



Mainstream News

Information about hearing loss for students, families and educators

Homework Check: How is Your Student Managing?

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PEDIATRICS

Homework is an extension of classroom learning, an opportunity to review and apply ideas and skills learned in class. An appropriate homework assignment for any student is one that is meaningful and manageable. Having a hearing loss does not mean that your student will always be lost or confused

when tackling homework each night, and not all students will need extra assistance all of the time. But, it is important to understand what the challenge areas can be and how to address them. As we approach the half-way mark of this school year, it is a good time to review how your student is managing homework and identify any adjustments that may benefit your student.

for missing or misunderstanding information. Mishearing directions in class can lead to confusion later on when the student begins an assignment.

How to Help

In her article "Five Homework Strategies for Teaching Students with Disabilities" (ERIC/OSEP Digest #E608, March 2001) Cynthia Warger outlines research-based strategies shown to be effective in improving homework outcomes. The strategies Warger discusses remain very relevant and are adapted here to include suggestions specific to students with hearing loss.

Give instructions clearly and deliberately.

We see many students who struggle because they have not gotten the correct information about an assignment. The following strategies help ensure homework expectations are communicated clearly.

- Write the assignment and due date on the board, give frequent reminders and do not erase items until their due date has passed.
- Be deliberate when giving instructions and when you need to make any modifications at a later time. Do not announce changes to an assignment at the last minute or during unstructured class time when students are chatting or getting ready for the bell to ring. Make sure you have your student's auditory and visual attention first.
- Encourage the student to write down in a homework notebook specific instructions or key words that will remind him or her of what is expected.
- Give your student time to start the assignment and check the student's understanding before he or she leaves your class. Can your student explain back to you what the assignment is?
- Review homework policies regularly. Provide

The Challenges

Listening through a compromised auditory system does not affect a student's intelligence, but it does impact, to varying degrees, a student's fund of knowledge and experience and skill with language. These factors have bearing on a student's ability to complete homework successfully. An assignment may draw on a presumed level of background knowledge that the student did not acquire through incidental learning. Less exposure to vocabulary and complex language structures can affect the student's ability to understand homework questions and the rate at which the student can reason critically and formulate responses. Even if the student is impacted minimally in these areas, he or she is always at risk

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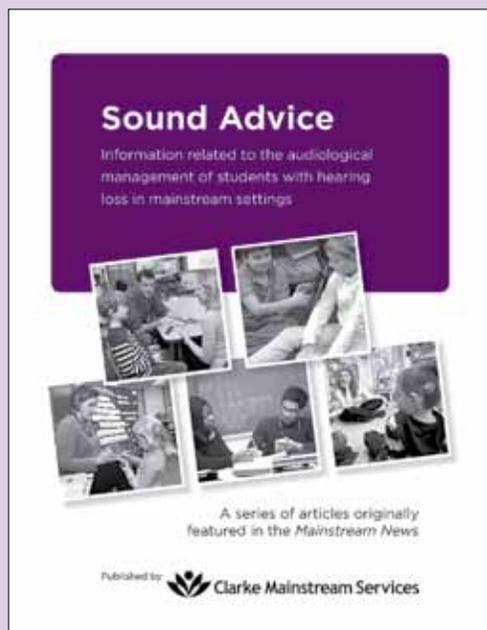
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Clarke Mainstream Services

NEW from Clarke Mainstream Services



Hot off the press!

A compilation of *Mainstream News* articles to copy and share with school teams throughout the year, this booklet offers ideas for supporting students as they learn to manage their listening devices in a variety of school situations.

Order your copy of **Sound Advice** today at clarkeschools.org/store.

Hear Me Out...a new BLOG for itinerant teachers and related professionals

Itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing spend a great deal of time on the road, often with limited access to other itinerants with whom they can collaborate. Written by Clarke itinerant teacher of the deaf Heather Stinson, **Hear Me Out** offers practical advice and tips for teachers of the deaf working with students in mainstream schools. Join this community and find a home base for gaining and sharing ideas!

