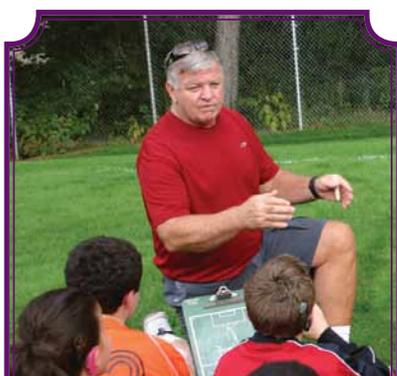




Mainstream News

Information about hearing loss for students, families and educators

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One of the Best

This issue is dedicated to **Dennis Moulton**, a beloved Clarke School teacher and coach, who passed away August 1, 2014. In his 42 years at Clarke, Dennis inspired and motivated many, many students in the classroom and on the playing field. The lessons he taught them about sportsmanship, perseverance and strength of character helped prepare them for life in the mainstream. Dennis was the ultimate role model, embodying the qualities as a coach that level the playing field for students with hearing loss.

Leveling the Playing Field for Student Athletes with Hearing Loss



LIKE ANY STUDENT, STUDENTS WITH HEARING LOSS PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL SPORTS for a variety of reasons. Some crave the competitiveness and intensity of a particular sport. Others pursue sports as an outlet for relieving stress or developing physical and mental stamina at an individual pace. At all levels of play, experiencing the camaraderie that comes with being on a team is a common motivator. Hearing loss does not impact an athlete's physical ability or capacity to understand the intricacies of a sport, but it is likely to present some communication challenges. To level the playing field for your athlete who is deaf or hard of hearing, it will be important to consider the variety of activities, both on and off the field, that comprise each season. The most effective strategies will come from collaboration between the athlete, his or her parents, coaches and teammates.

The following suggestions are offered with high school athletics in mind. However, many can be adapted for younger children participating in sports programs.

Kicking off the Season

For good reason, high school sports seasons begin with meetings to address rules, regulations and safety considerations. Many states now require student athletes and their parents to complete concussion training before play begins. A typical pre-season meeting might include a gathering of athletes and their parents in the school auditorium for announcements from the athletic director, a presentation or video on concussion awareness and policies, and then individual team meetings with coaches. As with any school assembly, some advanced consideration will promote access for the athlete with hearing loss.

- **Communicate meeting details clearly to students and families.** If the only means of sharing meeting dates/times is over the public address system at school, the student with hearing loss is likely to miss them. Posting notices around school, on the school website and sending emails to the school community are some ways to ensure everyone receives this information.
- **Encourage seating for optimal access.** Arrange ahead of time for this student's team to have a section near the front with the best visual and auditory access to the presenter. This way the student is not seated separately from his or her teammates.

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Making some adjustments in the delivery of instruction, a coach can promote understanding and keep this athlete from feeling singled out.

- **Make use of the student's FM system.** Let presenters know that they will be asked to use the FM transmitter/microphone. Consider attaching the FM to the main microphone used with the auditorium speaker system. A ruler and rubber band will often do! (see photo)
- **Provide written support.** Agendas, power point slides and the like assist in highlighting key points covered in the meeting.
- **When a video will be shown, choose only those that have captions.** Test the video ahead of time and make sure the captions are enabled so troubleshooting is not needed on the spot.
- **Repeat/paraphrase questions and comments from audience members.** This is bound to assist many members of your audience.



Coaching Tips

A coach who takes the time to learn about hearing loss and who sets high expectations for respect and acceptance among all team members will have a positive impact on this student's experience. This can mean the difference between the student who sticks with it through occasional difficulties and the student who gives up shortly after the season begins because he or she does not feel accepted or understood. Making some adjustments in the delivery of instruction, a coach can promote understanding and keep this athlete from feeling singled out. Strategies include:

- **Meet with the athlete prior to the start of the season.** This helps a coach become familiar with his or her communication abilities, sets the stage for a comfortable relationship and allows the coach and athlete to develop communication strategies together.
- **Review terminology, rules, plays and names of equipment at the beginning of the season with all team members and review them regularly.** An athlete with hearing loss can sometimes come away from an activity not knowing the related terminology or how to explain specifics of their sport to others.
- **Provide written materials with diagrams and explanations of plays and positions.** Be available to go over important information one-to-one with the athlete.

