



*For Teachers and Related Service Providers*

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO ARE HARD OF HEARING

### Promoting a Positive Educational Experience

#### TIP 1

Learn about the various ways to define *hard of hearing*.

There are various ways to define *hard of hearing*. As you plan for each student, keep in mind the following:

- You may see hearing level measurements from a hearing test that correspond with describing a student as *hard of hearing* (e.g., mild, moderate). However, these levels do not tell you about a student's ability to listen and understand.
- The most common definition of *hard of hearing* is functional, an individual who relies on and uses listening and spoken language for communication (regardless of measured hearing level).
- Hard of hearing individuals may identify themselves in different ways. Some may identify as *hard of hearing*, others as *Deaf*, and still others may choose not to identify themselves related to their hearing abilities.

#### TIP 2

Educate yourself about the potential challenges faced by a hard of hearing student.

Keep in mind that you may observe challenges in the following areas, suggesting that the student may need support:

- **Language and speech** (e.g., reduced vocabulary or missing tenses/plurals/contractions due to not hearing certain sounds)
- **Auditory load** (e.g., struggling to understand from the brain doing double duty in trying to hear, understand, and quickly respond)
- **Socialization and inclusion** (e.g., becoming stressed from missing information and then withdrawing from both academic and social interactions)
- **Access to the curriculum** (e.g., falling behind from missing key information shared while the teacher faces the board or walks around the classroom)

**Note:** If other students display similar "red flags," consider a referral for a hearing screening.

# TIP 3

Do not overestimate what a student can hear and understand ... or underestimate the level of support a student may need.

Regardless of a student's hearing levels, it is important to think about the following planning considerations:

- **Don't overlook a student's need for an IEP or 504 plan because the student "appears to hear."** Ensure the student has the accommodations and services to effectively access and participate in the school environment.
- **Get everyone on board to facilitate access to "incidental" information** that is shared informally throughout the school day (e.g., announcements, school news, social activities, schedule changes).
- **Keep in mind that the planning needs of a student with a cochlear implant** may be similar to a student who is hard of hearing.
- **Closely monitor students who have hearing in only one ear (unilateral hearing)** to determine the need for possible support.

# TIP 4

Include strategies to enhance ease of access throughout the educational environment.

Include strategies that can make a difference in helping a hard of hearing student access the educational environment, such as:

- **Promote optimal listening accessibility** through daily monitoring of hearing aids and cochlear implants, modification of classroom acoustics, and use of assistive listening technologies (e.g., FM systems).
- **Promote student engagement, involvement, and interaction:**
  - Provide flexible seating opportunities (e.g., chairs/desks in "u" shape)
  - Establish guidelines for classroom communication (e.g., raise hand before speaking)
  - Use pre-teaching (e.g., tutoring of new vocabulary)
  - Provide opportunities to access information visually (e.g., use of captioned media, printout of school announcements)

# TIP 5

Provide supports to enhance a student's socialization experiences and identity development.

Include opportunities to support students in developing friendships, becoming members of the school community, and feeling positive about their identity and self-esteem, such as:

- **Set up opportunities to orient classmates and other members of the school community** about how to successfully include a hard of hearing student.
- **Identify supports for the hard of hearing student** to learn to become a self-advocate (e.g., meet with school counselor to address topics such as how to respond to teasing).
- **Explore opportunities to connect the student with other hard of hearing and deaf students** in the school or community (e.g., summer camps, after school or weekend programs, organizations, associations).