

**ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN  
WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS  
O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER  
January 2001**



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## **Infant Hearing Screening Now Available in Ontario and Preschool Speech and Language Program Expands**

Every baby born in Ontario will be checked for hearing problems through a new infant hearing screening program, announced in December by Health and Long-Term Care Minister Elizabeth Witmer. The new program will receive \$4.7 million in start-up funding and \$6.7 million in ongoing annual funding to ensure babies and their families get help and support as early as possible. Minister Witmer also announced an additional \$6 million for the Preschool Speech and Language program. The new funding will expand the program to serve thousands more children.

For the first time, every child in Ontario will now have access to screening for hearing loss. The new **Infant Hearing Screening Program** will expand screening for all babies in neonatal intensive care units, and provide screening for well babies through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children postpartum home visit program. **Regional centres** will receive the funding immediately, and services are expected to begin in Spring, 2001.

### **Infant Hearing Screening Program**

There are three components to the Infant Hearing Program: screening, confirmation of hearing loss (audiology services), and communication development.

**Screenings** are conducted in two stages. The first stage is part of the **Healthy Babies Healthy Children** postpartum home visit. Additionally, infants who spend time in the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) are screened before leaving the hospital.

The second stage is conducted through the Infant Hearing program as close to the child's home as

possible and coordinated through regional centres.

Communication development services will be delivered to children with identified hearing loss from 32 Preschool Speech and Language Programs located across Ontario.

### **Preschool Speech and Language Program**

Prior to 1996, only 17,000 of the estimated 60,000 children with speech and language disorders had their problems identified and received assistance prior to school entry. The \$23 million Preschool Speech and Language program was launched in 1997, and this year, it is expected to help almost 60,000 preschool children.

As a result of the additional investment, preschool children, who turn five before they enter senior kindergarten, will continue to receive speech and language support as they make the transition into school.

To support this expansion, the Ministry of Health has developed guidelines for Transition Planning. Each Preschool Speech and Language Program will develop local protocols, with the school boards, to support smooth transitions. Parents will be involved, and should see the development of a plan on how the school staff will meet their child's needs.

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## **Annual General Meeting**

Planning is underway for the **OAFCCD Annual Meeting** to be held on **Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in Aurora**. The day will feature a workshop for families and Chapter Leaders. An invitation with all the details will be mailed out in April. This meeting is planned with all of our members in mind so **mark it on your calendar and plan to attend!!!**

## Strategies to Help - Listening and Following Directions

Consider using some (or all!) of these strategies to help your child to attend, listen and respond to directions successfully. They are not fool-proof, nothing is, but they are a start in giving your child the best chance of succeeding at something they will find difficult.

### **DO:**

- ❖ **Cut out all distractions** if possible ~ turn off the TV, don't have music playing, remove anything they can pick up and fiddle with
- ❖ **Use simple vocabulary** whenever possible
- ❖ **Be as clear and direct** as you can
- ❖ **Say their name** before you give them instruction or information to cue them into listening
- ❖ **Make sure they are looking at you** before you speak to them
- ❖ **Break more complicated information** and instructions into 'chunks' of information that they can deal with
- ❖ **Help your child develop strategies** that will help them to understand and recall information ~ for example, teach them to ask as soon as they hear a word they don't understand, stop at different points during the information and ask them to recall what they understand so far
- ❖ **Be aware of any other needs** your child might have that will affect their performance - are they tired, hungry, thirsty, bad-tempered, etc. This may seem obvious but some children with speech and language difficulties are often poor at recognizing these things for themselves, particularly emotions. They may know they feel out-of-sorts but they may not be able to identify why.

### **DON'T**

- **Say it again** in a louder voice
- **Overload them** with information
- **Talk too quickly**
- **Expect them to read your non-verbal body language** ~ many can't and this just adds to the confusion.

**Source: Afacic Parent Conference Workshop**  
**"Transferring strategies from school to home."**

## Tax Tips - Reader to Reader Submitted by Nancy Myers

Parents may be able to get some income tax relief if their dependent child with special needs meets the Revenue Canada criteria. Children with developmental or physical disabilities, as well as children with Autism or severe learning disabilities, may be eligible.

