

July 22, 2010

David Capozzi, Executive Director  
U.S. Access Board  
1331 F St. NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Capozzi:

As the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists, with over 11,000 members, the American Academy of Audiology (the "Academy") remains constantly vigilant to all issues associated with classroom acoustics. This includes the implications of listening in noise, both for individuals with normal hearing and those with hearing loss.

The Academy recognizes that appropriate classroom acoustics are necessary for children to access instruction and communication in classrooms at school. This means hearing and understanding what the teacher and all students in the classroom are saying. Listening in a noisy classroom environment is exacerbated for all children because their language competency is less developed than adults. This reduced language competency leaves them even more vulnerable to the negative effects of noise on listening and learning. Simply stated, noise in the classroom (both external noise and reverberation within the classroom) begins a domino effect where noise masks speech sounds leading to speech perception difficulties and subsequently decreased speech understanding. Children who are unable to hear and understand what is spoken experience academic achievement deficits, and often an increase in social-emotional problems. Children with hearing loss exhibit even more difficulty due to their reduced ability to hear caused by their hearing loss. The masking effect of noise in the classroom compounds the difficulty experienced by children with hearing loss. Likewise, children with attention deficits and other language and learning challenges demonstrate similar problems. Additionally, children who are non-native speakers of English experience excessive difficulty understanding speech in noisy environments, and these children constitute an increasing proportion of the school-age population in the U.S.

We urge the Access Board to undertake rulemaking for classroom acoustics and adopt the ANSI/ASA standards as part of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. The Academy stands ready to work with the Access Board to promote efforts to improve classroom acoustics. Please contact Melissa Sinden, Senior Director of Government Relations, at (202) 544-9335 or [msinden@audiology.org](mailto:msinden@audiology.org) with any questions.

| Sincerely,



Patricia B. Kricos, PhD  
President, American Academy of Audiology