Access **Hear Me Out** at clarkemainstreamblog.org.



Strengthen Your Skills as a Communication Facilitator at Clarke's Oral Transliterating Workshop

A practical and highly interactive 4-day workshop, taught by nationally certified oral transliterators, will take place on March 24-27, 2014. Clarke offers the only program in the United States that trains educational oral transliterators who help facilitate communication for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Attendees will learn how to provide the best possible access for students using a listening and spoken language approach. This training program is held on Clarke's Northampton, MA campus. Massachusetts Professional Development Points (PDPs) and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) CEUs will be available!

Interested in attending?
Visit our registration page at clarkeschools.org/otregistration.
Questions? Contact Barbara Tetreault at 413-587-7313 or btetreault@clarkeschools.org.

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students, parents, teachers of the deaf, classroom aides, tutors, after school staff—anyone who assists with homework—with this information in writing and make sure each person knows where assignments are posted online.

Consider accommodations that benefit students with hearing loss. Gathering feedback from your student, and those who assist your student, will help determine if homework accommodations are needed. Is your student able to complete homework within a reasonable amount of time, or is it taking significantly longer than expected? How much and what type of assistance does your student typically need? Are specific kinds of assignments more difficult than others? When difficulties are identified, one or more of the following accommodations may benefit your student.

- It may be appropriate to change the length of assignments, give fewer assignments, or change the format or presentation of instructions.
- Consider one-to-one assistance. For some students, clarification of directions is all that is needed. Some may need extra help in a particular skill or content area. For others, the support extends to help with unfamiliar vocabulary, language and background knowledge related to assignments. An itinerant teacher of the deaf often plays a significant role in making sure the student has the information needed to complete homework successfully, as well as communicating with team members the strategies that are effective in one-to-one sessions that can be applied in class or at home.
- Consider a peer tutor or study group. Monitor this closely so that the student is participating and learning rather than just copying information because of difficulties with communication.
- Provide learning tools (e.g., calculators; spelling assists). Make sure online tools are accessible. For instance, a high school English teacher posts links to YouTube tutorials for additional help with writing techniques, choosing only those that include captions or transcripts.
- Provide good notes. Most students will not be able to take their own notes in class because it is nearly impossible to listen, speechread, and write simultaneously. Set up a notetaking system, either using a peer or adult notetaker, so that the student has daily access to accurate, well-organized notes. Make sure the notetaker knows to include specifics about homework assignments and extra credit opportunities.
- As needed, write in simplified language or vocabulary above words/phrases in homework questions that are causing confusion.
- Adjust evaluation standards. For example, on a writing assignment give one grade for content and ideas and another for grammar.
- Provide prompt, useful feedback. Point out what the student has done well, areas that need improvement and suggestions for how to improve.

Teach study skills. Not only do we want students to have a positive experience completing work outside of class, we want them to do so with increasing independence. Teaching study skills goes hand in hand with providing appropriate accommodations. There are many ways to promote good habits outside of the classroom:

- Create a quiet, organized place for the student to work. Should the student attend after school care, there are likely to be many other students in the program. Even when there is a consistent schedule in which students work on homework, there may be too much back-

ground noise for the student with hearing loss to be able to work effectively. Find a quiet place in which the student can work and still have access to the help of an adult when needed.

- Choose a time in which the student is able to focus and has the stamina to finish this work. The student may be exhausted from working hard to keep up with communication at school and need a break. Starting homework right after school may not be appropriate for some students.
- Help your student develop a plan for completing multi-step assignments. Breaking a large assignment into smaller, more manageable parts will make completing the project less overwhelming. It may help some students to break even short-term assignments into smaller steps.
- Help your student learn how to get help. A student might be having difficulty with an assignment but not know how to explain the problem. An appropriate adult can help the student talk through the problem and then rehearse how to approach a teacher for clarification. This way, the student learns to identify and articulate specific aspects of homework that are difficult rather than simply saying “I didn’t know what to do.”
- Help your student establish a routine for checking assignments carefully before turning them in.
- Encourage the use of a homework calendar. Making lists, recording due dates and delineating time for assignments all help in making homework seem less intimidating. Calendars help with the management of long-term assignments and reserving time to study for upcoming tests. They can also be a concrete tool for evaluating performance and can be reviewed with the help of an adult to identify areas of success, improvement and difficulty.