- **If possible, make use of your athlete's personal FM system.** The FM will help the athlete hear you better across greater distances.
- **When giving directions to the team, make sure the athlete is positioned close to you for optimal auditory and visual access.** A circle formation is ideal, as it allows all players to see your face. Speak at a normal pace, repeat important information and make sure you are not standing where the athlete must look into the sun when directions are given outdoors.
- **Check in with the athlete to confirm understanding.** Can he or she explain directions back to you?
- **At practice, partner the athlete with a teammate who plays the same position to help with drills and alert the athlete to changes in exercises.** Having too many players who are trying to explain directions at the same time is confusing and hard to follow.
- **Demonstrate the skills and techniques you are asking the team to learn.** Enlist the help of an assistant coach or one of the athletes. Explain the goal of the drill or move first, and then demonstrate.
- **If videos of games/practices are recorded and discussed as a team, point out what you want athletes watching for first, show the clip, and then discuss it.** Avoid talking at the same time the clip is being played. Provide enough lighting for the athlete to see your face, and that of peers, during discussions and repeat comments and questions from teammates.
- **Use visual cues during play.** Visual signals to indicate the start of a race, a time-out, change of direction or specific plays are some examples.
- **Make sure that umpires and referees are aware of the athlete's hearing loss.** For example, decide before the start of a game how the umpire will let the athlete know what the count is. Ask referees to use hand signals in addition to the whistle to give the go-ahead for a throw or start, or to identify a foul or "dead" play.
- **Once a game is underway, call directions to a teammate who can relay your message to the athlete.** Rotating this responsibility cuts down on confusion.
- **Be aware that there is always the chance that cochlear implant processors and hearing aids can fall off during physical**

activity. It will just take a minute for the athlete to put them back on, but it is helpful to stop and allow the athlete to do so and then resume play. The family may be able to provide solutions for keeping these devices in place, such as a headband or other product designed specifically for this purpose.

- **There may be times when the athlete will not be able to wear his or her hearing**

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aid(s) or cochlear implant(s). Provide essential instructions before the athlete must remove his or her devices. Without his or her listening devices, non-verbal strategies for getting the athlete's attention and the help of a buddy will be particularly important, not only to help the athlete participate but also for safety reasons.

- **Consider communication during bus travel.** Engine noise combined with teammates talking, shouting to one another from a distance and playing music make communication access especially challenging for this athlete. Before making announcements or reviewing team strategy while heading to a game, position yourself near the player with hearing loss, consider using the FM system, turn off music and get everyone's attention.

Informal Gatherings

Participating in team activities on and off the field creates a sense of belonging and memories that last a lifetime. The activities where this camaraderie takes root are sometimes organized informally and are not always led by coaches. Captains' practices, for example, are held prior to the official start of a season for players to get a jump start on training. Once a season is underway, pre-game "pasta parties" and similar get-togethers promote team bonding. Invites often travel by word of mouth. The athlete who is deaf or hard of hearing may not catch meeting times, locations and other details mentioned incidentally around school, after practice or in the locker room. While openness with teammates about hearing loss is strongly encouraged, team captains especially should be made aware of the importance of clear communication. Calling the team together to make announcements and sending follow up texts or emails with event details will avoid any player from missing out. If a student is new to a school or thinking about going out for a team for the first time, the athletic director or other appropriate adult can be made aware of this and connect the student with the coach and team captains before a season begins so the student is looped into pre-season communications.

End-of-Season Celebrations

Each school has its own traditions, but most organize some type of end-of-season banquet to honor the efforts and accomplishments of their athletes. Letting this athlete know ahead of time how the event will be run will help identify any considerations that need to be made regarding access. Is the event being held at a venue where athletes will be listening to speakers from dining tables? What will be the best location for this student to have unobstructed access to the podium? Will the FM system be passed from presenter to presenter or can it be clipped near the podium microphone? Will the athlete benefit from printed copies of speeches?

