



## Language and Communication

*Margaret Finnegan, Ph.D One Parent's Perspective*

Deaf and hard of hearing children, like all children who are neurologically intact, are born with the amazing ability to acquire and develop language. From the earliest moments of life, they begin to communicate their needs and to interact with those around them. Through cries, squeals, hand clapping and eye gaze, deaf and hearing children begin to engage in the process of language learning. We watch them carefully and listen to them, certain that every utterance is meaningful. In this manner we recognize and build their skills. Through their daily efforts to make sense of the sounds of voices and/or the signs on hands, children activate their innate ability to acquire and develop the most sophisticated communication system of all - language.

Language, whether it is spoken or signed, whether it is English, French or American Sign Language, is learned through interaction. Children must actively participate in figuring out meanings, rules and structures: they cannot learn by passively observing or mimicking the language of others. Cognitive and social experiences aligned with meaningful linguistic data are required in large doses and in natural contexts for all children. By the time hearing children enter school, they have already mastered language. They have done so without formal language instruction.

Deaf and hard of hearing children have the same aptitude for language development as hearing children do. However, they must interact with their world visually instead of auditorially. Instead of listening and speaking, they watch and often gesture to make their intentions known. Their access to interaction is visual in a world where most people depend on audition. It is this fundamental mismatch of systems which often prevents the deaf child from participating in and mastering language.

*Hope! Dream! Achieve!*

*January, 2010*

**Parent Links  
Hope!  
Dream!  
Achieve!**

*Parent Links  
Hope! Dream!  
Achieve!*

Is a program of the California Department of Education funded by a federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant. The Parent Links name and materials are used with permission of the Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

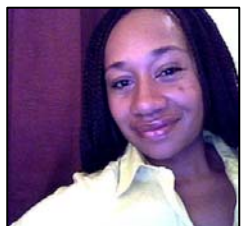




It is up to us as parents, teachers and care givers to visually maximize the interactive process for deaf and hard of hearing children. By including deaf and hard of hearing children in social and cognitive activities, by concentrating on communicating meaning (not structure) and by providing visual access to communication whenever possible, we can capitalize on the strengths of deaf and hard of hearing children. Sign language provides an access which is minimal in speech and audition. It ensures the deaf and hard of hearing child's participation in the language learning process.

\*The Parent Links name and materials are used with permission of the Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

## *Focus on Southern California Mentors*



### **Apryl Chauhan**

Mother of 3 young children Apryl's journey has brought her full circle. When her daughter was identified with a hearing loss a Parent Links mentor was there to support her family. Now, as a mentor herself Apryl is sharing what she has learned along the way with parents.



### **Barbara Matusky**

Mother of 2 grown children, both of whom attend CSUN; Barb and her husband were fortunate that so many people took the time to share their wisdom when they raised their children. Now it's her turn to be there for other parents.



### **Irma Sanchez**

Trilingual mother of 3 deaf boys; Irma has been a positive force in her community showing parents that Deaf and Hard of Hearing kids are just like any other children and that their lives and accomplishments should be celebrated!



### **Cora Shahid**

Parent of six year old son who is diagnosed with Moderate to severe hearing loss Cora has been active in supporting families for many years.

**“Each and every step of the way is a new branch to the tree of raising a deaf or hard of hearing child and just like with life, you are never finished learning all there is to know about raising a happy, successful, independent deaf or hard of hearing child. Our son, like your son/daughter, can do anything with your support. The sky truly is the limit for your child.”**

(Counties: Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura)

### **You can reach Apryl, Barbara, Irma or Cora at Family Focus Resource & Empowerment Center**

Barbara Matusky/Apryl Chauhan/ Irma Sanchez

18111 Nordhoff Street

Northridge, CA 91330-8265

818-677-6854 or [www.csun.edu/deafproject](http://www.csun.edu/deafproject)

# resources



## Free Heart Screening for Children with Hearing Loss

Some infants and children with severe to profound hearing loss may have a serious heart problem. If not found in time, some children may die suddenly from an irregular heartbeat. A simple, non-invasive test (an ECG) may be able to identify children at risk. A two-year study, funded by the National Institutes

of Health, makes it possible for all qualified children to be screened free of charge. The screening appointment is brief, the ECG does not hurt, and home visits are available. Families will receive a gift card for their participation. Even if children have had a prior ECG, it is still important that they be screened. English and Spanish-speaking staff is available.

