

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN
WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

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

September 1997

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**SCHOOL SYSTEM CHANGES -
WILL IT BE BETTER FOR OUR
CHILDREN?**

Minister of Education and Training, John Snobolen has said "**As part of our commitment to move students to the head of class, we will refocus our resources where they belong - on the individual student and teacher in the classroom.**" (January 13, 1997 Press Release) The implication of this comment and subsequent remarks in the proposed changes to the school system are intended to improve services to the children.

Many **parents remain sceptical** because these changes are taking place at a time when the government has made it very clear that they want to reduce public spending in all areas.

As a provincial organization representing parents, **OAFCCD has been able to participate** in some of the public consultations regarding changes. As a consequence of these meetings, **there seems to be some grounds for hope.**

In particular, the proposals regarding **financial reform of the education system** and the **increased emphasis on accountability** could result in changes to benefit students with communication disorders. The proposed changes include a **new grant** to meet the **needs of at-risk students** and another to provide **additional funds for individual high cost students.** Both of these grants could increase the available resources for our children.

There could also be a number of benefits to the changes in accountability. The biggest change will be that **only one level of government**, the provincial government, **will be responsible for funding and service levels.** This means that school boards can no longer put the blame for lack of services on another

level of government. In addition, **it could result in a greater consistency in service levels across the province.**

Despite these promising signs, **OAFCCD members will still remain cautious** in their support of the reforms. **These changes will only be beneficial to our children IF the system is adequately funded and services are provided to all the students that need them.**

1997 Annual Meeting

Dear Members,

The 1997 Annual General Meeting of OAFCCD will be held in **Toronto on Saturday, October 25, 1997.** The afternoon meeting will be held at the **Holiday Inn on King Street** starting at 1pm.

All members are invited to attend and hear from **Mary Jean Gallagher**, Chief Executive Officer of the Education Improvement Commission regarding changes in the school system.

Following the formal business agenda, participants are invited to attend one of the following skill development workshops:

- **"Communication Disorders and Behaviour"** by Genese Warr-Leeper, a Western University Professor, or
- **"Giving Your Child a Language Boost"** by Peel Board of Education Speech-Language Pathology staff.

There is no fee for members attending the Annual General Meeting, but we do need to know how many will be attending. To **register**, please call Sharen Heath at (519)842-9506 **before October 15, 1997.**

Sharen Heath, President

Education Improvement Commission

The Education Improvement Commission (EIC) has been recently established by Minister of Education and Training, John Snobolen. The EIC is chaired by David Cooke and Ann Vanstone, and has been given the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the school board re-structuring.

The EIC has considerable power and will have a significant influence on the structure and organization of the new school board. This is very important considering that system changes include the boundaries of school boards, the integration of union contracts, the role of Trustees, as well as the funding of education programs.

Mary Jean Gallagher, the Chief Executive Officer, of the EIC will be the Keynote Speaker at the OAFCCD Annual Meeting.

ATTENTION! Parents in Peel Region

In July, the **Peel Preschool Speech and Language Services Committee issued a Press Release** with details of the Implementation Committee membership. A parent, **Mr. Damien May is the Committee Chair**. For further details on committee membership, contact Cathy Evans at (905)820-7111 ext. 2358.

Families of **children who require preschool speech and language services**, including those who are already on a wait list at another agency, should contact **Liz Macdonald at Erinoak at (905)820-7111, ext. 2412**.

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

Check OAFCCD at:

■ <http://www.byfalls.com/oafccd/>

Lanark OAFCCD Chapter at:

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

To e-mail OAFCCD, contact Alison at:

■ abmorse@kwic.com.

Preschool Service Systems - Innovative Features

OAFCCD members have been participating, for almost a year, on District Health Council Committees with responsibility for preschool speech and language system development. Funding has been announced for many of the plans.

Parents will be pleased to see a number of features for which they have long advocated. New features in some of the plans include:

- "Normalizing" of communication problems through education of all parents about the development of speech and language.
- Early detection of communication problems focussing on children under two years old.
- Systematic identification of communication disorders through parent or physician administered check lists for all children at eighteen months.
- Community outreach through non-traditional service points including food banks, community centres and housing projects.
- Cross Ministry planning and service provision to ensure that available resources are maximized through the integration of new speech and language services with *Healthy Babies, Healthy Children* and *Better Beginnings, Better Futures* initiatives.
- Enhanced and flexible parent training and "train the trainer" programs.
- Media campaigns to enhance public awareness of communication disorders.
- Funding for OAFCCD Chapter involvement in public awareness and education activities
- Development of common regional waiting lists.

These are all great ideas and will improve services for our children. However, the work of parent members is not complete. Parent volunteers will be needed on Implementation Committees in each community and all of us must remain vigilant to ensure that the funds remain committed to speech and language services.

