

Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands: The Story of Deaf Education in New Zealand

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Overview

This TSM contains information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The materials provide multiple opportunities for revisiting the text several times.

“Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands: The Story of Deaf Education in New Zealand” explores how attitudes towards deafness have influenced the way education for the Deaf has changed over time. The article includes a social history of the van Asch Deaf Education Centre, which opened in 1880 (making it the oldest fully government-funded residential school for the Deaf in the world). Influenced by international movements, the school initially banned the use of sign language, but this didn’t stop children from using it in the playground or in their dormitories at night. The article touches on deaf culture and identity, the significance of New Zealand Sign Language, and changes to assistive technologies.

This article:

- outlines the history of the van Asch Deaf Education Centre
- explores changes in societal attitudes towards deafness and deaf education
- acknowledges the language, culture, and identity of the Deaf
- provides examples of assistive technologies
- includes diagrams to illustrate the text
- includes non-continuous text with subheadings
- includes technical information that is supported by a diagram.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme “Just Like Everyone Else” SJ L3 April 2012

Text characteristics from the year 6 reading standard

We have retained the links to the National Standards while a new assessment and reporting system is being developed. For more information on assessing and reporting in the post-National Standards era, see: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-and-reporting-guide>

Big D, Little d

You’ve probably noticed that big D on Deaf (especially when used as a noun, not an adjective). Some deaf people prefer it this way. On its website, Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand/Tāngata Turi explains that deaf people are positive about being deaf: “It’s a way of life for them, not a disability.” Put another way, these people think of themselves as “culturally Deaf” in the same way that a person identifies as Australian or Japanese. There are around nine thousand people in New Zealand who identify as Deaf. Most use New Zealand Sign Language and are involved in the deaf community. Those who prefer a lower-case d have often lost their hearing in later

abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students’ understanding

For example, the sign for the word “hospital” in Auckland is different from the one used in Christchurch.

In 1979, Total Communication (TC) was introduced, a method that used formal signs, gestures, finger-spelling, body language, listening, lip-reading, and speech. TC was not the same as the sign language used today; it was more of a signed code for English. Some people found it clumsy and long-winded, and deaf people kept pushing for our own native sign language to be recognised. Finally, on 6 April 2006, the New Zealand Sign Language Act came into effect, and NZSL became an official language.

a significant amount of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students (including academic and content-specific words and phrases), which is generally explained in the text by words or illustrations

to the brain, which interprets the signals as sound.

Cochlear implants are another important development. These hearing devices bypass damaged parts of the ear to directly stimulate the auditory nerve and send signals to the brain. Implants are different from hearing aids, which make sounds louder. Although cochlear implants are important tools for the Deaf, they don’t restore perfect hearing, and background noise can be a challenge. They also work better for some people than for others.

Looking to the Future

mixed text types (for example, a complex explanation may be included as part of a report)

Cochlear Impl

The microphone receives sound. The speech processor turns sound into digital information. The transmitter relays the information to the receiver (these are connected by magnets). Electrical impulses are sent from the implant to electrodes. The electrodes stimulate the cochlea. The auditory nerve sends signals to the brain, which interprets signals as sound.

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation




Reading standard: by the end of year 6

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “official languages”, “offensive”, “society”, “formal”, “vibrations”, “housework”, “woodwork”, “metalwork”, “graduated”, “underground”, “dormitories”, “matron”, “concepts”, “regional variations”, “long-winded”, “amplifier”, “bypass”, “stimulate”, “verbally”
- Reference to time periods, including “century” and “late 1960s”
- Labels associated with deafness, including archaic labels such as “deaf-mute” and “deaf-and-dumb”
- Words related to deaf communication, including “New Zealand Sign Language”, “gestures”, “lip-reading”, “speaking orally”, “oralism”, “Total Communication (TC)”, “finger-spelling”, “sign-language interpreter”
- Names of organisations, including “van Asch Deaf Education Centre”, “Sumner Deaf and Dumb Institution”, “Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand/Tāngata Turi”
- Words related to assistive technologies and hearing, including “device”, “sign language interpreter”, “central transmitter”, “amplifier”, “auditory nerve”, “cochlear implants”, “chat applications”
- Abstract terms such as “culturally Deaf”
- “Underground” as a metaphor for covert behaviour

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt the students' prior knowledge of strategies to work out unknown words, such as reading and thinking about the surrounding information, putting the words into context, and using parts of the words they recognise.
- Review the text to identify words that students may not be able to work out from their prior knowledge or the context. Decide which words you will need to pre-teach, for example, the difference between oral communication and non-verbal communication or different ways the Deaf have communicated over time.
- Have students work in pairs or as a group to develop a mindmap of non-verbal communication, for example, gestures, facial expressions, body language, and sign language.  The students could use an online tool such as [MindMup](#) to create their mindmaps.
- Play matching games, matching the topic and technical words with the correct definition.
- Students who are English language learners could focus on learning academic words that are used in a range of subject areas, such as “society”, “formal”, “concepts”, “stimulate”.
- Watch a video about how we hear, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMxOxHkwmU8>
- Spend some time discussing the difference between adjectives and nouns.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some understanding of sign language as a means of communicating
- Some understanding of what New Zealand society and schools were like a century or so ago
- Some understanding of the concept of culture and the ways culture, language, and identity interconnect
- Some knowledge of residential schools
- Some understanding of the role of assistive technologies
- Some understanding of what an “official language” is