Advice for Athletes

The athlete shares responsibility for collaborating with coaches and teammates to develop and fine-tune the strategies that will work best in practices, during games and in special activities over the course of a season. Some are skilled and comfortable doing so on their own, while others will need encouragement and support. Over the years, many student athletes with

hearing loss have shared suggestions with us. Common advice includes:

- **Ask questions.** Approaching the coach or a teammate for clarification shows initiative when you are not sure of what to do. "Sometimes even though I would get a late start on a drill, it was better than not knowing what to do," said one athlete. It's also worth staying after practice to talk with the coach and ask follow up questions.
- **Work hard to learn the names of teammates, coaches, equipment, related terminology, and rules as much as possible ahead of time.** Enlist the help of a parent, your teacher of the deaf, a sibling or friend as needed.
- **Be open about your hearing loss.** A positive, friendly attitude makes an athlete approachable and helps put teammates at ease. This goes a long way toward making meaningful connections. One student recalled the relief he felt after finally initiating a conversation with a teammate in his senior year. This opened the door to someone to talk with on the long bus rides to and from games. Prior to that, he had kept to himself. "I wish I had done that my freshman year," he said.
- **Be vigilant on the playing field.** Stay alert to the hand signals, eye-movements and body language of teammates and other players.
- **Develop hand signals with teammates and coaches to identify new plays to run, changes in positions and time-outs.** "My coach makes a rotating finger signal and I know she is telling me to reverse directions. Other players tap their sticks on the ice if they are around me because they know it gets my attention and I look up to see what the coach is saying to me," offered a three-season athlete on her ice hockey experiences.

There is a great sense of pride to be gained from representing one's school and contributing to a team. Participating in a sport provides an opportunity to develop a talent or interest in which the focus is not on hearing loss. With the right support in place, the athlete who is deaf or hard of hearing can focus on learning the game, improving skills and developing camaraderie with teammates. As one athlete shared, "The feeling I get when I'm focused on the field is so wonderful, it actually takes my mind off other things. You learn how to push yourself to the limit. Playing sports is one of the only times when my peers and myself are on 'the same level' and we have this great respect for each other."



Participating in a sport provides an opportunity to develop a talent or interest in which the focus is not on hearing loss.

10 Considerations for Fall Routines

As school gets underway, much is being done to help all of your students feel comfortable in your classroom and around your school. Time is spent introducing daily routines, rules and expectations, most of which are imparted verbally. Because a student with hearing loss may miss or mishear pieces of information, there can be gaps in understanding that a teacher may not realize right away. The following questions can help you uncover—and address proactively—areas that may need some extra attention. For many of the items below, your student's teacher of the deaf can be an ideal partner in reinforcing the concepts, language and vocabulary associated with these routine activities. The teacher of the deaf can also offer suggestions for improving situations where access may be compromised.

1. Does your student know the vocabulary associated with classroom activities? Very young students rotate through learning centers. A doctor-themed dramatic play area might have medical toys like a *stethoscope*, *blood pressure cuff*, and *thermometer*. Household items like *basters*, *strainers*, *tongs* and *sandpaper* are used in water and texture tables. *Unifix cubes* may be the key manipulative in a math center. In the older grades, science labs utilize *Bunsen burners*, *graduated cylinders* and *crucible tongs* to name just a few. Students acquire much of this vocabulary through incidental listening rather than direct teaching. Your student with hearing loss may have gaps in his or her command of terms that you might otherwise expect of your students at a particular grade level. Some individual review may be needed to ensure your student knows what all of your classroom materials are and how to use them.



2. Do your restroom routines have a visual component? Some classrooms, especially in preschool and kindergarten, can have individual bathrooms. It is common to teach children to knock first before entering the restroom. A student with hearing loss may not hear the response from an occupant. Adding a visual component to your restroom routine, such as an “occupied” or “vacant” sign that can be hung on the outside of the door, and

teaching children what these signs mean and how to use them, will eliminate confusion. For students who leave the classroom to use the restroom, consider posting classroom rules in addition to reviewing them verbally to make rules clear. Must students sign in and out? Are there particular times during class when bathroom passes are not allowed?

3. Does your student know what each classroom job entails? Class jobs keep a classroom running smoothly and instill a sense of community responsibility. Sometimes a job title alone does not make clear all that the job requires. While jobs are introduced at the start of the year, it can take a while for students to cycle through them. Each time students are assigned a new job, take some time to review them as a class and check in with your student with hearing loss individually. Can this student explain his or her current job to you or is some clarification needed?

4. Does your student know the pledges and songs that students in your class—and school wide—are expected to know? Pledges and songs are used to honor history, tie into curriculum units and promote unity among school communities. A goal for all students is that they are able to recite the words and understand the meaning behind them. The concepts within pledges, for example, can be abstract and may take some direct teaching to help a student better understand them.

5. Does your student know who's who around school? There are many people outside of the classroom with whom students will interact, or should at least be familiar with - from administration, to office staff, the school nurse, librarian and many in between. However, the names and roles of these people are not often taught explicitly. A student with hearing loss will feel much more confident making a trip to the office, for example, knowing the names and faces of all who work there. Creating things like “Who's Who” books and matching games using names and photos are ideal for one-to-one support sessions early in the year.