1. The Disability Deduction Form (Form T2201) needs to be completed by a medical doctor (hopefully by the same doctor who made the diagnosis). If the diagnosis pre-dates 1999, you should also request the Disability Deduction be backdated to the year of the child's birth, and applied against each year since then. (Note: You will not get the deduction backdated unless you specifically ask. While some parents have been successful in getting the deduction backdated to the birth date, others have only been able to get it retroactive to the date of diagnosis.)

2. Other costs may be claimed as "medical expenses". Effective in the 1999 tax year, there were some positive changes in the Income Tax Act, in particular, the definition of eligible medical expenses. These include: remuneration paid for therapy administered to an individual in respect of whom the disability credit may be claimed if (i) the therapy is prescribed by and administered under the general supervision of (A) a medical doctor or psychologist in the case of mental impairment, and (B) a medical doctor or occupational therapist in the case of physical impairment; remuneration paid for the tutoring services that are rendered to, and are in supplement to the primary education of, an individual who (i) has a learning impairment or mental impairment, and (ii) has been certified by a medical practitioner to be a person who, because of that disability or impairment, requires those services.

This change is very important for individuals with disabilities particularly since therapy is not defined, so long as it is under the general supervision of a medical doctor or psychologist. I think the wording is broad enough to include ABA therapy.

3. Check Revenue Canada on the Web at: [www.ccradrc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/rc4064eq/rc4064eq.html](http://www.ccradrc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/rc4064eq/rc4064eq.html)

**Note:** Nancy says *"Please note that the information I am providing is not to be construed as legal or accountant advice."* OAFCCD can't guarantee the accuracy of this information and recommends that you get professional tax advice.

## AT HOME ACTIVITIES

Research has conclusively proven that phonemic awareness is the best predictor of reading success. The ability to understand and manipulate speech sounds is critical to your child's ability to learn to read. Here are five easy, fun activities to do with your child to develop these important skills.

### Sound Scavenger Hunt

This activity develops your child's ability to recognize and remember speech sounds.

1. Choose a sound for your child to remember. Start with one sound and progress to four at a time. For kindergarteners, start with M, B, T and D. For first graders, use any sound except S, SH, CH or R.
2. Tell your child that s/he is going on a sound hunt. Child must find one item in the house that includes each sound (you can specify the size the item has to be, so that they're not dragging furniture around). Give your child a specific timeframe in which to collect the item(s).
3. When the child returns with all items, review the sound connected to each item.
4. After children are successfully remembering sounds and finding household items, you can do the follow up activity over the next days and weeks: Each time your child hears a word that contains a sound from the scavenger hunt, and can repeat the word or describe the item to you, s/he scores a point. You can record points with stars or stickers on a chart toward some designated reward.

### I Spy On The Fly

This activity develops a range of phonemic awareness skills, including the ability to recognize, segment, blend and rhyme sounds. Play it in the car.

1. I spy something that begins/ends with a \_\_\_\_\_ sound (you provide the beginning or ending sound of something you see, child finds the item and says the word).
2. I spy something that rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_ (you provide a word that rhymes with something you see).
3. I spy something that has a \_\_\_\_\_ sound in it (you provide a blend sound, like /gr/, /br/, spl/).
4. I spy something that has 3 beats ( you provide a word that has 3 syllables).

## Anywhere/Anytime

This activity develops your child's ability to recognize and remember sounds.

1. You say a word.
2. Your child says a word that begins with the sound that your word ends with.
3. You say a word that begins with the sound that your child's word ends with, and so on.

### Hot Potato

This activity develops your child's ability to blend sounds to form words.

1. You provide a sound (s).
2. Your child provides a second sound that blends with the first sound and contains both sounds (st).
3. You provide a word with the "st" sound (street).
4. Your child quickly provides another word (star).
5. The game continues until one of you cannot quickly think of a word with the blended sound or says an incorrect word for the blend. The player is "it" and starts the next round of the game.

### Placemat of the Day

This activity develops your child's ability to identify sounds and their corresponding letters.

1. Choose a sound each day.
2. Give your child a piece of white construction paper and have him/her draw a picture or several pictures of words that include the sound.
3. Show them how to write the letter(s) for the sound and write them around the border of the placemat to practice.
4. Use the drawing as a placemat for that day.

