



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

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

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

Provincial Update

OAFCCD continues to struggle financially and will not be holding a Conference this fall. The Conference was a great place to hear quality speakers and meet with other OAFCCD members and we are hoping to hold another Conference next year.

OAFCCD also struggles to recruit and maintain volunteers both at the Chapter and provincial level. Susan Richards, one of our outstanding volunteers, who has been active on the Board of Directors, at the Chapter level and as our WebMaster has recently stepped down as a Board member. Susan leaves the Board due to her busy family and work life, and she continues to support children with communication disorders as a school board Trustee.

On a positive note, OAFCCD has been able to nominate three new representatives to school board Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) in Algoma, Grand Erie and Thames Valley. Welcome to Linda Tambori, Amanda MacFadyen and Carleana DeKelver.

OAFCCD representatives continue to advocate for speech and language services at the provincial level and have had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Education and the Preschool Speech and Language Program. There is a continued commitment by the government to early identification and intervention and a strong recognition of the connection between communication disorders and literacy development.

The governments commitment to early identification and intervention is evident in the development of BEST START (see next article for more details) and in new investments in literacy programs in the elementary and secondary system. The recently released *Education for All, The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6* (see article on Writing on page 4-6) provides lots of suggestions for classroom teachers on how to help children with special needs.

Best Start

Best Start is a comprehensive, evidence-based early learning and care strategy designed to give all of Ontario's children the best possible start in life and help them achieve success in school. Best Start is an ambitious strategy that will take at least 10 years to implement all its components across the province, and planning will be done in phases

Best Start is the platform to address the broader determinants of healthy development. It will:

- *help parents support their children*
- *help children in Ontario to be ready to learn when they start Grade 1 and achieve success in school*
- *help make the transition to Grade 1 as smooth, seamless and successful as possible*
- *make high quality early learning and child care available for our youngest learners*
- *help parents by providing a variety of parenting supports*
- *help identify and provide support to children who need extra help*
- *build on partnerships with communities and with the federal and municipal levels of government.*

The first stage of Best Start has already begun, with increased child care spaces provided for children in JK and SK in communities across the province. Demonstration projects have already started in Lambton-Kent, Hamilton-Wentworth and Timiskaming. Planning is also underway to improve co-ordination and integration of early years programs, including Preschool Speech and Language and Infant Hearing Programs.

BEST START will provide more opportunities to identify children with communication disorders, more support for families and more speech and language services for children in Kindergarten. To find out more about Best Start check the Ministry of Children and Youth website at www.mcys.gov.on.ca

Collaborative Practice and the School Speech-Language Pathologist

Joanne Shimotakahara and Susan Menary

Speech-language pathologists in school boards face the challenge of developing services and programs to meet the increasingly complex range of communication needs of students in regular and special education programs. To this end, collaborative models of service delivery are increasingly being used by speech-language pathologists in schools. With unique training and expertise in speech, oral and written language and communication development, speech-language pathologists are a vital resource in collaborative efforts with teachers, parents and other professionals

The role of speech-language pathologists in schools has extended beyond traditional speech therapy to collaborative practices, encompassing a range of consultative and direct services and programs that support students' language and literacy learning in the classroom. These approaches have broadened the role of speech-language pathologists in schools to include:

- Participating on school support teams
- Consulting and sharing resources with teachers, parents and support staff
- Assessing students' oral and written language and social communication skills using classroom and curriculum-based approaches
- Working with teachers to develop classroom and curriculum based programming for students with oral and written language needs
- Designing and implementing early language intervention programs and services for young students at risk for language, literacy and social difficulties
- Providing in-services for parents and teachers
- Supporting teachers in developing language and communication strategies for individual education plans

For school speech-language pathologists, the use of a collaborative model has evolved in recognition of the central role that language and communication play in learning, literacy and social development. This model also recognizes that the classroom teacher and the classroom context are pivotal in addressing students' language and learning needs. Comprehensive educational planning including support by speech-language pathologists is essential since students' language learning difficulties typically continue throughout the school years and are life-long (Johnson et al, 1999).

