

Working With Students Who Are Late-Deafened

Late-deafness means deafness that happened postlingually, any time after the development of speech and language in a person who has identified with hearing society through schooling, social connections, etc. Students who are late-deafened cannot understand speech without visual aids such as speechreading, sign language, and captioning (although amplification of residual hearing may help with speechreading). These students may have lost their hearing suddenly or gradually, but share the common experience of having been raised in a hearing world and having become deaf rather than having been born deaf. Here are some suggestions that will help teachers work more effectively with this population.

1. Learn the basics of speech-to-text services (where auditory information is translated into text) and other communication options. Students who are late-deafened tend to rely on written English as their primary mode of communication. Speech-to-text services provide instant information and transcripts can help the student review the material at a later time. The student may not know about this service or other similar options.
 2. Learn the basics of using interpreters and those interpreting methods that may be used by the student (Sign Language Transliteration, Oral Transliteration, American Sign Language [ASL], and Cued Speech Transliteration). Students who are late-deafened use varied modes of communication, depending on the age of onset of hearing loss and cultural background. Some students who are late-deafened know ASL or use signed English as their preferred mode of communication.
- You may want to talk with the interpreter before or after class to learn more about interpreting and any possible classroom issues related to the type of communication being used.
3. Learn the basics of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, Section 504. These are laws that affect students with hearing loss in schools.
 4. Ask another student in the class to help with notetaking. Because some lectures can be lengthy, it may help to have another student summarize items and take notes, instead of having to read what may be very lengthy pages of text from transcripts later on. Some colleges will pay students who do notetaking; check with the Disability Services department at your school.
 5. Be aware of environmental issues, such as not standing in front of a window. Standing in front of a light source makes it difficult to speechread, pick up visual cues, etc. Be aware of the student and try to face him/her when speaking, without distractions near the face or mouth.
 6. Repeat questions and answers if at all possible.
 7. Remember that English is the primary language of the student. Use written English whenever possible.
 8. Regulate cross-talk. Ask students to raise their hands so that the student who is late-deafened is always aware of who is speaking.

9. Identify speakers so that the student knows who is speaking. This is also helpful for the speech-to-text service person, if one is in the classroom.
10. Provide access for out-of-classroom activities such as internships, group meetings, etc. If a student who is late-deafened needs to meet with a group, make sure he/she will have some way of knowing what the meeting is about...either through captioning, an interpreter, or other creative options.
11. Look directly at the student when speaking. Try not to speak while writing on the blackboard or with your head down or your back facing the student.
12. Enunciate clearly and try to speak at a normal pace. Speechreading is more difficult when words are greatly exaggerated or mumbled.
13. Provide visual aids whenever possible. Overheads or notes on the board are very helpful.
14. If possible, allow time after class for the student to ask questions privately. Sometimes it is easier to ask questions privately, especially if the student is not sure of some things and does not want to take up class time seeking clarification.
15. Take advantage of the Disability Services coordinator at your school or investigate other resources, such as the Association of Late-Deafened Adults, Inc. (ALDA).

For more information on how to contact professionals in the field of educating students who are late-deafened, as well as other topics covered by the PEPNet Tipsheet series, visit PEPNet's Web site at <http://www.pepnet.org>

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