6. Does your student understand the lunchroom routine? In the hustle and bustle of the noisy cafeteria, lunch room procedures can be confusing for any student, and especially so for a student with hearing loss. Our teachers of the deaf find it helpful to set a time with the student and cafeteria staff for a



lunch room “walk through.” Meeting the people the student will be buying from helps to clarify procedures students are presumed to know. It is also helpful to talk with cafeteria staff about lunch rules that may need to be adjusted for communication access. It’s happened that students with hearing loss and their peers have gotten up to move closer to one another for easier communication, only to be called out for not staying in their assigned seats.

7. Does your student have access to public address announcements? The public address system is often the quickest way to get information out to the school community, but announcements are not always easy to hear clearly. The speaker might mumble or talk too fast and the system can produce feedback. When announcements are made while students move between classes, it is unlikely *anyone* hears them. Students can miss opportunities to participate in activities, be unaware of changes in schedules and miss critical safety information. To avoid such consequences, your school team—with input from the student whenever possible—will need to consider how to make both planned and unplanned announcements accessible. The student should not be put in the position of asking someone what was announced, only to be told, “Don’t worry, it doesn’t have anything to do with you,” or “I’ll tell you later.” This can be humiliating and frustrating.

8. Does your student have access at school assemblies?

Distance from presenters, background noise and reverberation come with the territory of bringing large groups together in auditoriums, gymnasiums or similar spaces. These conditions make access to communication more difficult for students with hearing loss. Help your student get the most out of these special activities by planning ahead for optimal seating, use of the student’s FM system, written/visual aids and preview/follow-up teaching. The level of support needed will vary based on each assembly.

9. Has your student’s FM system been verified and fitted properly?

Optimal access begins with using technology that is working correctly for your student. An audiologist must ensure that the student is getting the right amount of gain from the FM microphone compared to that of the hearing aid or cochlear implant microphones. If the FM is set too low, improved access to the teacher’s voice will be minimal. Conversely, too much gain from the FM and not enough from the hearing aid or cochlear implant will negatively impact the student’s ability to hear peers. Verification should happen each year before school starts.

10. Does your student understand how and why daily listening checks are performed?

A daily check of your student’s hearing aid/cochlear implant/FM equipment ensures the equipment is working properly and helps catch problems early. Your student should assist in checking the devices and learn the associated language and terminology. Our teachers of the deaf find that making books, charts and checklists with students helps them understand the steps and how to explain them to teachers and peers. Inviting a peer to assist with daily checks is an ideal way to make the technology a regular part of classroom routines.





Making Videos Accessible

Whether used as an occasional supplement to classroom lessons, an integral part of a curriculum unit or simply for fun, video material is likely to be part of every student's classroom experience. Without careful consideration though, your student with hearing loss can be cut off from information presented through videos; lack of access can equate to a wasted class period and feelings of isolation. The following steps will ensure this does not happen.

Use Captions

Providing a student with an uncaptioned video to watch again at home is a common strategy we encounter, especially at the high school level. However, this does not provide better access. In addition to doubling viewing time on top of the student's regular homework, it does not provide better access to the spoken information. A better solution is to show captioned videos in class as standard practice.

With the captions activated, spoken words appear as text at the bottom of the screen. Captions also include descriptions of environmental sounds, such as "music playing," "baby crying," and so on. Some students with hearing loss rely on captions as their primary means of access to video material. Others use the text to fill in occasional pieces that are missed or misheard, which makes a significant difference in overall understanding. Captions assist in programs with no visual cues for speechreading (such as cartoons), and those with challenging content, heavy narration or narration by a person with an accent. They help students identify names, places, events and dates correctly. Additionally, captions are useful when background noise is present in the classroom, room acoustics are poor, or there is poor

sound quality in the video itself. Our experience has been that some students with hearing loss use captions consistently at home and are good advocates for them at school. Less experienced users often need support and practice to become comfortable using them and requesting them. Cap-

tions are encouraged in the younger grades too, as they have a positive impact on reading fluency, vocabulary development and motivation of emerging readers. Using captions from an early age also normalizes them for the student with hearing loss, peers and teachers.

