

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN
WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER

MAY 1997

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First announcement of new Preschool Services!!

On April 17, 1997 Premier Mike Harris announced the approval of new funds for four preschool speech and language service systems. The funding announcement included:

\$1.4 million for Peel Region
\$800,000 for Ottawa-Carleton
\$695,000 for Halton Region
\$200,000 for Rideau Valley (Leeds,
Lanark and Grenville)

In these communities the District Health Council has completed a community consultation process and developed a service system plan. Each plan has identified local needs and appropriate service enhancements. The process has involved the participation of OAFCCD members and will soon result in new services for our children.

A big **Thank You** is due to the OAFCCD members who have been active on these, and other, preschool planning committees. The family perspective is very important and parent participation should result in better services for our children.

Work continues in many other communities and it is anticipated that more plans will be completed and approved soon. The implementation of the preschool plans will require more parent volunteers for the governance and on-going development of the system. It is hoped that OAFCCD members will volunteer for these positions. Continuous monitoring and evaluation is needed to ensure that we get a services system that is responsive to the needs of children and

their families.

Education Reform

Bill 104, The Fewer School Boards Act, passed third reading on April 22 and Minister John Snobelen said "the changes have just begun". What does this mean for our children?

The Harris government has said many times that reform is needed "to focus more of the resources on the students". This **should** mean more speech and language services for children. However, there are no assurances.

OAFCCD Executive Members have been meeting with representatives at the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) to share the OAFCCD model for speech and language services to children. OAFCCD members have made it clear that they believe that speech and language services must be mandated and funded by MET. The present system "allows" each school board to decide whether to provide the services, and as we have seen in the last few years, this has resulted in many boards "choosing" not to provide the services.

The move to centralized funding and accountability will mean that the Ministry **can** ensure all school boards provide the same service. However, it is unclear whether the Ministry will mandate service provision, or what the common level of service will be. As with all school board services, it is not clear whether services in amalgamated Boards will rise to the highest level, drop to the lowest, or reflect a provincial average.

We believe that these type of decisions have not yet been made and that members of OAFCCD

have an opportunity to influence the outcome.

To find out how you can help see back page.

Language and the Adolescent

The ability to read and write is strongly influenced by the ability to understand and use language. Students who are good listeners and speakers tend to become strong readers and writers. Language has a major role in all subjects including reading, math, history, geography and even art. The early school years emphasize language development, social-emotional growth and readiness skills. The middle grades emphasize specific subjects. Mastery of language is assumed. Emphasis is placed on written skills. The later grades involve more complex use of language by students including an increased vocabulary, more advanced sentence structure, and different kinds of language for different situations.

The importance of early identification and remediation of language delays or disorders in young children is well known. Less commonly known is the importance of identifying and remediating language disorders in the adolescent. Such disorders may lead to feelings of failure, low self-esteem, poor academic and social success, and a high drop out rate.

Language Disorder refers to any impairment in:

1. **form** including phonology, morphology, and syntax, for example, misuse or misunderstanding of the information provided by word endings: "The boy eat his dinner."
2. **semantics (meaning)**, for example, difficulty understanding idioms: "It's raining cats and dogs."
3. **pragmatics (function)**, for example, using language for different purposes (promising, requesting), changing language for listeners needs (peer vs. teacher), or following the rules of conversation (turn taking, introducing topics of

conversation, and staying on topic).

Characteristics of Adolescent Language Disorder

1. Failure to understand or pay attention to rules of conversation, for example, turn taking, introducing topics of conversation, and staying on topic.
 2. Difficulty using different language for different needs of the listener or situation.
 3. Incorrect use of grammar.
 4. Poor or limited vocabulary
 5. Difficulty requesting further information to aid understanding.
 6. Tendency to ask questions that are too general ("Are you going out tonight?" when what is really meant is "Where are you going tonight?")
 7. Tendency to agree rather than voice opposition.
 8. Indirect requests and ambiguous statements.
 9. Class clown behaviour.
 10. Extreme forgetfulness.
 11. Withdrawal or exclusion from group activities.
 12. Difficulty with:
 - understanding non-verbal behaviours, such as body language
 - finding words
 - puns, idioms, riddles, jokes, sarcasm and slang
 - instructions, especially those that are long or grammatically complex
 - words with multiple meanings (bear versus bare)
 - sequencing
 - expressing thoughts
 - organizing information.
- Source:** American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

NOTE: OAFCCD members are very concerned that language disorders in adolescents are often

overlooked and that available services are inadequate. The many calls from parents across the province demonstrate the need for more intervention services for secondary level students.

Imagination and Language

Imaginative play enables children to learn through experiences that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to physically experience. Developing the ability to learn



through imagination is also the key

to furthering literacy skills. Research shows that demonstration of a decrease in the need for environmental support (real object) is a powerful predictor for writing achievement in Kindergarten.

