Understanding Hearing Loss

Information to guide educators of students who are deaf or hard of hearing

New Mexico School for the Deaf
Center for Educational Consultation and Training
Some basics…

- There are basically four degrees of hearing loss:
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Severe
  - Profound

- For a child who is learning language, any degree of hearing loss is significant. A “mild” hearing loss can have much more than a mild effect on language and social development.

- Hearing aids do not “fix” or cure hearing loss in the same way glasses correct a vision loss. A hearing aid only makes sounds louder. Hearing aids **cannot** make sounds clearer.
An Audiogram shows how loud a sound has to be for the person to hear it.
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The numbers across the top show increasing frequency (pitch), which is measured in Hertz (Hz).
An Audiogram shows how loud a sound has to be for the person to hear it.

The numbers down the side show loudness, measured in decibels (dB).
An Audiogram shows how loud a sound has to be for the person to hear it.

The charted lines show how loud a sound has to be at each frequency to be heard in each ear.
This audiogram shows where different environmental sounds would appear on the chart, according to frequency & loudness.
Sounds of speech occur in a specific range of pitch and loudness.
Hearing aids and cochlear implants are programmed to maximize these sounds.
The graphed line represents how loud a sound has to be to be detected. Therefore, sounds above the graphed line probably are not heard.
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Classifications of Hearing Loss

Notice how many speech sounds are not accessible with a “mild” loss.
Classifications of Hearing Loss

Moderate Hearing Loss
Classifications of Hearing Loss

Moderate-Severe Hearing Loss
Classifications of Hearing Loss

Severe Hearing Loss
Classifications of Hearing Loss

Profound Hearing Loss
Aided Audiogram

The line marked with As indicate how well this person tested with hearing aids.
Notice that even with hearing aids, this person presents with a mild hearing loss.
Aided Audiogram

Recognize the difference that having working hearing aids make in access to speech sound.
Items to Consider

- Does the student hear better from one ear than the other?
  - Consider seating changes if necessary
- Does the student benefit from hearing aids?
  - Are they worn consistently?
  - Does having hearing aids change behavior?
  - What can be done to help the student if hearing aids are not working?
  - Are other listening devices necessary in addition to the hearing aids?
- Are audiology reports consistent over time?
- An audiogram is one piece of information about a student, and cannot predict educational outcomes or mode of communication.
- Each individual experiences hearing loss in different ways even if their audiogram looks the same.
NMSD CECT Services

- Individualized consultation to students and education teams
- IEP attendance and assistance in developing the Communications Consideration Addendum
- Classroom observations
- Student evaluations and career assessments
- Online lending library - http://nmsdoutreachlibrary.org/
- Statewide & regional trainings
- Program or student specific workshops
- AmeriCorps sign language instruction program
Contact Information

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