



Sound in surround touted for classroom

OTTAWA -- All Canadian teachers from kindergarten to Grade 3 should wear microphones and classrooms should be equipped with surround-sound systems to give every student a "front row seat" when it comes to hearing, say audiologists and speech pathologists.

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OTTAWA -- All Canadian teachers from kindergarten to Grade 3 should wear microphones and classrooms should be equipped with surround-sound systems to give every student a "front row seat" when it comes to hearing, say audiologists and speech pathologists.

Citing research that shows young children cannot hear one of every six words the teacher says, the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists said Monday that classroom chatter, the din of computers, the hum of lights and outside distractions make classrooms noisy places that hinder student learning.

"When we put speakers in a classroom ... everybody shuts up and listens," Andre Lafargue, a New Brunswick audiologist, told a news conference on Parliament Hill.

A new study of 1,162 students in kindergarten to Grade 3, conducted by the New Brunswick government and professors at University of New Brunswick and the Atlantic Baptist University in Moncton, N.B., found that sound amplification is a significant benefit to young students and should be considered a "vital part" of helping them learn.

In the study, researchers studied 31 classes with sound systems installed and 29 without.

Students hear poorly if they are more than 2.75 metres away from the teacher. Another significant problem is that teachers' voices become strained trying to make themselves heard.

In tens of thousands of classrooms across Canada, teachers are already donning lightweight microphones around their necks to project their voices in the classroom.

Teacher Anna Crosland at Bear Creek Elementary School in Surrey said that "it's still early days" for surround sound at her school, but the systems appear to be making a difference since they were installed in the middle of the last school year.

"Even the youngest children are able to articulate that it's easier for them to hear the teacher," said Crosland. "I see the children, physically sit back in their chairs, knowing they're not going to have to struggle to hear what the teacher has to say."

The systems also appear to be making a difference for students who are learning English as a second

language, she said.

The West Vancouver School Board just bought dozens of systems for about \$1,200 each.

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