



July 2022

FOCUS



HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA

Supporting families with children
who are Deaf & Hard of Hearing

How to Help Students Who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing Succeed in School:

Whether the hearing difference is mild or severe, there's plenty teachers can do to help students succeed.

According to the CDC, as many as 15% of school age children have significant hearing difference in at least one ear.

Hearing loss in children can vary from mild, where a child might have difficulty hearing over background noise, to severe. Students who are deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) face special challenges in the classroom, but given the right accommodations, they can succeed academically.

Severe hearing loss is usually identified before a child enters school. However, mild to moderate hearing loss may not be recognized until a child is older. Children are often reluctant to speak up when they can't hear well.

Most teachers no longer use a traditional teaching style, facing the class while they lecture from the front. This is terrific for accommodating a variety of learning styles, but makes life in the classroom much harder for children who are deaf/hard of hearing, as they often cannot see the teacher's lips or hear them well when they move around the classroom. Here are some other ways hearing differences causes challenges in school.

- Background noise.
- Acoustics.
- Back-lighting.
- Note-taking.
- Difficulty collaborating
- Group work
- Social concerns

Children with any level of hearing difference may use lip-reading to get by. But lip-reading is not only a difficult skill to acquire; it also relies heavily on guesswork. In fact, it's estimated that only about 30-60% of words are seen clearly by lip readers. For the rest, it's like putting together a puzzle without having all the pieces. But teachers can make it easier for lip readers in the classroom by making eye contact, speaking clearly and normally, not shouting. They can also Arrange seats in a horseshoe or circle and reduce back-lighting concerns. Teachers should

always give the DHH students a moment to identify who is speaking. Another accommodation for kids who are DHH is the use of a sign language interpreter during class. Along with lip-reading and interpreters, students may use technology like hearing aids, assistive listening devices, and captioning or transcription. With or without this technology, teachers can also make a variety of accommodations to help these students learn in the classroom. In many cases, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will detail the adaptations needed.

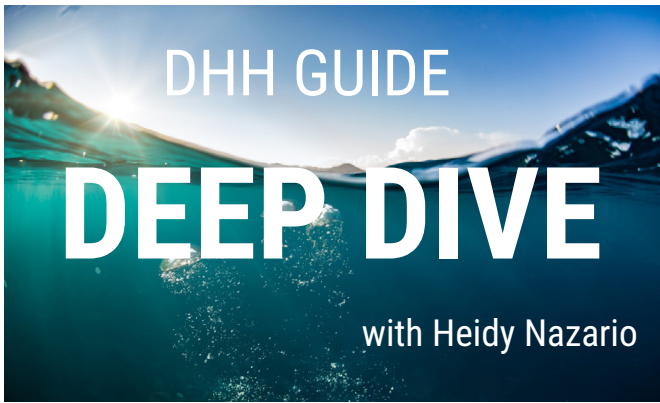
One of the major drawbacks for children who are DHH is that they can suffer socially. Teachers can help open a better, brighter world for them by encouraging other students to learn how to best interact with their DHH peer like these:

- Teach the class basics signs and fingerspelling.
- Help them learn the best ways to talk to a lip-reader.
- Seek out playground games that don't involve hearing.
- Pair a child who is DHH with a classmate who can assist them as needed.

Above all, don't let a student who is DHH feel isolated and avoid singling them out whenever you can. They just want to be "normal" kids, so help them feel that way when you're able.

This article is taken in part from How to Help Students Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing Succeed in School written by Jill Stakke a Contributing Editor with We Are Teachers. Copyright@2021. All rights reserved.





Going back to school was a joyful time for me. It meant seeing my friends for longer periods and having pizza for lunch when we didn't want to eat in the lunchroom. Everything seemed "normal" until I began noticing I was a little different than my friends. By sophomore year I could no longer engage in conversations and had to find the right spot to sit in the classroom so I could hear the teacher. I thought maybe I was distracted, but it seemed to happen a lot. One day while talking with my friends, one of them asked me to lower my voice since I was speaking loudly. This didn't make sense to me—wasn't I speaking at a considerable volume? That was the day I decided to learn more about my family's history with hearing difference. After a visit to the audiologist, I learned I had a genetic and progressive hearing loss, and that one day I would be profoundly deaf.

