Report on a survey of

Parents

of 'High' & 'Very High Needs' Deaf Students

in Mainstream Schools

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1.0 THE SURVEY

Two recent surveys commissioned by the New Zealand Specialist Education Services (Stockwell 2000; Fitzgerald 2000) investigated the resourcing and needs of deaf children in various educational settings. These surveys identified gaps in available support services, reported mixed outcomes in parents' and teachers' perception of the social integration of deaf students, and report that only 26% of deaf students are achieving at, or above, age-appropriate levels at school (Fitzgerald 2000). One survey concludes that 60% of children classified as 'high needs' (HN) - most of whom use spoken communication but cannot access the curriculum without significant support - can be considered to have their overall needs "reasonably well met", while for the 'very high needs' (VHN) group, many of whom are signers and have a minimal capacity to access the curriculum without support, "the needs of two in three… are considered to be reasonably well met." (Stockwell 2000:22).

This survey further investigated parents' experience and views of their deaf child's education in mainstream schools. Overall, the findings reiterate those of the two SES studies in 2000. This study was conducted in 2001as part of a larger research project undertaken by the Deaf Studies Research Unit which took a qualitative approach to investigating communication access and learning outcomes for HN and VHN deaf students in mainstream classrooms. The project involved six case studies of primary school aged mainstreamed students, using data from recorded classroom observations of the child, and interviews with parents, teachers, teacher aides, principals, and advisors; a second phase of the project conducted four nation-wide surveys by mail of parents, mainstream teachers, itinerant teachers of the deaf, and teacher aides of deaf students categorised as HN and VHN. This document reports results of the parent survey only. Survey findings generally mirror interview data with parents in the six case studies.

1.1 The survey instrument: questionnaire

Parents were surveyed by a written questionnaire that contained 27 questions. Most of the questions provided tick-box options and space for additional comments; some questions asked respondents to answer in their own words - for example, their reasons for choosing mainstream placement. The questionnaire was divided into four main sections, as follows: 1. 'About you and your child', covering demographic questions, hearing loss and communication mode of the child; 2. 'Support and progress at school', which investigated parental perceptions of educational support services, and academic and social outcomes for the child; 3. 'Choosing a school', which explored decisions about school placement; and 4. 'Overall view', which asked parents to evaluate their child's access to a suitable education in the mainstream, their satisfaction with information and advice received, and finally, invited respondents to identify any issues of concern. The questionnaire is appended.

1.2 Survey population and distribution of questionnaires

The target survey population were parents of fully mainstreamed deaf students verified by Specialist Education Services (SES) as 'high needs' (HN) or 'VHN needs'(VHN), and as such, eligible for Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) funding. The sampling aim was to gain as complete coverage as possible of this group of parents in New Zealand, which proved difficult to achieve. Stockwell (2000) reports that a total of 1005 deaf and hearing impaired students from primary through to secondary school are classified as HN or VHN, of whom 160 were included in the Stockwell survey sample. Of that survey population, 82% were reported to be mainstreamed. Using these percentages, we can estimate that up to 824 HN and very high needs deaf students are in the mainstream across all school levels.

Information available within the deaf education field indicated that the majority of 'HN' and 'very high needs' students are supported by an Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf (ITOD). A focus group of northern region ITODS (approximately 20) was therefore consulted prior to distribution of this survey to ascertain the average number of ORS students on their caseloads and the most practical method of getting questionnaires to parents. The focus group of ITODs reported that they averaged between 3 to 5 such

students on their caseload.[1] It was not possible for the researchers to obtain access to confidential contact details for the parents of deaf students, nor to reliably identify the schools in which they were enrolled through Specialist Education Services (as was discovered during the administration of a previous survey to mainstream teachers and teacher aides of deaf students, in which it was found that many of the schools listed in SES records in fact had no deaf student currently enrolled). It was therefore decided that questionnaires would be distributed to eligible parents on our behalf by all Itinerant Teachers, and returned directly to the researchers in self-addressed envelopes. ITODs were asked not to assist parents with completing the questionnaire, since it asked parents to comment directly on their and other professionals' services.

Advisors on Deaf Children were asked to distribute questionnaires to the parents of students who were known not to be on the caseload of an ITOD. Nineteen advisers received a total of 71 surveys to distribute.

The two Deaf Education Centres (DECs), as the primary employers of ITODS were asked to forward questionnaire materials to all ITODs, or to provide the researchers with postal addresses for ITODS based outside the DECs . By this method 83 ITODS were identified and provided with four copies each of the questionnaire, with a request to forward these to the parents of school-aged, mainstreamed, 'HN' or 'very high needs' students on their caseload. This gave a total of 403 surveys provided to Advisers and ITODs for distribution. By researcher's oversight, ITODs were not asked to report how many questionnaires actually reached parents, and since itinerant teachers have varying numbers of eligible students on their caseloads, the final number of parents receiving the questionnaires by this method is unknown.

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[1] With a total of 83 ITODS known to be employed by Deaf Education Centres (the main employer) at the time of the survey, this would give a maximum of 415 HN and VHN needs students being served by ITODs. Although this is a somewhat rough calculation based on verbal report of a sub-sample of ITOD's, (and there are also likely to be some additional ITODS not identifiable through DECs), it contrasts sharply with the 824 total indicated by Stockwell's statistics. Results of our survey showed that 86% of students received ITOD support; if this proportion were applied to Stockwell's 824 total, we would expect to find 708 students on ITOD caseloads, which appears not to be the case and raises a question about the proportion of such students who do in fact receive specialist teacher support.

1.3 Response to survey

126 parents returned surveys, representing 31% of the number of surveys provided to itinerants and advisers (but not necessarily reaching parents). The response rate from parents in 'other large cities' and provincial towns was relatively high compared to greater Auckland and Christchurch (the two areas which have Deaf Education Centres), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Location of parents responding to survey

Do you live in:	N	%
Greater Auckland or Christchurch area	41	33.1
Another large city	37	29.8
A smaller provincial town	46	37.1
Totals	124	100

It was anticipated that the Greater Auckland area would yield the largest number of responses, given its large population base. However, the proportionally lower response rate in Auckland and Christchurch relative to population size undoubtedly reflects the availability of specialist school options in these areas, i.e., a Deaf Education Centre (deaf school) and Deaf Resource Classes (units) within regular schools, which tend to enrol more of the HN/VHN deaf students in the area. These students are usually those with greater degrees of hearing loss, and those more likely to use sign language. In smaller centres which lack such options locally, all deaf children are more likely to be mainstreamed.

A small number of parents indicated that they had more than one deaf child but completed one questionnaire about their experiences on behalf of all of them. Different numbers of total responses to some questions reported in tables in this report reflect the inclusion of data from a small number of incomplete questionnaires, and the fact that not all questions were applicable to all parents.

2.0 PROFILE OF CHILDREN REPRESENTED IN SURVEY

The children represented by survey responses were mainly primary and intermediate students (69.2%) with 20.8% attending secondary schools. This may

indicate a lower rate of ITOD contact with highschool students, since the survey was distributed via ITODS, a lower rate of mainstreaming at secondary level, or simply a lower response rate among parents of older children.

The majority of children (69.7%) were reported as being deaf since birth or their first year, and the next largest group since the age of two years (11.5%). Some parents commented on late diagnosis and confirmation of a child's suspected deafness.

2.1 Level of hearing loss and verification status

54% of the children represented in the survey were profoundly deaf, 40% were severely deaf, and 6.5 % were moderately deaf. As this survey was directed specifically to parents of ORS funded students, it is likely that the moderately deaf students in this sample had additional disabilities in order to be verified as HN/ VHN. This information was not specifically sought in the questionnaire. 20% of the children had cochlear implants.

The majority (44.4%) reported their child's verification to be 'high needs', with 37.3% 'very high needs'. 13.5 % of parents said they were 'not sure', and a further 4.8% did not respond to this question, perhaps also indicating uncertainty. Table 2 shows the relationship of degree of hearing loss (as reported by parents) to verification status.

Table 2: Hearing loss x Verification status

	Very high needs		High needs		Not sure		Totals
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Profound	34	53	22	34	8	23	64
Severe	11	24.5	27	60	7	15.5	45
Moderate	2	25	4	50	2	25	8
Totals	47	40%	53	45%	17	15%	117

2.2 Types of school attended

All children in the survey are currently mainstreamed. A large majority of the sample – 124 - had attended mainstream schools only. 20 indicated that their child had previously attended a Deaf Unit (resource class), and 12 had previously attended a Deaf Education Centre (also referred to as 'school for the deaf').

2.3 Communication modes of children at home and school

The nature of deaf children's access to communication in mainstream classrooms was a major focus of the project of which this survey forms a part. Although survey data about language use does not directly reveal this, patterns in parental choice of communication mode for severely and profoundly deaf children are indicative of the kind of communication contexts created for them in mainstream school situations. Communication choice influences the type and amount of support at school that is considered appropriate for enabling the student to develop language, to access information and learning, and to manage social relationships. In the reverse direction, it may be true that the support available influences the choice of communication mode adopted and how well it is developed. Language use and communication opportunities powerfully shape a child's social experience of learning and their sense of identity.

67.2% of the children in this survey were reported to 'communicate most comfortably, or most of the time', by speaking and listening (i.e., orally). 18.4 % used 'sign mixed with speech, and 14.4% used signing only, giving a total of 32.8% reported to be using sign language in some form. A higher proportion of students in small provincial towns were reported as signing, which is probably due to the fact that signing children in large metropolitan areas have the option of attending a specialist deaf education setting, leaving relatively fewer in mainstream schools. This is not an option for signers in smaller areas.

Table 3: How does your child communicate most comfortably,
or most of the time?

	N	%
Speaking, listening, and lipreading (oral)	84	67.2
Signing and speaking together (a mixture)	23	18.4

Signing	18	14.4
Totals	125	100

Table 4: Use of sign language with child at home and at school

		At home		At school	
		N	**%**	**N**	**%**
All the time		16	12.7	22	17.7
Some of the time		32	25.4	15	12.1
Before, but not any more		14	11.1	11	8.9
Not at all		64	50.8	76	61.3
	Totals	126	100	124	100

In response to the question, 'At school, does your child use sign language in class?', 29.8% indicated that that they did, either 'all the time' (17.7%) or 'some of the time' (12.1%), (see Table 4).

At home, a higher total of 38.1% said that the family uses signing either 'all the time' (12.7%) or 'some of the time' (25.4%).

Some children and parents had previously used sign language at home and/or at school, but had ceased doing so (11% previously at home, and 9% previously at school).

While approximately 38 % of families currently use signing at home, only 29% of their children are reported as using signing at school. Similarly, Table 3 shows that signing (alone or mixed with speech) is the most usual mode of communication for 32.8% of the children, whereas Table 4 shows a smaller proportion using signing all or some of the time at school (29.8 %). This lower figure may reflect a lack of staff in schools with signing skills, and/ or a focus on oral communication at school. Parents may feel the immediate need to use more sign language at home to ensure understanding of essential social communication.

If we include the children who had used sign language 'before, but not now', approximately 50% of the children surveyed can be viewed as potentially or actually using sign language as a natural mode of communication. This contrasts with the

small proportion of children with whom signing is used consistently at school 'all the time' (17.7%), and at home (12.7%). Parents commented on the particular difficulty of the mainstream classroom situation for children who signed.

Table 5: Hearing loss x Communication mode

	Signing		Signing & Speaking		Speaking & Listening (Oral)		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	(N)	%
Profound	17	26	16	24	33	50	66	54
Severe	--	--	6	12	43	88	49	40
Moderate	--	--	1	14	6	86	7	6
Totals	17	14%	23	19%	82	67%	122	100

As seen in Table 5, almost all the children who signed were profoundly deaf (33 out of 40), but only half of all the profoundly deaf children were signing. Given that 54% of the survey sample are profoundly deaf and 40% are severely deaf (giving a total of 94% who potentially have significantly restricted access to speech), the relatively low proportion (33%) who use signing in some form suggests that many deaf children who would benefit from visual communication, and who are likely to identify as Deaf later in life, do not currently have access to sign language either at home or at school.

2.3.1 Opportunity and support for parents to learn sign language

The survey asked parents, 'If your child uses sign language, how adequate were the opportunities and support provided for you and your family to learn sign language?'. 42% of parents responded to this question, including some who reported their child to be oral, indicating that they may have attended sign classes at an earlier stage in their child's life. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Adequacy of opportunity and support to learn sign language

	N	%
Very good	12	22.6
Good	10	18.8
Adequate	11	20.75
Inadequate	9	17
Very inadequate	11	20.75

Totals   53   100

(Not Applicable or no response)   (73)   (57.9)

The results in Table 6 show that less than half (41.4%) believe opportunities and support for learning NZSL to have been 'good' or 'very good', with 20.75% rating them as 'adequate', and 37.75% experiencing 'inadequate' or 'very inadequate' provision. Cross-tabulation with communication modes showed that parents whose children use a mixture of signing and speaking found access to sign language tuition the least adequate.

The weighting of responses in the 'adequate' to 'very inadequate' range may be a contributing factor in the relatively low use of sign language by parents overall. Constraints on opportunity to learn and improve NZSL skills might also be a factor in those who reported using sign language 'before, but not any more', although this link was not specifically investigated.