To be effective collaborative partners with teachers and parents, speech-language pathologists need knowledge of evidence based approaches to ensure that their practices contribute to positive student outcomes and to be accountable for their services. To deliver effective services to students with speech, language and communication needs, they require not only knowledge about current child language and literacy theory and practice, but also evidence from the research on intervention strategies that work.

The need for evidence-based practice in school speech and language services is of increasing international interest. In the United Kingdom, McCartney (2003) encouraged speech-language pathologists to conduct field research and to document the outcomes of services to children in order to contribute to the body of evidence based research on effective speech and language intervention. Justice and Fey (2004) advocate the need for a comprehensive cardinal document for the practice of speech-language pathology that provides a description of the available evidence on assessment procedures, intervention approaches and components used in schools. They stress the need for developing guidelines and systematic reviews to assist speech-language pathologists in judging the quality and quantity of the evidence regarding various assessment and intervention approaches.

There is some research that documents the effectiveness of collaborative approaches. One example is a study that compared the differences between a collaborative approach, a classroom-based intervention with speech-language pathologist and teacher working independently and pull-out model for kindergarten to grade 3 students with speech and language needs (Throneburg, Calvert, Sturm, Paramboulas, Paul, 2000). Results indicated that the collaborative model with speech-language pathologist and teacher planning and working together in the classroom was more effective for teaching vocabulary from the curriculum to students who qualified for speech and language services than a classroom-based model with the speech-language pathologist and teacher working independently. Both collaborative and classroom-based models increased vocabulary skills significantly more than only regular instruction from the classroom teacher.

Speech-language pathologists in some Canadian school boards have implemented and evaluated collaborative practices for early

language intervention programs and services. In some school boards, phonological awareness programs were created to enhance regular kindergarten language and literacy programs aiming to benefit students with speech and language needs (e.g., Peel District, Thames Valley District). In other school boards, intensive kindergarten early language and literacy programs for language-delayed kindergarten children have been implemented using a centre-based model as an enhancement to the students' home school kindergarten program (e.g., Toronto Catholic District, Toronto District). The centre-based programs are co-instructed by teams of speech-language pathologists and teachers with special education training.

The following programs are examples of services designed by speech-language pathologists in collaborative projects with teachers. All program evaluations have resulted in significant gains for students in the oral language and early literacy areas focussed upon in the interventions.

Program and Contact	Purpose	Result
Sound Skills, Peel District School Board susan.bassili@peelsb.com .	To increase phonological awareness in regular education kindergarten students.	Fall-spring screening of phonological awareness of students indicated highly significant gains for the students
Phonological Awareness in the Classroom, Thames Valley District School Board y.nieuwesteeg@tvdsb.on.ca or r.salazer@tvdsb.on.ca .	To support the development of phonological awareness skills in the classroom	Significant gains over a three-year period on the spring screening. Greatest gains for classrooms with increased involvement of speech-language pathologists.
Kindergarten Language Program (KLP), Toronto Catholic District School Board susan.menary@tcdsb.org .	To develop oral language, social and early literacy skills in senior kindergarten children at risk for language and literacy delays	Significant gains from entry-exit assessment in receptive-expressive language, early literacy skills, and parent and teacher ratings of social use of language.
Kindergarten Early Language Intervention (KELI) Program, Toronto District School Board joanne.shimotakahara@tdsb.on.ca or sharon.mcwhirter@tdsb.on.ca	To increase oral language, early literacy and social communication skills in senior kindergarten children with language delays from highest socio-economic need schools	Significant gains from entry-exit assessment of receptive-expressive language, phonological awareness, social communication, and parent and teacher ratings of social use of language

Collaborative practices for speech-language pathologists and other school professionals are continuing to evolve and to be evaluated. There is a critical need for speech-language pathologists to evaluate and document outcomes of their services for the benefit of school-aged students with language and literacy needs and to use the information to further develop and improve collaborative practices.

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Helping Students with Writing Assignments

In August, the Ministry of Education released a new resource document for teachers: *Education for All, The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6*. This document is available on the Ministry of Education Website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/panel/index.html and includes many strategies that can be used to help children with communication disorders. This article has been written using ideas from Section 8 on “Writing” and strategies from Table 11.

Writing is a very complicated task as students must be able to juggle multiple demands such as formulating ideas, transcribing the information in a coherent and sequential manner, and monitoring spelling and mechanics (e.g. punctuation). Children may experience weakness in written expression because of more functional skill deficits (e.g. spelling, mechanics) and/or because they are unable to juggle the multiple demands of the writing process. For children with language disabilities the challenge is even greater.

The writing process involves four key stages:

1. Idea generating or **brainstorming** the content.
2. **Planning** for writing and deciding on the structure.
3. **Writing** a first draft of the key ideas and information.
4. Revising and **editing** the document.

The following Table provides suggestions and ideas for addressing the challenges that may be faced by the student at each stage.

Table 11: Steps in the Writing Process: Suggestions for Instruction	
Challenges that may affect idea generation or brainstorming	Suggestions for Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may lack relevant prior experience of knowledge of the topic • Students may be unable to recognize that prior experiences are relevant • Students may be unable to express relevant thoughts and ideas coherently • Students may have a limited vocabulary for expressing thoughts and ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select topics that are of personal interest to students • Encourage students to listen and use other students ideas • Use concrete objects, pictures/diagrams and mental images as “thought starters” • Use literature and other forms of media as thought starters: “Write an a different ending to this story, movie song.” • Use drama and other kinaesthetic activities as thought starters: “Let’s use charades to act out another ending to the story.” • Use open-ended questions or statements as thought starters: Ask the student what they liked or didn’t like in the story or movie. • Use software that supports idea generation
Challenges that may affect planning for writing	Suggestions for Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students start to write without considering the purpose, the topic, etc. • Students generate irrelevant ideas that do not match the writing purpose or target audience • Students have difficulty retaining information about the writing purpose or target audience • Students cannot transcribe their thoughts and ideas in print • Students do not understand text structure (beginning, middle, end). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with questions that direct their attention to the writing purpose and audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To whom am I writing? - Why I am I writing? - What do I know? - What should my reader know? • Provide students with concrete reminders or directions with respect to writing purpose and or audience. • Ask students to explain the purpose of the writing assignment in their own words. • Provide students with topic-relevant vocabulary. • Provide students with a scribe – a peer, older student, or parent volunteer. • Allow students to audio-record thoughts and ideas or use

	<p>assistive technology such as voice recognition software.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with visual organizer to guide them through the process. • Provide the student with an appropriate structure depending on the type of text to be produced (e.g., beginning, middle and end of story). • Provide students with a planning template • Offer a series of chronological pictures.
Challenges that may affect writing	Suggestions for Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may not possess adequate vocabulary • Students may be unable to recognize connections between ideas and thoughts • Students are unable to hold multiple ideas and thoughts in memory. • Students may not understand sequential order. • Students struggle and take extensive time to formulate ideas. • Students may have difficulties producing print. • Students may require excessive amounts of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with visual organizer to guide them through the process. • Provide the student with an appropriate structure depending on the type of text to be produced (e.g., beginning, middle and end of story). • Provide students with relevant word lists, transition phrases, and partial statements, • Have students recall words orally before writing. • Have students rebuild a text from a set of jumbled paragraphs • Rebuild a text from jumbled sentences • Provide students with elements of narrative and expository text (e.g. characters, setting, thesis statement, supporting detail) • Use graphic or advanced organizers and or writing templates (paper or electronic – provincially licensed software. • Use colour to highlight connected thoughts and ideas • Allow students to audio-record their writing and or use other assistive technology (e.g. word processors, voice to text software) • Provide students with ascribe • Frequently heck the student’s work to redirect them promptly and to encourage them.
Challenges that may affect revising and editing	Suggestions for Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may not possess adequate memory and organizational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a simply worded correction table. • Make sure the students understand all elements of the table and ask the students to explain it in their own words. • Offer much support at this stage, which is particularly challenging one for students with learning difficulties. • Make sure the students use toolboxes with properly tailored reference tools (personal dictionary, grammar rules, verb grid, etc.) to facilitate correction. • Allow the students to strike out words and use arrows rather than erasures. • Have another more skilled classmate correct work.
Students have trouble transcribing their texts in a readable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan publication with the students and assist them throughout the process. • Provide different tools and resources for publication (computer technology, stamps, multimedia).