Learning I had a hearing difference helped me understand why I struggled in social events or listening to the teacher when she spoke and faced the chalkboard. I also understood why I couldn't hear some female voices—I always thought they were speaking too low! This was the beginning of a self-search on what I can do to fit into the world as a person who was different than most people in my environment. It took a while, but I found my identity and learned how to explain my communication preferences. It even felt cool to be different! I loved getting a bright color for my hearing aids and wearing my hair in a ponytail for all the curious people wondering what was in my ear. I was fascinated by American Sign Language and had a hunger for more exposure to a community that felt

more "normal" to me. Having the support of my family, and learning what resources and tools were available for me, helped me discover my place in the world. Going back to school became, once again, a happy place.

Heidy Nazario - DHH Guide Supervisor



Heidy has a genetic and profound hearing loss detected at age 15 and identifies as Deaf. Her father's family has more than 10 people with hearing differences and most use hearing devices. She communicates with spoken English and spoken Spanish, and is learning American Sign Language. Heidy wore hearing aids from detection until age 30 when she got a cochlear implant.

Roots and Wings
by Denis Waitley

"If I had two wishes, I know what they would be, I'd wish for Roots to cling to, and Wings to set me free; Roots of inner values, like rings within a tree, and Wings of independence to seek my destiny. Don't make my life too easy, it's better if I try, and fail and get back up myself, so I can learn to fly. If I had two wishes, and two were all I had, and they could just be granted, by my Mom and Dad; I wouldn't ask for money or any store-bought things. The greatest gifts I'd ask for are simply Roots and Wings."

MNH&V
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITY

MNHV Parent Guide for the Northeast
African Communities

The MNHV NE African Communities Parent Guide position offers 10 flexible hours a week, some evenings and weekends, and a family-friendly work environment. MNHV Parent Guides receive specific training and team support. Parent Guides are responsible for the initial and follow-up connections critical to families who have a newly identified child who is DHH. They work closely with the MNHV team and learn the best way to support our families. They organize and lead family events, represent MNHV in the

“Protecting OUR Children.”

Hello from Northeastern Minnesota. I have been with Minnesota Hands and Voices for 10 years. As parents, we are always looking for the balance between keeping our children safe and helping them to gradually gain more independence. We want to protect them in the present and prepare them for their future. For the past four years I have been a part of the OUR program which was developed by the National Hands and Voices. OUR stands for Observe, Understand, and Respond. It asks us to think about things that may make some feel uncomfortable, but to do so benefits our children. Abuse, neglect, and bullying are unpleasant topics for many reasons. Once we do think about them, it is very difficult to know where to begin taking steps for prevention. That is why the OUR program was developed. To help families access information and to take preventive actions. So where do you start? First, thank you for reading this far! That is actually a good first step. That means you want to learn more, and you are open to thinking about this. There are specific skills, knowledge, and practices that can keep children safer. These are especially important for children who are DHH because of communication barriers or gaps of understanding certain situations.

When I was growing up we were taught about “red light vs green light touches.” This approach may still be good especially for children with emerging communication. The red light represents “discomfort or stop,” and is not associated with “bad or blame.” Later, the term “stranger danger” began being regularly used. This however did not teach children what to do if the dangerous person was someone they knew.

“Observe, Understand, and Respond”

The Kidpower® Put Safety First Commitment helps us to overcome the uncomfortable feelings that can get in the way of advocating for our kids: “I WILL put the safety and well being of myself and others ahead of ANYONE’s embarrassment, inconvenience or offense – including my own.”

The Kidpower® Protection Promise is a clear message to remember for ourselves and to communicate to our kids through our actions, that, no matter what, their safety is important to us. It goes like this: “YOU are very important to me. If you have a safety problem, I want to know – even if I seem too busy, even if someone we care about will be upset, even if it is embarrassing, even if you promised not to tell, and even if you made a mistake. Please tell me and I will do everything in my power to help you.”



If you ever suspect that a child is being maltreated you can call 1-800-4-A-CHILD to confidentiality talk to a counselor. They can help you make an effective action plan.

Did you know that you can incorporate specific safety goals on your child’s IEP or IFSP? These can help keep your children safe and help them learn to advocate. One goal for a younger child might include “the child will indicate, speak, or sign NO when feeling uncomfortable a specific number of times.” A goal for an older child might include “given several scenarios the child will be able to identify healthy and unhealthy relationship elements a specific number of times.”

