

## ents in 'Hearing Atmosphere'

By HARRY MULHALL

Staff Reporter

The classroom outwardly has the marks of something special.

The floor is carpeted; the class intimate; there's a microphone for the teacher.

It's on the second floor of Queen Mary Public School. But it exists by courtesy of the local public school system.

The students are from the Ontario School for the Deaf, participants in a pilot project that places them in an ordinary school environment.

In all there are nine youngsters hard of hearing — not deaf — and they've been going to Queen Mary since September, mingling with schoolmates of normal hearing.

"The idea is to place them in an overall hearing environment," explains OSD assistant superintendent Peter Kitcher, "to get them to integrate as much as possible."

Integration is not an instant process — and the Queen Mary project is no different.

Hence the special classroom, equipped and staffed by the OSD — after local school authorities signified their co-operation for the 1969-70 school year.

But the experiment's origins are from an earlier date — with Mr. Kitcher and Queen Mary principal Ronald Casswell as motive forces.

The school board provided the room — and the carpet needed to improve acoustics. The OSD installed a hearing loop — needed to amplify teaching instructions on students' hearing aids — and audio visual equipment.

It also designated OSD staff member Lynn Savage to conduct the pilot class.

Now, the project is ending its first quarter-year. Indications are that it will not disappoint neither its two originators or the authorities.

"It's early to say yet," cautions Mr. Casswell, "But — I've great hopes it's working out better than we'd expected."

Both student bodies within Queen Mary have accepted the situation as nothing phenomenal.

"The OSD children have fitted well into the school environment — and the school children have accepted them," says the principal. "It's a very normal situation. They're just another class in the school."

Encouraging results have been demonstrated by the contact.

Many young people, deaf or hard-of-hearing, do not converse easily with strangers since they are certain they may not be understood, says the school head.

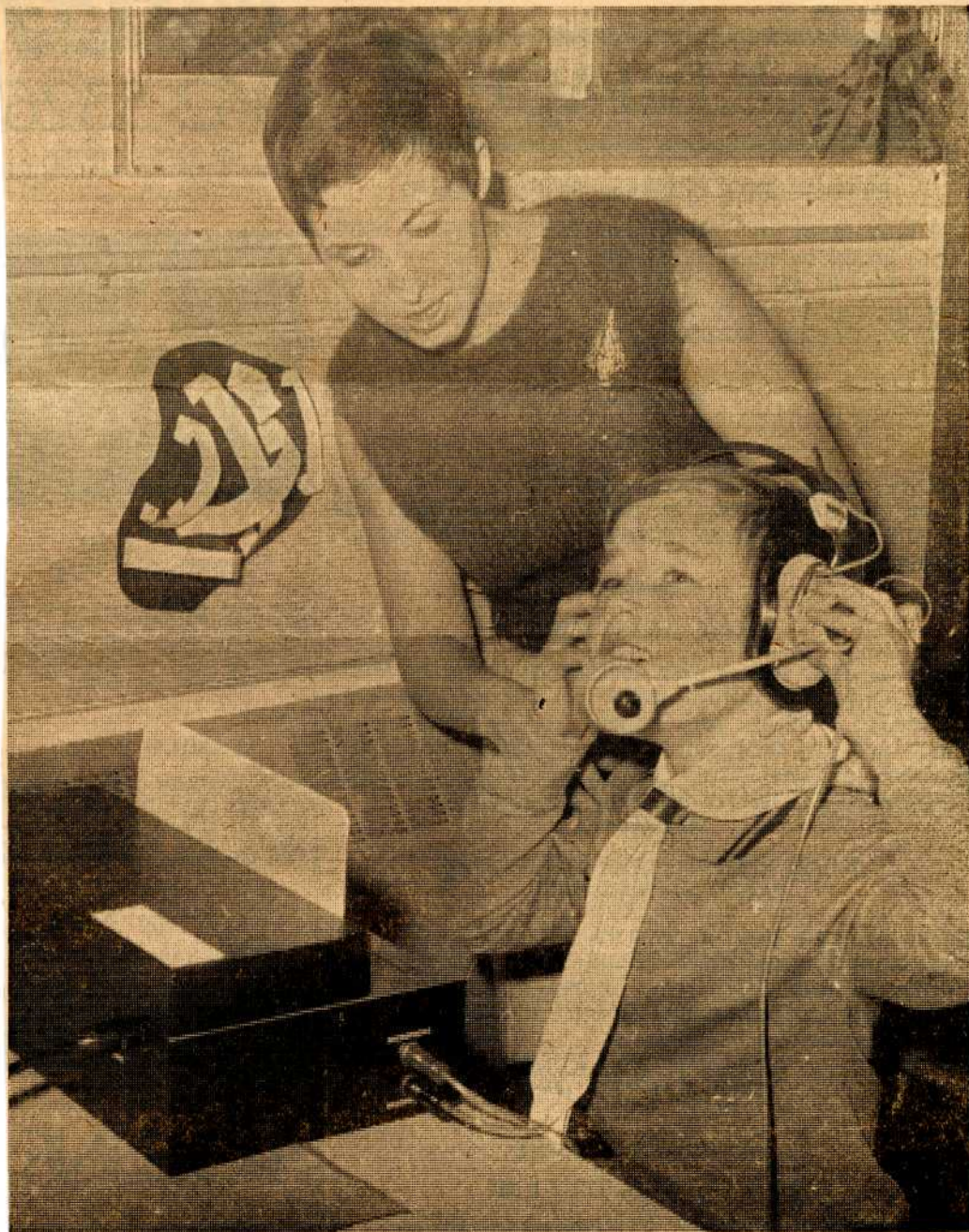
Yet "these children have done something I don't think they could have done three months ago: They're taking part in our assemblies. They will read and talk to our student bodies."

However, the special classroom also has paid dividends for Queen Mary students. Advantage has been taken of the availability of such a specialized service. At least two pupils with speech handicaps have "definitely improved," says Mr. Casswell.

The OSD students range in age from eight to 12 years. Queen Mary enrolment ranges up to Grade 6. There are no provisions for moving OSD students into higher public grades — as yet.

Mr. Casswell admits something will have "to be done" for students who qualify for such grades.

Mr. Kitcher says that "hopefully, this is the next problem."



### An Audio Assist

Ontario School for the Deaf has specially equipped Queen Mary classroom for project that places hard-of-hearing students in public school environment. Eugene Richer, 10-year-old OSD student from Garson, in Northern Ontario, gets assist from audio machine supervised by Mrs. Savage.