

Classroom Access Project (CAP) Backgrounder

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The CAP is a joint venture between Media Access Australia (MAA), Catholic Education Office Sydney and La Salle College Bankstown, and seeks to demonstrate best practice in relation to accessibility for deaf and hearing impaired students in mainstream educational settings.

The CAP explores this by establishing a 'model classroom' at La Salle College Bankstown in Term One 2010.

Mainstream educational setting

Most deaf and hearing impaired students attend mainstream schools, however, teachers in these schools do not receive pre-service training for their specific needs.

Deaf and hearing impaired students are often visited by specialist itinerant hearing support teachers, but usually only for a few hours a week. The rest of the time these students in mainstream classrooms may rely on inadequate technology to help them access the curriculum.

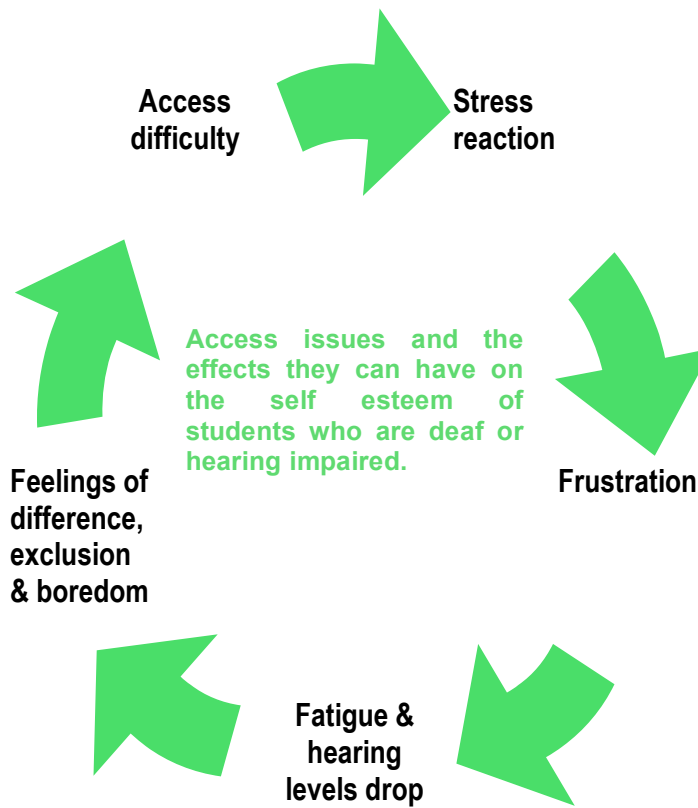
While some mainstream schools have implemented technological solutions, a customised approach that is specific to these students' needs is required.

Australian context

With the implementation of the National Broadband Network and the government's determination to ensure students and teachers are technologically literate through the 'Education Revolution', audiovisual materials are being used more and more to support the education curriculum.

Deaf and hearing impaired students are in danger of being left behind if audiovisual resources are used without access technologies such as captions.

A snapshot of denied access: the ramifications at school level



The 'model' classroom

The interplay of technology: a scenario

The CAP focuses on the inclusion of deaf and hearing impaired students in mainstream schools by looking at the solutions in a systematic way and implementing all technological needs in one pilot.

The Catholic Education Office Sydney's Sensory Impairment Program has put its resources behind the project and provided support through itinerant hearing teacher expertise and experience in the education of deaf and hearing impaired students. This has been greatly assisted by the staff of La Salle College with their commitment to the implementation of the project.

Captions

The partnerships underpinning the CAP facilitate the opportunity to explore the provision of captioned access in a planned and precise way.

Closed captions are an English-language text version of the sound track in audiovisual media, which includes not only speech but also other important sounds.

Only captioned audiovisual materials are used in the CAP, including downloadable resources from the Clickview network. A national captioned resource database, the [Accessible Education Database](#), in development by Media Access Australia (MAA), is also used to find captioned resources. The database allows teachers to search for captioned educational resources in categories relating to teachers' needs and curriculum topics.

The majority of educational audiovisual resources are not available with captions. However, an annual grant from the [Federal Department of Family, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs](#) of approximately \$133,000 is administered by Media Access Australia and targets a wide variety of education titles, especially those dealing with non-fiction subject matter such as English, History, Geography and Science.

Overseas developments in classroom access

The US has set some outstanding precedents:

- The [Described and Captioned Media Program \(DCMP\)](#), an initiative funded by the US Department of Education, is the most comprehensive database of captioned DVDs and downloads for school-age students in the world.
- The publication of the ongoing '[Accessible Classroom Primer](#)' looks at how to incorporate accessibility for a range of disabilities.
- Last year, a Roundtable on [how classroom acoustics benefit learning](#) was conducted by the US Access Board to explore how building design can accommodate for optimal acoustics.

NB: When students are referred to as deaf in mainstream educational settings, it does not mean that they are necessarily sign language users.

Acknowledgements

- [Printacall](#)
Front Row Pro (Soundfield Amplification System)
- [Electroboard](#)
Smartboard (IWB)
Short shot project
- [ClickView](#)
ClickView Library Server software
ClickView Digital Video Library
ClickView Player
ClickView 24-7

The generosity of the abovementioned companies has ensured that the project could proceed. MAA acknowledges and is grateful for their generous donations to the project.

About Media Access Australia

[Media Access Australia](#) (MAA) is Australia's only independent not-for-profit media access organisation.

MAA works to improve access to audiovisual media, such as TV, cinema, DVDs and new media, by providing information about technological solutions that make audiovisual media accessible to people with disabilities. These solutions include audio description, captioning and mainstream new media technologies. MAA also supports improvements in media access in Australia towards international best practice by identifying mainstream technological solutions and cost-effective ways to promote and implement them.

To this end, MAA works collaboratively with consumer organisations, Government and industry in Australia and internationally.

Audiovisual media is increasingly being used to support the curriculum in Australian classrooms. It is essential that this media is available with captions so that students who are Deaf and hearing impaired are fully included in the education process, preventing isolation and poor educational outcomes. MAA liaises with educational bodies and sectors around the country to facilitate further understanding of the issues involved and to assist in finding workable solutions applicable to all. MAA also works to help schools find and use technological solutions to enable full access for these students.

About Anne McGrath, Education Manager, Media Access Australia

Anne works part time as Education Manager at MAA and represents MAA on the Open Web Education Alliance Incubator Group of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Anne has worked as a primary school teacher in mainstream schools and as an Education Project Officer with the NSW Health Department, where she worked on the award winning, internationally acclaimed Triple A peer education program. She has also worked for the NSW Department of Education and Training as an Itinerant Support Teacher Hearing (ISTH) and as a Teacher/Consultant in Hearing Impairment for RIDBC School Support Services (Royal Institute for Deaf and hearing impaired and Blind Children).

Anne also currently works part time with the Catholic Education Office, Sydney, as an Itinerant Teacher Hearing, with the Sensory Impairment Program, working directly with deaf and hearing impaired and students in Catholic mainstream schools.

Anne is passionate about inclusion and access for students who are deaf and hearing impaired. She has personal experience of hearing impairment, growing up with a deaf mother and being hearing impaired herself. Anne uses assistive listening devices as part of her daily life.