**Community educators help promote learners’ emotional well-being**

### This is an important and challenging issue for Community Educators. Many girls within the Hub have had negative school experiences, and this may have been made worse by gender or disability related issues. Your learning hub needs to be a place that helps girls to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. This will help their participation in your learning activities. The Community Educator has a crucial role to play in encouraging all children’s social and emotional learning. Atmosphere and dynamics in the hub can be managed in order to encourage self-confidence and participation.

Girls need to understand and talk about their differences and similarities and must consider them as a natural part of society. You have an important role to play in helping girls to realise that their opinions, perceptions and emotions can be different but that they all are important parts of society. Diversity in society is enriching. As a community educator or a learning assistant you must model this by adopting a fair attitude towards all girls and organise activities that allow them to work together, interact and build their learning together. You need to encourage inclusive social behaviours such as mutual appreciation and respect, listening, tolerance and empathy

### Dealing with teasing

Girls who are disabled may be stigmatised by their families and communities, and this feeling can carry into the Hub. For example, due to negative labelling, students with visual impairment often shun inclusive education activities in Zimbabwe (Mahany, 2016) and the social aspect of learning in situations is often ignored in schools.

“S: I can discuss academic activities with the sighted students but not on social activities, they will just disappear from me and I cannot find them to socialise. “ VI Zimbabwean student (2016)

Your actions in dealing with issues such as teasing or shunning, will act as a model for the girls. It will also give strong signals to the disabled learners themselves about how you value them.

The physical layout of activities-supporting increased participation-the ways in which girls are welcomed, and the language that is used about them within the Hub all combine to contribute to their self-esteem and self-confidence. With regard to pedagogy, it is important to recognise any progress, however small, that individual girls are making.

### Acknowledging the contribution of each girl

Developing (or restoring) self-confidence and self-esteem in girls also entails recognising their contributions, however small they may be. Create a **Self-esteem inventory** with the girl. Talk to her about her strengths and weaknesses. Set aside perfection and set realistic expectations. Discuss with the girl that mistakes are made, maybe the girl misunderstands an instruction, because she was not able to hear it well. The girl needs to be confident and ask for clarification or help. If a girl knows herself, knows her own strengths and weaknesses she will succeed and meet her targets.

## Meeting the needs of specific girls and/or helping everyone?

The strategies and inclusive practices that are described so far will allow you to accommodate and support a diverse group of learners. However, when faced with supporting young people with intellectual disabilities and/or sensory impairments, educators may feel that these girls require special (i.e. different) pedagogical approaches. This belief is common in educators who have not worked with these young people before. It can therefore be helpful to plan for the specific needs of particular learners in your Hub, and then to reflect on the degree to which this plan might also help all members of the Hub.

Below we present some planning suggestions that relate to broad categories of disability. You are likely to produce others, in relation to your own situation and the young people in your Hub. It is useful to share and discuss your ideas with your school-based budy. .

### Girls with Visual impairment visual impairment

Imagine a learner with *visual impairment.* Think about any changes, or good practices, that you might need within the physical, social and pedagogical aspects of your own Hub. Many girls are coming to the hubs with a passion for learning, so the teaching methods need to appeal to their learning styles. Use the **Self-esteem inventory** as this will tell you what the strengths the girl brings. Talk to other CEs and your District Coordinator about where you can find more information.   
  
**Things to consider that might help the girl:**

* Ask the girl to about their visual impairment, to understand specific issues they may have.
* Be aware of the lighting in the room. Does it help or hinder the learner-ask them. And be prepared to try out different ways of seating with respect to the lighting in the Hub.
* Remove unnecessary physical obstacles in the Hub.
* Is the layout of Hub consistent? If not, how can you let the learner know of any changes when you make them?
* Address all students by name during discussion activities.
* Checking that you are heard. Is the pace and clarity of your speech accessible for the learner.
* The young person may have some sight; are they sitting in the best place to see what is happening? If you are using as board, is it clean, and near enough for them to see.
* If you are writing on a board, remember to describe any visual information (e.g. words and pictures) If an activity uses objects, pass these around. Can you include objects e.g. if you are carrying out numeracy activities, can you use beads or tactile materials
* Do you need to differentiate an activity [discussed in later section x] so that the learner can complete it successfully?
* Think who the girls is sat near or working with. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions?
* Can the girl signal to you or your assistant when clarification is needed.

### Girls with hearing impairments

Now consider a learner with *hearing impairment*, a girl who has some hearing ability. Think about any changes, or good practices, that yoou might need ensure within the physical, social and pedagogical aspects of your own Hub. Effectives strategies are crucial and these should be based on what you know about the girl’s hearing impairment.