Dissatisfaction with opportunities to learn sign language was higher in small towns, where a higher proportion of mainstreamed children were also reported as using sign language. Parents' comments indicate that sign classes are not available, are irregular or too short. Numerous parents commented on the lack of support for family members to learn NZSL, noting that it is expensive and impractical for siblings to attend night classes designed for adults. One parent wrote about the poor fit between available learning opportunities and their needs: *"Slightly improved just recently, but family access to sign language is nil. We try to go to sign language classes run for teachers and teacher aides. We often feel intimidated by professionals also attending and receive unhelpful comments from people in the wider community who don't understand how difficult it has been for us to learn to sign because we have it so rarely."* One parent reported learning sign language from her child, saying: *"There is no support for hearing parents to learn NZSL. I learned from my daughter."* Some suggested a need for alternative ways of learning such as home visitors and video materials. Parents from provincial areas commented on the lack of tutors qualified to teach NZSL.

Parents of children aged 11 to 13 were the most dissatisfied group. Within this age range, comments indicated some unease about the shift from Signed English in the child's early schooling to NZSL more recently, one parent writing: *"We began 10 years ago using signed English which suited our family and circumstances. Now with the push to NZSL, life is much more difficult and communication for us harder and we have lost enthusiasm to learn more".* Some parents expressed a belief in the importance of maintaining Signed English for English literacy development *("We have to have sign English in the classroom for reading"),* while a lack of information about the difference between Signed English and NZSL was evident in several responses.

A sample of comments about learning sign language follows:

- *I need more [sign language] to understand what my child is saying.*
- *Hard for an entire family to go to night class. Need affordable tutor to do home visits.*
- *… we wanted her to have access to oral language as well as sign. When we chose signed English there was a dictionary available for us to use at home and because of our rural isolation, there was no-one to regularly help me learn sign language. Our family needed to communicate immediately with our daughter.*
- *Fortunately, we befriended a deaf woman who eventually held a course at CCS. Adviser on deaf visits once a term.*
- *We key signed when she was younger as she never had a lot of speech. There was a lot of help for us.*
- *We had access to signed English classes through Polytech. There is a move to NZSL and New Plymouth has no tutor. A weekend workshop twice a term is inadequate.*
- *Inadequate because we chose to use NZSL when most school resource staff/support staff used signed English. I suspect it would be much easier now.*
- *No access to qualified instructors.*
- *I went to a class once and they were too fast at signing and used words my child didn't need to know at the time. I had to teach myself and my kids out of a dictionary.*

3.0 SUPPORT AND PROGRESS AT SCHOOL

3.1 Types of support received

Parents were asked to indicate all the types of support their child currently receives. Types of support received are shown in Table 7, in order of frequency reported. The majority of ORS funded children receive Teacher Aide and Itinerant Teacher support, in that order, with just over three-quarters receiving Advisor services. Fewer than half (44%) reported receiving speech therapy (although 67% of the children rely on spoken communication only), and less than a quarter (24%) had access to a Deaf resource person (also known as 'Deaf Mentor'). The services of interpreters (mainly untrained 'communicators') and auditory-verbal therapists were available to only 3% of the respondents.

Table 7: Types of support received

	N	%
Teacher Aide	115	91
Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf	109	86
Advisor on Deaf Children	99	78.5
Speech Therapist	56	44
Deaf Resource Person/NZSL tutor	31	24.6
Extra (non -ToD) teacher time	17	13.5
Communicator or interpreter	4	3
Auditory verbal therapist	4	3
Advisor/therapist other special needs	4	3
Other	4	3
Total responses	443	100

13.5% indicate receiving extra teacher time though ORS funding, (not from a teacher of the deaf).

3.2 Parent satisfaction with amount and quality of support

Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the amount of support services their child receives, with respect to number of hours of support, frequency of visits, and range of support staff available. They were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of support, with respect to the skills, attitudes, and effectiveness of people who worked with their child. Overall, the majority reported

being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the amount and quality of support. (See Tables 8 and 9).

3.2.1 Amount of support

Table 8: Satisfaction with amount of support

	N	%
Very satisfied	46	37%
Satisfied	64	51.6%
Not satisfied	11	9%
Very dissatisfied	3	2.4%
Totals	124	100

When broken down by area, there was a slightly higher rate of dissatisfaction with the amount of support reported in provincial areas (13% not satisfied, compared to 9% in Auckland/Christchurch and 10% in other large cities). Overall satisfaction with the amount of support was frequently qualified by a range of issues raised in parents' comments, as illustrated below.

3.2.1.1 Issues raised about amount of support

- Variability in amount of support allocated each year, inconsistent decisions made at school level, and the absence of some services in some areas (e.g., speech therapy, Deaf mentors, Advisors)
  - *TOD and teacher aide time is adequate. Support from deaf resource person is non-existent. Support from visiting staff from VADEC is non-existent. Even after requests for speech therapy, none happened.*
  - *Itinerant teacher of the deaf only this year 2 hours per week has made an enormous difference, both to child and parents.*
  - *Every year the quantity of teacher aide hours vary as a result apparently of funds available. Only limited hours available from limited support people as these people have high numbers on their caseloads.*
  - *We used to have an adviser on deaf but since we became ORS funded several years ago, I've since discovered that we are apparently no longer eligible.*

- - *After being off the roll of the ITOD last year, we now receive only 1 3/4 hours per week this year. Advisor for deaf visits once a term. There is no longer a NZSL tutor visiting as she left area.*
  - *Itinerant support has been organised and well used. Adviser on deaf children has been poor - when staff leave they are never replaced. The support has been unpredictable and sporadic.*

- Ineffective utilisation or coordination of resources.
  - *ORS funding allocates qualified teacher to students. This all goes into administration for my child. Schools/fundholders have been advised to use 2 1/2 hours /week in direct contact time with students. My child needs re-teaching of Economics/Math concepts and does not get this.*
  - *Sometimes the teacher of the deaf and the teacher aide can be there at the same time and they can come at important classroom times. My child doesn't always like to be removed from class for extra work or speech.*
  - *The itinerant teacher only comes Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday so my son gets large blocks of time from her. This is not ideal.*
  - *Amount of support is good but not co-ordinated effectively, and we find that our child's hours for say teacher aide hours are frequently directed to other uses as is the itinerant teacher hours.*

- Potentially negative impact on child of numerous support people
  - *We, the parents are satisfied but our daughter sometimes finds the help overbearing.*
  - *Not satisfied with the school resource teacher because it is another person involved. We feel that there are too many involved.*

- Parents feel they have to 'struggle' to gain and keep resources for their child
  - *Through my own efforts (i.e. lobbying school, attending all meetings with school and support staff and special ed.) I ensure that my daughter receives the support she is entitled to. I have also expressed dissatisfaction when necessary.*
  - *I have to put a lot of effort into making sure everything hangs together.*
  - *…the school refuses to spend anymore than the child's own ORS funding.*

- *Only recently have we received support. It is a major fight to get help from SES financial division. Parents should not have to struggle as hard as we do. I am sure there are parents who have given up.*

3.2.2 Quality of support

Parents rated their satisfaction with the quality of main support persons as follows:

Table 9: Satisfaction with quality of support

	% Very satisfied	% Satisfied	% Not satisfied	% Very dissatisfied
Classroom teacher	41	50.8	7.4	.8
Teacher Aide	48.3	43.1	7.8	.9
Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf	54.4	35.1	9.6	.9
Advisor on Deaf Children	49.1	38.4	7.1	5.4
Speech Therapist	60	30	10	-
Deaf Resource Person/NZSL tutor	32.4	47.1	17.6	2.9
Extra teacher time	50	30	20	-
Advisor/Therapist other special needs	-	50	50	-
Others	42.9	14.3	42.9	-

'Others' listed by parents included: school special needs resource person, extra (ORS) teacher time, speech therapist, SES physiotherapist, psychologist, occupational therapist, visual resource, Deaf Education Centre support workers, Deaf unit TOD.

As with the amount of support, parents also noted that the quality of support varies greatly from year to year, being dependent upon who is available to fill various positions, their level of training, their knowledge of deafness, their personality, and the school's selection process.

Classroom teacher: 91.8% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied. Despite the high rate of satisfaction reported in this question, training of mainstream teachers (re. deaf students) was frequently mentioned elsewhere in the survey as a major need.

- *Fortunate to have a teacher this year who has been a teacher of the deaf previously. Not usually the case and teachers struggle with communication.*

- *This year class teacher is more flexible. Last year I removed my daughter from the class…*

Itinerant teacher of the deaf: 89.5% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied. Some parents expressed a wish for ITOD s to be used where funding for extra teacher time is available, rather than teachers with no background in deafness. More dissatisfaction with ITODs was reported by parents of children who sign.

- *I would like the ORS time put back to the teacher of the deaf. ORS teachers do not know how to sign. They know nothing about deaf children.*
- *Full hours of support is good but quality of support- not enough NZSL skills.*
- *Itinerant teacher experienced at oral, little signed English. My child is NZSL.*

Teacher aide: 91% were satisfied or very satisfied, although some comments express dissatisfaction with the skills of teacher aides and the limitations on what they can be expected to provide under current conditions and training.

- *Teacher aide pay rate is $11 per hour on average. Skills and effectiveness are governed by goodwill of person, not rate of pay. No or little knowledge of deaf.*
- *The amount is fine; the quality of the teacher aide is not.*
- *We feel the most important area of development should be for our child's communication but this is where the support is sadly lacking. Our teacher aide is very good and is trying to learn as much as she can by herself.*
- *My son has excellent support at school however is still very reliant on the experience and the diligence of the teacher aide who acts as interpreter. I feel he is still excluded from much that happens in the classroom.*

Adviser on Deaf children: 87.5% were satisfied or very satisfied. Comments reflected concern with reduction in services, for example, that advisers were not replaced if they left, or that an advisor was rarely seen. Dissatisfied comments included:

- *AODC has too many children on caseload.*
- *My son receives excellent in classroom support. I am however concerned that the adviser has never even bothered to meet him.*
- *Advisor different perspective - denied extra hours of support. [Deaf parents]*

Deaf Resource person/Instructor: 34 parents responded to this question. As deaf instructor positions have only been in place for a short time and are available only in

some areas, this reflects a relatively high response rate. Of these, 27 were satisfied/very satisfied, while seven were not satisfied (mainly with the timing or frequency of visits), and one was very dissatisfied.

- *With the aid of the new system of [Deaf] mentoring it has helped the whole family to learn as well.*

- *We might have a deaf resource person visit the school but we are never informed they are visiting until after they have visited.*

- *Would be nice for deaf resource person to visit to build up my children's confidence.*

3.3 Perception of key staff in child's education

Parents were asked, 'Which of the staff do you feel has the most important role in helping your child to learn at school?'. Some parents listed more than one key person; the results listed in Table 10 show only the person listed first by each respondent.

Table 10: Staff with most important role in helping child to learn at school

	N	%
Classroom teacher	46	39.3
Itinerant teacher	34	29.1
Teacher Aide	29	24.8
Other	8	6.8
Totals	117	100

Results of a question about the main contact person at school who keeps parents in touch about their child's education were fairly evenly spread between the Class teacher - 28.4%, Itinerant teacher - 27.6%, Teacher Aide - 23%, and 'Other'- 20.7 %.

3.4 Perception of academic progress at school

Question 17 asked, 'How well do you feel your child is doing at school – academically? (e.g. reading, writing, maths, learning concepts, keeping up with class work)'. The largest group reported their child to be doing 'reasonably well' (55.4%), with the remainder almost evenly split between either 'doing very well', or having difficulties. A breakdown of responses is shown in Table 11.

Table 11: How well is your child doing - academically?

	N	%
Doing very well	26	21.5
Doing reasonably well	67	55.4
Has difficulties	23	19
Has serious difficulties	5	4.1
Totals	121	100

Overall, parents' perception of academic progress is more optimistic than the achievement estimates of mainstream teachers which was investigated in a separate survey (the results of which are shown in Table 12). Teachers report that that 65% of mainstreamed deaf students are achieving below age appropriate level in literacy, 56% below age appropriate level in maths, and 59% below age appropriate level in other curriculum areas.

Table 12: Mainstream teachers' estimate of deaf student achievement level
in key curriculum areas (N = 178)

	Literacy	Maths	Topic Studies
Above age level	11 %	5%	10%
At age level	24 %	39%	31%
Approx. 1 year below age level	29%	30%	25%
Approx. 2+ yrs below age level	36%	26%	34%

It is likely that parents and teachers use different criteria in their assessment of what it means for a child to be 'doing well'. Parents' more positive ratings are in relation to their expectations for a deaf child or for the particular child (e.g. *"I am always concerned that there are gaps in his understanding but feel that this is inherent in having a hearing impaired child and no reflection on the support provided"),* whereas mainstream teacher's assessments are in relation to the average age norms for all children. In general, parents of older children noted more academic problems than children of younger children. Parents' comments on this question are reported below.

Comments on academic progress

Parents' positive comments about academic progress highlight the importance of ITODs in supporting children's learning.

- *Doing well. All thanks to itinerant teacher pre-school.*
- *Most (if not all) literacy development achieved due to TOD teaching in NZSL - separate time, withdrawn from class.*
- *Last year with experienced teacher she was in the top 25%. She can work independently. This year with a first year teacher, less TOD hours, she has dropped to average.*
- *She is doing well but without the help of her itinerant, she would have fallen way behind. She lost her itinerant help for 3 years, because she was doing so well. Luckily at year 6, it was discovered that her comprehension was way below her chronological age which was effecting her academic achievement ability.*
- *Has achieved so well since left deaf school. Much better education and mixed well with friends.*

Parents described typical difficulties encountered as follows:

i) Lack of class teacher's understanding of the child's deafness and learning needs

- *We feel it is difficult for the class teacher to understand about what our daughter actually hears. This is the first Deaf student she has taught. Sometimes she misses out on things because of other noises... Deaf kids often pretend they have heard.*

ii) The effort required for a deaf child to concentrate in a busy classroom environment and to make sense of aural/visual input.

