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From Clinic to Classroom: Functional Approaches to Working with Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss Part 2, in partnership with Educational Audiology Association

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Kate Jablonski, AuD is the Educational Audiologist for the Lake Washington School District in Washington State. She graduated from Western Washington University with a Masters in Audiology and earned her AuD from AT Still University. Professional experiences include working in school districts, sales for a major hearing aid manufacturer and was a founding member of Wave Education Partners, and educational consulting group. She is the state representative for Washington for Educational Audiology Association (EAA) and serves on several committees. She volunteers to support networking, online collaboration and monthly meetings for Educational Audiologists in the state of Washington.

Disclosures

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial: Kate Jablonski is an employee of the Lake Washington School District in Washington State. In lieu of an honorarium, a donation has been made to the Educational Audiology Association on behalf of the presenter. Non-financial: Kate Jablonski has no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose.
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Thank you

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Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- List three ways unilateral hearing loss adversely impacts a student in an educational environment.
- List and describe the “three prongs” that must be met for special education eligibility and the differences between the two possible support program options.
- List at least three examples of assistive listening technology options and/or configurations commonly used in public school settings and three accommodations supportive of students with unilateral hearing loss.

Unilateral Hearing Loss and Educational Considerations

Patients with UHL

- Areas of Concern:
 - Speech perception (Bess et al., 1986; Ruscetta et al., 2005)
 - In Quiet
 - In Background Noise
 - Localization ability (Bess et al., 1986; Humes et al., 1980; Priwin et al., 2007)
 - Auditory fatigue (Adams et al., 2023; Bakkum et al., 2023; Sindhar et al., 2021)

What the research shows...

- ✓ Issues with failing/repeating grades (Bess & Tharpe, 1984, 1986)
- ✓ Academic/behavioral concerns (Brookhouser et al, 1991; English & Church, 1999)
 - 59% of kiddos with UHL had academic or behavioral problems
 - 35% of children with UHL will fail at least one grade
 - Additional 15-60% will need additional resources in school
- ✓ Language Development concerns (Borg, 2002; Lieu, 2004, 2010, 2012, 2013)
- ✓ Social-Emotional concerns (Bess et al., 1998; Ong et al., 2023)

What we see in school...

Listening in noise challenges

- Students work in small discussion groups within a classroom or individually during unstructured work time
- Poorer listening in noise skills adversely impact the ability to access peer discussion and overhear conversations around them (incidental learning)

Localizing sound challenges

- Teacher or student lead discussions – often happening with rapid fire questions and responses
- Student has issues locating the speaker in the room for visual cues, are too far away to hear or peer is soft spoken. Teacher may or may not repeat or rephrase important information based on student response.

Auditory Fatigue

- Parents and staff may report that they have concerns regarding the student's attention
- Listening for learning requires a high level of cognitive attention and energy. Listening and decoding auditory information throughout the school day can lead to fatigue (faster than their peers with intact hearing) and adversely impact attention and participation.

Your student referral for
today is...

Its Tuesday morning and you get an email from your colleague. They have attached a report from a clinic regarding a student that has been referred to the guidance team...

1. Scooby's Audiogram shows a **moderately-severe hearing loss in his right ear** and **normal hearing in the left ear**. He is 5 years old and in Kindergarten. A release of information form (ROI) is attached and lists the clinic and school.
2. Clinical Audiologist reports that the student has a history of CMV and did not pass their newborn hearing screening
3. Clinical Audiology recommendations include
 - Visual supports for auditory information
 - Seat Scooby away from any sound sources, such as HVAC systems or doorways to other classrooms.
 - In addition, during small group times, seat his group in a quiet place in the classroom.
 - He should be seated to the right side and front of the classroom, to ensure his better (left) ear faces his peers
 - Scooby should have access to a personal FM/DM system that goes directly to his hearing aid. Testing today demonstrated benefit with this setup for hearing assistive technology.

The Evaluation



The student must be evaluated to determine eligibility for services

- Determines if the student has a disability that adversely impacts their education and requires specially designed instruction (SDI) with accommodations or if their needs can be met with accommodations only
- Performed by a team of professionals which may include the following: School Psychologist, SLP, Educational Audiologist, Teacher of the Deaf (TOD), OT/PT, school nurse, general education teacher, special education teacher and includes input from the family and/or student
- Evaluations are done every **three years** to determine a student's eligibility status and examine their qualifying category; although, an evaluation can be performed at any time by request or if new information becomes available

The role of the Educational Audiologist in the evaluation team

- Helps the team understand the impact of any medical diagnosis that might have on cognition, balance, or fine or gross motor implications.
- Assess the student to determine the adverse impact of the hearing loss on audibility access in a variety of settings, function within the classroom (listening fatigue, self advocacy skills) and social impact
- Present clinical documentation of a disability, speak to the adverse impact of the disability and work with the team to establish if specially designed instruction is needed in any area assessed

Evaluation and counseling tools used in Educational Audiology

- **The Audiogram: speech and speech in noise testing is really helpful!**
- Children's Auditory Performance Scale (CHAPS)
- Children's Home Inventory for Listening Difficulties (CHILD)
- Compass Test of Auditory Discrimination*
- Vanderbilt Fatigue Scale (VFS)*
- Functional Listening Evaluation
- Hearing Itinerant Services Rubric*
- Placement and Readiness Checklist (PARC)
- Listening Inventory for Education (LIFE)
- Mr Potato Head Task
- Self Assessment for Communication-Adolescent (SAC-A)
- Student Need for an Interpreter
- UWO Plural test
- Screening Instrument for Targeting Educational Risk (SIFTER)
- Speech Intelligibility Index (SII) Count the Dots Audiogram

