

🎵 Instrumental Music and the Deaf 🎵

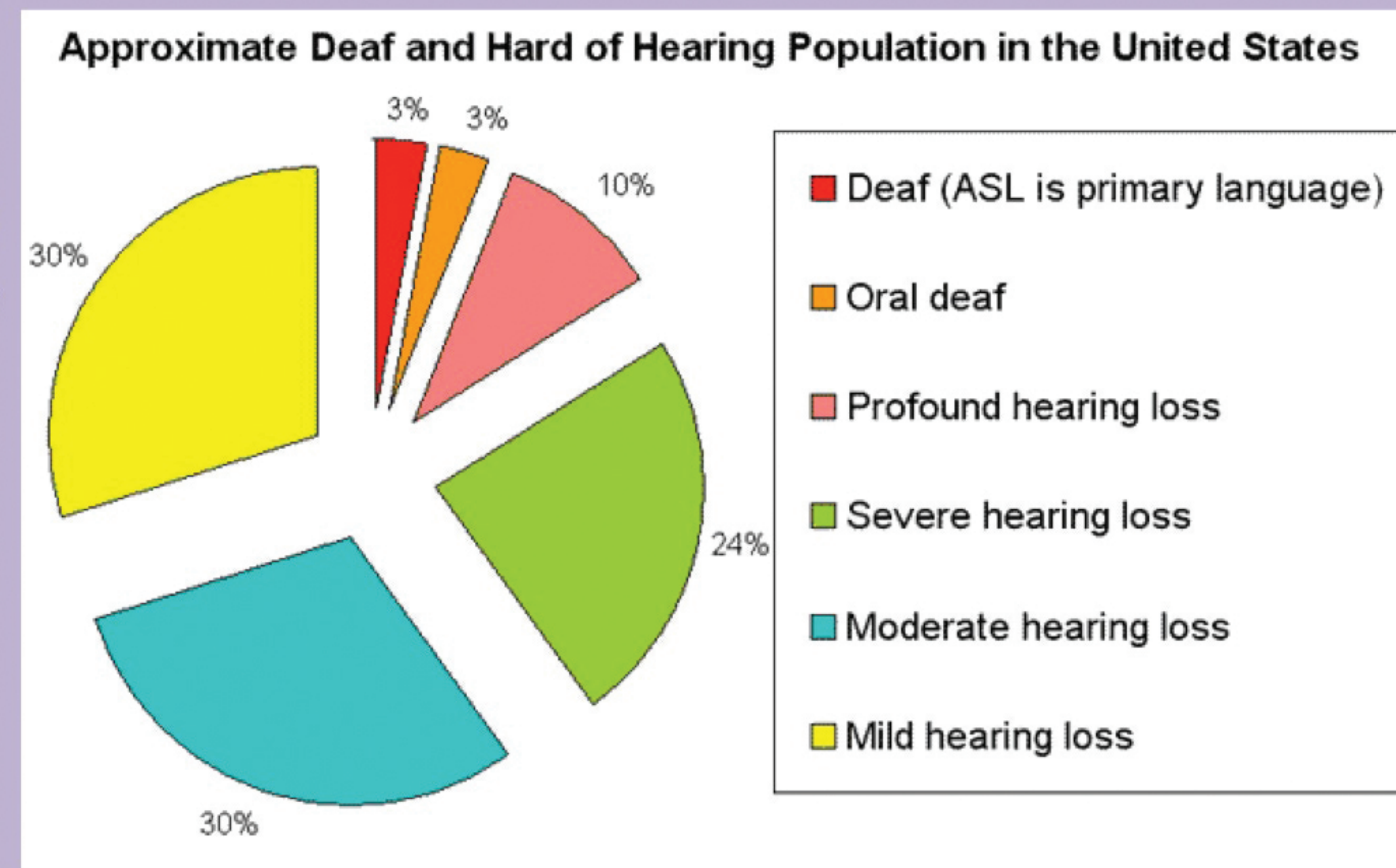
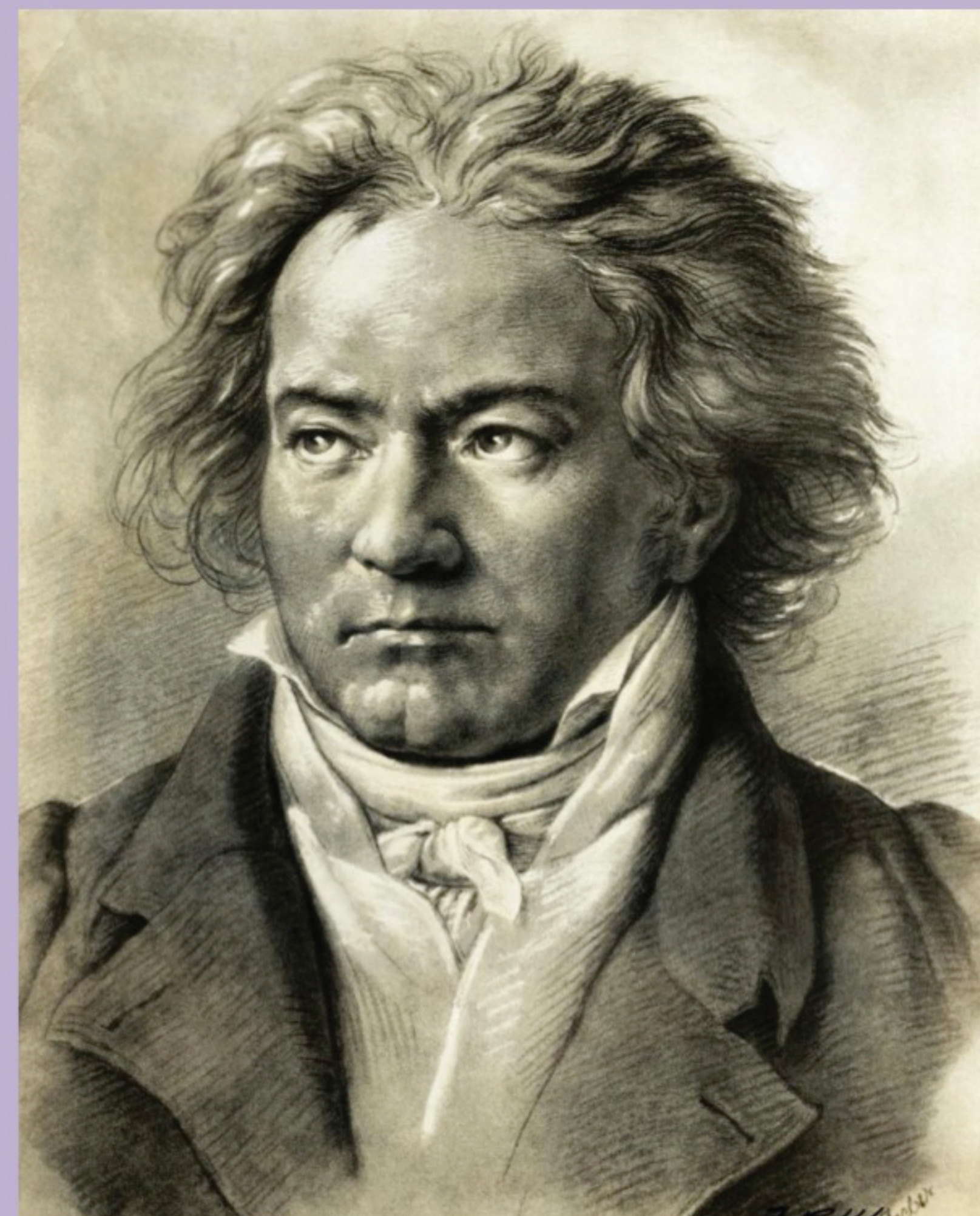
A Study in Education

