

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN  
WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

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

September 1996

13 Segal Drive, Tillsonburg, Ontario N4G 4P4 Phone: 519-842-9506 Fax 519-842-3228

**O.A.F.C.C.D. MEMBERS  
NEEDED TO PLAN LOCAL  
PRESCHOOL SERVICES**

The Guidelines for the new Preschool Speech and Language funding announced in the May budget have now been released. The Public Health Branch of the Ministry of Health has been given the lead role in this initiative, but it is an inter-Ministry project.

The funds are to be used to fill service needs and gaps **which are identified and prioritized at the community level**. The community proposals must be supported by the development of a community service plan, and an environmental scan of present service resources. The development of community plans, and proposals will be led by the District Health Councils.

The Guidelines direct each District Health Council to involve all stakeholders, including parents, in the planning process. OAFCCD has been recognized provincially as one of the parent groups that have a stake in this issue, and members of OAFCCD will be able to participate in the local community planning process. Many of the District Health Councils will start the process in September and **we need local volunteers to come forward quickly**.

The actual process will vary locally, and volunteer involvement may include attending a number of committee meetings, or public consultations, or reviewing documents. We will also be supporting local volunteers with prepared information and on-going advice.

If you want to be involved or would like more information, please call Alison at (519)688-0369.

**ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING**

**Saturday October 26, 1996**

The 1996 Annual General meeting will again be held in conjunction with the O.S.L.A. Annual Conference at the Holiday Inn on King Street in Toronto.

The Annual Meeting will be start at 1:30pm and we have invited Premier Mike Harris, or designate, to attend and share the latest information on the new preschool speech and language funds. There is no cost to attend the Annual General Meeting, but we do need to know how many people will be attending and ask you to **call Sharen Heath at (519)842-9506 before October 15th to confirm your attendance**.

Chapter Leaders or designates have also been invited to attend a special morning session the same day. At this meeting Chapter Leaders will be able to share information on local needs, and learn new ideas for membership recruitment and effective local advocacy.

**We would encourage everyone to attend the Annual Meeting.** While part of the meeting will include necessary business, such as the Treasurers Report and By-Law approval, the main reason for the meeting is for you to let us know your needs and provide direction to the organization. We are still a new organization and need your involvement if we are to evolve into an organization that is effective and meaningful.

The Annual Meeting should be over by 4:30pm. We would encourage you to car pool and can provide directions if needed.

# Preschool Language Development - An Overview

By Genese Warr-Leeper

What changes are observable in children's language in the preschool years? As children advance from simple one and two word utterances, their utterances become longer and more complex. Children gradually elaborate the way they say things by adding more detail. In terms of syntactic development they add and fill in words and word endings that were previously missing. These take the form of articles (a, the), prepositions (in,on), pronouns (I, he), auxiliary verbs (is, are), and noun endings (such as -s, which indicates plurality), and verb endings (such as -ed, which indicates past tense). The inclusion of these forms into children's speech makes their utterances seem more like adults and less like a telegram! This can be seen as they progress from "More milk" to "I want more chocolate milk", or "Mommy car" to "Mommy is going in the car".

In the early preschool years, children's vocabulary continues to grow and they learn many new word meanings. They learn new concepts and how to code these concepts linguistically. They also learn how to transform their ideas into sentences, and they begin to use a variety of sentence types. By the age of 4, most children's syntax is adult like. Their utterances contain expanded noun and verb phrases (gimme the big red ball; he pushed me down the steps); negative sentences (I won't do it); Yes/No questions (Can you cut the cake?); and Wh- questions (What will I do later?). Causal constructions (He didn't get a prize because he was bad,), conditional constructions (If I'll clean up, I'll get to watch TV); and temporal constructions (When he will come, he'll get a surprise) are also evident. Children learn more complex ways to use language socially, and they begin to develop discourse skills such as participating in conversations, giving instructions, and providing descriptions about objects, events, and people. By the time children enter grade one, they are able to use language for a variety of functions: to contribute new information on a topic; to describe objects, events, past experiences, and plans; and to use language to demonstrate, instruct, and reason.

Last, in the preschool years, children progress from talking about events in the here-and-now to talking

about events in the "there and then". Young children generally talk about events and objects that are present in the immediate context. They refer to what they are doing or what another person is doing in the immediate environment. Also, maternal input to younger children focuses on events and objects in the immediate environment. As children develop cognitively, they begin to refer to people, objects, actions, and events that are displaced in terms of time and place. They talk about past and future events and about objects and activities in the absence of external props or contextual support. How early this ability emerges is being studied.

Although children's language has reached a measure of complexity by the age of 5, much communicative development is yet to come. Vocabulary continues to grow throughout the school years. The use of nonliteral language, such as jokes, riddles, and metaphors, begins to appear in middle childhood along with the comprehension of sentences that contain verbs such as *promise* or *ask*. Ambiguous sentences allow for more than one interpretation, such as "The chili is too hot to eat," are understood a bit later, during middle childhood an early preadolescence.

In addition, during the school-age years, children expand their pragmatic and discourse skills. Their conversational abilities become refined, and they are better able to plan, organize, and sequence their ideas into coherent and cohesive units called narratives. Further, during this period children develop the ability to think and talk about language (called metalinguistic ability) and master language in another mode by learning to read and write. Finally, children's language skills advance to the point that they can understand by listening or reading without any contextual support, a critical skill for academic success. These are also the skills necessary to master a foreign language, and mathematical concepts needed to solve word problems and algebraic equations.

