

Language & Learning

Getting Ready for School

Placements Adapted for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Placements that are adapted for children with hearing loss are usually somewhere in schools designed for children with normal hearing. These schools are often called the mainstream, and putting children in the mainstream for most or all of the time is called inclusion.

In some mainstream classrooms hard-of-hearing children use special hearing devices, called FM auditory trainers. These devices enhance the sound quality in noisy classrooms. Teachers wear microphones that link through FM transmission to the child's device. In some cases, there are no specialists to work with the student or the teacher. If a child has oral language similar to that of the other students, and seems to learn at the same rate, then this setting is probably appropriate. Parents and teachers should carefully watch the language and academic progress of a deaf or hard-of-hearing child who is fully mainstreamed, and be sure that the room is acoustically treated to provide for the best listening environment. Putting carpets on floors, acoustically tiling ceilings, hanging curtains or shades on tall windows, and covering room dividers with carpet pieces are ways that a room can be adapted so that hearing aids and FM auditory trainers can work well.

Mainstream classrooms where a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or speech language pathologist consults with the classroom teacher, but does not work directly with the student are often appropriate when a child's hearing loss requires some small changes in teaching style. Some teachers already use visual aids, or ask questions to check comprehension, or assign a buddy for some activities, but others are glad to have a professional consultant to give them suggestions. Some deaf or hard-of-hearing children prefer to stay in their neighborhood schools with their friends, even if learning in the mainstream classroom takes some extra work. The consultant can help them and their teacher.

When a child who is deaf or hard of hearing needs someone to provide some extra tutoring, one option could be a mainstream classroom where a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or speech language pathologist pulls students out for services. The tutor can practice new vocabulary, introduce new topics, or fill in background knowledge that other children already know. Children who need this much help to keep up in class should have regular assessment and observation to be sure that they are doing well.

Mainstream classrooms with interpreters or paraprofessionals always in the room are most often appropriate when there are no other children with severe or profound hearing loss in the school district or in nearby areas. A teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing usually needs to supervise the person in the classroom with the child and keep track of the child's academic and social progress.

In public schools, resource rooms for children with various learning challenges (learning disabilities, speech and language, hearing loss) in public schools can be used to serve some students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Resource teachers need to know, however, that the needs of children with hearing loss are often different than those with other special challenges. A teacher with certification in both special education and education of the deaf and hard of hearing or a consultant to the resource room teacher can be very important.