- *Has a lot of problems understanding learning concepts and what is required of him, due to concentration problems.*
- *She has to work very very hard to keep up. She gets very tired but thankfully, she is very motivated to achieve. However, it is very hard work.*
- *Reading writing language big difficulties often refusing to co-operate as he is tired and ITOD only comes at certain times. Maths seems to be on a par.*

iii) Difficulty understanding the presentation of new concepts and instructions– that is, communication barriers, conceptual gaps, and a need for more specialised teaching than is available.

- *My child is certainly at a disadvantage in the class as he does miss out a lot. I have to pay for extra Maths and English to keep him up with the class.*
- *Qualified teacher one to one would put him in the 'very well' category - needs qualified teacher to consolidate concepts not fully heard because of deafness.*
- *She is good at reading, writing, maths but I am not sure about comprehension of what she is reading writing. She is keen and loves learning and getting things right (she hates getting things wrong.)*
- *Up to this year, I would have ticked the first box. However, we are now noticing that his comprehension is lagging behind his reading ability and he is missing information given by reading between the lines.*
- *Performing to acceptable level but below level capable of achieving.*

- *My child doesn't enjoy school a lot and at times doesn't want to go. I continually get told what I should be doing.*

- *High school has been a big jump from intermediate. His first term was difficult and he failed most tests, whereas before he passed and did reasonably well. Vocabulary is the most difficult.*

- *Due to hearing loss and illness is falling behind…Should have had more help years ago. As parents we try to fill in the gaps but not always possible.*

- *Is in one of the top stream classes. She is about average in there. She is having major problems with language learning to understand how questions can be asked in so many different ways.*

Some parents mention the psychological effects of feeling different, and of experiencing failure.

- *My older son has learned from past experience that he's different. But he is coping well because he has the freedom of choice and can get on with his schoolwork. My younger son is finding it hard to express himself amongst his friends during class. He must come to terms with what he is going through, rather than getting upset and confused with his emotions. This is the struggle he has, coping with people's reactions.*

- *My child has always been able to keep up with his peers with limited support. Now he is at a level where he needs more support, it is still unavailable to him. He sees himself as a 100% student and his failure at school certificate was devastating to him.*

- *My younger son doesn't like making mistakes because he doesn't like to be laughed at. Sometimes he doesn't understand the teacher and then he thinks he is being unfairly blamed.*

3.5 Perception of social relationships at school

Parents were asked 'How well do you feel your child is doing at school – socially? (e.g. getting along with children in class, forming friendships, behaviour, confidence and self esteem)'. Half the parents (50%) considered that their child was

generally doing well socially, while the other half perceived varying degrees of difficulty, as shown in Table 13.

<u>Table 13: How well is your child doing at school, socially?</u>

	N	%
Doing well	62	50
Sometimes has difficulties	41	33.1
Often has difficulties	16	12.9
Usually has a lot of difficulties	5	4
Totals	124	100

Comments on social relationships at school

Some parents described generally positive social experiences, as measured by having friends, 'supportive' and accepting attitudes of other children, or involvement in extra-curricular activities:

- *Social skills are improving slowly and is well liked.*
- *Circle of friends from kindy to school (who) know each other very well.*
- *Children at this age group are extremely supportive and friendly. Wanting to help.*
- *Her cochlear implant has changed this as she used to have a lot of difficulties.*
- *Because she has been brought up in mainstream and in a hearing world, she feels she is no different.*
- *Plays five sports, involved in activities i.e. kapa haka.*

Many parents described a lack of close friends due to communication barriers, bullying and exclusion, and difficulty understanding social behaviour norms:

- *Has difficulty socialising due to unable to communicate with peers.*
- *No close friends but is in good spirits and gets on well with classmates.*
- *Has no real friends.*
- *She tends to have difficulty with other children; she's bullied a lot. I think it could be caused by misunderstanding on their part.*
- *Problems with making himself clearly understood to other children. Tends to socialise with older (teenagers) or younger (new entrants).*

- *Has friends but I think their social knowledge is different e.g. does not follow fads such as Pokemon.*

- *She is doing well but sometimes feels excluded when other children do not intend it. They need more awareness of how to ensure she is included.*

- *Sometimes we have had excellent social situations, sometimes awful with bullying.*

- *Has lots of confidence and self esteem but has trouble getting along with children, forming friendships, behaviour. Had a couple of good friends at previous school.*

- *It is difficult. A deaf child's silly behaviour is not accepted by other kids the way the same behaviour would be accepted if the child was hearing. The quick communication game instructions are often not picked up; therefore; behaviour can be inappropriate, as rules etc. were not picked up. I feel there is lack of support at school in helping the child with friendships. My child has not been invited to his share of birthday parties… Behaviour is often inappropriate in order to get a laugh he's not aware he's being laughed at not with.*

- *Because my child can only communicate on a one to one basis it is very difficult for him to make friends who are good role models as those children are not encouraged to take the time to communicate with him. Hence, he is seen in a bad light because of the people's social skills that he associates with.*

A lack of confidence and self-esteem was also mentioned as a problem which might manifest in antisocial behaviour towards other children.

- *Thankfully, my son has a best friend who has been there for him since kindergarten. However, his confidence in the classroom is very low which has started manifesting itself in behavioural problems e.g. bullying, etc. His anger is becoming a concern to me.*

- *He doesn't like other children looking at his hearing aids.*

3.5 Contact with deaf peers and deaf adults

Opportunities for children to know peers and older role models who share their own characteristics and experiences can be critical to self-acceptance and positive self-image. For deaf children, communication with other deaf children is often different from communication experiences between themselves and hearing

children – typically, it is on a more equal footing, and a feeling of identity or similarity often leads to a greater level of understanding and self-confidence. For these reasons, the survey investigated how much opportunity for such contact currently exists for mainstreamed deaf children.

79.2% of children had only 'once a term' or 'occasional' contact with other deaf children, principally through 'Keep In Touch' days which bring mainstreamed deaf students together. Less than a third of deaf children (31%) socialised with deaf peers on a more frequent basis (daily/weekly/few times a month). A small group had built-in contact with a deaf sibling.

Table 14: Contact with deaf peers and deaf adults

Frequency of contact	With deaf peers		With deaf adults	
	N	%	N	%
Every day	19	15.2	10	8
Every week	10	8	9	7.2
A few times a month	10	8	9	7.2
About once a term	29	23.2	6	4.8
Occasionally	31	24.8	31	24.8
Never, or hardly ever	26	20.8	60	48
Totals	125	100	125	100

Almost half the children and their parents (48%) 'never or hardly ever' had contact with deaf adults; the next largest group (29%) had occasional/once a term contact with deaf adults, with 22.4% having more frequent contact, (this percentage includes responses from some parents who are deaf themselves, thus slightly lowering the actual figure for hearing parents.) Overall, the vast majority of parent and children have very little and infrequent contact with either deaf peers or adults.

Contact with other deaf people was most limited in small provincial towns. Contact with Deaf Mentors who visit mainstreamed students was reported by 31 parents, the majority of whom remarked on the positive impact of these people on their child and the wider school community. A few parents felt threatened or alienated by people in the deaf community who challenged their views, particularly in relation to issues around cochlear implants, and deaf children's identity as members of the deaf community. (Although one parent expressed the view that their child would be a future asset to the local deaf community and stated this as a reason to keep students in touch with Deaf adults.) Despite this diversity of views, parents' 'wish list' included more deaf resource staff for mainstreamed students and more deaf units which could provide a peer group.

4.0 CHOOSING A SCHOOL

4.1 Main reasons for choosing mainstream placement

The survey investigated the basis on which parents decide to mainstream a HN/VHN deaf child, in terms of sources of advice and information about available options, and parents' motives for choosing placement in a mainstream classroom. Question 21 asked, 'What were your main reasons for deciding to mainstream your child (rather than choosing a deaf unit or deaf school)? What things did you consider most important?' Analysis of responses identified seven main themes, as summarised in Table 15 in descending order of frequency. Many answers contained more than one reason (for example, 'higher academic challenge and experience with normal peers'), in which case each reason was coded and counted in each appropriate category. This accounts for the total of 214 responses (from 126 questionnaires).

Some of the categories that emerged from the data had a degree of overlap, such as socialisation in normal world/ exposure to spoken language, or exposure to spoken language/ deaf school not offering what was wanted (oral teaching). However our analysis determined that the differing emphasis or words used in parents' expression of their reasons warranted separation into distinct categories, which are explained and illustrated in the section below.

Table 15: Main reasons for choosing mainstream placement

	N
Proximity (transport, family/ neighbourhood relationships)	52
Socialisation in the normal world	37
No alternatives available in the area	29
Better academic level in mainstream	23
Exposure to spoken language	23
Local school was very helpful	21
Other	15
Deaf school not offering what we wanted	14
Total	214

Overall, the most frequently reported reason for deciding to mainstream was to keep the child in close proximity to the family and their neighbourhood. However, many felt that there was no choice about this, particularly in rural areas, in which parents also reported fewer resources being available to support mainstream placement. Others said that the mainstream was the only placement they would consider, without giving a more specific reason. Examples of responses in each of the categories are given below.

Proximity (52)

The largest group of parents described their main reason for mainstreaming as a desire for both physical and social proximity of the child to the home. However responses in this category contained three slightly different elements: (i) convenience of transport to school, (ii) sharing school experience with siblings (for practical reasons of convenience, and a desire for 'fairness/sameness' of educational opportunity), and (iii) keeping the child involved in the family and the neighbourhood community. Illustrative comments are as follows:

(i) Convenience of transport/location
- *Mainly location made us choose the school that was most accessible.*
- *Nearest school.*
- *Walk to school on their own*
- *Our ability to get transport to school for our child.*
- *I did want my child in a deaf class but they were too far away.*

(ii) Sharing school experience with siblings
- *That we wanted all our children to attend the same school.*
- *Older sibling already attending rural school and bus stops at our place.*
- *I want him to attend the same school as his older sister. Van Asch was too far. Half an hour each way by car for a five year old is quite a bit of time out of their day.*
- *Wanted the same opportunities for him as for our two older children, wanted him to mix with neighbourhood children.*

(iii) Keeping the child close to family and the community

- *Rural area - wants to be part of this community.*
- *We wanted our daughter to be at home with us and not go away to board at another city.*
- *We are a family and will not separate.*
- *Continuity. She went to Kōhanga Reo with kids she is at school with and has good co-operative relationships with them.*

Socialisation in normal world (37)

The dominant theme in this group of responses is a desire for the deaf child to have a 'normal' life, meaning identity with and integration into hearing society. Responses in this category centred around four key ideas, as follows: (i) A mainstream school experience will provide the child with skills for socialising and 'fitting in' with hearing people. Some parents also stated that mainstreaming allows the child access to both hearing and deaf worlds, by first coming to terms with the hearing world, with involvement in the deaf world being an option that could be chosen later in life. (ii) A deaf child should be treated as 'normal' – having the same opportunities, expectations, and experiences – in the hope that they will develop a self image or identity that is no different from others. (iii) Immersion in a mainstream school is the most effective route to developing oral language skills. (iv) The undesirable separateness ('ghetto effect') of deaf schools and units and a belief that these placements may constrain access education, work opportunities, and integration into hearing society. Comments which illustrate these beliefs follow:

(i) Skills for fitting in with hearing people; Access to 'both worlds'.
- *We wanted our child to fit in socially and felt it important to mainstream rather than be kept separate. If he so chooses when he is older to turn more to the deaf culture that's fine*
- *We had no choice but we considered mainstreaming the best option to enable our children to live in both worlds.*
- *To be able to give deaf and hearing challenge and experience in both worlds.*
- *Give a better chance at living in a hearing world.*
- *Ability to mix with and live in a hearing community - needs to be able to.*

- *We didn't even consider anything but mainstream, as she would eventually have to live in a mainstream hearing world.*

(ii) Being treated as normal and developing a 'normal' self image

- *My children feel happier being with other children and feeling no different to anyone else*
- *I felt that she could handle being like everybody else.*
- *Her to have normal schooling.*
- *We wanted our child to be treated like any other hearing student.*
- *So he could take his full place in society and hopefully develop to his full potential.*
- *We wanted him to achieve in a hearing world. We thought he was capable of achieving well in a hearing world.*
- *To increase his social skills and be with his brothers and to make him feel normal.*
- *To help lead our daughter into a normal life.*
- *To treat her as normally as possible.*
- *Being the same as everyone else. Socialising with hearing children.*
- *Need to succeed at all levels on an equal footing to gain entry into the working world.*

(iii) Developing oral language skills by immersion

- *To learn to be able to communicate as normally and with as many people as possible*
- *We chose oral. Therefore, he had to learn to cope in mainstream in hearing world.*
- *We were keen for our daughter to lead a normal life in a hearing environment, as she has no sign language skills.*

(iv) Undesirable separateness and limitations of deaf school or unit

- *I think that in a mainstream class my deaf child gets to mix with children her own age. She gets a wide range of role models and a higher standard of work. The deaf units in our area look like dumping grounds for mainstream failures.*

No Alternatives (29)

This group of parents' reported a lack of options in school placement. Some of these responses arise from rural location, but not all are accounted for by geographical isolation. Some large cities and nearly all towns lack specialised deaf education options. The two residential Deaf Education Centres in Auckland and Christchurch generally accept boarders at intermediate school age or above, and many parents apparently do not seriously consider residential schooling as an option in any case. Parents of children with multiple disabilities face extra constraints on choosing a school that is able to address their needs. Nearly all parents who gave this as their main reason indicated that they would have considered a deaf unit or deaf school setting if it had been available, which may also be true of other parents who did not list this as their main reason. A sample of comments describing a lack of alternatives as the main reason for choosing mainstreaming follow.

