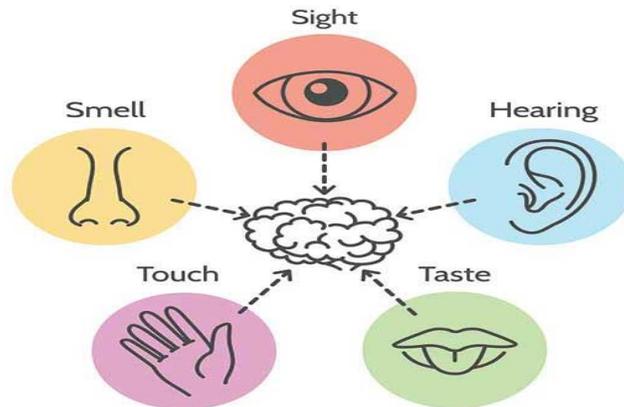


# Auditory & Vision Impairments

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We naturally learn with all senses. Our five senses of hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling play a vital role in our learning; they are the primary means to gain knowledge. When we use multiple senses to gather information, our learning is more meaningful and useful. Our brain is always working, just like our heart and lungs; they only stop when a major interference occurs. The function of our brain is to help us sort the information we gather from our senses into meaningful learning experiences.

Stop for a moment and reflect on what life would be like without your sense of hearing, touching, tasting, seeing, and smelling. Let's pause again to think about our students with impairments in these areas. When I reflected on life without my five senses, I realized how challenging learning would be. Please note I stated learning would be challenging; however, not impossible.

Two years ago, I had the pleasure of participating in a vision and auditory impairment evaluation. Participating in this evaluation allowed me to learn how these impairments influence learning.

Below I will share information from Nancy Olson, Auditory impairment Specialist, Doug Rogers, Vision Impairment Specialist, and Project IDEA Online. Let's first look at what auditory and vision impairments are according to IDEA.

<b>Auditory Impairment</b>	<b>Vision Impairment</b>
Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance, but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.	Visual impairment, including blindness, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness

**Nancy Olson, Auditory Impairment Specialist**

*An Auditory impairment can adversely affect educational performance in all academic areas. Those with a high-frequency loss will struggle to hear in noisy situations. Background noise, which is mildly disruptive to those with normal hearing, can be highly disruptive to hearing loss students.*

***Possible Social Problems:***

*Some behavioral issues are primarily due to missing incidental speech that occurs in the environment.*

- Students may be accused of selective hearing due to discrepancies in speech understanding in quiet versus noise.*
- Social problems may arise as students experience difficulty understanding in noisy cooperative learning or recess situations.*
- May misconstrue peer conversations and feel rejected or ridiculed.*
- Students may be more fatigued in the classroom due to greater effort needed to listen if the class is noisy or has poor acoustics.*
- May appear inattentive, distractible, or frustrated with behavior or social problems, sometimes evident.*

*Hearing and understanding speech are profoundly different. Whereas hearing is a relatively primary human function, many parts of the brain are involved in understanding and processing speech and language.*

*If you have hearing loss, the auditory cortex is not receiving accurate information, so the brain must work much harder at decoding the intended message. Because of the additional strain on working memory, your brain must decide what is most important. If you are in a crowded room and trying to listen to someone, tell a story, part of your brain is straining to understand the speech and trying to keep up with the story, while the rest of your brain is being used to stand upright, possibly holding something in your hand, keeping eye contact, and monitoring the general environment for safety and security. The more difficult it is to hear, the more difficult (and exhausting!) it is to understand and stay engaged.*

**Doug Rogers, Vision Impairment Specialist**

*A student can have a vision impairment and pass a vision screening. Vision influences orientation and mobility; this is why students with a vision impairment often receive orientation and mobility services. Orientation and mobility is not a disability; it is a support for other impairments.*



## Learning & Leading!

Please click on the links below to better understand auditory and visual impairments, how they influence learning, and teaching strategies.

### **Auditory Impairment**

<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/hearing-impairments/>

### **Vision Impairment**

<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/visual-impairments/>