Teaching study skills will foster a sense of pride as the student learns to manage and prioritize homework with more independence each year.

All students benefit from consistency and predictability, but this is particularly true for students with hearing loss. For young students, establishing homework routines and fostering a positive attitude toward completing assignments lays the groundwork for the more difficult and voluminous assignments down the road. Teaching study skills will foster a sense of pride as the student learns to manage and prioritize homework with more independence each year. When homework is appropriate for a student, it provides effective reinforcement of skills and requires a reasonable amount of time and effort to be completed. Assignments that are too difficult or take too long to complete will only discourage and chip away at the student’s self-esteem. The key is to strike a healthy balance so your student learns the value of homework and develops a sense of responsibility, while having time to pursue interests and decompress from stress that accumulates during the school day.



...about first jobs

10

We are interested in learning from students who have had their first job. What have they learned from the experience? How have they addressed their hearing loss with their bosses and co-workers? What advice do they have for other teens with hearing loss on how to be successful at their first job? For Briana, a senior in high school, her first job has been a perfect match with her expertise and love of horses.

Do you know a teen who has advice to share from his or first work experience? Encourage your students to submit their stories! Please see our link to submission forms on our *Mainstream News* page at clarkeschools.org/services/mainstreamnews.

Briana GRADE 12

My first job: I work as a stablehand [at a local stable] and I ride at two other barns. I still work there currently.

What I like about this job: I like working with horse people because they're down to earth. I can be myself. Plus I like working with the horses!

How I got the job: The owner of the barn knew me because I went to Barn Day Camp when I was younger. She saw my mom at the post office where she works and told her that I could come to talk about a job. I went on a Sunday but she was pretty busy giving lessons so she couldn't talk much. I told her I really wanted to work there so the next time she came in to the post office, she told my mom to come in to talk more about working there. She didn't ask me a lot of questions.

She told me that it would be like an internship but I would also be working cleaning out stalls, working with horses, riding and doing horse shows.

How I manage communication on the job: Directions/requests from far away are challenging so the owner normally comes up close to me and she'll talk to me face to face or she'll repeat it again or use a hand gesture that I know. There are so many different things she'll do. She occasionally uses a whistle. I always say, "What?" sarcastically and she'll say it again. I have no problem telling co-workers when I can't hear them. I keep a sense of humor about it.

Advice for teens with hearing loss on how to be successful at their first job: Never let your disability affect what you want to do. Make sure you find the right fit.



10 Questions to Consider Before Your Next IEP Meeting

With the majority of IEP meetings happening in the spring, the winter months are an opportunity to evaluate your team's current practices. Parents, students, educators and support providers all have an important role to play in the IEP process. Our hope is that the following questions guide teams in creating goals and service plans that best meet the needs of your students.

1. Is the vision statement updated each year? While parts of your student's vision statement may remain relevant from one year to the next, the vision statement should grow with your student. Prior to meetings, parents, especially, are encouraged to review the current vision statement, talk with their child and think about aspects of the statement that should remain and those they would like to add or change.

2. Are there ways to increase student involvement? Well before we are required to invite students, we can begin talking with them about their educational plans and goals. Students can be introduced and included in the process in a gradual yet meaningful way. Extending an invitation and giving the student a seat at the table is not enough. Preparation and follow-up is essential. When a student walks away with a positive impression of the process, the student will be invested in participating more and more each year. Create opportunities for your student to be introduced to the purpose of the IEP, to formulate ideas and opinions and practice sharing them. When the student attends all or part of a meeting, ensure support is in place for communication access, the conversation is student-directed and the student is given time to process and respond.

