

# PEDIATRIC SPEECH THERAPY NEWSLETTER

## HOW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY BENEFITS CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurologically based developmental disorder that significantly affects speech and nonverbal communication as well as social interactions. The term “spectrum” is used to describe the diversity in strengths and challenges possessed by each individual with ASD (Autism Speaks, 2018).

Many children with ASD have difficulty completing everyday tasks and communicating with others. Occupational therapy is a unique discipline that equips children and families with the skills and resources necessary to address these challenges. Occupational therapists focus on many different areas when working with children with ASD, including fine and gross motor skills, handwriting development, social interaction skills, motor coordination, and much more. Many children with ASD work with both speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists.



Occupational therapy also addresses sensory concerns, which many children with ASD experience. Sensory concerns refer to the way in which a child responds to input in his or her environment. A child may be hypersensitive or hyposensitive (or both) to specific input, which can make daily activities challenging. For example, tolerating textured foods, understanding his or her body in space, and dealing with unbalanced surfaces may cause disruptions within sensory systems that can lead to impulsive behaviors.

Occupational therapists work closely with the child’s family and care team (e.g., speech-language pathologist and behavior analyst) to design a holistic intervention plan to address the most significant areas of concern. Therapy is individualized to align with the interests of the child. For example, therapists may use movement activities, such as “Freeze Dance,” with a child who loves to dance to target vestibular sensory goals.



## STRIDES IN THE SUNSHINE: SIMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR SUMMER SPEECH & LANGUAGE PROGRESS

Children make exceptional gains in speech and language skills throughout the school year as a result of dedicated parents, motivating teachers, and encouraging speech-language pathologists. While summer is often considered the season of rest and relaxation, it can also serve as a time for children to expand upon their school-year strides.

As the nine-month school calendar remains standard, a phenomenon referred to as “summer learning loss” has emerged. Summer learning loss refers to a drop in test scores or loss of acquired skills as a result of a child’s extended break from school (Menard & Wilson, 2013).

Cooper (2003) reports that a lengthy break in the school year disrupts the rhythm of instruction and requires a significant amount of effort to relearn material upon the start of the following school year.

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# ASK A THERAPIST



## WHAT IS APHASIA?

Aphasia is a language disorder that occurs as a result of brain damage (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018). While strokes most often cause aphasia, any brain damage may lead to aphasia. The brain is divided into two halves: the left and right hemispheres. For the majority of individuals, the left side of the brain houses language skills (e.g., speaking, understanding speaking, reading, and writing). As a result, damage to this half of the brain can affect any of these skills (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018).

Deficits in speaking may include having an easier time producing single words as opposed to full-length sentences or producing made-up words altogether. In regards to understanding speech, an individual with aphasia may have challenges comprehending conversation in a noisy environment. Reading and writing deficits may manifest as difficulty putting words together to write sentences or reading books and computer screens (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018).

There are several strategies for communicating with individuals who have aphasia, and it is important to remember that aphasia does not impact intellect. One strategy to use is capturing the attention of the individual with aphasia before beginning of a conversation. At the start of a conversation, it is not necessary to talk louder unless the individual with aphasia asks. Another strategy is giving the individual time to finish his or her thoughts as opposed to finishing the sentences. A final tip is allowing the individual to make mistakes and try things for him or herself (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2018).

## APP OF THE MONTH:

### Dr. Seuss Treasury



Ages 4+

#### Target Skills

Speech & Language

#### About The App

App includes more than 50 of Dr. Seuss' classic books, so parents and children can share in the joy of reading together!



## Strides in the Sunshine: Simple Activities for Summer Speech & Language Progress Continued...

In the field of speech-language pathology, summer learning loss can especially affect a child's phonological awareness skills. Phonological awareness, a skill critical to reading achievement, is defined as a child's awareness of and ability to manipulate speech sounds (Tunmer, Pratt & Herriman, 1984). An example of phonological awareness skills includes accurately identifying rhyming words. To identify "bat" and "sat" as rhyming words, a child must understand both contain a similar sequence of speech sounds. A child must also recognize these words can be manipulated with different speech sounds at the beginning of the word to produce new rhymes.



