

CHOICES FOR CHILDREN

Early Intervention Program



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Carrie Rain, M.Ed., Director of Early Childhood Programs

FINGERSPELLING WITH YOUR TODDLER

Christie Homell, ASL Teacher, WPSD



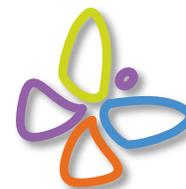
Research indicates that using fingerspelling with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children at an early age can support their reading and writing development. Fingerspelling is an important aspect of American Sign Language (ASL) and is highly recommended for expanding vocabulary development. Much like hearing children imitate speech, develop babbling and then eventually the spoken word, Deaf and Hard of Hearing children imitate signs and fingerspelling, develop “babbling” (an approximation) and then eventually the signed or fingerspelled word. Children should be encouraged to start fingerspelling at an early age. Both Deaf and hearing parents should continue to fingerspell words to their children until they grasp the words. It is very important for children to feel comfortable using different handshapes so they can develop the ability to fingerspell. With practice, young children can become fluent in fingerspelling. Research has shown that the more Deaf and Hard of Hearing children who use ASL are exposed to fingerspelling, the more likely they are to later develop fluency in reading and writing. Don't be afraid to use fingerspelling with your young Deaf and Hard of Hearing children... Fingerspell, fingerspell, fingerspell!

Read more at <http://vl2.gallaudet.edu/research/research-briefs/english/importance-fingerspelling-reading/>



TODDLERS ON THE GO

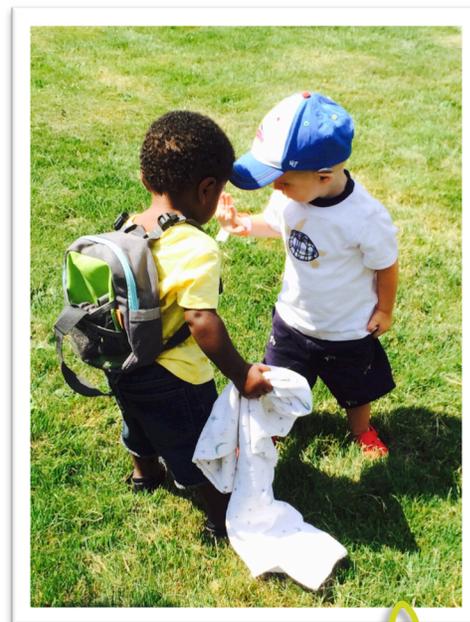
Mary Ann Stefko, Choices for Children Teacher



Whether it's a trip to the park, the grocery store or playing in the yard, toddlers are always on the go! Make the most of these experiences to support language and listening. Here are a few things to think about...

- Make sure you check your child's amplification and make sure it is working before you leave home.
- Take along extra batteries and amplification supplies.
- Take a few minutes and "plan" your outing with your toddler. Talk about where you will go, what you will see and new words/signs you might use.
- This is a good time to introduce predictions.
- Take some pictures while you are out and create a language experience book to share/read later.
- Remember to "narrate" everything you see and do. Talking and signing about your day allows your child access to incidental learning.
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Shake off the winter blues by heading out and about with your toddler ...making the most of your time together!



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: BRINLEE

Brinlee failed her newborn hearing screenings right after birth. When she was about 8 weeks old, Brinlee saw her first audiologist and was diagnosed with a moderate hearing loss and Brinlee was fitted for hearing aides. Shortly after that, Brinlee's hearing was re-tested and her hearing had progressed to a severe loss and cochlear implants were recommended. We couldn't be more pleased with our decision to choose cochlear implants and our experience at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Tell us about your family

Brinlee has an older sister named Alexis and we will be adding a baby boy to the family in May. Brinlee is thrilled about the idea of becoming a big sister!

What communication mode(s) did you use when you were in EI?