Although a good deal of language learning has already been mastered by the time the child enters Grade one, this is only the beginning and the child will continue to develop and refine language skills even into young adulthood.

References can be provided on request.

## Stuttering

### Can be prevented ..... if detected early.

Parents and caregivers can indirectly help a child to produce smooth speech more easily by reducing some of the demands on the child in the following ways:

**Speak more slowly, using shorter sentences and a quieter voice** when speaking with the child.

**Be a good listener** - attend to what the child is saying, and not how the child is saying it.

**Avoid interrupting** the child when s/he is talking and encourage good **turn taking rules** for everyone speaking in the household.

**Don't say** "Slow down", "Take a deep breath", or "think about what you are going to say".

When speaking with your child **talk about what you are doing, seeing and feeling** instead of asking questions about what s/he is doing.

**Avoid negative reactions** to your child's disfluent speech, including frowning, wincing, widening your eyes, looking away or tensing up.

**Praise your child** about how much you enjoy playing or talking with her/him and give lots of positive nonverbal messages, like smiles and hugs.

### Coming Events:

New OAFCCD Chapter Meetings are planned for:  
**Guelph** - October 8, 1996 Call Bonnie Burgess at (519)766-9582 ext. 326 for details.

**Sudbury** - TBA, For details call Paulette Pokonzie at (705)524-5619 or Ann Cole at (705)673-5885.

**Orillia** - TBA, Call Sharen Heath for details.

**October 26th, 1996 - OAFCCD Annual Meeting**

## Upcoming Conferences

### "Year of the Child Who Stutters"

Saturday September 21, 1996  
2 Gower Street, Harmony Hall,  
Toronto, Ontario

Sponsored by the Canadian Association for People who Stutter (CAPS) and the National Stuttering Project (NSP). For more information, call Mary Wood at (905)628-5549.

### Children's Cranial Facial Association Second Annual Conference

#### "Esteem: A Family Symposium"

Saturday October 19, 1996

For more information, call 1-800-535-3643

### "The Geneva Centre Symposium on Autism 96"

Metro Toronto Convention Centre  
Toronto, Ontario

November 6-8, 1996

For more information, call Geneva Centre at (416)322-7877

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Today I smiled, and all at once  
Things didn't look so bad.  
Today I shared with someone else,  
a bit of hope I had.  
Today I sang a little song  
And felt my heart grow light,  
And walked a happy little mile,  
With not a cloud in sight.  
Today I worked with what I had,  
And longed for nothing more,  
And what had seemed like only weeds  
Were flowers at my door.  
Today I loved a little more,  
Complained a little less,  
And in the giving of myself,  
Forgot my weariness.

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## Letter from the President

Dear Members,

Summer has provided somewhat of a break in everyone's hectic schedule, and it is now time to get back to business.

We are experiencing another exciting year in the growth of our organization. Our membership is our biggest asset, and you are all part of it! I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our growth, whether as a local Chapter member, as a local representative, or through financial support by paying your membership fee.

It is most important that our membership continues to grow, and support the association goals, especially the mandate and funding of speech and language services for our children. If you have not joined yet, please use the form provided and join as soon as possible. This is the last newsletter that will be provided to unpaid members. (If the fifteen dollar annual fee is a problem, the fee will be waived upon request.)

I apologize that I have not returned all of your requests for information, or support, and I ask you to please bear with me. I have not had enough time to deal with all the requests and have spent a lot of my time in Chapter development. I believe that members will get the emotional support they need from other parents in local Chapters and that is one of the reasons that Chapter development has been a priority activity.

We are still waiting for Revenue Canada to approve our Charitable Status, and are hopeful that it will be forthcoming soon.

Thanks to all of you for your interest and support. Special thanks to the Board members for their continued efforts, especially Alison, who provides many of our reports, letters and an interesting and informative newsletter.

*Yours truly,*

## Attention!!

### Chapter Leaders/Contacts

Next Board Meeting September 27th, 1996 at Grand River Medical Centre in Kitchener, Conference Room 2 Village Centre.. Call Sharen if you can attend and for directions.

Don't forget that we also need to know if you are attending the October 26th special meeting!

### Are you a member of O.A.F.C.C.D.?

Membership Fees and donations are currently our only source of operating funds. If you have not yet joined, or paid your 1996 Membership Fee, please do so as soon as possible. The Membership Fee is only fifteen dollars (\$5 of which goes to the local Chapter) so please join today!!! NOTE: Fees will be waived upon request.

To join, tear off and return to: OAFCCD, Sharen Heath, 13 Segal Dr., Tillsonburg, Ont., N4G 4P4

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postal Code:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent:** \_\_\_ **Professional:** \_\_\_

**New Member:** \_\_\_ **Renewal:** \_\_\_

Please enclose \$15.00 Annual Membership Fee with your application.

## O.A.F.C.C.D.

### Annual Meeting

October 26th, 1996 1:30-4:30pm

**Everyone Welcome**

Please call (519)842-9506 if you can attend, or mail, or fax (519)842-3228 this form.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

I will be attending the Annual Meeting.