

Considering Access & Acoustics in Classrooms

Note: This handout is meant to be a guide for what kinds of things to consider when choosing a classroom or looking at a classroom your child will be placed in. If you do not observe some of these strategies in a particular classroom or teacher, this does not necessarily mean it can't be a good fit for your child. It is important to talk to the teacher and the program to get a sense for what kind of modifications to the room or strategies can be applied to meet your child's needs.

Acoustics and noise levels in the room:

Factors that contribute to a quiet room:

Factors that contribute to a noisy room:

<input type="checkbox"/> Low ceilings	<input type="checkbox"/> High ceilings
<input type="checkbox"/> Bookshelves or furniture to divide the room	<input type="checkbox"/> Open plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Well-fitted doors with a seal	<input type="checkbox"/> Poorly fitted doors (or doors left open)
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft furniture (e.g., couches, bean bags, pillows)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard furniture (wooden, metal, or plastic)
<input type="checkbox"/> Carpets or throw-rugs	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard floors
<input type="checkbox"/> Curtains or blinds	<input type="checkbox"/> No window covers
<input type="checkbox"/> Lightly padded vinyl cloths or drapes on tables and hard surfaces (to reduce noise from containers and toys striking the table)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard table and playing surfaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Cork boards or drapes on walls or ceiling (to absorb sound)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard, bare walls (reverberate sound)
<input type="checkbox"/> Wicker baskets or soft materials in the bottom of storage buckets (to reduce noise during play and clean up)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard storage buckets or shelves
<input type="checkbox"/> Tennis balls on bottom of chairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Scraping of chairs and table legs
<input type="checkbox"/> Felt pads behind cabinet doors (storage and play area)	<input type="checkbox"/> Slamming of cabinet doors (storage and play area)
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced background noise	<input type="checkbox"/> Background noise <input type="checkbox"/> e.g., computers, fans, buzzing lights, wall heater, air conditioning, projector, toilets, sink, running water, talking/laughing/screaming from peers, music in background, noisy or battery operated toys, people going in and out of the classroom, fish tanks
<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet location	<input type="checkbox"/> External noise <input type="checkbox"/> e.g., playground outside, road traffic, hallway noise, nearby music room, etc.
Total: _____	Total: _____

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Teaching strategies that support a child's learning:

- Getting down to child's level when talking
- Getting close to communicate (3-6 ft)
- Using clear, tuneful speech
- Using a comfortable volume (not too quiet, not too loud)
- Manages classroom noise and voices quickly
- Faces children when talking
- Gets children's attention before giving the message
- Minimize kitchen or clean up noise
- Uses visuals to support what is being said (e.g., gestures, props, pictures, signing, etc.)
- Repetition of instructions
- Have children raise their hand or come to the front before talking
- Repetition of what other children have said or asked
- Facilitating interaction with peers
- Is flexible with following children's comments to allow for conversation and seizes learning opportunities
- Transitions from one activity to another are clearly indicated (spoken and visual cue?)

Total: _____

Other things to consider:

- Is the teacher open to learning about your child's hearing loss and how they can help support your child in the classroom?
- Does the teacher see you, the parent, as a partner?
- How many children are in the classroom (small class size?)
- How many adults are in the classroom (good adult-to-child ratio?)
- Do they incorporate any themes or topics into their program?
- What does their daily routine look like?
- Are there structured activities?
- Is the teacher open to using equipment in the classroom?
- How is the lighting in the room?
- Other needs or priorities to consider?
- Is there an appropriate balance of 'academic' and 'social' opportunities?
- Are activities and expectations are developmentally appropriate?

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