- *We don't have a Deaf School in our area but I wouldn't have sent him anyway. I never thought of not mainstreaming him.*
- *Lack of options. No deaf unit nearby. Great teacher of the deaf only reason for putting up with mainstream placement at present*
- *Our geographical isolation from any deaf school or deaf unit*
- *No other facilities in our city except mainstream i.e. NO CHOICE.*
- *Would have chosen deaf unit if one was less than 2 hours away.*
- *Did not know my child was deaf until he started school. No deaf school around. If there was and I knew he was deaf then I would have sent him there depending on transport at the time.*
- *We have no deaf unit or school in our city*
- *Small rural town. Other options not available.*
- *No choice, no school for deaf/blind.*
- *[Child has] multiple disabilities, so [deaf] boarding school not an option*

Academic level (23)

Some parents choose mainstreaming based on an expectation of higher ('normal') academic achievement, a more challenging standard of teaching and peer stimulation, and wider curriculum choice available in mainstream schools. These are stated in implicit or explicit contrast to deaf units and schools, as follows.

- *Higher expectations of child in mainstream.*
- *She gets a wide range of role models and a higher work standard.*

- *Orientation to normal hearing standards of achievement.*
- *We felt it was essential for him to be enrolled in a school which went through to form 7, as we want him to obtain a good university degree.*
- *Good teaching practice, broadness of experience, academic excellence, structured environment.*
- *Variety of curriculum subjects taught by highly qualified staff.*
- *Keeping up with peers.*
- *Feel education would be better in mainstream school.*
- *My daughter is bright enough to be mainstreamed.*
- *Because the classes are bigger, more challenge for him to learn, more variety of children to mix with, and better sports facilities (he is mad on sports).*
- *Because we wanted our kids to receive higher level of education.*
- *A belief that she is getting better education here.*

Exposure to spoken language (23)

Responses in this category express parents' uppermost desire for their child to use spoken language exclusively, for which they see the mainstream environment as optimal. Some parents express this choice as their own insistence that the child communicate orally, while others describe the placement decision as being guided by the child's demonstrated ability to speak and to 'cope' orally. Some responses make a specific contrast with the language environment of deaf schools, in which signing is seen to be detrimental to the development of speech and, by association, academic and social skills.

- *He is very oral and his speech is clear and understandable.*
- *Our desire from day 1 was for our child to learn to listen and come to spoken language, which will always be her first language (this was not an easy option but it worked)*
- *Not wanting her to sign or be with signing children.*
- *We wanted our child in an oral environment.*
- *Language development could progress at a far greater speed than in a deaf school.*
- *She was able to cope orally.*
- *Because he had good inclination in voice.*
- *He was mainstreamed because we insisted that he learn to listen and speak.*

- *As our child was communicating orally, we saw no reason to send her to a deaf school.*
- *Mainstream school could reinforce expectations for communicating and behaving appropriately within the environment.*
- *To keep him using and developing oral language skills.*
- *That he learn to speak and try learn new words.*
- *Obvious choice to us. Believed where her potential could be realised in an oral/aural way.*
- *To learn to communicate with hearing children.*
- *Not profoundly deaf uses only oral/aural, with excellent communication abilities.*
- *She did not want to and showed no interest in using sign language.*

Local school very supportive, helpful, resources available (21)

Responses in this category contained three main elements: (i) the positive attitude of staff in the local school towards the parents and a child with different needs, or a feeling of 'cultural fit' between the school and the parents; (ii) the perceived availability of knowledge, experience and resources in the school appropriate to supporting a deaf student; and (iii) the perceived quality and reputation of the school generally. Some parents mentioned more than one of these elements, but overall this group of responses placed more emphasis on the reputation, social environment and attitude of a school, than on the availability of deaf-related experience or resources. Illustrative comments are listed below.

(i) Positive attitude of school to meeting child's/family's needs; Cultural fit

- *Amount of help the school was going to give. The headmaster was very pleasant, wanted the child to start right away. Overall very helpful, close to where we live.*
- *Supportive, caring staff who we feel comfortable talking with.*
- *Community reflected school, same type of culture as our family, variety of friends.*
- *School had a policy and committee for special needs children.*
- *The schools attitude towards having a special needs student there was important to me. It also has an excellent reputation in our town.*

(ii) Experience and resources to support a deaf student

- *The school has a deaf unit so the whole school has knowledge of deaf.*

- *School's reputation for handling special needs children. Other Deaf children at the school.*
- *The support services were available to enable him to manage at our local school.*

(iii) General quality and reputation of school
- *Small school… Good playground. Safe environment. Happy school.*
- *The quality of their education was very good and the philosophy of the schools appealed to us greatly.*
- *Other deaf children had already attended the school. Small school roll. Principal and teachers willing to take on special needs child. Transition from Kindy to school made easier by having familiar faces e.g. kindy friends ITOD the same great teacher aide.*

Other (15)

'Other' reasons for choosing a local mainstream school related to individual circumstances, the child's amount of residual hearing (e.g., "*She has a moderate severe hearing loss … too much hearing for a deaf unit or school")*, the students' expressed choice, a desire for other children to learn to accept difference, the cultural preference for a child to attend Kura Kaupapa, and advice received from an Advisor. .

Deaf school not offering what was wanted (14)

14 parents specifically stated that they had chosen mainstreaming because a deaf school or deaf unit did not offer what they were looking for, based on several factors, as follows: (i) peers of similar age were not available for their child in a deaf education setting; (ii) they did not want their child to be educated in a sign language environment; (iii) a perception that deaf units and deaf school offer a lower quality of education and/or support. Examples of these responses follow:

(i) Lack of similar age peers
- *Deaf school have no more 5 year olds – they mostly go to mainstream.*
- *Few deaf children at deaf school. No child his age group. No challenge.*

(ii) Not wanting child in sign language environment

- *The deaf school did not offer the education we wanted for our child. That is, we wanted our child to be bilingual both oral and NZSL. The deaf school was too orientated to NZSL/ deaf culture for our taste.*

- *Special units and deaf schools don't cater for those who want to talk and live totally in a hearing world.*

- *As our child was communicating orally, we saw no reason to send her to a deaf school where main form of communication was sign.*

- *At the deaf school, his speech was deteriorating so we wanted him mainstreamed to make speech more important.*

- *Cochlear implant does not fit in with signing or Kelston Deaf Education Centre.*

(iii) Perceived low quality education. in deaf unit/school

- *The deaf units in our area look like dumping grounds for mainstream failures.*

- *My child … chose the intermediate and then the high school above the deaf unit because they treated the children differently than hearing children and their work was behind in pace and expectation of concept.*

- *Feel education would be better in mainstream school.*

- *He didn't have a good experience at the deaf school when he was five. Many behavioural problems amongst deaf kids and bad attitudes to cochlear implant kids.*

4.2 Sources of information and advice about school placement

The survey asked parents to describe where or from whom they gained information to guide their choice of school placement. Responses fell into four groupings as shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Sources of information that guided choice of school

		N	%
Self – own investigation of school(s)		59	42.5%
Advisor		34	24.5%
Other		24	17%
School (information from local school)		22	16%
	Total	139	100

As shown in Table 16, the majority of parents sought their own information about schools before making their decision. Some investigated more than one school, while

others stated that their main source of information was the local school. 24.5% listed the Advisor as a person who helped them decide on a school placement. This is perhaps a low figure, considering the service coordination and educational guidance role of Advisors for parents of pre-schoolers; alternatively, this result may reflect the counselling approach taken by Advisors towards encouraging parents to take ownership of their own decisions.

4.3 Anticipated highschool placement

Parents were asked, 'If your child is at Primary or Intermediate now, what is the most likely option you will choose for Highschool?'. 20% of the survey respondents reported their child to already be at highschool and did not answer this question. Results of those who responded are shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Anticipated highschool placement

	%
Fully mainstreamed in a regular highschool	67.4
Deaf resource class in a regular highschool	24.7
Deaf Education Centre	5.6
Special Needs Unit	2.2
Total	100

These results indicate a strong tendency for parents who have chosen mainstreaming at the primary level to continue with mainstream placement at highschool level, although a quarter foresee that their child will benefit from a Deaf Resource Unit environment within a highschool (if they have local access to one). A small proportion (5%) who intend to enrol their child in a Deaf Education Centre (deaf school) apparently anticipate benefits to a deaf adolescent in this setting which are not available in a mainstream context.

4.4 Satisfaction with advice and information received about schooling

Parents were asked to evaluate whether they received enough and the right kind of information about the advantages and disadvantages of different school options and support available when making decisions at each major stage of their

child's education. The results are shown in Table 18. Response options provided in the survey were worded as follows:

▪ *Yes* - got the information we needed to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

▪ *Partly* – got some information, but not enough to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

▪ *No* – did not get enough / the right kind of information to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

Table 18: Did you get adequate information on school options …?

	Primary school		Intermediate		Secondary school*	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	85	73.3	24	63.2	25	80.6
Partly	23	19.8	12	31.6	4	12.9
No	8	6.9	2	5.3	2	6.5
Totals	116	100	38	100	31	100

* Although only 20.8% of the sample reported their child to be at secondary school, 24% of the sample responded to the question about secondary school. This suggests that some parents at the time of the survey were in the process of selecting a highschool for their child, and answered on that basis.

The numbers shown in Table 18 indicate that most parents answering this question were reporting on their experience with information relating to primary school options (116, as compared to only 38 and 31 respectively who commented on intermediate and secondary school information). Overall, the results show that about three quarters of parents generally feel that they received adequate information about school options, particularly at primary and secondary school levels.

5.0 OVERALL VIEWS OF MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

5.1 Access to a suitable education in the mainstream

Parents were asked to rate, overall, their child's access to a suitable education in the mainstream. Two thirds (67.5%) of the sample responded that it was 'good' or

'very good', while almost one third (32.5%) had found it to be less than satisfactory, as shown below in Table 19.

Table 19: Overall access to a suitable education in the mainstream

	%
Very good	28.3
Good	39.2
Mostly satisfactory	23.3
Mostly unsatisfactory	7.5
Very unsatisfactory	1.7
Total	100

Parents of 5-7 year olds were the most likely to rate access to a suitable education as 'very good' (31%), whereas a smaller proportion of parents of 14-18 year olds (26%) rated overall access as 'very good'. The rating 'very unsatisfactory' was chosen only by parents of 11-13 and 14-18 year olds, reflecting the fact that academic disadvantage becomes more apparent as the child progresses through school. This might also indicate that accessing higher levels of schooling becomes more complex, and that the level of support available is less likely to meet all needs.

Parents offered many additional comments on this question. these are categorised and and illustrated below.

i) Positive school experience, with an emphasis on 'caring' for the deaf student.

▪ *The Deaf Departments* [sic] *do care and with the help of the mainstream education, I believe it will work miracles for Deaf children.*

▪ *The caring culture of the school has been of critical importance. It has helped a lot.*

▪ *We are very pleased with her progress and her learning needs are very good. Lots of my deaf friends realise that mainstreamed suits her best.*

ii) Inadequate support at the early stages of education:

▪ *Her first school was totally unsuitable, in every way. Communication support etc. But her new school is an improvement.*

▪ *Lack of support during early stages of his education.*

▪ *Generally, good but as deafness wasn't picked up until 3 years of age he needs lots of extra one- on-one to boost his learning to his age level.*

iii) Mainstream teachers' lack of knowledge and skills for teaching a deaf student negatively impacting the child's access to learning:

- *The problem we have in mainstream is with ignorant normal teachers. We are sick of being told our child is doing well and questioned the level of support he gets. They infer he doesn't need that level. They just do not get it. He's doing so well because of the level of support.*

- *It all depends on the classroom teacher and their methods and willingness to adapt their methods to better help our child ...*

- *There have been a couple of unsuitable teachers in the past which has wasted a whole year of school and put our child behind. Example: primary school teacher who refused to wear radio aids and did not modify teaching for hearing impaired student.*

- *This year good and how I imagined it always would be but due mainly to the commitment of the teacher aide, ITOD and AODC. Up until term 4, 2000 when I had my daughter removed from the class she was in, I can only say I don't think she got a fair deal ... The school's decisions regarding my daughter up until this year and her previous experiences could only be described as satisfactory...*

iv) Inadequate or inconsistent support at school:

- *We feel he could use more support, i.e. more hours from specialist staff. (More than 5 hours per week)*

- *Notes in exercise books and IEPs termly or less often are not sufficient.*

- *I have been fortunate to only have had one unsatisfactory experience with support and SES stuff. Otherwise, people are excellent if stretched to full capacity. Should be more people resources available and Te Reo Māori speaking people.*

- *Because we live in a rural community access is a little bit of a problem to teachers who are trained to teach deaf children and to know their problems.*

- *I don't believe the mainstream is to blame for our son's lack of progress. The main problem is the difficulty in finding suitable interpreters with enthusiasm to keep it going all day and not slack.*

- *I'm happy with most of my daughters education. I get annoyed when I see her Teacher Aide busy doing other things as she wears more than one hat in the*

school. The fact that the school also gets .1 of a teacher and uses it in other areas
of the school also annoys me as I feel it would have better uses.

v) Description of gaps in the child's educational situation:

▪ *If there was a school for deaf /hearing impaired children here, he definitely would*
  have gone there.

