



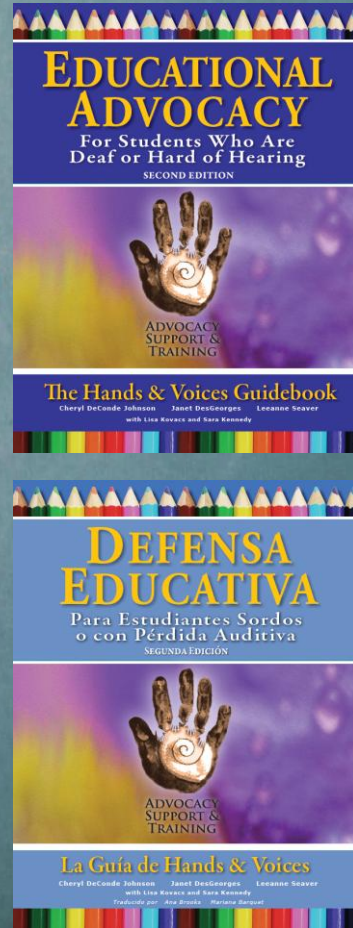
The Role of the Educational Audiologist

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Educational Audiologist · Owner, Hear to Learn, LLC (NH)

Presenting on behalf of the Educational Audiology Association (edaud.org)



Advocacy Support & Training Webinar Series

WELCOME

A Little About Me



Hi, I'm Rachel Parkington, AuD

Doctor of Audiology
Educational Audiologist

*I own Hear to Learn, LLC, and provide
educational audiology services across New
Hampshire.*

www.heartolearnnh.com



I'm a licensed Audiologist

I hold a clinical doctorate (AuD) in Audiology and have practiced Educational Audiology for 12 years.



I work inside schools, not just clinics

I evaluate classrooms, recommend, fit and verify hearing assistive technology, and sit on IEP/504 teams.



I own Hear to Learn, LLC (NH)

My practice contracts educational audiology services to school districts across New Hampshire



I'm speaking today on behalf of the EAA

The Educational Audiology Association (EAA) is a national professional organization dedicated to supporting audiologists who work in schools, helping ensure children with hearing loss or auditory processing needs get the services, accommodations, and technology they need to succeed in the classroom.

What We'll Cover

45-minute presentation, followed by 15 minutes of Q&A

By the end of this session, you'll be able to:

1

Describe the educational audiologist's role

...and how it differs from the Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (TOD), speech-language pathologist (SLP), and your child's clinical audiologist.

2

Identify key areas of assessment beyond the audiogram

Listening Fatigue, Self Advocacy, Classroom acoustics, hearing assistive technology, and functional listening, not just a hearing test.

3

Identify strategies and resources for advocacy

What to ask for and who else can help, even when your district has no educational audiologist on staff.



Why Does Auditory Access Matter at School

Hearing Is HARD Work

Children with hearing needs experience more fatigue than children with cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, or obesity.

— Hornsby, Worfel, Camarata & Bess, American Journal of Audiology, 2014

Why? Cognitive Load

When hearing loss is present, the brain works harder to fill in gaps and process the same information. That effort drains cognitive resources and those resources are not unlimited. This includes students with minimal or mild hearing loss.

“My brain needs a rest from listening.”

— Student with hearing loss

“First thing I do when I get home is take my hearing aids out. I just need a break.”

— Student with hearing loss

“My child will zone out or go into a bubble when she needs a break from listening.”

— Parent of a child with hearing loss

Hearing in the Classroom

Students with hearing and listening challenges may perform well below their academic potential **simply because they cannot hear clearly enough** to understand the instructor or material.

Schools are responsible for ensuring communication access is as effective for children with hearing loss as it is for their typically-hearing peers.

Three physical barriers get in the way:



Distance

Sound loses ~6 dB every time distance from the talker doubles.