Accommodations

- The evaluation helps guide the team to accommodations that will best meet the needs of the student based on clinical findings and student, family and staff reported needs/function
- A Functional Listening Evaluation can establish the impact of the student's educational setting on access and what mode works best for the student (auditory/visual, auditory only, with and without assistive listening technology)
- Surveys can help determine what common educational settings/situations are difficult and what accommodations can be used to help

Educational Impact Statement

THE STUDENT has an educationally significant hearing loss that adversely impacts **THEIR** ability to access and process auditory information in a variety of educational settings, communicate ideas, demonstrate knowledge and interact socially with peers and adults. Students with hearing loss and personal amplification are adversely impacted by difficult listening situations that include background noise, distance from speaker and environmental acoustics. Listening for learning requires a high level of cognitive attention and energy. Listening and decoding auditory information throughout the school day can lead to fatigue (faster than their peers with intact hearing) and adversely impact attention and participation.

The Evaluation meeting and the Evaluation Team decision – Examining two possible outcomes

To be eligible for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) the student must:

- (1) have a disability,
- (2) that adversely impacts their education, and
- (3) requires specially designed instruction

If the team answered **YES** to **ALL THREE** of the above, then the student qualifies for an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

- Document detailing present level of performance, goals for specially designed instruction and accommodations
- Goals as functional as possible (ie related to classroom performance and classroom expectations)
- Progress reports as often as parents are informed of the progress of children without disabilities and include general education teachers in meetings
- The IEP is reviewed **every year** but can be revised by request at any time
- Determines **placement** for a student based up **least restrictive environment**

To be eligible for a 504 plan, a student must

- (1) have a disability,
- (2) that adversely impacts their education

If the team determined that the student **DOES NOT demonstrate a need for specially designed instruction (and therefore doesn't need an IEP)**, then the student qualifies for a **504 PLAN**

Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504

- Applies to all ages in all environments
- Section 504 prohibitions against discrimination apply to service availability, **accessibility**, delivery, employment, and the administrative activities and responsibilities of organizations receiving Federal financial assistance ([HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov))
- Title II: **schools are required to ensure that communication for students who are deaf and hard of hearing “are as effective as communication for others”** [ADA Title II 28 C.F.R. 35.160 (a)(1)] **through the provision of appropriate aids and services “affording an equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as that provided to others”** [ADA Title II 28 C.F.R. 35.130 (b)(1)(iii)] and **“to participate in and enjoy the benefits of the district’s services, programs, and activities”** (DOJ-DOE p14). These requirements apply to all school-related communications for children ages 3 through high school in public schools, including charter and magnet schools.

Scenario one for our student: IEP

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

- The student qualified for help in Reading and Communication

Least Restrict Environment

- The student is primarily in general education with pull out services for reading from the Special Education Teacher and Communication support from the Speech Pathologist

Accommodations

- Present auditory information with visual reinforcements
- Preferential seating away from noise and with the better ear (LEFT) facing the class
- Option for small group work outside classroom
- Teacher will repeat/rephrase student comments during group discussion
- Student will have option to take “listening breaks”
- Assistive Listening Technology: FM/DM system

Scenario two for our student: 504

A 504 plan documents accommodations for the student to support auditory access. Our student had the following hearing accommodations based on recommendations from the Clinical and Educational Audiologist and findings from the assessment team:

- Present auditory information with visual reinforcements
- Preferential seating away from noise and with the better ear (LEFT) facing the class
- Option for small group work outside classroom
- Teacher will repeat/rephrase student comments during group discussion
- Student will have option to take “listening breaks”
- Assistive Listening Technology: FM/DM system

Accommodations should be reviewed at least annually as a student's needs will change over time

Assistive listening device (ALD) options for UHL

The Educational Audiologist determines the best configuration of ALD to meet student's needs based on:

- The information on challenging/fatiguing listening situations from the evaluation
- Where the student spends the majority of their time
- Form of personal amplification fit (Hearing Aid, BAHA, Cochlear Implant) – collaborate with your Clinical Audiologist!
- How the student engages ALD can change throughout the day based on need, even using more than one simultaneously (a DM system and Sound Field system)

Our ALD plan for our student (under IEP or 504):

- The Clinical Audiologist determined that the student was a hearing aid candidate
- The Clinical Audiologist did testing that showed a significant improvement in understanding speech in noise with a hearing aid and DM system
- The Educational Audiologist determined that the student struggled in class when the teacher was not facing them, during small group work and large class discussions
- The recommendation was made to fit the student with a DM system compatible with their hearing aid and also use the classroom sound field system pass around microphone as needed

Summary

- UHL can adversely impact a student's ability to access auditory information in a variety of educational settings
- A student with UHL should be evaluated by a team of experts that includes an Educational Audiologist to best determine the impact of the hearing loss and the implications for access and academic progress
- Support for students can be provided as a part of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan based on the evaluation team's findings and recommendations
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) is an important accommodation to support auditory access in a variety of adverse listening situations and are tailored to be compatible with a student's personal amplification
- Accommodations for IEPs and 504s should be based on demonstrated needs and reviewed as the student's needs will change over time

Thank you!

Kate Jablonski, AuD

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