

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

History/Social Studies

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Team members working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing need to carefully consider each student's unique needs and learning style, as well as the demands of the task. Strategies are offered to provide a starting point for thinking about possible adaptations. It is important to remember that all team members should have input into decisions regarding instructional strategies.

Possible effects of hearing loss on skill development in History

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing can learn about history in the same sequence and manner as their hearing peers. However, various factors may prevent children who are deaf or hard of hearing from successfully constructing historical knowledge, including the following:

- They may lack general vocabulary and the specific vocabulary needed to discuss the concepts of time, past, present, and future. Hearing children are exposed to language from birth and have an understanding of everyday language. It is more difficult for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to acquire language and learning from their environment incidentally (from overhearing conversations of others in their environment, on TV, on the radio). Without this incidental learning, a child who is deaf may not develop even beginning concepts of time, such as "last week," "two decades ago," or "in the twentieth century" without being formally taught them.
- Communication with others may be difficult. If the child and others in the environment cannot communicate with each other effectively, they may not have had the benefit of engaging in discussions regarding current events and concepts important to history such as "independence," "freedom of religion," and "exploration and discovery." Problem solving is especially difficult for children who are deaf, as a sound language base is necessary for putting observations into words or making predictions. Without communication skills, the child can be isolated in the learning environment and unable to participate in group activities and discovery (Ray, 2001).
- Cognitive development may be delayed. Research shows that children who are deaf or hard of hearing have normal intellectual potential (Meadow, 1980). However, for normal cognitive development to occur, a child must be introduced to diverse experiences and exposed to a rich language base (Ray, 2001). This does not always occur in the home and/or in the educational setting. Time concepts are abstract, and difficult to understand without experience and language.

Instructional and Environmental Strategies

- Ways to help students who are deaf or hard of hearing succeed in History

The following strategies are designed to promote access to History content based on the Standards of Learning for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is important to remember that each child has unique needs and that decisions regarding instructional strategies should be based upon current and accurate information about the child's sensory functioning and on team input.

- Be sure that there is someone for students to interact with in the learning environment who can effectively provide not only the vocabulary to label objects but also a language model for expressing concepts and ideas, using the child's mode of communication.
- Partner with parents. Maintain ongoing communication between the home and teachers so that vocabulary and concepts related with History are reflected and reinforced in as many different situations as possible. Make families aware of the limitless opportunities in the home for exploring and discussing current events and historical concepts during daily routines, and make sure that the parents are able to communicate effectively in the child's chosen mode.
- Provide an enriched learning environment that promotes a wide range of meaningful experiences with opportunities for reading about and discussion of historic events, past and present.
- Use multimedia approaches for visual representation of course content. Overhead projectors or PowerPoint presentations are preferable to blackboards, as the teacher does not need to turn his or her back to the students. This is especially important for students who are relying on speechreading, signing, cuing, and/or use of residual hearing for receptive communication.
- Use more than one mode of presentation for time concepts and historic events. These may include manipulatives (puppets, action figures), verbal (role playing, debates), pictorial (time lines), and symbolic modes (graphic organizers). Encourage students to translate between sign language, and English, and to make connections between all modes presented. Students can also use pictures, drawing sets, and visualizing or pantomiming of action to move from the concrete to more abstract representations.
- When using visuals, allow time for students to view the board, overhead, or objects, then to watch explanation/instruction given by the teacher or interpreter, and only then, allow students to offer responses. A hearing person can view visuals and listen at the same time. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing and rely on visual communication through sign language, cued speech, or speechreading must process information sequentially rather than simultaneously.
- Pre-teach vocabulary for coming History lessons in context. Collaboration with the speech/language pathologist in this effort can be beneficial. Remember, many children who are deaf or hard of hearing do not learn words incidentally.
- For students who sign, ensure that all involved are consistent in the signs being used. Use conceptually based signs and avoid inventing new signs for new vocabulary.

- Relate events in history with students' personal experiences through a dialogic process.
- Emphasize the role of deaf individuals in various events in history.
- Encourage students to process information at a deeper level through questioning.

Links and Resources

Meadow, K. (1980). *Deafness and child development*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ray, E. (Nov., 2001). *Discovering mathematics: The challenges that deaf/hearing-impaired children encounter*. ACE Papers, Issue II.

Marschark, M, Lang, H, & Albertini, J. (2002). *Educating Deaf Students: From Research to Practice*. Oxford University Press, Inc., New York.

History Through Deaf Eyes - Developed by Gallaudet University, History Through Deaf Eyes is a traveling social history exhibition aligning nearly 200 years of United States history with the experiences of deaf people. Using objects and images collected by individuals, organizations, and schools for deaf children, this exhibition illustrates the shared experiences of family life, education, and work - as well as the divergent ways deaf people see themselves, communicate, employ and adapt technology, and determine their own futures. See <http://depts.gallaudet.edu/deafeyes/about.html>

Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America, by Jack R. Gannon. An in-depth history of Deaf America begins with an overview of the early years. Each chapter then covers a decade of history, beginning with 1880. The text is supplemented by pictures, illustrations, vignettes and biographical profiles. "Subchapters" chronicle the multi-faceted dimensions of Deaf culture by focusing on Deaf athletes and more.