



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2003

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Provincial Updates

New Special Education Funding:

The new year has started on a positive note with announcements, in December, from the provincial government that school boards would receive new ISA Grants funding (based on approved claims) in the 2002-2003 school year. These new funds will help to relieve the pressure on special education budgets and, in many boards, provide for an expansion in special education programs and services.

OAFCCD has been critical of the ISA Grant eligibility process and the student profiles, but we are still very pleased to see new special education funds that recognize the high costs of meeting the needs of some special education students. Considering that the majority of these students will require speech and language services, we are very optimistic school boards will use the new funds to enhance these services.

Special Education Plans:

Over the next few months each school board will be reviewing their Special Education Plan and making decisions about the programs and services which will be available in the next school year. OAFCCD will be working through the SEAC reps to encourage school boards to enhance speech and language programs. However, we also need your help in getting the message to Trustees about the importance of speech and language services.

The review of Special Education Plans is a public process and should include public consultation. The consultation may take various forms including:

- making drafts available on the board Website
- holding special public meetings
- consulting with school councils and other groups
- inviting presentations to SEAC or the Trustees.

We encourage you to take part in the process and share your perspective. If your child has had services

and it has made a difference, share the success. If your child has been waiting months for service, express your concern. Your participation can make a difference and we will be pleased to provide you with support documents to make the case for enhanced services.

Spring Budget:

While the recent announcement of new special education funding is encouraging, speech and language services are still inadequate to meet children's needs. Funding for Education is still inadequate and Dr. Rozanski, in the Report of the Education Equality Task Force, estimates that implementation of all the recommendations will cost \$1.7 billion dollars over three years.

OAFCCD believes that there is an urgent need for an increase in Ministry of Education benchmark costs (salaries and benefits) and SEPPA grants. In addition, the Preschool Speech and Language Program is over-stretched with increasing costs and long waiting lists. OAFCCD will be making a submission to the Ministry of Finance with these concerns, but we also encourage you to make local MPPs aware of the needs.

Winning Photo

The OAFCCD Photo Contest was won by **Jeff Davis of Richmond Hill**. The winning photo features Aaron and Avery. The picture, and several others entered in the contest, will be used in upcoming OAFCCD publications.

This Issue Features:

- ✓When Kids Tune Out - Strategies for Managing ADHD in Children (pg 2-3)
- ✓What is Phonological Awareness and Why is it Important for Children Who Are Learning to Read? (Pg. 3)
- ✓Insert - Individual Education Plans (IEP) - The Parent's Role (Insert)

WHEN KIDS TUNE OUT

Strategies for Managing ADHD in Children

10 year-old Jacob cannot sit still in class. In fact, it seems he is in the hallway more than the classroom some days. Emily is in Jacob's class, but unlike him, she is well liked by the teacher. Quiet and compliant, she is hardly discernible amidst the clutter of the Grade 5 classroom. She works slowly and takes most of her work home to finish. The problem is, she forgets to record assignments and loses track of papers, which means that her homework is not always done. Her parents are frustrated, but her teacher doesn't seem to care because Emily is never a problem in class. Although Jacob and Emily are classroom opposites, both students have attention deficit disorders that contribute to their academic struggles. While Jacob gets a lot of attention for his problems, Emily's are hardly noticed. This can be fairly typical of girls who do not have associated symptoms of impulsive or hyperactive behaviour.

It is estimated that 5-10 % of the population is affected by Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), characterized by a reduced ability to pay attention and symptom onset before the age of seven.

Students with ADHD often struggle with the demands of school because of difficulties with listening to lessons, organizing materials, remembering instructions, managing time, setting goals, breaking large tasks down into steps and following through on tasks independently. Boys are diagnosed earlier and more frequently than girls because of a higher frequency of behaviour problems; however, incidence rates are quite similar between the two sexes.

Approximately 45% of affected children have associated language and learning impairments. Jacob had problems understanding language abstractions (e.g. indirect requests like "Cut it out") and struggled to "find" words when he talked (i.e. word retrieval problems). Emily's recall of spoken instructions was poor (i.e. reduced auditory memory) and her oral and written communication (i.e. discourse formulation skills) were weak, which contributed to slow working speed.