Possible supporting strategies

- Provide opportunities for students to talk, in pairs and small groups, about what they know about how deaf people communicate. Students could learn some basic signs by playing the online Sign Ninja game: <http://www.nzslsignninja.co.nz/> or by watching some episodes of Turi TV: <https://turitv.ezstream.com/#/>
- Prompt students to discuss technologies that assist people's hearing. The video [Kids Meet a Deaf Person](#) provides information about assistive technologies, including cochlear implants, along with general information about being Deaf.
- Discuss the concept of culture, which students often associate with observable factors, such as foods, clothing, festivals, and language. Discuss some deeper aspects of culture, such as shared ideas about what is important or valuable, ways people express their emotions, behaviours that are encouraged and discouraged, and perceptions about humour. Support students to make connections between their own concepts of identity and culture and deaf culture.
- Explain that an official language is a language that is accepted by the government and can be used in parliament, in courts, or in schools. The Māori language became an official language in 1987.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A non-fiction article that includes photographs, text boxes, and a diagram
- An introduction followed by thematically related sections under subheadings
- Generally straightforward sentences
- Embedded quotes
- Acronyms (in brackets after first use in full)
- A shift in focus from the history of deaf education to assistive technologies

Possible supporting strategies

- Before reading, prompt the students to recall what they are likely to find in an article. Provide opportunities for students to talk with a partner and remind each other of the features of information texts.
- Skim the article with students to see how it is structured, for example, the use of subheadings, diagrams, and text boxes. Note the difference in background colours to differentiate the body text from the text boxes that provide specific, additional information.
- Have students work with a partner to identify the source of each quote.
- Have pairs of students develop a structured overview of the article, using the headings as a guide.



Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 3 – Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics.

Level 3 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Level 3: Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

TECHNOLOGY (NATURE OF TECHNOLOGY)

Level 3 – Characteristics of technology: Understand how society and environments impact on and are influenced by technology in historical and contemporary contexts and that technological knowledge is validated by successful function.

Possible first reading purpose

- To find out about the history of education for the Deaf in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To consider how attitudes towards the Deaf have changed over the past one hundred years or so
- To explore changes to how the Deaf communicate
- To learn about the history of New Zealand Sign Language.

Possible writing purposes

- To explain how attitudes towards the Deaf have changed
- To write a letter home from an imagined historical student at the van Asch school
- To investigate and write about assistive technologies
- To investigate and create a labelled diagram about how we hear
- To interview a deaf person in order to learn about deaf culture.




Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Ideas: Show a developing understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

First reading

- Before reading, ask the students to discuss in pairs what they expect to find out from an article about “listening eyes, speaking hands”.
- Share the purpose for reading with the students.
- Skim through the text to help the students gain an overview of the text, noting the heading of each section, the photos, and the diagram.
- Read the introduction aloud and invite responses to why sign language was banned in New Zealand schools.
- Direct pairs of students to predict what they will learn from the article. Have each pair come up with some key questions they think the article will answer and things they would like to find out. You may like to prime the students by giving them some statements they can respond to before reading the article, for example:
 - Many deaf people feel good about being Deaf.
 - New Zealand Sign Language is different from other sign languages.
 - Most deaf people can understand what people are saying by looking at their lips when they are talking.
- Direct the students to work in pairs to read one section at a time, stopping to discuss each section before moving on to the next one.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Prompt prior knowledge of what to expect in an article. Discuss and feed in any features that the students are unsure of, such as factual information organised in paragraphs, headings, names of people and places, dates, and supporting photographs.
- Remind students of word-solving strategies to work out the meaning of words they don't know, such as reading on and rereading, breaking words into syllables and parts, and making connections with prior knowledge.
- Provide an overview of the text, taking time to talk about the focus of each section. Check what the students know and provide more background information where necessary.
-  Using a Google doc, create a table using a row for each heading, with an empty row underneath. Students can fill in a summary of each section or add questions about ideas or words they are not sure about.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

The teacher

Direct the students to compare the photograph of children in the van Asch Deaf Education Centre today (page 10) with what the classroom might have been like one hundred years ago. Encourage the students to consider what they might see, hear, and feel if they visited the school. They could use a table such as the one below to record their ideas.

	100 years ago	Today
See		
Hear		
Feel		

The teacher

Discuss that in every culture, approaches to education (what is taught and how it is taught) are shaped by beliefs and ideas about learning. These beliefs and ideas change over time, and so do schools.

- Show students a picture of a school classroom in the early 1900s, for example, this picture of Makowhai School in 1909: <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/23196166?search%5Bpath%5D=items&search%5Btext%5D=Makowhai+School>
- Have students discuss what school might have been like for the students and what it might have been like if you were deaf. Discuss how approaches to education have changed over time.
- Discuss other old-fashioned beliefs that impacted on the way children were taught, for example:
 - left-handed children being forced to write with their right hands
 - te reo Māori being banned in schools in 1867.