Noise

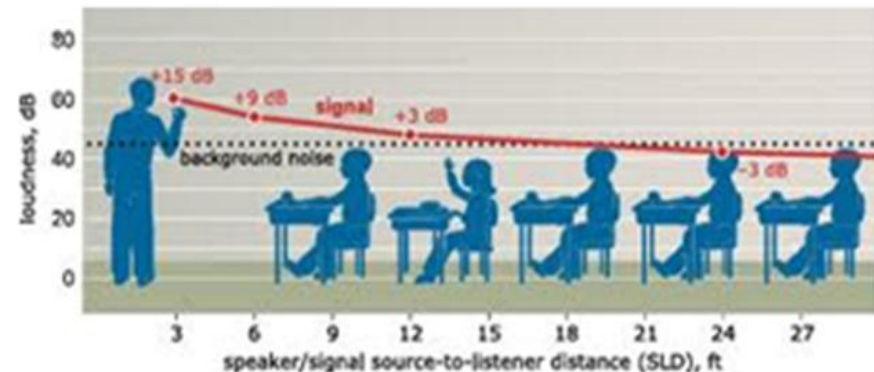
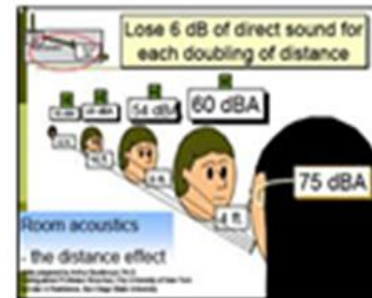
HVAC, hallways, and other students compete with the teacher's voice.



Reverberation

Hard surfaces bounce sound around, blurring speech.

Distance, Noise, Reverberation Why preferential seating isn't enough



What Is an Educational Audiologist?

An educational audiologist is a licensed audiologist who specializes in supporting students with hearing and listening needs in school settings.

They're part of the educational team, working to ensure children with hearing loss or listening needs can access instruction, communicate effectively, and participate fully in learning.

It's the Law: IDEA Sec. 300.34

Audiology is a **related service** under IDEA — the same category as speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and school counseling. Related services are the supports a child needs to benefit from special education.

34 CFR 300.34(a), 300.34(c)(1), 300.5–.6, 300.105(b), 300.113, 300.324(2)(iv–v)



They bridge the gap

between clinical hearing care and academic success
translating your child's hearing needs into what
actually happens in the classroom.

*Assessment that goes well beyond the audiogram
more on this shortly.*

The Role of the Educational Audiologist

- | | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Interprets audiological results
Translates test results for school staff and parents.</p> |  <p>Serves on the educational team
Participates in IEP/504 meetings alongside the rest of your child's team.</p> |
|  <p>Assesses classroom acoustics
Ensures equal access to auditory information in every learning space.</p> |  <p>Trains staff & students
In-services on auditory needs and equipment use for staff, students, and parents.</p> |
|  <p>Recommends, fits & verifies HAT
Hearing assistive technology: remote microphones, sound-field systems, and more.</p> |  <p>Builds self-advocacy
Works with students toward responsibility and confidence with their own hearing and equipment needs</p> |
|  <p>Manages equipment
Maintains a database of district-owned hearing assistive technology.</p> |  <p>Conducts evaluations
Auditory processing evaluations, hearing evaluations, Functional Listening Evaluations, etc.</p> |

"But We Already Have an Audiologist..."

Audiology is a broad field. "Audiologist" alone doesn't tell you what setting someone works in, or what they're positioned to do for your child at school.



Clinical Audiologist

Diagnoses hearing loss and fits amplification in a medical or private-practice setting.



Medical-Based Audiologist

Works within an ENT or hospital system on diagnostics tied to medical care.



Cochlear Implant Audiologist

Programs and manages cochlear implant devices post-surgery.



Industrial Audiologist

Focuses on workplace hearing conservation and noise exposure.



Educational Audiologist

Works inside schools to ensure auditory access to instruction all day, every day.

Clinical vs. Educational Audiologist

Both roles matter, they're just not interchangeable. Clinical practice allows time for diagnostic testing, amplification management and a written report. Without an educational audiologist, some school-based needs may go unaddressed.

