



Billings Public School District 2: Support for Students with Hearing Loss

Presented information from:

Michelle Betcher- Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of
Hearing

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Equal access for students with hearing loss amidst Covid-19

- The purpose of the presentation is to inform all staff members serving students with hearing loss in the Billings Public Schools.
- The goals are to provide current information about procedures and equal access to curriculum and language for students with all types of hearing loss within the grades from PreK to 12th grade to all district staff members.
- Laws pertaining to students under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Special Education of the Individuals with Disabilities Act
- Equal access pertaining to face coverings, caption, visual accessibility and written supports for accommodations that support student needs.
- Contact information for support to all school district employees

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Communication Needs

- Students who have hearing loss access communication through visual and auditory modalities. Access to curriculum face to face within the classroom and online will require accommodations for more visual and written supports.
- When teaching online, instructors have an important role in supporting and ensuring the success of students — especially deaf students. Online courses need to be accessible for deaf students. This resource outlines some key tips to think about when designing online courses and planning for course materials that are a good fit for online instruction.

<https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resource/tips-instructors-teaching-deaf-students-online>

Individuals with Disabilities and Section 504 Students

- Students with hearing loss may receive services directed from the Individuals with Disabilities Act or Section 504. Billings Public Schools Student Services are available to support all students with hearing loss within the classroom and for remote learning.
- [The National Association of the Deaf](#)
- [DOJ-DOE: Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students with Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)
- For more information, please follow this link. Please direct questions or concerns with administrators, program coordinators, Kim Niday and Michelle Betcher.

Masks and Teacher Mics

- Different types of masks have advantages and disadvantages for students with hearing loss. Clear masks for staff members and peers can be helpful to enable students with hearing loss to view facial expression, promote speech reading and lessen the frustration of missing vital information. Some students with hearing loss may prefer disposable masks or those made with a lighter material that are more acoustically transparent.
- A Functional Listening Evaluation (contact us) might help students and staff to identify the preferred type of mask.
- If a student has personal Assistive Hearing Technology, please use it! If you also have a speaker system in your class, please contact Kim. There may be a way (no promises) to connect them and only use 1 teacher microphone.

Captioning and supports for students with hearing loss

- Due to the required order of wearing masks, students with hearing loss will need additional support accommodations to access information. Acoustic support, visual schedules that are easily accessed, closed captioning, prior written information that will allow students to have presented information in that the student can focus on the teacher in either format, and specific accommodations individualized to the student's best learning environment should be determined and established by the educational team.
- [National Deaf Center: Caption Media](#)

Tips of Online Learning with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Flyer titled: Distance Learning with a student with hearing loss: Some tips compiled to make it easier for students with hearing loss to learn virtually. Eight squares with tips include: Use a microphone or headset (if available this can make it easier for the student to hear you clearly), use closed captioning on all visual media (students should know to turn on closed captioning on videos that they would watch during independent learning time), light should be facing you not behind you (posterior lighting darkens the face and makes it more difficult to get visual cues), reduce background noise (please turn off any background noise in your space examples are fans tv and dishwasher) , mute all students (this makes it clear to follow who is speaking), check for understanding in open-ended questions (avoid yes no questions), determine a procedure for asking questions (for example, typing Q in the chat box to indicate the child has a question) , and state the name of the student being called on and repeat what was said (repeat what the student shared in case it was not audible for the child with a hearing loss). Adapted by Nadia Iftekhar and Dana Lamkin

Distance Learning with a student with hearing loss

Some tips compiled to make it easier for students with hearing loss to learn virtually.

Use a microphone or headset

if available, this can make it easier for the student to hear you clearly.



Use Closed Captioning on all Visual Media

Students should know to turn on closed captioning on videos that they would watch during their independent learning time.



Light should be facing you, not behind you.

Posterior lighting darkens the face and makes it more difficult to get visual cues.



Reduce background noise.

Please turn off any background noise in your space (ex. Fan, TV, dishwasher).



Mute all students.

This makes it clear to follow who is speaking.



Check for understanding in open-ended questions.

Avoid yes/no questions.



Determine a procedure for asking questions.

For example, typing Q in the chat box to indicate the child has a question.



State the name of the student being called on, and repeat what was said.

Repeat what the student shared in case it was not audible for the child with a hearing loss.



Adapted by Nadia Iftekhar and Dana Lamkin

Tips for Wearing Masks with Hearing Devices

Flier is titled: Wearing a mask with your hearing aids. There are three sections: the top section shows seven adults wearing masks representing various ages and gender. The middle section is titled; Here are some clever tips to protect your ears and hearing aids while wearing a mask. Number one is a lady showing the back of her hair (if you have long hair, pull it back into a bun and loop the elastics around the bun), number two shows a man's back of his head (create a 'mask extender' out of fabric or ribbon about 10 cm long. Buttons sewn on either side allows for a place to out the elastic other than your ears), number 3 shows the side of a teenage girl (sew 2 large buttons onto a soft headband, placing the buttons to line up with each ear, looping the elastic around each button will take the strain off your ears) and number four shows the front of a lady with a hat on (use masks with string or ribbons that tie in the back. There are YouTube videos on creating masks that tie which puts absolutely no pressure on the ears. The third section of the flier is titled: Communicating when wearing a mask. Six icons with definitions are: a speech bubble with three dots stating speak slowly, clearly and at a normal volume, a speech bubble with a question mark says to rephrase remarks when not understood, two blank speech bubbles saying to take turns when speaking, an ear icon with a sound wave states to make sure hearing aid users have them on, an icon of a music boombox states to keep background noises in the room to a minimum and the last icon is a winking smiley face stating to face each other at a safe distance.

www.oticon.ca; oticon life changing technology on the bottom portion of the third section.

[Healthy Hearing: Wearing a mask with hearing aids](#)

Wearing a mask with your hearing aids

Here are some clever tips to protect your ears and your hearing aids while wearing a mask.

- 1.** If you have long hair, pull it back into a bun and loop the elastics around the bun.
- 2.** Create a "mask extender" out of fabric or ribbon about 10cm long. Buttons sewn on either side allows for a place to put the elastic other than your ears.
- 3.** Sew 2 large buttons onto a soft headband, placing the buttons to line up with each ear. Looping the elastic around each button will take the strain off your ears.
- 4.** Use masks with string or ribbons that tie in the back. There are YouTube videos on creating masks that tie, which puts absolutely no pressure on the ears.

Communicating when wearing a mask

- Speak slowly, clearly and at a normal volume.
- Rephrase remarks when not understood.
- Take turns when speaking.
- Make sure hearing aid users have them on.
- Keep background noise in the room to a minimum.
- Face each other (at a safe distance).

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