SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO ARE HARD OF HEARING
Promoting a Positive Educational Experience

There are various ways to define hard of hearing. As you plan for each student, keep in mind the following:

- You may see hearing level measurements from a hearing test that correspond with describing a student as hard of hearing (e.g., mild, moderate). However, these levels do not tell you about a student’s ability to listen and understand.

- The most common definition of hard of hearing is functional, an individual who relies on and uses listening and spoken language for communication (regardless of measured hearing level).

- Hard of hearing individuals may identify themselves in different ways. Some may identify as hard of hearing, others as Deaf, and still others may choose not to identify themselves related to their hearing abilities.

Keep in mind that you may observe challenges in the following areas, suggesting that the student may need support:

- Language and speech (e.g., reduced vocabulary or missing tenses/plurals/contractions due to not hearing certain sounds)

- Auditory load (e.g., struggling to understand from the brain doing double duty in trying to hear, understand, and quickly respond)

- Socialization and inclusion (e.g., becoming stressed from missing information and then withdrawing from both academic and social interactions)

- Access to the curriculum (e.g., falling behind from missing key information shared while the teacher faces the board or walks around the classroom)

Note: If other students display similar “red flags,” consider a referral for a hearing screening.
**TIP 3**

*Do not overestimate what a student can hear and understand . . . or underestimate the level of support a student may need.*

Regardless of a student’s hearing levels, it is important to think about the following planning considerations:

- **Don’t overlook a student’s need for an IEP or 504 plan because the student “appears to hear.”** Ensure the student has the accommodations and services to effectively access and participate in the school environment.
- **Get everyone on board to facilitate access to “incidental” information** that is shared informally throughout the school day (e.g., announcements, school news, social activities, schedule changes).
- **Keep in mind that the planning needs of a student with a cochlear implant** may be similar to a student who is hard of hearing.
- **Closely monitor students who have hearing in only one ear (unilateral hearing)** to determine the need for possible support.

**Include strategies that can make a difference in helping a hard of hearing student access the educational environment, such as:**

- **Promote optimal listening accessibility** through daily monitoring of hearing aids and cochlear implants, modification of classroom acoustics, and use of assistive listening technologies (e.g., FM systems).
- **Promote student engagement, involvement, and interaction:**
  - Provide flexible seating opportunities (e.g., chairs/desks in “u” shape)
  - Establish guidelines for classroom communication (e.g., raise hand before speaking)
  - Use pre-teaching (e.g., tutoring of new vocabulary)
  - Provide opportunities to access information visually (e.g., use of captioned media, printout of school announcements)

**TIP 4**

*Include strategies to enhance ease of access throughout the educational environment.*

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**TIP 5**

*Provide supports to enhance a student’s socialization experiences and identity development.*

Include opportunities to support students in developing friendships, becoming members of the school community, and feeling positive about their identity and self-esteem, such as:

- **Set up opportunities to orient classmates and other members of the school community** about how to successfully include a hard of hearing student.
- **Identify supports for the hard of hearing student** to learn to become a self-advocate (e.g., meet with school counselor to address topics such as how to respond to teasing).
- **Explore opportunities to connect the student with other hard of hearing and deaf students** in the school or community (e.g., summer camps, after school or weekend programs, organizations, associations).