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Introducing Deaf Children to the Mainstreamed Classroom through Literature

Submitted to the Faculty
Of the Master of Science Program in Secondary Education
Of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

National Technical Institute for the Deaf
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

By

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Student Signature

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Approved:

Project Advisor

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Introducing Deaf Children to the Mainstreamed Classroom through Literature

Shannon Hurley Seleen

National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Rochester Institute of Technology
INTRODUCING DEAF CHILDREN THROUGH LITERATURE

Project Overview

Currently, in America, most Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are in mainstreamed programs, rather than in residential schools. Most hearing children and teachers do not have much background knowledge about Deaf children. It is my belief that if a good book were published about a Deaf child entering a mainstreamed school, teachers would be able to use it to introduce Deaf children to the class. The book discusses some of the technology (TTY, Cochlear Implants, relay, and hearing aids) used by the deaf child and how the Deaf child communicates and uses an interpreter. My goal was to have the book be full of facts, and yet, still exciting for young children to read.

My final project is divided into three separate parts: the literature review, a children's book, and teacher's resources. The literature review consists of a paper written about relevant literature that has to do with the reasoning behind my project and the information in my book. My book is a standard children's book of 32 pages. My book’s target audience is 1st-4th grade. I would like to have this book published professionally.

Importance of the Project

This topic is important to me for many reasons. I love children’s books. I believe that children’s books are what shaped my ideals and beliefs about reading. I can remember what books I read as a child, and still today I can tell
you what they are about. I remember where I was when I read the book and how I felt. I want to be able to bring this same feeling to young children. I think that young children identify with children's books and are able to live and make decisions through children's books.

I also think that this project is important to deaf education because deaf students are placed into mainstreamed schools. Teachers need to have a way to approach the topic of deafness and to help the hearing students understand deafness and accept the Deaf student into their new environment. I think that many hearing children and teachers have questions about deafness once they see a Deaf child, and most are afraid to ask questions. I have observed that instead of questioning the Deaf student directly these children often pick on the Deaf child, and that makes for a difficult transition, for all children involved.

Project Objectives

My goal for this project was to create a book that would help teachers introduce Deaf children to mainstream classrooms. There is only one other book written for children about deafness or Deaf children. My book addresses Deaf children who rely on American Sign Language (ASL), cochlear implants, and an interpreter. I am also hoping that after children read this book and discuss it with adults, the reader will be able to appreciate their Deaf peers and be able to realize how diverse the world is.
Abstract

This project creates a product that teachers can use in the classroom to help introduce a Deaf or Hard of Hearing student to a mainstream class. As I started researching I discovered that there was are no similar products and that many teachers are not aware of deafness and the related issues. In order to create a children's book to help address this gap, I took a class about how to write children's books. For background I researched why Deaf and Hard of Hearing students are mainstreamed, as well as the problems with integrating Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. I then wrote my book. My book still needs to be tested with a real classroom before it can be submitted for publishing. Finally, I have included some additional resources for the teacher to explore.

Review of literature

I reviewed a variety of important topics in preparation for writing my book. This literature review focuses upon legislation and the effect that it has had on educational placement for children who are deaf, the social status of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in the classroom, how to teach literature based teaching, and what other books were currently on the market. This review led to the rationale and topics that are covered in my book.
Legislation and Deaf Children’s Education

“Educational programming for children and youth with a hearing loss is significantly influenced by legislation,” (Yater, 1997, p. 197). Public Law 94-142, the Education For All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, strengthened the trend toward mainstreaming Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) children. “This act mandated a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities, and it stipulated procedural safeguards to protect the rights of these children and their parents. The act called for nondiscriminatory testing, assurance of an annual individualized educational plan (IEP), and provision of services in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate to each child’s needs” (Moores, 1996, p. 19). This meant that public schools were required to accept and accommodate Deaf children whose parents wanted them to attend mainstream classes.

“Although PL 42-142 has been viewed in some areas as the “mainstreaming law,” the term mainstreaming was deliberately excluded from the act, which mandates both an appropriate education and an education in the least restrictive environment,” (Moores, 1996, p. 19). Mainstreaming means that a child is in a classroom with his/her peers during the day. The child does not need to be in the classroom the full day. Many people have differing views on what the Least Restrictive Environment for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children is.
Least Restrictive Environment is often interpreted by the many Deaf advocates including the Deaf community, teachers and parents, to mean that the child is not restricted in communication, and that the child attends a residential school.

