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Hearing Loss

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Hearing loss affects millions of people throughout the world. And one very important issue is the way in which this group of people is properly identified. The deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse, and those within this group have varying degrees of hearing loss. Although there have been many identifying words used over the years, the most commonly accepted terms today are “deaf” and “hard of hearing.” It is important to remember the impact that words and labels can have on people. Therefore, it is important to respect those with hearing loss and refer to them in an appropriate manner by not using outdated or offensive terms. A simple solution is to simply ask individuals how they identify themselves.



The following are common terms associated with hearing loss:



Deaf – a hearing loss so severe that there is very little or no functional hearing.



Deafened – a reference to a person who becomes deaf as an adult.



Hard of Hearing – a hearing loss where there may be enough residual hearing that an auditory device, such as a hearing aid, provides adequate assistance to process speech.



Hearing Impaired – often used to universally describe people with any degree of hearing loss including those who are deaf and those who are hard of hearing. However, this term is not frequently used by most in the community as it promotes a negative view by focusing on the “impairment” of what people can’t do.

Individuals with a hearing loss may use hearing aids, cochlear implants, and/or other assistive listening devices to amplify sounds to increase hearing capabilities. They may also use strategies such as reading lips, using sign language, sign language interpreters, and/or captioning. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may also exhibit difficulty with speech intelligibility. However, hearing loss does not affect individuals’ comprehension of or the physical ability to produce speech sounds.

Modes of Communication

Not all students with a hearing loss utilize all of the possible means of communication found in the Deaf community. Since not all students who are deaf can read lips, many use American Sign Language (ASL). However, there are several types of sign language systems that people in the Deaf community might use:



- Signed Exact English (SEE)
- Cued Speech
- Pidgin Sign Language (PSE)
- Fingerspelling
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Tactile Sign Language

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Instructional Strategies



- Circular seating arrangements provide the best advantage for seeing all class participants.
- Keep front row seats of classroom open for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Gain the visual attention of the student before speaking.



- Make sure that your face is clearly visible and look directly at a person with a hearing loss.
- Speak clearly in a normal volume of voice.
- Repeat the comments and questions of other students.



- Written information is a good way to clarify what is being said.
- Allow extra time for oral responses in class discussions.
- Allow for group discussion participation by students with hearing loss.
- Incorporate visual aids such as projected classwork images and captioned videos.



Resources:

"Question – What is the difference between a person who is "deaf", Deaf," or "hard of hearing"?" (2019) Retrieved 5-9-19 from <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>

How are the terms deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, and hearing impaired typically used?" (2019) Retrieved 5-9-19 from <https://www.washington.edu/doit/how-are-terms-deaf-deafened-hard-hearing-and-hearing-impaired-typically-used>

"Deaf and Hard of Hearing" (2019) Retrieved 5-9-19 from <https://www.disability.illinois.edu/instructor-information/disability-specific-instructional-strategies/deaf-and-hard-hearing>

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