NARRATIVES OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS: HOW ITINERANT TEACHERS OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SUPPORT THEIR STUDENTS’ SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Positive teacher-student relationships promote healthy school experiences and have been shown to play an important role in creating positive social and academic outcomes for students, including students with special learning needs (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Most deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students are educated in inclusive school environments alongside their hearing peers, and likely receive additional support from an itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing throughout their school years (kindergarten to grade 12). However, very little is known about the significance of this unique teacher-student relationship in terms of social and emotional support, nor in what ways this relationship may help or hinder social inclusion at school. To address the paucity of research in this area, I used a narrative inquiry and multiple case study design to examine the characteristics of the itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship. Each participant (four itinerant teachers and four DHH students) participated in two separate individual interviews and was asked to reflect upon their relationship working with DHH students or itinerant teachers, as appropriate. The first interview was semi-structured and captured the participants’ perspectives of their itinerant teacher-DHH student relationships generally. The second interview focused on the meaning and significance of the itinerant teacher-student relationship. Narrative stories for each participant were written from the interview data and analyzed using a constant comparison, thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Six prominent themes emerged from the itinerant teacher narrative stores: identity development (of students), attachment, safe space, connector, advisor, and itinerant teacher identity. Five prominent themes emerged from the DHH student narrative stories: identity development (of students), attachment,
safe space, connector, and advisor. This study contributes to the field of Deaf Education in terms of identifying possible important aspects of the itinerant teacher-student relationship from both the teachers’ and the students’ perspectives. In addition, the findings shed light on potential interpersonal mechanisms that may be involved in creating successful school experiences for DHH students who are educated in inclusive school environments.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Nancy Norman. All procedures of this research were carried out with adherence to the guidelines and ethical grounds for research involving human subjects presented by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The study, Narratives of Teacher-Student Relationships: How Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support Their Students’ Social and Emotional Development received ethical approval from the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board (certificate number: H13-00731).

This dissertation was supervised by Professor Janet Jamieson and Professor Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, and the entire supervisory committee provided guidance, feedback, and helpful editorial comments and suggestions. I was responsible for designing and conceptualizing the entire research study, performing the research, analysis of the research data, and the writing of the entire dissertation document.
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I also thank my dear friends, who gave me rocks to lean on and lots of laughs. And thank you to my family—especially to my parents, Sid and Sue, for your countless years of countless support!

And to Takashi and Marc, xoxo!
For my family and friends,

Thank you!
Chapter I: Introduction

Supportive teacher-student relationships promote healthy development for students throughout childhood, and have great impact on the students’ overall success in school. Through warm, supportive, caring relationships with their students, teachers foster connectedness and strong bonds of trust (Watson, 2003), which may have great influence and far-reaching impact on their students’ academic success and overall social and emotional health and well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In fact, this relationship may be crucial to the child’s development of social and emotional competence, healthy emotional adjustment, social connectedness, and overall positive mental health, and may provide protective factors for children who are at-risk for school failure (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Children who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) may be considered at-risk, as hearing loss interferes with their ability to acquire spoken language and communication skills and, thus, likely has a negative impact on their academic, and social and emotional development, even for those with a minimal hearing loss (Bess, Dodd-Murphy, & Parker, 1998; Moeller, Tomblin, Yoshinaga-Itano, Connor, & Jerger, 2007; Flexer, 1999).

However, in spite of the recognized importance of the teacher-student relationship to students’ school success, scant research has documented the nature of the teacher-student relationship between teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and their students; specifically, itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing (itinerant teachers), who support DHH children and youth in general education school settings. The current study uses a narrative inquiry and multiple case study design to examine the nature of this unique teacher-student relationship from the perspectives of both the itinerant teachers and DHH students. Four itinerant teacher participants and four DHH student participants
each completed two face-to-face individual interviews and provided narrative accounts of their reflections on the itinerant teacher-student relationship across the school years.

**Background to the Study**

**Deafness**

Historically, children who were DHH were educated in specialized segregated school settings (typically residential schools for the deaf). However, during the past 20 years, the inclusive education movement in public schools has promoted and facilitated the inclusion of the majority of DHH students into neighbourhood school settings, alongside their hearing peers. According to the 2009-2010 Regional and National Summary Report from the Gallaudet Research Institute (GRI, 2011), approximately 90% of school-aged DHH children in the U.S. are educated in regular public school classroom settings, at least part of the time. In these settings, DHH children often cannot communicate easily or reciprocally with their hearing peers, and, thus, are likely to be marginalized and isolated from their classmates, to some extent (e.g., Antia, Kreimeyer, Metz, & Spolsky 2011b). Many researchers have reported that DHH children in integrated school settings often experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, and neglect (e.g., Israelite, Ower, & Goldstein, 2002; Most 2004, 2007) and are likely to experience social and emotional difficulties associated with low self-esteem and self-concept (van Gurp, 2000; Warner-Czyz, Loy, Evans, Wetsel, & Tobey, 2015), emotional regulation and impulse control (Greenberg & Kusché, 1998), and understanding social language and making themselves understood (e.g., Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Research has also reported that DHH students educated in inclusive settings often experience a lack of good friends and close peer relationships (e.g., Israelite et al., 2002; Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Wauters &
Knoor, 2007). In short, hearing loss-related difficulties experienced by DHH children, especially in inclusive classroom settings, are pervasive and span across development, and are particularly detrimental to positive social interactions, subsequent social competence, and overall social and emotional development (Batten, Oakes, & Alexander, 2014).

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the development of skills related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically (e.g., Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004a). It has been well documented that the development of SEL skills in children significantly improves their attitudes about themselves and others, has a positive effect on social interaction, and decreases emotional distress and conduct disorders (e.g., Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004b). Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering the development of SEL skills leading to social and emotional competence in their students (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Knoors & Hermans, 2010). Supportive teacher-student relationships have been shown to have long-term impact on students’ academic achievements and social and emotional outcomes (e.g., Elias, 2006).

A growing body of research indicates that the development of students’ social and emotional competence is greatly influenced by the quality of teacher-student relationships (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Murray, Murray, & Waas, 2008). Current research has shown that when students have strong connections with their teachers and a sense of belonging in their school community, they are likely to have
positive social and emotional health and well-being (e.g., Elias, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Further, supportive teachers create safe and caring learning communities, encourage cooperative engagement between their students, foster mutual respect and responsibility, and develop strong bonds of trust with their students (Noddings, 1992).

Supportive teachers may also provide protective factors for students who are at-risk for academic and social failure and emotional distress (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). As noted previously, children who are DHH may be considered to be at-risk, as hearing loss often has severe impacts on cognitive, academic, and social and emotional development (e.g., Vaccari & Marschark, 1997). These difficulties have been noted even when the child’s hearing loss is within the mild to moderate range (Flexer, 1999). The difficulties pertain to a wide range of students: approximately 15% of school-aged children have an educationally significant hearing loss, and these children likely have some degree of difficulty associated with language and literacy development, speech articulation, academic achievement, and social and emotional development (e.g., Knoors & Marschark, 2014; Spencer & Marschark, 2010).

**Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

Itinerant teachers are educational specialists in hearing-related difficulties and have specific teacher preparation focusing on the audiological, linguistic, academic, and social and emotional needs of DHH children and youth. Typically, itinerant teachers support DHH students who are included in regular classroom settings and receive their education alongside their hearing peers. Itinerant teachers generally provide assistance using a either a push-in model of support (direct support provided within the regular classroom
environment) or a pull-out model of support (one-to-one outside the regular classroom), or a combination of the two models (Luckner & Miller, 1994) on a regular and ongoing basis (Hyde & Power, 2004). This support generally includes foci on audiological, communication, speech, language, academic, and social and emotional content (e.g., Luckner, 2010; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). It is very likely that itinerant teachers are the only specialists within the school environment to have specific teacher preparation in and a comprehensive understanding of the impact that hearing loss has on the entire development of the child (e.g., Hyde & Power, 2004; Yarger & Luckner, 1999) and, thus, they are uniquely positioned to provide insight into the social and emotional experiences of their students.

Little is known about the specifics of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students, or in what ways this relationship may help to facilitate social and emotional well-being, social skill development and social inclusion, and minimization of the potentially isolating impact of hearing loss. Despite the important and perhaps pivotal role that itinerant teachers play in supporting DHH students in inclusive classrooms, very little research has examined this unique teacher-student relationship. To date, there has been no systematic investigation of the relationship between DHH students and their specialist itinerant teachers, nor has any work examined the aspects that could provide insight and contribute to effective interventions.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students in terms of the students’ social and emotional development and social inclusion. The research question that guides this study
is: What is the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their DHH students in inclusive settings, from the perspective of both the itinerant teachers and the DHH students:

a) in terms of social and emotional development?

b) in terms of social inclusion\(^1\)?

**Significance**

This study has the potential for both theoretical and applied significance. Theoretically, it is hoped that the findings will shed light on the nature of effective teacher-student relationships and highlight the importance of this unique relationship to the academic and social success of children with hearing loss and to their overall social and emotional well-being. In addition, it is hoped this study will provide insights into the significance of the itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship and how DHH children manage and cope in inclusive school settings. Further, this study is the first investigation into the specific nature of the itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship, and may contribute to our understanding of the importance of the unique itinerant teaching role.

In an applied sense, findings may have the potential to shed light on the importance of the work of itinerant teachers, by highlighting possible critical points in development where itinerant teachers provide key social and emotional support to their students.

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\(^1\) Social inclusion: For the purposes of this dissertation, social inclusion refers to one’s belonging, acceptance and full participation in school (and society), as well as the social context’s recognition and embracing of diversity. Further discussion of social inclusion and the connections to social and emotional development are included in Chapter II and Chapter V.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter first provides a discussion of the prevalence and definitions of hearing loss, and then presents a discussion of current educational placement practices for DHH students. Next, this chapter presents the relevant literature on the work of itinerant teachers, DHH children’s social and emotional development and the impacts on peer interaction. The last section presents the framework of SEL, and provides a discussion of the relevant research that connects to SEL and academic success, social and emotional development, teacher-student relationships, and teacher social and emotional competence.

Deafness

Hearing provides access to sound, enabling children to overhear and develop listening and spoken language skills for communication with others. Childhood deafness and hearing loss interfere with a child’s ability to develop spoken language and, as a consequence, may have severe academic, linguistic, social and emotional impacts, even in the case of minimal hearing losses. Hearing-related difficulties experienced by DHH children are pervasive and span across development, and are particularly detrimental to social interactions and subsequent social and emotional development (e.g., Antia, Jones, Luckner, Kreimeyer, & Reed, 2011a; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Most school-aged children (in the United States) who are DHH are educated in regular public school classroom settings, alongside hearing peers, at least part of the time (GRI, 2011). In these inclusive school settings, DHH children often cannot communicate easily or reciprocally with their hearing peers, and, thus, are often marginalized and isolated from their
classmates, putting them at risk for social failure (e.g., Israelite et al., 2002; Antia & Kreimeyer, 2015) and emotional distress (e.g., Antia et al., 2011b).

Typically, DHH students in inclusive settings receive the majority of their instruction from general education teachers; however, due to longstanding impacts of childhood deafness and hearing loss, DHH children are likely to receive additional educational support from an itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing (itinerant teacher) on a regular and ongoing basis, which often spans across their entire school years (e.g., Luckner, 2011; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). To date, little is known about the specifics of this unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students, or in what ways this relationship may help to facilitate social and emotional development and social inclusion at school.

**Prevalence.** Childhood hearing loss is not a common occurrence and is often referred to as a “low incidence” disability (Karchmer & Mitchell, 2006). The prevalence of childhood hearing loss in developed countries is estimated at 1 to 3 children per 1000 live births (Finitzo, Albright, & O’Neal, 1998; Cunningham & Cox, 2003), and this estimate increases slightly to 4 to 5 in 1000 live births, as children age and progressive hearing losses are identified and included in the figure (Bess & Humes, 2003). Both of these estimates include hearing losses ranging from mild to profound deafness, with each level having significant (although varied) impact on the child’s ability to communicate effectively and on social functioning. It should be noted that the majority of children who are DHH have hearing losses typically within the mild to moderate range, and not profound deafness (Moeller et al., 2007).

Approximately 15% of school-aged children (6 to 19 years old) in the US have
educationally significant hearing losses (Niskar et al., 1998), characterized by difficulty understanding auditory information, difficulty learning spoken language (e.g., Moeller et al., 2007), difficulty developing written language and literacy skills (e.g., Most, Aram, & Andorn, 2006), and difficulty in social interactions and socializing with peers (Antia et al., 2011b). Many children with mild to moderately-severe hearing losses use amplification devices such as hearing aids and/or sound-field equipment to help provide access to sound and minimize the impacts of background noise. Children with more significant hearing losses (i.e., severe to profound and profound) commonly do not receive meaningful benefit from hearing aids and may use a cochlear implant, and/or visual support such as sign language (Flexer, 1999; Marschark, 2007). As a point of clarification, hearing aids are electronic devices (often computerized/digital) that amplify sound, rendering incoming sound audible that would otherwise be inaudible; cochlear implants are biomedical devices that deliver electrical stimulation to the auditory nerve via an electrode array surgically implanted into the cochlea; and sound-field amplification systems (also referred to as FM systems) are electronic equipment that amplifies an entire classroom through a loudspeaker system, with the teacher wearing an FM microphone/transmitter (Flexer, 1999).

**Definitions of hearing loss.** For a broad understanding of hearing loss and the associated functional characteristics, it is helpful to describe hearing loss levels in terms of the audiological and functional definitions. The following definitions, taken from Moores (2001), are endorsed by the Conference of Educational Administrators Serving the Deaf (CEASD): “*A deaf person is one whose hearing is disabled to an extent (usually 70 dB or greater) that precludes the understanding of speech through the ear alone, with*
or without the use of a hearing aid” (p. 11). By contrast, “A hard of hearing person is one whose hearing is disabled to an extent (usually 35 to 69 dB) that makes difficult, but does not preclude, the understanding of speech through the ear alone, with or without a hearing aid” (p. 11).

Hearing loss is measured in decibels (dB) and is typically categorized and reported by severity. In addition, it is common to refer to the impacts that the severity of hearing loss has on a child’s development and overall daily functioning. Children with hearing losses ranging from mild to moderately-severe are often able to use their residual hearing to process auditory information, and usually receive some benefit from the use of amplification equipment, such as hearing aids. Children with severe to profound hearing losses typically receive limited benefit from the use of hearing aids, and therefore, may use a cochlear implant and/or sign language to communicate. It should be noted that even with the use of amplification equipment, individuals with hearing loss may have difficulty discriminating speech; misinterpret and misunderstand some auditory information; and struggle to understand speech, especially in noisy environments (e.g., classrooms and playgrounds). Table 1 is a summary of Flexer (1999) and provides an overview of the key difficulties DHH children commonly experience in the classroom and social situations.
Table 1

**Definitions of Hearing Loss**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hearing Loss</th>
<th>Decibel Loss</th>
<th>Hearing Difficulty</th>
<th>Academic Difficulty</th>
<th>Social Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>-10 dB to +10 dB</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight (Minimal)</td>
<td>10 dB to 25 dB</td>
<td>Difficulty with faint or distant speech. May be unaware of subtle conversational cues leading to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of behavior.</td>
<td>May have trouble keeping up with fast-paced classroom dialogues and lessons. Hearing loss may go undetected and not likely to have amplification.</td>
<td>Trouble keeping up with fast-paced peer interaction (trouble with social interaction). Could lead to difficulties with social interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>26 dB to 40 dB</td>
<td>May to have much difficulty accurately decoding auditory information. May miss from 25 % to 40% of speech information (depending on level of background noise and configuration of HL) Hearing is a major effort May not be able to selectively hear important information.</td>
<td>Great impact on learning and may miss 50% of class discussions, especially if not aided or amplification is not used.</td>
<td>May appear daydreaming or not paying attention. Difficulty following conversations and may miss interpret social intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>41 dB to 55 dB</td>
<td>With a 45 dB loss: may miss 50 % to 75% of speech information. With a 50dB loss, may miss 80% to 100% of speech information.</td>
<td>May have delayed language understanding and trouble with syntax, speech production and vocabulary development.</td>
<td>Communication is significantly affected and become increasingly difficult. Begins to have impact on self-esteem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately-severe</td>
<td>56 dB to 70 dB</td>
<td>May have great difficulty understanding conversational speech. May miss 100% of conversations especially without amplification.</td>
<td>Well-marked difficulties in school, including language delay, reduced speech intelligibility.. Hearing aids are essential.</td>
<td>May have poor self-concept, low social maturity and experience a sense of rejection from peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>71 to 90 dB</td>
<td>Cannot hear conversational speech. With proper amplification, can hear environmental sounds and may detect speech.</td>
<td>Significant impact on language and academic development. Speech in not likely to spontaneously develop.</td>
<td>Isolated from hearing peers, due to the inability to communicate. May use sign-language to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe to Profound</td>
<td>91 dB &lt;</td>
<td>Unable to detect speech, but may be aware of the vibration of sound. Typically receive little to no benefit from amplification. May use a sign language and/or have a cochlear implant.</td>
<td>Significant impact on language and academic development. Speech is not likely to spontaneously develop.</td>
<td>Isolated from hearing peers due to the inability to communicate. Tend to be loners. May use sign-language to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>One ear only</td>
<td>May have difficulty with faint of distant speech, especially in noisy environments. Likely have difficulty localizing sounds and voices.</td>
<td>At-risk for educational difficulties. May benefit from the use of amplification equipment.</td>
<td>May to be fatigued in the classroom due to greater effort needed to listen. May appear distracted, inattentive or frustrated. Behavior problems may exist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Educational placement.** Historically (beginning in the early 1800s in North America), DHH children were educated in specialized segregated schools (typically residential schools for the deaf), separate from hearing children (Winzer, 2009). During the past 30 years, the inclusive education movement has dominated North American educational practices, with many DHH children increasingly integrated into general education schools and classrooms within their neighborhood schools, alongside their hearing peers (Angelides & Aravi, 2006; Holden-Pitt & Diaz, 1998; Winzer, 2009). In some school settings, DHH children receive educational instruction and support within a segregated placement (e.g., resource room); however, an increasing number of DHH students receive educational instruction within the general education classroom, with hearing peers and a general education teacher providing much of the curricular instruction. In fact, according to the 2009-2010 Regional and National Summary Report from the Gallaudet Research Institute (GRI, 2011), approximately 90% of school-aged DHH children in the U.S. are educated in regular public school classrooms settings, at least part of the time. In Australia, 85% of DHH students have been reported as being included in general education settings (Power & Hyde, 2004), and in Israel, 75% of DHH students have been reported as receiving their education in general education classrooms (Most, 2007). It should be noted that there are no specific statistics currently available for DHH children in Canada; however, due to the nature of the educational trends and similarity in the education systems throughout North America, it is reasonable to assume that the U.S. estimate is reflective of current educational practices in Canada.

In general education schools, a DHH child may be the only student within the classroom (and very likely the entire school) who is deaf or hard-of-hearing. Typically,
children with hearing loss receive the majority of their instruction from a general education classroom teacher, who is not likely to have knowledge and expertise about deafness and hearing loss and/or the use and benefits of amplification equipment. In addition to the classroom teacher, the DHH child may also have classroom-based educational support from a paraprofessional (educational assistant), and where sign language is the primary mode of communication. The DHH child may also have the support of an educational sign-language interpreter to mediate the interaction between the teacher and the DHH child and between the DHH child and the hearing peers. Due to the pervasive difficulties DHH children experience, these students are very likely to receive additional support from a specialist teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing on a regular basis. For children in inclusive classrooms this support is usually provided by an itinerant teacher.

**Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

**Nature of itinerant work.** The focus of the work of itinerant teachers primarily centers upon direct support to accommodate the audiological, linguistic, academic, and social needs of DHH students. Specifically, itinerant teachers’ responsibilities typically include traveling to meet students in their respective home schools, trouble-shooting amplification equipment, adapting and modifying materials and curricula, providing auditory and speech training, providing academic support, supporting social and emotional development, promoting social integration, coordinating meetings and giving workshops, providing in-service support to school-based personnel, developing and implementing individualized education plans (IEPs), conducting assessments and implementing support strategies, and communicating with parents, audiologists and other
allied professionals (Foster & Cue, 2009; Hyde & Power, 2004; Luckner & Howell, 2002, Luckner & Miller, 1994; Norman & Jamieson 2015; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). In addition, according to Konza and Paterson (1996), itinerant teachers need to be organized, skilled at mediation, experts in self-advocacy support, and have the ability to negotiate their role as an itinerant teacher within the regular classroom environment (as cited in Foster & Cue, 2009). Further, itinerant teachers need to be skilled collaborators (Compton, Appenzeller, Kemmery, & Gardiner-Walsh, 2015) and be knowledgeable consultants (Bullard, 2003; Foster & Cue, 2009; Luckner & Miller, 1994; Miller, 2008).

Overall, professional flexibility is seen as the most important attribute, and itinerant teachers must have a broad knowledge of academic subjects and a wide range of skills (Foster & Cue, 2009; Kluwin, Morris, & Clifford, 2004; Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Reed, 2003; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). Luckner and Howell (2002) interviewed 25 experienced itinerant teachers, who reported that the demands of their jobs are vast and varied; thus, the authors recommended that teacher preparation should include components for the skill development for working with DHH students with multiple disabilities and students with cochlear implants, as well as skill development for reading and language instruction and the development of self-advocacy skills.

The work of itinerant teachers also focuses strongly on supporting the social and emotional needs of their students. In a recent mix-methods study, Norman and Jamieson (2015) interviewed 11 itinerant teachers about their support to their DHH students in terms of social and emotional support. These itinerant teachers reported that their work often includes social and emotional components, and may, in fact, support DHH students’ social and emotional development up to 70% of their instructional time. However, these
itinerant teachers also reported that they did not necessarily feel well prepared to provide this type of support. Further, Foster and Cue (2009) surveyed 270 itinerant teachers, who indicated that supporting their students’ personal and social development was a large component of itinerant work. These teachers specifically highlighted the importance of teaching coping skills to increase DHH students’ self-esteem, encouraging personal independence, transition planning for after high school, and helping students network and socialize with peers.

Although the primary responsibility of itinerant teachers is direct instruction to DHH students, many also have a consultative role and work collaboratively with classroom teachers, parents, and other allied professionals. Consultation likely takes the form of providing suggestions, information, and materials. Itinerant teachers may also support the general education teacher by providing strategies for working with note-takers, interpreters, and educational assistants (Compton et al., 2015; Hyde & Power, 2004; Luckner, 1999; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). Above all, itinerant teachers need to be experts in hearing-related difficulties and have a deep understanding of the impact that a hearing loss has on the entire development of the child (e.g., Hyde & Power, 2004; Norman, 2015; Norman & Jamieson, 2008, 2015).

The work of itinerant teachers also has several notable challenges. For example, researchers have consistently reported that itinerant teachers often feel isolated in their professional lives (Hyde & Power, 2004; Konza & Paterson, 1996, as cited in Foster & Cue, 2007; Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Yarger & Luckner, 1999) and working in school environments without much collegial support (Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). Large caseload sizes and the isolating nature of the pull-out model of
support have been noted as contributing to professional isolation, as both reduce the time available to connect with students and school-based personnel. In addition, limited time for planning and preparation has been reported as a concern, especially for beginning itinerant teachers (Guteng, 2005; Luckner & Hanks, 2003). Further, several studies have reported that itinerant teachers do not feel that their DHH teacher preparation adequately prepared them for the unique nature of itinerant work (Foster & Cue, 2009; Luckner, 2010; Luckner & Howell, 2002; Luckner & Miller, 1994; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). In this connection, Foster and Cue (2009) noted that in a review of the United States Program Standards (2003) from the Council on Education of the Deaf, the itinerant teaching model and the specific skills needed for itinerant teaching were rarely discussed. Overall, within general education there is a lack of broad understanding about the work of itinerant teachers, their roles and responsibilities, and the critical support they provide (e.g., Norman & Jamieson, 2015; Yarger & Luckner, 1999).

**Service delivery models.** As mentioned previously, itinerant teaching is characterized by supporting DHH students in inclusive educational settings. Hyde and Power (2004) outlined three models of itinerant support, including team teaching (also known as co-teaching), classroom-based support (also known as push-in), and one-to-one support (also known as pull-out). Team teaching involves collaboration between the itinerant teacher and the classroom teacher, where both share a teaching role within the regular classroom setting. The push-in model of itinerant teaching centers on the itinerant teacher directly supporting DHH students within the classroom context; this support may take on a consultative approach to instruction. The push-in model generally focuses on provision of curriculum support and meeting other classroom-based educational needs.
The pull-out model of support is usually provided by the itinerant teacher outside of the classroom in a one-to-one teaching setting. This model generally allows for a quieter setting and time for the itinerant teacher to converse one-on-one with the student. Previous research indicates that most itinerant teachers use the pull-out model of support, which allows itinerant teachers to provide individualized attention and specific assistance to their students’ specific needs (e.g., Eriks-Brophy & Wittingham, 2013). For example, in a survey of 319 itinerant teachers, Luckner and Miller (1994) found that 71% of their participants supported their DHH students outside the classroom setting using a pull-out model of support; 15% used a push-in model and worked in the regular general education classroom; and 4% used a co-teaching model working directly with classroom teaching in planning and delivering instruction to the entire class.

Itinerant teachers may also provide consultation support to the school-based personnel, to the DHH child’s family, and to community support providers (such as audiologists) (e.g., Luckner, 1991, 2011; Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013). The current educational trends towards more inclusive classrooms have led (and are leading) itinerant teachers to provide their support within their student’s classroom setting using a push-in model of support, whereby itinerant teachers and classroom teachers use a collaborative teaching model (Antia et al., 2011b; Foster & Cue, 2009; Rabinsky, 2013; Reed, Antia, & Kreimeyer, 2008). However, to date, updated statistics have not been presented in the current literature.

The caseloads of itinerant teachers usually include a variety of student profiles (Bullard, 2003). For example, caseloads may include students from a range of grade
levels (from pre-kindergarten through grade 12); students who use sign language as their primary mode of communication; and students with varying cognitive abilities such as giftedness, additional disabilities, and linguistically diverse family backgrounds (Bullard, 2003; Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013).

The caseload size for itinerant teachers varies greatly among school districts and regions. In the province of British Columbia, Canada, the average caseload size for itinerant teachers is approximately 17 students per full-time equivalent teacher (Norman & Jamieson, 2012), with itinerant caseloads including students hearing loss plus additional complex learning and health needs (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, dependent handicapped, deafblind) (L. Lewis, personal communication, April 12, 2016). The current trends in education point to increasing caseload sizes and decreasing instructional time with each student. In an older study, Luckner and Miller (1994) reported the optimal caseload size for a full-time itinerant teacher to be 11 students; however, since this study has been published, there have been shifts in educational priorities to more inclusive environments, and this caseload estimate may no longer be applicable to or appropriate for the current educational system. Further, the length of time for each instructional session between an itinerant teacher and his or her students was reported to vary widely, from 20 minutes to full-day support (5-hours) (e.g., Luckner, 2010). Within the British Columbia school context, no published statistics are currently available. However, research conducted in rural and remote areas of Australia indicated that itinerant teacher support is often infrequent (e.g., Checker, Remine, & Brown, 2009).

**Professional preparation.** In Canada, most certified itinerant teachers have a background with a Bachelor’s degree in Education (or an equivalent teaching credential)
and are certified general education teachers. In addition, these itinerant teachers have specialized teacher preparation and training specific to the educational needs of DHH children, typically a post-baccalaureate diploma or Master’s degree. This preparation includes an emphasis on audiological, linguistic, and psycho-social aspects of deafness and hearing loss. Many itinerant teachers are certified teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, meeting the national certification standards for educators of the deaf and hard of hearing, as stipulated by the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (2009). In other regions, the requirement for initial teacher preparation varies. For example, in the United States, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing may have a Bachelor’s degree in Deaf Education but not have acquired generalist teacher credentials. Nevertheless, overall, certification standards for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing in the United States – as well as Australia – are similar to those in Canada (Easterbrooks & Putney, 2008; Norman & Bibby, 2010).

In Canada, itinerant teachers are not required by the certification body to participate in a mandated number hours for professional development following graduation (known as Continuing Education Units: CEUs), as required by some professional certification bodies in other countries, such as throughout the United States. Therefore, ongoing development of professional skills is largely placed on individual teachers to initiate. According to Luckner (2010), ongoing skill development is critical to good teaching practice, and teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing benefit from specific skill enhancement training and workshops. Foster and Cue (2009) reported that the itinerant teachers in their study supported ongoing professional development; many of them expressed interest in taking workshops or courses to enhance their skills in specific areas.
Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children

Social and emotional development. Childhood deafness and hearing loss of any degree often interferes with a child’s ability to develop spoken language spontaneously and easily. In fact, much research attention in the field of Deaf Education has focused on the difficulty DHH children have with language acquisition (e.g., Knoors & Marschark, 2013; Marschark & Knoors, 2012; Spencer & Marschark, 2010) and the subsequent impacts on cognitive, academic, and social and emotional development (e.g., Dammeyer, 2010; Marschark & Knoors, 2012; Vaccari & Marschark, 1997). Limited language and communication skills interfere with DHH children’s opportunities for social interaction, and thus their opportunities to socialize with peers and learn vocabulary, the social pragmatics of language, and effective social behaviors may be hindered (e.g., Carney & Moeller, 1998; Dammeyer, 2010; Marschark & Knoors, 2012).

Researchers have consistently reported that DHH children have difficulty managing emotions effectively (e.g., Calderon & Greenberg, 2011) and experience challenges with emotional regulation and impulse control (Greenberg & Kusché, 1998). For example, Greenberg and Kusché (1998) conducted a quasi-experimental intervention study on the PATHS (Promoting Alternate Thinking Strategies) Curriculum, which included 57 deaf children in 11 self-contained elementary school classrooms (using signed and spoken language together as the instructional communication approach) over most of one school year, with post-tests at one- and two-year time points. The findings emphasized that the DHH children in the comparison group had limited ability to communicate effectively and reciprocally, which likely greatly impacted their development of appropriate social skills, and may have had long-lasting effects on emotional well-being. For the
intervention group, the PATHS Curriculum intervention led to significant improvements in DHH students’ social problem solving, emotional recognition skills, and teacher and parent-rated social competence.

As a consequence of language deficits and communication difficulties, many DHH children are likely to experience difficulties associated with low self-esteem and in developing a healthy self-concept, particularly when comparing themselves to their hearing peers. van Gurp (2000) examined the effects of educational placement on self-esteem and domains of self-concept among deaf secondary school students attending three different educational settings, namely 1) segregated (school for the deaf, n = 27); 2) congregated (segregated within a hearing secondary school, n = 28); and 3) resource room (self-contained with opportunity for special class instruction and integration with hearing peers, n = 26). The findings revealed social and emotional advantages in attending segregated settings with peers of like hearing status, as compared with attending resource room and congregated settings where students had lower scores on a measure predicting self-worth. Further, Kent (2003) found that in mainstream schools (considered inclusive schools today), DHH youth ages 11, 13, and 15 who self-identified as DHH were at risk for physical and psychological harm, and, thus, due to the prevalence of negative stigma, DHH youth were reluctant to self-identify.

