

CHOICES FOR CHILDREN

Early Intervention Program



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

GROWING TOGETHER STAYING CONNECTED

Welcome to the first edition of the Choices for Children newsletter! Our goal is to stay connected with you, our families, and to provide you with access to quality resources, as well as information about the exciting things that are happening in the Choices for Children program across the state. If you have ideas about things that you would like to see in our newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact Carrie Rain at crain@wpsd.org. We're looking forward to growing together!



TIPS FOR TOTS

Tina Marshall, Choices for Children Teacher



It's 5:00 PM and you just want to get dinner on the table, but your baby/toddler keeps pulling out his/her aids! What do you do? Don't give up, try these tips:

- Hats! Lightweight bonnets or pilot hats with ties can be worn during waking hours to help deter little hands from tugging on hearing aids.
- Wig/Toupee Tape! Just a little strip of gentle double-faced wig tape can help hearing aids stay on.
- Safety clips are a must, especially when little ones begin to walk and explore. (www.babyhearing.org)
- Just like me! Purchasing hearing aids for a favorite stuffed animal or doll can help your child to be more accepting of wearing his/her aids. Build-a-Bear Workshop and American Girl Doll company both sell aids for their dolls. (www.buildabear.com , www.americangirl.com)

LITERACY CORNER

Karen Roudybush, Reading Specialist

Parents play a vital role in their child's reading development. From the experiences that connect and shape the things they understand to a child's passion about reading and words, parents make a difference. Reading daily with children provides them with the opportunity to use their imagination, explore new things and make sense of the world around them.



TODDLER GROUP

Michelle Campbell & Tara Nikou, Toddler Group Teachers

The *Choices for Children* program has expanded its services for families of children with hearing loss with the establishment of *Discovery Days* toddler groups at both the Camp Hill and Pittsburgh campuses. Each week, toddlers and their caregivers participate in theme-based activities, including: story time, music, movement, sensory and art. A strong emphasis is placed on language. New vocabulary is introduced weekly in both English and American Sign Language. Simultaneous communication is used throughout the sessions, allowing all participants, both Deaf and hearing, to take part in the learning activities. Our mornings are full of learning and laughter. The children learn through play and the parents support each other with friendship. It is truly a special program!

Come and join us! *Discovery Days* toddler group meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Pittsburgh and on Thursdays at the Camp Hill office. Hope to see you there! For more information, contact Carrie Rain (Pittsburgh) at crain@wpsd.org or Jessica Marks (Camp Hill) at jmarks@wpsd.org.

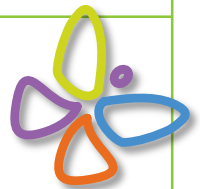


THE ROLLERI FAMILY

Two years ago, the Rolleri family was blessed with a beautiful little girl. When their daughter failed her first hearing test and then months later hadn't started babbling, speaking or making sounds... their fears were confirmed with one question from the ENT, "Do you have anyone in the family with hearing loss?" Mrs. Rolleri recalls her first call to Early Intervention, not knowing what to say, and just hoping that the meeting went quickly. A few weeks later, they met their hearing therapist, Mary Ann Stefko, who they describe as not only a teacher, but a lifetime family member. Mrs. Rolleri said that the first time Mary Ann walked into their home and communicated with her daughter using sign and speech, she saw her react in a way that she never had. "It was like Mary Poppins just walked into my home to reassure me," Mrs. Rolleri said. As parents who went through tears, devastation and questioning, 'why me?'... the Rolleri's have been able to find hope and happiness again with the support of Mary Ann and their Early Intervention team. "If you had told us two years ago [we] would have a deaf child with bilateral cochlear implants, learned some sign language and become a part of the Scranton School," Mrs. Rolleri said, "I would have never believed it."



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: GRIFFIN



Recently, we had the opportunity to reconnect with the family of one of our alumni, Griffin. He is a remarkable young man who excels in school and on the Lacrosse field. His parents, Rob and Margi have been his advocates from day one. They were kind enough to recount their experiences with us:

Tell us about your family

We have 3 children in our family. Alex (boy) is 18, Logan (girl) is 16 and Griffin is 14. Alex and Logan are hearing and Griffin is deaf. We live in Level Green, PA, which is a suburb of Pittsburgh.

What communication mode(s) did you use when you were involved in Early Intervention?

We embraced the total communication approach. We decided to learn how to sign but also pursued cochlear implantation for Griffin and used auditory-verbal methods to optimize his audition. We spoke to Griffin but also used ASL signs (usually in English order).

What communication mode(s) do you use now?

We usually use spoken English with Griffin. This is his preferred method of communicating. Along with listening, he also speech reads. When he is not wearing his processor or in challenging listening environments (background noise, group conversations), we often still sign. Sometimes we will use sign to support our speech.

Tell us about Griffin's current educational environment.

Griffin is in 8th grade. He is fully included in mainstream classes within our school district.

What support is the school providing?

Griffin has a cochlear implant (left side only). He also has a personal FM system. His teachers wear a microphone. In addition, there is surround sound in all of his classrooms and he has an ASL interpreter, which he uses for clarification. The interpreter helps Griffin when he misses information or especially when other students make comments. Griffin speaks well and uses the interpreter only receptively, as needed.

Describe your most memorable moment (a fun activity or aha moment) in Early Intervention.

My most memorable moment was when Griffin said the word "elephant," at 18 months when playing with his hearing therapist, Gloria.

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

Trust your instincts and do everything you can to learn how to communicate and make language accessible to your child. Signing with your child will help him/her to understand and learn. Use whatever technology you are comfortable with to help your child gain access to sound. There is not one right way to teach or communicate with your child.



UPCOMING EVENTS



PITTSBURGH

12/16/14- Breakfast with Signing Santa- WPSD (9:00-10:30)

1/20/15- Discovery Days Toddler Group- Spring Session begins

2/7/15- Literacy Workshop- WPSD (9:30-12:00)

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

SCRANTON

12/15/14- Signing Santa- Abington Community Library

12/18/14- Breakfast with Santa- SSDHHC

3/29/15- Literacy Workshop- SSDHHC

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

CAMP HILL

1/8/15- Camp Hill Toddler Group- Winter Session begins

3/28/15- Literacy Workshop- Camp Hill (10:00-12:00)

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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