Your child's clinical audiologist usually has limited or no access to:

- The IEP or 504 plan
- Speech/language evaluations
- Psycho-educational evaluations
- Academic & performance data from the school team
- Classroom acoustics
- Remote microphone technology

That's the gap an educational audiologist fills.

The priority of school-based audiology services:

Full communication access.

School staff get on-site assistance to provide that access and educate students as required under ADA and IDEA. The goal is better communication between school and clinic-based audiologists and better outcomes for students who are deaf/hard of hearing.

Educational Audiologist, TOD & SLP

These roles overlap in places, but each has areas only they are positioned to cover.



Educational Audiologist

Recommends, fits & verifies hearing assistive technology; assesses classroom acoustics; interprets audiological results for the team



Teacher of the Deaf/HH

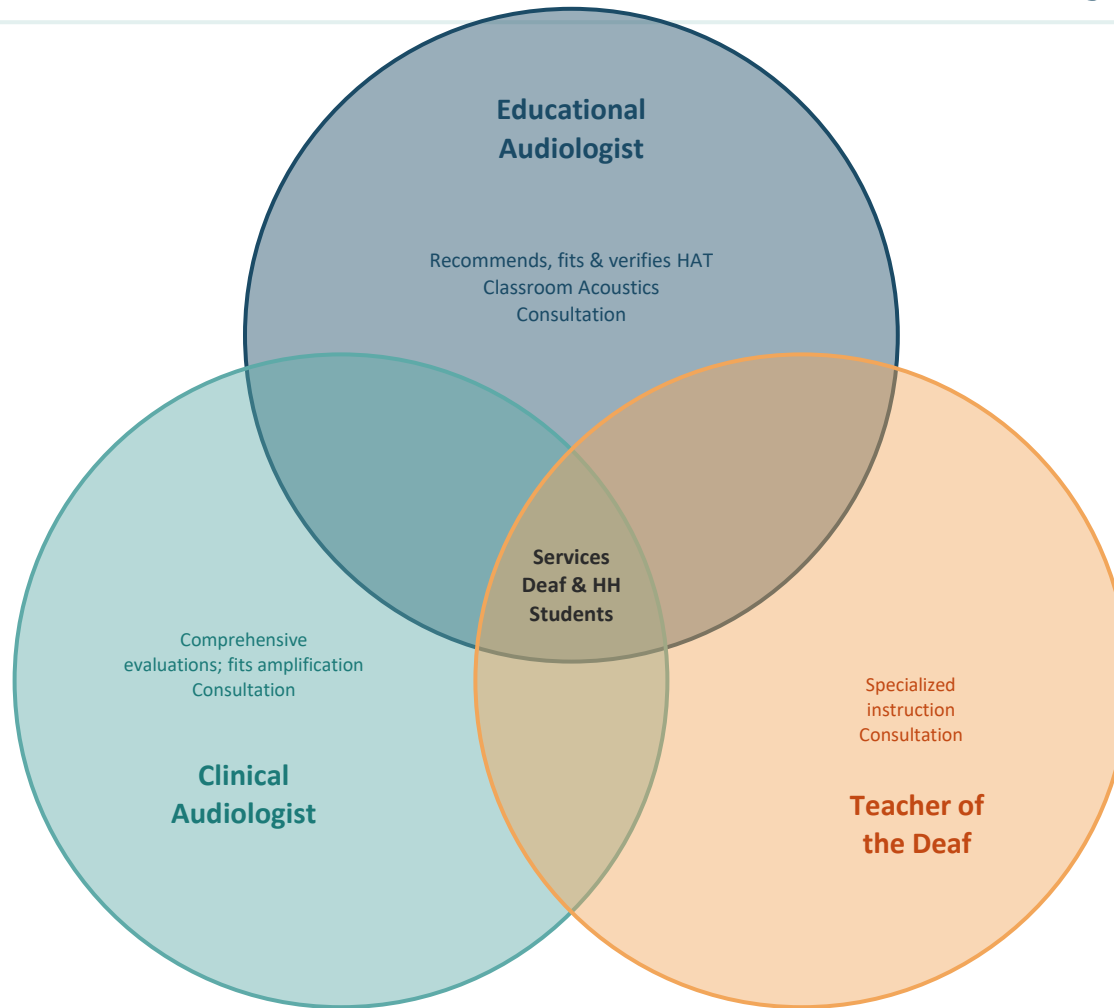
Direct instruction in areas that include self-advocacy, language, transition, academics; explains the effect of hearing loss on learning; recommends curriculum modifications.