"Some concern has been expressed that integrated placements may not meet the special needs of the hearing impaired. Both the Conference of Executives of American Schools for the Deaf (CEASD, 1977) and the National Association of the Deaf have argued that the notion of the least restrictive environment, established in Public Law 94-142, must refer to the range of services available as well as to their location and delivery. Hearing impaired children, placed in regular classes are in an educationally restrictive environment if their special needs are not being met", (Reich, Hambleton, & Houldin, 1977, p. 534).

On the other hand, many times the government, and other advocates, including parents and teaches do not agree with the Deaf community. This group of people believe that Least Restrictive Environment means that the child is learning with his/her hearing peers as much of the time as possible in a mainstream setting. In addition, the vast majority of Deaf children have hearing parents who wish for their child to be educated locally. Sending a child to a residential school takes the child out of the family's house. The family is becoming more important to the American society. Until modern technology, it was not uncommon for Deaf students to only return home to their families for major holidays (Bishop, 1979). Recently with both modern technology and the opportunity for many Deaf and Hard of Hearing to attend mainstream classrooms, students can be home every night with their families.
advocates believe that this is the most important reason to place a child in the mainstream classroom (Brill, 1978).

**Increase in Deaf Students' Mainstreaming**

Over the years, since Public Law 94-142, there has been an increase in Deaf children attending mainstream schools. As of 1977, 38% of Deaf students were mainstreamed either part or full time, with 49% of Deaf students attending a residential school; however, not all of these students lived at the school, (Karchmer & Trybus, 1977). Even in a one year time frame (1999-2000 and 2001-2002) there still seems to be an increase. According to the Gallaudet Research Institute, in 2000 (published in 2001), 58.3% of deaf and hard of hearing students were mainstreamed in a "regular education setting," and by 2001 (published in 2003) the number had risen to 65.6%.

While the number of students who are educated in a special school or center dropped from 28.7% to 26.6% (Gallaudet Research Institute (GRI), 2001 and 2003), the number of residential schools in the United States has also dropped and the number of public school programs have increased. In 1965 there were 69 public residential schools and 281 public school day classes. In 1975, the number of residential schools dropped to 63 and the number of public day school classes increased to 489 (Farrugia & Austin, 1980). These numbers show a significant change, and show that the switch to mainstreaming is still occurring. Also, the "total number of hours [deaf and hard of hearing students
are integrated with hearing students for academic instruction is increasing," (Gallaudet Research Institute (GRI), 2001 and 2003).

The number of students who are mainstreamed is still constantly increasing due to other factors as well. PL 94-142 is not the only factor influencing the shift to mainstreaming deaf and hard of hearing children. There are many other factors that contribute to the decision to mainstream a deaf child or not such as degree of hearing loss, age of onset, and distance to residential school. Currently, only 10% of students with a profound hearing loss are educated in mainstreamed programs, while 74% of students with less than a severe hearing loss (71 db or greater hearing loss) are in mainstream programs (Reich, Hambleton, & Houldin, 1977). The age of onset of deafness also has an effect on the educational setting. If a child becomes deaf after he/she is able to speak, than he/she is more likely to be placed in a mainstream setting. Children who become deaf before they are able to speak are more than fifty percent more likely to be educated in a residential setting (Reich, Hambleton, & Houldin, 1977). Children who have Deaf parents, and use American Sign Language (ASL) at home to communicate are also more likely attend a residential school (Reich, Hambleton, & Houldin, 1977). Parents who are a part of Deaf Culture and the Deaf community are more apt to send their children to residential schools because of social and leadership opportunities, and because Deaf culture is important at residential schools. I have observed in my teaching that Deaf children, who have other handicapping conditions besides Deafness, also tend to
attend residential programs, where they are better able to obtain the special services that they need.

Clearly the numbers of deaf students attending primarily hearing school settings has increased rapidly, for the variety of reasons mentioned above. This trend is continuing. Given this situation, there are an increased number of teachers and hearing students who could benefit from information regarding deafness.