Other research has found that DHH students in inclusive classrooms often cannot communicate easily or reciprocally with their hearing peers, and, thus, are likely to be marginalized and isolated from their classmates, putting them at risk for social failure. In a review of inclusion practices for DHH students, Stinson and Antia (1999) highlighted that DHH students in inclusive settings reported difficulties in making and keeping
friends with hearing peers. Furthermore, many researchers have reported that DHH children in inclusive settings often experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, and neglect. For example, Israelite et al. (2002) investigated the identity construction of seven adolescents using an inductive qualitative research design. These students reflected on their earlier school experiences in mainstream classrooms with hearing peers. For some of the students, poor experiences in the primary grades created lasting memories of isolation, marginalization, and being alone. In addition, some students reported feeling not understood by their hearing peers, who did not understand the impact of having a hearing loss, and, thus, did not empathize with their DHH peers (from the DHH students’ perspectives). Further, Norman and Jamieson (2015) conducted interviews with 11 itinerant teachers, who reported that their students commonly experience social and emotional difficulties involving understanding social language, expressing emotion effectively, and making themselves understood. As a consequence, according to the itinerant teachers in this study, many DHH children lack good friends and experience loneliness and social isolation.

It should be noted that only a small body of research has investigated the social and emotional development of school-aged DHH children, and the previously-cited research highlights the core difficulties DHH children have been reported to experience. Each of these studies must be interpreted with caution, however; the educational climate has changed considerably within the past 15 years, as inclusion practices have become the dominant educational placement for DHH children. Continued research is needed to further investigate how school-age DHH children function in their daily lives in these inclusive school settings.
**Peer interaction and socialization.** Peer interaction and socialization are critical to the development of healthy social and emotional competence (Antia et al., 2011a; Antia et al., 2011b; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992) and the development of the skills necessary to initiate and maintain friendships for all children (Antia, Stinson, & Gaustad, 2002; Rubin, 1980). For DHH children, communication barriers and breakdowns have been the focus of much research (e.g., Antia et al. 2011b; Antia & Kreimeyer, 2015; Hintermair, 2015; Marschark, 2007). It has been well documented that DHH children experience difficulty initiating and maintaining social interaction with peers (e.g., Duncan, 1999; Messenheimer-Young & Kretschmer, 1994; Vandell & George, 1981), have greater success and prefer social interaction with peers of similar hearing status (e.g., Levine & Antia, 1997; Minnett, Clarke, & Wilson, 1994; Weisel, Most, & Efron, 2005), and tend to prefer social interaction with peers who use the same mode of communication (e.g., sign language, oral language, simultaneous communication) (Bat-Chava & Deignan, 2001; Hulsing, Luetke-Stahlman, Frome-Loeb, Nelson, & Wegner, 1995).

It should be noted that language ability has been shown to greatly influence the frequency and quality of peer interactions, such that DHH children with high language ability significantly engage in more frequent social interactions, as compared to DHH children with medium or low language ability (e.g., Lederberg, 1991; Spencer, Koester, & Meadow-Orlans, 1994). However, familiarity has been shown to be an important mediating factor by minimizing the effects of hearing status and language ability on social interactions. Lederberg, Ryan, and Robbins (1986) observed 14 DHH children, ages four to six years, and reported that the DHH children had more successful
interactions with familiar than with unfamiliar hearing peers, and engaged in more
physical activities (such as running and tumbling) and pretend play than they did with
unfamiliar peers.

As a point of note, much of the research conducted on DHH children’s social skill
patterns and development has been conducted more than 15 years ago. In the last 15
years, the face of Deaf Education has shifted, as Newborn Hearing Screening has greatly
impacted the numbers of children receiving cochlear implants, earlier habilitation of
speech and language difficulties, earlier use of amplification, and earlier exposure to
family-centred care. Thus, early-identified DHH children are likely to have greater
linguistic competence than seen previously (Yoshinaga-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, & Mehl,
1998), which would lead to a positive influence on communication skills and social
functioning (Antia et al., 2011a). Furthermore, the early identification of hearing loss
increases the likelihood of DHH children developing language and communication skills
similar to that of their hearing peers, and, therefore, these children may have different
challenges than late-identified DHH children, who were usually those involved in studies
conducted over a decade ago.

Further, more recent research investigating the social competence, social acceptance,
and social status of DHH children indicates that DHH children and youth may not have
the same difficulties in engaging in peer interaction and socialization as previously found.
In fact, emerging literature indicates that DHH children and youth may be similar to their
hearing peers in terms of social competence (e.g., Antia et al., 2011a; Wauters & Knoors,
2007). However, these findings should be taken with caution, as the vast majority of
research in this area has revealed that DHH children have substantial difficulties
understanding social language, making and maintaining friends, and experience social isolation with hearing peers (e.g., Norman & Jamieson, 2015).

**Itinerant Teachers in Inclusive Educational Settings**

As mentioned previously, DHH students are likely to receive additional educational support from an itinerant teacher on a regular and ongoing basis (Hyde & Power, 2004; Luckner, 2006; Luckner, 2011). In fact, itinerant teachers are likely to be the only specialists within the school environment who have an in-depth knowledge of the encompassing and far-reaching impact that hearing loss has on the entire development of the child (Hyde & Power, 2004; Yarger & Luckner, 1999), and they may, in fact, know their students better than the regular class teacher (Foster & Cue, 2009). Foster and Cue also reported that itinerant teachers often have close relationships with their students’ and their families; these researchers noted that the development of trust, rapport, and acceptance with their students is essential to their job effectiveness. However, despite the important and sometimes pivotal role that itinerant teachers play in supporting DHH students in inclusive classrooms, to date, there has been no systematic investigation of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students. Knoors and Marschark (2014) described a related study investigating teacher-student relationship between classroom teachers and deaf students in special bilingual schools or co-enrollment schools and highlighted that deaf students rated their classroom teachers lower in terms of informational and emotional support as compared to their hearing peers. However, there has been no study that has focused on the importance of teacher-student relationships for DHH children who receive support from itinerant teachers. To underscore this point, Wolters, Knoors, Cillessen, and Verhoeven (2014) found that the teacher-student
relationship was the sole predictor of grade 6 DHH Dutch students’ well-being regardless of educational setting; however, across the transition to middle school for grade 7, relationships with peers and popularity predicted well-being, rather than relationships with teacher. Currently, research on teacher-student relationships with DHH children and youth is scant.

Social and Emotional Learning

This section provides an overview of the core concepts and dimensions of social and emotional learning (SEL), and highlights the impact that the development of SEL skills in children has on academic success, social and emotional well-being and on children’s overall development. Next, the importance of positive and supportive teacher-student relationships is discussed in relation to all children, and then specifically to children who are at-risk for academic failure and social and emotional distress. Finally, two models of teacher social and emotional competence (SEC) are presented that explain the importance of teacher SEC to SEL instruction and the teacher-student relationship.

What is SEL? SEL refers to the development of skills related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically (Zins et al., 2004a). In essence, SEL focuses on the development of skills that are fundamental to life, as it teaches children how to handle themselves, their relationships, their work, and their conduct. With effective SEL skills, children are able to calm themselves down when angry, make and maintain friendships, resolve conflicts respectfully and constructively, and make ethical and safe choices (Zins et al.). There are five widely agreed upon dimensions (as identified by the Collaborative
for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2016) included in SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Table 2 provides a summary of the key person-centred SEL competencies and core characteristics for each of the five SEL dimensions, as summarized from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2016).
Table 2

*Person-centred SEL Competencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Ability to assess accurately one’s feelings, interests, values, and strengths, and having a well-grounded sense of self-confidence (e.g., identifying and recognizing emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, needs, values, self-efficacy, and spirituality).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Ability to regulate one’s emotions to handle stress, to control impulses, and to persevere in overcoming obstacles (e.g., impulse control and stress management, self-motivation and discipline, and goal setting and organizational skills). Also emphasized are setting and monitoring of progress towards personal and academic goals and expressing emotions appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social awareness</td>
<td>Ability to take the perspective of, and empathize with, others as well as recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences (e.g., developing empathy, appreciating diversity, and developing respect for others).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship skills/management</td>
<td>Ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation (e.g., communication, social engagement, building relationships; working cooperatively; negotiation, refusal, and conflict management; and providing help). Also included are resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; and seeking help when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible decision-making</td>
<td>Ability to make decisions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions (e.g., problem identification and problem solving; evaluation and reflection; and personal, moral, and ethical behaviour). In addition, responsible decision-making includes one’s ability to apply decision-making skills to academic and social situations and contributing to the well-being of one’s school and community.</td>
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</table>

**Why is SEL important to development?** Social and emotional competence is necessary for success in school and life. It has been well documented that the development of SEL skills in children significantly improves the children’s attitudes about themselves and others, has a positive effect on social interactions, decreases emotional distress and conduct disorders (e.g., Zins et al., 2004b), and has positive effects
on academic performance (e.g., Zins & Elias, 2006). Children who have participated in SEL interventions have been shown to have an increased positive attitude towards school; increased classroom participation and engagement; application of greater effort to achieve academic success and improvement in problem-solving and planning skills; and improved academic skills in math, language arts, and social studies, (e.g., Zins, Elias, & Greenberg, 2003). In addition, children with well-developed SEL skills tend to have a higher sense of self-efficacy, better sense of community, more involvement in positive behaviours (such as sports), higher academic motivation, and increased prosocial behaviours than children without well-developed SEL competence (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). In fact, SEL skills have been shown to provide benefit to physical health, mental health, and overall sense of wellness (Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2004b). Overall, competency in SEL-related skills are critical to the overall development of the child and have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on academic and social and emotional development. The following two sections briefly highlight key research findings regarding the influence of SEL on academic and social and emotional success.

**Influence of SEL on academic success.** Effective academic learning has its foundation in caring relationships and warm and challenging classrooms (Elias, 2006). A growing body of research has emphasized the importance of SEL to academic achievement, and the connections between the five SEL dimensions and academic performance have been documented (e.g., Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000; Durlak et al., 2011; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). In a longitudinal study investigating the impact of self-discipline on final grades, Duckworth and Seligman
(2005) surveyed 180 students in the fall of grade 8, and found that self-discipline measurements in the fall predicted academic performance in the spring. Furthermore, Duckworth and Seligman found that students who were able to manage personal stress and were intrinsically motivated tended to work harder and, thus, earn better grades than those with poor SEL skills. Problem solving ability has also been shown to have a direct impact on academic performance, as students who are able to prioritize and make appropriate decisions about homework and studying do better academically (Zins & Elias, 2006). In a meta-analysis of 213 school-based universal SEL programs, Durlak et al. (2011) reported that when compared to control groups, the development of SEL skills in children enrolled in SEL programs (kindergarten to grade 12) significantly improved academic performance, with an 11% gain in achievement scores. Further, Linares et al. (2005) reported that after a two-year longitudinal SEL intervention study, grade 4 and grade 5 students showed increased levels of self-efficacy, problem-solving abilities, social-emotional competencies, and math scores relative to students in a comparison school.

**Influence of SEL on social and emotional development.** Children’s social and emotional functioning and development in schools have been a research focus for over 25 years. SEL has been found to be essential to social and emotional development of children from preschool through their high-school education (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2016), with much of the research centered upon the effectiveness of SEL intervention and prevention programs. These SEL programs are designed to promote social and emotional competence, and typically focus on building a caring community of learners, building supportive social relationships,
fostering prosocial behaviours, providing support for social and emotional needs, and encouraging resilience and positive mental health (e.g., Battistich, Schaps, Watson, & Soloman, 1996; Greenberg et al., 2003; Schonert-Reichl & O’Brien, 2012; Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014; Zins, Elias, Greenberg, & Weissberg, 2000). SEL programs also aim to foster the development of caring and responsible citizens (Payton et al., 2000). In a comprehensive review of SEL program effectiveness, Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 universal SEL programs, which included 270,034 students from kindergarten through high school. The authors reported that when compared with control participants for both correlational and longitudinal studies, students who participated in SEL programs had significantly more SEL skills, better attitudes about themselves and others, more prosocial behaviours and connectedness to school, and better academic performance.

Classroom and school climates have also been noted as important to positive social and emotional development, and can greatly influence the quality of the learning experience (e.g., Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl & O’Brien, 2012). In warm and supportive classrooms, teachers and students work together cooperatively and respectfully to build a classroom environment that promotes students’ strengths and abilities, implements behavior guidelines, and encourages intrinsic motivation. In supportive classrooms, conflict and disruptive behaviors are limited and students are focused on classroom activities and tasks (e.g., Brown, Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010; Pianta & La Paro, 2003). Overall, SEL is recognized as being critical to positive school experiences and having great influence on students’ social and emotional development.
Teacher-Student Relationships

Across development. Schools are social environments where children learn through an interactive process with their teachers and peers. A substantial body of literature has focused on the importance of teacher-student relationships, and has provided much evidence that strong and supportive relationships are critical to the development and success for all students (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1998, Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, 1999). Close and positive teacher-student relationships are open and honest, and students feel connected and supported and develop close bonds of trust (Noddings, 1992, 2003, 2005). Noddings (2005) described the relationship between teachers and their students as relationships of care, wherein teachers are responsible not only for providing care to their students, but also for helping their students develop the capacity to care for others. Teachers who model ethical care and are responsive to their students’ needs, create relational conditions that promote the development of social and emotional connections: “…we do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them” (p. 6). In short, teacher-student relationships provide a context for teaching and learning the social and emotional skills necessary for success in school.

Through positive relationships, teachers can greatly influence the quality of their students’ school experiences. When students have warm and trusting relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to have positive interactions with peers and better relationships with parents, be more engaged in the classroom, display more appropriate classroom behaviours, and have higher academic achievement than when teachers and students do not (e.g., Wentzel, 1997, 1998). Further, supportive teacher-student relationships encourage positive student engagement (Pianta et al., 2005) and more
prosocial peer interactions, and foster students’ intrinsic motivation to learn (e.g., Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teachers who have close relationships with students have reported that their students were less likely to be absent from school, more likely to display self-directed behaviour (e.g., Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004), and be more cooperative with teachers and peers (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1997; Klem & Connell, 2004) than teachers who did not have close relationships with their students. In addition, students with strong connections and close relationships with their teachers have reported more positive feelings towards school and less loneliness at school (Benard & Slade, 2009) and less peer rejection (Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1984) than students who did not have strong interpersonal connections at school. In short, positive teacher-student relationships are critical to students’ academic and school success and their overall healthy social and emotional adjustment.

Research has identified specific teacher behaviours that promote and foster healthy and supportive teacher-student relationships:

• when teachers show their pleasure and enjoyment of students and of teaching (Croninger & Lee, 2001);
• when teachers create a classroom context that is responsive and respectful (Charney, 2002; Donahue, Perry & Weinstein, 2003; Rimm-Kaufman, & Sawyer, 2004);
• when teachers offer students help in achieving academic and social objectives (e.g., answering questions in a timely manner, offering support that matches the children’s needs) (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2002);
• when teachers know and demonstrate knowledge about individual students”
backgrounds, interests, emotional strengths and academic levels (Pianta, 1999; Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman, Justice, & Pence, 2006);

- when teachers seldom show irritability or aggravation toward students (e.g., Pianta, 1999); and

- when teachers hold appropriately high standards for their students and offer opportunities for emotional connection (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004).

The teacher-student relationship remains an important support system for students across development. Children need connections to school-based adults for their entire school career (e.g., kindergarten through grade 12) (e.g., Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004).

Throughout development the nature of the teacher-student relationship changes; the following section discusses the relevant research on the nature and importance of the teacher-student relationship for the early elementary, middle elementary/middle school, and high-school years.

**Early elementary.** Much of the research on the importance of teacher-student relationships has its foundations in children’s school readiness, transition to kindergarten, and the early elementary school experience. Researchers have found that early school adjustment and functioning is connected to two readiness indicators: 1) language development and early literacy skills and 2) social-emotional competencies for relationship skills and self-regulation (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1996, 1997, 1998). In addition, teacher-student relationships have been shown to support social and emotional development, as positive relationships help children to regulate their emotions and
control impulses (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), thereby promoting school success. It has been suggested that the nature of teachers’ relationship with their students during the primary school years takes on that of a caregiver role (Pianta, 1994). Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins (1995) highlighted the importance of student-teacher relationships for children as they transition to kindergarten settings, as the quality of these relationships predict later school adjustment and academic outcomes. These researchers investigated the overall adjustment of 436 children from entry into kindergarten though grade 2, and indicated that children who had positive relationships with their teachers (such as warm, close, and communicative) in kindergarten were better adjusted and had better relationships with their grade 2 teachers as compared with children who had more conflictual relationships with their kindergarten teachers. Further to this, Pianta (1994) found that students who maintained positive relationships with their teachers in kindergarten showed better social behaviours and school readiness competencies (e.g., work habits and engagement) in grade 1.

Teacher-student relationships have been shown to be important to students’ academic outcomes, as well as to social and emotional behaviours and adjustment in the early grades. For example, Birch and Ladd (1998) investigated features of the teacher-student relationship between kindergarten teachers ($N = 16$) and their students ($N = 206$) across three domains (closeness, dependency, and conflict) in terms of students’ school adjustment. Findings indicated that closeness in the teacher-student relationship was positively associated with academic performance, as well as school liking and self-directedness; dependency was correlated with school adjustment difficulties, specifically poorer academic performance and more negative school attitudes and less positive school
engagement and dependency in the teacher-student relationship. By contrast, conflict was associated with school liking, school avoidance, self-directedness, and cooperative participation in the classroom. These findings are also supported by Pianta & Stuhlman (2004), who reported that the quality of the teacher-student relationship is important to students’ success in school.

**Middle elementary/middle school.** As children move through the grades, the characteristics and dynamics of the teacher-student relationship change. In the early school years (early middle childhood), teachers act as caregivers to their students, but during the middle elementary grades (also referred to as late middle childhood/early adolescence) this relationship begins to shift, and students place increasing value on their connectedness with teachers and their sense of relatedness (Connell, 1990). Relatedness refers to feelings of belonging, inclusion, acceptance, importance, and interpersonal support (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). These areas have been found to have great influence on academic outcomes, expectations of success, self-efficacy, student value placed on achievement, positive affect, effort in engagement, interest in school, on-task behaviours, and school grades. For example, Furrer and Skinner investigated children’s sense of relatedness to parents, teachers, and peers in terms of academic motivation. The participating children ($N = 641$) completed self-reports; findings indicated that relatedness predicted classroom engagement.

Wentzel (1997) also examined early adolescents’ perceptions of pedagogical caring of their teacher, with a specific focus on how teachers’ care related to students’ motivation to achieve positive social interactions and successful academic outcomes. In this study, a sample of 248 students were followed longitudinally from grade 6 through
grade 8. Findings revealed that student perception of teacher caring predicted student motivational outcomes. Specifically, perceived caring by teachers was significantly correlated with students’ prosocial and social responsibility goals, and also to academic effort. Perceived caring behaviours of teachers included modeling of caring attitudes, providing constructive feedback, having a democratic interaction management style, and being sensitive to individual differences. Consistent with this, other research has also found that students’ perception of teacher caring was a positive predictor of students’ motivation to promote prosocial attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Wentzel, 1998).

**High school.** Supportive teacher-student relationships continue to be central to academic and social-emotional development as children enter adolescence, and are particularly important as children move from the supportive and warm learning environments of elementary school into the less structured and more disjoined structure of middle school and high school (Wentzel, 2012). As previously mentioned, Wentzel (1997) found that students in middle school had better academic and social outcomes when they perceived that their teachers had a stance of pedagogical caring and students had a sense of relatedness and connection with their teachers. For older students, the teacher-student relationship continues to be an important predictor to student success (e.g., Resnick et al., 1997) and mental health adjustment (Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). Resnick et al. found that high-school students with strong connections to school-based adults reported lower levels of emotional distress, suicidal ideation, suicidal behaviours, violence, substance abuse, and early sexual activity than students without strong relationships with the adults in their school. In another study, Gregory and Weinstein (2004) investigated the adolescents’ perception of the quality of their
relationships with adults, both at home and at school, using a U. S. national database with 6794 adolescents from grade 8 through grade 12. Teacher connection was found to be the strongest predictor for academic growth in math for all adolescents, but may be particularly critical for students are at risk due to their low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The importance of strong connections between teachers and students has also been demonstrated in studies using a mentor-mentee framework. Dubois and Silverthorn (2005) conducted a large-scale study using a U. S. national database of adolescents and young adults ($N = 2053$), and investigated the psycho-social outcomes of the mentoring relationship between adolescents and non-family adults, and found positive outcomes across domains relating to adolescents’ education or work (e.g., completing high school), reduced problem behaviour (e.g., gang membership, hurting others in physical fights), increased psychological well-being (heightened self-esteem, life satisfaction), and increased health activities (physical activity level, birth control use) than those adolescents who did not have adult mentors. Overall, it appears that strong teacher-student relationships are critically important to the development and success of youth during the high school years, and also provide important protective qualities for success in life.

Children who are at risk. Teacher-student relationships are important for the healthy development of all children; however, they are particularly critical for children who are at-risk for academic failure, behaviour problems, and social and emotional distress. Positive relationships between teachers and their students may serve as a protective factor that may help moderate the effect of risks factors (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd & Burgess, 2001). For example, Hamre and Pianta (2005) investigated how...
the risk factors of 910 children (ages 5-6) who were identified with early academic
difficulties were moderated by supportive teachers. Children were assessed on four
functional domains (behavioural, attentional, academic, and social) and demographic
indicators, as reported by their kindergarten teachers, and were placed in grade 1
classrooms according to risk level. Findings revealed that at-risk students who were
placed in supportive classrooms had achievement scores similar to those of low-risk
peers. However, children placed in less supportive classrooms continued to show at-risk
indicators, lower achievement, and conflict with teachers.

The influence of the teacher-student relationship on childhood aggressive behaviours
and behavioural misconduct has been widely studied (e.g., Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson,
1999; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Stipek & Miles, 2008).
Aggressive behaviour in children is strongly associated with maladjustment, academic
failure, conduct disorders, and substance abuse and delinquency in later life (Greenberg,
Speltz, & DeKlyen, 1993). Strong and caring teacher-student relationships have been
shown to mediate the effects of aggression in children. For example, Hamre and Pianta
(2001) found that students with low conflict and teacher dependency in kindergarten
showed lower negative behaviours (e.g., disciplinary problems) and higher positive
behaviours (e.g., good work habits) than their classmates with higher conflict with
kindergarten teachers. Furthermore, Hughes et al. conducted a longitudinal study using
teacher and peer reports to investigate the influence that teacher-student relationships
have on highly aggressive children. Findings support the importance of quality teacher-
student relationships, as these relationships appeared to mediate the levels and effects of
aggressiveness in the children.
**Teacher Social and Emotional Competence**

Teacher social and emotional competence (SEC) refers to the social and emotional skills of teachers across the five SEL domains (self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making). Emerging research indicates that teachers’ SEC plays a key role in the development and sustainability of positive teacher-student relationships, as well as effective SEL instruction and overall classroom management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Jennings and Greenberg proposed The Prosocial Classroom Model (see Figure 1) as a way to understand the interplay between teacher SEC and student outcomes. This perspective asserts that teachers who have strong SEC experience less job-related stress, are less likely to experience burnout, and are better able to manage students who have challenging behaviour than teachers who have less developed SEC. Furthermore, teachers who have strong SEC are often more aware of their students’ needs and are able to recognize students’ emotions and respond with understanding and compassion (e.g., Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011), and are more likely to treat their student with kindness, compared to teachers who have lower SEC (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Wentzel, 1998, 2012). Thus, teachers with strong SEC promote healthy, safe, and caring classrooms that encourage positive teacher-student relationships and, in turn, these teachers promote students’ social and emotional development, foster their enjoyment of learning, and encourage academic achievement (Pianta, Hamre, & Allan, 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012; Wentzel, 2016).
Another model of teacher SEC that provides a framework to understand the importance of the relationship between teacher SEC and student outcomes was developed by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Research Institute (Yoder, 2014). This model asserts that teachers must strengthen their own social and emotional skills as a precursor to developing students’ SEC across the five dimensions of SEL. Figure 2 shows a model of teacher SEL/SEC and the connections to both social and instructional teaching practices. This model illustrates how teachers create healthy classrooms and promote SEL skill development in their students.
Taken together, The Prosocial Classroom Model and the Relationship Between Teacher SEL Skills and SEL Teaching Practices Model provide frameworks that help shed light on the potential mechanisms involved in facilitating students’ SEL skill development. Teachers with strong SEC in each of the five SEL domains use effective social and instructional teaching practices, which promote healthy teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management, effective SEL implementation (or instruction), leading to healthy classroom climates and positive student social, emotional, and academic outcomes. Research investigating the SEC of itinerant teachers has not currently been published. However, given that teacher SEC supports healthy teacher-
student relationships, and promotes job satisfaction and decreases teacher burnout, it is an important construct to consider in terms of itinerant teacher-student relationships and within the itinerant teaching model.

**Summary of the Literature and Research Question**

Many DHH children and youth are at risk for linguistic, academic, social, and emotional difficulties, and often have difficulty in their social interactions with hearing peers, including social isolation and emotional distress. With this in mind, DHH students commonly receive educational support from specialist itinerant teacher on a regular and ongoing basis, often throughout their entire school career (Luckner, 2011; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). In inclusive school settings, the itinerant teacher is likely to be the only specialist within the school environment who has an in-depth knowledge of the encompassing and far-reaching impact that hearing loss has on the entire development of the child (Hyde & Power, 2004; Yarger & Luckner, 1999). Given the longstanding relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students, it is reasonable to assume that itinerant teacher-student relationships may become close bonds of trust, and that itinerant teachers may provide stability and consistency of support within the inclusive school environment. Because of the often close associations between itinerant teachers and their students, they are uniquely positioned to provide social and emotional support, and this relationship may have the potential to help facilitate the social inclusion of DHH students in inclusive school environments.

Supportive teacher-student relationships have been found to promote healthy development for all students throughout childhood (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Wentzel, 2016) and may, in fact, provide protective factors for students who are at risk of school
failure (e.g., Ladd & Burgess, 2001). The large body of research in SEL has highlighted that the development of SEL skills for students may provide protective factors across child development, which may promote positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students who are at risk. The teacher-student relationship between DHH students and their itinerant teachers may be particularly important to the students’ social-emotional development and academic and social inclusion, as the pervasive impacts of being deaf or hard of hearing during childhood are complex and span across developmental domains.

However, no previous research has investigated the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students, and, thus, we do not know if – or in what ways – this relationship may help or hinder the social and emotional development of DHH students, nor do we know if this unique teacher-student relationship supports inclusive practices. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to investigate the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students, with a particular focus on the students’ social and emotional development and social inclusion. The research question that guides this study is:

What is the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their DHH students in inclusive settings, from the perspective of both itinerant teachers and DHH students:

a) in terms of social and emotional development?

b) in terms of social inclusion?
Chapter III: Methods

Background

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and their DHH students, as little is known about the specifics of this unique teacher-student relationship, or how this relationship may promote social and emotional development and social inclusion for DHH students in inclusive educational settings. To address this gap in the literature, the research question for the current study is:

What is the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their DHH students in inclusive settings, from the perspective of both the itinerant teachers and the DHH students:

a) in terms of social and emotional development?

b) in terms of social inclusion?

Narrative Research

Narrative inquiry is situated under the qualitative post-modern constructionist epistemology and encompasses a relativist perspective. Narrative theory posits that we come to know and understand ourselves, our experiences, and the meaning of our lives through our storytelling (e.g., Andrews, Squire, Tamboukou, 2008; Burr, 2003), and it is through these stories that we share our inner worlds with others, construct our meaningful selves, and make sense of our world (Riessman, 1993). It is through the engagement in storytelling that we come to know and gain insights into our motivations and emotions (McLeod, 2001) and construct our identities and realities (Chase, 2011). According to
Riessman (1993), stories are an essential part of who we are, as they provide coherence and continuity to our experiences and reveal our intentions and purposes as human beings (Polkinghorne, 1995, 2005). Through stories, we can explain how the episodes and events in our lives are meaningfully connected (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Patsiopoulos & Buchanan, 2011); stories also allow us to have a shared understanding with others (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). It is through thoughtful ponderings of real-life stories (and the retelling of stories) that we come to know ourselves and the nature of our relationships (Riessman, 2008), which in turn leads to personal insights (Riessman, 2003, 2000). In this way, storytelling is a highly suitable approach for investigating the nature of teacher-student interactions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that “experience happens narratively…therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Thus, stories provide a window into the social context where teaching and learning occur (e.g., Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995), and thus, through stories we can uncover the nature of teaching itself.

Narrative inquiry emphasizes that our stories and conversations in relationship with others may have a transformative influence on identity development. For teachers, narratives provide opportunities to self-reflect and to gain perspective on their teaching practice, and to give a context wherein teachers can make sense of, and understand, the nature of their work (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Through thoughtful ponderings of real-life stories, teachers come to know and understand what it means to teach (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1994), which may lead to personal insights and professional development (Jalongo et al., 1995) and help shape their identities as teachers (Luke & Freebody, 1997). For students, narrative storytelling provides a catalyst for greater
understanding of themselves (McLean, 2008), which supports the development of their personal and educational identities (McLean, 2005, 2008).

Narrative inquiry is uniquely well-designed to examine the nature of the relationship between itinerant teachers and the DHH students with whom they work. In the fields of special education generally and Deaf Education specifically, narrative inquiry has the potential to provide a window into the lived experiences of itinerant teachers and their students, and “gives voice to those who have been historically silenced or marginalized” (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 199). Narrative stories represent a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experiences (Polkinghorne, 1995), and allow for understanding of oneself and at the same time, provide a community for shared understanding with others (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Therefore, narrative inquiry provides a framework to understand the teaching context within the itinerant teaching model, and allows us to come to know the significance of the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students. Further, it allows us to gain a greater understanding of how both the itinerant teachers and their students understand the nature of the relationship in terms of identity constructions.

This study used a narrative inquiry and multiple case study design to investigate the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and their students. As Riessman (2008) asserted, narrative inquiry involves three levels of inquiry and analysis: 1) participants telling their own story; 2) the researcher constructing interpretations; and 3) the reader formulating understandings. More specifically, in keeping with Riessman’s perspective, the present study used a multiple case study design within the context of a thematic analysis, whereby participants’ stories were kept intact and thematic meanings
and understanding were emphasized over language usage or form (Riessman, 2000, 2005). Oral narratives of personal experiences commonly draw upon thematic analysis, which emphasizes “the content of the text, what is said more than how it is said, the told rather than the telling” (Riessman, 2005, p. 2). The narrative stories in this study were analyzed both within and across cases for emerging themes.

The basic foundational epistemological tenets of social constructionism and narrative inquiry include:

- knowledge is created and constructed through dialogical interactions; therefore, knowledge is co-constructed;
- all knowledge is socially situated and, therefore, is contextual, relational and fluid;
- there is no truth or basic nature, only relativist perspectives;
- stories are always retrospective and multi-voiced;
- power relationships are played out through dialogue;
- language is symbolic, shared and rooted in social context;
- self is socially constructed through social interaction and language; and
- meaning making and interpretation are dependent on the reflexivity of the researcher (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2003; Riessman, 2005).

