

Children with Hearing Loss Need an Educational Audiologist on their Education Team

by Kym Meyer, Educational Audiologist

How do students with hearing loss get the support that they need to understand in a typical, noisy classroom?

Make sure you include an educational audiologist on the educational team!

Many children with hearing loss attend public schools. These are children who wear hearing aids, cochlear implants, may only be deaf in one ear, or have an auditory processing disorder. Hearing loss is a “low incidence” disability, so there aren’t many of these students in each school. Most regular and special education teachers have never had training in hearing loss.

How do students with hearing loss get the support they need to understand in a typical, noisy classroom?

Educational Audiology is a “Related Service” under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

However, educational audiology services can look drastically different between states or even between school districts in the same state. Some school buildings actually have audiology booths to test children’s hearing. Other districts have never heard of educational audiology and, as a result, do not provide this service.

What Does an Educational Audiologist (EdAud) Do?

An educational audiologist (EdAud):

- supports students with hearing loss
- advises teachers on how to accommodate their students’ hearing loss in the classroom
- identifies acoustical modifications for the classroom
- makes sure that equipment, needed to access the curriculum, consistently works

IDEA requires that the equipment is functioning every day. Equipment includes the child’s personal hearing aids or cochlear implants, as well as school provided **H**earing **A**ssistance **T**echnology (HAT). We previously knew HAT as FM systems or auditory trainers.

An EdAud selects the appropriate HAT, fits it on the student, and make sure that the school-owned equipment will not cause additional hearing loss.

Who Should Select and Fit Hearing Assistance Technology (HAT)?

Professionals who are not EdAuds should not select or fit HAT. This may put the school district in a precarious legal position.

Teachers of the deaf (TODs) or speech-language pathologists (SLPs) often fit HAT equipment, because they are asked to by their school administrators. TODs/SLPs are an essential part of the hearing loss team. However, it is not within these professionals’ scope of practice to fit HAT on children with hearing loss.

The [Council on Education of the Deaf](#) and the Council for Exceptional Children establish preparation for

TODs.

The [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association](#) determines the scope of practice for SLPs.

These professionals, by their certification or licensure, are not trained/permitted to fit HAT equipment. Unfortunately, school administrators (who do not understand the different professional roles) tell many TODs and SLPs to fit the HAT equipment.

Caution! What can happen when non-audiology school personnel fit HAT?

Here are a few real life examples we have come across in the schools:

...the HAT turned a child's hearing aids off every time the SLP attached it. The child heard nothing while he was at school and was in danger of failing.

...teachers wore a HAT microphone, but did not realize the child needed HAT receivers on their hearing aids. Without receivers, the child did not have access to the curriculum.

...hearing teachers in classrooms mixed up the microphones and receivers for three children for six weeks during the school year.

...the school decided to use a speaker system for a student with a very significant hearing loss. This benefitted all the students in the room, except the child with hearing loss.

Children with hearing loss and the technology they need is the EdAud's expertise.

Hearing aid technology is changing regularly and it's the job of the EdAud to be current on technology and research that will allow a student with hearing loss to access the curriculum.

If your child has a hearing loss and is on an IEP, they should have access to an EdAud.

To make sure this service happens, write educational audiology into your child's IEP, just as any other related service.

My child with hearing loss is on a 504 plan...can she still access an EdAud?

Yes! A 504 indicates that your child needs accommodations to access the curriculum. Accommodations for a student with hearing loss can include:

- how the teacher presents information
- how they speak to the class so your child can understand them
- repeating the other students' comments
- addressing classroom acoustics
- closed captioning on videos
- and, very likely, a HAT

EdAuds specialize in providing this access and should be part of your child's 504 team.

My School District Has Never Heard of an EdAud. They Say They Can't Find One. What Can I Do?

EdAuds can be an employee of the school district, or may be an outside consultant. Outside EdAud

consultants may come from schools for the deaf, hospitals, university audiology training programs, or even private practice audiologists.

EdAuds must be licensed audiologists in the state where they work. Some states also require teacher certification to work in the schools.

Has your school district searched, but says they can't find an EdAud to provide services? **Try this.**

1. Contact the [Educational Audiology Association](#) to determine if there is one in your area.
2. Connect with other local families of children with hearing loss and find out if their children have access to an EdAud in their school district.
3. Check to see if your district can contract with the other school district to "borrow" their EdAud.
4. Call your state Commission of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing to ask if they have any resources.
5. Call a local university that trains audiologists to see if they can provide EdAud services.
6. Ask your child's clinical audiologist (the one that does her annual hearing tests or fixes her hearing aids) to provide this service.

If the school district has indicated that they can't find an EdAud, search for one yourself and don't give up. It doesn't always work out perfectly, but your child's education is worth pursuing.

What are the Differences between an Educational Audiologist and Teacher of the Deaf?

For the answer to this question, read [Separating the Roles of Teachers of the Deaf and Educational Audiologists](#).

<http://www.raisingandeducatingdeafchildren.org/2017/04/03/separating-the-roles-of-teachers-of-the-deaf-and-educational-audiologists/>

This article identifies a number of position statements and resource documents written by the [Educational Audiology Association \(EAA\)](#) and the [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#). These publications can help your district understand their responsibility to provide an EdAud on your child's team.

Google the titles of the documents listed in the post and you will have access to them. You may need to make copies for your school team.

Meet the Author

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