3. Does the IEP consider all areas impacted by hearing loss? Academic progress is essential to include in the IEP, but language, pragmatics, self-advocacy, speech and auditory development are equally important. As a springboard for discussions, check out the following tips specifically for students with hearing loss at <http://cochlearimplantonline.com/site/spice-up-your-ieps-with-salsas/>

4. Are decisions data-driven or based solely on anecdotal information? Data from current testing, systematic observations, and classroom and pull-out work is most helpful in determining current performance levels and writing meaningful, measurable goals.

5. How can language goals be incorporated into all areas of support? Language development relates to all subjects and across support areas. Discuss how each team member can incorporate language goals in their individual work with the student. For example, while working on physical therapy objectives, the therapist can incorporate verb tenses, multi-step directions, and temporal clauses ("Before you _____, _____.")

6. Are the IEP steps followed according to best practices?

In the interest of tight schedules, teams sometimes gather at an IEP meeting with a new plan already prepared. Remember to develop the new IEP after discussing how the student is currently functioning and the steps that will be needed to move the student forward.

7. Are new accommodations needed? Some accommodations are essential throughout a student's education (such as preferential seating, visual supports, teachers repeating/paraphrasing comments and questions from all students). As the student moves along, new learning situations arise that may require new accommodations, such as notetaking or captioned media. And, as your team reviews the list of accommodations, take into account all aspects of the school day. For example, how will you provide your student with access to public address announcements?

8. Are parents given time, and support as needed, to review and understand evaluation results before the meeting? When test results are provided for the first time at a meeting, parents can be overwhelmed rather than empowered. The terminology and language used to describe the results may be confusing to those who are not experts in the areas tested. As noted by Peter Wright, co-founder of the Wrightslaw Website and author of numerous publications on special education law and advocacy, "Section 300.613(a) [of the Federal Special Education Regulations] requires a public agency to comply with a parent request to inspect and review existing education records, including an evaluation report, without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding an IEP..." (<http://www.wrightslaw.com/blog/?p=67&ccpage=1>). Further, in this same blog, Wright highlights commentary from the U.S. Department of Education that was part of the issuance of these regulations: "...the reports may have information that parents need to participate in making decisions about the IEP... if parents receive reports at meetings, rather than before meetings, they cannot be active participants."

9. How will consult time be arranged? Effective consultation happens when teachers and service providers can meet at a designated time, but it can be difficult for teachers to give up planning time. When services are discussed, address how this will be worked out so teachers have sufficient release time.

10. Is the time allotted on service grids realistic? Given the number of goals and objectives for your student, and the pace at which the student works, consider how many sessions per week—and for what duration—is required for support services.

RESOURCES

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Access to Student Presentations

From preschool through high school, students often take turns presenting information to the class. These moments can be particularly challenging for a student with hearing loss to follow without the right supports in place. Even a classmate who is confident and animated in front of a group may speak too fast. Others may hide behind their paper and speak so softly they are almost inaudible. Whether it is a brief “show and tell” in the younger grades or a PowerPoint presentation in a high school classroom, the following strategies will help ensure the student with hearing loss does not miss out.

Make use of the FM system. Make it standard practice that the student presenting wears the FM microphone. When a student’s FM system includes a teacher microphone and a second, pass-around microphone, there are additional options. The student presenting can wear the teacher’s microphone and the hand-held microphone can be passed around to the audience. If students are presenting in pairs or small groups, have them use both the teacher’s microphone and the pass-around microphone so the student has access to all speakers. Prior to presentations, remind students of the proper way to hold/position the microphone and monitor this closely. A student who is concentrating on their presentation can inadvertently hold the microphone too low, facing down and so on, compromising the benefit of the FM.

