



The Inclusive Classroom:

Supporting Students with Hearing Loss

by AWWA Community Integration Service



Supporting Students with Hearing Loss

Why It Matters

As of December 2018, Singapore's mainstream primary and secondary schools have about 1,300 students with reported hearing loss (MOE, 2019). Speaking and listening are the primary modes of communication and learning in the mainstream classroom, so it is important that Students with Hearing Loss can hear and understand their teachers and peers well for learning to take place (Kiri Mealings et al., 2024).

However, hearing loss can affect much more than just a student's ability to "hear". It can impact how students access information, participate in classroom discussions, follow instructions, build friendships, and stay engaged throughout the school day. Many students with hearing loss may appear to be coping well on the surface, but still experience additional listening effort and fatigue during lessons.

Understanding some of the common challenges students may face can help teachers create more supportive and accessible classroom environments.



Factors That May Affect The Learning Experience For Students With Hearing Loss:

Missing Out on Information

If information is delivered only through auditory means, students may not catch everything the teacher says, especially if they are seated far away or if the teacher walks around the classroom.

Noise

Background noise, class discussions, and peer interactions can make listening more challenging.

Environment

Classroom acoustics and seating positions can affect access to learning.

Fatigue and Concentration

Students with hearing loss often need to put in more effort to focus on listening and processing what they hear. This can result in listening fatigue and reduced concentration, especially during long school days.





Students with Hearing Loss May Experience Difficulties With:

- »»» Learning to speak clearly, which may affect how well they are understood by peers and teachers
- »»» Participating confidently in class discussions
- »»» Developing language and literacy skills
- »»» Building positive peer relationships and participating socially due to missing parts of conversations



Your Role as a Teacher

You don't need to be a speech therapist to make a difference. In class, teachers can use simple, inclusive strategies to support students with hearing loss to make learning more accessible for them.

4 Whole-Class Strategies You Can Start Using Today

These strategies are beneficial for Students with Hearing Loss and some of them can benefit other learners as well.

1 Using assistive technological devices such as Frequency Modulation systems to help them access the learning.

What It Looks Like



MOE funds FM systems for students with hearing loss. One commonly used device in classrooms is the Roger Transmitter.

Why It Helps

This wireless system acts like a “microphone” that streams the teacher’s speech directly to the student’s hearing aid or cochlear implant. This allows the student to better identify and understand speech in noisy situations and over distances of up to 15m.

It improves access to spoken information, especially in noisy classrooms or when the teacher is speaking from a distance.



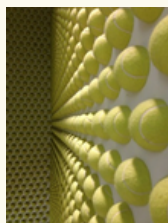
2 Provide a Structured Classroom Environment

What It Looks Like

Seating Arrangement

- Place the student in a seat where they can easily view the teacher's face and the board/screen, such as the front or side of the classroom.

Minimise Background Noise



- “Soundproof” the classroom where possible (e.g., chair socks, acoustic panels, tennis balls on chairs, rugs/carpets, curtains, acoustic dividers).
- Reduce distractions such as noisy fans or sounds that may interfere with hearing aids or FM systems.

Why It Helps

- Students can better follow facial expressions and gestural cues from the teacher instead of relying solely on auditory input.
- Reducing unnecessary noise helps create a more conducive environment for listening and learning.
- “Soundproofing” the classroom can reduce reverberation (sound echoing off walls, floors, and windows).

3 Using Multimodalities for Teaching

What It Looks Like

- Including captions for videos
- Providing written instructions
- Using visual representations and charts
- Using interactive whiteboards to display important information in real time
- Incorporating hands-on activities such as building models or role-playing to reinforce learning

Why It Helps



Visuals help bridge gaps for students who may struggle with auditory processing alone. Offering content in different formats (visual, auditory, and written) ensures that students can access the material in ways that work best for them.

4 Communicate Clearly

What It Looks Like

- Face the student when speaking
- Enunciate clearly and use short, simple sentences where possible
- Repeat or rephrase information when needed
- Pause to allow processing time and responses
- Check in regularly to ensure understanding
- Clearly indicate changes in topic or instructions
- Provide encouragement and positive feedback to build communication confidence

Why It Helps

- Clear communication strategies help students better understand what is being taught and reduce the likelihood of missing important information. They also support students in feeling more confident and included during classroom interactions.

It's About Creating a Safe Space for Learning



Supporting students with hearing loss in your classroom does not mean overhauling your teaching. It simply means noticing potential barriers, making small adjustments, and creating a space where every student can access learning more meaningfully.

When we integrate these strategies into our classrooms, we are not just helping students “hear better”. We are helping them feel heard, included, and supported as learners, communicators, and members of the classroom community.

References

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