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What is Deafness?

Deafness is caused by multiple situations including exposure to loud noises, an injury, or a genetic defect. It is a condition that affects the subject's ability to hear and process sounds. Depending on the severity of the hearing loss, patients can be assisted by hearing aids or more invasive treatments like the cochlear implant. Being completely deaf is a rare phenomenon, and occurs in only a small percentage of the hearing impaired population globally. This means that the majority of hearing impaired students wanting to play an instrument can actually process the pitches and volumes, just in a different manner than their hearing peers.

“The barriers are not erected which can say to aspiring talents and industry, 'Thus far and no farther.’ –Ludwig van Beethoven



From the Hearing Loss Association of North Carolina (2003)

Why teach music to the hearing impaired?

Every student has the right to participate in the art and community of their choice, and to be encouraged and inspired by their instructors. The study of music is a much greater feat than simply the mastery of a specific instrument. It is an art that connects individuals across rooms and continents through its highly inter-personal nature. Hearing impaired students should be encouraged to participate in the band room in order to develop the social skills and emotional expression that musical study facilitates.

“If we see someone in a wheelchair, we assume they cannot walk. It may be that they can walk three, four, five steps. That, to them, means they can walk.” –Evelyn Glennie, Hearing-Impaired Percussionist

Alternative Teaching Styles

🎵 Setting up the Rehearsal Space

The student must be near enough to the front of the room to read the instructor's lips and clearly see the conducting patterns, but remain close enough to the other students to perceive the sounds they are making with their instruments. Like every well-designed band hall, the room must be completely void of all excess sound; loud air conditioners, students heard from neighboring rooms, or noisy interruptions will seriously inhibit the hard of hearing student's ability to participate in the room.

🎵 Games to Improve Ensemble Listening Skills

An example from the John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles: Start by sitting on a hard floor, equipped with an electronic music player and large speakers. The instructor plays a pitch on the speakers, which the student can either feel directly with their hand or perceive from the floor, and asks the student to point either up or down depending on whether the pitch is high or low

🎵 Visual Instruction

The deaf student's ability as far as understanding instruction is the same as a hearing student, however there are specific limitations that must be considered. The instructor can speak only while facing the students, for instance, otherwise the child will be unable to read lips. Eye contact must be made at all times and a written or printed copy of all instructions should be provided.