The Hands and Voices OUR project <https://handsandvoices.org/resources/OUR/index.htm>

Marie Pank - NE Parent Guide

community, and participate in family support activities. Your personal experience of the challenges and joys of parenting a child who is dhh, helps support other parents who are just starting their journey. Candidate for this position must be fluent in Somali. To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please contact

Elena Miranda
Lead Cultural Parent Guide
elena.miranda@lssmn.org
651.265.2383

..... CONTACT

-  651.265.2435
-  mnhv@lssmn.org
-  mnhandandvoices.org
-  @MNHandsandVoices
-  @mnhandsandvoices

**IN
YOUR
CORNER**
with Marie Pank

MNH&V TRANSITION TALK with PACER.org

Preparing for Transition from Early Intervention to an Individualized Education Plan

Celebrate Change

Your child's third birthday is six months away, and you have been told that your family will be doing "transition planning" soon because the early intervention program ends at age three. This means your child may be moving from an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Moving from "Family Focus" to a "Child Focus"

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all children who qualify may receive special education services. Up to age 3, children are covered by Part C of IDEA. Part C focuses on helping the family meet the developmental needs of their child, such as learning to sit up, walk, or talk. These services are called "early intervention services." Typically provided in natural environments, such as the child's home or child-care setting, these services and outcomes for the child and family are defined in an IFSP.

At age 3, supports and services change as eligible children move from Part C to Part B of IDEA. Preschool services are covered in Section 619 of Part B; services that your child is eligible for from kindergarten until high school graduation or age 21 are addressed in the rest of Part B. The IFSP is replaced by an IEP. This important document contains goals and objectives to address the child's unique needs as he or she learns the skills needed to prepare for kindergarten. As much as possible, Part B services are to be provided in the least restrictive environment. That means that your child should be alongside typically developing peers in settings such as preschool, child care, or Head Start programs if the team agrees this is the appropriate setting. In addition, services and supports change as your child moves from Part C to Part B. Members of the team who helped you develop the outcomes specified in the IFSP may be different from those who will help to develop your child's IEP. Instead of working with a service coordinator, you will work with an IEP case manager.

Knowing What to Expect at a Transition Meeting

At least three months before your child's third birthday, your education team will call one or more transition meetings to discuss your child's needs and early childhood special education program options. This meeting could

be combined with a regularly scheduled IFSP meeting. You and the team will address a variety of topics, such as goals, timelines, and team members' responsibilities; your concerns; the need for any further evaluations to determine eligibility for Part B preschool services; and your special education due process legal rights. In addition, **you may want to discuss:**

- Differences between early intervention and special education preschool services.
- Options for where your child may receive early childhood special education services, such as community preschool, child care, Head Start, or pre-kindergarten.
- Information such as student-to-adult ratio, length of day, and family involvement.
- How special education services will be provided in the preschool program you select.
- Development of a new IEP for special education services or an Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) if your child lives in Minnesota and also receives county or health services.
- Ways to help professionals understand the unique strengths and needs of your child.
- Transportation to the new program.
- Strategies to make the process a positive one for your child.

Many decisions are made during the transition meetings. Feel free to ask questions then or anytime during the year. You might, for example, want to know:

- When will my child make the transition to a new program?
- Who will arrange for me to visit the proposed program?
- Who is my contact person if I have other questions?

If the team determines that your child does not qualify for special education services, the team members can provide you with information regarding other community-based services that may be available for you and your child. Making transition decisions with your team is just the first step. The next step is to prepare your family and child for the new teachers, children, schedules, routines, classroom activities, and expectations.

To help make the transition easier, try these tips:

- Plan ahead. Allow enough time to make decisions.
- Talk with other families about what the process was like.
- Learn how to advocate for your child.
- Talk to your child about going to a new program and visit that setting together.
- Read books about going to preschool.
- Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children.
- Encourage your child to communicate with others and ask for help when needed.

Regreso a Clases

¿Están listos para iniciar el año escolar?

Deseamos que hayan tenido un maravilloso verano lleno de diversión, aprendizaje y tiempo para disfrutarlo en familia. El inicio del nuevo ciclo escolar está a la vuelta de la esquina, ¿están listos? Esta es una etapa llena de muchas actividades para los padres, hay que prepararse para que los niños lleguen con buena energía al salón de clases, alimentarlos adecuadamente, que tengan un sueño y descanso reparador, pero ¿qué más hay que considerar en este regreso a clases?

- ü Útiles escolares
- ü Mochila
- ü Lonchera
- ü Zapatos
- ü Ropa
- ü Audiometría
- ü Chequeo de la vista
- ü Cita pediátrica para chequeo regular
- ü IEP o 504 Plan
- ü Contactos importantes (transportación, enfermera, trabajadora social, etc.)



