

## An Overview of Auditory Processing Disorder by Dr. Kirstina Ordetx



An auditory processing disorder is referred to as Central Auditory Processing Disorder and describes an interference of sound along the pathway from the ear to the brain: receiving, remembering, understanding, and using. The child who has the disorder is unable to filter competing background noises, may not be able to discriminate the subtle differences between sounds in words, and may not be able to discern where sounds are coming from. These auditory breakdowns make it challenging for the student to follow instructions, understand lengthy messages, and determine what is expected of her. She may frequently ask for clarification or for instructions to be repeated, may lose focus, and become frustrated. The areas affected by Central Auditory Processing Disorder include:

- **Auditory discrimination:** The ability to notice, compare and distinguish between distinct and separate sounds. The words *seventy* and *seventeen* may sound alike, for instance.
- **Auditory figure-ground discrimination:** The ability to focus on the important sounds in a noisy setting. It would be like sitting at a party and not being able to hear the person next to you because there's so much background chatter.
- **Auditory memory:** The ability to recall what you've heard, either immediately or when you need it later.
- **Auditory sequencing:** The ability to understand and recall the order of sounds and words. A child might say or write "ephelant" instead of "elephant," or hear the number 357 but write 735.

CAPD can often go undetected, as the specific regions of the brain that are responsible for the processing of auditory information are not fully developed until 7 or 8 years of age. In addition, the classroom setting is often where student challenges are recognized. Getting a diagnosis

requires finding a trained audiologist who can conduct specific tests that demonstrate how the brain responds to sounds.

Students who have a central auditory processing disorder thrive in a learning environment that uses a *multi-sensory approach*. Understanding their strengths and personal learning style (visual, auditory, tactile-kinesthetic) is a first step in building confidence as a learner. Opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge through *project-based learning* are necessary to foster motivation and attention. Teachers who recognize and understand the student's processing challenges will incorporate strategies and modifications to help with compensation and grade-level maintenance. These modifications will include the use of visual strategies, summarizing techniques, graphic organizers, content preview/review, comprehension checks, cooperative learning with specific partner pairing, executive function training, and opportunities for rubric-driven assessment.

Suggested Reading:

When the Brain Can't Hear by Terri James Bellis

The Sound of Hope: Recognizing, Coping with, and Treating Your Child's Auditory Processing Disorder by Lois Cam Heymann