

Strategies for Effective Teaching and Learning

Promoting Language Development in Young Children With Hearing Impairments

- **Speak using an ordinary tone/volume.** Make sure the student's attention is focused on the speaker. Talk naturally and clearly and use simple phrases or simple but complete sentences, depending on the pupil's language level. Do not shout or exaggerate words or slow down your speech unnaturally. Highlighting lips with lipstick can assist a young child in following speech. A mustache or long hair obscuring the face can cause loss of visual information.
- **Clarify idioms.** Explain idioms in context (for example, explain "It's raining cats and dogs" when you have used the expression after dashing inside during a cloudburst). This prevents misunderstandings and enriches the child's language.
- **Check with the student to ensure comprehension.** Sometimes saying "Tell me what I just said" provides information about how much a child understands. However, many children with a hearing loss have difficulty articulating their responses. Therefore, you may need to observe the child's actions for a short period to check for understanding. A perplexed look or doing nothing may indicate lack of understanding, and you will need to find additional, preferably visual, methods for getting the message across.
- **Institute a buddy system to facilitate a child's understanding of directions and curriculum content.** Many times children understand another child better than they do an adult, so have a child's buddy explain the information again after you have finished. Furthermore, attentive peer modeling of both speech and behavior is an excellent resource for the child with hearing deficits.
- **Show real-life pictures when reading or talking about a topic, and use simple signs, point, or have an example of the object you're explaining.** Pupils with a hearing loss need visual information to learn. Acting out experience-based language lessons or stories is helpful. Using environmental labels around the classroom can start such children on the road to learning language through print.
- **Provide language boards or books for children who have difficulty producing intelligible speech or manual signs.** Try providing a flannel board with pictures, words, or other graphic symbols to help communicate information such as available interest centers or answers to routine questions. The child can point to the board to indicate a response or choice. Preteach key vocabulary words from a story that will be read to the class, or send the book home with the child beforehand so that the words can be introduced by the family (and reinforced afterward).