



Early Intervention Critical to Literacy, say Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

September 8 is International Literacy Day

Ottawa, ON (September 7, 2012) — Can you read this? You might be surprised to learn that nearly half of Canadian adults struggle with literacy. For many people, literacy issues begin in early childhood — often before starting school. We now know that early identification, prevention and intervention is key to language and literacy development.

On September 8, join the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) in recognizing International Literacy Day. Together we can ensure that literacy remains a priority on national and international agendas.

“International Literacy Day is an opportunity for us to promote a literate environment for our children,” says CASLPA President, Judy Meintzer, MSLP, R.SLP, S-LP(C). “Singing songs, reciting rhymes, having access to books, markers and crayons — all of these activities and tools are really important; they encourage the type of play that facilitates language and literacy development.”

Although literacy development begins at birth, most children will recognize familiar signs, write some letters of the alphabet and even read their names by age four. In other children however, these emergent literacy skills are either delayed or absent.

Literacy is essential to social and economic well-being. Studies have shown that without early intervention, children struggling with language and literacy problems often go on to face other issues including academic difficulties, depression, high-risk behaviour, poor resiliency and isolation.

“Language and literacy skills develop in parallel,” says Meintzer. “As parents, teachers, physicians, audiologists, speech-language pathologists and supportive personnel, we need to collaborate. By working together we can minimize or eliminate the impact that these difficulties may have on a person later in life.”

Early identification, prevention and treatment of communication disorders is a team effort. Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs) work with children and their families to identify and improve their language and literacy skills. Audiologists (AUDs) assess and treat hearing problems and other auditory disorders; which, left undetected, can lead to serious delays in a child’s communication development. Supportive personnel are trained professionals who assist S-LPs and AUDs in the delivery of services.

“The good news is that, in Canada, we have access to essential child development programs that include speech-language pathology and audiology services,” adds Meintzer. “I encourage parents and caregivers concerned about a child’s communication development, or anyone experiencing communication difficulties themselves, to seek help.”

-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

CASLPA is focused on the importance of early literacy and has created resources like the Milestones Brochure, which outlines the ages at which most children typically reach speech, language and hearing milestones. To download this brochure, or to find a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in your area, please visit www.speechandhearing.ca.

On September 8, participate in International Literacy Day by reading a child a story, singing them a song, helping them draw a picture or even encouraging them to write a silly rhyme!

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CASLPA, with over 6,000 members, is the only national body that supports and represents the professional needs of speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel inclusively within one organization. Through this support, CASLPA champions the needs of people with communication disorders. Visit CASLPA at www.caslpa.ca or learn more at www.speechandhearing.ca.

For more information, please contact:

Krystle van Hoof, Director of Communications and Public Affairs

Telephone: 613-567-9968 ext. 241

Email: pubs@caslpa.ca