

# Insights

## HOW TO CHECK A HEARING AID



For children who use hearing aids, it is helpful to check the aids on a regular basis to ensure functioning. With minimum effort and a few minutes a day, teachers can help students check their hearing aids. Depending on the age of the child, students should take appropriate responsibility for the checking process.

### Know Background Information

Basic information on the child's hearing aid should be supplied by the audiologist or parents. Things to know about the aid include the following:

- Brand and model
- Recommended volume
- Internal settings
- Battery type

### Check Hearing Aid Functions

Two inexpensive pieces of equipment—a hearing aid stethoscope and a battery tester—should be kept in the classroom and used to check hearing aids. Stethoscopes can usually be purchased through local hearing aid dealers. The stethoscope is used to check the quality of sound provided by the hearing aid. Listen for the following problems:

- Sound cuts on/off when the volume control is changed.
- Sound cuts on/off when the cord of an FM system is jiggled.
- Voice quality sounds distorted.

Battery testers are also available through hearing aid dealers or local commercial outlets, such as RadioShack. Depending on their quality and sophistication, testers are usually inexpensive. Use them according to directions to test hearing aid batteries. Only batteries working at full power will provide good hearing aid function.

### Check Student Function With Hearing Aid

Described below is a quick, efficient check of how a child functions with a hearing aid. In addition to including if the hearing aid is working, this check can detect other possible problems a child may be experiencing such as a change in hearing levels related to outer or middle ear problems or a change in sensorineural hearing levels.

- Have the student sit facing you at a distance of about three feet, wearing the aid.
- Cover your mouth with an index card or piece of paper.
- Individually present each of the following five sounds: *ah*, *oo*, *ee*, *sh*, *s*. (These sounds represent the variety of the frequencies present in speech.)
- Have the student raise one hand or place a block into a container when the sound becomes audible.
- Set a baseline for each student, consisting of the sounds the student can perceive from three feet away, using a functioning hearing aid with a good battery. Not all students will hear all five sounds.
- Check each student's awareness of the five sounds on a regular basis. If hearing deviates from the student's baseline, check the aid more carefully.
- If a thorough check of the aid confirms that it is working well, poor performance on the five-sound test may indicate that a problem such as fluid in the middle ear is impairing the student's ability to hear at baseline levels. Notify the student's family if you strongly suspect that middle ear fluid is causing problems.