



Hearing Loss in the Classroom (FM Systems)

An FM system is a device that helps children hear better in noise. A personal FM system works directly with their hearing aids or cochlear implants.

The person who is speaking has a transmitter that picks up their voice and the hearing aid or cochlea implant has a receiver.

When speech is sent through the FM system, the child hears that signal louder than the noise in the room. When an FM system is used in the classroom, the student will hear better and can be an active participant. Let's watch a video about hearing loss in the classroom and the use of FM systems:

"Guys, welcome back, Monday morning. I hope everybody had a great weekend."

For a child with hearing loss, no matter how good the technology is, they are listening through a damaged auditory system. We need to help them to hear what is happening in the classroom. If they do not hear the teacher, if they do not hear the questions and comments from other kids in the classroom, they are going to miss a significant amount of what happens and that is not fair to them. We have to remember that classrooms are very noisy places. For a child to hear well in the classroom we need to get them some special assistance.

The first example we are going to show you today is to help you understand what a child with a hearing loss hears in the classroom with an FM system, and what he would hear if we did not turn the FM system on.

The teacher in this classroom has forgotten to put on his FM microphone. Without the microphone turned on, it is almost impossible for a child with a hearing loss to hear clearly. Let's listen to what a child with a hearing loss would hear with the FM unit turned off.

Without an FM system on, the child is going to be hearing very muffled speech or like they are listening from a very great distance.

Forgetting to turn on the FM system can happen to anybody, but do not count on the student to tell you if it is not working. Look for visual clues that he is confused, or watch the student trying



to look around to see what is happening in the classroom. After a quick check the teacher can turn on the microphone, check with the student, and make sure that all is working well. That gets the student back on track and gets the lesson going in the right direction. Once the FM system is turned on, the student is hearing as if the teacher were standing right next to his ear. Making sure that the FM system works is the responsibility of both the teachers and the students. The students are responsible for advocating for themselves and should be encouraged to say something when the FM system either is not working or is working poorly. As long as they can hear, they can compete.

When there is only one microphone, we know the child will hear the teacher clearly, but they also need to hear the classroom discussion. If there is a pass mic, the microphone can be passed around from student to student and then all of the students will have the opportunity to speak into the microphone and the child with the hearing loss will hear everything they are saying. If there is not a pass mic, in the classroom, it is the teachers responsibility to repeat what is said, so that the child with the hearing loss knows what is happening. That means repeating the question if a child asked a question, or repeating what the kids say in their comments. Listen now to how other students comments sound to a student with a hearing loss, and how disorienting it can be for a child when the teacher forgets to repeat the comments or the questions.

By continuing with the class and not repeating the other students' comments, the teacher quickly loses the attention of the child with the hearing loss. Let's hear again just how difficult it is for a child with a hearing loss to hear his classmates.

You see how important it is for the teacher to repeat the comments of other children in the classroom, so that the child with the hearing loss can be a fully productive member of the class. The two reenactments you just saw are two simple steps that can happen in every classroom to help children hear better. It is something that needs to be part of every educational day.