice I have for other kids with hearing loss who would like to try this activity is: Bring the FM and stand in the front!



Weyehn GRADE 10

A favorite activity I participate in is: Art/drawing

I love this activity because: It is fun and I love drawing things from my imagination.

I am proud of myself because: Art and drawing inspired me and I am a good friend to everybody.

What I do to make sure I can hear and understand my teachers:

I give teachers my FM system so I can understand my teachers and hear well.

What my teachers do to help me hear and understand: They face me when they are talking and they don't exaggerate.

A communication challenge I've faced in this activity and what I did to make it better is: Some people

mumble because they thought that I could hear them really well. I tell them to speak clearly and loudly because I need good communication.

How my hearing aids/FM helps me in this activity: An FM system helps me to receive information better and hear better.

A goal I have for pursuing this talent: I could take drawing classes next year, practice drawing from what I observed and find someone who is talented like me.

Advice I have for other kids with hearing loss who would like to try this activity is: Show your confidence, work hard in school, don't give up something you love to do, and make new friends that have the same interests or talents as you.



Mikaila GRADE 10

A favorite activity I participate in is: Modeling class
I love this activity because: I love walking on the runway and learning all about the modeling industry. It's my passion to pursue a modeling career in the future. I love doing hair, make-up, dressing up and showing people that I want to do well in modeling school.

I am proud of myself because: I worked so hard to learn everything and I picked it up pretty fast and I just love doing it.

What I do to make sure I can hear and understand my instructor: I talked with the instructor about how I can hear them before we started doing modeling class.

What my instructor does to help me hear and understand: My instructor looks at me when she talks and makes sure I get everything.

A communication challenge I've faced in this activity and what I did to make it better: At first, I did not get anything, so I had to stand up for myself to tell them that I'm deaf and I need you to look at me when you're talking so I can hear you and read your lips.

How my cochlear implant helps me in this activity: My cochlear implant helps me so much because I need to hear them talk.

Advice I have for other kids with hearing loss who would like to try this activity: You can't be shy to do this because you have to walk on the runway and take photo shoots with a photographer. You can shine bright when you work hard in this modeling industry. You can't be lazy and have to be motivated to do this. Show the world that you can do anything you want and no one can stop you from your dreams.



Wil is a fourth-grade student who is an active participant in explaining his hearing loss to his teachers and peers each year. In this column, he will answer questions that students encounter routinely in the mainstream. As you can see, he is well on his way to becoming an ambassador for students with hearing loss!

Dear Wil,

I was invited to a meeting with my teachers where they will learn about my hearing loss. Should I go?

Yes, you should go because sometimes a kid can do a better job explaining his/her equipment to a teacher. The kid can help the audiologist if she forgets something and the kid can get a chance to meet their new teachers.

I will be playing soccer for first time this fall. Should I tell my coach about my hearing loss? What should I tell my teammates?

You should tell your coach about your hearing loss and then you should tell him to try and speak louder. If the team asks you about your hearing loss you should tell them the same thing and also make sure that the coach and teammates try hard to make eye contact with you when they are talking to you.

My friends are asking about my hearing aids. What should I tell them?

I think that you should tell them that you have a hearing loss and that means it is harder for you to hear. Hearing aids help you hear better because they have a microphone on them and it picks up a lot of speech sounds, but sometimes the quiet sounds are really hard to hear. The sound is transported into a tube, which leads to a mold that fills up the entire ear. Then it is a lot louder because the microphone picks up the sounds and makes it easier to hear. The cool thing about the molds is that you can choose the colors; one time I had red, white and blue molds for the presidential election.

If you or your students have questions for Wil, please email them to mainstream@clarkeschools.org and we will try our best to include them in future issues.

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provides children who are deaf and hard of
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34th Annual Conference on Mainstreaming Students with Hearing Loss

Building A Sound Future Together

October 17 & 18, 2013

Sheraton Hotel, Springfield, MA



This two-day conference provides information on hearing loss and how to maximize success for students, parents and professionals in mainstream settings.

Conference highlights:

A variety of mini-workshops
Popular short course for those new to hearing loss
Inspiring keynote speakers and panel of young adults
"Making Connections!" for students in grades 7-12
Vendor hall showcasing the latest technology and resources

Online registration is OPEN and brochure is available at
clarkeschools.org/services/annual-mainstream-conference

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