

CLASSROOM ACCESS PROJECT A CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Students with hearing loss are at a disadvantage when viewing video resources due to their inability to hear well. As a result, key educational messages are often lost, with long term ramifications for these students.

- 12,000 students with hearing loss in Australian schools
- 83% of students with a hearing loss that is significant attend mainstream schools¹ (Hyde & Power, 2003)

Captions are an accessible way for students to view video

- being essential for students with hearing loss
- with immense benefits for:
 - students with English as a Second Language (ESL)
 - struggling readers
 - visual learners

Research supports the benefits of the use of captioned audiovisual content

- “When captions were present, they appeared to serve as a focusing agent helping readers to identify the central story elements.”² (Linebarger, 2001, p 297).
- Chai & Erlam (2008, p 26) referred to the “significant improvement in listening and reading comprehension and incidental vocabulary acquisition”³ for second language learners as a result of using captioned video material.

The Classroom Access Project (CAP) was developed as a response to the specific needs of students with hearing loss, with a focus on access to captioned video and other media, and improved sound in mainstream schools.

The CAP was trialled in two Sydney high schools in partnership with the Catholic Education Office Sydney and Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta in 2010.

¹ Hyde, M.B. & Power, D.J. (2003). *Characteristics of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in Australian Regular Schools: Hearing Level Comparisons*, Deafness and Education International, 5, 133-143.

² Linebarger, D. L. (2001) *Learning to read from television: the effects of using captions and narration*, Journal of Educational Psychology, 93(2), 288-298.

³ Chai, J. & Erlam, R. (2008) *The effect and the influence of the use of video and captions on second language learning*, New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics, 14(2), 25-44.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT

THE PROJECT UTILISED ACTION RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERED UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

- Operated for 20 weeks in both trial schools, using a ‘model classroom concept’ as a focal point
- Detailed, purpose-designed training program for school staff, including teachers and librarians
- The model classroom in each trial school was an ordinary high school classroom
- Various year groupings were timetabled through the model classroom, including both students with hearing loss and their hearing peers
- Students with hearing loss used a combination of hearing aids and FM systems as part of their daily life

KEY COMPONENTS

- All video and other media content shown throughout the project was captioned
- Supportive and interested school Principal and staff
- Inclusive teaching practices
- Improved sound
- Teachers and students provided regular feedback throughout the trial period

CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGIES

- Interactive Whiteboard (IWB)
- Laptop and a Soundfield amplification system connected to the IWB
- The IWB displayed captioned video and other media
- The Soundfield amplification system provided dual benefit increasing:
 - the sound of the teacher’s voice
 - any audio played through the IWB
- Teachers used a microphone from the Soundfield amplification system, which transmitted the sound of the teacher’s voice evenly around the classroom, giving all students the opportunity to hear direct teacher instruction

OUTCOMES

Teachers and students provided feedback regularly throughout the project:

Teachers’ final feedback included their increased understanding of how to integrate the technologies to improve sound quality and provide captioned video, which benefited the students with hearing loss and the whole class.

- Increased teacher confidence and use of technology and captions
- Teachers prioritised the need for captioned media for whole class benefit
- Teachers adapted their planning to source and include captioned video
- The enhancement of existing in-school culture of inclusiveness and accessibility
- Improved access to teaching and learning opportunities for students with hearing loss
- Students articulated the benefits of both the use of captions and improved sound quality

The Classroom Access Project is a straightforward initiative that lends itself to application in mainstream schools and specialist settings nationwide.

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TESTIMONIALS

PRINCIPAL

“It was one of those projects that I immediately jumped at a chance to be involved in because we have a number of students who have hearing impairment, and we want to try and improve the outcomes for all of our students. So we needed, perhaps, to educate ourselves a little bit about how we could actually best meet their needs.” **Patricia Baker, Principal**

TEACHERS

“(The project) made everyone aware of the hearing impaired students. Teachers (are now) more aware of best practise for hearing impaired students.” **Anonymous teacher response**

“Students pick up everything said with captions. They read along as well as listen which is good for all students, hearing impaired or not”. **Anonymous teacher response**

STUDENTS

“I found that it was a lot easier, especially when a teacher was writing on the board and she wasn’t facing you, so you couldn’t lip-read. But I could still hear her perfectly fine because she had the little microphone on. So I noticed a big difference.” **Year 10 student**

“It does help, because when we were in class yesterday, I found that, for me, it was easier. And I went home and decided, OK, I’m gonna put captions on the TV and so I did, and it did help.” **Year 8 student**

