

Working in special education

Resource Teacher
of the Deaf





Meet Tiffany Whelan, a Resource Teacher of the Deaf at Van Asch Deaf Education Centre, Christchurch

Tiffany has been a Resource Teacher of the Deaf (RTD) in Christchurch since 2008.

Tiffany's story

Tiffany taught as a mainstream primary school teacher in Christchurch, before training as an RTD.

Tiffany's day-to-day

Tiffany visits each of her students in their regular classrooms, several times a week, focusing on literacy, language and deaf culture. "I help my students with their work using opportunities to teach based on the goals set out in their individual education plans and guide their teacher to support them with visual and language strategies. Wherever possible, my teaching is linked to the class programme - we do as much as we can in the classroom."

Reflecting cultural values in her work

Tiffany's students are fairly diverse and from a variety of cultural backgrounds. "It's interesting to hear their different ideas and family perspectives and I always join in cultural activities when the opportunity arises."



Rewards and challenges of the role

“I love working with the students and seeing them make progress,” says Tiffany, “but for me, the best bit is being able to be a good role model for my students as I’m also deaf, and am able to share my own understanding of life as a deaf person with them.”

“The main challenge? I’m always in someone else’s classroom and each teacher has their own way of doing things. I need to fit in with their programme whilst being aware of the needs of my student, and find ways to work collaboratively.”

Future aspirations

Tiffany wants to build up her experience as a lead teacher at this point. “I’m also quite keen to learn more about Theory of Mind and how it relates to reading and social development.”

Nature of the work


Resource Teachers of the Deaf (RTD) are employed by the combined board of the Van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education Centres.

Resource Teachers of the Deaf:

- › work collaboratively with parents, caregivers, teachers and other specialists to support the language, learning and social needs of children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- › develop language, communication and cultural skills and knowledge in the context of the New Zealand Curriculum
- › use a variety of specialist and general assessment tools and strategies, to identify specific needs and set achievable goals
- › prepare education programmes and check and maintain hearing technology
- › collaborate with a range of professionals from education, health and community organisations, and agencies.

Qualifications and experience

To become an RTD you will need:

- › a teaching qualification
 - › to have attained, be working towards, or willing to work towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching
 - › teaching experience.
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Skills and knowledge

In addition to the qualifications and experience, an RTD must have knowledge of or skills in:

- › New Zealand Sign Language
- › Deaf Culture
- › Te Whāriki, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum and/or the NZ Curriculum/ Te Marautanga o Aotearoa
- › teaching and teaching practice
- › managing hearing needs in a variety of settings
- › language and literacy development
- › effective communication, teaching, research and planning skills.

Career development

Becoming an RTD will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

With further training, other roles an RTD can move into within the deaf education centers include:

- › Classroom teacher for deaf students
- › Advice and guidance roles
- › Early intervention teacher
- › Specialist resource teacher in literacy, language, Deaf culture or visual communication
- › Leadership.



You will:

- › be supported and supervised by experienced professional colleagues
- › be kept up to date with the latest evidence
- › take part in ongoing professional learning and development
- › have opportunities to share and extend your knowledge and skills.





Further information about Resource Teachers of the Deaf

Special education careers and professional development

For more information about the role of the Resource Teacher of the Deaf and working in special education, visit our special education careers webpage **www.education.govt.nz/careers-in-special-education**

Special education scholarships and study awards

If you're interested in a career in special education you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out more at **www.education.govt.nz/r/sestudyawards**

Career information

For profiles of different careers visit the Careers New Zealand website **www.careers.govt.nz**

Contact us

Want to speak to someone about a career as an RTD? Give us a call or drop us an email.

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