Con nuestros niños con diferencias de audición hay que tomar en cuenta otros aspectos, como llevarlos a su revisión de audiología y asegurarnos que su tecnología (si usan alguna, Aparatos Auditivos, Implantes Cocleares, etc.) este funcionando correctamente, hacerles su chequeo de la vista y asegurase que ven bien, llevarlos a su revisión pediátrica para ver que están saludables, sin dejar de lado que los servicios escolares estén listos para su niño, sea este el IEP (Plan Individualizado de Enseñanza por sus siglas en Ingles) o Plan 504, o cualquiera que sean los servicios para los que su niño califica.

Este listo para reunirse con la enfermera de la escuela si su niño requiere ser medicando en horario escolar, tenga los formularios firmados y los medicamentos listos para ser entregados.

Y claro está, no menos importante, la salud emocional de su niño; platicar con ellos y explicarles si habrá una nueva escuela, nuevos compañeros de clases, nueva maestra, tal vez nueva rutina, etc. Déjele saber a niño saber que cambios enfrentará y que se espera de ellos acorde a su edad.

Preparar a nuestros niños para una vida adulta independiente, feliz y exitosa no solo se refiere a la preparación académica, sino también a la enseñanza en casa; con cosas básicas como ordenar sus juguetes, poner la basura en el bote, todo acorde con la edad de nuestros niños. Ninguna enseñanza de vida estará de más.

No olvide que en Manos y Voces de MM nuestros Padres Guías tienen amplia experiencia criando a sus propios niños con diferencias auditivas, así que no dude en contactarnos con cualquier duda que usted tenga.

Elena Miranda Elena.Miranda@lssmn.org
651.265.2383

LATINO CULTURES

with Elena Miranda

Welcome to MN Hands & Voices

Kindra Christensen is a Parent Guide for the southwest region and has been with MNHV since January 2022. She is dedicated to the mission of MNHV and is passionate about supporting families through their journey.

She lives in Brown County with her husband and four children. Her second child Adelyn has unilateral, profound hearing loss. Kindra and her family enjoy camping, exploring state parks and spending time in the garden during the summer.

Kindra volunteers her time giving back to the community. She helps lead a local Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group that support many community outreach programs. She is committed to ongoing training.

Contact Kindra at kindra.christensen@lssmn.org or 612.468.7241



DEAF EXPERIENCE

with Zekeriah & Ashley

Hello, everyone! We are Zekeriah (Zek, age 5) and mom, Ashley. We also have a 4-year-old black lab named Nala. We enjoy living out in the countryside in southern Minnesota where we can play in our big backyard.

This is a little bit about Zekeriah's journey. Zekeriah did not pass his newborn hearing screening and we were put through a whirlwind of unnecessary appointments between Faribault, Owatonna, Mankato and Rochester hospitals. Finally at 20 months old, I had an honest audiologist tell me that Zekeriah was unable to hear with his hearing aids, and a cochlear implant (CI) would have a 10% chance of working. Even with this honest opinion, we were still pushed by her and other doctors as well as family to go through with trying the CI as I was told "you are a hearing parent - your child will learn best if he can hear" and "your child will amount to nothing if he doesn't get the cochlear implant." It was Dawn Hill who is the Toddler Teacher at MSAD, at our home visit took the time to talk about what we were going through, providing support for my decision to take Zekeriah's hearing aids off and quit the appointments.

Before getting in touch with Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) at 6 months old, Zek underwent an MRI and spinal tap because he was not meeting his milestones. We met with a top neurologist from Mayo Clinic in Rochester who diagnosed Zekeriah. She told me that "in my years of being a Neurologist, I do not give this diagnosis lightly. I have never seen a patient with this diagnosis walk by the time he is 3 and will most likely be in a wheelchair with a feeding tube."

I called many different hearing schools to see what they could offer with the Help Me Grow program and what school would look like when preschool age came around. It was important to me to find a school and a support team that would do everything to help Zekeriah succeed to the best of his ability. We started to look at schools that had deaf programs and deaf schools in the cities. We came to our hometown of Faribault and met with Anne Grace Donatucci at MSAD. It was here that for the first time, we weren't told "Zek wouldn't be a good fit here". When touring MSAD, it didn't feel like we were getting those looks of judgement. When we showed up to MSAD after enrolling, we were greeted by friendly staff introducing themselves to us. They were excited to share if they were a teacher, an interpreter,

or another support staff at the school.

