

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



# **Summary of key issues for ‘Very High Needs’ and ‘High Needs’ deaf students in mainstream schools**

Rachel McKee and Eileen Smith

**Deaf Studies Research Unit**

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Contact: [rachel.mckee@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:rachel.mckee@vuw.ac.nz)

## **Common issues for ‘Very High Needs’ and ‘High Needs’ deaf students in mainstream schools - from 5 surveys of Parents, ITODs, Teacher Aides, Mainstream Teachers, Deaf paraprofessionals**

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### ***Communication modes and communication access***

- 54% (of parent survey sample) were profoundly deaf, 40% severely, 6.5 % moderately deaf; 20% had a cochlear implant. Of this sample:

#### **67 % are oral**

- Many have difficulty accessing spoken communication at school -
  - acoustic classroom environment not suitable
  - language delays – gaps in academic & social language skills cause social and learning barriers
  - many need ‘oral interpreting’ - provided by TAs
- Insufficient speech and auditory-verbal therapy available for oral & CI children

#### **33% are signers**

- 14.4% sign language (NZSL?), 18.4% sign and speech mixed
  - Half of profoundly deaf children use sign language
  - More children sign at home than receive SL support at school
- Low level of NZSL competence in teaching staff, families
  - SL interpreting provided by untrained Teacher Aides: classroom data indicates poor quality of access to info

- 74% of TAs feel ‘totally’ or ‘very’ responsible for student’s communication access in class
- 83% of mainstream teachers believe they can communicate at least reasonably well with their deaf student
- Majority of Teachers and Teacher Aides estimate that deaf students can access half or more of the communication in class

<b><i>Positive perceptions about mainstream situation</i></b>	<b><i>Negative perceptions about mainstream situation</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for social experience with hearing peers</li> <li>• Exposure to normal curriculum and extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Opportunity for speech development in oral language environment</li> <li>• Proximity to home- easy transport, local community connections</li> <li>• Parents express high level of satisfaction with ITOD support</li> <li>• Deaf Mentor innovation is seen as positive</li> <li>• 86% of mainstream teachers are satisfied with support and advice received about teaching deaf student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social isolation, lack of deaf role models &amp; self esteem</li> <li>• Academic gap – difficulty accessing mainstream curriculum at same level as peers (communication barriers; insufficient teaching support)</li> <li>• Student dependence on Teacher Aides (TA is main focus of students’ interaction rather than with teacher, peers)</li> <li>• Inadequate training to ensure effective practice/outcomes – especially mainstream teachers, teacher aides, but also ITODs, Advisors</li> <li>• Gaps in availability of specialist support – ITOD coverage, speech therapy, NZSL tuition, family support</li> <li>• Early Intervention –inconsistently available, too narrow in focus (Parents express low level of satisfaction with Advisor support)</li> <li>• Lack of physical adaptation in classrooms– acoustics, awareness of visual needs, utilization of H. Aid and notetaking technology</li> </ul>

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### ***Perceptions and data on academic outcomes***

- Parents report that it is difficult to get realistic information about their child's achievement level from teachers
- 77% of parents believe their children to be achieving 'reasonably well' or 'very well'
- Mainstream teachers report difficulty assessing deaf students - language difference, adapting assessments, appropriate benchmarks
- 65% of mainstream teachers report their deaf student to be below age level in literacy, 56% below age level in maths, and 59% below age level in other curriculum areas
- Majority of ITODs see educational outcomes as 'less than satisfactory' for most mainstreamed students, esp. profoundly deaf, & signers
- A small (probably unrepresentative) sample of national examination results data for 32 secondary school students on ITOD caseloads indicates that 84% passed 2.75 School Cert subjects, 53% passed 3 6<sup>th</sup>FC subjects, 34% passed 3 Bursary subjects.
- Absence of a centralised system for recording data on academic achievement of mainstreamed D/HI students makes it impossible to empirically evaluate educational outcomes at either primary or secondary level at present.
- Deaf paraprofessionals identify linguistic isolation and communication barriers, lack of Deaf-appropriate teaching strategies, and over-dependence on teacher aides as main contributors to academic under-achievement.

## ***Desired changes to current mainstream situation***

Parents and professionals prioritise these points differently, however all items are common to their 'wish-lists':

- Training of mainstream teachers – deaf awareness, NZSL, teaching strategies
- Training of teacher aides – deaf awareness, NZSL, speech, curriculum teaching strategies, behaviour management
- Prof development , further training for ITODs – NZSL, speech development. Qualify those who are currently untrained.
- More effective early intervention - wider scope of information & training for parents
- NZSL tuition for teachers, teacher aides, deaf students, families, hearing students
- Access to deaf peers, deaf role models, deaf studies, NZSL models - by clustering deaf students, and more Deaf staff
- Qualified interpreters and notetakers to provide communication access
- Improved deaf awareness in school/community
- Increased and more consistent availability of specialist resources – e.g. ITOD contact, speech therapy, Deaf mentors
- Rationalise allocation and coordination of support services - reduce excesses, inefficiencies
- Improve accountability in the use of ORS funding resources by schools
- More assistance for moderate needs students