



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER

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President's Report

I would like to thank those members who have responded to our request for membership fees and donations. It is encouraging to know we have your support!

For those of you who are still thinking about finding a cheque and mailing the membership, I would encourage you to do so as soon as possible. OAFCCD is in a financial crisis and every dollar is vital. In an effort to control costs, the contract for Alison Morse has been reduced from 15 hours per week to 10 hours - this means less services for those families who are overwhelmed and need help in getting services for their child.

In another cost saving move the Newsletter is only being sent to paid members (including either 2003 or 2004 fees) and active volunteers. If you value this Newsletter, please make sure you pay your membership fees or make a donation. As always we encourage you to share this Newsletter with other families and encourage them to join OAFCCD.

I would also like to remind you that we are looking for more volunteers. On the insert page of the Newsletter we have listed some of the volunteer jobs that are available. Please look at the volunteer positions and consider whether you can help OAFCCD to reach more families and help more children.

As the provincial government continues to look at rationalizing health care services the issue of speech and language services for children who attend school is once again being reviewed. OAFCCD continues to advocate for the school boards to have the lead responsibility for provision of speech and language services and have developed a Position Statement on Speech and Language Services for School Age Children. A brief summary is on page 4 and the full document is available on the OAFCCD Website. I encourage you to read this position statement and share the OAFCCD position with other families and professionals.

Rhonda Jacobson, President

Snacks Are for Talking Too: The KELI Cookbook

The Toronto District School Board Kindergarten Early Language Intervention (KELI) Program has recently published a cook book with recipes and activities to stimulate language development. Snack time is an important part of the KELI program and it is designed to provide many opportunities for students to use and expand their oral language, literacy, and social communication skills. While children learn how to make snacks, they also learn to label and classify objects, sequence events for a purpose, ask a variety of questions, and look for familiar words in recipes. The following recipe has been re-printed with permission from the cookbook.

Goldilock's Face

Ingredients:

- ! round crackers
- ! raisins
- ! string cheese/grated carrots
- ! red jujubes hearts/sweet red pepper

Instructions:

- ! Use round crackers as Goldilock=s face.
- ! Decorate the cracker with two raisins for eyes, string cheese/grated carrots for hair, and a red jujube heart/sweet red pepper for lips.

Talking Activities:

- ! Talk about the three things that Goldilock=s did in the bear=s house (e.g., ate the porridge, broke Baby Bear=s chari, fell asleep in Baby Bear=s bed).
- ! Discuss why AGoldilock=s@ is a good name for the character (e.g., golden hair).
- ! Discuss how the bears felt when they saw the mess that Goldilock=s left in their house. What could they say to Goldilocks so that she would not make the mess?

**For information on how to order the KELI
cookbook see insert page.**

Great Expectations: Succeeding at School

Presentation from the OAFCCD Annual Conference 2004

**by Dr. Genese Warr-Leeper,
Professor, School of Communicative Disorders,
Elborn College, University of Western Ontario**

Dr. Warr-Leeper is a recognized expert in language disorders, and has published widely on the nature of language disorders in special populations including behaviour disorders, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders as well as on the efficacy of novel treatments and service delivery models. Recent research interests include: social skills training for integrated children with physical disabilities; computer-assisted language training for children with Down syndrome; effectiveness of mediated social communication stimulation for children *at risk*; identification of young children at risk for hearing impairments; and language and literacy development in children. Dr. Warr-Leeper has been actively involved with OAFCCD since it was founded ten years ago.

Dr. Warr-Leeper began by providing an overview of speech and language disorders. Disorders of speech, including articulation, dysfluency (stuttering) and voice, are more easily identified, while language disorders are less obvious. It is estimated that 10% of all children have a communication disorder. Of these children less than 30% will have a speech disorder, the majority have language disorders, with some children having both.