▪ *We think she will do better in a Deaf Unit with partial mainstreaming, so will be*
  changing to this soon.

▪ *Mainstream education was fine for my child at an early age but as my child got*
  older the gaps academically and socially began to appear.

▪ *The main gaps are access to learning sign language, Deaf culture and history,*
  and regular interaction with Deaf people from an early age. When everything
  falls apart - hearing aids don't work, teacher aide's sick, no adviser - then
  parents are left to keep things going and that's a crisis. A better infrastructure is
  needed.

5.2 Level of advice and information received by parents

The content, amount, accessibility, and presentation of information and advice
to parents (particularly hearing parents) is crucial in shaping their knowledge,
expectations, choices, and skills for educating a deaf child. Parents were asked to give
an overall rating of their perception of the level of advice and information available to
them regarding their deaf child and their education. A relatively high degree of
satisfaction was expressed: 73% report this to have been 'good' or 'very good', and
27% as less than satisfactory, as shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Level of information and advice to parents

	%
Very good	35.2
Good	37.8
Mostly satisfactory	19.3
Mostly unsatisfactory	4.2
Very unsatisfactory	3.4
Total	100

Many parents supplied further comment on this question which give a fuller picture of their experiences. Comments ranged from unequivocally positive, to mixed, to critical. Quite a number of comments that started on a positive note were qualified by a concern which reflected mixed experiences. Issues raised included: lack of awareness and knowledge within mainstream schools (despite good support from visiting experts); a need for more deaf units; information from advisors being narrowly focused (i.e. lacking Deaf or bilingual perspective); insufficiently available, or inappropriately presented information; frustration with 'false reassurance' about a child's progress; and uncertainty about future provision of support. Some parents felt that they had had to search for information, and/or that there simply was not enough expertise or information available to them at the right times. A representative range of such comments follow:

i) Positive comments on advice and support

- *We have always had very good support since we found our daughter was deaf at 6 months of age. One hour after ABR [the] specialist rang us. Two hours after ABR [the] deaf adviser telephoned us, organised appointment for next day. Began early intervention at Van Asch at beginning of next week. Attended pre-school there for 4 1/2 years 2-3 times a week very skilled teachers and audio support. We could not have had better support. We live 40 minutes from Van Asch.*
- *Plenty of information and advice - especially if you ask.*

ii) 'Qualified' positive comments

- *The services available have been fantastic. Our child is well catered for in every way for which we are very grateful. Goodness knows what will happen with our allocation of hours in the future.*
- *The teachers, the teacher aides, the professionals etc. have all done their best for my child. I wish there were more deaf units around the country. I believe that deaf children need a specialised education.*
- *Resources available and accessibility ... have been greatest from deaf adviser and itinerant teacher. From primary school I feel there is a certain lack of*

understanding as child is only deaf /hearing impaired in whole school at present. Maybe we are all learning together.

- *Very good from the experts who work with my child, e.g. Teacher aide, ITOD, AODC, Deaf Resource people - but from the school setting very poor and some incredibly bad decisions made up until this year.*

- *Very good, up to the middle of last year thanks to an excellent adviser on the deaf. We no longer have an adviser on the North Shore. This is a tragedy.*

- *Information regarding education was basically good but regarding early behaviour problems at home, not very helpful*

iii) Problems with relevance and availability of advice and information

- *The way the education system goes it seems they are not willing to admit that development is slow, everyone learns at their own pace, etc… Unless a parent is active in their child's education and questions, a child can seemingly go through the system. We regularly ask and get responses to anything we want to know but you have to be willing to be up front and approach them in a way that doesn't personally threaten them- (teachers, principals etc.)*

- *The child feels like he is not doing very well but teachers tell me that he is doing really good.*

- *Some people think that their way of doing things, their way of thinking is correct, and there is a tendency to be pressured into following in their path and doing what they say.*

- *We don't feel the adviser is much use to us. We have a different perspective/views on many issues. (Deaf parents)*

- *Some stuff is so technical that we don't understand it and other times we are treated like idiots! Always they say our daughter is very bright but they seemed (in the past) to forget where she got her intelligence from.*

- *The main complaint I have is that the advice of Deaf adults about what constitutes a good education for a deaf child was missing. And, itinerant teachers and advisors don't provide sufficient information for us to make an informed choice. They took a view, i.e. my child should be oral, never mind what happens when the hearing aides break or she has a cold or there is too much background noise. Having to fight for sign language and oral was hard.*

- *I have had little or no support for myself and my child has many people with him teaching him nothing.*

iv) Problems with the availability of advice and information

- *Only because I have asked many questions and have been proactive my background in special needs and contacts in deaf education helped immensely. To the unaware parent it would be easy to be kept in the dark. Many advisers are passionate about deaf education but the changes in the structure of SES has changed their role to non existent.*

- *... we lived in Wellington until 15 months ago and were never offered cochlear implant, now with a further hearing loss we have been. If I'd had previous exposure to CI I may have been quicker to action it. Now it looks very difficult for us to be high enough on the waiting list to get one.*

- *... not good at initial diagnosis. I found information tended to be drip fed and often not given. It is vital advisors are out there helping parents especially at the early stages and decision times during education.*

- *Most of the decent information I received I had to go out and look for myself. I think that if you have disabled children in NZ and you are not naturally assertive then your kids haven't got much of a show of achieving much out there.*

5.3 Parents' suggested improvements to the mainstream situation: 'wish list'

The final question in the survey asked parents, "If you are not completely satisfied with your child's progress or current learning situation at school, what could improve the situation? (If you had a 'wish list', what would it be?)". Responses suggested both increased access to existing resources, the provision of new (or locally unavailable) resources, and to a lesser extent, qualitative change in the organisation and delivery of services. The main 'wish list' items are summarised in Table 21, listed in descending order of frequency. Each category is explained further below.

Table 21: Parents' 'Wish list'

	N
a) Deaf awareness training in mainstream school	26
b) Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf (more)	23
c) Teacher Aides (more/better trained)	19
d) Improved classroom environment and/or adaptive technology	19
e) Better use of resources *(& other comments)*	16
f) Increased support, generally	14
g) More deaf units	11
h) Deaf Resource/Role models (more)	10
i) Speech therapy (more)	7
j) Sign language (more tuition)	7
k) Home support	6
l). Notetaker (provision of)	5
m) Advisors (more)	5
n) Rationalisation of current support	4
o) Interpreters (provision of)	3

a) Deaf awareness training in mainstream school

Comments in this category focused on the need for training and informing mainstream school staff, students and parents about how to teach and include a deaf student. Parents point out the considerable and specialised knowledge required to educate a deaf student, and observe that the current system for preparing mainstream schools to acquire this knowledge is inadequate. Most of these comments focused on staff members; a few commented on the equally important need for hearing classmates to learn about communicating with a deaf child. A sample of comments on training follows:

- *As most [teachers] do not have any experience in teaching deaf children [they] need in-service training and support to help them understand the specific needs of our deaf children.*
- *More in class support for teacher from knowledgeable source, e.g. adviser, especially for new teacher, and throughout the year. Not just 30 minute visits.*
- *Teachers need necessary training to understand how hearing loss can effect speech, learning, listening etc., which would bring further benefits for the child.*
- *Mainstreaming is not truly effective without trained specialist support for teachers, students and parents. Deaf children require their siblings to be trained to communicate as well. There is no support currently available. Class peers need education at all levels to communicate.*
- *Deafness is a very specialised disability requiring a great deal of awareness of staff to its implications. No teachers we have come across have this. We have to inform them of all the requirements and contacts.*
- *There seems to be more courses available to learn how to educate/communicate with profound deafness. A moderate /severe loss are looked on as normal and their needs are easily ignored … information is hard to get /courses aren't available.*

- *A lot of deaf kids can't fit into the mainstream because of their own levels of frustration with the world around them. Issues like getting hearing people to appreciate deaf culture more, making time to talk to not look away from or walk away from the person as they are speaking and to appreciate deaf gesture as simple as a tap on the shoulder as using manners not interrupting or being violent.*

b) Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf: increased, trained

Parents emphasised the value of specialist teaching from ITODs and many wished for an increase in ITOD hours. Some called for all itinerants to be trained as teachers of the deaf, reflecting dissatisfaction with the fact that some itinerant and ORS funded extra teaching time is provided by teachers without training in deaf education. Others mentioned the need for appropriate replacements when an ITOD is sick or on leave.

- *To have unlimited support, teacher aide itinerant teacher of the deaf which of course means "funds".*
- *Itinerant teacher has been excellent would love more than four hours a week…*
- *Having only one weekly one hour visit from an ITOD seems insufficient at this crucial time in our child's development.*
- *At least 2 hours itinerant time daily in the morning for primary school.*
- *Teacher of the deaf training long distance to make itinerants available to all children who need one.*
- *That the child could keep the itinerant teacher throughout schooling life as the number one support person. They have all the skills to be the child's best person owing to the fact that they are specifically trained in all matters relating to hearing /deaf education. The different perspective itinerant teacher has brought in one term has been so beneficial both to child and parent and teachers.*
- *Relief cover for teachers of the deaf.*
- *Number one - more itinerants available. More time with itinerants less with teacher aide. I'm happy with the adult intervention hours he has available but would love it all with itinerant not teacher aide i.e. a trained better qualified person who is better equipped to help.*
- *I don't understand why itinerant teacher (oral, little English sign) chosen for my child (NZSL) I've appealed but nothing [happened]. Not fair.*
- *I want the ORS time given to a teacher of the deaf.*
- *Trained itinerant teachers of the deaf.*

c) Teacher Aides - increased and trained

Noting the major role that teacher aides play in a deaf child's participation in class, parents expressed a wish for both more teacher aide time, and for a better level of training or calibre of personnel. Comments on the need for more training and better working conditions for teacher aides demonstrate parents' perception that aides

require teaching skills, and/or sign language interpreting skills. The need for replacement of aides on leave was also noted.

- *As the teacher aid spends most of the time with the child I think they should have as much in service training as the itinerant teachers of the deaf.*
- *Teacher aide. More than 15 minutes a day would be a start.*
- *Access to mainstream with support of NZSL fluent teacher aide.*
- *I would like to see teacher aides of the deaf get more training.*
- *I would also like to see the teacher aides being given more respect and credit in terms of the important job they do. Now I feel the teacher aide is being asked by the classroom teacher about what best suits the child whereas prior to this the teacher aide was either not consulted or her ideas were rudely dismissed.*
- *Teacher Aides need more money. It is hard to find a good teacher aide and one who knows how to sign.*
- *[wish for] an intelligent teacher aide.*
- *Full time teacher aide hours.*
- *Mainstream schools to be receptive to the needs of deaf pupils- not appointing a teacher aide because they can do the hours but testing their aptitude to sign and their dedication to the pupil.*
- *Speech work [should] not [be] assigned to the teacher aide.*

d) Improved classroom environment and/or adaptive technology

Given the fact that two thirds of the children represented in this sample must rely on partial hearing and lipreading for access to communication throughout the school day, it is not surprising that many parents expressed a belief that their child would benefit from smaller class size, and from the installation of a loop system or other acoustic improvements to the classroom. Many parents wished for sub-titled film resources in schools, and the use of real-time captioning of speech by notetakers. These technologies are scarcely available at present in New Zealand schools, although they are widely used overseas. One respondent suggested a need for sign language video material (although approximately one third of students in the survey were signers) – probably not because these materials are already widely available, but because most parents have not been exposed to the possibility.

- *Classrooms in mainstream need to improve acoustics for deaf hard of hearing students/hearing students and teachers.*
- *Future technology equipment. Talking computer e.g. teacher talking and comes up on screen. DVD for resources.*
- *A waterproof hearing aid for swimming lessons.*
- *More timely cochlear implant, before eroding child's learning, confidence, self esteem, and relationships, (where there is a progressive hearing loss.)*

- *Smaller classes. Hearing loop system available in classroom.*
- *... our biggest wish would be to have classrooms designed with much better acoustics and better lighting.*
- *Sub titles on videos and TVs in classrooms. Modern classrooms with good acoustics. Smaller number of children in classes. Loop systems.*
- *The FM system is still not helping enough for my son to understand what the teacher is saying.*
- *More resources for deaf children e.g. DVD and subtitles on all resources.*
- *Appropriate age level books with signing videos. Teletext for videos etc.*
- *In high school…we think a lap top computer is the way to go. Faster than a note-taker child can watch screen. Can ask questions, can refer back to notes on disc…*
- *Classes kept to size of 20.*

e) Better use of resources (& other comments)

Comments in the category covered miscellaneous issues, some of which were particular to the respondent's circumstances. Several expressed frustration with delays in receiving appropriate assistance, and with the apparent mis-use of resources intended for the deaf child. Comments included the following:

- *We cannot access RTLB despite one coming to our school*
- *More support needed when children are very young. Thanks to hospital, my son had to wait till he was 6 to get hearing aids. Ear people need to listen to parents about their children.*
- *SES help children earlier. It would solve a lot of problems later.*
- *[We wish] That the funding that was allowed for my child was available for her to use rather than being told there is no money left for what we want.*
- *Knowing that the school uses the resources properly when you know that they use it in other places because they feel your daughter doesn't need any more help, because she is doing quite well. I want the extra that is brought into the school used to extend her education.*
- *I'm sure some schools use their resources well. It has angered me so much at times I feel I would like to educate my children from home…*
- *Curriculum adaptation essential.*

f) Increased support, generally

Many parents wished for more one to one specialist support for their child, and more support for themselves. These comments indicate a perception that deaf children's learning potential is not being realised under current conditions in the mainstream situation, and that an increased amount of 'expert attention' would improve learning.