**The Researcher’s Lens**

My interest in this research topic comes from my 12 years working as an itinerant teacher. Throughout this experience, I had the opportunity to work with many DHH students, across all grade levels (kindergarten to grade 12), often for many consecutive
years. Each of my students had unique linguistic, academic, and social-emotional strengths and needs, and I came to understand first-hand how important the teacher-student relationship is to the resiliency of DHH children and youth, especially during times of stress and distress. Most notably, many of my students had difficulty interacting effectively with peers and building lasting friendships, and they often experienced communication breakdowns, feelings of social isolation, and loneliness. During difficult times (e.g., transitions from elementary to middle school/high school), the focus of my work often took on a counselling role, and I would provide direct support for the social and emotional challenges my students were facing. Oftentimes this support included debriefing with the student following difficult situations, problem solving with the student for conflict resolution, directly teaching the student appropriate social skills, and collaborating with school personnel to establish ongoing school support structures. It should be noted that much of the social-emotional support I provided arose as a reaction to an immediate problem, and was not necessarily considered by school-based personnel as part of the itinerant teacher work. As I reflect on the meaning of this work, I am passionate about the significance of this unique teacher-student relationship and how it may contribute to DHH students’ success in school, help support the development of social and emotional competence, and encourage social-emotional resilience and emotional well-being for DHH children and youth in inclusive school settings.

In addition to my work as an itinerant teacher within the British Columbia public school system, I am actively involved, both provincially and nationally, with the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CAEDHH), and have had opportunities to work with many itinerant teachers. In addition, it is worthy to
note that I have normal hearing levels in both ears, have been involved as a professional with members of the local deaf community, and I currently work in the field of general teacher education, as well as in the professional preparation of special education assistants (paraprofessionals). Taken together, these professional relationships and collaborations place me in the position of an “insider” with participants, and, thus, I followed clear guidelines for ethical conduct for researchers. Specifically, before the first interview began, I was transparent about my relationships with teachers and colleagues, I reviewed the rights of participants in narrative research, and I promoted comfort and confidentiality with the participants by providing an explanation of my ethical boundaries as a researcher in the informed consent process. Further, I used pseudonyms in all transcribed interviews and participant stories. In order to ensure confidentiality of the participants within the broader profession, I used pseudonyms for names in all written documents and in all discussions and correspondence with my dissertation committee members.

The Researcher’s Subjectivity

The position of an “insider” has limitations for subjectivity throughout the data collection process, during narrative story construction, and during the recursive process of data analyses and interpretation. In narrative research, transparency is critically important, and, therefore, I engaged in a thoughtful reflexive practice with the emphasis on challenging my biases and assumptions. As a way to limit my inherent bias, I kept a journal of my reflections and ongoing meaning making of the emerging themes, and I engaged in thoughtful dialogue with others about my own process of self-discovery. As I engaged in the data collection process, the writing of participants’ stories, and the
narrative analysis, I continually reflected upon my own values, beliefs and judgements by asking myself: *Why do I see it that way?*, and *From what other angle or point of view can my conclusion and understanding be interpreted?* This reflective engagement helped facilitate my deeper understanding of the meaning of this work and manage researcher bias.

**The Current Narrative Study**

This study used narrative inquiry and multiple-case study design to investigate the teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and DHH students, where four itinerant teachers and four DHH students participated in individual face-to-face interviews, across two separate time periods. The first interview focused on the significance of the teacher-student relationships and followed an interview protocol (see Appendix A for itinerant teachers and Appendix B for students); the second interview focused on clarifying participants’ narrative stories and gathered further information about the deeper meaning(s) of the relationship. The same methodological procedures were followed for each participant at each interview time period. To assess the validity of the research, a member check and an expert peer review were performed. To ensure confidentiality, each interview was conducted individually and pseudonyms were used in all written documents (transcripts, participants’ stories, manuscripts) and during all discussions with members of the research committee. It should be noted that separate recruitment procedures were conducted for both perspectives (itinerant teachers and students) to ensure confidentiality and to reduce the likelihood that teacher and student participants would have established working relationships with each other.
Participants

**Itinerant teacher characteristics.** Itinerant teacher participants met all of the following inclusion criteria:

- British Columbia teacher certification;
- teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing certification;
- itinerant teacher for a minimum of 7 years.

**Student characteristics.** Student participants met all of the following inclusion criteria:

- educationally significant hearing loss (stated by the British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Education Category F—see Appendix C);
- age 16 to 19 years old;
- received support from an itinerant teacher on an ongoing basis, throughout his/her school years.

Selection of Participants

**Recruitment (itinerant teachers).** A formal request was submitted to the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board for approval. Upon approval notification, the Burnaby School District was contacted and a formal ethics application was made requesting access to use an electronic mail system maintained by the B.C. Provincial Outreach Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POP-DHH). It should be noted that POP-DHH is housed within and managed by the Burnaby School District, and, thus, School District approval was also necessary. Once approval was granted from the Burnaby School District, a participant recruitment email was sent to all itinerant teachers throughout the province of British Columbia, requesting their participation. The
recruitment package included a detailed description of the purpose of the study; an explanation of the study design, which detailed the expected time commitments for both interview time periods; a description of the expected depth of discussion for both the initial and the follow-up interview; and a participant consent form. Interested itinerant teachers who met the inclusion criteria and were interested and/or willing to participate in the study were asked to respond directly to me via email. As per UBC’s Ethics Board requirements, each participant was provided an informed consent form, which included information about the voluntary nature of research, the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point, and the steps taken to protect confidentiality (such as the use of pseudonyms in all written documents). The informed consent form was provided along with the interview questions two weeks prior to the first scheduled interview. Each participant was given a cash honorarium of $50.00 upon completion of the study.

**Recruitment (students).** A formal request was submitted to the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board for approval. Following ethics approval notification, a formal request was submitted to the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - Parent Branch (CHHA-BC Parent Branch) Executive Director, requesting approval to recruit student volunteers who met the previously listed criteria for participation in the study. Once approval was obtained from the CHHA-BC Parent’s Branch Executive Committee, recruitment information packages were sent to the Executive Director for distribution. The recruitment packages included a detailed description of the purpose of the study; an explanation of the study design, which detailed the expected time commitments for both interview time periods; a description of the expected depth of discussion for both the initial and the follow-up interviews; and a parent/guardian informed consent form.
Once consent forms were received from parents, I made initial contact with each of the students and families, and offered an opportunity for further explanation and clarification. As per UBC’s Ethics Board requirements, each participant was provided informed consent and student assent that included information about the voluntary nature of research, information about the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point, and the steps taken to protect confidentiality (such as the use of pseudonyms in all written documents). The students and parents were provided with the interview questions two weeks prior to the scheduled first interview. Each student participant was given a cash honorarium of $50.00 upon completion of the second interview.

**Data Collection: Interview I**

**Itinerant teachers.** The four itinerant teachers participated in the first individual semi-structured face-to-face interview (approximately 1 hour) with me (Principal Investigator). Two weeks prior to the scheduled interview, the teachers were individually provided the interview protocol (see Appendix A) and asked to reflect on their relationships with the DHH students with whom they had worked on a regular and ongoing basis. During the first interview, a protocol was used to help facilitate the discussion (see Appendix A). The itinerant teachers were asked to reflect on the meaning of the teacher-student relationships with their students, and discuss aspects of these relationships that may have helped and/or hindered their students’ overall success and social and emotional well-being. Participants were also asked to reflect on the nature of their work with DHH students at different ages/grades, and then divide their narrative accounts into chapters that represent the five significant time periods in school, as determined by transition periods (school entry, primary grades, intermediate
grades/middle school, high school, and transition and preparation for graduation). The itinerant teacher participants then provided names for each of the five chapters, as though they were writing an autobiography of their teaching experiences. All interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face, with two of the four sets of interviews taking place within the Greater Vancouver area and the other two sets of interviews taking place in the participants’ home communities, located in outlying areas of British Columbia (one of these itinerant teacher worked in an urban centre, and the other itinerant teacher worked in a rural community). It should be noted that a total of 12 itinerant teachers volunteered to be participants in this study; however, due the comprehensive and in depth nature of narrative research, only the first four itinerant teacher respondents were included as participants in this study. See Table 3 for the demographic information for each of the four itinerant teacher participants (all names are pseudonyms).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years Experience (Itinerant Teaching)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students. A total of four DHH students volunteered to participate in this study, and each participated first in an individual semi-structured face-to-face interview (approximately 1 hour) with me (Principal Investigator). During the first interview, a protocol (see Appendix B) was used to help facilitate the discussion. Student participants
were asked to reflect on their relationships with their itinerant teacher(s), with a specific focus on the aspects of these relationships that may have helped and/or hindered their social and emotional development and social inclusion at different ages/grades (see Appendix B). Participants then divided their narrative accounts into chapters that represented five significant time periods in school (school entry, primary grades, intermediate grades/middle school, high school, and transition and preparation for graduation), and then provided names for each chapter as though they were writing their autobiography. All interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face, with three of the four sets of interviews taking place within the Greater Vancouver area, and the fourth set of interviews within the participant’s home community, which was located in a rural area of British Columbia. See Table 4 for the demographic information for each of the four DHH student participants (all names are pseudonyms).
Table 4

Demographics: DHH Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Hearing Loss</th>
<th>Age of Diagnosis</th>
<th>Amplification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Bilateral, moderate-severe</td>
<td>4 years old</td>
<td>Hearing aids, FM system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Bilateral, microtia, deaf</td>
<td>At birth</td>
<td>Hearing aids (bone anchored), FM system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Bilateral, large vestibular aqueduct syndrome, progressive, severe</td>
<td>3 years old</td>
<td>Hearing aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Bilateral, deaf</td>
<td>1 year old</td>
<td>Hearing aids until age 3, cochlear implant age 4, activation age 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcription Procedures

All interviews (for both itinerant teachers and students) were completed using spoken English and were audio-recorded. All eight first interviews were transcribed verbatim, which included a thorough and rigorous scripted account of verbal and non-verbal utterances (such as umm, hmm, coughing) and any obvious display of emotion (such as laughing). Four of the eight interviews were transcribed by me and four by a research assistant. The Principal Investigator verified the accuracy of all eight transcripts by comparing the written script with the audio-recording. All interview data, including
audio-files, hard copies of interview transcripts and computer files, were kept in a secure locked filing cabinet.

**Data Collection: Interview II**

**Itinerant teachers.** The four itinerant teacher participants engaged in the second individual face-to-face interview with me (Principal Investigator). Participants were presented with the written transcript for the first interview and were asked to clarify my understandings about their experiences and provide an account of the meaning of their relationships with their DHH students. I then wrote individual narrative stories from the information gathered during both interview time periods. Next, itinerant teacher participants edited and verified their respective individual story for accuracy, and gave me permission to use their written story as an accurate representation of their experiences. Following data analysis, each itinerant teacher participant was presented with his/her story along with a summary for the identified emerging themes, and then completed a member check procedure (description to follow).

**Students.** The four student participants engaged in a second face-to-face interview with the me. During the second interview, student participants were presented with a written transcript of the first interview, and were then asked to clarify my understandings about their experiences and provide an account of the meaning of their relationships with their itinerant teachers. I then wrote individual narrative stories from the information gathered during both interviews. Student participants then edited and verified their individual story for accuracy, and gave me permission to use their written story as an accurate representation of their experiences. Following data analysis, each student participant was presented with his or her story, along with a summary of the identified
emerging themes, and then completed a member check procedure (description to follow).

**Data Analysis and Reporting**

Data were analyzed using an inductive approach and the thematic content method presented by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). In this procedure, narrative data were first coded by identifying main concepts within the data, and then each concept was given a descriptive name (or code) that described the meaning of the concept. Then, codes with similar meaning were grouped together (or collapsed) into larger overarching emerging themes. It should be emphasized that this method of data analysis is a recursive process and should not be viewed as a linear model. The following list summarizes Braun and Clarke’s method of analysis that was used for this study.

1) **Familiarization with the data:** Reading and re-reading the data and noting any initial analytic observations.

2) **Coding:** Generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the research questions. Coding was an analytic process, so codes captured both semantic and conceptual readings of the data.

3) **Searching for themes:** Collapsing the identified coded data into meaningful categories and then identifying any similar themes in the narrative data. Searching (as stated by Braun & Clarke) is an active process in which the researcher constructs themes. In this phase, all coded data are collated relevant to the themes.

4) **Reviewing themes:** Checking that the identified themes match the coded data and the full data set, with the objective of ensuring that the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data. During this phase it was often necessary to
adjust the themes by collapsing two themes together, splitting themes into two or more themes, or by disregarding themes that did not fit with the larger data set. It was through this process that the salient themes emerged.

5) Defining and naming themes: Identifying the essence of each theme and then constructing a concise and informative name for each theme.

6) Write-up: Creating an analytic narrative from the extracted data that tells the reader a coherent and descriptive story about the data, and provided context within the existing literature.

Trustworthiness

To evaluate the trustworthiness of this study, both a member check and peer review procedures used the following criteria:

1) Resonance (Conle, 1996): To what extent do the identified themes and the researcher’s interpretations and representations resonate with the participant’s experience(s)?

2) Verisimilitude (Bruner, 1991; Huberman, 1995): To what extent do the researcher’s interpretations and representations reflect the personal truth of the participants?

3) Pragmatic Value (Mishler, 1990, 1995; Polkinghorne, 2007): To what extent do the findings have applied significance in Deaf Education?

An individual member check was conducted with all participants (both itinerant teachers and students) after all stories had been analyzed and emerging themes identified. All participants were sent their individual stories and the descriptions of the emerging themes by email, and provided me with their responses to the three criteria used to evaluate the worth of the findings (as outlined below). All of the four student participants
and four itinerant teacher participants agreed that the identified emerging themes were robust in terms of their own experiences across the three criteria of worth (resonance, verisimilitude, and pragmatic value), with the noted exception of one itinerant teacher participant not necessarily seeing her role as a connector or relational facilitator (one of the identified themes) with all of her students.

The peer review procedure was completed by two expert itinerant teachers who were not involved as participants in the study. They were selected on the basis of their years of experience as itinerant teachers (a minimum of seven years experience as an itinerant teacher, as this was consistent with the inclusion criteria for itinerant teacher participants) and the fact they had only minimal associations with both me and members of the supervisory committee. Each of the peer reviewers was given a set of narrative stories (either the four itinerant teachers’ stories or the four students’ stories), along with the description of the emerging themes. Each peer reviewer was asked to read a set of narratives and then the emerging themes that were identified during the data analysis, and then evaluate the findings in terms of the three criteria of worth (resonance, verisimilitude, and pragmatic value). Both expert peer reviewers provided the written feedback to me through email, and agreed that the findings supported their own experiences, were accurate representations of the content in the narrative stories, and have contributed understanding about the work of itinerant teachers and the field of Deaf Education.

**Issues of Representation**

As stated by Riessman (1993), participants’ stories are inseparable from the interpretive lens of the researcher, and, therefore, the researcher is accountable to
prioritize transparency throughout the process of analysis and interpretation. With this in mind, I have left the participants’ stories as stand-alone quotes as much as possible and have included their full narrative stories as part of this chapter. In addition, as a way of maintaining transparency to the reader and identifying the researcher’s interpretive biases, I have included my own reflexive process and subjective voice in Chapter V: Discussion. I also acknowledge that power relationships are always present, most notably the teacher-student relationship, the adult-child relationship, the school system at large, and the researcher’s positionality in relation to the participants. Further, my own reflective practice was completed as field notes after each participant interview, while constructing the participants’ stories, and while completing the narrative analysis during the coding and identification of emerging themes. Anonymity of the participants (and any other individuals mentioned throughout the interviews) was maintained by the use of pseudonyms in all written documents.

It is important that the participants’ narrative stories maintain their integrity by allowing the participants’ voices to be represented in their stories. With this in mind, as a researcher, I acknowledge that the findings represent a reflection of my own subjective interpretations, and that only through the member check procedures completed by the participants and the expert peer review process do the findings have value.
Amanda’s Story

**Background.** My name is Amanda [pseudonym] and I have been an itinerant for 26 years, but also taught grade 6 in a rural community for 1 year, which turned out to be a really valuable experience and an important piece of being a good itinerant teacher. I’ve always been an itinerant, except for my practicum experience at the school for the deaf and a brief part-time position in an oral deaf special class in my first two years of teaching in an urban School District. My educational background includes a B.Ed., and a diploma in Deaf Education from UBC. Over my career, I have worked in a few different districts (which were all urban), and I’ve been in my current district for over 20 years. In that time, I have worked with some signing kids, but I always had an interpreter with me, but now, my students are all oral kids. I also have had students with all sorts of equipment and seen a real evolution in hearing aids and FM systems. I have now had three CI students. When our district had its first CI students implanted, they all went to a resource program but now they are all integrated from day one.

**Kindergarten to grade 5—traditional teacher—students in their cocoon.** When a new student is coming into kindergarten, I meet with the parents and also the classroom teacher ahead of time to let them know about what to expect. I find parents are a bit reluctant to use personal FM—They’ve gotten adjusted to their child having to wear hearing aids—usually—because that’s usually happened early. But when they enter kindergarten, they’re putting other equipment on, so parents can be hesitant about it. And of course, kindergarten is so much more, there’s so much flow and movement of kids and less teacher direction, so decisions need to be made about the type of equipment as well.
So you’re dealing with teaching the teacher about the equipment, and then teaching the teacher why it is used for the student. It is really important to first establish a relationship with the student so that they’re comfortable with you. I rarely take a kindergarten student out of the classroom. I usually go in and play, and join in with whatever they’re playing and just do the activity that they’ve chosen and then I can hear the language that they’re using and their articulation, and that sort of thing. Ideally, it’s 30 minutes, 3 times a week but these days it’s not necessarily ideal anymore. It depends on what’s working with the rest of my students’ timetables/schedules. Through kindergarten, grade 1, 2, 3 the parents get to know me better and we meet at least for the IEP meetings and often connect through email to communicate about things that are coming up, or issues or worries.

In grade 1, 2 and 3, I will do more pull-out and do language games or math games or just fun activities. I’ll read to them, they’ll read to me. It just depends on each student – what they’re needing and where they’re at. In the intermediate years, I will usually do pull-out support for sure, and I spend a lot of time with review of concepts and vocabulary, plus working on writing and reading. But I usually go into the classroom in the primary grades and I always let the teacher know that I’m not there to make comments on their teaching, but to see how my student is doing in the class. I usually do observations and go play games with other kids as well, so that my student doesn’t think that I’m glued to them. And then I’ll talk to the classroom teacher about what I noticed about their language or their articulation, or if I notice that they’re hanging back and watching to see what’s going on and being shy about finding a partner—So, I might point that out too. Intermediate, is kind of the same deal as primary.
Grade 6 to grade 8—Coming out of the cocoon and becoming the person they’re going to be. Then middle school, same kind of thing. I might try to do more observation work because I want to see how they’re really handling the bigger class, the more noise, the faster speed of information coming at them, and how they’re using their assistant or their interpreter. And I usually do this throughout the course of the year.

The teachers in middle school have their hands full because they’ve got so many other students with special needs in there. So I generally use the IEP meeting at the beginning of the year to talk to them about my student’s hearing loss, the equipment and educational needs. I also try to include the principals in the loop too because they are out there in the hallways at break times. They know their students, they know what’s going on, and they know the kids that are having trouble. The learning support teachers at the middle school are important but they don’t do much with our kids. So, while they’re my liaison person for setting up the IEP meetings, they don’t do a lot, usually, with my students. The speech and language pathologist is important at middle school, so it’s important as an itinerant to have a good relationship with them—they are a really important colleague.

In middle school, the students are about 12 years old so we talk a lot about their hearing loss and why they’re wearing this equipment, and why I’m always coming to work with them. These are the big years, and the transition from elementary is huge. So I start to talk to them about how the transition is going, help to get them aware of their learning needs, and what they need to be successful. I encourage them to start thinking about what is helping them but also, what they don’t like. Then when they transition from middle school to high school they have a good idea about what they need from their
teachers and how to manage in the different classrooms.

**Grade 9 to 12—stepping back—butterfly time—letting them fly.** By high school, they’re definitely telling me what they need. So, unless a teacher comes to me and says, “You know, he’s not doing this or she needs help on that,” I follow the student’s direction. Usually, at the beginning of the year we do an IEP meeting, and I give them my email address. I email out the short ‘Coles notes’ of what their goals are and let them know here’s how you can contact me if something’s coming up, but mostly I’m working with the student once a week probably. I let them know that if there’s something they want me to work on, send it to me. So it’s usually English or it’s Social Studies. I teach them advocacy skills, which is a big part of my high-school support, so when they hit university or college, they are comfortable going and talking to the teacher and saying “I didn’t understand this.” I also work on organizational skills, because this can be a huge issue if they just don’t get assignments in. I also discuss and practice things such as how to write exams, work on getting ready for university or college by visiting the campuses, searching out scholarships/bursaries for DHH and finding out about the disability office.

In high school, we have an IEP meeting at the beginning of the year, trying to get all the teachers together. I have the DHH student with me and we do an info session where the student explains “here’s what my hearing’s like, here’s why I’m using this equipment, here’s what other teachers in the past have done that’s been great for me” and then I try and get feedback from the teachers. “What are your concerns or worries about having him/her in your class this year and what I can I do to help support you?” —just so they know I’m available as a resource. For the transition after graduation, I make sure the students can manage without me, so I begin to put things on their lap and they are
‘running the show’.

Reflections of the relationship. I think my elementary kids would just think of me like they would any teacher. “Oh she’s my teacher, she comes once a week or twice a week and she helps me with my reading and math. That would probably be their answer. In middle school they’d probably say “she makes me wear my FM.” In high school, she helps me and tells me how to go get help. And I think that at a certain point, if you’ve got a good rapport with those high school students then they start valuing you. I’ve got one student who needs help in math. And I actually am seeing him twice a week. He is always going to math class because he knows I’m coming. He’s sitting with 51% and he probably will pass the course. I sometimes think that if he didn’t know that I was coming, then I’m not sure he would be there. I need to be flexible and have a sense of humour. You can’t be judgmental about kids. That’s another thing I think is important—You have no true idea of what’s going on in their lives at home. It may be a miracle that they’ve managed to get to school today.

With the little ones, I’m their advocate, and their parent is their advocate. And I think part of my job is to make sure the parents understand they’re going to be their advocate forever, even though we’re going to try to get them to be as independent as possible. But in terms of the student, when they’re in elementary school, I really think I’m their advocate as well as their support teacher for vocabulary building and language skills. With the older kids, I encourage them to come to the IEP meeting. Sometimes they don’t want to come but I let them know they’re invited, and let them know what I’m going to say to their teachers. I also teach them about their hearing loss and what their hearing is like, and how to talk about it with other people.
I also work on building the student’s confidence so that they feel comfortable saying, “I’m not hearing what was said.” I try to build in empowerment whenever possible. Sometimes we role-play so that they’re comfortable but even just me talking to them about their hearing loss over the years makes them understand that this is their right, and to expect certain things.

I build trust so “when they say something I believe them.” If they say their FM’s not working, I don’t say, “oh I know its working, I just checked it.” You just check it again. That I think is a huge thing. I think it’s really important that we believe them and they know that we believe them. When they say they’re having a problem with something, that you acknowledge it, “ok here’s what I’m going to do and I’ll get back to you on how or what I found out.” I think the consistency that I’m always there when I say I’m going to be there, and I let them know if I’m not going to come—Certainly in terms of high school students this is important.

For elementary, I think it’s just the consistency of being there over time and developing a talking relationship with them, and this helps them to trust you. I mean, if you’ve done something that has broken a trust, that’s huge, so don’t do that. I think it’s like any relationship, over time you get to know a person and know what you can or can’t do. It works both ways though, too, that they learn if they tell me something that’s not true and I go and ask somebody and they say no, that didn’t really happen, it went down like this, then I need to discuss this with the student and let them know that I need honesty from them. And I’m being really honest with you when I say I’m going to go talk to somebody or I’m going to see what solution I can come up with. I think they need to know that it’s a two-way street.
With the younger kids, they think you’re God, just because you’re just an adult, and you’re a teacher. It’s a different thing when they’re little, and then when they get older, I worry that they might not feel they can talk to me as openly or honestly as they might want to, because I’ve had this relationship with them all along. However, I am sometimes uncomfortable having a student through their K-12 years because it could limit them in feeling comfortable becoming that new person that they’re going to be in middle school. Acknowledging their growth as a person helps, as well as being open/non-judgemental, helps. By the time they are in middle school, they call me by my first name because that is how all their teachers refer to me (since I have a difficult last name to pronounce correctly), and there’s always been respect. In middle school they want to be accepted by everybody, wanting everyone to like them and to have friends. So trying to fit in becomes a priority for the older kids.

The social and emotional issues with the little ones, really is about not wanting to wear their hearing aids and not recognizing the need for them, and the emotions that come with feeling “I’m different because I’m wearing hearing aids and nobody else is.” I find with kids that are integrated, they are oral, so I’m going to say they’re usually okay with social/emotional development, but this depends on how their parents are supporting social development by having play dates.

Overall, I think the relationship with my students is a bit of the mother-nurturer role in school; ‘Mother’, as in on the look-out for issues not academic—more emotional, and ‘nurturer’, as in supporting the student as they work through the emotional toll that can happen when a student has a hearing loss. At the same time, I’m not trying to be their best friend. I try to connect with the kids on a personal level, because I know a lot about
what they are doing and their interests. Sometimes I am a sounding board for them, someone to listen and to give them an outsider perspective and opinion. I think that consistency of support from the itinerant is important for the student. I have a close connection with many of my students and they trust me. I had one student yesterday say, “You know, I’m kind of scared about graduating. I’m kind of ok about it, I’m happy I’m graduating but I’m kind of worried about it.” And for him to say that is showing his trust in me. He was sharing some of that emotion he was having about it and I just responded with “well, that’s normal, because look at what you’ve done. You’ve been in school for 13 years of your life. And now you’re going to leave it. That’s normal to feel that way, to be a little worried about it, because it’s a big change.” I don’t know whether he said that to his parents—Maybe, but being an itinerant and working with the student for that length of time leads to comfort in being able to have that kind of conversation or ask that kind of question. They know that you hear them and are paying attention to what they’re saying, and that you care about them. Really, I felt honoured that he said that to me. I think it’s a real honour to be an itinerant teacher—You have that relationship with a student for such a long time, and it’s a really unique one.

I also think an important part of being an itinerant is having a good relationship with the classroom teachers, learning support teachers, the secretaries, the principals all knowing who you are and what your job is, so if there’s an issue going on with your student, they think to contact you. Oftentimes, it is something like the student hasn’t heard what is going on, and then they are sent to the principal’s office. So, as an itinerant, you need to be there and to make sure the student really heard what happened in that situation before they get reamed out for bad behaviour or a bad choice.
For the students who are integrated, I think it is really important that they go to their neighbourhood school, if they can. I think the friendships that they can create there and then carry through into their neighbourhood for play on the weekends and after school are important. I don’t disagree that some kids need to be in a specialized program, but it needs to be right for the student. The TDHHs of the South Island always host an annual beach day with all of the deaf and hard-of-hearing kids in the districts, and this is a great opportunity for them to meet other kids who wear hearing aids, and to have a connection with kids who may have similar experiences to themselves. Connecting the deaf and hard-of-hearing students in a social setting is part of the itinerant’s job. While the student(s) might not self-identify as deaf, they still need to see other students that are ‘like them’, that wear hearing aids.

I see my role as itinerant is to help support my students to be successful in their academic career, and to graduate as complete individuals— happy complete individuals. But sometimes the academic stuff is irrelevant and it’s the social stuff that’s the most important thing. I want my students to feel accomplished when they finish school, and feel socially connected with other kids. I think an itinerant teacher who is successful is the one who a principal would be able to say, “yeah I know her but I don’t really know what she’s doing—what I mean is she’s doing such a good job that I don’t have to do anything to help support the student.” Then I’m doing my job, which means that the student is successful in a regular classroom and in a regular social setting; how you do that is different with every student and in every year and grade.

As an itinerant I think you’re the eyes and the ears in the classroom for them. Kind of like the mother ghost that hovers—watching, just to see how it’s working for them.
When they are little, you have an adult-child relationship with them, and you are their teacher, doing academic support—Because during this time, you’re really working on their language, so that’s your traditional teacher time. In intermediate, that’s the butterfly time. That’s when the student comes out of the cocoon. So K-5 is when they’re in the cocoon, grades 6-8 is when they are coming out of the cocoon and they are becoming the person they’re going to be. That is when my time switches to become more of a listener/counsellor but I’m still in teacher mode a good chunk of the time, but letting them evolve. By grade 10-12 and for sure by the time they hit grade 12, they should be in full flight. They should be confident young adults ready to go the next step of whatever they’re going to do. So I’m their counsellor/tutor person at school in high school. I’m the person who gives them the support/instruction/tutoring they need so they can graduate successfully, including getting things set up at post-secondary, if that is what they choose.

Lynda’s Story

**Background.** My name is Lynda [pseudonym] and I have been an itinerant teacher for 30 years, and before that, I was a classroom teacher at a school for the deaf for 6 years, and also teacher in a self-contained resource room for 1 year. Over my career, I have also worked as a school classroom teacher in the public school system. During my 30 years in Deaf Education, I have worked with a range of children with very different hearing losses and amplification needs. My first position was at a school for the deaf and the kids were mainly using sign language to communicate. When I became an itinerant, the students were totally oral with different degrees of sensorineural hearing loss, and some had additional learning needs.

I work in a rural district so I have quite a lot of travelling. I generally support
students within one community, but sometimes I get referrals from all of the surrounding areas, as well. Itinerant work in a rural community is best supported by collaboration with other professionals, so I often work with the local SLPs and collaborate with assessments. Over the years, I have had a lot of Special Ed training and had some really good mentors who were very open to sharing their field with me, so it’s been a satisfying career.

**Kindergarten to grade 1—setting the background of the stage.** When a new student starts kindergarten, I try to go to the school early—Usually in June for a transition meeting with the school staff and the parents. This is a great way for everyone to start to get to know each other and begin speaking the same language.

As school starts, I follow-up by collecting reports from the clinic and try to go into the school the week before school starts to introduce myself and touch base with the classroom teacher. And then, I usually try to be there on the first day of school just to connect with the student and to make sure they know who I am, and that everything is okay.

In the early years, I do see social and emotional problems come up. Some issues are caused by isolation, so I work with the classroom teacher to make sure that everyone involved is aware of the issues and then we work collaboratively to help support the student. In these cases, I generally give the teachers information about hearing loss and what it feels like not being able to hear properly.

In kindergarten, I think my role is to provide a constant support to my students, which is really helpful because they know I’m there regularly and just there to support them. There are always situations where they don’t want to be pulled or they don’t want to be different, but over time, a balance develops between the benefits of going with a
friendly adult to a quiet place where they can have a story read to them (if that’s what they need) or they can do some drawing and writing and rather than staying in the classroom activity. Getting out of the hurly burly environment of the classroom really becomes a benefit that even the quite young start to appreciate.

With my work, I usually provide support to the students both within the classroom and pull-out to a quiet, separate room, but depending on what is happening in the class and what is best for the student—I do a lot of whatever is needed.