Dr. Warr-Leeper provided an overview of the components of language. Language is the set of structural rules for sounds, words, sentences, texts and social behaviour. Children acquire language partially through imitation but the primary means is through subconscious abstraction of rules. Parents do not consciously teach language rules but do provide language models that help children to learn. Children watch and listen, try to copy the sounds and words, and gradually learn the rules subconsciously. Although some language rules have been learned at school, most people can't usually define all of the rules that have been learned subconsciously over many years of communicating with other people. Thus as parents talk and read with their children, the hidden language rules are taught. The speech-language pathologist works with the child, teachers, and others to improve abstractions of rules through guided practice techniques and more direct teaching of rules and compensations.

Children with language disorders have difficulty learning the rules of language and may have difficulty in understanding other people or expressing themselves. As a result it may look like they have behaviour problems ("You are not listening to me or doing what I asked.") and they will also have difficulty learning new languages (reading, math, science, French). For children with a language disorder parents, teachers and others have to provide more focused practice and a more explicit approach to teaching language and language rules.

Achieving the skills needed for school success begins in the crib with skills building one on another. However, the development and maturation of language is not simply a matter of piling up knowledge and strategies. Development and maturation are the result of evolution of the organism. All cognitive, sensory, and language domains work together with experience to create a new and different learning machine at each stage of development. Because all humans have a different constellation of abilities and experience, each stage will vary from person to person.

Development of skills occurs along a continuum: - *Practical attempts to unconscious knowledge to adult skills* of reading, writing, problem solving, appropriate behaviour and thus contribution as a member of society. For

example the development of writing showing comparable oral and written language stages:

Development of Oral and Written Language		
Oral Language Stage	Written Language Stage	Level of Understanding
Babbling and Cooin	Scribbling	Exploration of medium
Language Intonation	Linear/repetitive drawing	Refining the form
Native language sounds	Letterlike forms	Cultural relevance
Words	Letters and early word-symbol relationships	Conventions of language
Creative grammar	Invented spelling	Over generalization of Arule@ hypothesis
Adult speech	Standard spelling	Formal structure

Dr. Warr-Leeper focused on the major oral and written language attainments that are needed by children, and she identified simple, effective and widely applicable procedures to help children develop these attainments. For example, the following strategies can be used to improve listening comprehension or information processing:

Strategies to Improve Listening Comprehension and Information Processing		
Strategy Name	Strategy Elements	Parent Action
Verbal Mediation	Overt and covert talking, explaining, ordering or instructing oneself	Ask child questions or to talk about what they heard
Rehearsal	Active/aloud or silent	Ask child to practice saying what they heard or want to say in response
Paraphrasing	Message is transformed into the child=s own words and integrated with information the child knows	Tell child what was said in words the child can understand. Ask child to explain what they heard in their own words.
Visual Imagery	Drawing or describing a mental picture to portray the ideas or information presented	Ask child to draw a picture of what they heard. Ask child to close their eyes and describe what they see from the story.
Analysis of key ideas and networking	Identify important words or concepts and relate them to familiar concepts. Child then elaborates and builds networks or bridges from stored ideas to new concepts.	Help child make a list of key words. Ask child to define or explain each word. Offer an explanation for new or difficult words. Talk about new concepts and ideas, and help the child relate them to more familiar concepts.
Systematic retrieval strategy	Ideas are elaborated on verbally and related to previously known ideas. These elaborations are understanding, thinking about, and retrieval of the material to be remembered. Self-questioning and interrogative strategies are used.	Ask child to organize new words and concepts into lists or a chart. Ask child to explain how the words and ideas connect together. Prompt with extra questions or observations if necessary.

OAFCCD Position on School Speech and Language Services

The ability to communicate effectively is an essential skill in modern society. Children who have communication impairments are at a disadvantage in every way, including their ability to be educated, to be involved in community activities, and to participate in society.

Children with speech and language disorders may have **difficulties at Grade 2 & 3, when the child is learning to read, at Grade 5, when the child is expected to write in a conventional manner, and Grade 9, when the secondary school curriculum is delivered primarily through the listening mode.** Students with communication disorders also have **difficulties with social communication skills** and may have behaviour problems which lead to suspensions and involvement in the criminal justice system.