Speech-Language Pathologists play a key role in identifying and treating language based learning disorders. Early identification and treatment are critical in preventing academic failure and social/emotional problems common in children with ADHD. Speech-language pathologists also consult with teachers and parents to develop coping strategies to improve students' behaviour and social skills.

Students often require educational assessment and specialized tutoring to provide the one-on-one teaching and skills development (e.g. time management, study skills, test-taking strategies) required for school success.

Tips For Parents:

- Request a Speech-Language pathology assessment if you have any concerns about your child's reading, writing, listening, memory, speech or social skills.
- Learn how to advocate for your child. Consider joining a support group for parents of children with communication disorders (OAFCCD), ADHD (i.e. CHADD) or learning disabilities (LD Association).
- Provide as much structure as possible at home. Establish routines for important tasks (e.g. chores, homework) to decrease the impact of organization and memory problems.
- For young children, provide advance warning of any changes in routine or transition times to reduce associated anxiety.
- Teach strategies for organizing your child's workspace and written work (e.g. labelled storage areas, written outlines for projects).
- Give instructions that are clear and simple.
- Involve your child in physical activities to allow constructive ways to burn off excess energy.
- Use consistent behaviour management strategies. Focus on the use of positive and specific praise for appropriate behaviour.
- Teach social skills (e.g. how to start and maintain conversation, topics to avoid, how to express concern using verbal and nonverbal communication) that will help children to make and keep friends.
- Teach conflict resolution skills and problem-solving strategies

Tips For Educators:

- Remain calm, patient and understanding regarding behaviour difficulties. Encourage students to build self-control and take responsibility for their actions.
- Modify the classroom environment to enhance attention (e.g. seat student closer to the teacher and away from distractions).
- Maintain an organized classroom (a place in the room for all materials and completed assignment).
- Teach list making, day planning, note-taking and social skills explicitly.
- Keep rules to a minimum and enforce them consistently.
- Praise effort and give specific praise for improved work and behaviour.
- Use subtle cues to remind students of expectations (place hand on desk to indicate that it is time to work).
- Modify the curriculum and daily schedule to incorporate student's interests and learning preferences; allow choice of tasks/activities; alternate high and low interest tasks.
- Make instructions clear and simple and augment with visual information (e.g.. notes, graphs, diagrams) whenever possible. Ask students to repeat and/or paraphrase important directions to ensure comprehension and retention.
- Teach planning and organizing skill explicitly (e.g. help students collect materials that will be needed before each activity).

Article was written and submitted by **London Speech and Language Centre**. Nationally recognized for excellence, the clinic is committed to improving the social, emotional, educational and vocational future of individuals with communication and learning challenges.

ATTENTION SLPs! SUMMER SPEECH CAMPS

OAFCCD will again be including a list of summer camps and programs in the May Newsletter. If any Speech-Language Pathologist, or agency, is planning to offer summer programs for children with speech and language difficulties, please provide the information by April 1, to OAFCCD at 13 Segal Drive, Tillsonburg, ON N4G 4P4 or fax to (519)842-3228.

What is **Phonological Awareness** and Why Is it Important for Children Who Are Learning to Read?

Phonological awareness is the explicit understanding of a word's sound structure. It is critical for effective decoding of printed words and the recognition of sound-letter connections necessary for competent spelling. The term began appearing in research literature in the late 1970's, but there was an explosion of studies in the 1990's, demonstrating the link between phonological awareness and reading development. Reading instruction programs that incorporate phonological awareness training are now widely used in speech-language pathology and special education, and are considered critical in preventing reading failure.

Phonological awareness is a multi-level skill that reflects knowledge of how words can be broken into smaller units in differing ways. Training tasks may require children to segment words into syllables, (syllable-level tasks), identify or produce rhyming words (rhyme level tasks), identify individual sounds in words, blend sounds to make words, or segment words into their individual sounds (phonemic-level tasks).

Dr. Gail Gillon wrote, "Measures of phonological awareness, particularly at the phoneme level, are powerful predictors of reading success and can predict early literacy performance more accurately than variables such as intelligence scores, vocabulary knowledge, and socio-economic status."

Article re-printed with permission from **Straight Talk**, the London Speech & Language Centre Newsletter prepared by Kerry Erle, M.Cl.Sc.