- *More one to one times would definitely benefit. My child responds better in this way. (Hears best too). My 9 year old child frequently needs more clarification of*

instructions or for them to be repeated. It seems to me that deaf children need more assistance in this matter especially regarding tests.

- *Lots more one to one help with basic building blocks of learning that he has missed. He's missing out on a lot of learning simply because he doesn't get it in general conversation. Would be great for somebody to do a check (test) on what sorts of things he doesn't understand i.e. the very basics that you need to know to make harder work easily understood e.g. maths general concepts.*
- *More support so you feel you are not relying on people's good nature.*
- *He could have more one to one.*
- *More time in general.*
- *More advice and help at the time when it is needed e.g. when we first had hearing aids. There wasn't any support; we learned as we went along.*
- *More visits from professionals.*
- *For those who give out special needs time (teacher aide), they need to experience for themselves children with special needs who are like us in a small town and don't have the support.*

g) More deaf units

A number of parents indicated that a deaf unit would be a preferable alternative if available- offering greater teaching expertise and opportunities for contact with deaf peers and older role models. Some mentioned that the use of NZSL in a deaf unit would provide more accessible learning and social experiences.

- *Our first wish is for our child to be surrounded by deaf peers.*
- *I would like to see deaf units in small towns.*
- *A deaf unit at our local primary school with: a Teacher of the deaf fluent in NZSL, a Deaf language assistant, access to mainstream with support of NZSL fluent teacher aide, mainstream classes not open plan.*
- *We would wish for a specific deaf learning class where all communication is in NZSL.*
- *Full time teachers experienced with deaf children. Curriculum subjects, suitable for deaf children to comprehend. Learning goals.*
- *More deaf children living locally so they could be taught together all day every day within a mainstream school so they can mix socially and for some subjects.*
- *Option available close to home for deaf units.*
- *A deaf unit at each level of education, primary, intermediate, secondary.*

h) Deaf Resource/Role models

More contact with Deaf adult role models as a part of children's educational and social development was seen as desirable by some parents:

- *More access to deaf role models. Open freedom to use deaf resource class without negotiation/politics.*
- *That our child was taught by a deaf teacher.*

- *I would like to see more deaf adults get involved with deaf children at schools.*
- *A deaf person who can answer questions about what it's like at different stages of growing up.*
- *I realise Deaf studies curriculum is coming, unfortunately too late for my child. The whole area of social skills and social understanding needs a great deal of research. The isolation of a deaf child is difficult to deal with at times. Class teachers and teacher aides need a great deal more support to prevent misunderstanding of the child's behaviour.*

i) Speech therapy

Parents desired more access to speech therapy than is currently available:

- *A speech therapist recommended by audiologist but not provided.*
- *At present, we are receiving no speech language therapy.*
- *Speech lessons on an ongoing basis.*
- *More help with speech.*

j) Sign language – improved access for children, staff, parents

Equal numbers of parents wished for more speech therapy and more access to sign language. Those mentioning improvement in sign language availability wished for:

- *TODs and Teacher Aides signing (NZSL) in support of oral language. If not initially understood aurally by child then signing is used too.*
- *NZSL as first language in the classroom.*
- *It would be nice if he can learn some sign language so as to be able to communicate with a deaf person, to be part of the community.*
- *More NZSL tutors to help teacher aides staff at school etc.*
- *NZSL taught to the teachers and students on a regular basis, that did not use itinerant hours*
- *Regular sign classes.*
- *NZSL dictionaries in all schools.*
- *Access to sign language classes daily for my child, also for parents and siblings, weekly.*

k) Home support – better liaison with parents

- *Special needs school co-ordinator to let us know what is going on at school i.e. when teacher aid leaves and no-one is helping him.*
- *More interaction in the schools for parents making them feel respected. More support for parents.*
- *Help parents who help their child -we need the support as well. Listen to parents.*
- *My wish list would be that educational professionals could listen to the parents call.*

l) Notetakers - provision of

Some parents identified a need for trained notetakers. They described notetaking as a way for oral students to immediately access classroom communication, in addition to providing a record of teaching points.

- *Equal access - note takers.*
- *To be able to compete on an equal footing some extra one to one plus note-takers in all curriculum areas are necessary for the student to have equal access to learning and information.*
- *Teacher aide or itinerant to write down all teacher says or using some kind of computer technology where the child is picking up what the teacher is saying straight away especially questions. So that the deaf child is not left out or misses out on information.*
- *He wants what the teacher says written down, not what they write. How can we get people to understand this?*

m) More Advisors

Their current scarcity is reflected in comments on the need for more access to trained Advisors on Deaf Children – both for parents and school staff:

- *Access to a deaf adviser again- say two times a year or as required.*
- *Involvement of an adviser. This role contributing impartiality and objectivity. It also supports parent involvement.*
- *Heaps more advisers with smaller caseloads.*
- *An adviser to advocate and inform people of the real needs of the deaf. There is an assumption that if a student talks they can hear everything.*
- *Trained deaf advisers.*

n) Rationalisation or re-organisation of support

Some of these remarks suggested that a deaf student may be impeded by too many different adults carrying out various support roles, and/or that the support services could be differently combined (e.g., "*To be able to attend a Deaf Ed Centre part-time. Mainstreamed at other times*").

- *I wouldn't want more hours because I want him to still be independent, to think and do for himself.*
- *Rationalise the number of people providing support.*
- *The tricky thing is balancing his needs for one to one with his very natural objection to being taken out of class too often, and his desire to participate fully in class activities.*
- *Consistency in support staff for teacher support hours.*

o) Interpreters (provision of)

The small number of parents who wished for the provision of interpreters (relative to the number whose children use sign language) is more likely to reflect their virtual absence in the school system, rather than a limited need for their services.

- *Equal access - interpreters.*
- *Excellent interpreters with diligence and enthusiasm happy to work for the very low pay rates offered.*
- *Automatically full hours of support e. g. interpreter, itinerant teacher, note-takers.*

6.0 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON MAINSTREAMING EXPERIENCE

Of the 126 respondents, 20 made additional comments at the end of the questionnaire about their experience of mainstreaming their deaf child. These comments ranged from those who were very satisfied *("I am very pleased with my child being mainstreamed, she has always been accepted by her peers ... and treated with the greatest professionalism by her teachers")* to those who were very critical of current arrangements *("With our current education system, mainstreaming will never work when it comes to educating our Deaf children. When the curriculum is delivered in English, everything is second hand".)* Many positive comments were qualified by some concerns.

Overall, the comments describe situations in which the support received from schools and professionals is as good as could be expected, but gaps in the children's access to learning and social relationships remain evident, for example:

- *Socially for our child, mainstream ... has been an awesome experience. Educationally he is being let down by the system. He is struggling in language (written, reading and sign) and that is because he is not given enough time by the professionals educated/trained to help him."/*
- *High school is proving more difficult to keep up to date with what is happening. Depends a lot on the student's own initiative to take responsibility to find out. Assemblies and other gatherings are very hard. They are on the outside in many ways in mainstream schools, which is sad. A close friend makes all the difference.*
- *Our child is successfully mainstreamed. He has had some problems over the years with making friends and following conversations".*

Positive aspects of parents' experiences highlighted the importance of communication between professionals and parents in supporting a deaf child in a mainstream school:

- *For us it has worked as we have a wonderful support team. Keep communication lines open with the school and let teachers feel comfortable to say no they don't think they can teach your child. Better to have them in a class with a teacher that works for them rather than one that doesn't.*
- *Communication with teacher aide /itinerants is the greatest need for parents to know what is happening and how their child is coping.*

Parents also reiterated the value of specialist teaching received from itinerant teachers of the deaf: *"The itinerants are trained and know so much more than a teacher and therefore more valuable"*.

While some parents expressed concern about changing support staff, others raised the opposite issue – the drawbacks of having the same personnel work with the child for many years on end: *" I would like the teachers involved in [Deaf Units] to ... have only two years maximum with the same children. Being too familiar can lead to many problems with parents, children and teachers"*.

Several emphasised that mainstreaming is reliant upon parents' own efforts as educators in trying to cover gaps in the school situation:

- *...our nine year old responds and learns well if we put in lots of one to one time and I realise it is difficult in large classes to have the resources to do this.*
- *We have to accept that our deaf children will miss out on lots in a mainstream situation but we can offer them all the assistance they can get. Parents' involvement is crucial".*

The lack of choice of placement options, particularly for signing children, was an issue:

- *I feel deaf children where NZSL is their first language are isolated in the mainstream school with usually only the specialised teachers to communicate with. They tend to have to follow what is happening rather than take a lead. I am not a great believer in mainstreaming deaf children whose first language is NZSL, but in a small town, there is no choice.*

These comments were alongside those who were adamantly opposed to the idea of a congregated school setting, for reasons of wishing to normalise the child's social experience, maintaining relationships with family, and academic standards:

- *It's a hearing world they must live in and they need as normal a life as possible and to be in their own community*
- *I shudder at the thought of sending my child away from home. Although she does require specialised teaching this can be provided (if you are lucky like us) here in her local area. I believe that Kelston is full of failed children (yes often from mainstream) and I wanted my intelligent child to reach her full potential".*

7.0 KEY ISSUES: SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY

7.1 Communication modes of mainstreamed children

7.1.1 The predominance of oral communication

Over two thirds (67%) of children represented in this survey communicate in an oral-aural mode, a figure which includes only half of the profoundly deaf children. Fitzgeral (2000) notes that 23% of her sample were reported to be oral, yet had little intelligible speech and no use of sign language.

An expectation that immersion in a spoken language environment will effectively develop spoken English skills was a key reason that parents chose to mainstream their child. Facility in speech was seen by parents as important to the deaf child's future ability to work and socialise in hearing society. Parents generally did not see deaf education centres or units as offering programmes focussing on oral communication, and many believed that placement in deaf schools or units would lead to limited communication skills, lower academic achievement, and less ability to integrate into society. For parents of children considered to have usable residual hearing and/or speech, a mainstream school was seen to be the only appropriate language environment. Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the limited amount and irregularity of speech therapy or auditory verbal therapy available.

7.1.2 Sign language use

Just under a third (32.8%) of students in the sample were reported to use sign language - either NZSL, or a mixture of signing and speaking. However, when settings for language use were analysed, a slightly higher proportion (38.1%) were reported to use sign language at home, and a slightly lower proportion (29.8 %) at school. A further 11% reported having previously used signing at home but not any more, and 8.7% had previously used sign language at school, but not now.

The difference in figures between communication modes reported at home, at school, and in general usage, indicate that a number of children for whom signing is a known communication mode do not have access to sign language at school, or no longer have access to sign language either at home or school. Those parents who reported previous use of sign language did not explain why they had stopped signing, but likely factors arising in case study data include advice following a cochlear implant, the transitional use of sign language to support early language acquisition until speech emerges, and the lack of opportunities for families to acquire sign language skills and have contact with deaf bilinguals. Parents commented on the difficulty of the mainstream situation for signing children in particular, and a lack of suitable placement alternatives, especially outside of metropolitan Auckland and Christchurch.

Parents of signing children were the least satisfied with the skills of itinerant teachers and teacher aides, and called for better training of professionals in sign language, and better quality sign language learning opportunities for families and the deaf child. These findings demonstrate a need for the cohesive design and delivery of human and material resources that would enable families, deaf students, and their teachers to learn NZSL to a standard which adequately supports academic learning. This is currently not in place in the home, school or professional domains, as evidenced by common reports of 'do it yourself' learning from a dictionary, lack of NZSL classes and competent tutors, self-funded attendance at classes, and under-skilled professionals and para-professionals. Further planning and investment is needed in the training and employment of Deaf people in particular, in roles which support families and key school staff to develop NZSL skills to the level necessary to support a bilingual education.

In general, for parents whose children use sign language, the mainstream situation is not seen to support this choice adequately. However, restricted communication (and the various circumstances that give rise to this in a mainstream context) was reported by parents of both oral and signing students as the main reason for children missing out academically and having difficulties fitting in socially in a mainstream class.

7.1.3 The basis of parents' decisions about language use

The low rate of sign language use and inadequate resources in place to support NZSL users reported in this survey suggest that the acceptance of a bilingual option in deaf education since 1993 has not widely impacted deaf children who are mainstreamed. It is surprising to find that 14 years after the introduction of signing through Total Communication (in 1979), only half of profoundly deaf children who are mainstreamed and only a third of all VHN (i.e. mainly severely and profoundly deaf) mainstreamed deaf children use some form of sign language at home and/or at school. The fact that some parents still express confusion between Signed English and NZSL almost a decade after the acceptance and promotion of NZSL in educational policy indicates that the potential role of NZSL in deaf children's educational and social lives is not convincingly conveyed to parents who choose mainstreaming. Expressed beliefs about the advantages of an exclusively oral approach reflect hearing parents' natural desire for their child to acquire the home and school (spoken) language, in combination with the nature of advice, information and opportunities to learn about deaf people which parents are exposed to (or not) early in the deaf child's life.