#### Things to consider that might help the learner:

* Get to know the girl and find out about the severity of her hearing impairment. This may be from the girl herself, or the experts who have assesed her to establish hearing thresholds.
* Be aware of the lighting in the room. Does it help or hinder the learner-ask them. And be prepared to try out different ways of seating with respect to the lighting in the Hub.
* Often learners rely on sight, hence all information must be written whenever possible
* Checking that you are heard. Is the pace and clarity of your speech accessible for the learner. Try not to talk to the learner, or present information to the group, when turned away from them. Can they see your face.
* Use body language and expression to highlight points within your speech.
* Can your assistant be helpful, e.g. in taking notes or clarifying tasks.
* Do you need to differentiate an activity [discussed in later section x] so that the learner can complete it successfully?
* Think who the girl is sat near or working with. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions?
* Can the girl signal to you or your assistant when clarification is needed?
* Always get the attention of the girl before speaking to her.
* Ensure the girl can feedback to you so you can make adjustments.

Background noise can be a profound barrier for young people with hearing impairment. This can include the noise of other learners and nearby traffic. Can you reduce this noise or ‘schedule it in any way-? For example so that your instructions to the group can be heard (before learners move around or a bus arrives), or that small groups use turn taking in their work together. Over time some girls will have to learn to use hearing aids.

Arrange seating so that the girls can see each others’ faces. Teach them to take turns when speaking and get into the habit of signalling before they speak.

When you are working with larger groups, indicate with your hand to a girl and say their name. This is very helpful in orientating the learner towards the girl who is speaking next or to where the activity has moved.

### Girls with physical impairments The term ‘physical impairment’ can encompass a wide variety of situations. It might refer to a girl who is able to use only one hand, someone who uses a wheelchair to move around or a learner who has muscular and coordination difficulties. Therefore, as with the other categories we have considered, a good first step is to get to know the girl and find out about their disability and the impact that this might have.

However, there are some general point to consider:

* + - Arrange the room so that everyone can move around as easily as possible.
    - Can the girl access her seating area easily?
    - Is access to the toilet straightforward? Is assistance required
    - Think who the girl is sat near or working with. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions?
    - Consider regular ‘movement breaks’ to help with management of pain.
    - Can your assistant be helpful, e.g. in taking notes, clarifying tasks or handling materials.
* Some young people with physical impairments will need extra time to speak and become involved in activities. Do your planned activities, and ground rules, allow this to happen?
* If a learner uses a wheelchair; where possible place yourself at their eyelevel when talking to them. Is your writing on a board at a height that is visible to them?

### Girls with speech and language difficulties Many of the issues that children with speech and language difficulties experience in learning are not immediately obvious. For example, some girls will experience difficulties with language comprehension. This makes it particularly important to get to know the girl’s strengths and identify where they might need support.

* Take time to get to know the girl’s ways of communicating and how they speak.
* If their speech is difficult to understand, sit them with someone who understands and likes them.
* The use of carefully planned groups can be beneficial. Consider who will work well together as a group. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions?
* Teach the girls key word signing.
* Check that you can be heard. Is the pace and clarity of your speech accessible for the learner. Try not to talk to the girl, or present information to the group, when turned away from them. Can they see your face?
* Use body language and expression to highlight points within your speech.
* Allow time for girls to think and respond. They may need time to sequence their thoughts. Planned turn taking is very helpful in group work.
* When giving instructions, opt for clear manageable ‘chunks’ of information.
* Give explanations of unfamiliar words and metaphors
* Make sure that girls are able to ask for clarification. Your assistant may be helpful here in supporting explanations in a busy situation.

### Learners with intellectual disabilities

This terms encompasses a very diverse group, spanning those who might be later than their peers in beginning reading or understanding some concepts to those who are at an early stage of intellectual, communication, social and emotional development. This girl may need support for many activities and is likely to have at least one impairment additional to their learning disability. Assessments by pyschologists is critical in order to determine their levels of understanding.

Home language learning is essential as is making presentations appealing: use pictures and large print and make activities practical so that girls learn by doing.

You have probably identified that nearly all these strategies and ideas presented here will support many learners with different impairments and also those without disability or impairment. This is reassuring, and illustrates that through reflection and planning you will be able to develop learning hub activities that work well for a diverse group of learners.

### Summary points

* Manage the physical space so girls are safe and valued, and can access the learning activities.
* Manage the social and psychological aspects so that girls feel confident and happy to engage with the learning activities.
* Manage the pedagogical aspects of the hub, to support diverse leaners and carefully consider how to support collaborative learning.

Together this will help create a welcoming and supportive environment, in which girls can learn successfully.

| **Visual impairment** | **Hearing impairment** | **Physical impairment** | **Speech and language difficulties** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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