Rhyming Activity

Pick a favourite nursery rhyme. Review the vocabulary used in the nursery rhyme and explain words the children may have difficulty understanding.

Read or recite the nursery rhyme.

- When reading, exaggerate the rhyming words.
- When the rhyme is finished, see if the child can identify which words rhymed.
- When re-reading the rhymes, leave out the rhyming words and let the child fill in the blank.

COMING EVENTS

Whitby - February 11, 2003 - *Learn to Sign with Your Baby or Toddler!* WeeHands Sign Language Workshop, Cost: \$25 each or \$35 per couple. **Contact: Sara Bingham at (905)655-8836.**

London - February Workshops - *The New Technology (Feb.11), How to Protect Your Child (Feb. 25).* Workshops for parents of Learning Disabled and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Children. (Cost: \$10 per person or \$15 for couples) **Contact: Learning Disabilities Association (519)438-6213.**

Waterloo - February 13, 2003 at 7:00pm - *Legal & Financial Planning for families with Children with Disabilities and Special Needs,* Presented by Kenneth C. Pope, Lawyer, and Lifetrust Planning. Cost \$10. **Contact: 1-866-536-7673**

Richmond Hill - February 15th, 2003 - *Legal & Financial Planning for families with Children with Disabilities and Special Needs,* Presented by Kenneth C. Pope, Lawyer, Autism Society and Lifetrust Planning. Repeat sessions starting at 9:30 am and 1:30 pm, Cost \$10. **Contact: 1-866-536-7673**

Markham - February 23, 2003 *Working toward Inclusion with Individual Education Plans,* Facilitator: Marilyn Dolmage, Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Inclusive Education, **Contact: York South Association for Community Living, Anita or Darlene, tel. 905-294-4971, ext. 67**

Toronto - February 27, 2003 - *Using Communication Boards Everywhere,* An introduction to the production and use of basic picture communication boards. A referral from your child's speech-language pathologist is required. **Contact: Surrey Place Centre (416)925-2169 Ext. 441.**

Toronto - April 5, 2003 - *Dr. Dale Willows, Research-based approaches to assessing and teaching students with reading and writing disabilities,* The International Dyslexia Association, Ontario Regional Group. Registration Fee. **Contact: (416)716-9296.**

London - April 19-20 - *Choices, Options and Opportunities Making Individualized Support & Funding Work in Ontario,* Community workshop by Individualized Funding Coalition of Ontario. **Contact: Janice Strickland, tel. 519-473-4786**

Toronto - May 31, 2003 - *Maximizing Speech Intelligibility and School Success for Children with Motor Speech Disabilities,* Presented by Megan Hodge from University of Alberta. **Contact: ECHO voice mail at (905)780-1489 or e-mail apraxiaontario@yahoo.com**

Hamilton - May 3-4 - *My Community Includes ... Me!* Annual Family Conference - Integrated Action Group & Family Alliance Ontario. Keynote Speaker: Judith Snow **Contact: Hamilton Family Network, or call 905-526-7190**

London - Monthly Workshops - *Autism Link (Feb. 11th), The Tangled Tongue (March 10th), Children Who Tune Out (April 23rd), More Than Just Talking (May 13th), Cracking the Code - Enhancing School Age Literacy Skills (June 10th).* Workshops for parents and educators are held monthly by the London Speech and Language Centre. (Cost:\$30 or \$20 in advance) **Contact: Pat Cassidy, (519)642-7370.**

Ajax - April 5 - June 7 - Children and Youth Programs, Saturday Sessions include *Language to Literacy, Primary Readers, Junior Readers, Social Skills (Primary and Junior), and Everyday Reading, Everyday Math, Everyday Social Skills* for Youth (Cost: 16hrs/\$250) **Contact: Exceptional Learning Centre (905)686-4800.**

University of Western Ontario Language Development Study

Professor Elizabeth Skarakis-Doyle is still looking for children to participate in her research study to develop new ways of assessing young children's understanding of language, in order to identify children with language difficulties at an earlier age.

The project team is inviting English speaking children between 2 ½ and 5 years of age, who are receiving therapy for language difficulties, to participate in the study along with children who are developing language normally. If you are interested in taking part or finding out more, please call Joselyne Jaques at (519)694-1361.