Data about children's communication modes and the reported communication difficulties at school indicate that parents may not have access to information about language choice and associated school placement options which extends to the likely ramifications of these choices for the deaf child's life, both in, and beyond, school years. For example, parents of profoundly and severely deaf pre-schoolers need access to an historical perspective (which can be provided from a variety of sources including, obviously deaf people, the hindsight of parents of deaf adults, and research based information), in order to understand the historical and research evidence (cf. Musselman & Akamatsu 1999) that a large proportion of children in this category will eventually adopt sign language for reasons of communication ease and social identity - typically after years of educational, linguistic and emotional struggle.

7.2 Contact with deaf peers and deaf adults

The survey shows that most mainstreamed children have little opportunity to socialise with other deaf children regularly enough to enable meaningful friendships, the sharing of experiences, and a sense of peer identity which could support the development of positive self-image, self-esteem, and acquisition of deaf 'survival strategies'.

Even fewer children (half) have any contact with deaf adults, and this is generally occasional. Contact with deaf peers and adults was, predictably, most limited in small provincial towns and rural areas. These findings underline the fact that for most deaf children in the mainstream, their self-image is more likely to be defined by a feeling of 'otherness' or difference, than by the positive self knowledge that can result from seeing one's own characteristics reflected in, and affirmed by, others who are similar. The visits of Deaf Mentors were generally seen by parents as beneficial to deaf students' confidence and also to the awareness and attitude of the wider school community (as also found by Fitzgerald 2000). More Deaf resource staff and more deaf units (offering specialist teaching and deaf peers) were called for by parents.

Principle 7 of the National Plan (2002) for deaf education "recognises the Deaf community as a valued partner in the education of deaf and hearing impaired children" and as a cultural resource; implementing this principle could include providing parents with early and significant experiences with a range of Deaf people (and communication styles) who can demonstrate the outcomes of parental decisions about language and schooling, and also give parents a realistic insight into the ways in which Deaf adults interact with deaf and hearing people in their everyday lives. The employment of Deaf Mentors and NZSL tutors by Deaf Education centres is a positive move to achieve this kind of learning through contact between Deaf children, their parents, and Deaf adults. At present, however, parents observe that their input is generally limited to intermittent visits, and contact occurs mainly in school settings. Parents report infrequent contact between deaf children, between deaf children and deaf adults, or between themselves and deaf adults. While some parents do not perceive this as a 'gap' in the system, and others express discomfort about their encounters with Deaf adults, some clearly value such contact, noting the apparent ease and confidence of their child in the company of other deaf people. Facilitate opportunities for parents and children to have contact with Deaf role models are

needed – not as an occasional 'add on' where and when possible, but as central part of all deaf students' educational development.

7.2.1 Mainstreaming as preparation for 'living in two worlds'

In describing their reason for choosing mainstream placement, parents commonly mentioned this idea: "*we considered mainstreaming the best option to enable our children to live in both worlds*".

This statement presupposes that being schooled with hearing children will, through time, equip the deaf child with the skills and knowledge needed for competent participation in hearing society and also membership the deaf world. It is implicity presumed, by contrast, that schooling with other deaf students and specialised teachers equips deaf students only for 'living in the deaf world', and would lack relevance or advantages for their future lives as deaf people living in a predominantly hearing society. With regard to the first presupposition, there is little evidence that the typical mainstream situation (i.e., one deaf child in a hearing school) affords social experiences and communication skills that prepare deaf children for connection and identity with the deaf community. There is, on the other hand, much documented and anecdotal evidence of limited social interaction in hearing school settings (Fitzgerald 2000; Ramsey 1997), and of 'successfully' mainstreamed young deaf adults who feel at ease in neither the hearing nor the deaf world (Appleby in McKee 2002; Leigh 1999; Sameshima 2000). The experience of Deaf as well of other bicultural minorities tends to suggest that academically successful and well-adjusted bicultural individuals are often (although not exclusively) those who were firmly grounded as children within their minority cultural identity, either at home or at school, whereas those immersed in the majority culture without active affirmation of their 'other' cultural identity are more likely to experience identity confusion, low self-esteem, and struggle during young adulthood to establish an integrated personal and cultural identity (cf. Kannapell 1991). This issue is a topic of strong feeling within the Deaf world and the subject of much study in the research literature. There is no single or 'best' solution to finding this balance which fits all individuals and situations; however, this common ideal surrounding the social benefits of mainstreaming must be considered in light of information about the actual processes and lived outcomes of

the mainstreaming experience, in order that beneficial and informed choices can be made, and thoughtfully reviewed as needed.

7.3 Parent perceptions of resources and support provided

Although parents are generally satisfied with the amount of resources available for their child, they perceive their provision to be somewhat inconsistent or precarious, with both the quantity and quality of support varying from year to year. Parents observe that schools do not always utilise all the allocated ORS funds for the benefit of the deaf child or do not always use them in appropriate or effective ways. Most students rely on an ITOD for meaningful teaching experiences, and nearly all have a teacher aide performing the functions of tutoring, interpreting (or 're-phrasing') and notetaking, among other things. No parents indicated that they had qualified interpreters supporting their children and only a handful indicated an awareness of interpreters and notetakers as potential services that could be available to mainstreamed students. Teacher aides' signing and tutoring skills were seen as variable, although overall parents expressed more satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the support they provide.

Some parents reported that resources had improved recently, in particular, access to itinerant teacher support. ITODs were often described as the only professional in the child's school situation with prior knowledge of deafness and were seen as the key person in programme planning, student learning, and staff training. More itinerant teacher visits were high on parents' wish list, as was increased 'one-to-one support' in general - pointing to the difficulty that parents perceive deaf students otherwise have in accessing communication, instruction and the social interaction around learning in a class programme designed for hearing children. The common wish for more individualised support (or, in some cases a deaf class alternative) signals some parental anxiety about the amount of time at school during which the conditions for a deaf child to learn to their potential are actually met. Parents' calls for more individualised support in the mainstream also belies a systemic view of how deaf children can learn most effectively, which is, in fact, created by the mainstream context and the special education construct. That is, if a deaf child is not learning effectively (or 'keeping up') in a group of hearing children taught by a teacher who is

unfamiliar with deafness (and possibly the child's main language), the remedy is to increase the amount of expert (or, in the case of untrained teacher aides, inexpert but caring) support or interventions to bridge gaps between the child and the rest of the class - whether these gaps be the child's level of cognitive development, world knowledge and experience, literacy, or access to spoken language. This description may oversimplify complex situations and intentions, however it is made to point out that this equation does not take into account the essentially social nature of learning at school, and the vital role of shared language and experience in mediating this process between children and teachers. This is a fact which deaf education professionals themselves are often acutely aware of and uneasy about as they move in and out of a deaf student's mainstream situation on their visits. Parents too acknowledge valid concerns about the potential drawbacks of excessive adult attention, (such as over-dependence on adults, or the pressure of constant surveillance), and also note the difficulty of coordinating multiple support staff with a regular class schedule in ways that are fruitful and inclusive, rather than isolating or intrusive, for the deaf student.

7.3.1 Need for more Deaf Resource Classes (units) as an option

Parents' responses were divided between those who couldn't and those who wouldn't have chosen a Deaf unit placement for their child as an alternative to mainstreaming. A proportion of parents recognised the grouping of deaf students and specialised teachers as a positive alternative, as expressed directly by this parent:

> *The teachers, the teacher aides, the professionals, etc have all done their best for my child. I wish there were more deaf units around the country. I believe that deaf children need a specialised education.*

Deaf units and schools were characterised by parents in this survey as either desirable but unavailable in the region, or, by other parents to whom they were an available option, as educationally undesirable. The perception of deaf units and schools by some parents as 'dumping grounds for mainstream failures' contains at least an element of truth, given the reality (also widely acknowledged by parents) that mainstream schooling will fail to meet the real learning needs of a proportion of deaf students, for whom a safety net then becomes essential. Ideally, a Deaf resource class can create a learning environment that is academically sound, recognises common background experiences, and is responsive to deaf ways of communicating and learning. The negative perceptions expressed by parents may be partially informed, yet tend to create a self-fulfilling cycle in which parents of capable deaf students avoid any congregated deaf education settings. Both claims about deaf units – of their unavailability, and of poor educational outcomes - warrant urgent empirical investigation and, if found to be valid in any respects, remedial measures should be taken, based on models of demonstrated best practice in deaf education in order to provide parents and students with positive choice.

7.4 Academic and social success at school

7.4.1 Perceptions of academic achievement and barriers to learning

Many parents chose mainstream schools specifically because they considered that they offered a more challenging academic environment and potentially higher standards of achievement. The majority of parents stated that their children were

doing 'reasonably well' academically. Smaller. but nearly even proportions were reported as doing either 'very well' or as having difficulties. Parents' perceptions in this survey are more optimistic than Stockwell's and Fitzerald's (2000) finding of 26% achieving at or above age level, and than mainstream teachers' assessments of achievement as found in this study (see Table 12, section 3.4).

Some parents said they found it difficult to get realistic information from the school about the actual achievement levels of their child. As found in the Fitzgerald study (2000), numerous parents observed that the academic gap (with hearing peers) grew wider as the child progressed through school. Almost one third of parents said that they would probably choose a Deaf unit, or a Deaf Education Centre at high school level, due to academic and social needs that had emerged by late primary school.

Learning difficulties in the mainstream classroom described by parents included: understanding concepts, reading comprehension, understanding instructions, and staying abreast of the rapid pace of the class programme. Parents observed that their children had to work very hard to achieve and 'keep up' in the mainstream. Some expressed an acceptance that their child would achieve at a lower level because of their deafness and considered that they were doing well within these expectations, while others were at the opposite end of the spectrum, with determinedly high aspirations for their child.

Class teachers were seen to have the most important overall role in helping deaf children learn, although itinerant teachers were repeatedly described as critical to the child's progress towards individual learning goals. Training for mainstream class teachers and school community about teaching deaf students was at the top of the parents' wish list, indicating a strong perception that despite their important role, mainstream teachers – as could be expected - are generally not well equipped to teach deaf learners, (as the teachers themselves also attest in their own survey responses). This reiterates Stockwell's (2000) finding.

7.4.2 Social relationships at school

In terms of social interaction at school, half of the parents surveyed said that their child was doing well or reasonably well, with the other half reporting that their child had social difficulties. Echoing findings in the research literature (cf. Stinson & Antia 1999 for a review), a common theme was that deaf students were often excluded or teased, and lacked close friends due to obvious and subtle communication barriers (including deviation from social behaviour norms, a lack of shared 'kid's culture' knowledge such as TV programmes or fads and rules surrounding games, or the deaf child's frequent miscommunication). School staff were generally seen as insufficiently skilled in strategies for communicating with deaf students which led to misunderstanding of the child's behaviour, an inability to facilitate appropriate interactions in class, and frustration for the child. Effective training in deaf awareness/communication skills was seen as crucial for the school community, including children and staff.

A central goal for most parents in mainstreaming their child is to achieve a 'normal' socialisation experience through exposure to hearing communication and social norms; however, these findings point to a discrepancy between this aspiration and parent's awareness of what may actually transpire at school. The survey clearly reveals parental awareness and distress that in many (but not all) cases, their deaf child cannot participate equally in the communication which binds social interaction at school, putting them at risk of being marginalised to a greater or lesser degree . Two parents commented that cochlear implants had improved socialisation for their children.

7.5 Advice and support to parents

Support and advice received during early pre-school years is obviously valued by parents. The data also indicate, however, that relevant information and support is not always forthcoming or consistently available when needed, as this parent describes:

> *[advice] not good at initial diagnosis. I found information tended to be drip fed and often not given. It is vital advisors are out there helping parents especially at the early stages and decision times during education.*

Parents generally desire more ongoing home-based support and more pro-active developmental and educational guidance in pre-school and early school years. A

wider spectrum of information on which to base decisions – particularly a Deaf perspective - was also considered desirable, as this parent explains:

... the advice of Deaf adults about what constitutes a good education for a deaf child was missing… itinerant teachers and advisors don't provide sufficient information for us to make an informed choice. They took a view, i.e. my child should be oral, never mind what happens when the hearing aids break or she has a cold or there is too much background noise. Having to fight for sign language <u>and</u> oral was hard.

The recent decline of the advisory service (as noted by parents) provides a critical opportunity for a reformulated system of early intervention and family support, ideally extending to a more visible advisory presence throughout school years.

7.5.1 Parental participation in their child's education

Parents' accounts of feeling compelled to take an active role in their child's school situation echo Schein's (1989:112) conclusion that, "regardless of the setting parents choose for their deaf child's education, they should expect to cooperate with the instructional personnel. Parent participation is mandated … at the least, a parent must sign the child's Individualised Education Programme … such formalised procedures are not demanded for regular school students".

Parents' most frequent point of contact with the child's school situation is the class teacher, closely followed by the itinerant teacher and teacher aide who often provide parents with more specific information about their child's progress. Parents emphasised the importance of team-work and open communication between deaf education professionals, the school, and parents, for maintaining a good learning situation for the child. A number of parents commented specifically that they (and ITODs) should be involved in the selection of teacher aides, who are a key support person in the deaf child's daily school life, yet are often appointed by the school without evidence of relevant skills for working with a deaf child.

Parents in this study expressed a sense of 'struggle', feeling that they needed to probe for information, lobby education personnel to gain and maintain appropriate support for their child, and monitor progress - as summed up by this parent:

> *Unless a parent is active in their child's education and asks questions, a child can seemingly go through the system. We regularly ask and get responses to anything we want to know but you have to be willing to be up front and approach them in a way that doesn't personally threaten them- (teachers, principals etc.)*

Many parents (particularly of older students) spend a great deal of time working with their children at home to 'fill in the gaps' that they perceive to be incurred by deafness itself and/or by the amount of learning missed in class.