Speech-Language Pathologist

Evaluates and treats articulation, language skills, and communication development, in the student's preferred language and communication mode.

It Takes a Team — Collaboration Is Key



Collaboration in practice:

- Each provider knows what specialized instruction / services the others are providing
- The educational audiologist consults on remote-mic training and classroom modifications
- The TOD builds skills through specialized instruction (eg: literacy & self-advocacy skills) informed by the hearing profile and student needs.
- The clinical audiologist's evaluations help provide information on the child's hearing levels and current amplification status.



Assessment Beyond the Audiogram

A hearing test is only the starting point. Here's what a full picture looks like.

A Fuller Picture of Assessment



STARTING POINT

Comprehensive Audiological Evaluation

Pure-tone audiogram, speech audiometry, and tympanometry.

BEYOND THE AUDIOGRAM — what educational audiologists assess beyond the audiogram



Listening Fatigue

Measures the toll listening effort takes across the school day.



Self-Advocacy

Does the student understand their hearing difference and equipment needs? What does a student do if they're missing information or equipment is not working?



Functional Listening

Information on performance in noise, with/without visual cues and at a distance



Classroom Acoustics

Distance, noise, and reverberation, measured in the actual learning space.



HAT Evaluation & Recommendation

Whether hearing assistive technology is needed, and which kind fits best.

These evaluations look beyond “does my child hear sound?” to “can my child access and understand language throughout the school day?”

Functional Listening Evaluation (FLE)

An FLE looks at how a child accesses auditory information in real classroom conditions, not just in a sound booth.

It examines performance in noise, at a distance, and with or without visual cues. Everyday listening challenges a standard hearing test doesn't capture.

What It Measures

Results can guide **accommodations** written into the IEP or 504 plan, and can support a request for hearing assistive technology.



Why It Matters

a hearing test alone does not give functional information needed to know how a child accesses auditory information in a classroom

Results can support seating, HAT, and classroom accommodations.

Fatigue Scales

Children with hearing loss often work harder to listen all day, these scales measure the toll that takes.

Separate child, parent, and teacher versions each capture listening-related fatigue from their own point of view.

Three Perspectives

Fatigue findings can **support requests** for rest breaks, a lighter afternoon load, or other accommodations built into the IEP or 504 plan.

Developed by researchers at Vanderbilt University for use with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Why It Matters at Home

Explores why we may have after-school crankiness, zoning out, or wanting the hearing aids off the moment they're home.

Listening fatigue is real, and measurable.

Self-Advocacy Assessment

Does the student understand their hearing difference and equipment needs and know what to do if something isn't working?

It tracks whether a child can explain their hearing loss, ask for repeats or captions, and check their own equipment.

What It Builds

Growth here supports **independence** that carries a student through school, college, and work.

Often assessed using tools like the Audiology Self-Advocacy Checklist for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Why It Matters

Adults won't always be there to advocate, this is what carries a student forward.

Growth here is tracked and built over time, not assumed.

Evaluating the Classroom Itself

An educational audiologist doesn't just assess the student, they assess the room. Background noise comes from more places than most people expect:

- HVAC & duct noise
- Hallway noise
- Hard floors, ceilings & windows
- Electrical & light fixture hum
- Student-generated noise

The fix isn't always technology.

Sometimes it's rearranging seating, adding sound-absorbing materials, or simply knowing where the noisiest spot in the room is, all outcomes of a classroom acoustic analysis.



What a classroom acoustic analysis can lead to:

- A specific, measured seating recommendation
- Sound-absorbing treatment for hard surfaces
- A sound-field or remote-microphone system where needed
- Data the team can revisit if things change

Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT): What & Why

HAT bridges the gap between the listener and the sound source by eliminating the effects of distance, background noise, and reverberation by sending sound directly to the ear.



