

### Five Key points

- Children with typical hearing begin laying the foundation for spoken language in utero and follow a progression through ordered benchmarks in their auditory or listening development. (Elliot, 1964; Northern & Downs, 1991)
- Auditory capabilities of infants with typical hearing develop through a predictable hierarchy with early skills underlying later skills essential for spoken language and eventually literacy. (Boothroyd, 1997; Pollock, D. 1970)
- Teachers working with children with hearing loss benefit greatly from setting individual auditory goals for their students using a combination of well-regarded tools outlining the hierarchical auditory development of the typical child.

### Auditory Foundation for Spoken Language

Babies with typical hearing have had 20 weeks of listening before they were born and have a preference for their mother's voice above all others once they are arrive. Infants born with hearing loss begin life with a 20-week delay in their listening skills and neurological networking in the auditory cortex.

Research has shown babies acquire their native language by listening to speakers in their environment; and they begin life prepared to speak (Werker, 2006; Winegert & Brant, 2005; Cole & Flexer, 2007). This highlights the critical period for babies born with hearing loss until they are diagnosed and receive appropriate amplification in order to access the entire speech spectrum of their native spoken language. The delay can be a small as 34 weeks if diagnosed at birth through newborn hearing screening, or as large as 2-3 years without screening at birth.

### Auditory Hierarchies

Cole and Flexer, (2007) state "All informed auditory training work done with children with hearing loss to develop auditory skills is based on theoretical models and constructs." It is through these models that teachers are able to assess each child's current auditory capabilities and set subsequent goals in order to bring the child to their individual potential in spoken language through audition. Assessing children and setting appropriate auditory goals is best accomplished by consulting a variety of auditory hierarchies in order to ensure each child's individual needs are met.

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