Source: Reprinted with permission from Cognitive Concepts. For more information check out [www.earobics.com](http://www.earobics.com)

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## ATTENTION SLPs! SUMMER SPEECH CAMPS

OAFCCD will again be including a list of summer communication day camps in the May Newsletter. If any Speech-Language Pathologist, or agency is planning to offer a Camp this summer, please provide the **information to Alison Morse by April 1, 2001**. Information can be mailed to OAFCCD at 13 Segal Drive, Tillsonburg, ON N4G 4P4 or faxed to (519)842-3228.

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## COMING EVENTS

**“More than just Talking” and “Cracking the Code - Enhance Early Literacy Skills”, (London)** Free parent workshops are offered regularly. **Contact: London Speech and Language Centre, Bonnie Riddolls (519)642-7370**

**Children’s Group Programs, “Talk it Up!”, “Speak For Success”, “Kid’s Club” and “K.I.S.S.”, (London).** A variety of programs for children. **Contact: London Speech and Language Centre, Bonnie Riddolls (519)642-7370**

**Children’s Group Programs, Jan - May 2001 (Ajax)** Weekly workshops focus on literacy, math, social skills and daily living skills. **Contact: Speech, Language and Learning Centre (905)686-4800**

**Help** - If you know about any workshops or activities for parents and/or children with speech and language problems, please let us know. The Newsletter is produced three times a year and we like to include upcoming events. **Call Alison at (519)842-9506 or fax events to (519)842-3228.**

## Parent Resources

### **Books:**

**SLAM DUNK** - A Young Boy’s Struggle with Attention Deficit Disorder. **By Roberta N. Parker.** This is the story about Toby Butler’s struggle to succeed in school. With the help of his parents, teachers and concerned health-care professionals, Toby learns about ADD and ways to help himself.

**Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention** - A book for kids about ADD. **By Kathleen G. Nadeau, Ph.D. and Ellen B. Dixon, Ph.D.** Written especially for kids, this guidebook about the challenges of ADD is packed with cartoons, activity page, and checklists. It’s not an instruction manual but a fun, friendly workbook that offers a wealth of helpful tips for every situation - at home, at school, and among friends.

**Learning Disabilities and ADHD** - A family guide to Living and Learning Together. **By Betty B. Osman, Ph.D.** In this reassuring book, noted psychologist Betty B. Osman offers expert guidance and insight to help

you help your child. Her unique approach addresses not only school issues, but also focusses on social interactions with peers and family. A completely revised and expanded edition of the classic *Learning Disabilities: A Family Affair*, this guide provides vital information.

**Books, videos and other resources are available from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. Call (416)929-4311 or check out Website at [www.ldao.on.ca](http://www.ldao.on.ca)**

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## Communipak

The Communipak is a multipurpose communication system, to be used with Velcro backed photographs, picture communication symbols or written words. It has proven to be very beneficial to those who have challenges communicating their needs, wants and ideas. The Communipak gives the user more independent communication, power, choice and control in their daily lives. This communication tool is very functional for adults and children whether they are individuals with special needs, or anyone with speech difficulties including those with English as another language.

The Communipak is a comfortable, durable, (water repellent exterior) wallet type pak worn around the waist, making it very easy to access but difficult to lose. It is constructed with a 7" long - 6 ring binder system that allows for easy customizing to meet individual needs. It may be used with any combination of the Communipak pages or any of the 7" long - 6 ring binder accessories available on the market ranging from plastic photo holders to calculators etc. The Communipak comes with two standard fabric pages, one schedule page, and one multipurpose zippered pouch. The Communipak can be used for visual scheduling, conversation, remnants, grocery shopping, ordering from restaurants etc.

Communipak is \$89.95 plus applicable taxes, shipping and handling. Please note that picture communication and/or word symbols are NOT included. For further information please contact Deb Boucher at: Adaptive Creations Inc., 3240 Samuels Crescent Coquitlam, B.C. V3E-1C8 or email: [adaptive.creations@3web.net](mailto:adaptive.creations@3web.net)

OAFCCD has not seen the Communipak and does not endorse this product. The information is shared as a service to families.