OAFCCD recommends that the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services work in collaboration to review Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 81 (PPM81) and develop a new provincial policy for speech and language services. OAFCCD recommends that the new policy should assign the Ministry of Education lead responsibility for the provision of speech and language services for all children in publicly funded schools. The new policy should:

1. Ensure that school board **funding for speech and language services is clearly designated and protected** for the provision of speech-language services.
2. Establish **benchmarks** for the delivery of speech and language services that include a **full range of identification and intervention services** and be **based on a minimum ratio of Speech-Language Pathologists.**

In order to achieve an integrated service system OAFCCD further recommends that the funds for all speech services currently provided by Community Care Access Centres be transferred to the Ministry of Education.

Benefits to Having Speech and Language Services Delivered by the School Board:

- Assigning the responsibility for delivery of speech-language services to school boards will reduce fragmentation and duplication of services.
- School boards will be responsible for assessment of all students and management of a single access system. This will improve access to service and streamline the referral process.
- School boards have the authority to employ Speech-Language Pathologists or contract services from community agencies to meet the special needs of students who are medically fragile or who require complex care services.
- School board based SLPs are part of the school team and are able to integrate speech and language services with the curriculum and literacy initiatives.
- School boards in Ontario have the infrastructure in place to expand services and meet the needs of all students with communication disorders.
- Enhancing the school system to meet the needs of all students with communication disorders builds on the Preschool Speech and Language System.

OAFCCD believes that a new inter-ministerial policy is needed for the delivery of speech and language services to students and that **schools should be responsible for the primary delivery of speech and language services.**

(For more information on the OAFCCD Position Statement on Speech and Language Services for School Age Children check the OAFCCD Website at: www.oafccd.com)

OAFCCD Volunteer Opportunities

SEAC Representatives: Each school board in Ontario has a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and OAFCCD is able to nominate members who will represent local families by attending SEAC meetings. The requirements for this position include Canadian Citizenship, over 18 years of age, a tax payer to the relevant school board and not an employee of the school board. SEAC meetings are held monthly from September to June and can last 3-4 hours. SEAC reps are supported by OAFCCD with training opportunities, monthly updates and a membership manual. This is an excellent way to find out about special education program and services in your board and to make sure our children have a voice.

Chapter Leaders: Members who are willing to organize Chapters. Includes planning and organizing parent meetings, being a contact for local parents via phone or email, connecting with local service providers and organizing or attending local public awareness activities as a representative of the association. Meetings should be held at least once a year.

Community Contacts: Members who will act as a contact for new members and talk to members on the phone about the organization and local community services and issues.

OAFCCD Board Members: All Chapter Leaders and contacts are ex-officio members of the OAFCCD Board and are welcome to attend meetings which are held 5-6 times per year. Meetings are generally held in the London - Toronto area, with more distant members participating by phone.

Short Term Volunteer Positions

Volunteers are required for a variety short term commitments to plan and organize specific activities - including data entry for the OAFCCD database, organizing local Workshops or the Provincial Conference, and public awareness activities for May as Better Speech, Language and Hearing Month.

Public Awareness Activities: Public awareness activities can include setting up an Information Display at a community location or event, stuffing envelopes, distributing OAFCCD brochures in the community or arranging for a story to about a child with a communication story to be featured in the local paper.

Newsletter Development: Volunteers are needed to help with the Newsletters, by writing articles or providing information on local events which can be included in the Newsletter. Volunteers are also needed to edit and review the articles.

Fund raising or Grant writing: Volunteers are needed to develop and write grant proposals or organize local fund raising activities. Or you may have information on sources of funding that can be approached to provide support for OAFCCD activities. Funds are needed for local Chapter meetings, the Annual Conference, Newsletters and the printing of public awareness materials, as well as the ongoing organizational costs. New fund raising activities include selling Speech Bubbles as part of May awareness activities.

Parent Articles and Resource Development: Volunteers are needed to review and update OAFCCD Parent Articles and to edit new resources. This job can be done from a home computer in Word or WordPerfect format.

Support and materials are available for these activities. Call Alison Morse, Provincial Coordinator at (519)842-9506 for more information about OAFCCD and volunteer opportunities.