

Experience poor hearing for yourself

In experiments and self-testing, the students should experience hearing impairment themselves and, as a result, understand how the everyday life of hearing-impaired or deaf people differs from their own.

1 Preparation

One third of the class is given earplugs to put in both ears; another third get just one earplug. The other students retain their “normal” hearing ability. The earplugs are removed for the class discussion and then the three groups switch roles so that in the end each student has taken on each role.

2 Assignment 1: Following the lesson

The teacher will give a regular lesson in subjects like English, personal, social and health education (PSHE), or math for 5 to 10 minutes each.

Afterwards, all students should report on what they experienced. In the ensuing class discussion, the teacher should primarily focus on which subjects were easier or harder for the hearing-impaired students to understand. Differences between the individual subjects do indeed exist. For example, normally communication in math class is not primarily verbal as is sometimes the case in subjects like English or PSHE; rather, class involves nonverbal communication in writing individual solutions on the board. In general, giving students something written to focus their gaze on provides good support for understanding, and so a subject like math is easier to understand.

The teacher can also explain how teaching takes place in classes for the deaf (lip-reading, sign language) and also talk about the different sorts of aids available for people in this situation who are hearing-impaired or completely deaf.

3 Assignment 2: Group game

The students and teacher can now go to the gymnasium or the playground to play a group game that primarily depends on communication and understanding. For example, it can be a game in which one child stands facing the group and says a color. Only the children who are wearing this color may take one step forward. This continues until they reach the child announcing the colors. Afterwards, in a class discussion the children can describe their impressions. This helps the children understand the extent to which people with hearing impairment or total hearing loss are restricted in interaction with others. The children should come up with their own suggestions of how to make interaction with others easier.

4 Assignment 3: Team work

The students are divided into small groups and work together in a team on exercises given to them by the teacher. They have to “talk” to each other in order to do the exercises.

Sitting in a circle, the students can then exchange information. How did they communicate with each other to make themselves understood? Which “form of communication” was the most effective? How do deaf people communicate with each other?