**Grade 2 to grade 4—maintaining and enhancing—being alert.** During elementary, I think my consistent support is really important to establish trust and build the relationships with my students. When the kids are younger I build trust by doing empathy, such as, “I know a little bit about hearing aids even though I don’t have one myself, but I do know what it’s like and how frustrated you can get.” A lot of my support is empathy around the fatigue, such as “I know for you, by the end of the day…”, so I spend time talking to them about their experiences, and once they figure out that it is a truth for them, they start to trust me. Really, I think it is the empathy about what it’s like to have a hearing loss that is bonding. Although I don’t have one myself, they know I do care, even if other teachers and other adults don’t. I really try to be sensitive to the experience of having a hearing loss and wearing hearing aids, because I want them to wear their hearing aids—at least for a while. I worked with one student in particular, who had difficulties like this. He was a fun kid to work with and had a lot of potential, but we had to go through our “own getting to know you stuff”—I mean storming and forming. For him, it was really a collaborative approach that helped. I spent time working with his support teacher at the school to make sure things kept going when I wasn’t there. This is
the great thing about long-term relationships with schools—you get to know people and it is easier to collaborate when needed.

**Middle school—randomness—stepping in the background.** Middle school is different because it is the first time the kids encountered a lot more randomness and as an itinerant, you don’t have the same authority anymore. So, I need to make that transition myself about my own identity and then reestablishing my identity, as a teacher. You are a member of their team, but you also need to adjust to the student’s desire to not have you see them as often. For example, they don’t want to be taken out and they don’t want to be different, but social isolation happens. And depending on the anxiety level of the student, fear can also be part of their experiences as well.

Friendships can be a big source of social problems. In the case of one of my students, I was quite worried about her social life, because she only had one really good friend. I used to fuss about that with the parents and teachers—but she got what she needed from that one friend and was OK. However, with another one of my students, it was a different story. In middle school he was showing really strange social behavior—he was withdrawn and used inappropriate language with the other kids. He was isolated—he chose to be isolated. I would try and encourage him to work in groups and I also completed some assessments so I could show him the difference between his performance and his potential. So, this approach helped move him forward—And you know that’s relationship building right there. By the time he was in grade 11 and was in an apprentice program, he was pulling down 94s in his academic subjects. I think it is the trusting relationship with me that helped.

Also, my concerns at middle school age are academic and I worry about how my
students are going to keep up with the level of rigor and openness.

**High school—gaining strength.** During high school, I do a lot of talking about forward thinking and talking about what they might want to do when they finish grade 12. I encourage them to go to open houses at universities and colleges to see what programs are available and what might interest them, but mostly my goal is to stay connected with them and be available for their support. So, at this age, I don’t push anything on them, I just let them know that I’m there if they want to talk. I also spend a lot of time connecting them with each other and showing them how to make connections. As a teacher of the deaf, we do a yearly picnic for all the kids that we work with and this is a great way for the students to connect, year after year, and get to know that there are others like them out there.

**Reflections on the relationship.** I always focus on developing my student’s self-advocacy and independence. With the little kids it’s more about what they need, such as “I can’t hear or my battery is dead”, that sort of thing – so advocacy is about having them speak up for themselves and not just sit there in oblivion. With the older students, it is more about teaching problem-solving and interpersonal communication skills. One thing I don’t do much anymore is discuss my student’s hearing loss, because this can be a sensitive topic as you are talking specifically about the student and how they’re different from everyone else.

I build trust in my relationship with students by making sure I have regular visits, so that they feel comfortable with me. I also try to share their interests and bring in things that they find enjoyable. I have one student who is totally mad about My Little Pony, so I bring in teaching material for that and give her a treat at the end of our session every time
by reading her favorite book—She knows it very well and enjoys the time very much. One time she got grounded from My Little Pony for 10 days and she couldn’t sneak, not even a peak on my my iPad, because that would have been breaking the trust. So you see, I know it is a bit nutty but from doing that type of thing, I think it really helps build a deeper relationship. I can now use that experience as an example to show her how strong she is. I think it is taking a personal interest that makes a difference. I also really believe that they need to become people with meaningful lives with interests, so if they show anything that stands out at all, I go with it—and cheer them on when they win or succeed.

Sometimes though, it is hard to connect. I recently had a new referral for a student in high school. When I went to see him, he was totally embarrassed. All of a sudden he has this lady coming to visit, who is wanting to know how he’s doing in English and asking him questions about getting his math done. And saying “Can I help you? Let’s go down to the resource room.” And meanwhile all he wanted to do was play games on his little phone, and not focus on getting his work done. Finally we are starting to be OK. I just needed to hang in there and keep talking with him. He is nervous but slowly getting OK. So it is a little bit harder when they are older and when you don’t have a previous relationship established. But even so, I tried to find ways to connect with his experiences. Also, I had one student who got really angry with me because I was bringing the FM system and I really wanted her to wear it, but she didn’t want to. Her anger was because she was so aware of her difference to others and she didn’t like it, and I represented the “difference” to her. So we had some real breakdown for a period of time. But I just kept going on, and she forgot about the FM. She had a lot of support needs, and what she needed was a friend, in a sense. When she went to high school she
had a really strong support program in place and people took her under their wing, so I saw her less. This is true for other students too, even though I’m in contact and connect with the teachers and EAs, it’s not the same and the kids do miss me. If I don’t show up some week, they would ask me “Where were you last week? You didn’t come last week.” Even the little one will say that to me. “Where were you? I didn’t see you for a long time.” So that says to me that it’s important to them.

Sometimes the connections with students are very deep and meaningful. I had one student who was very much in need of support and I always had time for her in my life. She really wanted to be with me, and I still have her picture on my desk. And I had another student who is now at university and I saw her in a store one day, and said “we’re going to have to get together.” We have the same birthday so we’ve always been bonded. She was a really, really great girl. She just drank in anything I could bring to her. When she was in high school sitting in French, I would meet with her in the hallway and would hang out, and we’d just have a great old time. It was a really fun friendship. We both knew that it was outside of what a teacher-student relationship was to be like. We didn’t, I mean, I didn’t cross any boundaries ever, but the family appreciated that I would go over to their place once in awhile, you know, once a year, and they’d take me out for dinner. At the end of her schooling, they made sure I got tickets to the graduation. So that was a really close bond. That is an ongoing lifelong relationship—partly because she lives relatively close to this community and also because I’ve got a need to connect with her. I need to do that and I really care about her and wonder about the path her life is taking.

Relationships are sensitive and with some students, you naturally become close. I
think you need to be yourself and authentic—that’s giving them respect, they are fully informed, valued human beings and should be treated decently. As for my relationships with teachers, I try to be realistic about what I’d like from them and how things fit together. I think it actually works better for the schools and the district when you are prepared to be you, and can be holistic and see the whole picture. In my experience, living and working in a small community, people are naturally connected and the kids are comfortable because they know the people in their community through their family and friends of friends.

Sarah’s Story

**Background.** My name is Sarah [pseudonym] and I have been an itinerant teacher for 8 years, with all of my experience in one district, with the exception of my practicum at the school for the deaf, but this was only for a few weeks. Before I became a teacher of the deaf and hard-of-hearing, I completed a paraprofessional program and was an educational interpreter for 8 years, and I then went back to school to complete my undergrad and teaching degree. I taught as a general education classroom teacher for 8 years before going back to school to complete my masters in Deaf Education. I have been working in the same school district for over 20 years, in a variety of roles. Over my career, I have worked with a wide range of DHH children, with losses ranging from minimal, unilateral, to profound. I’ve only had a couple of signers, and these kids had profound losses and used educational interpreters, but most of my caseload has been hard-of-hearing students. I’ve only had one student with a cochlear implant, most of my students wear hearing aids, have personal FM systems, or use nothing but may have a sound-field system in the classroom. In my district there is elementary school (K-7) and
then high school (8-12), so there is only one major transition, other than the entry into kindergarten.

**Kindergarten—best-laid plans.** Kindergarten is all about trying to predict everything that could possibly happen and then be two steps in front of it—it’s about team building. When a new student is coming into kindergarten, I try to visit the early intervention program and come for visits to talk with parents, to begin to get the families prepared for what to expect when they are in the school system—it’s kind of “a get to know you” period. I may even have regular contact with the parents, maybe every other week or so I get background information and to see if the parents feel their child is ready for kindergarten or not. I think entry into kindergarten is really getting to know the parents, and letting them get to know me and feel comfortable with me, and informing them about how the public school system works, what kinds of services they’re they can expect their child to receive, and who’s going to take on the different responsibilities. I also work a lot to inform the kindergarten teacher about their child. Making sure everything’s in place and that they feel confident and to let them know everything is under control and it’s not just them that has to do everything, that they’re part of a team—this is what I usually try to impress with them. Some parents jump into that team relationship very easily and other ones don’t really understand it. So I think that in the early part the important piece is just giving information, answering lots of questions and keeping in touch so that they are comfortable when the time comes.

Once the child is in kindergarten I think my role is to make sure equipment is used and to provide training to the teacher and EA. I try to go and do this immediately so that there’s a really smooth transition. And I think it’s important for parents to see that the
communication needs have been addressed and that routines are established. I like to get to know the child, before we write the IEP, so I do a little bit of assessment and get to know what the parents’ goals are, what they’re hoping for and what their concerns are, and making sure that we’re all in agreement on that. And then as kindergarten unfolds, for me the big push is always to support the developing independence for the child, and I have the goal, by the end of kindergarten of the student wearing hearing aids and FM regularly and by the end of kindergarten, I work with the child to increase their level of independence when carrying out hearing aid and FM routines. I also like to pull kids from the class with my students when I take them out, so the other kids get exposure and it’s not such a mystery about what they are doing when they leave the classroom, and it answers a lot of the questions naturally, and it breaks down the barriers of “it’s ok to ask and wonder.” I also spend a lot of time watching closely to make sure that the student is progressing and if there’s any early intervention that’s required, and then we can get right on top of that in the kindergarten year. I include small group game activities in HRT sessions to help build the student’s confidence and help me identify areas of weaknesses and strengths, and so then we can build on them. So I think it’s more fine-tuning—those early years are just so crucial for early intervention, I think it’s really about making sure we don’t miss any boat.

During kindergarten, I begin building the relationship by working on “all about me,” whether that is a powerpoint or making a book on the computer, and that’s kind of a fun thing to do. We update it every year and it is fun for the kids to look back and see what they were like then. They also love it when I take them out and a friend can join us. I have a number of students who have social challenges. They might be bossy, or act really
silly when uncomfortable, misbehave, or lack turn-taking skills. A lot of time is spent on prompting and teaching pro-social skills. So we do a lot of game activities, and a lot of listening and barrier games with them and also with one of their friends.

**Grade 1 to grade 3—being proactive—being on top of things.** I think those early years are really about getting to know each other and the more time you spend together the easier it is, so it’s important just to have fun and play, at least sometimes, otherwise you’re just that teacher that comes and pulls them and takes them out and you’re doing spelling—you know I arrive at the door and their shoulders slump, you know, oh, spelling worksheet again, ok. So I try to make it fun so that their eyes light up when I arrive, and I think bringing friends is an important part of it in those early years.

Usually by grade 2 they’re with a core group of peers who have had a turn to join our sessions by then, but sometimes I will give a class presentation where I can encourage them to share their “all about me” books with their class but I don’t give a formal presentation because I don’t like to force them to do that; I find it easier to do it in an informal way. By this time too, I know them pretty well and the relationship is building, so it’s actually easier to get work done. And I try to be connected to the families by sending a game home, or something like that. By this age the social issues are definitely starting to emerge, but you never really know if it is straight hearing loss issue or some other factors as well.

By grade 3 the student’s learning profile is becoming clear, so by grade 2 or 3, I start to focus on remediating specific skills, and the social piece is often a part of this. By this age too, the classroom is much more academically-focused, so it’s not as easy to take friends out. This time is your window when you can actually make change. You can work
on those speech goals intensely without having to arm-wrestle them. So you need to get in there and be proactive and address all of those things now before you have to become a magician.

**Grade 4 to grade 7—self-advocacy.** By the middle years, my work really focuses on independence and developing self-advocacy. Who am I, just understanding themselves, learning to learn in different ways and self-advocating with peers, teachers, in life, at dance class, in the swimming pool, in swimming lessons, and different contexts. So, if a student needs sign, I may also provide a signing club at lunch, so the social piece gets included there. I’ve had signing time once a week in the class. I work a lot on just prepping them to start to use more strategies for communication breakdown and repair, what to do when you feel you have missed information. And teach them strategies they can use subtly in the classroom so they can learn to be more proactive.

By grade 7 I’m really focusing on self-advocacy and getting them ready for the transition to high school. This might include looking ahead to different listening situations and talking to them about what the classrooms are like and where would be the best place for them to sit, and get them ready for moving around to 8 classrooms and managing their equipment with 8 teachers. I also start to chat about what classes they think they want to take. So, it is really predicting ahead and trying to be proactive and anticipate challenges like organization and trying to get some systems in place. I always have my 7’s create a handout that is “all about me” where they lists their needs, their hearing needs, adaptations that help them and ways that they find helpful, and things that their teachers can do that they would find helpful. During the first week of September, I email that out to every teacher, along with the IEP. I also make sure the student is
comfortable approaching their teachers or adjusting volume. Then when we meet and I always check in and make sure things are going OK, and then can make adjustments as needed. So I always do this sort of check in.

**High school—looking beyond.** Grade 8 is sort of an awkward year, and I don’t think it’s necessarily realistic for the students to be good self-advocates. By grade 9 things start to get more settled. I have a grade 9 girl now who won’t go move a system but she will go turn the volume up (which is good), and she’s actually started to comment that the other kids in her class will remind her teachers to start using the systems, which is nice. They don’t know it’s there for her necessarily, but they may also find it helpful.

In my experience, high school is a time when the use of amplification starts to slip. I think it’s when they have to carry it from class to class and kind of be responsible for it and of course the perception of their peers is really important. So at that point I think my work is more just checking in, when I meet with my students, just to see how they are doing, and how things are going? Has your hearing changed? Tell me about your classes. Then sometimes we get sidetracked on dealing with a problem. I have a student who has trouble with executive functions, and he’s behind (as of yesterday) in 8 assignments, so I started modelling how to organize his life, record due dates for his assignments in his planner and how to organize his binder. So, he finally is accepting some support help from me. Sometimes it gets down to just providing scribing or going to see a teacher. I have another boy with two cochlear implants and he doesn’t need anything—everything’s great, until he gets overwhelmed. Then I help him break down the tasks, and get organized, and the two of us would write an email to all of his teachers saying basically that his is totally stressed out for a variety of reasons and they could help by just a check-
in email, because he refused to go see them face-to-face, even with me there. Sometimes teachers emailed back and their perceptions were completely different, so I think you can’t go through your school years without learning to become a self-advocate. Supporting students in learning to go see a teacher face-to-face and ask a question or ask for clarification is important.

Challenges arise, even for capable students. Everyone can benefit from ongoing self-advocacy information and support. There is a lot of communication breakdown in high school too. One student told me that when she is sitting in the hall with her friends at lunch, she really can’t hear, and they’re all looking at their phones and their faces are down on their laps and unless they’re looking at her, she can’t hear them. We discussed ways for her to talk with her friends. She won’t bring it up with me directly but if I bring it up in a roundabout way somehow, she’ll just start talking about it. It is really just having the rapport with our kids and finding different ways to approach issues. They are teenagers and don’t want to talk, and many of them will say, “It’s fine, everything is fine,” so this is when having a relationship with them is really important, so I can find ways to discuss problems and then help with possible solutions, and being proactive. But they are not always comfortable with you knowing and don't always want a solution, so I just throw things out there for them to think about. I have one student in grade 10 who gives me absolutely nothing. If I ask him “How are things going?” “Everything’s great.” He is new to me this year, so I don’t have a relationship established with him. The sessions are challenging. Trying to establish a relationship and trust can be painful. So I bring activities and hope that something sparks something along the way.

I think the last grades of high school—grades 10, 11, 12 are about getting them ready
and looking at life after high school. What are the next steps? What do they need to consider? Where they might need to self-advocate and explain themselves.

**Reflections on the relationship.** Establishing a comfortable rapport with the students is critical. When they are young we play a lot of games and look at books together, and really focus on building comfort and spending time together. I also encourage them to bring a friend with them to our session, and they love to do this. I have a class list so I work my way through it, that way that everybody in the class has an opportunity to join us.

As far as trust, I think my students know that we’re part of a team. What they tell me might be conveyed to parents, but I don’t do it in a way that would get them in trouble or anything. They need to know we are there to support them, which works in their favour. I think kids know that when they problem-solve with me they are supported, so I think the trust just happens. I don’t think I do anything other than just listening to them and spending time with them, and then if there’s a problem they know I’ll follow up right away. I think it’s important to do it efficiently, like if there’s a situation I’ll follow up right away. And I think they see that, that probably helps. Otherwise they probably wouldn’t be as forthcoming. So I think responding to things in a really timely manner and being a problem-solver and ultimately letting them choose. So I’m not forcing anything on any of them at any age. So I think giving them the ultimate power in making their choices is important.

There are definitely social issues that come up with pretty much all of my students at some point or other. So, I’m usually dealing with social-emotional concerns in some way in every session. Sometimes when I show up, it’s just talking about problem-solving
through frustration or just an opportunity to talk. So you kind of get to know each other that way too, when you are dealing with real problems and just having that time to problem-solve together and provide emotional support and encouragement. Really, the problems could have absolutely nothing to do with the hearing loss, but social issues are definitely not uncommon—things like socially hovering but not joining in, social connection, self-esteem and negative self-talk, and self-understanding of hearing loss, how they got their hearing loss. A lot of times the kids feel different, and no one has really explained their hearing loss to them, so I try to fill in the gaps. I think my students really trust me and let themselves be vulnerable. Some kids are very sensitive about their hearing loss, so I try to explain that it is only a small part of them. I see my role is also to give them the language to use for self-advocacy. Whether it’s academic or social, they’re not going to just come up and ask for help when they need it.

I think our kids with hearing loss are working harder than anybody in that class to listen and focus, and do what they need to do in a day—when I come in, that is the time they can take it a bit slower, and leave the room and just be a time to slow down the pace and relax for a little bit and get a little bit of a break. So, I make sure it’s not all work, and it’s important to take time at the start of every session to say hello and “How’ve things been? Tell me, you know, bring me up to speed since the last time I saw you.” I think the social and emotional piece comes up naturally in these times, because the kids are relaxed and comfortable—I try to make a safe haven where they can relax and they can tell me how they are feeling. Sometimes, when I walk in they don’t want to see me because they are engaged in what they are doing and don’t want to leave the room. So I try to be sensitive to this, too, and this gives me an opportunity to observe and maybe just
put my agenda aside and it is what it is.

It’s a very intimate relationship, so if you are not respectful or sensitive to what the student needs, then you can be too overbearing, and the relationship would start to break down and then things wouldn’t work in your favour. I think it’s a really fine balance. We need to be sensitive and flexible, and make our work together fun and meaningful. I see myself as a coordinator of a team, and a support for the child and the family, and helping everyone make decisions that are in the best interest of the child.

**Jan’s Story**

**Background.** My name is Jan [pseudonym] and I have been an itinerant teacher for 15 years, and my only experience at a school for the deaf was during my practicum in a kindergarten classroom. I have a B.Ed. and a masters in Deaf Education, and I also did a year of sign at VCC. After my B.Ed. but before my signing program and my masters, I subbed for a year, but I have basically always worked in one district. Over my 14 years as an itinerant, I have worked with kids with hearing losses from mild to profound deafness; and from progressive hearing losses to stable hearing losses. I think I’ve met pretty much everything out there. I’ve had oral and signing kids, unilaterals, and cochlear implants, and kids in the process of getting an implant. My district has elementary, middle school and then high school, and I work with DHH students from kindergarten to grade 12.

**Kindergarten to grade 2—the beginning years—educating the school.** It is really important to have a good relationship with the teacher so I always try to establish a good rapport first, but sometimes this is not easy. I remember one kindergarten teacher who was very unsupportive, and I was just new to the job, so I was trying to be too nice and
friendly. I remember it was my first or second day and I came out of there in tears because she was very nasty. So this relationship with the classroom teacher is really important. My support generally includes educating the student about their hearing loss, teaching them self-advocacy skills, and talking about hearing protection. I try to do presentations in the student’s class, so everyone can learn about hearing aids and FM systems. I also make sure the students are independent with their equipment, and are independent hearing aid users, such as putting ear moulds in. I often encourage the kids to bring a friend to our sessions, and so I have the students teaching their friends about their equipment, which is really good for the students because it helps them connect with other kids. I also focus on language, speech, and all of that. I mean, every kid is different and so some need more of different things. For example, I have one student who needs very little support with her equipment so I work on other things. I think in kindergarten, we do a lot of educating the teachers, which is at every grade but in kindergarten it’s so big. It is a dance that we do because you need the teacher to like you and embrace you in the classroom, especially at kindergarten because you want to get off on the right foot and you want the students to be comfortable saying, “Oh, here’s my FM, you need to put it on.” So it’s figuring out friendly ways to do that. In the early years I think the emotional support is really important, because often the hearing loss is pretty new depending on when they’re diagnosed. I think things will change with the newborn screening and everything but most of my young ones have been recently diagnosed. I also have a student who’s missing an ear on one side and she is in the younger years, so it’s been a lot of social-emotional support. Kids have been bugging her, so my work is focused on how to deal with that, and giving her words to say, and helping her develop good
connections by bringing friends along to our sessions. But I also do a lot of basic concepts, speech and language work too, but self-advocacy is so big—My caseload is never boring. Basically, I try to give them a bit of everything—give them a little bit of self-advocacy, a little bit of equipment, and introduce them to being at school when you have a hearing loss.

**Grade 3 to grade 5—identity support.** At this age, sometimes the kids start to reject their equipment a little bit. When they are little, you can sell them on it because it’s cool and everyone wants it. But by grades 3, 4, 5, I start to see more of, “I don’t need it—I can hear without it.” So I try to develop connections that build confidence with their equipment. I find in grade 7 and 8, having them put a presentation together about their hearing loss and sharing it with their peers is a good strategy. And even my grade 6 students think it is cool and this really builds confidence. I have one student who came from French immersion and he was so lost at first, but now he’s such a strong kid, and so confident with himself, and kids just love him.

In grades 3, 4, 5, kids are starting to do more academics so you are also helping support them that way because they may be struggling because they have missed things, so I try to help with whatever is going on in the class. It is also our connections with the teachers that are so huge because some teachers are really good at letting me know what is coming up, and what I can do to help, but others say, “Oh, he is fine,” or “It’s my classroom so back off”, so I try to do as much as I can—I’d say 90% are very open but the other 10% are the ones that you remember.

As far as social issues at this age, I think it is the realizing, accepting that they’re different. For some kids this happens more in middle school, and they don’t want to wear
the FM, because all of a sudden it is about being cool. I think this age is about helping with their identity. Supporting them and supporting them in coming to terms with their hearing loss, and developing an identity.

**Middle school—the challenging years.** Middle school is so much social-emotional, and they do so many things as a team. It’s so awful in so many ways for kids with hearing loss. They do a lot of team activities where you get 120 kids together and they can’t hear a thing and are totally lost – they have no idea what’s going on. So, my work is about helping them finding their identity, so it is really social-emotional support. I have one guy who was great up until grade 5, he’s now in grade 6, and he doesn’t want an FM—“I’m good, I’m good without it”—He’s just doesn’t want to be different. I think meeting new people when you’re at such a critical point in developing your identity can be hard, so you have to be strong in yourself.

I think the transition is hard for some kids, because K-5 is like a cocoon, and they feel accepted since kindergarten, but middle school tends to be the toughest socially and emotionally for a lot of our kids. There are a lot more kids too, and some kids have never seen a kid with a hearing aid. So for some of my kids, they aren’t really ready for this. I try to prepare them as much as possible but it isn’t always an easy time to be different. I try to assist them by talking to the teachers and really work as a team and knowing the teachers. But I find that the first year at middle school sometimes is a bit of a make or break year—it seems like sometimes they move away from their equipment for a bit and come back to it in high school, or when they realize they need the equipment – it’s kind realizing who they are and what they want to be and then accepting that.

**High school—getting them ready for beyond.** I feel high school is a lot more of an
academic approach because we are getting ready for post-secondary and beyond. So, I do a lot of post-secondary support and planning, I may even start this in grade 10 by talking about post-secondary and what they want to do and how to advocate for themselves. Also, helping them meet the counsellors, getting everything set up and making sure that they’re on top of things like student loans, and helping prepare scholarship applications.

I also try to provide a lot of mentoring opportunities in secondary school with my middle school students, which helps develop their confidence and leadership skills. That way they can feel proud and become a bit more of who they’re going to be. I am still able to help them that way and try to make them confident. Socially my work is a lot of counselling regarding where they want to go, what they want to do, what supports are available there, all of that kind of stuff.

In secondary, I am still dealing with equipment but it’s not nearly as much language support. I do academic support for some of my kids, absolutely, but I definitely feel like I counsel more in grade 11 and 12. And it may not be anything to do with their hearing loss, it might be just things that are going on in their lives. I have a student whose mum has breast cancer, I have a student losing his hearing and so there is a lot of counselling kind of support, and talking them through the difficult times, and setting them up with people who are trained to deal with those things. It’s tricky though because a lot of them are so connected to me that they don’t want to go talk to someone else. My student that’s losing his hearing doesn’t talk to others. I’m the one that has picked him up from his house when he’s woken up and couldn’t hear and take him to his hearing test when Mum was working, so he really trusts me and doesn’t want to talk to anyone else. So often we are the key like that.
Reflections on the relationship. It is the relationship with the family that is very important. For some of my students, they are doing quite fine, but the family is still grieving, so I’m providing ongoing support to them. Like my student who is losing his hearing, it is the mum who really, really is struggling, so she and I are in contact all of the time, and it is my support that is helping her to get through it. She is so distraught that she wasn’t taking her child to appointments—because she is so anxious. So I now do a lot of his appointments. For that student, his mum being healthy plays such a huge role in him being able to cope with what’s going on, so I’m trying to take care of his mum too. That student is 16 and has a progressive hearing loss so he cries a lot, it is awful, so I try to be there as much as I can so I can connect with him.

I’ve tried to hook him up with a few students and a young woman who was late-deafened, as well. And they finally met and mum was there as well, so that was a really important social-emotional connection, especially for mum, because she could see someone who is late-deafened with a cochlear implant being successful. It was such a positive thing because for the first time, it was the first meeting we had where mum didn’t cry. It is so important to connect the students and family with people they can talk to, that they are going through similar things, to establish those connections — so I’m trying to do that.

It is really important for me to understand where my students are at emotionally—this is necessary to build trust. I have one student who is kind of closed off but she can talk to me about things that she’s worried about. And she knows it’s confidential and she can’t go to talk to the teacher to say that she is worried about this or that. But the teacher keeps me informed so I know when my student is not doing her homework, and then I
can follow up to see what is going on. She is a signer, and uses an interpreter, so she can be quite isolated, so social-emotional supports are key components of my work. She just needs so much, but that is what our caseloads are—I think almost half our time is social-emotional, just talking about things that are going on and how she can deal with it and how she communicates with other people. If they’re not supported socially and emotionally then the academics don’t happen.

I had a student from K-12 who graduated last year—She was such a strong kid, really confident in herself she—she loved to talk about what was going on but she really didn’t need the social emotional, so I would try to hook her up with another one of my student who was struggling with self acceptance-- And they became such good friends yet both dealt with their hearing loss so differently. So the social-emotional support has been a key part of what I do in trying to give my students confidence to talk about their hearing loss, I try to give and provide different opportunities and ways to explain it to others, such as being a mentor to younger students. I try to help with their identity so they are strong and can manage by themselves and be independent.

Anxiety is a big issue, especially during the transitions. Our approach in our district really focuses on trying to connect them with someone at the next level up, and then, you know (hopefully), there’s someone at the school who actually has a hearing loss, they’ll give the tour a head of time. I often get the student to make brochures about their hearing loss so they can explain things they want their future teachers to know and what they can do to help them. I also have one of my other students give the tour of the school just so they feel connected to the peers. I also spend a lot of time getting them ready socially and emotionally by preparing them for what it is going to be like, such as being a much
bigger school, and much noisier places. Plus getting them connected to their counsellor so
they feel comfortable and make sure we have a good relationship with the counsellors—
because I’m only there once a week—I think so much with the transition is the preparing.
And then also preparing the family I forgot, especially for the transition to post
secondary—I guess it is just getting them as ready as possible. Sometimes too there’s a
switch in hearing resource teachers\(^2\) and that can lead to anxiety, so we always make sure
they meet the new hearing resource teacher.

My job can be really emotional and stressful, so I cope by immersing myself in my family. I have a lot going with a few students right now, so I find it hard to separate myself. I do think about them at night and I talk through things with my husband, which definitely helps. Also, my hearing resource teacher\(^2\) group is really close, so we try to connect regularly—which helps a lot. Our jobs are so emotional, and we need to look after our own emotional health too. I don’t think I was prepared for how much of our job is social-emotional. I was ready for the speech, language development and assessment parts, but I wasn’t prepared to know how to help a 16 year old boy who’s going deaf and has shut everyone off—sometimes I feel like I’m flying by the seat of my pants a little bit. But you know, connecting him with his counsellor is hard because they are not aware of the social-emotional impacts of hearing loss, so for him, this wouldn’t be right because the counsellor doesn’t have clue what he is going through and what will happen next.

I build trust by letting my students know that everything they tell me is confidential, other than if they’re going to hurt themselves or hurt someone else or anything like that. I think being able to identify with their situations helps build trust and their confidence in

\(^2\) Hearing resource teacher is synonymous with itinerant teacher.
me and I think just being there to talk through things. Being supportive, not judging, and letting them be themselves, and they are able to say, “I hate my hearing aids” and you can say, “I understand but you need them”, I guess being a sounding board is helpful too.

When they are younger, I feel like I’m a bit more performer. You know you have games and you bring friends because you want them to want to come. I think being there is important, I’m a safe place to come for 40 minutes, and the kids (doesn’t) don’t really realize that they are learning but we’re doing language games and we’re doing it in a safe fun place. I try to set it up so they think I’m a more super fun person and then I think then they connect with you. I have one student who always hugs me at the end and says “I don’t want you to leave.” They need to look forward to you coming, and you want to be someone that they want to see. Consistency is also important—And just being supportive and cheering them on. I really think being an advocate for them is important – like how to put their ear moulds in their ears for the first time –you cannot help but say “Yay!” Because no one else really gets how great that is in their world other than their parents and their audiologist. It is so exciting when they can do it independently and they can do it on their own—and you’re their person that’s cheering them on for all those little successes. And I think (that and) they’re great. And anything that they do that’s great (and) I always play that up so when they come to see me it’s positive. Even though you’re dealing with the hearing loss, when they come with me it’s a happy place.

I also think humour is huge, especially with older kids. I play a lot and like being able to joke with them because they’re not used to teachers always being able to joke. Sometimes, I think sometimes just the school situation hinders our work with the students, and leads to not being able to see them enough. Plus when teachers are not
being supportive this can be hard and a challenge—but it is what we face at times, right. We really can’t do our job without a team, and I think so much of our job is about connections with everyone—like the parents, the teachers, and the student. I also think relationships with the teacher and the interpreters are so key in our job. You can’t do it in isolation, and there are so many pieces—If you’re not connected with the other people then how do you make it work?

