



(R to L): Kim Murphy, S-LP; Theodore; Andrea Gingras, S-LP; Romeik; and Melissa Farkouh, volunteer

REFERENCES

American Speech and Hearing Association. (2004). Tips for Working with an Interpreter. www.asha.org/about/leadership-projects/multicultural/interpret.htm. Retrieved December 15, 2004.

Dayle, J. & Wong, L. L. (1996). Mismatch between aspects of hearing impairment and hearing disability/handicap in adult/elderly Cantonese speakers: Some hypotheses concerning cultural and linguistic influences. *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology*, 7, 442-446.

DeBow, A. & Green, W.B. (2000). A survey of Canadian audiological practices: pure tone and speech audiometry. *Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology*, 24(4), 153-61.

Hsu, B. (2006). Chinese and Western cultural differences in seniors' attitudes and beliefs concerning hearing loss and related coping strategies. M.Sc. thesis, University of British Columbia.

Ramkissoon, I. & Khan, F. (2002). Serving Multilingual Clients with Hearing Loss: How linguistic diversity affects audiologic management. *The ASHA Leader*, 8(3). www.asha.org/about/publications/leader-online/archives/2003. Retrieved December 15, 2004.

Siu, C. (2005). Speech audiometry on Cantonese and other non-native English speakers: the use of digits and Cantonese words as stimuli. M.Sc. thesis, University of British Columbia.

Statistics Canada. (2005). Dynamics of Immigrants' Health in Canada: Evidence from the National Population Health Survey. www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/050223/dq050223c-eng.htm. Retrieved June 22, 2009.

Statistics Canada. (2006). Immigration and Citizenship: 2006 Census. www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/071204/dq071204a-eng.htm. Retrieved June 22, 2009.

Emerging Literacy in a Multicultural Community

Andrea Gingras and Kim Murphy
Speech-Language Pathologists
Montreal Fluency Centre
www.montrealfluency.com

The Montreal Fluency Centre (MFC) is a non-profit organization serving the needs of children with difficulties in speech, language, learning and literacy in English and French. Through speech-language pathology and psycho-educational services, our goal is to reduce the long-term risks of these difficulties and minimize the impact they may have on children's lives. The Centre follows children through all the educational milestones from preschool to adolescence and is well known for its collaboration with parents, educators and other health care providers in supporting the families that are seen at the MFC.

We believe that better outcomes are achieved by working directly with the child, by supporting and mentoring families and educators, by working with partners in the community and by collaborating with professionals from other disciplines. We believe in developing innovative practices through research-based interventions, ongoing program evaluation and training/mentoring of clinicians.

The Centre, in operation for over 20 years, reaches more than 180 families weekly through in-clinic and community outreach programs that target communities at high risk as a result of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Literacy skills develop along a continuum, beginning long before reading, writing and spelling develop. Emergent literacy skills are the precursors to conventional literacy skills. The main indicators of emergent literacy are oral language, emergent writing, print knowledge, alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness. These skills have been found to be among the most important in preparing children for later success in reading (National Early Literacy Panel [NELP], 2009).

In 2008, The Montreal Fluency Centre initiated "The Gift of Reading Program" for emergent literacy. This is a replication of Dr. Laura Justice's "Read it Again" program. Through private funding over the next 3 years, and with collaboration from Dr. Laura Justice, researcher at Ohio State University and consultant for the United States Department of Education, our speech-language pathologists will be focusing on a preventative emergent literacy program centered on storybook reading. The goal during the next 3 years is to expand the project in English and then to develop it in French. This program is not intended to teach preschool aged children to read, but rather to help build a foundation that includes a) vocabulary, b) narrative, c) phonological awareness and d) print awareness skills. These have been identified by the NELP as some of the most important factors related to later school success.

Phase 1 of Gift of Reading was a pilot project in a multidisciplinary centre located in a vulnerable neighborhood of Montreal and serving the needs of refugee families in the city. In this community, up to 83% of families speak a home language other than English or French. Our program provided parent training and therapy for a small group of preschoolers who were considered at high-risk for learning difficulties. Each family received a copy of the weekly book to review the concepts that we modeled in the treatment sessions and to add to or begin their own family library. Data collected before and at the end of the treatment phase showed that the children made significant improvement in all areas, particularly print knowledge and alphabet knowledge.

Phase 2 is currently underway in a Montreal school in another vulnerable neighborhood. This program also uses storybooks as the main focus but involves a larger number of children, offers teacher training and takes place in the preschool classroom. Results of this project were being analyzed starting in June 2009, but initial observations have shown improvements in specific areas, for example print awareness and rhyme awareness. The teacher has reported that she appreciates the simple nature of the program and that the children are having fun while learning early literacy skills.

The program will continue in September 2009 with the following recommendations: use of more culturally relevant books; encouragement of parent participation; shared book reading in the home language (L1) to support the development of maternal language; and cultural exchanges. Phase 3 will focus on the development of this program in French. The goal of the program is to ensure that children are ready to learn by the time they enter kindergarten.