



# PERSPECTIVES on

## Hearing and Hearing Disorders in Childhood



AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION **DIVISION 9**

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### *Coordinator's Corner*

Today, we are very proud to bring you a progress report on literacy and the hearing disordered child. For over 80 years, literacy rates for individuals with the profound hearing loss have stayed the same, until the past 11 years when technology has created greater access to amplification and spoken language. Because those with hearing loss now have greater access to speech, there is a need to educate parents and professionals that expectations of reading performance are higher.

Dr. Denise Wray brings many pertinent and time critical points to the forefront in her article "Reading, Writing, and Reaching Literacy: Raising Expectations for Children Who are Deaf." She describes literacy as a "kind of currency to improve one's quality of life." We all know this, yet she goes on to point out that the number teacher-education programs that focus on sign is significantly greater than those that focus on aural-oral options. Funding by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services mirrors this relationship. This is a situation requiring focused attention and remediation.

Dr. Robertson looks at many ways to help families and professionals establish good habits that promote literacy growth. In the next article, I explore ways to remediate some of the deficits in spoken language access for those who either have not maximized current technology or their auditory systems are still compromised. We

find this problem in children who receive cochlear implants later in life. I explore some of the systems that promote visual imprinting of auditory codes through simple color coding or cues that match spoken language phonemes synchronized with spoken language. It is very important for us to remember as we walk down this literacy path, that estimates of 30% or more of children with hearing loss have learning differences that are not related to their hearing loss.

Reading challenges for the child with mild-to-moderate hearing may not be related to auditory processing, as Dr. Lorna Halliday points out. We must be mindful of the higher incident of the "double deficit" in children with hearing impairment. Typical reading intervention strategies need to be modified based on accessing the auditory information, decoding abilities (auditory processing), matching decoding phoneme to orthographic representation, (visual-auditory matching), discriminating the visual information of orthographic representation (visual processing), and recoding and blending phonemes to orthographic representation (visual-motor integration, orthographic to auditory memory and auditory closure). Assessments must be continually refined when the child with hearing loss has instruction in reading, but does not progress. The primary problem preventing reading success may not be the hearing loss. We must be careful to refer the child to the intervention strategy tailored to his/her needs.

Finally, Dr. Ann Geers explores

some of the possible underlying areas that require focused assessment and remediation because of significant spoken language deficit. While phonological awareness is one segment of the necessary skills underlying literacy, Dr. Geers draws our attention to other equally important and predictive variables, such as mastery of grammatical competence and connotative and denotative knowledge of vocabulary.

One of the pertinent points that she addresses, which is often misunderstood, is the predictive value of narrative discourse assessments in literacy prognosis. This skill requires integration of auditory information, lexical and syntactic processing of the information, holding information in memory, re-organizing and executing the re-constructed interpretation. As-

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