**Socialization of Deaf Children in Mainstream Settings**

Much research has indicated that there are often difficulties relating to emotional and social development for the deaf student, which need to be understood and alleviated or prevented. A number of authors mention that academic performance is often enhanced by attendance in public schools, however, social and emotional development may be adversely affected (Reich, Hambelton, & Houldin, 1977, Farrugia & Austin, 1980, Martin & Bat-Chava, 2003). "Although many deaf children educated in mainstream schools achieve good academic outcomes they also show signs of greater isolation and psychological difficulty compared with children who attend schools primarily with other deaf peers," (Martin & Bat-Chava, 2003, p. 512). "Mainstreaming challenges us to address both the commonality and diversity among students with and without impairments," (Higgins, 1990, p. 138). When Deaf children are mainstreamed, many times the hearing children have questions and do not accept the Deaf
child. It is the teacher’s job to help facilitate the introduction of the Deaf child to the classroom.

Anita and Stinson (2002), discuss that as teachers, we need to make the Deaf child feel as if they are a “member” of the class. Being a member “in the school community implies that all students and teachers are accepted and valued by the school and that their unique needs are met within the classroom and school community,” (214). For a student to become a member, all teachers, students, and staff need to work together to erase stigmas and create a healthy school environment.

Powell notes that some students feel as if their teachers forgot about the fact they were Deaf and it made school more difficult, (as cited in, Froehlinger, 1981). One of the many ways that teachers can address this is by using the “Buddy System.” The “Buddy System,” is a good way to help students with communication and to help with “missing things in the classroom.” The Buddy helps the Deaf child by telling him/her what is happening during morning announcements, fire drills, and when the classroom gets noisy. The hearing child is also able to learn about a new culture and way of life. The “Buddy System” has been shown to help Deaf students receive important information in the classroom (as cited in, Froehlinger, 1981).

Many Deaf students in the mainstreamed environment never meet another Deaf child. Also, most Deaf children in mainstreamed schools will never meet any Deaf adults that are able to serve as a role model for the child. Some advocates for Deaf culture believe that this inhibits Deaf identity (Foster &
Deaf children who are mainstreamed should have access to Deaf culture outside of school, and teachers need to make sure that they are not negatively influencing a Deaf identity, (Foster & Emerton). To help alleviate social isolation, Yater believes that it is important for hearing children and teachers to understand deafness and to be able to ask questions about deafness (1977). It is also important to understand what adjustments need to be made in the classroom. A classroom demonstration or lesson about deafness should be incorporated as soon as the Deaf child walks into the mainstreamed classroom. “If children understand each other’s needs it is considerably more difficult to reject each other.” (Yater, 1977, p. 180). Gaustad believes that you can’t just introduce a Deaf child and leave it at that. Lessons should be infused with Deaf culture and topics about deafness through out the year, (Anita & Stinson, 2002).

Deaf students need therefore to be truly integrated into the mainstreamed class with the help and active approaches of the teacher. Such approaches are essential to help alleviate or prevent possible social isolation of the deaf student, and possible issues of identity. Reading a book about deafness, as well as discussing it in class with the Deaf students and/or Deaf adults might be one step in the effort to create a more complete and inclusive environment for social and emotional growth.
Literature Based Instruction

Literature based instruction is widely used in both elementary and middle schools (Smallwood, 2002). Literature based teaching happens when a teacher uses literature as the main source of information for teaching young children. "As teachers implement literature-based programs across the curriculum, they see the advantages of children's nonfiction as a vehicle for helping students learn subjects such as social studies, science, and health," (Moss, 1991, p. 26). Basal readers are gradually being phased out and children's nonfiction, informational, books are starting to replace them in both elementary and middle schools, (Moss). Also, elementary school students tend to prefer nonfiction books to text books, basal, and educational books. "The incorporation of age- and language-appropriate thematic literature into the early childhood curriculum can stimulate content-based academic learning. This systematic approach is particularly beneficial to young children ages 3 through 8 because it provides background knowledge and cultural information along with opportunities to hear, speak, and interact with carefully crafted language in thematic and story contexts. It also develops literacy in an engaging and playful context" (Smallwood, p. 1).
Disability Books

Currently there are not many books (still in print) about deafness and Deaf children that are written for and at the elementary level, although books about sign language and how to sign are numerous. The only book that I found about a Deaf child is titled “Can You Hear the Rainbow: The Story of a Deaf Boy Named Chris.” This book chronicles the life of a Deaf child named Chris. Chris is a Deaf child who learns using the oral method. This book is the only book written for children that I was able to find about deafness, besides books written about Helen Keller and sign language. Books about deafness are important in helping teachers to introduce Deaf children into the classroom.

