



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

May is Speech and Hearing Month

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May is Speech and Hearing Month

Celebrate and Spread the Word!

May is nationally recognized as “Better Speech and Hearing Month”. You can help children and families by supporting OAFCCD and spreading the word about the impact of speech and language impairments on children and their families.

Some ideas of how you can help include:

- Like, comment, retweet and follow OAFCCD on social media
- Paying an Annual Membership to OAFCCD by completing the attached Membership Form
- Sharing copies of this Newsletter with families and peers
- Donating to OAFCCD by mailing a cheque or through [Canada Helps](#)
- Giving a copy of the OAFCCD brochure to families
- Directing families and peers to the resources on the OAFCCD website at: www.oafccd.com
- Recognizing a peer, child or family member by donating to OAFCCD
- Writing an article for the OAFCCD Newsletter or website.

NOTE: Donations accepted through Canada Helps are issued tax receipts instantly.



Accessing Speech and Language Services for Children

For the past year, services for children with communication disorders may have appeared quite different than usual due to COVID-19. Families may have experienced restrictions on in-person assessments and intervention as well as having to access services on-line. Service changes and new protocols may have made accessing services more difficult. This has had a significant impact on children who need speech and language services. In addition, accessing initial screening assessments and entering preschool or school-aged services may have been more of a challenge this year.

Once vaccinations have helped to contain the pandemic and things return to normal, what should parents expect in terms of accessing Speech and Language Services for children in Ontario?

Preschool Children

Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) Programs are established across the province. Preschool programs employ Speech-Language Pathologists (S-LPs) to assess your child’s speech and language development and provide information about next steps, such as what you can do at home to help your child. If intervention is needed, services may be available to help your child develop the skills they need. There may be wait times for assessment or intervention services. To find the contact information for the Preschool Speech and Language Program in your area check the MCCSS site, [Preschool Speech and Language Program Locations](#).

Transition to School

Parents have an important role to play in the transition to school and advocating for their child. With parent consent, PSL services may share information with school-based services. This may occur at various times during the Kindergarten years, depending on local arrangements. Check with your preschool provider to find out how your child's information will be shared. Make sure you know what the plan is, to ensure that services for your child will transition smoothly without unnecessary duplication. In some situations, and especially for children who receive a number of different preschool developmental services, a meeting between preschool service providers and the school-based special education team may be arranged. There may be a wait for services delivered at school. Parents have an important role in advocating for the supports their child needs.

School Age Children

Once children have started school, the classroom teacher is the first person you should share your concerns with about your child's speech and language development. A transition to school plan may be in place for your child, however, for some children a difficulty with speech and language development may only become noticeable when the child is at school. In kindergarten your child should be able to communicate with the teacher, the Early Childhood Educator and the other children in the class room without difficulty. Some children may only start to show communication, speech or language concerns as they learn to read or start reading to learn.

If you have concerns, it is important that you talk to your child's classroom teacher. The teacher may try different strategies to help your child, request help from the special education teacher, or request a referral to a Speech-Language Pathologist. Typically, referrals to school-based Speech and Language Services are made through the Special Education Team and the principal of the school. Some school boards also have early identification programs for primary students.

In Ontario, most publicly funded school boards employ Speech-Language Pathologists (S-LPs) as part of their multidisciplinary teams for special

education services. Upon referral, the school-based S-LP typically assesses a student's needs, provides recommendations regarding how to support communication needs in the classroom, and arranges for intervention services and additional referrals, as appropriate. Some boards provide group or individual intervention by a school-employed S-LP or Communicative Disorders Assistant. For children with speech-sound disorders, voice disorders, fluency(stuttering) or swallowing issues, a referral may be made for Speech Therapy through the School Health Support Services provided through Children's Treatment Centres. Services delivered at school may look very different from what parents have experienced in the preschool years. It is very important that parents connect with the school-based S-LP to support your child's speech and language goals at home and help advocate for his/her needs.

Private Speech-Language Pathologists

Some parents have concerns about the length of waiting lists or would like to see a Speech-Language Pathologist privately for other reasons. To find a private SLP who works with children, you can check the following websites:

- OSLA - [Find a Speech-language Pathologist or Audiologist](#)
- CASLPO – [Find a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologists](#)

All Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists are regulated professionals who are governed by their college. You can check with your employer to find out if your Extended Health Care Benefits will cover SLP services.



BIG THANKS **to Speech-language Pathologists at the** **York Region District School Board**

Interim Chief Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Kristen Robson encouraged the SLPs to donate to OAFCCD. Thanks to their generous support over \$700 has been donated to OAFCCD.

Five Common Q's about Children's E-books

By Zoe Dunn and Kiersten Bertrand



Now more than ever, children and families are turning to electronic books (e-books).

There have been several studies about e-books over the past decade, and they have identified both advantages and disadvantages to e-books. Check out the answers to common questions about using e-books with your youngsters!

Who benefits from using e-books?

