

## Listening and Spoken Language Strategy:

# Whisper

**Definition:** A **Whisper** is accomplished when the speaker turns off the voice and reduces the suprasegmental of intensity. Whispering is a form of acoustic highlighting.

### How is this strategy done?

In order to whisper, a person uses their breath to speak softly without the use of the vocal cords. This affects the suprasegmental of intensity (loudness) which gives extra power to consonant sounds.

### Why is this strategy important?

In the English language, vowels carry the power of speech as well as the prosody (Ling, 1989) while consonants carry the meaning, or intelligibility, of speech. The vowel sounds can often overpower the less intense consonant sounds which makes them more difficult to hear for a child with hearing loss. A *whisper* can make the consonants easier to hear (more acoustically salient) and give the child a chance to focus on the consonant sound as opposed to the vowel sound.

This Auditory Verbal strategy helps build the following Listening and Spoken Language skills:

- ✓ auditory attention
- ✓ auditory accessibility
- ✓ auditory feedback loop

### Discussion

The voice can be used in many in different ways to capture the attention of listeners. Children are much more interested in listening to a storyteller who uses their voice to intrigue the listener. A *whisper* can add an element of surprise and call attention to the speaker. Children will often lean in and focus on what is being said when a *whisper* is utilized correctly. It may take a few repetitions, but the *whisper* will cue the child to focus intently on the speaker's message. A *whisper* also allows the higher frequency sounds of speech to be heard more clearly.

Try a whisper for a word that a child has misarticulated and see if the child is able to change that error after the word or sound has been whispered.

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### Example

Child: I saw two cat

**Adult:** Hmm. There were two? Listen.....I saw two *cats*. (whisper only the word *cats*)

Give the child a chance to repeat the phrase including “cats” with the /s/ sound on the end

Whisper

# References

Ling, D. (1989). *Foundations of spoken language for hearing-impaired children*. Washington, DC: Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf.