

CHOICES FOR CHILDREN

Early Intervention Program



VOLUME 2 : WINTER 2015

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

TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY INTERVENTION: LENA

Tara Nikou, Choices for Children Teacher

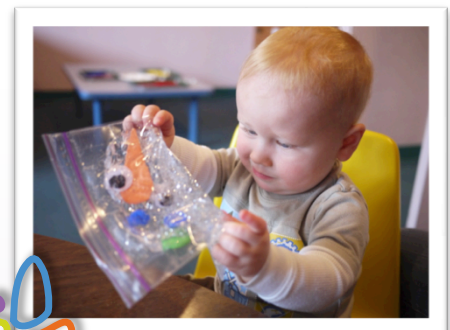
Recent brain research indicates that talking with your young child is especially important because a child's brain develops very rapidly in the first few years of life. A child that hears and speaks more words develops more neural connections and pathways in his or her brain, which positively impacts intellect and social-emotional development.

Researchers Hart and Risely (1982) found that the more parents and caregivers talked with their children from birth to age four, the more likely those children were to succeed later in life. In fact, they found a 32 million word gap between the number of words heard by children with lots of early language exposure and those with too little. They showed that this word count gap explains most of the difference in IQ at age 4 and in school success at age 10.

The LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) Research Foundation developed the compact Digital Language Processor (DLP) to track word counts and turns in conversation. This tool can provide valuable information, which can help parents to improve the language, cognitive and social and emotional development of their children.

Choices for Children has incorporated the LENA system into our program in order to help families of children with hearing loss to track the amount of "talk" that they are using with their child. Parents are able to receive valuable, objective information not only about the number of words that their child is exposed to, but also about the quality of the listening environment. For example, is the child in a noisy atmosphere all day? We know that children with hearing loss need to be in an optimal listening environment to make the best use of their assistive technology (both hearing aids and cochlear implants).

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LITERACY CORNER

Karen Roudybush, Reading Specialist

Share a great book with your child! Help to encourage your child's interest in books. When you read, talk with them about the pictures and help them find things on the page they know. Although, at first, they may want to munch on a book soon they will be turning the pages and tuning in for the story.



TIPS FOR TOTS

Michelle Campbell, Choices for Children Teacher



Managing therapists, play time, doctor visits and family schedules can be a lot to juggle! Remember, you have the most important voice. If you or your child are sick or overwhelmed, it's okay to cancel.

- Post a calendar for therapists to see with doctor's visits and therapy appointments.
- Post a white board. Have therapist write down one goal per week. This will help therapists know what each other are working and integrate goals together.
- When overwhelmed let your therapists know.
- Ask for specific examples of how to incorporate goals into daily routines.
- Play, with no goals.... Just play and laugh.
- Let your service coordinator know if you need to decrease frequency for a short time because of family travel or medical appointments.
- Remember that you are the most important person in your child's life. Follow through is critical. It is okay to ask if for clarification or more examples of how to implement a strategy.
- Ask for updated information to be sent to all therapists so that you do not need to repeat yourself!
- Ask for therapists to write up a quick update for upcoming doctors appointments. Audiology: What sounds are they responding to at home?, what sounds/words are they saying?, what words are they signing?, etc. It is often hard to remember on the spot. This way you can just hand over a quick report.

Remember to ask for help, you have a team of people who are here to support you and your child. Don't forget what a great parent you are!

TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY INTERVENTION

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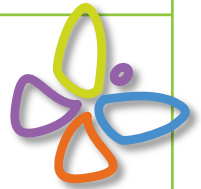
LENA technology allows families to compare themselves to national norms. Families can see if they are conversing enough with their child, based on normative data. A line graph details the amount of talking that occurs throughout the day and a bar graph indicates the amount of noise in the child's listening environment in one-hour increments.

This highly sophisticated equipment is small and easy to use. The family simply turns on the DLP recorder and places it in a special vest worn by their child. The DLP will record 16 hours of content, providing the computer software information for analysis. The recorded data is transcribed into a series of reports that the CFC teacher will share with the family. The teacher and family will use the data from the LENA reports to create strategies for families to use in order to enhance their child's learning.

The good news is that simply increasing the amount of "words and turns" used with your child can close the 32-million word gap. This strategy can give all children an equal chance at success in school and life.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: RAELYN



We found out about Raelyn's hearing loss before we left the hospital when she was born. She failed her newborn hearing test three days in a row but no one could give us answers at that time. We made appointments with audiology at Hershey Medical Center for Raelyn to have an ABR to hopefully find out the extent of her hearing loss. When she was 8 months old, we received an answer. Raelyn had a bilateral profound hearing loss. We started hearing therapy with Michelle Campbell, CFC teacher, right away. We started teaching Raelyn sign language and working on her mouth imitations. We tried hearing aides for a few months with no result. When Raelyn was 18 months old, she received a cochlear implant. At that point, still with the help of our angels from early intervention adding speech therapy, we started adding words with her signs. We always incorporated signs and words into Raelyn's daily routines and interests. Now, here we are 2 years later, Raelyn is talking in full sentences and is age appropriate for her speech and language skills. My advice to families would be to start with EI as soon as possible and to let it be child centered/directed, following their interests and letting them be the leader.

Tell us about your family

Raelyn lives with her mom and dad. She has a large extended family that loves her very much!

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

Total communication

What mode(s) do you use now?

Total communication

Tell us about your child's current educational environment

Raelyn receives private speech therapy

Describe your most memorable moment in Early Intervention

Mom: Maybe learning how to explain the CI process and that not all sounds are "turned on" at first. I explain that to people all the time because everyone thinks it's like the "YouTube experience." I really think each time Raelyn responded to a new sound was just another little piece to the big puzzle of her hearing. I think, for me, the greatest moment in our journey so far was when we were outside and she recognized birds chirping for the first time. That's not necessarily a learning moment... but a realization that she really was succeeding with her CI.

Dad: The biggest thing that stands out to me was when Raelyn signed for the first time. She signed 'more' for her binky when we were leaving Wal Mart. I thought that was a big step. It wasn't during a session, but I learned that everything is a learning time and that follow through was important.



UPCOMING EVENTS



PITTSBURGH

3/12- Sam Sandler: Deaf Magician- WPSD (7:00 PM)

3/20-3/21- Family Learning Weekend- WPSD

4/2- Larry Siegel Workshop- WPSD (6:00-9:30 PM)

4/28- CFC Family night out- Pleasant Hills Library (6:30 PM)

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

SCRANTON

3/29- Literacy Workshop- SSDHHC (1:00-3:00)

5/1-5/2- Family Learning Weekend- SSDHHC

5/4- Larry Siegel Workshop- Clark Summit (10:00-3:00)

5/5- Larry Siegel Workshop- Allentown (10:00-3:00)

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

CAMP HILL

3/28- Literacy Workshop- Camp Hill Office (10:00-12:00)

4/16 - 6/4- Toddler Group- Camp Hill Office- Thursdays (10:00-11:30)

5/6- Larry Siegel Workshop- Camp Hill Office (10:00-3:00)

5/14- *Super Deafy* movie- Harrisburg (7:00)

For more information, contact
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Visit us online at: <http://www.wpsd.org/choices-for-children/>



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