The key to providing captions consistently is planning ahead. Select only DVDs that have closed captions (cc) or subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). English subtitles are an option, they just do not include environmental sounds. Learn how to enable captions on your classroom computer or television and introduce them as a tool everyone can use as needed. As early as possible, teach the student and peers how to turn them on and make sure instructions are in place for substitute teachers.

Web streaming is now a common method of accessing videos. To search for captioned videos on YouTube, for example, use the video title or subject followed by 'cc' (i.e. 'Civil War, cc') or select 'closed caption' in the filter option. When playing your chosen video, click on the 'cc' icon in the bottom right corner of the screen to enable the captions. For videos that do

not have these embedded captions, avoid clicking on the automatic caption option; it tends to be inaccurate. BrainPop and Discovery Streaming are reliable sources of online captioned videos. The Described and Captioned Media Program (dcmp.org) offers a free membership to schools and families, with DVD loans and web-streaming options.

Use the FM System

There may be connectivity options with your student's personal FM system that provide better auditory input than placing the FM microphone next to the computer or television speaker. The use of a splitter (circled in the photo) is often a simple, inexpensive solution. A splitter plugs into the audio port of the classroom computer (may also work with some televisions). Then, the computer speakers and the FM system are plugged into the splitter. This allows the sound to go directly to the student's FM receivers without blocking the sound for the rest of the class. Use of the FM system in this way does not negate the need for captions or vice versa. Talk with your student's educational audiologist and teacher of the deaf to see if a splitter is a possibility for your student.



A splitter allows sound to go directly to a student's FM receivers without blocking sound for the rest of the class.

Provide Written Support

In addition to text on the screen, many students benefit from a set of notes or an outline of key points. Requiring a student with hearing loss to take notes or answer written questions while a video is playing is an unfair expectation. The student must concentrate on listening and watching and will miss information when looking away to write.

Manage Discussion Carefully

Avoid talking over the sound of a video to highlight a point, add clarifying information or ask the class a question. Instead, pause the video, discuss, and then resume the video. During discussion, be sure enough lights are on for the student to see your face for visual cues. Make it a habit to repeat/paraphrase comments and questions from the class.

Consider Pre- and Post-Teaching

Depending on the content and purpose of the video shown and the specific learning needs of your student, preview and/or review teaching can help ensure your student walks away with the intended understanding. A video might introduce a topic where a certain amount of background knowledge, language and vocabulary is presumed. Collaborating with the student's teacher of the deaf, individual support sessions can be an ideal setting to preview the topic, identify and fill in gaps and broaden the student's knowledge base. This will help the student better understand the material presented in the video and be prepared to participate in related class discussions and activities.

Technology available in classrooms today makes showing videos quick and easy. A little bit of advanced planning will go a long way in making videos accessible to your student with hearing loss.



Wil, a fifth-grade student, has a strong interest in helping others learn about hearing loss. In this issue, he answers questions submitted by a second-grade class.

Dear Wil,

Do you feel comfortable having hearing aids? Do your friends respect you?

Yes, I am very comfortable and used to wearing my hearing aids. I don't even notice them after a while. My friends do respect me. Most of the time everybody treats me normally, almost like I don't have them. I have had them so long I think people are used to seeing them on me.

Do your hearing aids or FM ever break? What do you do if that happens?

My FM breaks about 1-3 times a month so I am pretty used to it. My hearing aids have problems sometimes, too. I always tell somebody if that happens. You should tell somebody so they know what's going on. If you know what's going on just fix it, but if you don't then ask for help. Sometimes the fix is simple.

Is there a certain time of the day you take off your hearing aids?

Yes, whenever I go in the water, go to bed or I am replacing hearing aid batteries. Sometimes I turn them off so I don't have to listen to my little brother, too!

Do you or your students have questions for Wil? Please send them to mainstream@clarkeschools.org.



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Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech
provides children who are deaf and hard of
hearing with the listening, learning and spoken
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35th Annual Mainstream Conference:

Tuning In and Tapping Potential

**Tuesday and Wednesday,
October 21-22, 2014**

NEW LOCATION: Sturbridge Host Hotel,
Sturbridge, MA



Join us for two days of workshops and general sessions on maximizing student success. This conference is offered for parents, classroom teachers and para-professionals, teachers of the deaf, speech and language pathologists, audiologists, school administrators and other educational professionals working in mainstream settings with preschoolers through high school age students using listening and spoken language.

Visit clarkeschools.org/services/annual-mainstream-conference to register and learn more about this year's workshops, guest presenters and our very special "Making Connections!" program for students with hearing loss in 7th-12th grade.