Helping Children Learn to Read

Most people think that children must learn to talk before learning to read. But, lots of children who have speech problems can learn to read. On the other hand, some children with good speech skills, do not progress naturally into reading. Many children have problems in making the connection between oral and written language. These are thinking and language skills that must be mastered before learning to read. If your child is having difficulty with speech and language, the child may need extra help developing these pre-reading skills. Fortunately, there is a lot you can do at home to prepare your child to read.

TALK TO YOUR CHILD

Talk to your child as much as possible. Give your child every opportunity to learn about the sounds of words and the rhythms of speech. The child with hearing problems can still learn about speech from looking at moving mouths and noticing how different words are shaped by the tongue and lips. The child can also learn to read gestures, posture and "body language".

READ TO YOUR CHILD

Children discover that printed letters and words are important when they see us paying attention to newspapers, magazines, mail, words flashed on TV screens, recipes and signs. When you read stories and share picture books with your child, letters, words, and reading become a part of the child's world, too.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO READ

1. Help your child focus attention on pictures, sights, and sounds.
2. Enjoy books together in a warm, comfortable environment. Sit close together and share your thoughts and feelings about the book you are reading.
3. Use books which ask your child to search for hidden objects, such as the animals in the forest or the birds in the leaves.
4. Encourage pointing to the unique features of objects. "What a big truck! I like big, red trucks." Even a non-hearing child can follow your lead.
5. Do problem solving of all kinds together. Does this part fit with that? If I turn the puzzle piece does it go in? Can I make the paper go in the envelope if I fold

it?

6. Play memory games, either with words or objects. Say, "I took a trip and on my trip I took _____?" Each person in turn adds one more item for the others to try and remember. Or, you can ask, "Please bring me all the things we need to set the table"

7. Ask your child to find information from print/graphic material. For example, ask your child to find a doll or a truck in a toy catalog that the child especially likes.

YOUR CHILD STARTS TO "READ"

During these activities, your child learns to attach meaning to sounds, gestures, or sign language. Then the child discovers that symbols, including pictures, can mean things. Finally, the child must connect specific verbal symbols (words) to speech sounds and word meanings. This is a big job and your child may need extra help or practice along the way.

Your child may begin to identify letters, call out the words on road signs (such as "STOP"), or try to make letter shapes on paper. But, don't worry if your child shows no movement toward these activities. Keep doing the above activities. Some children take longer than others.

Spoken language is a flow of sounds represented by groups of letters. Each person has to discover through many experiences that letters represent individual sounds. Your child needs time to learn about how the individual letters c-a-t, for instance, form the word cat. Your child comes to know this from lots of experiences of being read to, talked with, looking at pictures of cats, and seeing the letters c-a-t placed under the picture.

Learning to read is a long slow process, but with your help your child can get started.

(Excerpt from: Parent Articles 1, Pre-reading Skills by Judith M. Creighton, Ph.D)

Summer Communication Day Camps

In the May Newsletter, OAFCCD members received a list of summer Communication Day Camps. We would like to know whether members found the information useful. Specifically, we would like to know how you would rate the following:

- ✓timeliness (in May Newsletter)
- ✓level of detail
- ✓price of programs
- ✓types of programs
- ✓program location
- ✓other, _____

Please call Alison Morse at (519)688-0369 with your comments, or include them in with your membership renewal.

Membership Reminder!

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.)

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Workshops and Conferences:

Parent Workshops (London) - Preventing Stuttering in the Preschool Child (September 24th, or November 12th); Speech-Language Info Sessions for Parents (October 7th or November 25th). **Contact: J. Anthony Wray, (519)675-0449.**

Learning Disabilities Parent Workshops (London) - Overview of Learning Disabilities/Attention Deficit Disorders (Oct.2); What the Law says about the Educational Rights of Exceptional Children (Oct.9); School Issues (Oct.16); Reading and Your Disabled Child (Oct.23); Assessment and Your Child (Oct.30); Family and Social Issues (Nov.6). Each workshop \$10.00 for members and non-members. **Contact: LDA London-Middlesex (519)438-6213.**

Language Play Group (London) - An 8 week Pilot Program for 3 to 4 year old children with Down Syndrome. **Contact: J. Anthony Wray, (519)675-0449.**

Toronto LEAP program - Serving children with Autism and their families. An individualized program designed to address your child's learning differences. **Contact: Barbara Nagai, (416)289-7343.**

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.**

Attention Chapter Leaders!!

A Board Meeting will be held in the morning of **Saturday October 25, 1997** at the **Holiday Inn on King.** All Chapter Leaders (or a representative) are invited and a subsidy is available for travel and accommodation costs. Please contact Sharen at (519)842-9506 for more information.