



Adopt-a-Classroom Program



A Program of The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL)

Noise in Our Classrooms

Presently, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador provides support to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and mainstreamed in regular schools through the provision of Itinerant Teachers. Itinerant Teachers provide services such as preschool intervention, direct teaching in speech/language, academic support, assistance with technology (hearing aids and FM systems), career exploration, facilitating access to post-secondary education, counselling (about hearing loss and associated issues for child and family), and education of school and community members (regarding hearing loss and advocacy). Unfortunately, due to financial and budgetary constraints, Itinerant Teachers are limited in the amount of support they are able to provide in the area of noise abatement.

Research has proven the benefits of acoustically sound classrooms. With the removal of carpets and other sound absorbing materials from schools over the past two decades, many students are exposed to increased noise and reverberation in the classroom. Noise in the classroom creates an acoustic environment that is detrimental to all students' abilities to hear and process auditory data. As a child's ability to hear and process information does not fully develop until 13 -15 years of age, they are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of noise in the classroom. It has been shown that a reduction of classroom noise increases academic achievement, concentration, attention and classroom participation of all children.



Classroom noise is especially detrimental to hard of hearing students, particularly those who wear hearing aids. A hearing aid amplifies all sound. It is limited in its ability to distinguish between background noise and speech. Therefore, it amplifies all noise whether it is desired or not. This makes following a conversation in a noisy environment extremely challenging, distracting, and exhausting.

The Hushh-Ups Pilot Project

A significant source of noise in the classroom is that of chairs scraping on uncarpeted floors. In an effort to decrease this type of noise, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - Newfoundland and Labrador initiated and funded a pilot project to provide Hushh-Ups for 9 classrooms (the classroom of a hard of hearing student and adjacent classrooms) in St. Peter's Elementary School, Mount Pearl. Hushh-Ups are special balls that are placed on the bottom of moveable tables and chairs to eliminate the noise caused by friction with the floor. Evaluation data found that both students and teachers benefited from the use of Hushh-ups.



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The volume of a teacher's normal speaking voice is approximately 65 db while the noise of a chair scraping on an uncarpeted floor is approximately 85 db. Teachers at St. Peter's stated very positive outcomes as a result of the Hushh-Ups Project including significant noise reduction, less disruption, improved academic achievement and less strain on the teachers' voices. Maintenance staff also found that Hushh-Ups reduced the amount of floor maintenance required. As a result, St. Peter's elementary has raised funds to provide Hushh-Ups in every classroom. Unfortunately, this is just one success story. Presently, there are 172 schools in the Province who have mainstreamed hard of hearing students.

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The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL), with the endorsement of the Department of Education and other educational and health organizations, are looking for sponsors for the Adopt-a-Classroom program. The goal of this program is to provide Hushh-Ups for every Kindergarten to Grade Six classroom in the province. Schools with hard of hearing students will be give first priority, followed by all other schools. The approximate cost per classroom is \$200 with adjacent classrooms also receiving Hushh-ups (if whole school is not completed).

What are Hushh-Ups?

Hushh-Ups are air inflated balls that are specially manufactured for their acoustic qualities

They include:

- interior rubber core 4 mm in thickness (much thicker than a regular tennis ball)
- felt covering of extra duty; woven felt composed of wool and nylon approximately 5mm thick
- precision machine cut in the top to allow attachment to the furniture leg



Benefits to Students, Teachers and Maintenance Staff

- Improve all students' ability to hear, discriminate speech and attend to their teacher during instructional periods. This is especially true for students who are hard of hearing.
- Enhance all students' comprehension of oral language
- Enrich the learning environment for all students by eliminating the scraping noise of chairs in classrooms
- Improve students' attention and concentration by decreasing distracting noise
- Eliminate chair noise between floors in schools with multiple stories
- Reduce headaches, fatigue, and stress experienced by teachers and students who are exposed to the constant scraping noise of chairs
- Decrease the strain on the teacher's voice while trying to speak louder than the noise of the chairs. Studies have shown that teachers' have a high incidence of vocal chord problems
- Diminish floor damage caused by chairs scraping on tiled floors
- Reduce floor maintenance costs (labour, cleaning supplies, replacement, etc.)



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Qualifying Criteria

- Students will be in Grades K-6
- Students are currently on the caseload of the Itinerant Teacher for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing.
- Students who are not on the caseload of the Itinerant Teacher, but are brought to the attention of the Itinerant Teacher as having a history of continual middle ear difficulty documented by an Audiologist or a Physician,

How You Can Adopt-a-Classroom

The benefits of an acoustically sound classroom are many. Student's attention span improves, productivity and participation increases, and students have better educational outcomes. In short, the more a student can hear, the more they will learn and retain. An added benefit is to the teacher. They will not have to raise their voice to be heard. We believe the benefits of incorporating Hushh-Ups in all classrooms with hard of hearing children far outweigh the relatively minor cost involved in their implementation.

We Need Your Help!

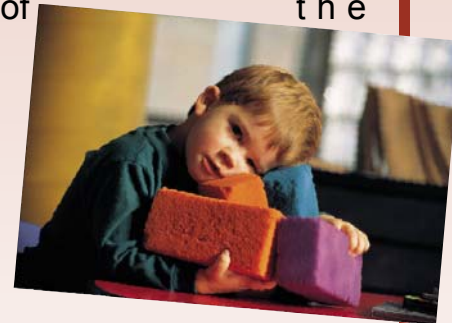
CHHA-NL is looking for patrons to sponsor the provision of Hushh-Ups for Kindergarten to Grade 6 classrooms in Newfoundland and Labrador. Schools with hard of hearing students receive first priority.

Benefits to Sponsors

- Tax deductible receipt for donation
- Public Recognition of contribution
- Satisfaction of knowing the contribution made to the education of children of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ways You Can Help!

- Become a sponsor
- Talk to your employer about becoming a corporate sponsor
- Hold a fund-raiser (bake sale, jeans day, coffee break)
- Encourage others to become a sponsor



Help us "Hushh-Up" the classrooms of Newfoundland and Labrador toward a "sound" future for our children.