Narrative Stories: Students

Cynthia’s Story

**Background.** My name is Cynthia [pseudonym] and I am 19 years old. My hearing loss was first identified when I was four years old, and I began wearing hearing aids right away. I have a moderate to severe, sensorineural hearing loss in both of my ears, and my left side is lower than my right side. There is no one else in my family with a hearing loss. When my hearing loss was first identified, my mum put me in a preschool with other kids who were deaf and hard-of-hearing but I didn’t like it, so she moved me to a public preschool. I have been wearing hearing aids since I was four and I also wear an FM system at school. In my school district I attended elementary school from kindergarten through grade 5, then I moved to middle school from grade 6 and grade 8, and then finally to high school for grade 9 to grade 12. During my school years, I had two hearing resource teachers, one for my elementary school time, and another one for middle school through high school. I graduated high school last year and I am now going to college.

When I went to kindergarten, I had my first hearing resource teacher. She introduced me to what she does and helped me with homework, if I had any. She was a bit like a
teacher but I feel she was kind of like my counsellor in other ways. I worked with her from kindergarten until she retired when I was in grade 6. I had my second hearing resource teacher from grade 6 until I graduated. So I’ve had two hearing resource teachers in my life.

**Isolation (kindergarten to grade 2).** Well first off, I remember when I started wearing hearing aids, I thought it was just a common thing, that all the students my age were wearing hearing aids the same as I did, but when I hit kindergarten I realized it was just me and only a few people wore hearing aids, so I kind of felt isolated a bit, but that’s when my first hearing resource teacher came along. She helped me feel like all of the students around me. I remember that she really provided me a lot of support—that was the number one big thing that I got from her, and I appreciated it a lot. She helped me understand why I had hearing aids and the other kids didn’t have hearing aids. And she provided a lot of social support for me, which helped me a lot in growing up. For example when I didn’t feel comfortable with my FM system with the wire on me in elementary school or kindergarten, because the kids were saying, “Oh, what’s that? What’s that on your body?” I would feel uncomfortable because I was young. So I explained this to my hearing resource teacher and she told me why I had it, that I shouldn’t feel uncomfortable, the kids would understand after awhile, that kind of stuff. And then I would understand and then feel better. She gave me comfort and information that helped me understand. After awhile the other kids understood and they’d say: “oh my god that’s so cool, can I try it?”

She would always ask me how my day was, how’s everything. She’d ask me what I was just learning and then I’d always have some piece of work that I would have to do
with her. So she’ll help me with it, make sure that I understood the task, and afterward she’ll ask me how my hearing aids were and how was my FM system.

I was pretty confident when I was younger, as soon as I started trying to understand myself more and more, and she helped me understand about my hearing loss which helped me a lot. I can remember that there was this one time when she brought in the 3D ear structure and showed me where I had damage in my ear, and I remember one time she came in to my actual classroom to teach the kids about my hearing loss, so it was helpful. I felt better and it made me feel like I know more about my hearing loss, even though I was really young. My relationship with her definitely helped my social and emotional development. I remember we would go out for a field trip with a bunch of other students that had hearing losses, hearing aids or were deaf, and we would bond together because we’re all the same in a way. I felt like I could connect with those other students when we’re all together as one. I found social interactions with other students difficult at first, but after awhile I got the hang of it because I would read lips. But some kids don’t really talk clearly at that age. So I’d just say “Oh, can you say that again, or can you repeat that again”, and they wouldn't mind if they repeated it. So I guess it’s fine. But if I still didn’t understand then I would just walk away.

I felt like the hearing resource teacher was always there for me, always checking my hearing aids and helping me with my work. She would give me her phone number if I wanted to call her about anything at anytime. And she left a phone number for my parents as well, so if they have any questions about my hearing loss they could just call. I felt like she did the best job that she could do for me.

**Building identity (grade 3 to grade 5).** It was from grade 3 to grade 5 is when I
understood that I had a hearing loss and not that many people have it. When I was in grade 3 she did the ear structure again and taught the kids. I guess she knew that the kids were always asking me, “oh what’s that in your ears”, so I think that was her way of letting the kids know that I had hearing loss by just teaching the kids with the 3D model. Nothing really stands out as different from the earlier grades. I was just getting more comfortable. That’s it. It was always the same thing. But I remember at the end of grade 5, she would prepare me for the transition to Middle School and she took me there and introduced me to another hearing resource teacher, the one who was working there and she gave me a tour. And she would prepare me with the FM system and talk about the things I would need and such. And she told me what middle school was like for her. She told me that it would be a little more tough. She helped me a lot with that transition from elementary school to middle school. I did feel more comfortable because I knew that she wanted me to feel more comfortable. The tour really helped because I knew who my future teachers would be but it would have helped me more if she also sent a letter to my future teachers to tell them about me and my hearing loss, and what I would need to be successful, the type of support I would need, and that kind of stuff. So that’s something that could be improved.

**Building confidence (grade 6 to grade 8).** I had a different hearing resource teacher in middle school. When I met her it was kind of awkward because I was already so close with the first hearing resource teacher, so I wasn’t really comfortable but after awhile she was really supportive as well. It took a little bit of awhile to get to know each other and be comfortable and have a good relationship. But she always did the same kind of task that my old one would do.
There she helped me with things like videotapes being played in the classroom or that kind of stuff. Obviously I couldn’t hear because it was better for me to read the caption so I told my hearing resource teacher about this problem, and I guess she sent an email to the teacher letting him know that it was difficult for me to watch the video tapes and it would be better for me to watch it by myself at home or with the captions on. So she helped me with that.

It wasn’t that tough for me to make new friends because people just come up to me, so I just talked to them. My hearing resource teacher told me if you can’t hear what the person is saying just don’t be afraid to ask again. She just gave me tips of how to communicate with others. And then she told me if I’m in a group setting with a whole group of friends and I can’t hear, she would tell me or encourage me to catch up later with another friend.

I remember there was a socials teacher and oh my God, he would clip it (it being the FM system microphone) onto his keychain necklace that he had and it was so annoying because when he walked, the keys were jingling. So obviously the jingling sound I could hear through my ears, which made it more difficult for me to hear what he was actually trying to say. So I informed that to my second hearing resource teacher and then she sent an email to him letting him know that I came to her, then he would ask me if I could hear better if he put it (it being his keychain necklace) into his side shirt pocket. So that got better.

I was always a happy kid so I joined rugby in grade 7, I was worried about how I can play rugby with my hearing aids. I don’t want my hearing aids falling out when I run or somebody tackles me, or whatever. So I asked my second hearing resource teacher what I
could do to protect my hearing aids, and especially protect it from the sweat that was coming from the side of my skin from behind my ears. And she actually found these little hearing aid pockets that covered my hearing aids so that sweat wouldn’t get inside. And that helped a lot. And I appreciated that help a lot.

**Having confidence and looking after self (grade 9 to grade 10).** I had the same hearing resource teacher in high school which started in grade 9 and she did the same thing as my first hearing resource teacher. She gave me a tour of the high school but also included other students who had hearing loss too. So, we met the principal and I think we met quite a few teachers that she knew I was going to have in grade 9. She also asked me to make the notes of what would help me with my future teachers for grade 9. In high school my hearing resource teacher would ask me when I have a block off and when I am free to meet her. She would give me the choice of when she should come meet me. And then she made a day every week that we would meet up. She would ask me how my hearing aids are, she would actually check them because sometimes she thought I was lying and she would ask me how my classes are, help me prepare for tests if I need the help, but I always brought her work just in case she’ll ask me. I remember this time when I had a problem with my hearing aid—something with the ear mould or positive or negative feedback—something like that. I told her and she took me to the hearing clinic to get it fixed, she helped me with things like that. And she also helped me with how I’m communicating, and background noise to make sure I can I hear well. I can remember that I was stressed about my math so she found she actually found me a tutor that I can work with and that helped a lot. And then English as well was a tough subject for me and that was actually her best subject, so she helped me with that as well.
She was always there through emails, the phone, and physically. I remember when she asked me if I had a crush on any guys, and I didn’t, but she said that it’s ok to let your crush know about your hearing loss, and not to feel so shy about it.

**A woman (grade 11 to grade 12).** In grade 11 and 12, we met up at lunchtime and we would chat and discuss my plans for the future. She knew that I was going to turn 19, so I couldn’t stay in the hearing children clinic, so she took me to this new adult clinic that I’ll be going to after I finish turning 18 or turning 19 and so she took me there with another student that has a hearing loss similar to mine, and that helped too. Without that help I wouldn’t know which clinic I should go to. She also helped get the FM set up for post secondary. There’s this application that you have to fill out for college or university, so she helped me fill that out, and she let me know where and when I should send it, and help with setting up an appointment with a career planner in college. She did a lot of things for my transition. During this time period, my relationship with her was necessary for sure because without her I don’t know what I would do. Going from high school to post-secondary is hard because it’s not the same, and I feel like I would still be lost if she hadn’t done all of that work for me.

**Reflections on the relationship.** I feel that having a hearing loss is something that my parents or any other person without hearing aids wouldn’t understand, but obviously she majors in this kind of stuff, so I felt like I could trust her more. I could rely on her and I feel like she understood me more than the other teachers did. They both understood when I was comfortable with my hearing loss and when I was not. For one example, I felt uncomfortable actually telling my teacher face-to-face “Oh I can’t hear the audiotapes or whatever”, so I felt like I always had to rely on her to tell her so she would do the job for
me. In high school she encouraged me to handle any problems with the teacher, so I think she helped me build my confidence as well. She helped me with lots of things, for another example, there was a time when I wanted to go swimming but I felt like I couldn’t go because I felt that I wouldn’t hear if I went swimming. But my hearing resource teacher told me to just go swimming, you deserve it, you’re just a child, don’t worry about it, you’re just going swimming, just let your friends know that you can’t hear but you hear them before you go in the pool, and that kind of stuff. And actually what I found out was that when I went in the pool I can actually hear in the pool. And I also remember this time, that my sister would tease me about my hearing loss, so I would tell my hearing resource teacher about it and she would help me find strategies to ignore her, and she told me I could just turn my hearing aids off. Her support made me feel better--better about myself. And sometimes we would actually go out for lunch—just me and her, and we’d have conversations that were close to us. These conversations were just between us, and not school related-- this helped a lot in having a closer relationship.

My second hearing resource teacher didn’t really have a close relationship with my family but my first one did--She had a really close relationship with my mum especially, but my second one didn’t really, but she did leave a phone number for my parents in case they needed to ask a question or anything like that. For the first one, I guess they were close because my mum was worried about my hearing loss and she didn’t know what to do, and she would call her to get advice.

As I recall, I don’t think there was anything that was unsupportive. I mean she’s always there every week, there when I needed her through email, phone call. But I would have liked more contact with other children who have hearing losses. I think this would
have made me feel more comfortable because it would let us know that it’s not just me
alone, there’s people out there that’s just like me. These connections are important
because of the way we communicate.

I feel that it is better for students with hearing loss to have a hearing resource teacher
right at kindergarten instead of just coming into their life at random times probably like
grade 6, because I feel when you hit kindergarten you’re starting to realize that it’s only
you that has a hearing loss and the majority of students don’t. When you start to have an
identity of who you are because of your hearing loss, it is important to have a hearing
resource teacher to help you understand your hearing loss better. If a student doesn’t have
a hearing resource teacher, I’m sure it would be more difficult through childhood and
time at school, because without that support it would be hard to build confidence and they
would have lower self-esteem for sure. So that’s something really important.

My hearing resource teachers were like my school parents, and I was closer to them
than any other teachers. They built trust with me by always being open and I could rely
on them to help me and look after me. They were always positive, and always helped me
feel good about myself and that I was like the other kids—they helped me be more
confident and comfortable with myself. We had a personal relationship and met up every
week, and I felt comfortable telling them my experiences throughout the day, and they
always knew where I was coming from, so I didn’t have to explain myself as much—they
always knew what I needed, and that made me feel better. And they knew me best, I
mean, both my weaknesses and strengths, and I could just be myself. We were close and
we just clicked.
Kyle’s Story

**Background.** My name is Kyle [pseudonym] and I’m currently 18 years old, just finishing grade 12 and will be going to university in September. My hearing loss was identified at birth because I have microsia, which means my ears are warped. When I was born, the doctors checked and found that I don’t have any ear canals, so this is what causes my hearing loss. It’s fairly visible and easy to see, because I just don’t have any holes in my ears. My hearing loss is severe rising to moderate, and it is a conductive hearing loss in both of my ears. Basically, my middle ear works perfectly fine. It’s just the no ear canals. I have worn 2 hearing aids since I was 6 weeks old, and I also use a FM system at school. No one else in my family has a hearing loss, with the exception of the typical old age thing. I went to a neighbourhood preschool with hearing kids, and I started working with my hearing resource teacher when I went into kindergarten at school. I don’t really remember that much back then but I had the same hearing teacher from kindergarten through grade 8. After that, she retired, so I got another one for grades 9 and 10, and then another one for grade 11. In grade 12 I went back to my second hearing resource teacher to finish up high school.

I don’t remember much in terms of my hearing resource teacher when I was in kindergarten but I do remember more about what happened in primary years. I was never embarrassed or scared about my hearing loss. My parents always raised me to be comfortable with it so I never had much of a problem. I don’t actually remember meeting the hearing resource teacher for the first time. My mum talked with her a whole bunch and had a lot of help at the beginning of school, but I don’t think that was a huge part of my kindergarten experience. I do remember her coming to explain my hearing loss and
hearing aids to the class, but that is about it.

**Developing leadership (grade 1 to grade 3).** My strongest memories of my hearing resource teacher started in grade 2 or 3 and we would sit in front of the class and teach them a bit of sign language and a bit of awareness of hearing loss and that kind of thing, but it also was a lot of fun and I really enjoyed it. I also remember going out of the class once a week with her and doing the standard kinds of stuff outside the class, like colour by number things and word games. I remember talking about synonyms and antonyms at one point. Sometimes my best friend at the time would also come with me, which was kind of fun. That came about because we had sign language during class and I mentioned that my friend wants to come with me, so she let her come too. I always enjoyed working with her and it was kind of cool because I got to leave class and escape.

I also remember we talked about my hearing loss, and she really helped me with the FM system. I those days I had to wear a belt with this big box on the side with the wire going out, and I didn’t really like using it all that much. But she always helped me to wear it and helped me to remember to use it, which continued on throughout high school. I remember she was there to help with that kind of thing when I needed it. At that point, I think she was still helping by talking to my mum and then my mum would talk to me as well. I don’t remember having many problems in school at that point, I just needed to get used to wearing all that equipment and feeling comfortable. She would always help by talking to the teachers and my mum would come too, and basically help by talking about my hearing loss and what it means, and what they could do to help, such as wearing the FM, just the whole standard explaining sort of thing. At that point there weren’t any problems because elementary teachers are so nice. I was a pretty good student, and I
never took my hearing aids off--the FM maybe but not the hearing aids because without my hearing aids I can’t hear. So for me that was just never an option because I wanted to hear. The main emphasis of her work was to not be seen by me as the enemy, so we did a lot of fun activities. In hindsight, I see she was also making sure I was on track for my speech and language, as well.

**Middle school—finding out who I am (grade 6 to grade 8).** From that point on, I remember mostly everything. In general it was just exciting to move onto middle school and my hearing resource teacher was obviously going to stay with me for that. At this point I started explaining a bit more of my own hearing loss. My hearing resource teacher would come to talk to the teachers with me but she would have me do a bit more of the talking. And IEPs, I can’t remember when I started being part of those, that might have been grade 8 or grade 7, something like that. So I think I was kind of gradually shown how the process works and then I started slowly taking it over, and then by the time I got to high school I never had any problems with explaining my hearing loss or being embarrassed about it or anything.

There were a couple trouble points though. One was when was in about grade 7 where one of the teachers got mad at me for always forgetting my FM in his class. So, I talked to my mum about it, who then talked to my hearing resource teacher, and I believe the hearing resource teacher talked to him about the problem. My hearing resource teacher was always an advocate for equipment and access, and whenever there was a problem she would be able to go talk to people and so that was good. During this time, the help was still once a week doing the same kind of things as when I was younger. At this point we started to talk more about things, like is everything still working fine, and
she would ask me if I had any problems with the FM or hearing equipment, or that kind
of thing. I never really felt out of place with getting out of class in middle school, it was
like elementary school—it was still fairly normal, it was never a huge deal.

**High school—smooth sailing (grade 9 to grade 12).** I had a new hearing resource
teacher when I was in grade 9. By then, I was fairly good at self-advocacy, so she was
more for just a back-up support kind of thing—for safety kind of, rather than something
essential. High school was different because of all the classes. Again it was sometimes
hard to remember to bring the FM around which stayed an issue for me, and I would
discuss any thing like this with my hearing resource teacher. She did help with several
things later in grade 12 and she helped with a whole bunch of the university transition
stuff, which was good. I met with her every week, even through grade 12. We met either
before school, after school or during lunch, but not at class time because it’s a bit more
challenging to just pull me out of class. I never really needed much and I was fairly self-
proficient by that point. I also never really had much problem academically, I’ve always
been a mostly A’s student. One thing that did come up was that I was allowed to have
extra time on exams, but I was kind of unsure about it because I didn’t feel like I
deserved extra time just because of my hearing loss. I didn’t feel like I needed that. But
my hearing resource teacher always said you have it then you may as well take it, it is
better safe than sorry. She always tried to help me through these situations.

Overall, I really enjoyed it and it was a lot of fun. I really felt that they were the good
years. Even in grade 9 and 10, my hearing resource teacher was still helping out with a
little bit of stuff, but by grade 11 and 12 was very much just me, except for the transition
to university stuff, which she did help me a lot with—that is because it was a big thing.
She focused her help on teaching different ways to explain my hearing needs to professors, and she also helped facilitate that connection. So we talked to the person there at the university; they were really hesitant to give real time captioning because it’s really expensive. We talked about options, worked on it, and she was really helpful during that process. It was really good. We even talked about how to talk to profs before the class and that kind of thing. And at that point in high school, pretty much everything was up to me, and there wasn’t anything else that I really needed help with at high school in grades 11 and 12, so her job kind of shifted to help with the transition because that was something we could work on. But overall, high school was fine. I don’t remember those years being particularly challenging in terms of hearing loss stuff. But I have no doubt that she would have helped if a problem did come up. If there was anything happening, we would just talk about it. She would always check up on me and check in. I did question how much it was needed because a lot of the time we would get together and it would just be like, “Oh, is everything still fine with you?” I just thought it was another thing that I have to do. I would have to get up early that day and I’d have to remember to go, and that kind of thing. So it was just kind of like a bit of an extra hassle to do that. But again, it was still nice to have that support, if something did go wrong (which nothing really did--which is why I think it was a bit questionable), it would have been really good to have that support ready and her job was just to be there in case something happened. It just wasn’t needed in my case but it was nice to know that someone was there who had my back if I ever needed anything, or had any issues. But in my case, I was always comfortable in the classroom setting. I didn’t feel so different than anybody else. I was unique, but not in a bad way.
**Transitioning planning—leaving the kid years behind.** I know it will be a lot of work I think, but it is all fine. There aren’t any super huge hiccups, just a little bit more difficult and a big change, I guess. Basically, it is a big transition. My hearing resource teacher said that we could always email her and talk to her about issues even after I finished high school. She said she’s available to help with any of the transition stuff.

**Reflection on the relationship.** I guess to some extent I am in contact with all the hearing resource teachers. We are also connected because my mum works with a couple of different organizations in the hard-of-hearing field, so they all know me. So it would never be a problem if we needed help with anything. The relationship with my first hearing resource teacher was definitely the one that our family is closest with. She was always really helpful in the early years and would talk to teachers and that kind of stuff. She kind of helped us --my family. She was kind of just like a friend in a way, just kind of somebody that was a teacher but it was more on a personal level because she wasn’t a teacher of the whole class, she was my teacher-- So, really a teacher but slightly differently. I guess because she helped me with things like the presentations and other hearing stuff, she almost seemed like she was a bit more on my side because she understood all that hearing stuff a bit more than other teachers. Throughout the years, we still are in contact with her, and she’s kind of a family friend now, and we do see her every so often. We had a closeness and we still do now. And we’re still friends with her now, even though she’s retired, she still comes to have tea occasionally. So I mean that’s quite a good relationship with her and I was a lot closer to her because I grew up with her. I did trust the others too, but just not in the same way as the first one—they weren’t quite as good, and they didn’t have the history about me either, so that makes a bit of a
In elementary school, the work with my hearing resource teacher was kind of a fun thing to do—it was kind of cool. I got to get out of class and do fun stuff. So it was just whether or not it was worth it in those later years. It wasn’t really a lot of time out of my schedule it was only about a 15-minute thing. Other than that, it was just always helpful to have the support. I was always intrinsically motivated to do well, so she didn’t really help me excel academically, but socially, she helped develop my confidence and being able to talk comfortably about my hearing loss and other needs.

I think for the most part, the support I received for my transition to university was all pretty good. I was fairly happy with all the support I got throughout my school years. I was happy with my hearing resource teachers and I’m really glad we did presentations with my classes; this was a lot of fun and a really cool thing to do. They really didn’t want me to hide anything, and to have everything out in the open, and they always encouraged me to explain my own hearing loss to other people and to take ownership of who I am. This really did set the scene for me to be a leader later on, and it really helped get me comfortable and be able to talk about my hearing loss. Honestly, I’m fairly happy with all the support and everything. Even though at times I didn’t really need much help, it was nice to know that someone had my back if I ever needed anything. The relationship for me really is “just knowing that there is somebody there.” I don’t think I would change anything.

**Megan’s Story**

**Background.** My name is Megan [pseudonym] and I am currently 19 years old. My hearing loss was identified when I was 3 years old. I have large vestibular aqueduct
syndrome, so my hearing has gradually declined over my childhood. My hearing loss is now severe in both ears but my left is worse than my right. No one else in my family has a hearing loss. My grandma wears hearing aids but that’s because she’s really old. In my area everyone went to elementary school then to middle school, and then high-school had 2 campuses, 1 for grades 9 and 10, and another for grades 11 and 12. So, I had 4 transitions.

My life started—diagnosis and preschool (lost hearing at age 3). As the story goes, I was on the porch and my mum was trying to call my name and I wasn’t answering, so she kept on getting a little bit closer and calling my name and a little bit closer and then finally she was right behind me, and called my name, then I turned around. So, it was then she realized that I wasn’t being rude I actually couldn’t understand what she was saying because I couldn’t hear her. I then was taken to an audiologist and all of these tests were done and I was diagnosed with my hearing loss. Only half of my hearing loss has actually been diagnosed. The other part can’t be diagnosed due to the fact that they can’t get tools into the right part of my ear and brain, because it might cause further damage. From what my mum told me, it was a very long process for my diagnosis and trying to figure it out. None of the doctors could figure out what was wrong with me. A lot of doctors wanted to put me in the mentally handicapped place and eventually they figured the hearing loss out.

I’ve had a few concussions since then and after my first concussion my hearing went down quite a bit and now my hearing loss is quite severe. I have worn two hearing aids since I was three but I don’t use an FM system. To be honest, I hated it. All the kids were saying “What’s that? And why does she need that?” And then the teachers had this big
headset thing and I felt really uncomfortable and I didn’t feel like I was part of the group of kids. So, I hated that part, so I never used it. I just tried my best to be normal, listen to what they said the best I could, and of course I missed out on information, but to me it seemed better than that. I was really self-conscious, and I didn’t like it. When I was little, I did everything I could to not use my hearing aids. I thought they were terrible. Even in kindergarten I was struggling a bit.

I did go to preschool and my first helper was Debbie and she was kind of my hearing assistant. She helped me associate with kids in a better way and tried to bring more of the normal student out of me and less hearing-impaired student. When I would do something kind of off, or something that I wasn’t supposed to be doing, she would try to correct it and say no maybe you should try doing it this way. She actually became a huge part of my life until she went on maternity leave and then she was no longer my hearing assistant. I had her from preschool until grade 5, and then she left to have her family. She was so great, but I had many after her and I felt so comfortable with all of them. They were all really good and they were all really supportive and did everything that they could to help me, especially get along in school. And when Debbie left, she also left all of her notes and everything, which made their jobs a lot easier. They didn’t have to ask me so many questions, and they didn’t have to figure me out because it was all written there. She did an absolutely amazing job of getting me started--She was great--she was very great, and very supportive during the early years of my schooling. Even when I was in preschool, she would just pop in every few days and see how things were going, and help me with work and whatnot.

Just before I went into kindergarten when I was still in preschool, I remember my
mum took me into the kindergarten classroom and she told me this is where you’re going to be going next year. I just remember this very clearly because I was terrified. I started crying because I didn’t know these people, I know those people. I was so nervous any time I needed to move to a new location or a new grade. But Debbie would always show up. She’d always be there. Even through all the changes, I had one concrete thing that got me through for a little bit.

**Learning curve (kindergarten to grade 5).** To be honest I don’t remember a lot of what happen in the early years, I just remember that she was there, I think through preschool I was just getting to know her, and she was just starting to become a part of it, but through my elementary school I would actually be taken out of the classroom, she would take me into another classroom and help me with school work, with my FM system, and help me with understanding life as a hearing-impaired student. She gave me what I needed to move on. She had a way of finding the gaps where I needed the extra support and then we’d focus on that. Especially math, she spent a lot of time with me on that. She also taught me a lot about hearing, the FM system and how it would help me. Whenever a new piece of equipment was brought into a classroom she wouldn’t only educate me, she would educate everyone in the classroom so I didn’t have to answer 30-some odd questions. And that was really helpful because we would all sit down and she would go up to the front of the classroom with me, she would show my hearing aids, she would bring in a teddy bear that had hearing aids and explain how this all worked and she would explain the FM system, why I was using it and she tried to make it fun so I didn’t feel like an outcast or anything, and that was really helpful. I’m sure that there were times when she would talk to my teacher when I wasn’t present but she didn’t really work
with my teacher that much.

During our sessions in elementary school, we would work in a separate room, and I would take my work, usually whatever we were doing in class and she would sit me down at a table and we would just go over it question by question, break down the questions and so I could try to answer them. I was not very good at school. When I was really little, I didn’t understand it, I didn’t understand a lot of the questions that were being asked. Math was my absolute weakest subject and she tried to help me kind of excel a little bit more in it.

In Grade 3, it was definitely schoolwork that the hearing teacher helped me with. She helped me understand my hearing loss better and would always bring in diagrams and stuff so the other kids could understand what I was going through, too. She would help with my schoolwork, she would help the teacher understand what I was going through, she helped in a lot of the different ways. I needed help in all different ways because I didn’t really understand my schoolwork then, and I didn’t really get reading or math. To be honest, I didn’t really get anything except for sports. Basically, I didn’t understand school. We would work on whatever I was doing that day when she came in, and then she would just help me out and she always knew that I had trouble with everything. And she was really nice because she would just be there and not make me feel bad about not understanding it, she just helped me in all of the subjects in all of the ways just so I could get through school. And so her many, many hours along with my mum’s many, many hours, that definitely helped. All of her time that she spent, and all of the studying habits that she made me learn, were really beneficial.

Socially awkward (grade 6 to grade 8). When I went to middle school that is when
Debbie started her family and I got a new hearing teacher. She was brand new at her job and she was really nice. I didn’t have her for very long so I had a couple of hearing teachers through middle school and all of them were really nice. They were all really helpful, and they all knew the help that I needed, and they all took the time to sit down, help me through all of my questions, because I’d bring my work to them. They didn’t really do the classroom stand-up because I was a lot older and I didn’t really need that anymore. But they still took me out of the classroom, helped me with whatever questions I needed and with all of my schoolwork, and they still put many hours into helping me push forward.

At this time, there wasn’t specific days that she would come, it was usually just kind of pop-in, but it would usually be one or two times a week and we’d just have that the entire block to work on whatever I wanted to work on, or whatever I wanted to talk about, and that was really helpful. We did talk about things, and they all listened. They all wanted to help me with my work, of course, but they would never stop any of my stories. They would never tell me to push on and they all listened, they all wanted to help me in all of my areas of life and not just my schoolwork. They wanted to help me socially and with any friend situations. It wasn’t always just school. They would help me with my friend groups, by giving me advice like maybe you can go play with this person today or maybe you can go play with that person today, and they just kind of put the strings together so I could try to fit into different things.

**Bring my face forward (grade 9 to grade 10).** In high school, I had another hearing teacher, and she was really funny, she was really awesome, she was really outgoing and I wish that we could have had a little bit more time to work on my work a bit more often,
because I felt during high school I needed a little extra 1:1 time because I was doing a lot of courses. I knew I wanted to go to university and I was so determined to get there and I probably could have used a little bit more help. But she was so great for the time that she was there, she spent so much time with me, and even if she had no idea what I was doing she would look it all up before she showed up and she would do her absolute best to help me there. And she helped me a lot with the social situations of high school too—which was awesome. She talked to me a lot too, and she always asked if anything was bothering me today or “Anything that you want to talk about?” Sometimes that was nice because I just need that break from the constant studying, because I didn’t really have a lot of social life. I didn’t go out after school and do all that stuff. I came home, I would do all of my homework from probably 5:00 to 9:00 at night and that was my day every single day. It would take me so long to do homework. She always offered to help me with the social things if I had some problems that I wanted to talk about, then she would help and that’s probably the reason why I got into university was because she wrote amazing letters for me. I had those study skills where I could sit down for 5 hours and do that continuous work without stopping and be so motivated and determined to finish it. And to do my absolute best on it with not even one flaw in it. And that’s probably what helped the most. And she always encouraged me with this. I feel like I was taking everything that I had learned up to grade 8 and bringing it all together, so I was beginning to be my true personality because I could accept myself. I don’t know how to put that in one word but it was like the start of me being able to be me.

**Start my life and push forward (grade 11 to grade 12).** When I was in high school, I didn’t work with a hearing teacher very much. I’m quite an independent person
and I didn’t need a lot of help, I knew how to handle that myself by then. Towards the end of high school, I had some boyfriend struggles and friend struggles and the hearing teacher was definitely there to talk about them. She would try to help me come to my senses and maybe figure out what they were thinking, and to figure out what I was thinking. That would just kind of bring them all together and make me calm down, and she would always give me advice like that.

Moving forward (transitioning to post-secondary). The transition to post-secondary was mostly me. My hearing teacher was super excited for me when she found out I got in, but there wasn’t a lot that she could have done to prepare me for that. She gave me some of her stories, and the fact that she said that when you go to university, you meet more people that have the same mind as you, she told me that she made some of her best friends in university, she didn’t really miss the high school life, she is extremely happy with what she accomplished and that even if you go to university and you get into one program, you might not always stay in that program. She told me that you might change your mind, you might go in a few circles before you find out what you want to do, but she was so over the moon when she found out that I got in and that’s where I wanted to end up. But this was the only really advice that I got from her. The rest of it was me just kind of jumping off a plane and jumping into that whole new world of oh my God, this is happening.

Reflections on the relationship. Before I met my first hearing teacher, when I was first diagnosed I was told that there would be very limited things I would be able to do, like my social skills wouldn't be very good, my speech wouldn’t be very good, my activities and sports level wouldn’t be very good, I wouldn't make it to grade 10 math.
Basically, I wouldn’t be able to go further and I wouldn’t make it into university. So after I was notified of all of these things when I was in elementary school and middle school, she would tell me you’ve accomplished all of this, and you were never supposed to accomplish this, and she would praise me on it. That really helped me because from her telling me these things and trying to make me more of a normal person by pushing towards my speech and not slurring my words, and helping me in all of those ways, she made me accomplish all of those things, everything they said I couldn’t do, I’ve actually excelled in all of them. And she’s the reason why I did, because of her helping me from the beginning of my elementary school--that’s why I’m where I am-- because of her helping. She was more than just a hearing teacher, she wanted me to do the best that I could, she wanted me to do my absolute best, and I became one of her kids. Everything that I did, she was extremely proud of me and she was so proud of my accomplishments and everything. I did a lot of sport and a lot of social time, and she was really happy with all of those things because a lot of hearing-impaired students have a lot of trouble in those areas. She gave me a lot of confidence and helped me fit into my school and feel good about myself. She taught me how to push through my challenges and she was always there for me. She gave me a stable, trusting relationship with high standards and expectations.

