



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER March 2022

933 Alice Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 2J9 Phone: 519-290-1763 Website: www.oafccd.com
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The OHRC Right to Read Inquiry

The final report from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) Inquiry into reading instruction in Ontario public schools was published on February 28, 2022. The goal of the inquiry was to assess whether Ontario is using evidence-based approaches to meet students' right to read. Although the Inquiry focused on students with reading disabilities (in particular dyslexia, a difficulty with recognizing words, reading sentences fluently and spelling), children with communication disorders also struggle with reading. The Right to Read Executive Summary posted on the Ontario Human Rights Commission website states "The right to read applies to ALL students, not just students with reading disabilities. This inquiry found that Ontario is not fulfilling its obligations to meet students' right to read."

The scope of the inquiry and resulting recommendations of the OHRC focused on the following items considered benchmarks for an effective systematic approach to reading instruction:

Universal Design for Learning: Accessible evidence-informed instruction for all students in the classroom.

Mandatory Early Screening: Use of effective measures to identify struggling readers who need more support not later than grade 1.

Evidence-based reading intervention programs: Flexible, inclusive, scientific and timely interventions for those students deemed "at risk".

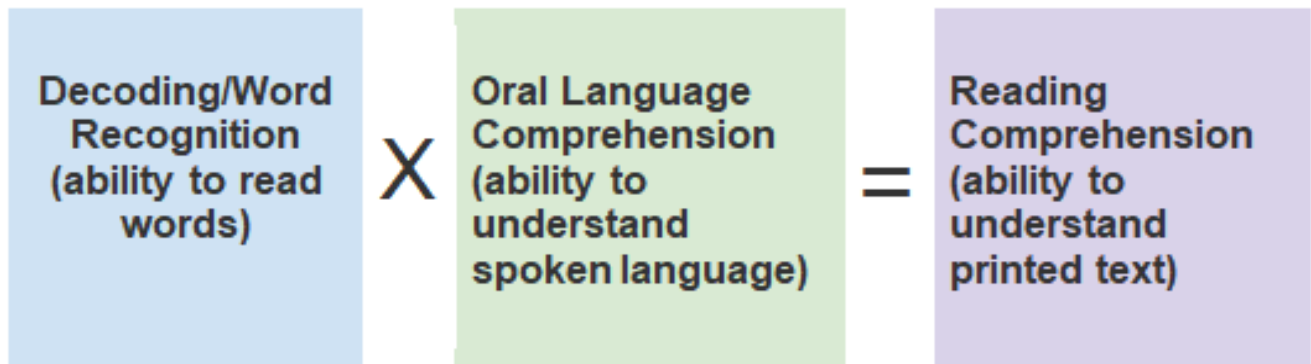
Accommodation: Timely implementation of effective technological and other supports.

Assessment: Specialist assessments (e.g. psycho-educational and speech-language pathology) should be available for those continuing to struggle despite high quality support.



**Ontario
Human Rights Commission**
**Commission ontarienne des
droits de la personne**

As a parent with a school-aged child struggling to read, you may find the OHRC final report promising, but be uncertain as to its relevance for your child. After all, although dyslexia is a common co-occurring condition for children with language disorders, it does not fall under the "Communication Disorders" umbrella because dyslexia is a problem specific to reading. So, let's take a look at the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) to get a better understanding of the components of reading.



Decoding/word recognition is the ability to sound out and, later, read words with automaticity. **Oral language comprehension** is the ability to understand the meaning of words, sentences and stories told through spoken language. **Reading comprehension** is the ability to understand what they read. Children need both decoding/word recognition and oral language comprehension to read and understand printed text. Children with dyslexia have good oral language comprehension but poor word recognition skills. In other words, information that is shared verbally is easily understood, but the child’s difficulty in decoding written words prevents them from understanding what they read when they decode text.

Children with communication disorders fall along continuums of weak to strong skills for word recognition and language comprehension. Typically, children with language disorders associated with an Intellectual Disability struggle with oral language comprehension. Children who are hard of hearing struggle with decoding words due to their difficulty with phonological processing and vocabulary; consequences of their restricted access to language acquired through listening. Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) struggle with oral language comprehension and expression which impacts reading comprehension and the vocabulary, sentence structure and verbal reasoning they express in writing.

Research suggests children with DLD are also 50% more likely to be diagnosed with a co-occurring condition of dyslexia. Children with communication disorders often struggle with reading comprehension due to word recognition or

language comprehension deficits or a combination of both.

For more information, go to the OHRC website: https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/right-to-read-inquiry-calls-for-critical-changes

Ministry of Education Shares Plan to Strengthen Reading Supports for Students

The office of Education Minister, Stephen Lecce released a news statement following the OHRC’s announcement. “Ontario is making a \$25-million investment in evidence-based reading intervention programs and professional assessments to support learning recovery and enable school boards to immediately begin meeting the needs of struggling readers. Funding is being made available for this school year and will carry through into the 2022-2023 school year.” The Ministry of Education is committed to the following actions:

- Aligning the elementary Language curriculum and the Grade 9 English course with scientific, evidence-based approaches that emphasize direct, explicit and systematic instruction
- Eliminating all references to unscientific discovery- and inquiry-based learning, including the three-cueing system, by September 2023
- Releasing a science-based guide for educators in spring 2022 that will support effective early reading instruction
- Collaborating with partners, including faculties of education, on professional development for educators to ensure they are learning science-based reading instruction methods

- Revising the elementary Français, Actualisation linguistique du français, Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants, and the Grade 9 Français curriculum by September 2023
- Beginning development of a French-language reading intervention program
- Engaging with parents and sector partners on a longer-term response and developing accessible, parent-friendly resources on literacy skills.

