



Creating an Optimal Preschool Environment for Listening and Spoken Language Development



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Preschool Environments



Range of Settings Available:

- **Non-categorical Special Education Classroom**
- **General Education classroom (with or without supplemental services)**
- **Small-group instruction with a special education teacher with classmates sharing hearing loss as their primary qualifying disability**
- **A combination of two or more of the above**

Preschool Environments



- **Decision must be made individually & based upon the needs of each child and family**
- **No single setting can be considered an optimum, or even appropriate, fit for the needs of all children with hearing loss**
- **Appropriate setting can, & often should, vary for the same child across time**
 - **Needs of the child should be regularly assessed**
 - **Program or settings changes made as needed**

Preschool Environments



Factors to consider for each child:

- Development relative to typically developing peers
 - Speech & language
 - Self-advocacy skills
 - Social skills
- Previous early intervention services
- Additional educational challenges present or suspected
- Intervention services received outside of school day
- Level of family support & involvement
- Needs of the entire family unit

Non-Categorical Preschool Classroom



Possible Advantages:

- Teacher likely has experience working with children with varying disabilities
- May be available within the family's home school district
- Small student-to-teacher ratio

Possible Disadvantages:

- Teacher may not be licensed in area of child's primary disability
- Children's skills may vary significantly across several areas of development

General Education Classroom



General Characteristics:

- Curriculum-driven
- Centered around skills & activities
- General vocabulary & language stimulation
- Group/class focused

General Education Classroom



A look inside an "Older 3's" classroom:



General Education Classroom



Possible Advantages:

- Exposure to peers with age-appropriate speech & language skills
- Opportunity to practice listening & self-advocacy skills in a larger natural setting
- Most common classroom setting so multiple choices available

Possible Disadvantages:

- Academic & language levels may be too advanced for child's current skill set
- Increased background noise & reduced attention from teacher due to larger class size
- Teachers generally have limited experience working with children with hearing loss

General Education Classroom



Components necessary to maximize success of a child with hearing loss:

- Child has the communicative competence to be successful
- School administration & classroom teachers with the time and willingness to:
 - learn about & understand the effects of a student's hearing loss
 - become familiar with the child's hearing device(s)
 - collaborate with parents/support personnel
- Support professionals with expertise stimulating language acquisition through listening & talking (including auditory stimulation through listening alone)

General Education Classroom



More components necessary to maximize success of a child with hearing loss:

- Aggressive audiological management including educating classroom teacher to perform listening checks
- Classroom acoustics within ASA & ASHA for regular education classrooms
- Frequent language comprehension checks opportunities for students to express themselves
- Opportunity to address areas of need that may exist within a small group or 1-on-1 setting

Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



General Characteristics:

- **Primary focus is child communication**
 - Auditory skills (phonetic & phonologic)
 - Vocabulary & semantics
 - Articulation
 - Syntax & Morphology
 - Pragmatics/Social interaction skills
- **All activities selected with specific communication targets & then integrated into preschool & cognitive skill development**
- **Designed based upon individual child needs & the remediation of existing language weaknesses**

Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



Possible Advantages:

- Small class sizes
- School staff with specific expertise in stimulating spoken language acquisition with children who are D/HH
- Offers a safe environment for children to practice emerging language and listening skills
- Level of support available to parents

Possible Disadvantages:

- Environment may be too restrictive for some children
- May not be available at family's school of preference
- Exposure to children with typically developing language skills may be limited

Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



Circle Time



Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



Components necessary to maximize success:

- Classroom teacher and supplemental support professionals with experience stimulating language acquisition
- Intensive stimulation of listening & spoken language skills throughout the school day



Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



Components necessary to maximize success:

- Small class sizes with frequent opportunities to divide further based upon skill level
- Classroom acoustics within the Acoustical Society of America & ASHA standards for classrooms for children who are D/HH
- Frequent device checks (Ling Sound Test)



Listening & Spoken Language Classroom



Additional components of an optimal Listening & Spoken Language Preschool:

- Team teaching - each child shared by more than one experienced D/HH professional
- Opportunity to interact with typically developing peers as appropriate for the child (including opportunities for partial mainstreaming)
- On-site or immediate access to audiological support

Resources & References



- Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing - <http://www.agbell.org>
- American Speech-Language and Hearing Association partnership with Council for Education of the Deaf (ASHA-CED) - www.asha.org/ashaced/
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2005). Guidelines for Addressing Acoustics in Educational Settings [Guidelines]. Available from www.asha.org/policy
- Nelson, P. B. & Blaeser, S. B. (2010, September 21). Classroom Acoustics: What Possibly Could Be New?. The ASHA Leader.

Resources & References



- **The following National Standard acoustic guideline documents are available for download free of charge at:
<http://asastore.aip.org/>**
 - **ANSI/ASA S12.60-2010/Part 1 American National Standard Acoustical Performance Criteria, Design Requirements, and Guidelines for Schools, Part 1: Permanent Schools**
 - **ANSI/ASA S12.60-2009/Part 2 American National Standard Acoustical Performance Criteria, Design Requirements, and Guidelines for Schools, Part 2: Relocatable Classroom Factors**