To be eligible for the free screening, children must have a birthday of August 1, 2005 or later, and have severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss. Every child's participation helps us better understand this heart problem and could help prevent sudden deaths.

- The screening visit is free and families receive a gift card for their participation.
- The ECG can be done at home. The child does not need sedation because the ECG does not hurt.
- Our study personnel speak Spanish.
- Even if the child has had a prior ECG, it is still important that he or she be screened for this serious heart problem.

*For more information...*

*Valley Medical Center,*

*Email: [jlnsresearch@yahoo.com](mailto:jlnsresearch@yahoo.com)*

*Visit the website: [www.infant-heart.com](http://www.infant-heart.com)*

*Call (408) 885-4415*

*Or call toll-free 1-877-221-8210*



## *Refer to Parent Links*

It is now possible to refer to Parent Links online or by fax. California Department of Education program consultant for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Nancy Grosz Sager will receive the referral and forward it to the Parent Links area representative.

**Who can Refer:** Anyone including parents and professionals. Forms available in English/ Español

**How to Refer:**

- Go to *Professionals and Parents Make a Referral* at [www.myparentslinks.com](http://www.myparentslinks.com)
- Fill out the interactive form
- E-Mail back or print out form and fax

Terms related to Hearing Loss

IFSP- Infant Family Services Plan

IEP- Individual Education Plan

## Did You Know... American Sign Language was started with one little girl.

- Alice Cogswell was born in 1805. When just 2 she came down with spotted fever, a type of meningitis and lost her hearing.
- When Alice was 9, Her father wanted her to go to school, but there was no school that taught deaf children.
- Her teacher Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet went to Europe to learn more methods of teaching.
- He brought back deaf educator Laurent Clerc who knew French sign language (FSL). They established the first deaf school in Hartford Connecticut in 1817. American Sign Language of today is based on Laurent Clerc's use of French sign Language. ([www.StartASL.com](http://www.StartASL.com))



Sculpture by Frances Laughlin Wadsworth 1909-1978

Alice Cogswell statue located in Hartford Conn.



## *Parent Mentors*

Parent mentors are parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. From hearing aids, cochlear implants, sign language and speech, we have been there. Have questions? Give us a call.

### **Exceptional Parents Unlimited**

Darla Schwehr  
[dschwehr@exceptionalparents.org](mailto:dschwehr@exceptionalparents.org)  
Vicky Olea  
4440 N. First Street  
Fresno, CA 93726  
559-229-2000 x 208

### **Counties**

Alameda, Contra Costa  
Fresno, Kings  
Madera, Mariposa  
Merced, Monterey  
San Benito, San Francisco  
San Joaquin, San Mateo  
Santa Clara, Santa Cruz  
Stanislaus, Tulare

### **Family Focus Resource & Empowerment Center**

Barbara Matusky  
<mailto:barbara.matusky@csun.edu>  
April Chauhan  
<mailto:apryl.chauhan@csun.edu>  
Irma Sanchez  
<mailto:irma.sanchez@csun.edu>  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
Northridge, CA 91330  
818-677-6854 Office

### **Counties**

Imperial, Inyo  
Kern, Los Angeles  
Mono, Orange  
Riverside, San Bernardino  
San Diego, San Luis Obispo  
Santa Barbara, Ventura

### **Rowell Family Empowerment Center**

Kat Lowrance  
Barb Ciukowski  
[barbarac@rfenc.org](mailto:barbarac@rfenc.org)  
962 Maraglia Street  
Redding, CA 96002  
530-226-5129

### **Counties:**

Alpine, Amador, Butte,  
Calaveras  
Colusa, Del Norte, Humboldt,  
Lake  
Lassen, Marin  
Mendocino, Modoc  
Napa, Nevada, Placer  
Plumas, Sacramento,  
Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou  
Solano, Sonoma, Sutter,  
Tehama, Trinity  
Tuolumne, Yolo, Yuba