During that first visit, Zek was welcomed in as if he was already a student! Have we had bumps in the road at MSAD? Yes! One of my very first concerns was accessibility - would Zekeriah be able to continue at MSAD if his future was going to have him bound to a wheelchair? I brought those concerns up right away. I continued my search even after Zekeriah started at MSAD. I looked into homeschooling and other programs and schools outside of Minnesota. In the end the best option for Zekeriah was MSAD and to advocate for his needs right here.

Change is never immediate but over the past four years we have brought concerns up and we have seen the start of needed change occur. Even though some of our initial concerns will no longer affect Zekeriah's ability for access we know that it will help other students who do need that accessibility. We are grateful for the efforts in getting them started. MSAD is where Zekeriah is loved and embraced for who he is by administration, staff, and his peers. He is able to be with his classmates the whole day which is very important to me. He receives his services in the classroom instead of being pulled out which no other hearing or deaf school could make possible.

If you know Zekeriah, you know that he is NOT in a wheelchair and does NOT use a feeding tube. He is my little miracle that has worked so hard and at 3 1/2 years old he started walking!

We enjoy going to Faribault Family Aquatic Center during the summer and love seeing our friends that happen to be there as well! We enjoy walks at River Bend Nature Center and we recently started rock climbing together. We enjoy bumping into MSAD staff and families out in the community when Zek is out DoorDashing with me to make some fun money. I think he has more money in his bank than I do now :) haha. It's always nice to see friends and staff at MNHV events as well!

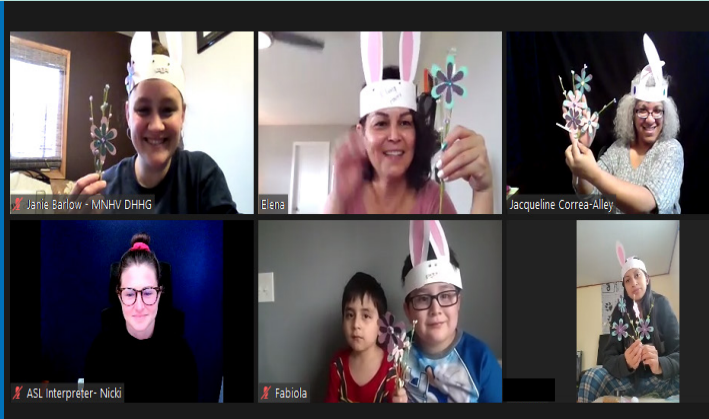
I love that MSAD has students go on field trips or have visitors to their classrooms from local places such as Southern Heights Dental, and the police and fire departments. We have run into staff from each of these places that recognize Zek and they will talk to me and tell me that they recognize him from a field trip.



..... Earth Day



.. Reading, Set, GO! ..



.. Building Bee Homes ..



.. Self Care w/ART! ..



Northfield Family Picnic

Splish Splash BASH! at Riverside Park in Saint Cloud

MNHV EVENTS STATEWIDE



ON-LINE	IN-PERSON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earth Day • Reading, Set, GO! • Building Bee Homes • Self Care with ART! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northfield Family Picnic • Splish, Splash, BASH!
<p>THANK YOU for helping make these events possible! DJ Enterprise - Wadena, MN Saint Cloud Area Sertoma Club - Saint Cloud MN</p>	

Find a current list of MNHV Family Events online, for more information and registration visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-amp-voices-at-lss-9882223703>



HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA

709 University Avenue West
Saint Paul, MN 55104

FOCUS
NEWSLETTER

FOCUS | Supporting families with children who are Deaf & Hard of Hearing

July 2022

HANDS & VOICES
LEAGUE OF HEROES
SUPERPOWERS WITHIN™

*Calling all the Superheroes in the MNH&V Community!
Dust off your superhero costume or come as you are to join our Hands & Voices' League of Heroes!*

HANDS & VOICES
MINNESOTA

IN PERSON FAMILY EVENT

FREE FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

2022 Annual • Minnesota Hands & Voices • Metro

DATE: Thursday, August 4th

TIME: 5:00-8:30 p.m. (rain or shine)

WHERE: Como Park Midway Pavilion 1199 Midway Parkway, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55018

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-mn-hands-voices-annual-metro-picnic-tickets-275272376087>