At the beginning, I was kind of uncomfortable with the whole hearing aid/FM system thing and she tried to make it a little bit more comfortable and made me a little less ashamed of it. She tried to make it so I would appreciate it. For example, I can help other people who are like me, and I could tell them how I dealt with it, and I can show them that this isn’t you. That there’s more to you, your hearing aids don’t have to be you
and that you can only accomplish this much. You can try to excel and that’s what I’m trying to do—kind of be more, and that’s what she taught me to do.

The main weakness with the hearing teacher help was that I felt uncomfortable with being the only person who’d have to leave the room. I think it was harder in elementary school because we’d all be in a classroom and then the teacher would say that I needed to come out and go over here. But through high school I was in that learning resource room and then I wouldn't be removed from a classroom, I wouldn't be leaving my social area and she would just come in and sit with me there and so I didn’t have any awkwardness or feeling uncomfortable. She was just there 100% to support me and I never had to go anywhere to do it. I think the support really helped by having someone else give me input that boosted my self-esteem a little bit.

Every single one of them had me as their priority, and I knew that. They were so positive and so realistic about helping me improve and excel, and I never had to face any of those things by myself, so that really helped with the trust-building. They helped me so much that it was hard not to trust them and to put my faith in their hands. I really depended on them and felt really comfortable because they had my best interest at heart. It was always a highlight of my day just to sit down and talk to her, and that part was really comforting because it was a nice break and a place where I was cared for and it helped take some of the stress out of my day. Even though it was awkward that I had to leave the classroom, I still liked it, and I liked the attention, and it made me feel special. I think it was this emotional stability that I got from them always being there that had the biggest impact on me. I didn’t have to go through all of it alone, and because of their support, I was able to push myself further and become more determined to be
successful—I was always a determined person, but I don’t think I would have been as willing and secure about it.

My hearing teacher was always just that one person that I could count on. They would never judge me, they would never have anything bad to say about me, and they just always had a smile on their faces. They were really nice, and were always so positive. If they were negative about my grades, or something that I wasn’t able to do then I would be very torn up by that, because they’re the one person who knows about hearing impairments, so if they weren’t polite about it, then that would just destroy me. It would be so awful. That would have just torn me right down to nothing. I would feel that if they don’t get it and are seeing me in a negative light, then I would have nothing. But that never happened for me, and I just hope that never happens to anyone else. They should be very much involved in the student’s lives and know them well.

Liam’s Story

Background. My name is Liam [pseudonym] and I am 18 years old. I was born profoundly deaf but I was not identified with a hearing loss until I was about one year old—it was totally out of the blue because no one else in my family is deaf. I currently use a cochlear implant on my right ear but I started with hearing aids in both ears, but they didn’t work and I hated them—It was always a nuisance. I was three turning four when I got the cochlear implant, but at first I didn’t like it, so it was not activated until I was about five years old. I also used an FM system at school for every class. And I did use a free-field system in elementary school with a hand-held microphone, but when I went into high school I had eight classes so that didn’t really work. I did use a speaker system just for one class –humanities, because I saw that teacher the most often.
Joyful—playful—good times in life (preschool to grade 1). When they found out I was deaf I went to a special preschool where I was learning sign language until I was about four years old, then I switched over to a new preschool focusing on oral communication when my cochlear implant was activated, so that I was forced to speak. The doctor said you have to sit on your hands or otherwise you wouldn’t speak at all, that was what it was at that time. So I wasn’t able to sign at all and I had to speak. At that school, I was always in a very small class and remember grade 1 being my favourite year because we went on a field trip every week. They had two teachers for seven children. So, it was not like school, we’d go there and learn how to sew, plant beans--it was just playing all of the time.

Quiet—bleak—dull (grade 2 to grade 3). I came to my neighbourhood elementary school when I was in grade 2 and was there through grade 7. This is when I first met my hearing resource teacher and I had her all the way through to the end of grade 12. During this early time, I honestly can’t remember that much but I just remember I played outside and had a good time, but sometimes it just seems like these school years were dark. I do remember always wanting to be in the classroom with my friends, even though I was very quiet, I did talk a lot and I was very comfortable speaking. Mostly during that time period, I just learned how to speak and how to work with the FM. I also remember that my hearing resource teacher would help me make a slideshow about my hearing loss to show the class, so we’d work on that quite a bit during our sessions.

Independent—own self—colours (grade 4 to grade 7). I remember that in the intermediate years I was tired but also felt more independent—I was more my own person. By the end of grade 7, I was my own self and things came back to colour, but I
still found it very tough. I had an educational assistant that would help quite a lot and then when Mrs. Jones [pseudonym for the itinerant teacher] came once a week, she would take me out of the class and do work with her for about an hour.

Our work was mostly academic and less play. Mrs. Jones was more of a teacher during this time, and she made sure I learnt how to do spelling and reading. My work with her was focused a lot on helping me do my homework and making sure that I did my spelling vocabulary. Most of her support was to provide me help at the school, but two or three times throughout the school year we would go on field trips with the other students in the district. She would gather all the deaf students and we would go on the field trip, or sometimes we’d go to a movie or have a picnic. It was more like a day out of the school and an opportunity to meet and connect with other deaf kids, which was good. But I was really connected socially and my family had a lot of ties, so I never really had any problems with my social life.

I always had good relationships with the teachers, but I think sometimes it was tough, too. I think they thought I should know the content more, so they were trying to push me, which was good. That’s what my EA and Mrs. Jones often did, too. They were trying to help my English skills better because I was always behind. I never seemed too worried about it at the moment, I rather hated working on it but they always pushed me. And I really didn’t like leaving the class, it was just more of a feeling, I just wanted to know what everybody else was doing, and I didn’t want to miss any of the class. You know, when somebody gets up and walks out of their desk and everybody else is sitting there, they all wonder what is that person doing—that kind of thing. I don’t think you can help much with that, but I just didn’t like the feeling of being pulled out.
Shy—ball is rolling—easier path (grade 8 to grade 12). I think it was a rather smooth transition to high school. Mrs. Jones always came with me to go and talk to the teachers, so she would always be by me to back me up. Even in grade 6 or grade 7 when I had to go and talk to a teacher, she would often help me with my confrontations with teachers. For example, if I asked them to provide a certain kind of help or use the FM more often, she would always come and explain it more clearly and in more depth to the teachers – at that time I lacked the knowledge. When Mrs. Jones was there it was easier for me because she made it official. She helped me learn to be a self-advocate and she would model that for me. Over time, I easily got onto it and I was able to do it by myself. But she was really a strong support for me. She mainly came to meet with me and we would just talk. We didn’t do work any more because I was doing more advanced stuff that she couldn’t do. She always told me that it’s better studying if you tell somebody else how to do it. So that was her idea, so I played along with it. She always was there for me and I kind of miss her now, even though we had difficult times too.

After high school I’m going to be going to university, and Mrs. Jones helped me by encouraging me to go to the universities to meet people and get things set up. She also helped a bit by emailing people and taught me how to look things up on the websites to see what different schools have to offer, and she provided helpful insights to these matters. Basically, it was one-to-one guidance to help make sure I get the support that I needed. For example, one helpful thing was the closed captioning, which I used for some situations in grade 10 to grade 12 as a kind of a trial strategy so that I could get this support when I went to university. Last year I went on a trip to Brazil, and I told her right away so she knew that I was going to be away. I see her all the time so it was easy to talk
to her, and then she nudged me to go and tell the teachers right away so I could rearrange the exam. I really feel like she was more there to be my advisor.

**Confident—blind—no worries (transitioning to post-secondary).** I am now getting ready for post secondary and I do feel a bit worried about how it will go, but I’m also feeling confident about it and there is nothing to be afraid of—I just don’t know what’s over there.

**Reflections on the relationship.** The relationship does change over time. I think she was more of a teacher when I was younger. So the relationship was mostly academic. As I got older, it changed a lot and I didn’t see her as often but still saw her on a regular basis in high school.

Some days were tough to work with her, too. I was a tough student and sometimes I didn’t always want to work. At first she kind of pushed me a little too much and was nagging me to do this and to make sure I get my English done—even though I didn’t want to do it. I always had like a bit of a bitter attitude towards her on some days. It was a personally challenging situation. I remember that in grade 2, I wanted to stay in the class and play with the counters and beads but she would sometimes come at a wrong time. And in grade 3 or grade 4 or grade 5, when it was starting to get more serious about academic work, we had to make sure that I didn’t miss math or English, science class or social studies, so she would come in during art or gym, and those are the classes I liked more, so I really wanted to stay and I would hate her because she would come at the wrong time. I always thought, “Why did you pull me out when I was having a fun project with everyone?”, and I was always feeling jealous of the other students because I couldn’t do the particular art project with them, and it was something like painting or carving a
pumpkin. Just an easy and fun activity, but I always kind of had a bit of resentment about it. I wasn’t always comfortable with her being around because I always wanted to be with the other students and do the same things. I didn’t want to feel different and she would often take me out, and didn’t like that because I was worried that being pulled out might make people think that I’m stupider and not as smart because I needed help. And she was always there and forced me to go into a small dark room with her to do work. But this changed when I went to high school and I was very comfortable with her and I had no problems walking with her down the halls. I just found it natural.

Really, my trust with her was developed over time. I did trust all of the teachers and I had the confidence that they were doing their jobs. With Mrs. Jones, I came with this basic understanding and trust in the teacher-student relationship, but over time this became more personal and it grew. I would tell her things that happened in my life, and she would also tell me about her family and other experiences. So, it was more like a friend to a friend kind of trust, it was deeper and she definitely cared about me and I knew it. She accepted me for who I am as a person and worked with it.

Mrs. Jones was always like a parent in a way, I mean since I’ve known her for so long. She was always there, even though there was good and bad. Sometimes it was a lot of personal attitude towards each other, and some days she didn’t like me either. I could tell that she didn’t like me and I didn’t like her too, but I think it was like a mother and child kind of thing. I’m pretty sure she did hinder my progress once or twice, and she did hurt me sometimes. But really, she always tried to make me feel comfortable and it was always easy to talk to her, and I found her help was most beneficial in high school, especially for grade 8, grade 9, and grade 10. In grade 11 and grade 12, she didn’t really
do anything because she didn’t know how to do the work I was doing, like math or that kind of stuff, so we would just talk. I really feel like she was more there to be my advisor in a way.

I do think it’s a really good thing to have someone who stayed with me throughout my school years. Even though my schools changed and I had different teachers every year, I still had that one person to support me once or twice or three times a week, every week, for my whole 12 years, and it worked well. She was always there for me and she really knew what was going on, and what I could do. She knows me more on a personal level. Really it’s much like an academic relationship, but it’s more personal, so I think that’s why it worked so well. She was always there and always building me up from when I was a little kid, even though I grew independent of her, she was always there to nudge me in the right way. She made me strong, and this was the biggest influence that the relationship had on me. She gave me the confidence to go out and excel, and not to be afraid. We had a good relationship and I knew she was going to be there year after year—forever, essentially.
Chapter IV: Findings

In this chapter, the thematic findings are discussed in two sections. First, I present the themes for the itinerant teacher participant narratives and illustrate the emerging themes through relevant participant quotes, and I then outline and illustrate the emerging themes from the student narratives. Pseudonyms are used for all participant names.

The complete collection of itinerant teachers’ and students’ narrative stories are included as part of the previous chapter (Chapter III: Method). Although I present the findings on the data analysis as a separate chapter, my process of data analysis for this narrative research began at the time of the first interview, through dialogue, and then continued through the co-construction of the individual narrative stories with each participant. In keeping with the premise of narrative inquiry, it should be acknowledged that the findings of this work incorporate my own reflexivity (included in Chapter V: Discussion), and represent my understandings and meaning making of the significant themes that have emerged from the narrative stories.

The research question that guides this study is:
What is the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their DHH students in inclusive settings, from the perspective of both itinerant teachers and DHH students:

a) in terms of social and emotional development?

b) in terms of social inclusion?

**Itinerant Teacher Themes**

Six overarching themes emerged through the iterative process of data analysis for the itinerant teachers’ narratives: a) identity development (students) b) attachment;
c) safe space; d) connector; e) advisor; and f) itinerant teacher identity.

Identity Development (Students)

Within the theme of identity development (students), I found the sub-themes of fostering independence, promoting self-advocacy, normalizing hearing loss, and empowerment, where each emerged as being central to the support provided by itinerant teachers. The itinerant teachers’ narratives emphasized the importance of their work in terms of the psycho-social development of their students and their role in supporting their students’ identity development. Further, the itinerant teacher narratives highlighted their perspective on developing their students’ survival skills for life (e.g., how to manage in the world when one is DHH).

Fostering independence. A large part of the work of itinerant teachers is to encourage DHH students to become independent, confident and successful individuals. The students’ personal independence is critically important to their academic success, social inclusion and overall well-being at school, as it encourages the development of self-esteem and self-care, a sense of purpose and self-determination. In addition, this focus on fostering independence shifts the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student over time. Given that the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students is often longstanding, fostering of independence takes a developmental perspective. Itinerant teachers reported support for the social-emotional domain was emphasized across the grade levels, where the itinerant teacher provided direct support in the earlier grades and gradually moved away from direct intervention as their student moved to higher grades. Specifically, itinerant teachers provided opportunities for their students to explain their hearing loss, goal setting for wearing equipment, mentoring
younger students, providing opportunities for their students to talk about their hearing loss, and transition planning when moving schools.

Jan: …the social-emotional support has been a key part of what I do in trying to give my students confidence to talk about their hearing loss. I try to give and provide different opportunities and ways to explain it to others, such as being a mentor to younger students. I try to help with their identity so they are strong and can manage by themselves and be independent.

Sarah: And then as kindergarten unfolds, for me the big push is always to support the developing independence for the child, and I have the goal of by the end of kindergarten the student wearing hearing aids and FM regularly, and by the end of kindergarten, I work with the child to increase their level of independence when carrying out hearing aid and FM routines.

Amanda: In middle school, the students are about 12 years old so we talk a lot about their hearing loss and why they’re wearing this equipment, and why I’m always coming to work with them. These are the big years, and the transition from elementary is huge. So I start to talk to them about how the transition is going, help to get them aware of their learning needs, and what they need to be successful. I encourage them to start thinking about what is helping them but also what they don’t like…. By high school, they’re definitely telling me what they need.

**Promoting self-advocacy.** Self-advocacy refers to the action of representing oneself and speaking up for one’s views, interests, and needs. In terms of Deaf Education, self-advocacy often includes itinerant teachers directly teaching DHH students about their hearing loss, providing support to the classroom teacher about differentiating instruction
and enhancing acoustic classroom environments to help facilitate effective listening, and providing direct instruction to the DHH students about how to ask for their social and emotional and learning needs to be met. In addition, itinerant teachers also teach their students about hearing protection, teach their student how to wear and look after their hearing aids, teach effective communication and repair strategies for communication breakdowns, role-playing to build comfort and confidence, and teach their students specific language that helps promote self-advocacy.

Jan: My support generally includes educating the student about their hearing loss, teaching them self-advocacy skills, and talking about hearing protection. I try to do presentations in the student’s class, so everyone can learn about hearing aids and FM systems. I also make sure the students are independent with their equipment, and are independent hearing aid users, such as putting ear moulds in.

Sarah: By the middle years, my work really focuses on independence and developing self-advocacy. Who am I, just understanding themselves, learning to learn in different ways and self-advocating with peers, teachers, in life, at dance class, in the swimming pool, in swimming lessons, and different contexts….I work a lot on just prepping them to start to use more strategies for communication breakdown and repair, what to do when you feel you have missed information. And teach them strategies they can use subtly in the classroom so they can learn to be more proactive.

Amanda: I also work on building the student’s confidence so that they feel comfortable saying, “I’m not hearing what was said.” I try to build in empowerment whenever possible. Sometimes we role-play so that they’re comfortable but even just me talking to them about their hearing loss over the years makes them understand
that this is their right, and to expect certain things.

Lynda: I always focus on developing my student’s self-advocacy and independence. With the little kids it’s more about what they need, such as “I can’t hear or my battery is dead,” that sort of thing – so advocacy is about having them speak up for themselves and not just sit there in oblivion. With the older students, it is more about teaching problem-solving and interpersonal communication skills.

**Normalizing hearing loss and encouraging self-acceptance.** A central function of the relationship that itinerant teachers have with their students is to normalize what it means to have a hearing loss and to encourage the DHH students’ self-acceptance. Normalizing can be understood through the act of providing empathy and engaging in interactions that include an act of caring, with the aim of reducing the negative and isolating experiences that many DHH students encounter in inclusive school settings. The itinerant teachers’ narratives illustrated normalizing hearing loss in two ways, first, by supporting their students’ development of healthy self-understanding and self-concept, and second, through the social context in classrooms by instructing hearing peers and teachers about hearing loss. Normalizing hearing loss for DHH students promotes their self-acceptance and social-emotional well-being by breaking down the barriers of being different than their peers, and promoting inclusive attitudes and practices in schools. In addition, itinerant teachers promoted normalizing hearing loss by allowing their students to have a friend join the itinerant teaching sessions, by having picnics with other DHH student in the school district, and by teaching self-awareness in term of their students’ hearing loss.

Jan: As far as social issues at this age, I think it is the realizing, accepting that they’re
different. For some kids this happens more in middle school, and they don’t want to wear the FM, because all of a sudden it is about being cool…I think this age is about helping with their identity. Supporting them and supporting them in coming to terms with their hearing loss, and developing an identity…. I have one guy who was great up until grade 5, he’s now he is in grade 6, and he doesn’t want an FM—“I’m good, I’m good without it.” He just doesn’t want to be different. I think meeting new people when you’re at such a critical point in developing your identity can be hard, so you have to be strong in yourself.

Sarah: I also like to pull kids from the class with my students when I take them out, so the other kids get exposure and it’s not such a mystery about what they are doing when they leave the classroom and it answers a lot of the questions naturally, and it breaks down the barriers of it’s OK to ask and wonder…A lot of times the kids feel different, and no one has really explained their hearing loss to them, so I try to fill in the gaps. I think my students really trust me and let themselves be vulnerable. Some kids are very sensitive about their hearing loss, so I try to explain that it is only a small part of them.

Amanda: I want my students to feel accomplished when they finish school, and feel socially connected with other kids…. which means that the student is successful in a regular classroom and in a regular social setting; how you do that is different with every student and in every year and grade.

Lynda: As a teacher of the deaf we do a yearly picnic for all the kids that we work with and this is a great way for the students to connect, year after year, and get to know that there are others like them out there.
**Empowerment.** Ultimately, the work of itinerant teachers is to empower students to take ownership of their own learning, learning needs, and future directions in life. Empowerment facilitates confidence, motivation, competence and self-efficacy. The itinerant teachers in this study empowered their students by meeting each student at his or her own level in terms of self-understanding and self-acceptance, and by providing their students with accurate information about what they need to be successful. This includes clear explanations about what students need to consider when they are planning for their future, identifying relevant resources, and supporting their students’ interests and goals. The itinerant teachers described empowering their students by providing opportunities for leadership, confidence building, involvement in educational planning (attending their Individual Education Plan meeting) and goal setting. Itinerant teachers also described providing instruction to the classroom teachers about hearing loss, as well as information about the impact hearing loss might have on their students’ learning and experiences. Further, itinerant teachers may empower their students by discussing their individual strengths and potential for success.

Jan: I also try to provide a lot of mentoring opportunities in secondary school with my middle school students, which helps develop their confidence and leadership skills. That way they can feel proud and become a bit more of who they’re going to be. I am still able to help them that way and try to make them confident.

Amanda: With the older kids, I encourage them to come to the IEP [Individual Education Plan] meeting. Sometimes they don’t want to come but I let them know they’re invited, and let them know what I’m going to say to their teachers. I also teach them about their hearing loss and what their hearing is like, and how to talk
about it with other people.

Lynda: In middle school he was showing really strange social behaviour—he was withdrawn and used inappropriate language with the other kids. He was isolated—he chose to be isolated. I would try and encourage him to work in groups, and I also completed some assessments so I could show him the difference between his performance and his potential. So, this approach helped move him forward—And you know that’s relationship building right there….I think it is the trusting relationship with me that helped.

**Attachment**

Attachment in the context of relationships is understood as a deep, secure and enduring emotional bond that connects people together, often over time and space (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969). For itinerant teachers, the attachment with their students begins in the early primary grades, and becomes more secure as the relationship deepens over time through the ongoing, consistent nature of the itinerant teacher’s support, year after year. Within the theme of attachment, the two sub-themes of relational closeness, and longstanding consistent support emerged. Within relational closeness, itinerant teachers supported the developing attachment by being respectful of the students’ sensitivity and needs, by not being overbearing and judgemental, by being authentic and honest, and by connecting with their students on a personal level, such as discussing personal interests and by providing an outsider perspective on their students’ issues and concerns.

**Relational closeness.** Relational closeness is characterized by a degree of warmth, positivity, and open communication between a teacher and student, which may act as a
support structure within the school environment (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). This closeness between the itinerant teacher and their students may facilitate a “secure base” from which the students can take risks and stretch their understandings, both academically and social-emotionally. The ways that itinerant teachers may foster closeness, warmth, and positivity are illustrated by the following, and highlight the importance of authenticity, empathy, trust, and mutual respect:

Sarah: Establishing a comfortable rapport with the students is critical….It’s a very intimate relationship, so if you are not respectful or sensitive to what the student needs, then you can be too overbearing, and the relationship would start to break down and then things wouldn’t work in your favour. I think it’s a really fine balance. We need to be sensitive and flexible, and make our work together fun and meaningful.

Jan …[I have a] student [who] is 16 and has a progressive hearing loss so he cries a lot, it is awful, so I try to be there as much as I can so I can connect with him….[so] I think being able to identify with their situations helps build trust and their confidence in me, and I think just being there to talk through things. Being supportive, not judging, and letting them be themselves, and they are able to say, “I hate my hearing aids” and you can say, “I understand but you need them.” I guess being a sounding board is helpful too….Even though you’re dealing with the hearing loss, when they come with me it’s a happy place.

Lynda: Relationships are sensitive and with some students, you naturally become close. I think you need to be yourself and authentic—that’s giving them respect, they are fully informed, valued human beings and should be treated decently.
Amanda: I try to connect with the kids on a personal level, because I know a lot about what they are doing and their interests. Sometimes I am a sounding board for them, someone to listen and to give them an outsider perspective and opinion. I think that consistency of support from the itinerant is important for the student. I have a close connection with many of my students and they trust me.

**Longstanding consistent support.** The nature of the support itinerant teachers provide often spans many years, with the exact nature of their support being varied across each student’s development. During the primary school years, the itinerant teachers’ support focused on building connections with students, parents, classroom teachers and school personnel, as well as providing direct support to scaffold DHH students’ development of communication and language and literacy skills. During the middle school years, itinerant teachers’ support is centered on the development of self-advocacy skills, as well as support for curriculum-based learning outcomes through direct instruction and the re-teaching of curriculum content. During the high school years, itinerant teachers’ support focuses on building independence, and developing problem solving and self-advocacy skills, with gradually decreasing focus on curriculum-based support. In addition, the itinerant teachers’ support during the final grades of high school centers on transition planning for graduation. The examples listed below illustrate how the longstanding and consistent nature of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students promoted relational attachments.

Jan: I have one student who always hugs me at the end and says, “I don’t want you to leave.” They need to look forward to you coming and you want to be someone that they want to see. Consistency is also important. And, just being supportive and
cheering them on.

Lynda: During elementary, I think my consistent support is really important to establish trust and build the relationships with my students. Sometimes the connections with students are very deep and meaningful. I had one student who was very much in need of support and I always had time for her in my life. She really wanted to be with me, and I still have her picture on my desk.

Amanda’s story illustrates the developmental perspective of the attachment between itinerant teachers and their students:

Amanda: When they are little, you have an adult-child relationship with them, and you are their teacher, doing academic support—because during this time, you’re really working on their language, so that’s your traditional teacher time. In intermediate, that’s the butterfly time. That’s when the student comes out of the cocoon. So K-5 is when they’re in the cocoon, grades 6-8 is when they are coming out of the cocoon and they are becoming the person they’re going to be. That is when my time switches to become more of a listener/counsellor but I’m still in teacher mode a good chunk of the time, but letting them evolve. By grade 10-12 and for sure by the time they hit grade 12, they should be in full flight. They should be confident young adults ready to go the next step of whatever they’re going to do.

The itinerant teacher narratives also highlighted the disconnect felt when attachments with their students were difficult.

Sarah: I have one student in grade 10 who gives me absolutely nothing, if I ask him “How are things going?” “Everything’s great.” He is new to me this year, so I don’t have a relationship established with him. The sessions are challenging. Trying to
establish a relationship and trust can be painful.

And one itinerant teacher expressed some discomfort with the nature of the longstanding relationship, as it did not allow for her students to “reinvent themselves”.

Amanda: …I am sometimes uncomfortable having a student through their K-12 years because it could limit them in feeling comfortable becoming that new person that they’re going to be in middle school.

Overall, the itinerant teachers expressed very positive experiences in their relationships with students. The following quote sums up the feelings and sentiment expressed by all four itinerant teachers.

Amanda: I think it’s a real honour to be an itinerant teacher—You have that relationship with a student for such a long time, and it’s a really unique one.

**Safe Space**

Safe space in school is a place where students can relax and be fully self-expressed without the fear of being made to feel uncomfortable or unwelcomed, and are spaces where self-respect is promoted and individual diversity is embraced and accepted.

Itinerant teachers used safe space in school in two ways: first, by establishing a physical safe space that was separate, quiet, private, and non-threatening, and second, by creating an emotional safe space within the teacher-student relationship that was exemplified by the prosocial attributes of being caring, understanding, accepting, and empathic. Itinerant teachers created a safe space by allowing their students to relax and feel comfortable, by conducting one-to-one lessons at a slower pace than lessons in the classroom environment, by providing opportunities for their students to draw or have a story read to them, and by respecting the confidential nature of their relationship.
Lynda: There are always situations where they don’t want to be pulled or they don’t want to be different, but over time, a balance develops between the benefits of going with a friendly adult to a quiet place where they can have a story read to them (if that’s what they need) or they can do some drawing and writing and rather than staying in the classroom activity. Getting out of the hurly burly environment of the classroom really becomes a benefit that even the quite young start to appreciate.

Sarah: I think our kids with hearing loss are working harder than anybody in that class to listen and focus, and do what they need to do in a day—when I come in, that’s the time they can take it a bit slower, and leave the room and just be a time to slow down the pace and relax for a little bit and get a little bit of a break… I think the social and emotional piece comes up naturally in these times, because the kids are relaxed and comfortable—I try to make a safe haven where they can relax and they can tell me how they are feeling.

Jan: It is really important for me to understand where my students are at emotionally—this is necessary to build trust. I have one student who is kind of closed off but she can talk to me about things that she’s worried about. And she knows it’s confidential and she can’t go to talk to the teacher to say that she is worried about this or that.

Amanda: I build trust by [following the motto] “when they say something I believe them.”

**Connector**

The work of itinerant teachers in part is to facilitate connection and support for various stakeholders within the kindergarten to grade 12 school system. Itinerant
teachers’ support not only includes academic, audiological, linguistic, and social and emotional support, but also includes addressing interests and concerns of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and allied professionals. Given that the nature of the itinerant teacher-student relationship is longstanding, itinerant teachers are uniquely positioned to facilitate consistency of support throughout the DHH student’s school years. The itinerant teachers’ narratives indicated that itinerant teachers see themselves as facilitators of inclusion, and promote interpersonal connections within the school system. Some strategies used by the itinerant teachers make connections with their students include, allowing them to bring friends to the itinerant teaching sessions, connecting with the family by sending games home, by connecting the family to additional support personnel, and by connecting their DHH students with other DHH students throughout a school district through social events.

Jan: I often encourage the kids to bring a friend to our sessions, and so I have the students teaching their friends about their equipment, which is really good for the students because it helps them connect with other kids….It is so important to connect the students and family with people they can talk to, that they are going through similar things, to establish those connections — so I’m trying to do that.

Jan: I also think relationships with the teacher and the interpreters are so key in our job. You can’t do it in isolation, and there are so many pieces—If you’re not connected with the other people then how do you make it work?

Sarah: I try to be connected to the families by sending a game home, or something like that.

Amanda: Connecting the deaf and hard of hearing students in a social setting is part
of the itinerant’s job. While the student(s) might not self-identify as deaf, they still need to see other students that are ‘like them,’ that wear hearing aids.

Lynda: I also spend a lot of time connecting them with each other and showing them how to make connections.

Advisor

An advisor is a more knowledgeable and experienced person who takes genuine interest in facilitating the success of a less experienced person. Supportive advisors foster positive relationships and advocate for students’ educational and other related school matters, and cultivate teacher-student relationships where their students feel safe, respected, and appreciated. Specifically, itinerant teachers provided counselling support to their students and families, gave their students opportunities to talk through problems and frustrations, and provided guidance in terms of communication strategies. The itinerant teachers in this study saw their role as an advisor or counsellor to their students as illustrated in the following quotes.

Jan:…[in high school] my work is a lot of counselling regarding where they want to go [to university], what they want to do, what supports are available there, all of that kind of stuff….I definitely feel like I counsel more in grade 11 and 12. And it may not be anything to do with their hearing loss, it might be just things that are going on in their lives.

Sarah: I’m usually dealing with social-emotional concerns in some way in every session. Sometimes when I show up, it’s just talking about problem-solving through frustration or just an opportunity to talk.

Amanda: I’m their counsellor/tutor person at school in high school. I’m the person
who gives them the support/instruction/tutoring they need so they can graduate successfully, including getting things set up at post-secondary, if that is what they choose.

Further, the itinerant teacher as a counsellor to their students was a reoccurring sentiment throughout each of the itinerant teacher’s narratives and is typified by the following quote.

Jan: I think almost half our time is social-emotional, just talking about things that are going on and how she can deal with it and how she communicates with other people. If they’re not supported socially and emotionally then the academics don’t happen.

In addition, the itinerant teachers’ narratives revealed that their supportive role changes across development, from teacher in the earlier grades, to advisor/mentor in the middle grades, and to friend in the later high-school grades.

Amanda: (discussing the elementary school years) When they are little, you have an adult-child relationship with them, and you are their teacher, doing academic support—Because during this time, you’re really working on their language, so that’s your traditional teacher time.

Sarah: (reflecting on the middle school years) One [of my] students told me that when she is sitting in the hall with her friends at lunch, she really can’t hear, and they’re [her friends] all looking at their phones and their faces are down on their laps and unless they’re looking at her, she can’t hear them. We discussed ways for her to talk with her friends.

Lynda: (focusing on the high school years)[I have one student] when she was in high school sitting in French, I would meet with her in the hallway and would hang out,
and we’d just have a great old time. It was a really fun friendship. We both knew that it was outside of what a teacher-student relationship was to be like.