Spoken language was our primary mode of communication during Early Intervention. However, as a family we have decided that it was also important for Brinlee to learn sign language as well. Brinlee was exposed to sign language for the first time at 3 months old and starting signing around 1 year of age. It is our goal that Brinlee will be fluent in sign one day!

What mode(s) do you use now?

Spoken language is our current mode of communication but sign language is also very important to our family. We would like Brinlee to

be able to effectively communicate with her hearing and Deaf peers through both modes of communication.

Tell us about your child's current educational environment and what support is the school providing

Brinlee attends the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Hershey. Hershey offers a variety of services depending on the child's needs. We love that Hershey offers inclusion with a hearing classroom. Brinlee is able to spend part of the day with her Deaf peers in a smaller classroom setting where she is exposed to sign language and also participates in the hearing classroom in a much larger setting. We feel this is an essential piece in preparing Brinlee for Kindergarten. The curriculum includes math, science, language arts, and reading.

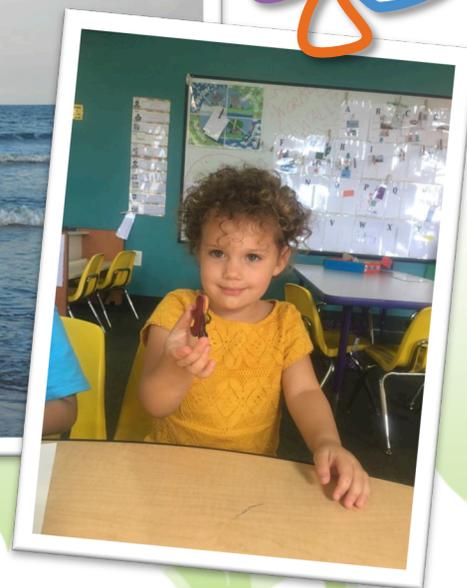
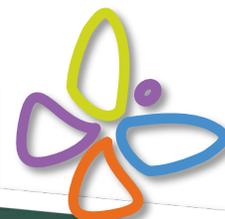
Describe your most memorable moment (fun activity or "aha" moment) in EI

Michelle Campbell was Brinlee's Teacher of the Deaf and is now her current preschool teacher. Brinlee truly could not be more blessed to

have such a caring and compassionate teacher in her life. One of our most memorable moments with Michelle was when we had a therapy session at the PA Farm School. Brinlee loves Michelle and animals so it was the perfect combination!

What advice would you give to families who are just finding out their child has a hearing loss?

I remember having so many questions and wondering what our future would look like after receiving the news that Brinlee had a moderate to severe hearing loss. I was scared! Looking back over the last 3 years, Brinlee received all the services she needed (hearing therapy, speech therapy, and music therapy). Her speech and academic progression has surpassed any of my expectations. We have also met so many families along the way and I can't imagine our life without them! Hearing loss can be scary and intimidating but we could not be more blessed with the EI services, community support and activities, and the friendships we've made.



UPCOMING EVENTS



PITTSBURGH

1/31- 5/18- Discovery Days
Toddler Group - WPSD

3/24 & 3/25- Family Learning
Weekend: "Pathways to
Literacy" - WPSD

For more information, contact
Carrie Rain at
crain@wpsd.org

SCRANTON

3/5- Family Literacy Workshop
2:00-4:00 PM - SSDHHC

3/25- Family Learning Day:
"Opening the Door to Your
Child's Future" 9:30 AM – 3:00
PM - SSDHHC

For more information, contact Jon
Konzelman at
jkonzelman@thescrantonschool.org

CAMP HILL

Thursdays, 2/2 – 5/23 – 3:00-
4:00 – Story Time for Children
with Hearing Loss –
WPSD/SSDHHC Outreach
Center, Camp Hill

3/4- Literacy Workshop –
10:00-12:00 -
WPSD/SSDHHC Outreach
Center, Camp Hill

For more information, contact
Jessica Marks at
jmarks@wpsd.org

Visit us online at: <http://www.wpsd.org/choices-for-children/>



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