

# Basic Requirements for a Better Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairment

**Dr. Arjun Prasad**

Special Educator, Department of Hearing Impairment, Faculty of Special Education

Dr. Shkuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow

Email: [drarjunprasaddsmru@gmail.com](mailto:drarjunprasaddsmru@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The aim of inclusion is to create a learning environment that respects diversity, makes all students feel valued, removes barriers to their learning and gives them the support they need to reach their full potential. Inclusion is not limited to students with disabilities. It is about including all children, regardless of their differences, in the process of education and participation. Children with hearing impairment require visual aids for better inclusion. There are several basic pre-inclusion and post-inclusion requirements for better inclusion of these children. Pre-inclusion requirements refer to creating an environment that prepares all individuals, especially students with special needs, to participate equally in education and society. Post-inclusion requirements refer to the necessary improvements and resources that ensure that the needs of all individuals are met in an inclusive environment. These basic requirements are presented in this article.

**Keywords:** Hearing impairment, better inclusion, learning environment, collaborative approach, guidance and counseling, basic needs, proper development etc.

## 1. Introduction

The word inclusion literally means making someone a part of a group, team, or organization. It is the process and act of creating an environment where all people in society, regardless of their personal identity, background, gender, race, or disability, feel respected, valued, and have an equal opportunity to participate actively and equally in all aspects of society, such as education, work, and daily life. It is not just about accepting diversity, but also about removing barriers that prevent people from being fully included, so that everyone can make their best contribution. Inclusion in education refers to an educational approach where all children, regardless of their physical, mental, racial, religious, linguistic, or other differences, receive quality education together in the same school and classroom. It aims to create a learning environment that respects diversity, makes all students feel valued, removes barriers to their learning, and gives them the support they need to reach their full potential. Based on the Salamanca Declaration (1994), the global movement of 'Education for All' states that inclusion of all children in regular schools is the most effective way to counter discriminatory attitudes and achieve the goal of inclusive education. Inclusion in the classroom refers to providing all children with the opportunity to learn together in a common classroom, regardless of their abilities. Attention is paid to

the individual needs of each child and support is given to them to participate. According to the National Curriculum Framework, India (2005), "Inclusion is not limited to students with disabilities. It is about including all children, regardless of their differences, in the process of education and participation." Good inclusion of children with hearing impairment requires visual aids, such as sign language, captioning and clear visual aids; strategic classroom modifications such as strategic seating arrangements and acoustic treatments; assistive technology, including hearing aids and remote microphones; clear communication practices such as speaking slowly and clearly; and a supportive social and educational environment that includes peer coaching, individual plans, and school-wide awareness of the child's needs. There are several basic pre and post-inclusion requirements for better inclusion of children with hearing impairment; some of the major requirements are as follows:

**Pre-Inclusion Requirements:**

Pre-Inclusion Requirements refer to creating an environment that enables all individuals, especially students with special needs, to participate equally in education and society. The following are the pre-inclusion requirements for children with hearing impairment:

**(I) Early Identification and Intervention of Hearing Impairment:**

Early identification and intervention is important for children with hearing impairment as it minimizes developmental impacts, leading to better language, speech, social and academic skills. Early identification enables timely access to hearing aids, assistive devices or cochlear implants, allowing children to reach their full communication potential. Intervention services, especially before the age of 6 months, significantly improve social interactions, emotional development and overall quality of life and prevent long-term cognitive decline and other challenges.

**(II) Use of Appropriate Hearing Aids:**

Appropriate hearing aids are important for children with hearing impairment to access sounds, develop speech and language, improve social skills and thrive in educational settings. Early and consistent use of properly fitted devices, tailored by qualified audiologists according to the child's specific degree and type of hearing loss, is essential for optimal language acquisition and overall development. Behind-the-ear assistive devices are common for children as they are able to accommodate ear development and family counseling is an important part of the process. In the modern scenario, cochlear implantation has proven to be a good hearing option for children with hearing impairment.

**(III) Proper speech, language and communication development:**

Speech, language and communication are important for the overall development of children with hearing impairment, helping them learn, form social relationships and achieve independence. Early intervention is important as the brain's language learning capacity is most active during childhood. Speech-language pathology, auditory training and the use of assistive devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants can help bridge the communication gap by maximizing residual hearing and promoting oral language development. Involvement of parents and related specialists is essential for the holistic development of speech, language and communication of children with hearing impairment.

**(IV) Properly Guidance and Counseling:**

Guidance and counseling for children with hearing impairment involves a multi-faceted approach, including early identification and intervention, supporting developmental goals such as speech and language through special techniques, providing information and support to families, promoting effective communication strategies for both the child and caregivers and linking them to special services and support networks. Key components include the use of hearing aids, teaching sign language, implementing strategies to enhance communication in different environments and linking families to professionals and resources such as audiologists and early intervention programs.

**Post Inclusion Requirements:**

Post Inclusion Requirements refer to the necessary improvements and resources that ensure that the needs of all individuals are met in an inclusive environment. The post inclusion requirements for children with hearing impairment are as follows-

**(I) Classroom Arrangements:**

Inclusive classrooms for children with hearing impairment should use semi-rectangular, semi-circular, L-shaped, straight line seating arrangements with preference to front facing seating arrangements to ensure clear visibility of the teacher and classmates, which is essential for lip reading and following visual cues. The distance between the teacher and the students should be 5 to 6 feet so that they can lip read during teaching. It is important to reduce background noise, make lighting optimal, and provide written material to supplement verbal instruction. It is also important to include visual aids, gestures and written notes to improve understanding and appoint a peer buddy for clarification.

**(II) Visual and Auxiliary Supports:**

To support children with hearing impairment in inclusive classrooms, use visual aids such as pictures, gestures and closed captioned videos, provide written notes or transcripts, and implement assistive technologies such as FM systems or remote microphones. Teachers should speak clearly and softly, use strategic seating arrangements to seat students towards the front, modify classroom acoustics to reduce noise and pauses between speakers to ensure clear communication. A collaborative approach incorporating individual education plans and consultation with the child's audiologist is important to provide support tailored to their specific needs.

**(III) Modifications in Teaching Methods:**

To teach children with hearing impairment in an inclusive classroom, use visual aids, such as charts and captioned videos, and clear gestures to supplement spoken language. Speaking slowly and clearly, facing the child directly and getting his/her attention before starting to speak. Providing written information, such as lecture outlines and new vocabulary lists, in advance. To improve access and create a positive learning environment where these children feel comfortable participating, it is important to consider using technology such as amplification systems or captioning.

**(IV) Curriculum Adaptations:**

The curriculum for children with hearing impairment in an inclusive classroom requires adapting content and teaching methods to focus on visual, sign language and written text rather than primarily

auditory input. This includes the use of audio-visual aids, providing sign language interpreters, using real-time captioning, breaking down complex topics into smaller units and teaching socio-emotional skills to promote social interaction and communication. A supportive classroom environment with optimal lighting and trained teachers is also essential for successful inclusion.

## Conclusion

Inclusion in education refers to an educational approach where all children, irrespective of their physical, mental, racial, religious, linguistic or other differences, receive quality education together in the same school and class. For better inclusion of hearing impaired children, there are several basic pre-inclusion and post-inclusion needs, some of which are pre-inclusion needs and some are post-inclusion needs. Pre-inclusion needs include early identification and intervention of hearing impairment, use of appropriate hearing aids, development of appropriate speech, language and communication, and timely guidance and counseling, and post-inclusion needs include classroom arrangements, visual and auxiliary supports, changes in teaching methods and curriculum adaptations.

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