Fact sheet

For teachers:
Adjustments for students with a hearing impairment

A hearing loss may impact on students' ability to:
- produce speech sounds;
- hear and understand language;
- produce oral language;
- acquire and use background knowledge across a range of topics;
- access information presented in the classroom;
- understand new concepts - particularly language-based concepts;
- interact with other students.

The student may often be more comfortable in a small group or one-to-one situation. This diagnosis will impact on each student differently at different stages. The student may have additional difficulties in intellect or mobility, or may have a diagnosis in another impairment area.

A student with a hearing impairment will learn key concepts from the curriculum, and develop the skills to apply these. Some students with a hearing impairment may exceed year level expectations in subject areas of interest, but then have fewer skills in other areas.

Adjustments in planning
- Plan with other team members (speech language pathologist, advisory visiting teachers, special education staff, year level teams, subject area teams) to incorporate priorities for the deaf/hearing impaired student.
- Consider interactions between students and other members of the school community.
- Consider the structure and organisation of the school (e.g. timetable, behaviour management policy).
- Consider the selection and use of curriculum materials (e.g. worksheets, videotapes, sport equipment).
- Consider the classroom setting (e.g. open-area, single classroom).
- Consider settings inside and outside the classroom (e.g. lunch, physical education activities, work experience).
- Consider extra-curricula activities (e.g. religious education, sports days, school band).
- Consider specific needs in KLAs/subjects.
- Use the IEP (Individual Education Plan) to prioritise the adjustments needed for the student to access the curriculum.
- Allow time for the development of language and listening skills in the classroom context.
• Use routines and structures to support students to predict what will come next in the program.

**Adjustments in teaching**

• Pre-teach specific language and concepts required to ensure the student has the required prior knowledge for the activity.
• Gain the student's attention before you give instructions.
• Ensure that you are clearly visible to the student at all times.
• Keep your hands and other objects away from your face while speaking.
• Use normal clear speech. Do not exaggerate your speech.
• Avoid speaking while facing the blackboard.
• Avoid moving around the classroom while speaking.
• Communicate clearly. Repeat and rephrase when necessary. Emphasise key words.
• Use a focusing phrase e.g. "listen to this question".
• Check for understanding by asking the student to tell you what they need to do or repeat what they heard.
• Use buddies to help relay and rephrase information.
• Give students time to look at visual aids before talking to the aid so that the student with a hearing impairment has time to shift their attention from the visual to the auditory.
• Use visual aids such as word webs and semantic maps and concrete examples to illustrate the links between information.
• Provide an outline of what is to be learnt, focus on key concepts and opportunities to practise and demonstrate competence in a number of ways.
• Increase opportunities to practise new skills and concepts - teaching a younger child; demonstrating to other adults in the school; practising on the computer with a peer.
• Utilise available human resources - peer tutoring, teacher aides, special educators, therapy services, interpreters, notetakers.
• Encourage class members to use sign language with the student if needed.
• Teach routines, expectations of behaviour and consequences explicitly.
• Display routines visually using timetables or calendars of upcoming events.
• Explain sudden changes of routine so students know what is going on around them.

**Adjustments in assessment**

• Identify barriers in assessment that may prevent the deaf/hearing impaired student from demonstrating their knowledge and skills or competence.
• Consider the provision of special arrangements and/or exemptions.
• Change the nature of the task (e.g. requiring the student to demonstrate skills rather than write an explanation of them).
• Alter the procedures of a task (e.g. allowing the student to listen to a live presenter instead of listening to an audiotape, allowing the student to sign an oral presentation).
• Provide specialised equipment (e.g. allowing the student to use a TTY, captioned videotape, FM system).
• Vary the conditions for a task (e.g. providing the student with extra time or alternative seating arrangements).
• Revise the language used within a task, if appropriate (e.g. rewording a worksheet or assessment task so a student can understand it clearly).
• Revise the language expected in student responses (e.g. focusing on the content students give in response rather than vocabulary and grammatical structures used).
• Consider the practical arrangements relating to the assessment.
• Consider the venue (e.g. Do the acoustics and visual conditions provide optimal opportunities for the student? Does the student need a separate venue?).
• Plan seating arrangements (e.g. does the student need to sit close to the front to see and hear the presenter clearly?).
• Consider the delivery of instructions or task (e.g. Does the student require spoken directions to be signed? Does the student need a live presenter or written script to access an audiotape).
• Provide extra time (e.g. how much extra time does the student require to overcome language barriers?).

Adjustments in environment
• Be aware of the effect of environmental noise on a deaf/hearing impaired student.
• Minimise environmental noise by using curtains or pictures on windows, book bags on chairs, carpets, felt or rubber tips on the legs of chairs, hanging mobiles of students work.
• Install a Soundfield Amplification System (SAS) to cut down background noise in the classroom.
• Avoid glare or light behind you - don't stand in front of windows to speak to the student.

Adjustments in resources
• Use captioned videos/DVDs.
• Use assistive technology such as an FM system, Soundfield Amplification Systems as required.
• Use pictorial programs or sign-based web-sites to create a range of resources from instructions to readers.
• Utilise peers, volunteers, teaching teams and specialists.
• Borrow resources, materials from the Advisory Visiting Teacher or a nearby Special Education facility.

From Education Queensland

This fact sheet was created for public information by Deafness Forum of Australia. It is the national advocacy body for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Australians. It represents all interests and viewpoints including those people who have a chronic disorder of the ear and those who are Deafblind. www.deafnessforum.org.au