

Classroom Modifications

Deaf and Hard of Hearing students benefit from environmental modifications. Some are very simple and easy to accommodate. Others are more difficult. The most important issue is typically the reduction of background noise. Background noise needs to be monitored and diminished to improve access for the student. The following is a list of suggestions to help modify a classroom to reduce background noise and meet the hearing needs of a deaf or hard of hearing student.

- Put tennis balls on chair legs to lessen background noise. Local tennis centers provide free used tennis balls to schools if you call and ask.
- Use carpets or area rugs when possible.
- Keep door closed when possible especially during high traffic times. This keeps wanted sounds in and unwanted noises out.
- Seat student away from vents and heaters.
- Put up curtains or soft materials on windows.
- Speak clearly and naturally.
- Speak at the ear level of students when possible. Sitting across from the student is better than standing.
- Seat the student away from open windows, heaters humming, electronic equipment, lab equipment, computer speakers, etc. anything that makes noise.
- Speak close to the student. Seating should be near the speaker. The further away they are, the harder it will be to hear you.
- Seating arrangements should maximize visual needs. Try semi-circles and horseshoes if possible. This allows the deaf or hard of hearing student to see the speaker and the other students.
- Talk directly to the deaf or hard of hearing student.
- Be sure they are looking at you when speaking to them.
- Avoid talking to the blackboard.
- Use adequate lighting in the classroom.
- Stand in front of a neutral background when speaking. Avoid standing in front of bright lights and windows.
- Use live voices when possible. Audio tapes are difficult to hear without visual cues.
- Use visual cues as much as possible to reinforce spoken information.
- Avoid walking around while talking. It takes a few seconds for the student to locate the sound source.
- Avoid talking from behind the student even when standing close to them.
- If you have class pets, make sure they are not adding excess background noise to the room. Even a fish tank filter or a noisy hamster wheel adds noise that makes it more difficult for the student to hear.

****From the webpage of Serena Wunderlich:**

http://web1.newpaltz.k12.ny.us/local/high_school/Teachers/swunderlich/index.htm