Not the same as hearing aids

HAT reaches the ear over distance and noise. Hearing aids have a 3-6 foot listening bubble, HAT reaches beyond that.



Improves Access

Directly addresses the problems of distance and noise.



Used whenever distance, noise, or reverberation are present

Large groups, circle time, lectures and often at home, too.

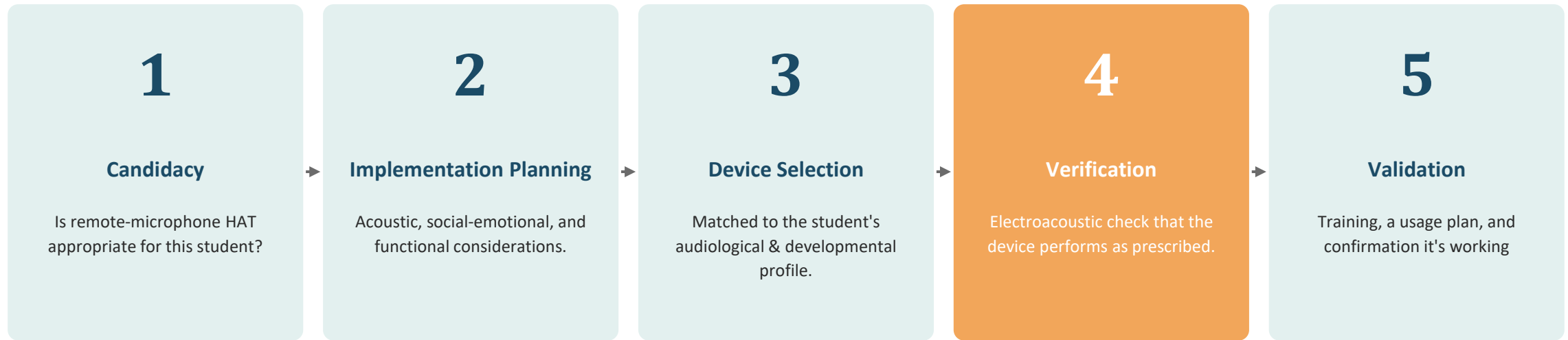
Only audiologists

are trained and scoped to select, fit, and verify hearing assistive technology for children. **NO OTHER PROFESSIONALS SHOULD BE RECOMMENDING OR FITTING THIS TECHNOLOGY.**

Technology changes 1–2x per year. Each student's audiological and amplification history has to be considered when selecting and fitting, it is not one-size-fits-all.

(American Academy of Audiology Clinical Practice Guidelines, 2011)

The 5-Step Process for Fitting HAT



“Transparency” is a must.

Electroacoustic verification means measuring, with equipment, exactly what sound is reaching the student's ear, not assuming the device works because it's turned on. Without verification, a device can look fine and still not work appropriately.

But What Could Go Wrong?

Real examples from the field, without dedicated educational audiology oversight, these went undetected for months:



A remote mic turned a child's hearing aids off every time the teacher attached it, the child heard nothing at school and was in danger of failing.



A teacher wore a HAT microphone, but the student's hearing aids didn't have the matching receivers installed, no access to the signal at all.



A student's device had to be switched into streaming mode before the microphone would work. No one knew. The student had no access for the entire school year.



A school used a general speaker system for a student with a significant hearing loss, the wrong tool for that student's needs

Training & Daily Listening Checks

Fitting the equipment is only step one. It has to be used correctly, every day, by people who understand it.

Staff & Student Trainings

- When and how to use the microphone
- Daily listening checks
- Basic troubleshooting
- Muting the mic when appropriate, a simple step that's easy to forget and easy to miss

Daily Listening Checks

- Staff and parents need instruction from an audiologist before doing checks themselves (ASHA, 2002)
- What a check looks like depends on the student's age, ability to respond, and experience with the equipment
- Checks should be logged; not just done and forgotten

A Growing Caseload, Year After Year

One district's educational audiology caseload, tracked over time:

8

students served
in the DHH program (2015)

77

students on the
educational audiology caseload (2024–25)

235

pieces of hearing assistive
technology actively managed

This kind of caseload takes ongoing case management: equipment assignment in the fall, classroom observations and maintenance through the year, and equipment collection and service every summer, not a once-a-year visit.