7.6 Choosing mainstreaming

Parents play a key role in both choosing and supporting mainstream school placement for their children. Most parents described investigating school options themselves and making their decision about school placement independently. Advisers were reported as having directly assisted about a quarter of parents in the process of choosing as school, such as this respondent: *We were advised that mainstreamed education would be best for our child and had faith and trust in the person telling us this - the adviser on deaf children .*

Particularly in rural areas and towns, some parents stated that they felt there was no real choice about their child's school placement. It was also in such areas that fewer resources are available to support an inevitable mainstream placement.

The most prevalent reason that parents chose a mainstream placement was a combination of physical proximity (i.e. convenient transport to the nearest school), and a desire to keep their child in emotional and cultural proximity to the family and their community. These are understandable priorities when contemplating a five-year old starting school, but the degree of importance given to them by parents in this survey does not reflect a highly informed level of consideration or guidance about

how adequately the learning and social needs of a deaf child might be met, long term, in the average local school.

A desire for the child to develop spoken language, hearing-world social skills and a 'normal' identity was the next predominant motivation for parents to choose mainstream placement. Many parents indicated that mainstreaming was a conscious choice against their child's social identification with other deaf people (specifically, sign language users and/or low academic achievers), and a bid for assimilation or integration into the hearing world. As Schein remarks, "Putting a deaf child in a neighbourhood school is a declaration of normalcy: 'see, Dick/Jane goes to the same school with all the other children in the neighbourhood' (…but) parents frequently find that the school personnel know as little as they do about deaf children…" (Schein 1989:112).

Parents in this study were attracted to schools that conveyed a positive attitude towards special needs children and/or had previously enrolled a deaf student, in the hope that these factors would enable the school to provide a learning context suitable for a deaf student. Parent's comments and findings from the larger project suggest that schools rely quite heavily in this enterprise upon the calibre of para-professional support staff, which often falls short of the skill level required – a state of affairs in which New Zealand trails in the path of similar experience overseas (cf. Schein, Mallory & Greaves 1991.)

As this parent reflects:

> *From primary school I feel there is a certain lack of understanding as child is only deaf /hearing impaired in whole school… Maybe we are all learning together.*

Everyone in this typical scenario is undoubtedly 'learning together' and developing the kind of awareness which is often cited as a societal benefit of mainstreaming. The issue of concern to parents must be to what extent the pace and quality of this unfolding insight may compromise the deaf child's opportunities to learn effectively from their first days and years at school.

Conclusions (bullet-point list of key findings, without commentary)

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Appendix A: Letter and Questionnaire

Letter to Parents:

April 3rd 2001

To: Parents of Deaf & Hearing Impaired Students

Re: *Survey on Mainstream Education of Deaf Students*

The Deaf Studies Research Unit at Victoria University is currently doing research on the learning situation of 'high' and 'very high needs' verified deaf children in mainstream schools. The project involves some detailed case studies of mainstreamed deaf children, as well as surveys of teacher aides, teachers, and parents to gain an understanding of communication access and educational achievement. We hope that the findings of this research will be useful to policy makers, professionals, and parents. On the next page is a brief summary about the research project.

We want to know more about parents' views and experiences of how mainstreaming is working for deaf children, and so we are sending you this questionnaire via a teacher of the deaf. We hope that you can spend around 45 minutes to answer the questions.

This survey is anonymous - without names attached. It has been addressed and posted to you by your child's itinerant teacher of the deaf. If you fill out and return the questionnaire, this means you are giving your consent for this information to be used as part of our analysis and summary of results. When we report survey results, information from all questionnaires will be reported in a way that makes it impossible to identify individual responses. The information you provide will be treated <u>confidentially</u>. Survey responses will be destroyed after the project is completed.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please return the questionnaire in the enclosed stamped envelope, **by May 11th, 2001.**

The information you contribute will greatly assist in providing a clearer picture of how parents view the educational support provided for deaf children. *You can request a summary of research findings (available after August 2001) by completing the enclosed request form and returning it in the separate envelope provided, in order to keep your name separate from your anonymous survey response.*

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at the numbers given below.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Rachel McKee
Programme Director, Deaf Studies
Ph (04) 463 5626, Fax (04) 463 5641
Email: rachel.mckee@vuw.ac.nz

STUDY OF DEAF LEARNERS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

1. Summary of the research project

The Deaf Studies Research Unit (DSRU) at Victoria University of Wellington is undertaking a research project on deaf children as learners in mainstream classrooms. This project aims to provide a clearer picture of the day to day experience of mainstreamed deaf children in primary schools. It will focus on how deaf children communicate and learn with other children and staff during the school day. The research will also look at how itinerant teachers and teacher aides work to enable deaf children to access classroom activities. We will do detailed case studies of several children in different regions who are verified by Specialist Education Services as "very high needs" or "high needs", since these children face the greatest communication challenges. We believe that this research will provide information about the learning opportunities of mainstreamed deaf children that will contribute to understanding how the goal of inclusive education is reflected in practice.

Another stage of the project will survey a larger number of mainstream teachers of deaf children, teacher aides, and parents of deaf children to gain an understanding of their perspectives about the mainstream situation. Data on examination passes achieved by deaf school leavers over the last five years will be collected through itinerant teachers of the deaf, to form a profile of the outcomes of mainstream education of deaf students.

2. Collecting data

Data for the study will be collected in three main ways: (a) Video-recording and observing 15 - 20 hours of class time per case study child. Video data will include the deaf child interacting with other children in the class and with adult staff; (b) Interviews with the parents of each deaf child, the mainstream teacher, teacher aide(s), and itinerant teachers. Interviews will provide background information about the particular mainstream situation and give the perspectives of key people in the child's education, to supplement classroom observations. Interviews will be audiotaped. (c) A national survey (by questionnaire) of mainstream teachers, teacher aides, itinerant teachers, and parents of deaf and hearing impaired children.

3. Outcomes of the research

A final report of the main findings will be written up by August 2001 and made available to parents, schools, and other participants in the research at their request, as well as to the Ministry of Education and SES. Findings of the research will also be reported in articles suitable for professional journals or conferences on deaf education.

4. Privacy of participants and Formal Consent

The names and identities of children, adults, and schools who take part in this research will not appear in reports of the findings. Video data that identifies participants will be seen only by researchers at the DSRU. If the researchers wish to show any part of the video data for a specific purpose later, such as illustrating a talk or a paper about the research, permission will be sought from the persons involved. Survey responses will be anonymous. Formal consent for all collection and use of data will be sought.

Survey of Parents of Deaf & Hearing Impaired Children

PLEASE FILL IN THIS SURVEY ONLY IF YOUR CHILD IS NOW MAINSTREAMED

Section 1: About you and your child

1 . Do you live in:
- ☐ the greater Auckland or Christchurch area?
- ☐ another large city (eg., Ham, PNth, Wgn, NPlym, Dun)?
- ☐ a smaller provincial town (eg., Wanganui, Blenheim), or a rural area?

2. How old is your child? ☐ 5-7yrs ☐ 8-10yrs ☐ 11-13yrs ☐ 14-18yrs

3. From what age has your child been deaf/hearing impaired? _____

4. Is your child now at: ☐ *Primary* ☐ *Intermediate* ☐ *High school*

5. What is your child's hearing loss?
☐ *Profound* ☐ *Severe* ☐ *Moderate* Has cochlear implant? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

6. Is your child verified this year as:
- ☐ *Very high needs* ☐ *High needs* ☐ *Not sure*

7. Please tick all the kinds of school placements your child has attended (now and previously):
- ☐ Mainstream
- ☐ Deaf unit/resource class
- ☐ School for deaf

8. How many different schools has your child attended altogether? _____

If more than one primary or secondary school, why did your child change schools?

- ☐ Family shifted to different area
- ☐ Not satisfied with support at previous school
- ☐ Other reason (please state briefly) _____

_____

9. How does your child communicate (to other people) most comfortably, or most of the time?
- ☐ Signing
- ☐ Signing and speaking together/ a mixture
- ☐ Speaking/listening/lip-reading (oral)

10. At home, do you (and your family) sign to your child?
- ☐ Yes – all the time
- ☐ Yes – some of the time

☐ Before – but not any more
☐ No

11. At school, does your child use sign language in class?
☐ Yes – all the time
☐ Yes – some of the time
☐ Before – but not any more
☐ No

12. If your child uses sign language, how adequate were the opportunities and support provided for you and your family to learn sign language?
☐*Very good*　　☐*Good*　　☐*Adequate*　☐*Inadequate*　☐*Very inadequate*　　☐ *NA*

Please comment if you wish:

Section 2: Support and progress at school

13. What extra support does your child receive at school because s/he is deaf? *(Tick all that apply)*

☐ Itinerant (visiting) Teacher of the Deaf
☐ Teacher Aide
☐ Communicator or Interpreter
☐ Advisor on Deaf Children
☐ Speech therapist
☐ Visits from Deaf Instructor/Deaf Resource Person/Deaf NZSL Tutor
☐ Other (please state) _____

14. How satisfied are you with the **amount** and **quality** of support your child currently receives?

    a) **Amount** of support   (number of hours, frequency of visits, range of support people)

☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied* ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

Please comment if you wish:

    b) **Quality** of support (skills, attitude, effectiveness of people who work with your child)

    Classroom teacher
       ☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied*   ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

    Itinerant (visiting) Teacher of the Deaf
       ☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied*   ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

    Teacher Aide(s)
       ☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied*   ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

    Advisor on Deaf Children
       ☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied*   ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

    Deaf Instructor/Deaf Resource Person
       ☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied*   ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

    Others (*who?*)   _____

       ☐ *Very satisfied*   ☐ *Satisfied*   ☐ *Not satisfied* ☐ *Very dissatisfied*

Please comment if you wish:

15. Which of the staff do you feel has the most important role in helping your child to learn at school? (*Please give their job title, not personal names*)

16. Who is the **main contact person** who keeps you in touch about your child at school? (Who do you talk to most often about your child's education?) (*Please give their job title, not personal names*)

17. How well do you feel is your child doing at school – **academically**? (eg., reading, writing, maths, learning concepts, keeping up with class work)

☐ Doing very well (keeps up with classmates, generally achieving well)
☐ Doing reasonably well (making progress in most areas, less progress in others)
☐ Has difficulties (often finds learning a struggle, not making enough progress in several areas)
☐ Has serious difficulties (generally finds school very difficult, missing out on a lot)

Please comment if you wish:

18. How well do you feel your child is doing at school – **socially?** (eg., getting along with children in class, forming friendships, behaviour, confidence & self esteem)

☐ Doing well (feels like a class member, good self-esteem, has good friends)
☐ Sometimes has difficulties with these things
☐ Often has difficulties with these things
☐ Usually has a lot of difficulties (eg., feels isolated/frustrated/not confident/ behaviour problems)

Please comment if you wish:

19. How often does your child have contact with other deaf children?
　　　　☐ Every day
　　　　☐ Every week
　　　　☐ A few times a month
　　　　☐ About once a term

☐ Occasionally
☐ Never, or hardly ever

20. How often do you and your child have contact with deaf adults?

☐ Every day
☐ Every week
☐ A few times a month
☐ About once a term
☐ Occasionally
☐ Never, or hardly ever

Section 3: Choosing a school

21. What were your main reasons for deciding to mainstream your child (rather than choosing a deaf unit or deaf school)? What things did you consider most important? *Please list in order, if possible.*

22. Where (or from whom) did you get information that helped you decide on this school for your child?

23. If your child is at primary or intermediate now, what is the most likely option you will choose for high school?

☐ Fully mainstreamed at a regular high school (for all classes)
☐ Deaf resource class in a regular high school (mainstreamed for some classes)
☐ School for deaf (Deaf Education Centre)

24. At each new stage of your child's education, did you get enough information, and the right kind of information about the pros and cons of different school options, and the support that would be available for your child? (Please answer for each level)

a) Primary School
☐ *Yes* - got the information we needed to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose
☐ *Partly* – got some information, but not enough to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

☐ *No* – did not get enough / the right kind of information to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

b) Intermediate School (if child attended one)

☐ *Yes* - got the information we needed to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

☐ *Partly* – got some information, but not enough to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

☐ *No* – did not get enough / the right kind of information to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

c) Secondary School

☐ *Yes* - got the information we needed to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

☐ *Partly* – got some information, but not enough to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

☐ *No* – did not get enough / the right kind of information to feel confident about how our child would be supported in the school we chose

Please comment if you wish:

Section 4: Overall View

25. Overall (thinking about your child's experiences at school so far), how would your describe your child's access to a suitable education in the mainstream?

☐ Very good   ☐ Good   ☐ Mostly satisfactory
☐ Mostly unsatisfactory   ☐ Very unsatisfactory

Please comment if you wish:

26. Overall (through your child's life so far) how would you describe the level of advice and information you have received about your deaf child and their education?

☐ Very good   ☐ Good   ☐ Mostly satisfactory
☐ Mostly unsatisfactory   ☐ Very unsatisfactory

Please comment if you wish:

27. If you are not completely satisfied with your child's progress or current learning situation at school, what could improve the situation? (If you had a 'wish list', what would it be?)

28. Please feel free to add below any other comments that might help us understand parents' views about mainstream education for deaf children.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research!

If you have any questions about this survey or the research project, please contact:
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