Model and guide the students on how to retrieve key information about beliefs by looking for words such as “it was thought that” or “people believed”.

Support students to make connections between people's ideas about deaf people and the way deaf children were or are taught.

The students:

- make inferences about what the school might have been like one hundred years ago compared with how it is today, making connections with what they have read and seen in the article
- use the information in the article to compare what they might see, hear, and feel if they visited the school one hundred years ago and today.

The students:

- make inferences about the beliefs educators held about teaching deaf people. They could use a Google doc to record the beliefs, the language taught at the school, and the advantages and disadvantages of that teaching method, using the stems provided below.

	Idea or belief about deaf education	Language taught at school	Pros or cons of this method
1880	Deaf people should ...		
1960s	Deaf students learn better if ...		
2006	Deaf students have the right to ...		

The teacher

Share the following statements with the students and ask them to agree or disagree and provide reasons based on their reading.

- *Children should have a say in what they learn.*
- *It is important for the Deaf to choose the ways they want to learn and the language they want to use. (Remind the students that being Deaf is part of people's culture and identity and that many deaf people feel positive about being Deaf.)*

Ask students to respond to the final paragraph of the article and its heading "Looking to the Future".

- *What is the writer saying about the future of deaf education? How does it relate to technology?*
- *If a technology was developed that meant all deaf children could hear perfectly, should it be compulsory for children to use it? Why or why not?*
- *How does the idea of choice relate to the introduction, where we learnt that sign language was banned from schools?*

METACOGNITION

- *Was the information in the article what you predicted it to be? What was different or unexpected? What is one thing that you learnt from reading this article?*

The students:

- think critically about whether children should get a say in what they learn
- identify the various choices they can make at school and the things they have no control over
- make connections and integrate the information across the article to discuss what they have learnt about the importance of being able to choose the way you communicate and learn.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *I noticed you skimming and scanning the text to see whether you could find the answers to some of your questions. That's a good skill to develop because it can help you to find information quickly in a text.*



Reading standard: by the end of year 6

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Ideas: Select, form, and communicate ideas on a range of topics; Structure: Organise texts, using an appropriate range of structures.

Text excerpts from “Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands”

Page 10

It’s lunchtime in the Christchurch suburb of Sumner, and groups of students are chatting. If they wanted, some of these students could talk without making a sound. That’s because they also speak New Zealand Sign Language, one of our official languages. But when deaf students were first taught in New Zealand, sign language wasn’t used at all. In fact, it was banned!

Examples of text characteristics

INTRODUCTION


An introduction should give readers an idea about what the article will be about. Good writers are skilled at crafting introductions that make their readers want to keep reading. One way to do this is to include a “hook” that will grab a reader’s attention.

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Reread the introduction to “Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands” and discuss how the writer has crafted her introduction.

- How has the writer tailored her introduction to her audience? Did it help you to make connections with your own life?
- How does the introduction let you know what the article will be about?
- How did the writer hook you in?

Ask the students to plan a non-fiction article on a topic that interests them and that they want to inform readers about. Then have them write the introduction, using “Listening Eyes, Speaking Hands” as a model. They should include a “hook” that will engage their readers. They could share their introduction with a partner and ask for feedback.

DIGITAL TOOLS  The students could use a Google doc for this task.

Page 14

Janet Stokes, who now works at the school’s museum, has been told lots of stories about this. “Signing was very underground,” she says. “In the dormitories, where the kids slept, they would be signing like crazy. But when the matron came in, they would stop. At playtimes, lunchtimes, they were all signing. But in class ... not a thing!”

ANECDOTES

Anecdotes are short stories about people or events. They can add a storytelling touch to non-fiction articles, helping readers to connect facts and information with real-life experiences.

Ask the students which personal stories they remember from the article. Discuss the benefits of including anecdotes in articles about the past.

- How effective was the inclusion of people’s memories in the article? How did they help you to relate to the children at the school?
- What sources could you use to add an anecdote in your own writing? What challenges might you face when trying to find an anecdote?

Have the students continue writing their article and consider where they could add an anecdote, either from their own experience or from the experience of someone they know and can talk to.

Page 14

The Language That Wouldn’t Be Silenced

HEADINGS

Headings help readers to find their way around a text and locate information more easily. Sometimes headings can be a play on words.

Discuss the purpose of headings and do a quick skim of the article together to look at each heading. Alternatively, give the students a mix-and-match activity and have them work in pairs or small groups to match headings to paragraphs.

- How well does each heading inform you about what the paragraph is about?
- Why is the heading “The Language That Wouldn’t Be Silenced” a play on words? Can you see how it relates to the information in the paragraph?

Using a Google doc, have students remove the headings from one of their pieces of writing, placing them in a table at the start of the article in a random order. Pairs of students can see whether they can match the paragraphs with the headings from each other’s writing.

METACOGNITION

- Why is it important for your reader to be able to connect with what you are communicating? How could you help this to happen?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- Your article has some really interesting information about the history of our school, but I think you could make your introduction stronger by talking directly to the reader.



Writing standard: by the end of year 6



The Literacy Learning Progressions