Team Collaboration, in Their Own Words

From a real audiological report for a 3rd-grade student with moderate hearing loss:



Teacher of the Deaf

“Direct and consultative services from the teacher of the deaf are strongly endorsed. Direct services are recommended in the areas of self-advocacy, narrative comprehension, literacy, and content areas. Consultation is recommended to support teachers in monitoring comprehension and ensuring communication access.”



Educational Audiologist

“Consultation from an educational audiologist is required to support training staff in use of the remote microphone, maintenance of the hearing assistive technology used in the classroom, modifications to the listening environment, and auditory access to remote learning.”



Advocating for Educational Audiology

What to do when your district doesn't have this expertise on staff.

“My District Doesn't Have One...”

Not every district has an educational audiologist. That doesn't mean the service isn't required.



Start from the law

Audiology is a related service under IDEA — your child's team is required to consider it, whether or not a staff position exists for it.



Ask who is currently responsible

For interpreting audiology results, recommending/fitting/verifying equipment, and assessing classroom acoustics. If the honest answer is “no one,” that's your starting point.



Request contracted services

Many districts contract with an outside educational audiology practice rather than hiring in-house.



Loop in the providers you do have

Your child's TOD, SLP, and clinical audiologist can each speak to what falls outside their scope, and support the request for audiology involvement.

Questions to Bring to Your Child's Team



Who on our team is qualified to select, fit, and verify hearing assistive technology?



Has our classroom's acoustics ever been formally assessed?



How and how often is equipment being verified, not just “turned on”?



Who is trained to do daily listening checks, and are they being logged?



Does our IEP/504 reflect audiology as a related service, with a named responsible person?



Who is coordinating between our clinical audiologist and the school team?

Resources for Families



Wright's Law

wrightslaw.com — plain-language explanations of IDEA-related services, including audiology.



EAA Position Statement: Shared & Suggested Roles

edaud.org/position-stat — clarifies who's responsible for what among educational audiologists, SLPs, and TODs.



Role Comparison Chart

successforkidswithhearingloss.com — a side-by-side comparison of roles supporting students with hearing loss.



Optimizing Outcomes for Students Who Are D/HH

NASDSE, 3rd edition — a national framework for building the right team around your child.

Educational Advocacy For Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The Hands & Voices Guidebook, 2nd Edition

About the Educational Audiology Association



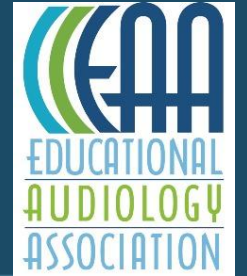
Educational Audiology Association (EAA)

An international organization of audiologists and related professionals who deliver a full spectrum of hearing services to children, particularly in educational settings. Established in 1984 to advocate for educational audiologists and the students they serve.

- Publishes advocacy resources families & schools can use to build the case for services
- Produces the Journal of Educational, Pediatric & (Re)Habilitative Audiology
- Recognized by the American Academy of Audiology and ASHA as the related professional home for this field

Visit them at:

edaud.org



Why it matters for your family:

EAA member directories and position statements can help you find an educational audiologist near you, or hand your school district the professional backing to justify bringing one on.

Key Takeaways



The educational audiologist is a distinct role

Different from your child's clinical audiologist, TOD, and SLP. Each covers ground the others can't.



Assessment goes far beyond the audiogram

Classroom acoustics, hearing assistive technology fitting and verification, and functional listening evaluations.



You can advocate for this, even without one on staff

Start from IDEA, ask direct questions of the team, and lean on resources like the EAA.



