

(Approved by the Board of Directors of the Educational Audiology Association September 2009)

Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention Education

More, and younger, children have access to music and video systems equipped with the latest technology. Whether listening through speakers or earbuds, or having contact with noise in their environment, children and youth are exposed to noise that is pervasive throughout their educational and recreational day. The 3rd National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (Niskar et al., 2000) found 5.2 million, or 12.5%, 6 -19 year old children in the United States had hearing loss directly related to noise exposure. In 1992 it was reported that over the previous 10 years the percentage of 2nd graders with hearing loss had increased 2.8 times and hearing loss in 8th graders had increased over 4 times (Montgomery and Fujikawa, 1992). Research has documented that children with minimal hearing loss tend to have more learning difficulties than children who have normal hearing (Bess et al., 1998, Centers for Disease Control). Rabinowitz et.al., (2006) reported that 20% of young adults, 17 to 25 years old, enter the industrial workforce with evidence of early hearing loss consistent with noise exposure.

Lack of public awareness and effective dissemination of information, materials and curriculum appear to be one of the greatest reasons that our children have not embraced good habits regarding noise exposures and its harmful effects (Centers for Disease Control, Folmer, 2002). Programs such as Dangerous Decibels (www.dangerousdecibels.org), Listen to Your Buds (www.listentoyourbuds.org) and Crank It Down (www.hearingconservation.org) provide good basic information and suggested activities for use with students.

Based on training and scope of practice (American Academy of Audiology, 2004, American Speech, Language Hearing Association, 2004), as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (34CFR300.34(c) (1)(iv), audiologists have primary responsibility to provide noise education and hearing loss prevention education. Designing a hearing loss prevention program requires consideration of several components:

1. Determining the contents and making the curriculum relevant for the various age groups.
2. Identifying existing courses where noise education may be infused.
3. Identifying who will teach the various modules and the role of the audiologist in the management and delivery of the program. The audiologist is best suited to assist the general education teacher in integrating the critical information into their own health, science or vocational education courses.

It is imperative that students today develop healthy hearing habits that will serve them as adults. Noise education is vital to protect our youth's hearing and can best be planned and coordinated by audiologists working in the schools as part of the education team.

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