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Hands & Voices of Oregon

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June 2011

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Quick Updates

Mark your calendars for **August 21!**

It's our annual picnic at Wilsonville Park, in Wilsonville.

Kids (big and small!!) can play in the splash pad and we'll have games and food! More information will come out in the next few weeks! We hope to see you there!

[Portland area Parent Group Saturday, June 11th at Tucker Maxon School 2860 SE Holgate Blvd Portland 97202. Child care is provided in the gym \(for siblings too!\) by licensed teachers.](#)

[Salem Area Parent Group Monday, June 20th, 7 - 8pm at Oregon School for the Deaf, library. Children welcome to come.](#)



Letter from the Executive Director Helen Cotton Leiser

Dear Hands & Voices Family,
"I am barely hanging on".

I have heard four parents say this to me in the last five months. The last time I heard this said was from a parent of a school-aged kiddo who was having a difficult time accepting his hearing loss. It reminded me that our grief, our anger, our challenges as parents are on-going. We can all understand a parent of a newborn feeling overwhelmed, but when it's a parent of an older child we sometimes forget that those parents will cycle through moments of intense grief/anger/emotion as their child transitions through school and life. Last year I met with a mom who was having intense grief because her son was graduating high school. She was embarking on the typical 'empty nest' syndrome, but also the change in her own life where IEP's, educating teachers every fall, pre-teaching were all a huge part of her life for so many years. Suddenly she didn't need to do that anymore.

As parents its easy to be consumed by our children. As parents of deaf/hard of hearing children that consumption can often mean the educational and social integrity of our child's development. It could mean learning a new language (ASL), learning about technology, paying for technology, many many many doctors appointments, constant worry and a lot of time teaching our child language. As we learned on this week's statewide conference call, our kids are at a greater risk of abuse and bullying.

Parents, I think its important for you to acknowledge your feelings and know that you are not alone. We are tired... tired of dealing with insurance companies, tired of worrying, tired of trying to figure this all out, tired of all the acronyms that keep coming our way, tired of not knowing

Quick Links

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<http://www.ushersyndrome.nih.gov/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AtresiaMicrotia/>

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what services our child should be getting, tired of long IEP meetings, tired of being tired.

Sometimes it's difficult to acknowledge the blessing in all this. Through their hearing loss our kids have given us a gift. For me the gift has been in appreciation of hearing, and through my girls my community has grown. I am surrounded by professionals and parents who have taken me under their wing, who constantly educate me and listen to me. I get to help another parent feel supported while being supported myself. And I always have an out for not doing the dishes... talking to my girls and teaching them takes precedence!

Summer is here... get some rest, enjoy your kids! Enjoy your partner/spouse, enjoy yourself! It's a good time to replenish!

Warm Regards,
Helen

Elements of a Language Rich Home Environment

By Joanne Corwin, Rosemary Gallegos, Mary Pat Moeller, Arlene Stredler Brown

For infants, stimulation is based in the social/affective relationships with family members. It is conversational from day one. As children grow, stimulation and dialogues need to support the child's understanding of his/her world and provide the necessary foundations for literacy.

Parenting any child is a developmental process. When a child is deaf or hard of hearing, families learn everything that any parent learns, but they add the process of figuring out how to provide and make accessible fluent language models and strategies to support increasingly abstract dialogues with their child.

Language blossoms and flourishes in an environment that is:

Respectful - The child is seen as a person who can communicate routine information and can understand and learn complex communication.

Real and Meaningful - Communication is authentic, not contrived. The child's interests and natural curiosity are used as language content.

Nurturing - Language is presented within a zone of proximal development. This means that the family accepts and supports the language of the child. Families also gently challenge the language of the child to "bump up" and stretch the child's use of new vocabulary, complex language, and abstract ideas. This means that language is not only tied to the here-and-now, but includes discussion about things that are not in the room and that happened in the past and will happen in the future. Complexity and range of purposes for using language are modeled, and the child is encouraged to use language for this wide variety of functions (such as to play, to pretend, to negotiate, to complain, to question, to answer, to describe, etc).

Responsive - A family follows a child's lead. They accept approximations and model precision naturally. They map language into communicative attempts the child initiates.

Strategic - Language is flexible and incorporates a variety of strategies to encourage communication and expansion (expectant pauses, repetition of the child, rephrasing, adding a gesture for clarification, changing modes or languages to clarify meaning, using manipulatives to support understanding or maintain attention).