There are many books, written for children who have disabilities other than deafness. The most common disabilities topics that I found were, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, and stories about children with other physical disabilities such as orthopedic disabilities. For the most part, these books cover how the child feels about being disabled and what other children should know about the disabled child. Most of the disability books that I looked at discussed that you should treat the disabled child like any other child, and that you should not tease the child about his/her disability. There were also a few biographies about famous people who were disabled in some way. These people include Helen Keller and Franklin D. Roosevelt. None of the books went into much technical information about the disability. In general, the section for
books written for children about disabilities is very small. The one book that is
written about deafness, for children, is about an oral student.

Conclusion

The mainstreaming of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students has been
rapidly increasing over the last three decades. As a result many classrooms now
have one or more Deaf or Hard of Hearing student. The majority of the teachers
and hearing students know very little about deafness, and for this reason I
decided to write a book for children about Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in
the mainstreamed setting. My book addresses Deaf children who rely on
American Sign Language (ASL) and an interpreter. Also, children’s nonfiction
literature many times is not up to date with new technology (Moss, 1991). I have
not been able to find any children’s books that address cochlear implants. With
so many children now receiving cochlear implants, I think that it is important for
both children and adults to know about this new technology. I am also hoping
after children read this book and discuss it with adults, the readers will be able to
appreciate their Deaf peers and be able to realize how diverse the world is.

Implementation

When I started this project I took a class about how to write and publish
children’s books. Then I outlining everything that I wanted to address in my book.
I then went to two hearing children ages 8 and 11. I discussed the topics with them and I had them tell me what they understood and what they found interesting. I then took this information and wrote my book. After the first draft of my book I returned to the same two children and I read them the book. We had an hour conversation about the book and I changed it based on their suggestions. Not all of their suggestions were verbally stated. Some of their suggestions were implied by the questions that they asked. I revised the book three more times, and each time I went back to the same two children and asked what they thought of the changes. When they told me that they found interesting and understood in the book, I revised and finalized the information one more time. I will test this book in the classroom before I submit it for publishing.

Discussion

I thought that it would be easy to discuss, and put into a book, deafness issues for young children. I found that it was difficult to make the book easy for children to understand. If I were to complete this project again, I would test this book with a real class earlier. I think that I would also try to read the book to more Deaf students. I would also sign up to take a class to help me write the book. Before I submit my book for publishing, I plan on testing my book more. I would like to read my book to a real classroom to receive young students input on my book. I would then change it according to what the students say. Also, before I submit for publishing, I would like to have a few teachers look at my Teacher's Guide and change it based on their suggestions.
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parents, and administrators. Washington, DC: Alexander Graham Bell 
Association for the Deaf.


Appendices
Appendix A:

Children’s Book Titled “Caitlin and William’s New School”
“Caitlin and William’s New School”

Caitlin and William were nervous and excited. They were going to a new school. This school was different; this school was for both hearing and Deaf children. Caitlin and William used to go to a school where everyone used Sign Language to communicate and everyone was Deaf. Caitlin, William, and their interpreter, Charles, walked into the new classroom. Everyones’ mouths were moving and all of the students were in a group. All three walked into the room; everyone stopped and looked at them. They all started to talk at the same time. Charles was signing and telling them what was happening, but it was a blur. Both Caitlin and William were a little frightened and worried about how they would be able to understand everything. They hoped people would raise their hands in class.

The teacher asked all of the students to sit on the carpet in front of her. Caitlin and William were nervous, but Charles told them that they would be fine and that he would sign to them everything that was being said.

The teacher, Mrs. Rose, introduced herself to Caitlin and William. Mrs. Rose then started to explain who Charles was to the class. “We will have another new person in the class from now on. He is an interpreter.”

“What is an interpreter?” asked Mary.

“An interpreter is a person who listens to what people are saying and uses Sign Language to tell a person who can’t hear what is being said. The interpreter also watches what the Deaf person is
signing and speaks so that hearing people can understand what is being said.

"What is Sign Language?"

"Sign Language is a language where you don’t speak to a person; instead you use your hands to talk."

"WOW!"

