

Two moms shine a light on hearing in the classroom

Susan Stibal and Beth Brady partnered with their local district to create a pilot project called Hear to Learn, which brought Redcat audio systems to every elementary class

MAKING EVERY DESK A GOOD PLACE TO HEAR

Imagine asking a child to learn to read in the dark. Of course she would struggle. Instead of turning the lights on in her classroom, imagine you categorize her as low-achieving or mediocre. No school in the country would allow this. We expect every child’s desk to be a good place to see, but not every desk is a good place to hear.

Classrooms are noisy—and growing. Many “open concept” schools don’t even have walls to contain noise between classrooms. Radiators rattle. Vents hum. Chairs squeak. It’s no wonder research shows that kids not seated in the front row miss 30% to 50% of what their teachers say.

Other factors can put students further behind. Maybe they sit in the back, speak English as a second language, have ear infections or attention deficits, or are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Most parents don’t necessarily see when their children struggle to hear. But hearing is not invisible to us. As moms, one with a child who hears with cochlear implants and one who works as a speech pathologist, when we discovered classroom audio and quickly learned about the benefits, we immediately determined that this was something every classroom in our community should have.

We partnered with Lincoln Public Schools in Lincoln, Nebraska, on a pilot project called “Hear to Learn.” After convincing the superintendent and raising the needed funds, we installed 139 Redcat classroom audio systems—one in every room of five elementary schools. We’re now in phase two, working with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to study the benefits.

After two months with the systems, here’s what our teachers are saying:

1) CHILDREN HEAR INSTRUCTION NO MATTER WHERE THEY SIT

Because the audio system’s flat panel speaker projects the teacher’s voice evenly across the classroom, every desk becomes a good place for students to hear and learn. Teachers are able to quickly get a student’s attention from across the room and don’t have to repeat themselves when giving instructions.

2) NO MORE “TEACHER VOICE”

Teachers raising their voices to be heard often results in vocal-strain related absences, or just plain old exhaustion at the end of the day. When they wear the small infrared microphone around their neck, teachers can speak normally (or even whisper) and still be heard throughout the room.



LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HEAR TO LEARN LINCOLN, NE

CHALLENGE

Allowing all students in large and chaotic classrooms to hear the teacher and each other clearly.

LIGHTSPEED SOLUTION

Redcat Access Tabletop System



RESULTS

- Teachers are able to quickly get a student’s attention from across the room and don’t have to repeat themselves when giving instructions
- When they wear the small infrared microphone around their neck, teachers can speak normally and still be heard throughout the room
- Teachers report fewer off-task behaviors, resulting in easier classroom management, increased instructional time, and better academic outcomes for students
- With the handheld microphone for students, even the quietest child can be heard

3) STUDENTS PAY BETTER ATTENTION AND STAY ON TASK

Students listen and engage more readily when they can hear. Teachers report fewer off-task behaviors, resulting in easier classroom management, increased instructional time, and better academic outcomes for students.

4) STUDENTS LEARN MORE FROM EACH OTHER

With more emphasis on reciprocal (student-to-student) teaching, hearing each other is critical. With the handheld microphone for students, even the quietest child can be heard. Teachers tell us children love the microphones and wait patiently to use them.

5) TOOLS LIKE VIDEOS AND MUSIC AND MAXIMIZED

Using multimedia not only helps keep children engaged, but it's an important part of today's reading curriculum. Our teachers are able to hook up their laptops or personal electronic devices wirelessly to the speaker while their voices are still being heard clearly over the music or video.

We started the Hear to Learn project because we knew that it was vital for children to hear their teachers and each other. Thanks to our passionate supporters in the community, we were able to make a difference. Think about your hometown. How can you help children hear to learn?

Connect with Susan Stibal and Beth Brady by watching this short [video](#) and following [Hear to Learn](#) on Facebook.