OAFCCD supports all of these recommendations and endorses evidence-based reading instruction practices.

A new resource for teachers: Project Inclusion

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Holland Bloorview) launched a new learning resource to help educators and school board staff combat ableism and promote accessibility, inclusion and full participation of students with disabilities. Project Inclusion, funded by Ontario's Ministry of Education, is a series of five online learning modules built around personal experience stories and practical strategies for inclusion in school communities.

The modules are available in both English and French at <https://deareverybody.hollandbloorview.ca/project-inclusion>. A facilitator's guide accompanies the modules, for those who would like to organize discussion groups.

Holland Bloorview, together with Bloorview School Authority, worked with more than 300 individuals and organizations including OAFCCD, to design this learning resource. Read more about the development of the modules at <https://hollandbloorview.ca/stories-news-events/news/project-inclusion-launch>.

OAFCCD is grateful to Holland Bloorview for providing the opportunity to contribute to this very important work.

Hearing Well

Does your child...

- have speech and/or language concerns?
- have academic difficulties?
- have difficulty following directions, especially when you are at a distance?
- sometimes misunderstand or respond?
- incorrectly to statements/questions?
- have difficulty learning in school?
- watch closely to a person's lips when he/she is talking?
- often ask for repetition?

Selecting one or more of the above, could indicate that your child might have a hearing loss.

You may be wondering:

My child passed the infant hearing screening at birth...

The infant hearing screening is just a screen and may not catch all cases of hearing loss. For that we need a formal assessment by an audiologist. Studies suggest that 25-50% of children with hearing loss developed their permanent hearing loss after infancy⁴. Audiologists recommend children be retested before they enter kindergarten.

My child hears fine at home...

Listening in a classroom is vastly different than listening at home. Factors such as distance, background noise and number of speakers greatly impacts the ability to accurately hear what is being said.

At school, children with hearing loss, even mild or unilateral hearing loss, have greater difficulty hearing when there is hallway noise, other students' talking, noisy fans, or when background music is present.

In addition, it is more difficult to hear speech at a distance; sitting beside someone at the dinner table or talking to them when less than 6 feet is vastly different than listening to a teacher from 10-20 feet away.

My child speaks fine at home...

Because children with unilateral hearing loss are less likely to show speech delays, they are often not diagnosed until they are school-aged⁵. Even though they may appear to hear at home, having a hearing loss can significantly impact their performance at school.

Did you know?

Children with unilateral or mild hearing loss often go undetected. When left undetected, mild, and unilateral hearing loss can adversely affect a child's academic, psychosocial and language development¹.

How would having a mild or unilateral hearing loss affect my child?

- difficulty functioning in complex environments (i.e. classroom)
- difficulty with sound localization
- difficulty with speech recognition in noise
- fatigue
- incidental learning (over hearing) becomes more difficult and reduces exposure to vocabulary and language
- difficulty establishing strong peer relationships and difficulty contributing to conversations in social settings.

Research shows...

Almost half of children with hearing loss will experience a deterioration in their hearing during their childhood².

According to the Ontario Infant Hearing Program, 2 out of 1000 babies are born with hearing loss. In addition, 8 out of 100 children are diagnosed with hearing loss by the time they reach adolescence, 79% in only one ear³.

What should I do now?

Getting your child's hearing tested at birth and when they are school aged are key. Early detection is important and can make a significant impact on their speech and language abilities. Early detection and intervention can also make a significant impact on how well they perform in school and the ease to which they learn.

Next Steps:

- **Contact your local audiologist and schedule an appointment to get your child's hearing tested.** The cost will depend on the clinic and will sometimes be covered by your extended health benefit plan. If cost is a concern, please contact your school for further information.
- Contact your teacher of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing if you have any further questions/concerns. If you are not sure who that is, ask the Special Education teacher at your school and they will connect you.

¹Bess, F., Dodd-Murphy, J., & Parker, R. (1998). Children with minimal sensorineural hearing loss: Prevalence, educational performance, and functional status. *Ear & Hearing*, 19, 339–354

²Barreira-Nielsen C, Fitzpatrick E, Hashem S, Whittingham J, Barrowman N, Aglipay M. Progressive hearing loss in early childhood. *Ear Hear*. 2016;37(5):e311–21.

³October 3, 2016. Health Facts Sheet, Hearing Loss of Canadians, 2012-2015. Statistics Canada.

⁴Watkin PM, Baldwin M. Identifying deafness in early childhood: requirements after the newborn hearing screen. *Arch Dis Child*. 2011;96(1):62–6.

⁵May 2018. Phonak Compendium. *A Review of Unilateral Hearing Loss in Children*.

Stacey Minogue and Jennifer Jager are itinerant teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Upper Grand District School Board

OAFCCD Membership Renewal

Membership renewals are now due. You can help OAFCCD by paying your 2022 membership and/or by donating to OAFCCD. Memberships are for each calendar year and you can pay for your 2022 membership now. Giving to OAFCCD is easy! You can e-transfer your membership fee to Alison.morse@outlook.com or you can make an immediate donation on-line through CanadaHelps. Donations of \$25 or more will be recognized with a free membership for 2022.