Constant - The child is bathed in language (in routines, for new and exciting events, to allay fears or confusion, to explain what is happening now, to explain what will happen, for commenting, sharing, discussing, problem solving etc.).

Guiding - Language is used to advocate and provide guidance. Children learn how to problem solve and think through options with their friends and adults.

Social - Children have numerous opportunities to interact with a wide variety of communication partners at home and in the family's community.

Complete - The child is provided with fluent language models.

Emotional - A family uses language to communicate their emotional availability. This provides the child with words to label and discuss feelings.

Thought-Provoking - The most wonderful aspect of language is that its purpose is to communicate and stimulate thought. The world is an amazing place that is full of surprises. Children need the opportunity to talk about the "whys" and "hows" of their environment.

Parent Suggestions for the Child with Unilateral Hearing Loss from "Educational Audiology Association"

It is known that a child with unilateral hearing loss will have difficulties and challenges with social localization and understanding speech in noise. Studies show that 25-35% of these children fail a grade and that the risk for problems in schools is up to ten times higher than for children who have normal hearing in both ears. Here are some suggestions that might minimize these negative effects:

1. In the classroom, your child's better-hearing ear should be facing the teacher or main sound source. That might mean moving seats for different classroom activities.
2. Your child will benefit from sitting in a quiet area in the classroom. Reducing background noise will make it easier for your child to hear and understand speech. Examples of background noise include other children doing assignments, heaters, air conditioners, fish tanks, computer terminals, fans, open windows, etc.
3. A unilateral loss makes it difficult to tell what direction sound is coming from. Therefore it is important to teach your child to always look both ways before crossing the street. It would also be useful to put rearview mirrors on your child's bicycle.
4. It is important to retest hearing on a regular basis. Your audiologist will recommend when to have your child's hearing retested. If you suspect a change in hearing, your child should be retested immediately.
5. Prompt medical attention is recommended for ear infections. Your child may hear as well when he/she has a cold or ear infection.

Online ASL Tutorials



<http://www.aslpro.com/> - FREE

<http://www.handspeak.com/> - FREE

<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm> - FREE

<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm> - FREE (to test your knowledge of ASL finger spelling)

<http://www.aslpro.com/games/jeopardy/jeopardy.html> - FREE ASL GAME (to test your ASL skills)

<http://www.signingonline.com/enroll.html> - costs \$49.95 per 4 months of access

Transition: High School to College by Martha Fydrich

Every year seems to present itself with new challenges, rewards, expectations and decisions. This has been another year of transition for our oldest child. Her high school career is quickly ending, with college as her next goal in life. During her junior year of high school, we started attending college fairs. We asked all the "normal" questions but added one more, "What are your resources available for disabled students? More specifically, "What are your resources available for Deaf and hard of hearing students?" The answers were often very positive and at other times quite honest that it was extremely hard for them to provide services. Throughout our search, we kept in the back of our minds this principle: opportunities that were going to provide a compatible, communication driven learning environment to meet the special needs of our hearing-impaired daughter.

Narrowing our choices, we then contacted the offices for disabled students and gathered information on services provided. A decision was made to attend CSU and a letter of acceptance was received shortly after she submitted her application. We then met with the coordinator of interpreting services and learned the process for arranging for interpreters, notetakers, etc. This gave her a chance to feel comfortable with expectations, people providing services, and student responsibilities.

Transitioning from high school to college removes one from the protection of the IDEA Law. College students are provided services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). As civil rights legislation, Section 504 and the ADA prohibit discrimination based on disability or handicap. It will provide auxiliary aids, accommodations, and modifications to qualified students in order to have an equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from programs provided by the university or college. Students must self-identify as having a disability, with appropriate documentation. In turn, reasonable accommodations will be provided.

Another step in the transition process is to connect with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). This is our next step in transition from high school to college. We have contacted DVR and connected with a counselor who works with Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. An appointment is arranged and an application is filed. Next we will attend an orientation and eligibility meeting and continue with the appropriate steps outlined.

Transition, or passage from one stage to another, never happens without a great deal of work, insight, and emotion. Learning the appropriate process, meeting wonderful people, and finding success is always part of transition. The high school to college transition will be remembered as facing new challenges, rewards, expectations and decisions.

" In pursuit of our dreams, we do not always need to have fuel to take us to that destination. Sometimes we just need fuel enough to take us to the next service station and fill up."

- by Jonathan Simango --- Zimbabwe

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