Services for Deaf People in a Rural Setting: Issues and Recommendations for Teachers

**?**

* You are a teacher.
* Your school is in a rural area and the people are poor.
* There is a deaf child in your class of hearing children.
* Your are not a specialist in teaching deaf children.

# What do you do?

Helpful Hints

**Remember:**
Deaf children can benefit from school just like hearing children
Deaf children **can** be taught
Deaf children need **extra** support

# 1. How do I get to know the child?

**Relationships**

**Put the child at ease by:**

* Developing a positive relationship with the child.
* Finding out about his/her interests.
* Developing a positive relationship with his/her family and their wider community.

**Communication**

* Get information from the family about their communication with the child. How do they communicate?
* In the beginning use the same kind of communication. If it works for the family it will work for you.

**Reading and Writing**

* Concentrate on thinking, reading and writing skills. These are the key to the development of the child.
* Reading and writing can enhance future development. Later in life they can read newspapers, books, etc. to educate themselves further.

**Hearing**

* Find out how much the child hears.
* Find out if he/she lost the hearing before or after acquiring language.

**Remember:**
Deaf children have special needs. They are not stupid or dumb.
Communication may be a problem. The child may not be able to speak or write. However, the child has a language. Together you will learn to communicate.
Communication is the key to the education of the child. It is possible to communicate.

# 2. What about in the classroom?

**Place in the Classroom**

* Put the child at the front of the classroom so he/she can hear and see as much as possible.
* Try to always face the class.
* Do not cover your lips when speaking.
* Be on the same level as the child (face-to-face) when talking to him/her.

**Visual Aids**

* Use pictures and objects 'act out' what you want to say.
* Encourage the child to act out ideas.
* Together you can give signed names to new objects.
* Use real objects and relevant resources (e.g. farm and household items) to develop communication, interest and content.
* Use written labels, gestures and signs to help the child identify the objects etc., that are used during activities.

**Interaction**

* Take a very interactive approach to communication and education.
* Prepare challenging theoretical and practical activities for your class.
* Encourage and challenge the child to respond to your 'actions' with 'action'.
* If possible, give the child time on a one-to-one basis outside the classroom.
* Encourage the child to ask questions and tell you about his life, interests, etc.. Respond to these.

**Remember:**
Others have tried this before and it **has** worked.
Have confidence in your abilities. Ask for help. You do not have to do it alone

# 3. How should I structure the lessons?

* Try to use materials that are available in your environment as much as possible.
* Include several 'hands-on' activities relevant to the age group and the culture of the community. It is always good to give your students things 'to do' and the deaf child will be able to participate like all the others.
* Include more information all the time in a planned and structured way. This will expose and broaden the understanding of the child and the way he/she 'sees' and understands the world around it.
* Plan activities that foster team work, e.g. games, classroom activities, etc.

**Remember:**
You do not need expensive materials and equipment to teach the child.
Encourage deaf and hearing children to interact with each other.

# 4. How will he/she respond?

**In Class**

* Remember that it will take the child a while to be able to 'express' him/herself and to use what they have received. Be patient.
* Continue to 'bombard' the child with a variety of meaningful experiences. He/she needs to learn to think and use these experiences to learn.
* Remember that deaf children will begin by drawing letters and words. To them, words are just like pictures. They will try to use these pictures when 'writing'. At first they will not understand the individual letters that make up the words.

**At Home**

* Encourage parents, etc. to communicate with the child.
* You can show them about activities in school. Encourage the parents to do similar things at home.

**Remember:**
Have patience.
Do not expect the child to start reading within a few days. They may have no previous experience.

# 5. Who can help me?

**Hearing Members of the Community**

* Try to get involved in community activities and get to know the leaders of the community (if you yourself are not from that community).
* There may be people in the community who know about deafness but were never asked.
* Some members of the community may know people with more information, e.g. children in the cities and universities who may know doctors, teachers, deaf adults, etc. who could help.

**Deaf Members of the Community**

* Deaf adults in the community could help you to learn to communicate with the child.
* They may be in touch with Associations of the Deaf that could help.

**Region or Country**

* Find out what other help is available in your region or country.
* Check with other agencies that offer services.

**Education**

* Speak with other teachers.
* Write to former colleagues, your teacher trainers and your Ministry of Education.
* Sometimes there is information available in packages and teachers' guides (e.g. written, audio- and audio-visual).

**Remember:**
Don't be afraid to ask for help.

# 6. How can I learn more?

**Courses**

* Seek out short term training courses. These will help you do a better job and to make informed decisions.
* Help to lobby your government etc. for training materials and for regular training courses in teacher training colleges.

**People**

* A deaf adult, other community members and persons from outside the community can visit your class to do demonstrations, hold a mini-workshop, etc..
* If there are deaf adults in your community or nearby you could encourage them to form a club in your school. Contact with them could help you to learn their language.

**Remember:**
Try and get more training.

# 7. Am I making progress?

**Ask yourself:**

* Is your student progressing?
* Does he/she understand the lessons?
* Is his/her communication better?
* Is he/she happy to come to school?

**Ask Others**

* Ask the child's parents and family for comments.
* Try and get somebody to look at your work and help you improve.
* There must be many other teachers with the same problems. Writing in the newspapers or in professional magazines may help you to share your experiences.
* Write to your Ministry of Education. There may be someone there who is interested.

**Remember:**
Share your experience with others in similar situations.
Evaluate your work after a short time.

# 8. Is this all I should do?

This list is not exhaustive, it is simply to give you some helpful hints. Experiment and see what works best for you.

The child will progress.
Try and get more training.
Deaf children can benefit from school just like hearing children.
Ask for help. You do not have to do it alone.
Keep communicating - not just through speech.
Others have tried this before and it has worked.
Have confidence in your abilities.
Communication may be a problem. However, the child has a language. Together you will learn to communicate.
Encourage deaf and hearing children to interact with each other.
Deaf children can be taught.
Don't give up - be patient.
Do not expect the child to start reading within a few days.
Evaluate your work after a short time.
Communication is the key to the education of the child. It is possible to communicate.
You do not need expensive materials and equipment to teach the child.
Deaf children need extra support.
Share your experience with others in similar situation.

Initiative for Deaf Education in the Third World, Egypt, 1997

Issues and Recommendations for [Interpreters](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/interps.docx)
Issues and Recommendations for [Parents](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/parents.docx)
Issues and Recommendations for [Sign Language](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/signlang.docx)

**Reference:**
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