Allow flexible seating. Encourage the student to adjust his or her location as needed for optimal auditory and visual access. If a younger student is presenting, chances are the class will be seated on the floor. Have them sit in a circle or semi-circle. This way, the student’s view of the presenter, as well as peers who ask follow up questions, will not be obstructed.

Ensure proper positioning of the presenter. Classmates may understand that their peer with hearing loss needs them to face the audience at all times. Sometimes in an effort to do so, a presenter may inadvertently stand in front of accompanying visuals, such as a poster or SmartBoard screen. Make sure the presenter faces the class when talking but also stands to the side so visual information is not blocked from view.

Establish communication rules. Prior to any student presentations, review the expectations for presenters and audience members. Loud, clear speaking voices; facing the audience when speaking; holding a book or paper up in a way that it does not cover the mouth, and so on are essential for presenters. Explain what the audience should be listening for—and ready to respond to. Will you expect them to ask a question, identify a few main points, summarize, share a compliment or make a personal connection? This adds structure and encourages active listening.

Leave (at least some) lights on. SmartBoards (and similar technology) are becoming the norm for projecting data, PowerPoint slides, video clips and more. With this comes the tendency to turn off all of the lights. This makes it difficult for the student with hearing loss to see the presenter’s face clearly for speechreading cues. Leaving one row of lights on or finding a way to have a light on the speaker will not compromise the quality of the image projected on the screen. If the teacher facilitates a discussion after such a presentation, turn all of the lights back on first.

Provide written support. Make copies of whatever a presenter will be reading aloud available for the student with hearing loss, preferably ahead of time. This aids listening, speechreading and

comprehension. Consider projecting written material on the board to help everyone follow along. In addition to helping the student follow the presentation in the moment, written materials assist in follow-up processing. Especially in the upper grades, students may be expected to incorporate information gleaned from peer presentations into a writing assignment, and they may also be tested on this information. When the written component of a project is not available in time, have a peer or adult notetaker take notes on the presentation and make a copy of the presentation afterward.

Facilitate comments and questions. After a student has presented, time is usually set aside for comments and questions from the audience. As with all group discussions, teachers can facilitate this process by emphasizing turn-taking, identifying speakers, and repeating/paraphrasing comments and questions. If a second microphone is available, pass it to students before they offer feedback.

Check in with the student. How are these situations working for your student? Checking the student's understanding of a presentation is one piece of the puzzle. Asking questions that require the student to give back information will be more effective than yes/no questions or those that do not dig deep enough. ("What did you think about Tommy's presentation?" is likely to draw a response like "It was good," which reveals nothing about what the student understood.) The other important piece is talking with the student specifically about access. Finding an opportunity for a one-to-one conversation, ask the student how easy/difficult it was to hear the presenter. What helped the student follow along? What was challenging? What could make it better the next time? Reaching out to a student in this way sends the message that the student is a valuable member of the classroom.



Dear Wil,

Why is it important for kids to learn about their hearing loss and how their equipment works?

It is important for kids to learn about their hearing aids because when you get older your teachers will not do as much for you, they want you to be more responsible. It is also important for you to learn in case of a problem that your teachers/parents cannot fix. I learned about my FM and hearing aids by looking at everything. My audiologist gave me a problem-solving sheet. I look at it when my FM is not working properly. I take the sheet, look at the problem that is happening, and look at [and try] the solution. If you get new equipment try to look it over before you actually do something. Don't be afraid and ask for help.

Can you describe a challenging situation and what you did to make it better?

Sometimes it's a challenge when there are many people in the room talking and I can't hear the teacher talking. The teacher has to speak louder which goes right to my ears and is a bit uncomfortable. I ask them to stop because I can't hear anything and it usually works. "Can you please stop talking? It's very distracting," is a nice way to ask.

Wil, a fourth-grade student, has a strong interest in helping others understand hearing loss. Do you or your students have a question for Wil? Send questions to mainstream@clarkeschools.org.



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Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech
provides children who are deaf and hard of
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