Thank You

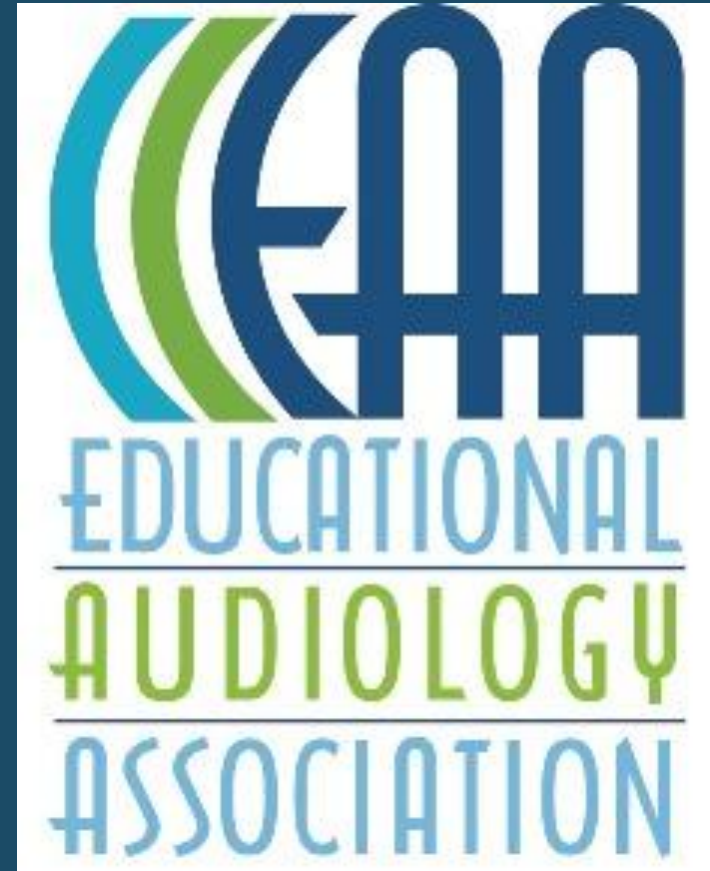
*Questions? Let's talk — 15 minutes of Q&A starts now.
Please type your questions into the Q&A box.*

Rachel Parkington, AuD

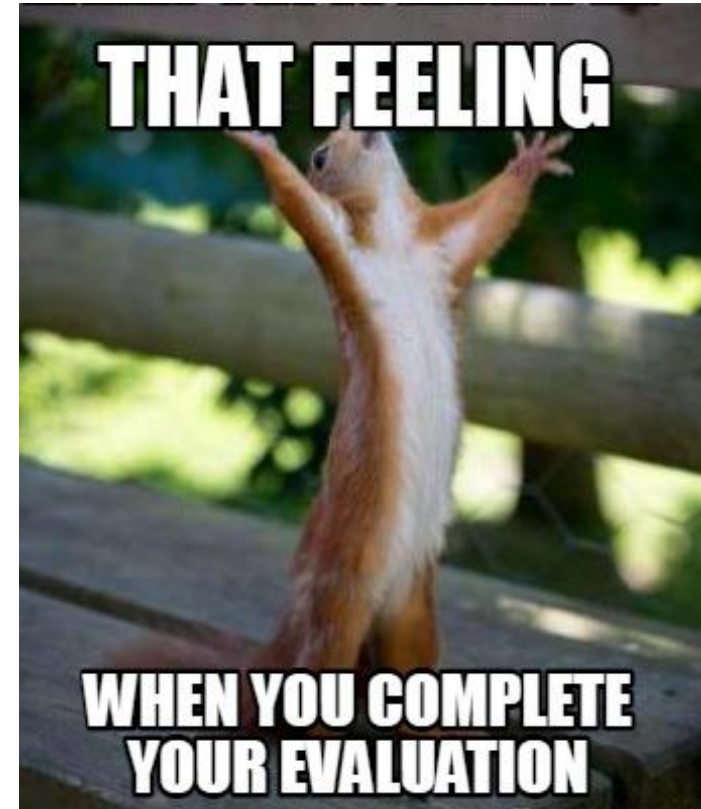
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Thank you!



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