Itinerant Teacher Identity

The itinerant teachers in the study did not necessarily identify in the role of a teacher, but, rather, an expert in hearing-related support, a relational facilitator and mentor/coach, and may assume a counselor role when necessary. Thus, their professional identity centres around building and maintaining relationships, building connections and rapport with others, and developing longstanding bonds of trust. Relationships with students are longstanding (often many years) and intimate, and built on rapport, respect, trust, dependability, and sensitivity. These relationships are cultivated through a fine balance between expertise and empathy. Relationships with parents are proactive, responsive, and delicate. Relationships with colleagues are informative, responsive, and may include crisis management. Itinerant teachers viewed strong and supportive relationships with all stakeholders as essential for effective support of DHH children within inclusive school settings. The theme of itinerant teacher identity includes the sub-themes of hearing loss expert; counsellor; relational facilitator; advocate and guardian; and champion.

Hearing loss expert.

Jan: Basically, I try to give them a bit of everything—give them a little bit of self-advocacy, a little bit of equipment, and introduce them to being at school when you have a hearing loss.

Sarah: I work a lot on just prepping them to start to use more strategies for communication breakdown and repair, what to do when you feel you have missed information. And teach them strategies they can use subtly in the classroom so they
can learn to be more proactive.

**Counsellor.**

Jan: I have a student who’s missing an ear on one side and she is in the younger years, so it’s been a lot of social-emotional support. Kids have been bugging her, so my work is focused on how to deal with that, and giving her words to say, and helping her develop good connections by bringing friends along to our sessions.

The itinerant teachers also indicated their support for their students’ families.

Jan: It is the relationship with the family that is very important. For some of my students, they are doing quite fine, but the family is still grieving, so I’m providing ongoing support to them. Like my student who is losing his hearing, it is the mum who really, really is struggling, so she and I are in contact all of the time, and it is my support that is helping her to get through it. She is so distraught that she wasn’t taking her child to appointments—because she is so anxious. So I now do a lot of his appointments. For that student, his mum being healthy plays such a huge role in him being able to cope with what’s going on, so I’m trying to take care of his mum too.

**Relational facilitator.**

Sarah: I see myself as a coordinator of a team, and a support for the child and the family, and helping everyone make decisions that are in the best interest of the child. Lynda: I do see social and emotional problems come up. Some issues are caused by isolation, so I work with the classroom teacher to make sure that everyone involved is aware of the issues and then we work collaboratively to help support the student. Amanda: I also think an important part of being an itinerant is having a good relationship with the classroom teachers, learning support teachers, the secretaries,
the principals all knowing who you are and what your job is, so if there’s an issue
going on with your student, they think to contact you.

Advocate and guardian.

Amanda: I see my role as itinerant is to help support my students to be successful in
their academic career, and to graduate as complete individuals—happy complete
individuals….I think the relationship with my students is a bit of the mother-nurturer
role in school; ‘Mother,’ as in on the look-out for issues not academic—more
emotional, and ‘nurturer,’ as in supporting the student as they work through the
emotional toll that can happen when a student has a hearing loss….As an itinerant I
think you’re the eyes and the ears in the classroom for them. Kind of like the mother
ghost that hovers—watching, just to see how it’s working for them.

Champion.

Jan: I really think being an advocate for them is important – like how to put their ear
moulds in their ears for the first time –you cannot help but say, “Yay!” Because no
one else really gets how great that is in their world other than their parents and their
audiologist. It is so exciting when they can do it independently and they can do it on
their own—and you’re their person that’s cheering them on for all those little
successes.

Lynda: I also really believe that they need to become people with meaningful lives
with interests, so if they show anything that stands out at all, I go with it—and cheer
them on when they win or succeed.

Student Themes

Five overarching themes emerged from the iterative process of data analysis for the
The five themes identified in the student narratives have significant overlap with the themes that emerged from the itinerant teachers’ narratives; however, the findings from the itinerant teachers’ thematic analysis highlighted the that the itinerant teachers used a professional framework when discussing the significance of their relationships with their students, whereas the findings from the students’ thematic analysis revealed that the students used a personal growth and development framework when discussing their relationships with their itinerant teachers. In order to maintain the integrity of the student participants’ narratives as personal life stories, and to be sensitive to the personal nature of these stories, the student themes are presented in a holistic manner, rather than identifying sub-themes within each emerging theme. This decision was made in order to promote ethical practice of the personal narratives, and to help ensure that the students’ stories are read and interpreted within the personal context in which they were told.

**Identity Development: Fostering Independence**

Identity development and fostering independence are central to the importance of the relationships between DHH students and their itinerant teachers. Identity was fostered through facilitating self-advocacy skills, self-knowledge, and self-acceptance; the
development of self esteem and confidence building; “normalizing” what it means to be DHH; and over time (in the relationship), the development of resiliency for DHH students. Specifically, from the DHH students’ perspective, itinerant teachers supported their identity development by teaching about hearing loss and amplification equipment (to both the DHH students and their entire class), by having the students attend their own IEP meetings, by encouraging their students to explain their hearing loss, and by building up their students’ confidence and self-esteem through praise and encouragement. The following quotes from the student narratives illustrate the student’s perspective on how the support provided by their itinerant teachers helped foster independence and promote overall healthy self-concept and well-being.

**Self-advocacy and self-knowledge.**

Megan: She also taught me a lot about hearing, the FM system and how it would help me. Whenever a new piece of equipment was brought into a classroom she wouldn’t only educate me, she would educate everyone in the classroom so I didn’t have to answer 30-some odd questions…. [and she explained] why I was using it and she tried to make it fun so I didn’t feel like an outcast or anything….

Kyle: At this point I started explaining a bit more of my own hearing loss. My hearing resource teacher would come to talk to the teachers with me but she would have me do a bit more of the talking. And IEPs, I can’t remember when I started being part of those, that might have been grade 8 or grade 7, something like that. So I think I was kind of gradually shown how the process works and then I started slowly taking it over, and then by the time I got to high school I never had any problems with explaining my hearing loss or being embarrassed about it or anything.
Liam: Really it’s much like an academic relationship, but it’s more personal, so I think that’s why it worked so well. She was always there and always building me up from when I was a little kid, even though I grew independent of her, she was always there to nudge me in the right way.

**Self-acceptance and self-esteem.**

Cynthia: I feel like my hearing resource teacher [itinerant teacher] was always there for me…her support made me feel better about myself…[one time] I wanted to go swimming but I felt like I couldn’t go because I felt that I wouldn’t hear if I went swimming. But my hearing resource teacher told me to just go swimming, you deserve it, you’re just a child, don’t worry about it, you’re just going swimming, just let your friends know that you can’t hear but you hear them before you go in the pool, and that kind of stuff…[without my itinerant teacher] I’m sure it would be more difficult through childhood and time at school, because without that support it would be hard to build confidence and they would have lower self-esteem for sure. So that’s something really important.

Megan: She was just there 100% to support me and I never had to go anywhere to do it. I think the support really helped by having someone else give me input that boosted my self-esteem a little bit….she would tell me you’ve accomplished all of this, and you were never supposed to accomplish this, and she would praise me on it.

**Attachment: Stable and Secure**

As described previously, attachment is defined as a deep and enduring bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969). From the students’ perspective, the itinerant teachers supported the developing relational
attachments by wanting the best for their students, by communicating a sense of pride in their students’ accomplishments, providing ongoing help, taking a personal interest in supporting the relationship development such as going out for lunch, and by having longstanding bonds of trust. The students described their relationships with their itinerant teachers as longstanding, secure, stable, dependable, and personal.

Megan: She was more than just a hearing teacher, she wanted me to do the best that I could, she wanted me to do my absolute best, and I became one of her kids. Everything that I did, she was extremely proud of me and she was so proud of my accomplishments and everything…. Every single one of them had me as their priority, and I knew that. They were so positive and so realistic about helping me improve and excel, and I never had to face any of those things by myself, so that really helped with the trust-building. They helped me so much that it was hard not to trust them and to put my faith in their hands. I really depended on them and felt really comfortable because they had my best interest at heart.

Cynthia: Sometimes we would actually go out for lunch—just me and her, and we’d have conversations that were close to us. These conversations were just between us, and not school-related— this helped a lot in having a closer relationship.

Kyle: … it was nice to know that someone was there who had my back if I ever needed anything or had any issues.

Liam: Mrs. Jones [pseudonym] was like a parent in a way, I mean since I have known her for so long. She was always there, even though there was good and bad…She was always there for me and she really knew what was going on and what I could do…She made me strong and this was the biggest influence that the
relationship had on me. She gave me the confidence to go out and excel, and not to be afraid. We had a good relationship and I knew she was going to be there year after year—forever, essentially.

**Safe Space**

Safe spaces in schools were described as a trusting environment and included both physical space (quite, free of distraction and background noise, private) and emotional space (caring, understanding, and accepting; itinerant teachers were seen as supporters or personal cheerleaders). This “relational space” provided a context for the development of self-acceptance and personal growth. Generally, this safe relational space facilitated supportive and affectionate feelings; however, at times it permitted negative attitudes to emerge. The students explained that their itinerant teachers created safe space by encouraging them to push through challenges and build confidence, providing an opportunity for them to take a break from the stress of school, and allowing them to bring friends to the itinerant teaching sessions.

Megan: She gave me a lot of confidence and helped me fit into my school and feel good about myself. She taught me how to push through my challenges and she was always there for me. She gave me a stable, trusting relationship with high standards and expectations…[she] was always just that one person that I could count on…and would never judge me….It was always a highlight of my day just to sit down and talk to her, and that part was really comforting because it was a nice break and a place where I was cared for and it helped take some of the stress out of my day. Even though it was awkward that I had to leave the classroom, I still liked it, and I liked the attention and it made me feel special.
Kyle: Sometimes my best friend at the time would also come with me, which was kind of fun…. I always enjoyed working with her and it was kind of cool because I got to leave class and escape.

In contrast, at times the relationship with the itinerant teachers hindered social-emotional well-being. Liam expressed his discomfort with receiving support as well as the growth and development in the relationship with his itinerant teacher over time.

Liam: I always had like a bit of a bitter attitude towards her on some days. It was a personally challenging situation…we had to make sure that I didn’t miss math or English, science class or social studies, so she would come in during art or gym, and those are the classes I liked more, so I really wanted to stay and I would hate her because she would come at the wrong time….I always kind of had a bit of resentment about it. I wasn’t always comfortable with her being around because I always wanted to be with the other students and do the same things…. [but] she was always there and forced me to go into a small dark room with her to do work. But this changed when I went to high school and I was very comfortable with her and I had no problems walking with her down the halls. I just found it natural.

**Connector**

Itinerant teachers were seen as facilitators of inclusion, by using the established (and trusted) relationships with their DHH students to build connections with others. Most notably with hearing peers, DHH peers, and teachers both within the school and across schools when transitioning educational settings such as moving from elementary school to middle school and high school. Each student narrative story illustrated different strategies that their itinerant teachers used to help build connections. For example,
scaffolding self-advocacy by coming with their students to talk to teachers, arranging field trips with other DHH students in the school district, giving advice about making social connections, teaching school personnel about parents about hearing loss and equipment, and by helping their students connect to university personnel to establish accommodation in post secondary.

Kyle: In general it was just exciting to move onto middle school and my hearing resource teacher [itinerant teacher] was obviously going to stay with me for that. At this point I started explaining a bit more of my own hearing loss. My hearing resource teacher [itinerant teacher] would come to talk to the teachers with me but she would have me do a bit more of the talking.

Cynthia: My relationship with her definitely helped my social and emotional development. I remember we would go out for a field trip with a bunch of other students that had hearing losses, hearing aids or were deaf, and we would bond together because we’re all the same in a way. I felt like I could connect with those other students when we’re all together as one.

Megan: They wanted to help me socially and with any friend situations. It wasn’t always just school. They would help me with my friend groups, by giving me advice like maybe you can go play with this person today or maybe you can go play with that person today, and they just kind of put the strings together so I could try to fit into different things.

Kyle: She would always help by talking to the teachers and my mum would come too, and basically help by talking about my hearing loss and what it means, and what
they could do to help, such as wearing the FM, just the whole standard explaining sort of thing.

The connecting support continued through the transition to post-secondary school.

Kyle: She focused her help on teaching different ways to explain my hearing needs to professors, and she also helped facilitate that connection. So we talked to the person there at the university; they were really hesitant to give real time captioning because it’s really expensive. We talked about options, worked on it and she was really helpful during that process. It was really good.

**Advisor: Cheerleader**

Itinerant teachers were not necessarily regarded by their DHH students as being in a teacher role, but, rather, were seen as an advisor or guidance counsellor, a parent in school, or as a friend. In addition, relationship patterns varied across development, where in the earlier grades, relationships with itinerant teachers were seen as a teacher-student relationship, middle grades as a supporter or advisor, and by the end of high-school as a friend. The students described different strategies that their itinerant teachers used that illustrated their role as an advisor (cheerleader). For example, the itinerant teachers counseling their students on personal issues (e.g., relationships), by always being positive and empathetic, and by facilitating a comfortable caring relationship with their students on a personnel level.

To illustrate the relationship development and closeness that developed overtime, Kyle reflected:

Kyle: The relationship with my first hearing resource teacher was definitely the one that our family is closest with. She was always really helpful in the early years and
would talk to teachers and that kind of stuff. She kind of helped us—my family. She was kind of just like a friend in a way, just kind of somebody that was a teacher but it was more on a personal level because she wasn’t a teacher of the whole class, she was my teacher—So, really a teacher but slightly differently. I guess because she helped me with things like the presentations and other hearing stuff, she almost seemed like she was a bit more on my side because she understood all that hearing stuff a bit more than other teachers….we still are in contact with her, and she’s kind of a family friend now, and we do see her every so often. We had a closeness and we still do now. And we’re still friends with her now, even though she’s retired, she still comes to have tea occasionally. So I mean that’s quite a good relationship with her and I was a lot closer to her because I grew up with her. I did trust the others too, but just not in the same way as the first one—they weren’t quite as good, and they didn’t have the history about me either, so that makes a bit of a difference.

The following quote highlights itinerant teachers as counsellors and friends, and illustrates the relational shifts that occur as students’ social and emotional, and learning needs change.

Megan: Towards the end of high school, I had some boyfriend struggles and friend struggles and the hearing teacher was definitely there to talk about them. She would try to help me come to my senses and maybe figure out what they were thinking, and to figure out what I was thinking. They would just kind of bring them all together and make me calm down, and she would always give me advice like that.

Liam: The relationship does change over time. I think she was more of a teacher when I was younger. So the relationship was mostly academic. As I got older, it
changed a lot and I didn’t see her as often but still saw her on a regular basis in high school… I came with this basic understanding and trust in the teacher-student relationship, but over time this became more personal and it grew. I would tell her things that happened in my life, and she would also tell me about her family and other experiences. So, it was more like a friend to a friend kind of trust, it was deeper and she definitely cared about me and I knew it. She accepted me for who I am as a person and worked with it.

And Cynthia highlighted the closeness she felt towards her itinerant teachers, and how she saw them as her parents at school.

Cynthia: My hearing resource teachers [itinerant teachers] were like my school parents, and I was closer to them than any other teachers. They built trust with me by always being open and I could rely on them to help me and look after me. They were always positive, and always helped me feel good about myself and that I was like the other kids—they helped me be more confident and comfortable with myself. We had a personal relationship and met up every week, and I felt comfortable telling them my experiences throughout the day, and they always knew where I was coming from, so I didn’t have to explain myself as much—they always knew what I needed, and that made me feel better. And they knew me best, I mean, both my weaknesses and strengths, and I could just be myself. We were close and we just clicked.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students, and to explore which aspects of this relationship may facilitate social and emotional development and social integration for DHH students in inclusive educational settings. Using a narrative inquiry and multiple case study design, four itinerant teachers and four DHH adolescents participated in individual interviews. They provided retrospective accounts of their experiences and focused their narratives on how the support by itinerant teachers impacted academic success, social inclusion and overall well-being at school. Data were analyzed using an inductive approach and thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and six prominent themes emerged from the itinerant teacher narratives, and five prominent themes emerged from the student narratives. In this chapter, I first present two theoretical perspectives that provide a framework for understanding the emerging findings, namely relational-cultural theory and attachment theory. I then discuss the key findings and an unexpected finding in terms of the study’s two guiding research questions, and provide a discussion of my overall reflections on this work. I end the chapter by presenting the limitations of this work, and put forward suggestions for implications for practice and for future research.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Emerging Findings

The findings of the current study can be understood within the context of two complementary theoretical frameworks, attachment theory and relational-cultural theory. To be consistent with the inductive methodological approach of narrative inquiry, the foundational theoretical perspectives are presented in Chapter V: Discussion and explain
the significance of the emerging findings of this work.

**Attachment theory.** Attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969), situated within a constructivist perspective, asserts that children come to understand their world and their relationships through active engagement and experience with them (Riley, 2009). Attachment is understood as an emotional bond that develops between people and is characterized by four distinct attributes (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969, 1988). First, the caregiver or special person (someone considered stronger, wiser, and more capable than another) maintains a physical or psychological proximity to the child/student. Second, the attachment figure (e.g., parent, teacher) acts as a safe haven or a source of security for the child/student, insofar as the child experiences decreased anxiety and/or relief from a confusing or threatening situation. Third, the attachment figure acts as a secure base from which the child/student can explore his or her physical and social worlds, and thus, feel safe to take calculated risks, which in turn supports the mastery of new skills and subject matters (Bowlby, 1988; Waters & Cummings, 2000). Finally, the child/student experiences increased anxiety during prolonged or unexplained separation from the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1988).

According to attachment theory, early childhood experiences between a primary caregiver and a child predict later life outcomes and set a blueprint for interpersonal attachments and subsequent communication styles (Thompson & Raikes, 2003). In other words, children who have secure attachments (e.g., warm, responsive, sensitive) with their primary caregivers develop confidence and security in exploring their world, whereas children who have insecure or disorganized attachments (e.g., unpredictable, avoidant, unresponsive) with primary caregivers exhibit maladaptive behaviours such as
being fearful, sad, anxious, rejecting, and angry (Bowlby, 1988). The quality of early childhood attachments (attachment style) influences future relationships, in that secure attachments promote positive relationships (e.g., Feeney, Collins, Van Vleet, & Tomlinson, 2013) and insecure attachments promote disruptive behaviour problems and dysfunctional relationship patterns throughout the lifespan (e.g., Greenberg et al., 1993; McConnell & Moss, 2011). With this in mind, positive relationships between teachers and their students have been shown to predict higher academic achievement, better school retention, and healthy social and emotional well-being for students when compared with less supportive teacher-student relationships (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Zins et al., 2004a).

Interpersonal attachments provide a secure base that fosters psychological growth and promotes personal independence. Students who are securely attached to their teachers pay closer attention during learning activities and feel positive about teacher-student interactions, and value their teacher’s support (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Hughes et al., 1999; Hughes & Chen, 2011). In fact, supportive teacher-student relationships have been shown to promote resiliency against academic failure (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta et al., 1995) and provide a context for reciprocal care-giving and care-seeking behaviours (Riley, 2011). Teachers become a significant support figure in the child’s life. Kesner (2000) stated, “Perhaps there is no other nonfamilial adult that is more significant in a child’s life than his or her teacher” (p. 134). Thus, relational functioning between teachers and students provides a foundation for success in school and in life (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2016; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Zins et al., 2004a).
Attachment theory asserts that relational bonds (relational closeness) develop over the lifespan, and are defined by the longstanding and dyadic nature of interpersonal connections and by depth of growth in interpersonal connection over the total history of the relationship (Ainsworth, 1989). Given the close and longstanding teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and their students, relational closeness emerged as a defining characteristic of this unique relationship. All eight participant narratives (itinerant teachers and students) highlighted the importance of their teacher-student relationships in terms of cultivating relational closeness (warmth, positivity, open communication) and trust, as well as providing longstanding constant support, which contributed to the development of secure attachments and a secure base for learning and self-discovery. Further, a developmental perspective emerged within this unique teacher-student relationship. All of the eight narrative stories described a gradual shift from a more dependent relationship (e.g., direct support and teacher directed advocacy for the student’s needs) to a more independent relationship (e.g., indirect instructional support, itinerant teacher listening and counselling, student-directed self-advocacy). This developmental shift (and growth) is illustrated by Amanda (itinerant teacher) through the use of a butterfly metaphor:

When they are little, you have an adult-child relationship with them, and you are their teacher, doing academic support—because during this time, you’re really working on their language, so that’s your traditional teacher time. In intermediate, that’s the butterfly time. That’s when the student comes out of the cocoon. So K-5 is when they’re in the cocoon, grades 6-8 is when they are coming out of the cocoon and they are becoming the person they’re going to be. That is when my time switches
to become more of a listener/counsellor but I’m still in teacher mode a good chunk of the time, but letting them evolve. By grade 10-12 and for sure by the time they hit grade 12, they should be in full flight. They should be confident young adults ready to go the next step of whatever they’re going to do.

**Relational-cultural theory.** Relational-cultural theory also provides a conceptual understanding of the significance of teacher-student relationships, as it emphasizes the importance of relational development over time, and asserts that helping (and healing) take place within the context of growth-fostering relationships (Jordan, 2001, 2010; Jordan & Hartling, 2002). From the perspective of relational-cultural theory, relationships themselves (in terms of psychological development) are the unit of study. This perspective asserts that interpersonal connection and personal growth occur when a relationship is authentic and sincere, and is based on mutual empathy and mutual empowerment. The relational-cultural theory framework explains that interpersonal connectedness is essential for healthy psychological development and emotional well-being, and the need for interpersonal connection deepens over time; that is, throughout the lifespan, we move toward greater relational interdependence with others, rather than toward personal independence. Relational-cultural theory places healthy relationships at the centre of interpersonal development, as relationships bring together the conditions for people to grow and contribute to the world. According to Jordan and Hartling (2002) people need to be in connection in order to change, open up, shift, transform, heal and grow. From this perspective, healthy relationships are understood to include a sense of calmness, which promotes safety and security; acceptance, which promotes comfort from pain of social exclusion; resonance, which promotes empathy; and energy, which
promotes healthy connections (Banks, 2011).

Findings of the current study align with the relational-cultural theoretical perspective in terms of healthy relationship development in four ways. First, calmness (i.e., safety and security) was discussed throughout all of the participant narratives and emerged specifically within the safe space and attachment themes. Second, acceptance (i.e., comfort from pain of social exclusion) was highlighted in the emerging themes of identity development (students), specifically within the sub-themes of fostering independence, normalizing hearing loss and encouraging self-acceptance, and empowerment, as well as within the emerging themes of attachment and safe space. Third, resonance (i.e., empathy) was illustrated through the emerging theme of attachment; however, empathy was specifically discussed by all participants within the sub-theme of relational closeness. Finally, energy (i.e., healthy connections) was illustrated within all of the emerging themes (identity development (students), attachment, safe space, connector, advisor, and itinerant teacher identity). From a relational-cultural theoretical perspective overall, the itinerant teacher-student relationship may be characterized as a healthy interpersonal relationship.

The relational-cultural theory perspective sheds light on the meaning of the key findings of the current study. Given that the relationships between itinerant teachers and their students are likely longstanding, often spanning the DHH student’s entire school career (kindergarten to grade 12), the developmental perspective of relational-cultural theory (i.e., relationships develop and deepen over the lifespan) deepens our understanding of the mechanisms involved in healthy interpersonal connections (e.g., calmness, acceptance, resonance, energy) and provides a lens that illuminates the
importance of relationships between itinerant teachers and their students, in terms of personal growth and identity development for both the itinerant teachers and the DHH students.

Taken together, both attachment theory and relational-cultural theory inform the meaning and significance of the key findings of the current study, in that healthy teacher-student relationships are built on foundations of secure attachments that develop over time in relationships with caring others. These relationships create an interpersonal context for meaningful teaching and helping, and also facilitate a relational space for self-discovery and personal growth. The following discussion is presented from the perspective that includes both attachment theory and relational-cultural theoretical frameworks, and highlights the emerging themes from the eight participants’ narratives.

Research Question

a) What is the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students in terms of social and emotional development? The participants’ narratives (both itinerant teachers and students) in the current study reflect the significance of the longstanding teacher-student relationship in terms of the first three major emerging themes (i.e., identity development (students), attachment, and safe space), as each theme adds to our understanding of the roles and responsibilities of itinerant teachers within the inclusive school environment. This research expands our understanding of the work of itinerant teachers in relation to the experiences of DHH students in inclusive educational settings. It also highlights important interpersonal connections within the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students, and extends our understanding of relational aspects that influence social-emotional and
identity development. Further, the current study is the first study to examine the experiences of itinerant teachers and DHH students within a relational context, and thus, shed light on the importance of caring adults (who have specific hearing loss-related knowledge) in the kindergarten to grade 12 inclusive education system.

The most prominent and significant finding connected to the Research Question part a is the emerging theme of identity development (students). The current study emphasized the importance of the relational space between itinerant teachers and their students as a context for students to explore their strengths and barriers to learning. This relational space encouraged the DHH students to build confidence, work through challenges, and take risks necessary for the development of psychological maturity. It also provided a context for the students to explore what it means to be deaf or hard of hearing, and thus, to gain a deeper understanding of themselves. In fact, identity development (students) emerged as the primary goal of the teacher-student relationship, in that all of the student narratives emphasized the value of the longstanding, caring, and trusting connection with their itinerant teachers, as these relationships created a place where students felt safe and secure to be vulnerable and to seek out support for their social and emotional challenges. Given that the itinerant teacher is likely to be the only individual within the school system (and perhaps within the students’ lives) who has a deep understanding of the impact of hearing loss across development and across developmental domains (e.g., linguistic, academic, social, and emotional), this relationship creates a place where DHH students can learn about themselves and acquire a healthy self-concept and DHH identity.

The finding of identity development (students) emerged as a consequence of itinerant
teachers supporting DHH students’ self-advocacy development and self-acceptance, normalizing what it means to be DHH, fostering independence across development, and empowering students to be self-determined learners. Previous research has highlighted that itinerant teachers often support self-advocacy skill development (e.g., Foster & Cue, 2009; Hyde & Power, 2004; Luckner & Howell, 2002; Luckner & Muir, 2002), self-development, self-esteem, and independence (e.g., Antia et al., 2011b; Foster & Cue, 2009; Israelite et al., 2002; Norman & Jamieson, 2015), and self-determination and empowerment (Luckner & Muir, 2002; Luckner & Sebald, 2013; Sebald, 2013). This finding is consistent with previous research in that all eight narratives (both itinerant teachers and students) indicated that itinerant teachers helped DHH students build self-esteem, increase confidence, and normalize what it means to be a DHH person in a hearing world. In line with relational-cultural theory, this finding suggests that itinerant teachers foster an environment of support where students can develop their DHH identity. This perspective adds to our understanding of the potential importance of the itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship in terms of identity development. Continued research in this area is necessary in order to further our understanding of the relational mechanisms involved in identity development for DHH children and youth who are educated in inclusive schools.

Attachment emerged as the second predominant theme, illustrating the significance of the unique itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship, and was present in all of the participants’ narratives. Each narrative story revealed that the nature of the longstanding relationship between itinerant teachers and their students cultivated relational closeness, warmth, and positivity, and provided a secure base at school. Liam stated:
Mrs. Jones [pseudonym for the itinerant teacher] was like a parent in a way, I mean since I have known her for so long. She was always there, even though there was good and bad….She was always there for me and she really knew what was going on and what I could do….She made me strong and this was the biggest influence that the relationship had on me. She gave me the confidence to go out and excel, and not to be afraid. We had a good relationship and I knew she was going to be there year after year—forever, essentially.

The attachment theme contributes to our literature within Deaf Education by identifying an important support structure for DHH children within inclusive school environments. Specifically, the attachment theme adds to our understanding of the necessity of itinerant teacher support throughout the DHH student’s development, and extends our knowledge about the importance of these longstanding relationships in terms of cultivating an environment of belonging and creating a place for personal growth. This finding supports our understanding of the importance of attachments with supportive adults at school, as these relationships have been found to promote students’ healthy social and emotional well-being (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2006; Wentzel, 1998). It should be noted that the importance of attachment within the teacher-student relationship is a well-established domain in general education; however, the itinerant teacher-student attachment finding forges new ground within Deaf Education and within the itinerant teaching model, as this unique teacher-student attachment is often longstanding, and may, in fact be deep and personally meaningful.

The third most significant finding that emerged from all of the participants’ narratives is that of safe space. This theme manifested in two distinct ways. First, safe
space was understood as a physically safe space within the school setting, one that is separate, quiet, private, and non-threatening. Second, safe space was understood as an emotional safe space within the teacher-student relationship, and was explained in terms of the qualities of the relationship, including prosocial relational characteristics of caring, understanding, accepting, and empathy. These two dimensions of safe space support the previously discussed themes of identity development of students and attachment, in that a safe space provides a safe haven, and thus, creates both a physical and an emotional environment where DHH students may feel safe to seek out support for their social and emotional challenges. Further, consistent with relational-cultural theory, these safe spaces provide a context where helping (and healing) may take place, as well as facilitate students’ identity development. This finding is consistent with the notion that secure relationships develop over time in interactions that are caring, supportive, and empathic (e.g., Owens & Ennis, 2005). However, further research on the development of DHH identity within the itinerant teacher-student relationship is needed.

The safe space finding may also shed light on the unique contribution of the itinerant teaching model in Deaf Education. Within the field of Deaf Education, previous research has indicated that self-contained resource programs for DHH students within an inclusive educational environment provided a safe space for learning and personal growth (Isrealite et al., 2002); however, the current study is the first known documented work to identify safe space within the teacher-student relationship itself in the itinerant teaching model of support. This finding is noteworthy, as the itinerant model is vastly different than other educational models (e.g., self-contained classrooms or specialized schools for the deaf). In contrast with models where DHH students have frequent contact with specialist
teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, DHH students in inclusive settings likely have minimal weekly contact with their itinerant teacher, and thus, the safe space (both physical and emotional) must be created within the relationship itself. Therefore, this finding contributes to our understanding of the contextual factors – both physical and emotional – that may contribute to effective itinerant teacher support in schools.

The fourth most significant finding was the role of itinerant teachers as advisors. All of the narratives described the necessity of a securely attached, close relationship built on trust, supportiveness, empathy, and mutual respect as a precursor to effective social and emotional support and subsequent development. In reference to both the relational-cultural and attachment theoretical perspectives, the function of the itinerant teacher-student relationship appears to facilitate an emotional climate in which students may grow emotionally. The theme of itinerant teacher as an advisor revealed a shift in the nature of the teacher-student relationship over time. In the early school years, the relationship resembled a parent-child or teacher-student relationship; the middle school years an advisor-student relationship; and the later school years a friend-friend or mentor-mentee relationship. This finding is consistent with previous literature that indicates that itinerant teachers often become an advisor or counsellor to their students, especially when students’ social and emotional needs become apparent (e.g., Foster & Cue, 2009; Norman & Jamieson, 2015). Further, this finding reveals that itinerant teachers individualize and change their instructional priorities to help meet their students’ changing needs, as their students develop. This finding also deepens our understanding of the developmental perspective that itinerant teachers take as they provide support throughout the student’s school years, and provides insights into the value of these close and longstanding
b) What is the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students in terms of social inclusion? All participant narratives highlighted that itinerant teachers are often act in the role of a connector who facilitates social inclusion for their students. This finding emerged in several different ways. First, itinerant teachers were the contact persons within the school system to help ensure that the support needs of stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators, allied professionals) were addressed. This finding is consistent with previous research that identified itinerant teachers as the most frequent and important facilitator of inclusion (Erik-Brophy et al., 2006). Second, itinerant teachers served as relational facilitators by introducing their students to peers and other teachers, directly teaching social skills within the context of peer relationships, and connecting DHH students with each other. Third, itinerant teachers also provided direct support in terms of connecting their students to teachers (or other support personnel) across transitions from one context to another, such as transitions to new schools or to post-secondary institutions.