Caitlin and William were starting to feel more comfortable with the class. Then, Mark noticed something on Caitlin’s head and asked Mrs. Rose what it was.

“That is Caitlin’s Cochlear Implant. A Cochlear Implant is a device that Caitlin had surgically put in her ear to help her hear and understand what people are saying,” Mrs. Rose answered.

(Insert picture of Cochlear Implant here)

Mark turned to Caitlin, “Does it hurt?”

“No. Do you want to feel it?” she signed to Charles and smiled.

As soon as Charles told Mark what she said, Mark smiled and the whole class walked over and touched the place where Caitlin’s Cochlear Implant was on the side of her head.

Then Mary turned to William and asked him why he didn’t have a Cochlear Implant.

“A Cochlear Implant does not work for everyone; Hearing aids work better for me. Not all Deaf people are the same,” William explained.

William took his hearing aid out of his ear and showed it to the class.

(Insert picture of Hearing aid here)
The class was very interested in all three of the new people in the classroom. The class had many questions. One student was afraid to make William and Caitlin mad, so she talked to the teacher before she asked each of her questions. Mrs. Rose asked both Caitlin and William if they would answer the students’ questions. They were so happy that the other students were accepting them that they answered every question.

Mary asked how they became Deaf.

Caitlin signed to the class, “We were both born Deaf, but our parents can hear, just like your parents.” It took a while to explain but Caitlin told the class that most Deaf children do not have Deaf parents.

Mary thought that Caitlin was smart and wanted to be her friend.

Then, Mark asked William, “Why don’t you or your sister talk?” William told the class, “We both go to a special class every week to learn how to talk. Many Deaf people can talk but it is a hard thing for many to learn.”

Caitlin said, “Using American Sign Language is our way of talking.”

Mary then asked shyly, “Why does your voice sound different?” Caitlin then told the class, I have never clearly heard a person’s voice so I have to train myself to talk.”

Then Caitlin got an idea. She asked the teacher if she could teach the class how to sign the alphabet. The teacher said that it was okay but only after lunch and recess. She told the class to line up and go to lunch. Charles went with the students and was busy
interpreting through all of lunch and recess. The kids didn't play much; they all sat and continued to ask questions.

When the students returned from lunch, all of their desks were moved into a circle. They all sat down quietly. Mrs. Rose told the class that she moved the desks so that everyone would be able to see each other talking. Caitlin then taught the whole class the fingerspelled alphabet, even Mrs. Rose. Mrs. Rose promised the class that Caitlin and William could teach them a few words a week so that the whole could talk to each other in Sign Language.

Both Caitlin and William had a wonderful day. Before it was time to leave, Mary asked Caitlin if she could call her on the phone some time.

Caitlin said, “I have what is called a TTY. It is a computer that I use to type what I say.” (Insert photo here) “Mrs. Rose already told me that I can teach the class how to use one next week.”

Mary was very exited to learn more.

When they got home, they told their Mom and Dad all about their day, and said that they love school. Caitlin hoped that she and Mary would become best friends and Mark hoped that he and William would become best friends. Caitlin and William were excited knowing that they were going to be happy and have many friends at their new school.
Appendix B:

Teacher Resources
Teacher Resources

This book is meant to be read before, or as soon as possible after, that a Deaf or Hard of Hearing student enters your classroom. More and more Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are being mainstreamed and many teachers and students know about deafness. Use this book as an opportunity to talk with the Deaf student. With this guide both you and the Deaf student can answer any questions that the hearing students may have. This book addresses issues such as Sign Language and interpreters, TTY, Cochlear Implants, hearing aids. Here are some good resources.

TTY-
http://www.captions.com/tty.html

Relay-
http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trs/con_trs.html

ASL-
http://www.aslinfo.com/aboutasl.cfm

Sign Language Alphabet-
http://where.com/scott.net/asl/abc.html

Interpreters-
http://www.swsc.org/windomsc/Sign%20Language%20Interpreter.htm

Classroom tips-
http://www.ohlone.edu/org/dsps/dspsfacultyhandbook/classroomtips.html

Cochlear Implants-
http://www.zak.co.il/deaf-info/old/ci-faq.html

Hearing Aids-
http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/

Book about Deafness Issues-
For Hearing People Only by By Matthew S. Moore and Linda Levitan
Deaf Life Press, 1993