This document has been prepared for classroom teachers but there are many suggestions that parents can use to help children at home as they work on school assignments. A parent will often have more time than the teacher to work with the student, and they know more about the child’s interests and strengths.

One of the first tasks for a parent is to make sure the child understands the assignment and knows how long they have to complete

the work. If your child has difficulty with complex instructions or memory problems it is very important that the parent is in regular communication with the teacher, and that a process has been established for recording homework. This could be as simple as a special place in his planner or binder where the assignment is written down. Depending on the child's needs and abilities, the child could have written the instructions themselves or been provided written instructions by the Teacher.

Brainstorming:

Once it is clear to both you and the child what the assignment involves and when it is due, the parent can help the child to break the assignment into several parts. Many children struggle to get started on a written assignment, or rush to write a few sentences without thinking about the whole document. You can help your child brainstorm their ideas by asking questions and helping them to sort their ideas. If they have a choice of topics you can make suggestions related to their interests or hobbies. You may want to help them write a list of the ideas or make a few diagrams of the important events. From your knowledge of the child you may be able to link the discussion to ideas and activities, stories or videos that are more familiar to the child.

Planning:

When the child is ready to think about the structure or format you can ask questions and provide reminders. Ask the child about the sequence of events, what happened first, what happened next, and about the characters and locations. There are many different writing styles and, if the child has a choice, you may want to look in a few favorite books to identify the style that the child wants to use. Stories can be written from a first person perspective and the story will unfold from a personal perspective – “I looked over the fence and saw....” Or they can be written in a narrative style with the child describing events as they appear to an outsider – “The boy looked over the fence and saw....”. By looking at different examples and discussing the different choices you will help the child to evaluate and select their approach.

You can also help the child make a list of key words or descriptions that will be needed. Take time to check the spelling of important words and make sure the vocabulary list is words the child understands and can use correctly. Children that have difficulty with spelling related to phonological awareness (poor letter - sound recognition) may need to develop a personal dictionary. If they have difficulty identifying the letter sounds the personal dictionary may need to be organized in a way that makes sense to them – for example by subject or topic rather than alphabetical. Picture dictionaries can also be helpful to beginning readers.

Writing:

When the child is ready to start writing, provide reminders about sentence structure, the need for action words (verbs) and descriptive words (adjectives). Make up a tip sheet if your child has difficulty with grammar and punctuation. You could provide a model sentence or paragraph with key parts highlighted to remind your child about the structure and punctuation. You can also help the child develop a visual diagram or model of the story that will help them remember the details and sequence of events.

Technology:

For children who use assistive technology, make sure they understand how to use the software or adaptive devices to complete assignments. For example, for a child who uses Kurzweil, the software can actually be used in the planning and organizing phase. Assignments written with voice recognition software should be carefully reviewed to make sure there are no pronunciation errors that have resulted in the wrong words being selected. The SpellCheck feature can also be used to check spelling – although it can't check whether the right word has been used and can only make sure the spelling is correct.

Editing:

Once the first draft is complete encourage the child to read it over and make corrections before you look at it. When you look at the work start by focusing on the positives – interesting ideas, good descriptions, neatness, and correct use of grammar and punctuation. Identify areas for improvement and ask the child for ideas on what changes are needed.

Parent Role:

Look carefully at Table 11 and you may see more ideas that you can use at home. You can also talk to the classroom teacher or special education staff at your child's school for other ideas. Remember it is not your job to do the assignment or to make the corrections. It is your job to help your child develop the skills and confidence to produce written work, and to know how to critically review and revise their own work.