It is highly supported that children learn best when the instruction is continuous (Cooper, 2003). Therefore, the remainder of this section will provide several examples of activities to promote the development of speech and language skills over the warm summer months.

The first example of a simple summer learning activity is free and will have children busy on their feet. Go for a walk! A walk around the block or adventure to a scenic destination can incorporate a variety of speech and language skills. As parents walk with their children, they can take advantage of open-ended questions or observations such as, "I wonder what this is!" or "What do you think is all the way up in that tree?" Open-ended questions are an excellent way to facilitate conversation and expansion of language.

Parents can also create picture checklists with labels above each image to simulate a scavenger hunt and facilitate reading comprehension. Another example of a simple summer learning activity is sure to stir up some fun. Bake a treat! As children engage with easy recipes, they gain exposure to sequential vocabulary and practice following directions.

A final activity to encourage summer learning can be a relaxing part of the weekly routine. Take a trip to the local library! The value of reading to children could not be more critical. Several professionals, such as Smith (1978), have reported reading to children helps them learn that printed words on a page have distinct speech sounds and contain special meanings.

#### References

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## SPEECH THERAPY SPOTLIGHT

### Deborah Esquivel, MA, CCC-SLP

#### About Deborah Esquivel

Debbie Esquivel is a Speech-Language Pathologist who received her under-graduate and Master's degrees from California State University, Fresno. Debbie has experience working in adult rehabilitation, as well as school and clinic settings.

She began working at Aspire Speech & Learning Center in 2006, and has been here ever since. Currently she enjoys working with a wide range of clients from preschoolers to adults.



Debbie has been married to her husband Ramon for 14 years and has been blessed with five wonderful grandchildren. In her free time, Debbie enjoys going to her grandchildren's baseball and basketball games, having them over for sleepovers and following their imaginations and creativity.

#### Three words Deborah uses to describe herself

*Compassionate, Thoughtful, Organized*

#### Why Deborah loves being a speech therapist

I love being a therapist because it gives me the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in people's lives, by making them happier and healthier.

#### Deborah's favorite things

My favorite things are faith, family, playing with my grandkids, trips to Morro Bay or San Francisco, playing and listening to music, and chatting over coffee with friends and family at La Boulangerie!

#### What people are saying about Deborah Esquivel

*"Debbie has been there for me and believed in me.  
I will always be grateful for her help and friendship."*

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[Grow@AspireSpeech.com](mailto:Grow@AspireSpeech.com)

Please include the address of your office & how many additional copies you would like.



**Concerned About Your Child's Speech or Development?**

**Call us today  
for a free consultation  
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## About Aspire Speech & Learning Center

Aspire Speech and Learning Center, formerly Center for Communication Skills, is a premier provider of speech therapy services and academic support in the greater Fresno area. Kathryn Wage and her team of experienced speech therapists have a long-standing and well-deserved reputation for providing services that improve the lives of their clients. The therapists are well known for supporting parents in improving optimum functional outcomes for their children. The practice has grown rapidly since moving to the California Learning Connection and provides services through a wide range of payer options, both public and private, and receives referrals from top pediatrician practices and elite preschools around Fresno. We offer free consultations to prospective clients to help determine the best fit for our offerings.

Contact Aspire Speech & Learning at [Grow@AspireSpeech.com](mailto:Grow@AspireSpeech.com) or call (559) 228-9100



## Aspire Speech & Learning Center

### California Learning Connection Office

2505 West Shaw Avenue, #101  
Fresno, CA 93711-3334

**Phone** (559) 228-9100  
[Grow@AspireSpeech.com](mailto:Grow@AspireSpeech.com)  
[www.AspireSpeech.com](http://www.AspireSpeech.com)



### Schedule Your Evaluation Now!

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### We Appreciate All of Your Referrals

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It helps us know we are doing a good job.



### Contact Us Today!

Do you have thoughts or feedback? If so, we would love to hear from you.  
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