



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER November 2015

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OAFCCD Struggling

We need your help!! OAFCCD has not been able to replace the income from the Walk the Talk for Kids event and has further reduced services this year. The Provincial Coordinator is only able to work a few hours each week and as a result less service is being provided to families.

Income from membership fees is very important to OAFCCD. Please pay your membership fees now and consider a seasonal donation. We can issue a tax receipt and your contribution will support OAFCCD activities.

Please continue to share information about our organization with other families and, if you are an SLP, with your clients. OAFCCD has lots of resources for families and we can provide valuable peer support.

To pay your membership and make a donation, please print the attached Membership Form and mail with a cheque. We can't accept credit cards for membership fees, but you can make an on-line donation to OAFCCD through CanadaHelps.



Special Needs Strategy Update

This has been a very busy year as communities across the province have developed plans to improve the coordination of services for children and youth with complex and or multiple needs and integrated rehabilitation services including speech and language services.

OAFCCD has been involved in the process by sharing the OAFCCD Position Statement on the Special Needs Strategy with chairs of all 34 planning committees. OAFCCD representatives have also participated in community consultations and parent surveys.

The community plans for coordination of services were submitted in mid-June and the implementation is to start this month. We understand that implementation will be staggered and that only a few communities will start the work before the end of the year. The plans are ambitious and it is hoped that improved agency collaboration and additional funds will significantly improve the experience for families. One of the key goals is to eliminate the need for families to tell their stories over and over again.

The community plans for integration of rehabilitation services, including speech and language services, have just been completed and submitted at the end of October. It is not clear when implementation will begin.

OAFCCD has serious concerns about the lack of new funding to support the community plans for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology. There will be savings as the services are better integrated and system efficiencies are realized. However, it is very unlikely the savings will be sufficient to reduce all of the waiting lists.

Integration of rehabilitation services, and particularly the ending of separate services for speech impairments, will improve the system. The number of service transitions will be reduced and improved wait list strategies will reduce gaps and get services started more quickly. The single wait lists will also make it clear how many children and youth are waiting and what services they need.

OAFCCD continues to monitor the planning and hopes that families will also have a voice in the implementation at the community level. As information becomes available we will share it with our members.

Reading to Learn

Once children with language disorders learn to read they may also struggle with *reading to learn*. In the senior elementary and high school grades, students are expected to listen and read to learn. Both of these skills will be hard for a student who has a language disorder. The student is expected to comprehend abstract concepts, make inferences, interpret what is heard or read, problem solve and ask questions.

As the learning expectations increase, students with language disorders may have difficulty with understanding and completing assignments, with tests and exams, and with following the course content. As a result the student may stop paying attention, act out in the classroom and receive failing marks. The student is at high risk for failure and for eventually dropping out of school.

The language content of the curriculum will become more difficult for the student. New vocabulary, including specialized vocabulary for science and math, will constantly be introduced. The sentence structure will become more complex and students will be exposed to words with double meanings and figurative language. Students need to learn how to decode sentences and make sense of the text.

Parents continue to have an important role in helping children read to learn. Parents should:

- Continue to read aloud to children, even after they can read.
- Read a novel to a child to provide practice in listening.
- Stop frequently to make sure the child understood the content.
- When a new word or idea is introduced stop to discuss it with the child.
- Encourage the child to guess the meaning of the word from the context.
- At the end of each reading session discuss the story plot and try to predict what will happen next.

Phonological awareness (the explicit understanding of a word's sound structure) is critical for effective decoding of printed words and the recognition of sound-letter connections necessary for competent spelling. Parents should

- Continue with phonological awareness activities using age-appropriate materials.
- Older children may not want to repeat nursery

rhymes, but they need to identify words which sound the same or rhyme.

- Pattern books for older children are available. These books are based on identifying and repeating sentence patterns. For example,

In the room I see a door.

In the room I see a door with a knob.

In the room I see a door with a window.

In the room I see a desk.

In the room I see a desk with legs.

In the room I see a book.

In the room I see a book with a cover.

- Ask the Teacher or Librarian for books to use at home.

Parents can also help children to learn new vocabulary for each new topic or subject.

- Ask the Teacher for a list of important new vocabulary.
- Help your child to learn how the words are pronounced and what they mean.
- Make a small drawing or visual image to help the child master the new words.
- Use a dictionary when you aren't sure about a word and look it up together. The dictionary will provide information on pronunciation and meaning.
- Students will learn how helpful a dictionary can be and will be encouraged to use it again when they have difficulty with new words.

Another way to help your child is to develop a visual map of the story plot, characters, historical chronology or science content. With the child's help:

- Make small drawings to depict key events or characters.
- Put the drawings in sequence to help the child understand the events and remind them about key information.
- Drawings don't have to be complicated (little stick figures are fine) but the visual images will help the child to remember the plot or events.
- The drawings can also be used to help study for a test or exam. For many students with language problems the visual cues can be very helpful.

Students with language impairments often have difficulty with figurative language. Figurative language is when you describe something by comparing it to something else. For example, "He

was busy as a bee” or “She had stars in her eyes”. Parents report that their child does not have a sense of humour and is unaware when a word has a double meaning. Children need to be provided this information explicitly. Studies have shown that we constantly use figures of speech and it is important to make sure students have the opportunity to learn as many as possible. Parents should:

- Stop and talk to your child whenever you use a figure of speech or a word with more than one meaning.
- Provide explanations when you think they have missed the point.
- Talk to your child about idiom (local terms or words that are unique to the situation) and metaphor (words or phrases that represent something else).

Students who have difficulty with language can become frustrated and give up on school in the higher grades. Parent support continues to be very important in helping children to be successful at school.

Some of these ideas and strategies have been taken from the [“Think Literacy Success, Grades 7-12, The Report of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk in Ontario,”](#) released in October 2003.

For more strategies to help your child with oral and written communication, check the OAFCCD Website, [General Suggestions for Improving Oral and Written Skills](#).



Seasons Greetings to you and your family from the Board and Provincial Coordinator at OAFCCD.

HOMWORK TIPS

Homework can seem overwhelming to many children. As a result they avoid doing it or leave it to the last minute and try to rush the job. Children need to develop good study habits and there are many ways in which you can help.

- Help your child get into the habit of using a planner for homework.
- For longer assignments, work with your child to break it into manageable chunks and help your child work out a timetable for the component parts.
- Practice outlining material - key ideas could be in point form on small pieces of paper which can then be put in order of importance.
- Practice drawing conclusions - about TV shows, family activities/concerns/your child's opinions.
- Practice sorting main ideas and details from everyday life.
- Practice sequencing everyday activities.
- Go over questions before reading the material, such as end of Chapter or unit questions; generate questions from unit goals or common sense (who, what, when, where, why).
- Practice paraphrasing material (saying it in your own words).
- Help your child learn vocabulary:
 - Content specific vocabulary - science terms, from a specific unit, i.e. on the Inuit or nature.
 - Build vocabulary knowledge - descriptive words, figures of speech, multiple meaning words.

Children also need a quiet place to work and it helps to have a regular routine. Doing homework on a daily basis, at the same time and place, can help a child to develop good homework habits.

Remember, your child must do the work, but your involvement and interest can make all the difference!!

Based on materials presented by Janet Doonkervort, S.L.P., Thames Valley District School Board, in an OAFCCD Chapter workshop.