Interactive e-books can be helpful for children with a range of literacy skills. New research shows that children with developmental delays may benefit from the interactive features of e-books. Other research shows that e-books may be particularly beneficial for children who may not have had much access to high-quality literacy material.

What skills can my child learn by using an e-book?

Children can learn a variety of literacy skills from good-quality e-books. A good quality e-book has added extras such as a dictionary, real-time highlighting of words read by a narrator, and games/pictures that help explain the story. E-books can support the development of:

- Phonological awareness (i.e., the ability to identify and manipulate sounds in a word)
- Concepts about print (e.g., what marks a sentence; where a book starts or ends)
- The beginnings of word writing (e.g., making a mark on a page to stand for a word)
- Word recognition (i.e., reading words)

How should I help my child engage with an e-book?

Children learn most from e-books when adults share the e-book with them and talk about the story. Kids learn less when they look at e-books by themselves. The research shows that parents tend to lead discussions about the digital features and games in the e-book. However, to maximize a child's learning with e-books, parents should have discussions with the child that go beyond the pages of the book. Parents can talk about how the story relates to the child's lived experience, and provide explanations when necessary. Remember these tips when reading e-books:

- Talk about the story and expand the story
- Describe & explain what is in the story
- Consider using a "read-only" mode first before activating interactive features

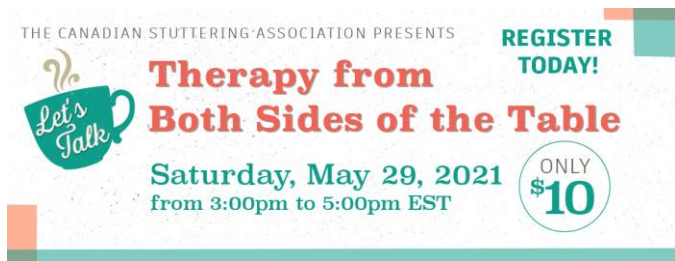
What e-book features should I look out for?

Well-designed e-books should contain multimedia features that directly relate to the story and support the child's understanding of the story. Extra features that are not about the story distract from the reading experience. Look for e-books that contain:

- Pictures and "hot-spots" (areas on a page to click on) to help children understand the story (rather than music or animations that distract from the story)
- Games that can be played after the narrator has read the page
- Words that are highlighted as the narrator reads to help children make the connection between the spoken word and its written form
- A dictionary feature to help expand on tricky words and build children's vocabulary
- Forward and back arrows to mimic page turning and reinforce the left to right directional reading

Can I still use paper-based books?

Most researchers agree that e-books should not be used as a replacement for shared reading with traditional paper books. Rather, sharing a good quality e-book with a child that has helpful interactive features can be used in addition to traditional paper books.



Canadian Stuttering Association

We are excited to invite you to an interactive virtual talk from both sides of the therapy table.

The Canadian Stuttering Association invites you to join on Saturday, May 29 from 3 to 5 p.m. EST (12 to 2 p.m. PST) for an informed panel of Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and persons from various therapy backgrounds, this virtual collaboration will delve into different approaches to treatment, as well as individual experiences and perspectives about the therapeutic process.

This online event will provide a great opportunity for persons who stutter (PWS) of all ages, their family, and significant others to share their experiences and to ask questions about speech therapy. We welcome and encourage the participation of SLPs and SLP students to learn from and engage with panelists and other participants about their therapy experience.

We hope you can join the conversation on Saturday, May 29 from 3 to 5 p.m. EST (12 to 2 p.m. PST) for what will be a lively and informative conversation from both sides of the therapy table. The cost is only \$10!

[Register here!](#)

The panel will be co-hosted by Carla Di Domenicantonio, CSA SLP Liaison, and Lisa Wilder, CSA Webmaster and Editor.

OAFCCD Annual General Meeting June 15, 2021 7:00pm to 7:30pm

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Tuesday June 15, 2021 by Zoom. Guests are welcome but only members may vote. At the meeting there will be an update on activities over the last year and formal votes on the Financial Statements and Board membership. If you would like to attend, please contact Alison Morse at Alison@oafccd.com

OAFCCD Special Meeting June 15, 2021 at 7:30pm

On June 15 OAFCCD board members and guests held a special meeting to examine OAFCCD's activities. Many great conversations were had and ideas were generated. It was agreed that additional discussions would be beneficial. Therefore, following the Annual General Meeting at 7:30pm the Zoom meeting will continue with further discussion about how the organization can support children with communication disorders and their families.

We invite your input into the special meeting by considering the following questions. If you are able to attend, please come prepared to talk about these questions, or if you can't attend please provide input by e-mail to Trudy@oafccd.com

Questions for Consideration

1. What type of information and support are families looking for about communication disorders and speech and language services?
2. What can be added to the [OAFCCD Website](#) to meet the needs of families?
3. How can OAFCCD help children with communication disorders and their families recover from the disruption of speech and language services related to COVID-19 over the past 2 school years?
4. What suggestions do you have to increase awareness of OAFCCD amongst families and Speech-Language Pathologists?