The itinerant teacher as a connector is consistent with an applied perspective of attachment theory for teachers and parents developed by the Neufeld Institute (Neufeld, 2013). This approach emphasizes that security within a relationship is a fundamental need for children (and students); therefore, when a student is separated from attachment figures (e.g., parents, teachers, peers), such as moving to a new school or changing grades, his or her separation anxiety increases. According to Neufeld, this separation from relational attachments can be managed (and anxiety reduced) through the use of “matchmaking.” This interpersonal connection strategy involves the attachment figure
(e.g., a known teacher) acting as a relational “matchmaker” by introducing his or her students to new teaching personnel and peers within the new setting. From the emerging theme of itinerant teacher as connector, it appears as though itinerant teachers use their established trusting relationships with their students as a foundation or bridge to build connections with others. This finding was most evident across periods of transitions (e.g., moving to new schools, acquiring new itinerant teachers), and begins to shed light on how itinerant teachers may provide specific guiding support to help facilitate interpersonal connections for their students within inclusive educational environments.

**Unexpected Finding**

Research on teacher identity in general education has emphasized the importance of the teacher identity construct as foundational to how teachers view themselves as professionals and how they conduct their teaching practice (Sachs, 2007). Sachs (2005) highlighted the essence of the construct of teacher identity:

> Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience. (p. 15)

In the context of the work of itinerant teachers, the emerging theme of itinerant teacher identity was an unexpected finding of the current study, as the four itinerant teacher participants did not necessarily view themselves as a traditional teacher throughout their students’ development, but, rather, identified their professional identity resting on being an expert in hearing-related support; a relational facilitator and a
mentor/coach; an advocate, guardian or champion for their students; and a counselor, especially when supporting their students’ social and emotional needs. The theme of itinerant teachers’ professional identity emerged around relationships, including building connections and rapport with others and developing longstanding bonds of trust. In addition, the itinerant teachers in this study indicated that the nature of their work shifts as their students develop, and, therefore, the itinerant teacher identity also shifts from that of a traditional teacher in the early school years, to that of advisor in the middle school years, and that of a friend or mentor in the later high-school years. Given that the work of itinerant teachers is vastly different from that of other teaching personnel within the school system, and the fact that itinerant teachers take a developmental perspective in planning and supporting their students throughout the school years, it seems reasonable that a distinct professional teacher identity emerged. Jan explained the itinerant teacher identity as, “Basically, I try to give them a bit of everything—give them a little bit of self-advocacy, a little bit of equipment, and introduce them to being at school when you have a hearing loss.”

The finding of teacher identity contributes to our understanding of the work of itinerant teachers by shedding light on how they may view their professional lives. Further research is needed to uncover how itinerant teacher identity may influence the work of itinerant teachers and their job satisfaction.

My Reflections

From the beginning of my doctoral studies, I was interested in the meaning of the unique itinerant teacher-student relationship, largely because of my own experiences as an itinerant teacher. As I began my research career and started investigating the literature
within Deaf Education, I was surprised by the very limited attention that has been paid to the influence and impact of teacher-student relationships within Deaf Education in general; and I found no studies that had investigated the unique and longstanding teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers and their students. I knew from my 12 years as a practicing itinerant teacher that the relationship was significant (even special), particularly in terms of providing social and emotional support; however, this was not reflected in research. My curiosity led me to design a research project with a relational focus and undertake this narrative inquiry.

I first interviewed the students, and felt personally – as well as professionally – connected to their stories of experience. All of the students told me stories of struggle and triumph, sadness and faith, sacrifice and perseverance. They told me how being deaf or hard of hearing impacted their lives and their sense of self, and each openly discussed the role their itinerant teachers played in their development. Each had confidence and a strong presence; they were determined to succeed. In a word, they all had grit! Megan’s story was filled with emotional content that I found personally moving, as I could empathize with her experiences, and relate her experiences to those of my previous students. As we talked, she explained how her life began when she was three years old, when she lost her hearing. Her story was filled with her struggles of self-acceptance and her deep drive to overcome her challenges. After each interview, I felt in awe of her and her accomplishments; her story gave me further inspiration for this work. Liam’s story resonated deeply with me on a professional level. He explained with clarity how his relationship with his itinerant teacher had its ups and downs, and how the attachment of each to the other grew over time. His story provided me with a unique lens, as he was the
only one of the four participants who had the same itinerant teacher throughout his or her school years, and therefore, he was able to discuss the significance of his relationship with his itinerant teacher as an 11-year educational experience. As I read his narrative, I gained much insight into the development of this unique teacher-student relationship and the deepening of the attachment over time.

I then interviewed the itinerant teachers, and was struck by the difference in tone and content of our discussions, compared to my interactions with the students. The students communicated their stories from a personal and vulnerable perspective, whereas the four itinerant teachers communicated their stories from a professional perspective. Each itinerant teacher clearly explained the details of her work with students at different developmental stages and highlighted how she saw her role in supporting development and empowering student success. The narrative of Lynda resonated with my own values and beliefs about the work of itinerant teachers, in that she was personally – as well as professionally – invested in her students’ well-being. She spoke about how she cared for her students, and made great efforts to build a trusting relationship with them. Lynda’s priorities as a teacher resembled my own, and I found her narrative comforting as it helped me appreciate the contributions I have made over my 12 years as an itinerant teacher. Amanda’s story also stood out as exceptional. She explained how her work often involved supporting families and providing comfort in times of distress. In this way, the role of the itinerant teacher extends into counselling practices. Amanda viewed the significance of her relationship with her students as providing all-encompassing support and being their personal cheerleader. Amanda’s story did not mirror my own experiences as an itinerant teacher; however, her explanations of the complexity of
itinerant teacher work expanded my view of the contextual demands placed upon itinerant teachers to provide social and emotional support within their teaching role.

Over the course of this work, my understanding of the significance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students has both broadened and deepened. What is the meaning of the relationship? At the beginning, I felt passionate that the meaning was about providing DHH students with the building blocks for student success. As I became more versed with the literature and through the interviews with both the itinerant teachers and students, I shifted my understanding of the significance to include a perspective of itinerant teacher job satisfaction. I now understand that the relationship is special, not only because of student success, but also because of mutual caring, empathy, and empowerment. During our interviews, each itinerant teacher commented that the interview process itself highlighted why she loved working as an itinerant teacher. One itinerant teacher expressed her work in terms of a butterfly metaphor; she saw her role as a facilitator of the DHH student’s identity beginning with emerging in the early years, to self-advocate in the elementary school years, to establishing identity in the middle school years, to cementing identity in the high school years, to emerging as an adult—as a DHH person (complete self acceptance) by high school graduation.

Throughout this work, my own professional identity shifted as I journeyed from having a life in schools as a practicing itinerant teacher and a colleague, to being a researcher of others’ lives in schools. Throughout the research process, I learned to appreciate my insider perspective as a place to gain insight and to be credible with my participants. I also learned that it is a place that requires great sensitivity, as the
relationship between a narrative researcher and participants is one of vulnerability. This was most evident during my interactions with the itinerant teachers, where all four participants commented on how they felt a bit uncomfortable as they read their own stories. One itinerant teacher commented, “It’s like listening to your voice on tape….” As a narrative researcher, I, too, felt vulnerable and needed to be very aware of my professional boundaries, the confidential nature of my interactions with participants, and my ethical limitations, as the participants knew each other and, in fact, some discussed their involvement in this study with each other. In this way my understanding of the complexity of this work grew, as I learned to negotiate the tensions between my professional boundaries as a researcher and my insider position as an itinerant teacher.

Limitations

Although the research question (part a and b) that guided this study was addressed by the narrative inquiry research design, the limitations are shared with narrative studies in general. First, narrative inquiry rests on the premise that we come to understand experience through the telling and retelling of stories. With this in mind, the goals of narrative analysis are to provide insights for both practice and research, and are not intended to be statistically generalizable to the greater population. Thus, because of the highly subjective and contextual nature of this style of research, the data do not yield findings that are generalizable to other individuals or different contexts. Nevertheless, the findings have transferability to other individuals, as they are applicable to other itinerant teachers and DHH students beyond the eight participants in this study. However, it should be noted that the extent to which the findings of this study capture the experiences of other itinerant teachers and DHH children and youth is unknown.
Second, given the co-constructed nature of narrative research and the meaning making between the researcher and the participants, questions on the credibility and trustworthiness of the research data (narrative stories) and the emerging findings arise. For the current study, participants’ narrative stories were written from the interview transcripts and through follow-up discussions with each participant. The authenticity of each co-constructed narrative was confirmed through member check procedures with each participant. In narrative research the emerging findings are a reflection of the reflexivity of the researcher; given my previous work as an itinerant teacher, the authenticity of the co-constructed narratives and the interpretation of the emerging findings were confirmed through both member checks with participants and through expert peer reviews (see Chapter III: Method for procedures). Further, issues of representation of the participants’ experiences were addressed by including each participant’s complete narrative story as part of this dissertation (see Chapter III: Method), and then using substantial quotes from these narratives in the presentation of the emerging themes in the Findings chapter (Chapter IV: Findings). Finally, given the co-constructed nature of this work, I also include a discussion of my own reflections in the current chapter (Chapter V: Discussion).

Third, due to the voluntary nature of recruitment for the itinerant teachers, only a female perspective is shared, and thus, we do not know if the findings of this work are applicable across genders. Given that relationships with male teachers may develop in different ways or male itinerant teachers may have different priorities for itinerant teacher support than their female colleagues, research that includes the perspective of male itinerant teachers would be valuable.
Fourth, the recruitment procedures for the students also limit the findings of the study. The students were recruited through a parent support organization, and, therefore, they were likely to have important support structures outside of the school context which may have contributed to their successful relationships with their itinerant teachers. The voices of students who have limited family support are not represented, and, therefore, the findings from the students’ perspectives must be interpreted with this in mind.

Further, the students in this study should be considered exemplars, as they were highly successful academically and transitioned to post-secondary education after completing high school. This study does not capture the stories of students who might be more vulnerable to academic failure and social-emotional distress than the participants who were included.

Finally, all of the itinerant teacher participants and all but one of the student participants were Caucasian and had been living in Canada most of their lives. Therefore, the narratives as a whole did not give voice to individuals from different cultures or those who may have immigrated to Canada. Consequently, we do not have a perspective that included possible intercultural or linguistic barriers. For future research, it would be important to include the perspectives of itinerant teachers and students who are from different cultural backgrounds, as cultural understanding of hearing loss and disability, as well as language barriers may influence the significance of the itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship.

**Significance of the Study and Implications for Practice**

This study has both theoretical and applied significance. Theoretically, it is hoped that the findings shed light on important aspects of itinerant teacher-student relationships
and provide insights into relational mechanisms with caring adults, all of which may influence DHH students’ success and social and emotional well-being at school. Further, it is hoped that the findings add to our understanding of social-emotional aspects of hearing loss, specifically for adolescents who are educated in inclusive school settings. In an applied sense, the findings underscore the importance of the teacher-student relationship in cultivating a safe and secure learning environment, one where DHH children and youth are able to explore what it means to be deaf or hard of hearing and to develop their DHH identity. It is hoped that the findings have contributed to the broader discussion of the important role of itinerant teachers not only in providing academic support, but also in terms of their unique roles in supporting their students’ emotional and identity development, and in facilitating their social inclusion at school. In addition, it is hoped that the findings may be a catalyst for a discussion of the unique teacher identity of itinerant teachers, an important topic that has not previously been addressed in the literature.

**Implications for Future Research**

The current study is suggestive of at least five avenues for future research. First, the dynamics within the itinerant teacher-DHH student relationship (i.e., identity development, attachments, and relational space) are compelling; however, the use of a narrative inquiry and multiple case study design limits the generalizability of the research findings. Future research could incorporate a survey tool and quantitative analysis, which would allow for statistical inferences to the greater population of both itinerant teachers and DHH adolescents. Second, future research could use a more direct participant recruiting strategy (e.g., purposeful sampling: maximum variation sampling or snowball
sampling) that may help identify and encourage participation from male itinerant teachers. Third, future research could be designed to encourage participation from DHH students who may have limited support outside the school setting (e.g., students who have low SES, students who are recent immigrants), as this may shed light on critical teacher-student relational factors that may not have emerged from the participant narratives in the current study. Fourth, future research might focus on the perspective of students with different cultural and linguistic experiences, as well as those who have additional or complex learning needs (e.g., blindness, autism spectrum disorder).

Finally, future research could incorporate developmental theory as a framework for investigation, as the findings holistically emphasize the developmental nature of itinerant work. Given that the itinerant teacher-student relationship is longstanding and spans across DHH students’ developmental stages, often over many years (kindergarten to grade 12), and that itinerant teachers have a unique teaching responsibility in supporting their students’ outcomes across developmental domains, including the language domain (e.g., speech, language), cognitive domain (e.g., academic), and affective domain (e.g., psychosocial, identity), and across developmental periods (kindergarten through grade 12), itinerant teachers need a broad and deep knowledge and understanding of child development. Currently, there is no research that has investigated how itinerant teachers vary their support across developmental stages and domains. Therefore, this line of research is necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding of the itinerant teaching role, their responsibilities across child development, and how these may influence the itinerant teacher identity. Collectively, future research is needed to inform teacher preparation programs and professional development initiatives about itinerant teacher
best practices when supporting DHH students’ social and emotional development.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Itinerant Teachers

Demographic Information
1) Years of experience as an itinerant teacher
2) Years of experience as a teacher at a school for the deaf
3) Educational background
4) In what districts have you worked? Were these urban or rural?
5) What is your scope of experience with children who are deaf and hard of hearing, in terms of the children’s:
   a. Hearing loss
   b. Modes of communication
   c. Assistive listening equipment

Narrative Interview
Task I
Everyone's experiences in life can be written as a book. I would like you to think about your work with one particular student or several students. This (these) student(s) should be someone with whom you have worked from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Reflect as if you are writing a book, and each of the following time periods will become chapters in this book.

1) Entry into kindergarten, 2) The primary years, 3) The intermediate years, 4) The high-school years, and 5) Transition planning post-secondary.

Task II
Now think of the titles you would give to each of the five chapters.

Task III
For each of the time periods in Task I, reflect on the following questions:
1) Tell me about a significant event or episode in the students’ life or stage when you have provided assistance and/or support. (If there is more than one, please reflect on all that you find significant).
2) Tell me why you find this/these event(s) or episode(s) significant.
3) Tell me why your relationship with the student(s) was significant for this event or episode.
4) Tell me what your role and/or relationship with the student played for this stage.
5) Tell me what aspects of this relationship helped encourage your students’ social and emotional development, and social interactions with his or her peers.
6) Tell me anything that may have hindered your students’ social and emotional development, and social interaction with his or her peers.
7) Looking back, is there anything you would have like to be different?
8) Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Students

Demographic Information:
1) Age
2) Age when your hearing loss was identified
3) What amplification equipment do you use (hearing aids, FM, CI)
4) Age started using amplification equipment
5) Is there any one else in your family with a hearing loss? If so, what relation?
6) Age/grade you started working with an ITDHH?
7) How many ITDHHs have you worked with?
8) Where have you attended school?

Narrative Interview
Task I
Everyone’s experiences in life can be written as a book. I would like you to think about your work with your Itinerant Teacher over your entire school experience (Kindergarten to Grade 12). Think as though you are writing a book, and each of the following time periods will become chapters in this book.
1) entry into kindergarten, 2) the primary years, 3) the intermediate years, 4) the high-school years, and 5) transition planning post-secondary.

Task II
Now think of the titles you give each of the five chapters.

Task III
For each of the time periods in Task I, reflect on the following questions:
1) Think about a time when a significant event happened in your life when you needed assistance and/or support of your Itinerant Teacher. (If there is more than one, please reflect on all that you find significant or important in some way).
2) Tell me why you find this/these event(s) or episode(s) significant or important.
3) Tell me why your relationship with your Itinerant Teacher was important for this event or episode.
4) Tell me why your relationship with your Itinerant Teacher was important for this stage in your life.
5) Tell me what aspects of this relationship helped encourage your social and emotional development, and social interactions with your peers.
6) Tell me what aspects of this relationship may have hindered your social and emotional development, and social interactions with your peers.
7) Looking back, is there anything you would have like to be different?
8) Is there anything else you would like to add?
## Appendix C: British Columbia Ministry of Education Special Education Category F

### Deaf or Hard of Hearing

**Level 2 funding allocation**

1701 Code F  
This checklist should only be used in conjunction with Section E.10 of *Special Education Service: A Manual of Policies Procedures and Guidelines (Nov. 2010)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To be eligible the following must be met</th>
<th>Student’s Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ The student has a medically diagnosed significant bilateral hearing loss, a unilateral loss with significant speech/language delay, or a cochlear implant (typically documented in a report from a health professional such as an audiologist).</td>
<td>PEN __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Assessment information indicates that the student has substantial educational difficulty due to the hearing loss.</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is documented evidence that:  
☐ A current IEP is in place, dated after September 30, previous school year.  
☐ The IEP has individualized goals and measurable objectives, with adaptations and or modifications where appropriate, and strategies to meet these goals.  
☐ The goals correspond to the category in which the student is identified.  
☐ The services outlined in the IEP relate to the identified needs of the student.  
☐ The student is receiving special education services to address the needs identified in the assessment documentation that are beyond those offered to the general student population and are proportionate to level of need.  
☐ The student is being offered learning activities in accordance with the IEP.  
☐ The IEP outlines methods for measuring progress in relation to the IEP goals.  
☐ A parent was offered the opportunity to be consulted about preparation of the IEP.

Reduction in class size is not by itself a sufficient service.  
☐ A qualified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing provides the services.
Appendix D: District Request for Recruitment of Itinerant Teachers

November 12, 2013
Burnaby School District 41
Board of Education
5323 Kincaid Street
Burnaby, BC V5G 1W2

ATTN: [Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]:

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia and working with Dr. Janet Jamieson in the area of the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I am currently conducting research for my dissertation work that focuses on the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and their students. Please accept this proposal of a study titled "Investigating Relationships: Itinerant teachers and their students" for your review. This study will involve recruiting itinerant teachers who work throughout BC through the Provincial Outreach Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing email distribution list. The each interested teacher participant will contact me directly and complete a two, 1-hour face-to-face interviews at times and locations that are convenient for the teacher.

This study has been approved by the University of British Columbia ethics review board (documentation is attached). Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions, or if I can provide further assistance in expediting this application.

Sincerely,

Nancy Norman
Doctoral Candidate
University of British Columbia
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4
Appendix E: Recruitment Letters for Itinerant Teachers

Email Text for Participant Recruitment:

Dear BC Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing:

I am a Ph.D. student working in the area of Deaf Education with Dr. Janet Jamieson at UBC. I am requesting your participation my dissertation research, which is investigating the unique teacher-student relationship between itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and their students. One important aspect of this research is to obtain the perspective of itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, with a specific focus on social and emotional development of children.

We are inviting you to participate in two individual interviews focusing on your experiences working with deaf or hard of hearing students throughout the school years. The first interview will specifically focus on the social and emotional supports that itinerant teachers provide, and the second interview will be conducted based on the findings of the first interview, with the goal of clarifying understandings and gaining deeper insights. We are interested in learning more about your experiences with this long-standing teacher-student relationship and would greatly appreciate your input.

Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. I have attached the research consent form that explains the purpose and procedures for this study. If you are interested in participating in the study, have questions, or if you would like further information about the study, you may contact [nancy.norman@alumni.ubc.ca](mailto:nancy.norman@alumni.ubc.ca) or [Dr. Janet Jamieson](mailto:janet.jamieson@ubc.ca) at 604-822-5262.

As a thank you and to acknowledge your time and assistance, each participant will receive a $25 Chapters gift card for taking part in this study.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study!

Sincerely,
Nancy Norman
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, & Special Education
University of British Columbia
Please join us in this important study!

Consent Form

Investigating the Teacher-Student Relationship between
Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and their Students

Principal Investigator:  Dr. Janet Jamieson, Professor
Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

Co-Investigator:  Nancy Norman, Ph.D. Candidate
Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

This research is for a Doctor of Philosophy degree and is part of a thesis. Information from this study will be presented in a thesis and may also be presented as a published journal article or a conference presentation.

Dear Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing,

The purpose of this form is to request your consent to participate in a research study. The study will be conducted in the Faculty of Education of the University of British Columbia, and will partially fulfill the requirements for a doctoral degree being completed by Nancy Norman (the co-investigator). I am inviting your participation because you have are an itinerant teacher and work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Purpose of the Study:
Currently, very little is known about the experiences of deaf and hard of hearing children in their relationships with their itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, especially from the itinerant teacher’s perspectives. The aim of the proposed research is to investigate teachers’ experiences with regard to the support they provide to deaf and hard of hearing students with
Appendix F: Consent Form for Itinerant Teachers

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

regards to their social and emotional development. Dr. Janet Jamieson and her graduate student, Nancy Norman, at the University of British Columbia have designed this project with the aim of gaining insights into the importance of this unique relationship. It is hoped that by identifying critical points of social vulnerability for students with hearing loss, as well as learning more about the support itinerant teachers provide, findings may promote new directions for professional development and professional preparation of itinerant teachers.

Study Procedures:
We are inviting you to participate in two individual interviews focusing on your experiences working with deaf and hard of hearing students throughout the school years. The first interview will specifically focus on the social and emotional supports that itinerant teachers provide, and the second interview will be conducted based on the findings of the first interview, with the goal of clarifying understandings and gaining deeper insights. We are interested in learning more about your experiences with this long-standing teacher-student relationship and would greatly appreciate your input.

The interviews will take place in the itinerant teacher’s home (or other convenient location of your preference) during the fall and winter of 2013-2014 (November-March). Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes to conduct. Each interview will be audio- and video-recorded to help us transcribe the interviews as accurately as possible. The recordings will not be used beyond this purpose and will not be edited, exhibited, or reproduced.

There are no known or suspected risks associated with participating in this study. However, by participating, you could help other teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing better support children with hearing loss. We hope our findings will help inform professional preparation for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, and also provide information useful for professional development activities. The study findings will be published in academic journal articles.

Honorarium:
To acknowledge your time and assistance, each participant will receive a $25 Chapters gift card for taking part in this study (to be given after the second interview).

Confidentiality:
Any information resulting from this research study will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Neither the names of participants nor their home communities will be identified in any published version of the study, so it is highly unlikely that your identity could be determined. Data records and analysis will be kept on a computer hard disk, which will be accessible to only the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator. If you decline to participate, there will be no jeopardy to your employment whatsoever.
Appendix F: Consent Form for Itinerant Teachers

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Contact:
If you are interested in participating in the study, have questions, or if you would like further information with respect to this study, you may contact N

ancy Norman at or by phone at 604 818 8307; or Dr. Janet Jamieson at 604 822 5262 or by e-mail at

If you have any concern about your treatment or rights as a research participate you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services

If you would like an interpreter present for your interview, we would be pleased to arrange for one at no expense to you.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study!
Appendix F: Consent Form for Itinerant Teachers

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Informed Consent:
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to my employment.

My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. My signature below indicates that I give consent to participate in this study.

I consent to participating in this study.

__________________________  __________________________
Signature                        Print name

Contact Information:

__________________________  __________________________
Telephone                        E-mail address

__________________________
Date

Copy of the consent form for the researcher’s records
Appendix F: Consent Form for Itinerant Teachers

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Informed Consent:
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to my employment.

My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. My signature below indicates that I give consent to participate in this study.

I consent to participating in this study.

______________________________  __________________________
Signature                  Print name

Contact Information:

______________________________  __________________________
Telephone                  E-mail address

______________________________
Date

Copy of the consent form for your own records
Appendix G: Recruitment Letter for Students

Email Text for Participant Recruitment (Students)
Dear CHHA-BC Parents’ Branch Parents,

I am a Ph.D. student working with Dr. Janet Jamieson at the University of British Columbia, and as part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting a research study investigating nature of the teacher-student relationship between adolescents who are deaf and hard of hearing and their itinerant teachers. One important aspect of this research project is to better understand the perspective of the students and thus, I am inviting your adolescent children who are 16 to 18 years old to participate in two individual interviews. The first interview will specifically focus on the social and emotional supports that itinerant teachers provide, and the second interview will be conducted based on the findings of the first interview, with the goal of gaining clarity and deeper insights. I am interested in learning more about your adolescents’ experiences with this long-standing teacher-student relationship and would greatly appreciate your child’s input.

In order to participate in this study, adolescents must meet the following criteria:
- Age 16 to 18 years old
- Attend a neighbourhood school alongside hearing peers
- Have worked with one or more itinerant teacher(s) of the deaf and hard of hearing throughout his/her school years

The interviews will take place in your home (or another convenient location of your adolescent child’s preference), during the spring of 2013 (April-June, 2013). Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes to conduct.
As a token of my appreciation for your time, each student participating in this study will be given a $50 cash gift.
I have attached the consent form that explains the purpose and procedures for this study. If you agree for your child to participate in this interview, and/or would like further information about this study, please contact me at XXXXXXXX

Please read the attached consent form before agreeing to participate in study.
Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this important study! I hope that the findings will help us better understand how itinerant teachers can best support students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Sincerely,
Nancy Norman
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, & Special Education
University of British Columbia
Please join us in this important study!
Consort Form

Investigating the Teacher-Student Relationship
Between
Itinerant Teachers and their Students

Principal Investigator: Dr. Janet Jamieson, Professor
Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

Co-Investigator: Nancy Norman, Ph.D. Candidate
Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

This research is for a Doctor of Philosophy degree and is part of a thesis. Information from this study will be presented in a thesis and may also be presented as a published journal article or a conference presentation.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The purpose of this form is to request consent for your adolescent child with a hearing loss to participate in a research study. The study will be conducted in the Faculty of Education of the University of British Columbia. The study will partially fulfill the requirements for a doctoral degree being completed by Nancy Norman (the co-investigator). I am inviting your participation because you have an adolescent child with a hearing loss who receives support from an itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Purpose of the Study:

Currently, very little is known about the experiences of deaf and hard of hearing children in their relationships with their itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, especially from students’ perspectives. The aim of the proposed research is to investigate students’ experiences with regard to the itinerant teachers’ support to their social and emotional development. Dr. Janet Jamieson and her graduate student, Nancy Norman, at the University of British Columbia have designed this project with the aim of gaining insights into the importance of this unique relationship. It is hoped that by identifying critical points of social vulnerability for students with hearing loss, findings may promote new directions for professional development and professional preparation of itinerant teachers.
Appendix H: Consent Form for Students

Study Procedures:
We are inviting your adolescent child (ages 16 to 18 years old), who is deaf or hard of hearing to participate in two individual interviews focusing on his or her experiences working with his or her itinerant teacher(s) throughout the school years. The first interview will specifically focus on the social and emotional supports that itinerant teachers provide, and the second interview will be conducted based on the findings of the first interview, with the goal of clarifying understandings and gaining deeper insights. We are interested in learning more about your adolescent child’s experiences with this long-standing teacher-student relationship and would greatly appreciate his or her input.

The interviews will take place in the adolescent child’s home (or other convenient location of your child’s preference) during the spring of 2013 (April-June). Each interview will take approximately 60 minutes to conduct. Each interview will be audio- and video-recorded to help us, as accurately as possible, transcribe the interviews. The recordings will not be used beyond this purpose and will not be edited, exhibited, or reproduced.

There are no known or suspected risks associated with participating in this study. However, by participating, you could help other children who are deaf and hard of hearing who are supported by itinerant teachers. We hope our findings will help inform professional preparation for teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing. The study findings will be published in academic journal articles.

Honorarium:
To acknowledge your time and assistance and to defray the costs of time involvement, each participant will receive a $50 cash gift for taking part in this study ($20 for the first interview and $30 for the second interview).

Confidentiality:
Any information resulting from this research study will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Neither the names of participants nor their home communities will be identified in any published version of the study, so it is highly unlikely that your adolescent child’s identity could be determined. Data records and analysis will be kept on a computer hard disk, which will be accessible to only the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator. If you decline to participate, there will be no jeopardy to the support you receive from CHHA-BC whatsoever.

Contact:
If your adolescent child is interested in participating in the study, has questions, or if you would like further information with respect to this study, you may contact Nancy Norman or Dr. Janet Jamieson. If you have any concern about your treatment or rights as a research participate you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services. If you would like to have a translator or interpreter present for your interview, we would be pleased to arrange for one at no expense to you.
Appendix H: Consent Form for Students

Parent’s Consent:
I understand that my child’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he or she may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to the support we receive from CHHA-BC.

My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. My signature below indicates that I give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I consent to my child participating in this study.

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Parent’s Signature                      Print name

Parent’s Contact Information:

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Telephone                        E-mail address

________________________
Date

Copy of the consent form for the researcher’s records
Appendix H: Consent Form for Students

**Parent’s Consent:**
I understand that my child’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he or she may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to the support we receive from CHHA-BC.

My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. My signature below indicates that I give consent for my child to participate in this study.

**I consent to my child participating in this study.**

______________________________  ________________________
Parent’s Signature            Print name

Parent’s Contact Information:

______________________________  ________________________
Telephone                     E-mail address

Date

**Copy of the consent form for your own records**
Appendix I: Student Assent

Dear Participating Student,

**Purpose of this Study:** Researchers from the University of British Columbia (UBC) invite you to be a part of this research project with deaf and hard of hearing students (ages 16 to 18 years old). We are studying how students’ hearing losses have experienced their relationship with their itinerant teacher(s) and we need your help to better understanding how students think and feel about social and emotional support they have received.

**Interview Content:** If you agree to participate, you will be involved in two separate individual interviews. The first interview will focus on how you have been supported in your social and emotional development by your itinerant teacher(s), and the second interview will focus on clarifying information and understandings, as well as gaining deeper insights into your experiences.

The interviews will take place in your home (or other location convenient to you) and will take about 60 minutes to complete. Each interview will be audio- and/or video-recorded and then transcribed. The recordings will be used only for the purposes of this study, and will not be edited or shared with anyone else.

**It is Voluntary:** The interview is voluntary, and if you change your mind at any time during the study, you may stop the interview. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your support from CHHA-BC or your itinerant teacher in anyway.

**It is Confidential:** The information that you give in this interview is confidential and no one at your school or in our community, including your parents/guardians, your itinerant teacher, other teachers, or your principal will have access to your interview information. No names or any other identifying information will be used. All information that you provide to the researchers will be keep confidential.

**Honorarium:** To thank you for participating in this study you will receive a $50 cash gift ($20 after the first interview and $30 after the second interview).

**Potential Risks:** There are no known or suspected risks associated with participating in this study, that is, there are no known risks of physical, emotional or mental harm to you.

**Potential Benefits:** It is important that you know that THIS IS THE FIRST study looking at the importance of the relationship between itinerant teachers and their students. It is hoped that this study will provide valuable information that will help us prepare future teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and best support students with hearing losses.

**Verbal Assent:** If you do not want to participate in the project, let me know.

Thank you for your help!