What can you do to Stimulate Imagination at Home?

1. Transform objects into new things (i.e.

stick becomes a toothbrush, comb, baseball bat

2. Act out a favourite Nursery Rhyme or Fairy Tale, selecting new character roles.

3. Have your child select a few toys from around the house and listen as you create a story incorporating all the items selected.

4. Turn your kitchen into a restaurant or the moon, and eat a meal in a “different” place.

Guide your child through who would be in these places, how would you act when you met these new people, what would you eat, etc..

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Education Reform - Call to Action

Bill 104 will result in significant changes in the education system. It has also created an opportunity for OAFCCD members to influence policy and decision makers about the need for speech and language services to be mandated and funded by MET.

You can help by talking and writing to your local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). Very few MPP’s understand communication disorders or the need for speech and language services. Please take the time to call or write your MPP. You can share your story or information about OAFCCD. If you need help with a letter call your Chapter Leader for a sample letter or other advice.

More Funds Needed!!

Membership Fees and donations are currently our only source of operating funds. OAFCCD has Charitable Status and tax receipts will be issued for all donations. If you have not yet joined or

renewed your membership, please do so as soon as possible. The Annual Membership Fee is only fifteen dollars. (Remember membership fees will be waived upon request.)

Please complete and send the attached notice to make sure that your membership information is correct. Return to: OAFCCD, Sharen Heath, 13 Segal Dr., Tillsonburg, Ont., N4G 4P4

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ **Phone:** () _____

Parent: _____

Professional: _____ **Specify:** _____

New Member: _____ **Renewal:** _____

Don't forget to enclose \$15.00 Annual Membership Fee with your form.

Coming Events

OAFCCD Chapter meetings

May 3, 1997 - **Orillia** Chapter Information Meeting. Contact: Margaret Van Dyk at (705)326-5941

May, 1997 - **Peel Region** Chapter Information Meeting. Contact: Brenda Patterson at (905)846-6875.

May, 1997 - **Toronto** Chapter Information meeting. Contacts: Francine Ball at (416)752-8221 or Carolyn Johnstone at (416)269-9289.

June, 1997 - **North Bay Chapter Meeting**. Contact: Margaret O'Hagen at (705)474-3809.

June, 1997 - **Sudbury Chapter Meeting**. Contacts: Paulette Pokonzie at (705)524-5619 or Anne Cole at (705).

Conferences and Workshops

May 15, and June 11, 1997 - **Speech-Language Information for Parents (London)**. Evening session, 7-9pm. Contact: Tony Wray (519)675-0449.

May 22, 1997 - **Preventing Stuttering in the Preschool Child (London)**. Evening session, 7-9pm. Contact: Tony Wray (519)675-0449

May 21-23, 1997 - **Mission Possible - Together it is**

Happening Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services (OACRS) Annual Conference, Holiday Inn, **Burlington**. Contact: Meeting Management Services (905)335-7993.

May 21, 1997 **Energizing Together** - OACRS Pre-conference workshop for youth, parents and health professionals. Contact Wanda Cooper, Erinoak.

May 24, 1997 - **Speech and Hearing Drop-In Day** Parents concerned about their child's hearing or speech and language can drop in between 9am and 12 noon. Two locations - **Middlesex-London Health Unit** and **Elgin-St. Thomas Health Unit**. Sponsored by OSLA and Elgin Community Care Access Centre.

May 29, 1997 - 7:30pm **Parent Session** at **Richmond Hill** Central Library. Ideal for parents of pre-school children interested in learning how to develop early language and pre-reading skills. Contact: (905)884-9288.

Imagination Plus (Toronto) - offers drop-off programs (summer and year round) for preschool and Kindergarten children which will stimulate imagination and improve language skills. Contact: Dr. Karen Halpern, at (416)789-1624.

Fall 1997 - Signing Course for Parents (Hamilton). Ten week evening course for families and educators of young people using the Signed English manual system. Fee \$80 including text. Contact: Nancy Haveman at (905)318-5582.

Saturday October 25, 1997 is the date of the **OAFCCD Annual General Meeting (AGM)**. Once again the AGM will be held on the last day of the OSLA Conference at the Holiday Inn on King in **Toronto**. Complete details in the September Newsletter.

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

Thanks to Susan Richards an OAFCCD Home page has been established at:

<http://www.byfalls.com/oafccd/>

The Lanark Chapter home page can be found
n e a r - b y a t :

<http://www.byfalls.com/oafccd/lanark/>

Through these sites it is also possible to reach a number of speech and language websites.

Other relevant websites include:

<http://www.peds.umn.edu/centres/ncyd.html>

- National Centre for Youth with Disabilities.

<http://www.easterseals.org/seals> - Easter Seal Society of Ontario.

<http://indie.ca> - Integrated Network of Disability Information and Education for Canadians.

E-mail correction: Alison Morse can be reached at **abmorse@kwic.com**.