

The New

SOURCE

SPRING '04

A PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL DEAF ACADEMY

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

James Tresh, President

Spring is finally here!

Dear Families and Friends:

Spring is finally here!

Many of you, who live in northern states, have endured a long and arduous winter season this year. I am sure most of you are relieved to see and feel the signs of Spring in the air.



There is a great deal of news that I hope to share with you in this Spring, 2004 issue of THE SOURCE. Earlier this month, we sponsored our annual conference on mental health issues in Deafness. This year's event was titled: **The National Deaf Academy 2004 International Conference: Mental Health and Deafness Around The Globe**. The conference, held at the Hilton at the **Walt Disney World®** Resort was well attended with participants from the United States, Canada, England, Venezuela, and Israel, among others. In addition, we were proud to have as our guests, speakers from Holland, France, Belgium, England and the United States. We also had speakers who had previously emigrated to the United States from Taiwan, Nepal and Singapore! We were honored with keynote addresses by Dr. I. King Jordan, President of Gallaudet

University and Mr. Andrew Lange, President of the National Association of the Deaf.

Overall, the conference was a wonderful adventure of learning and sharing. In the Summer, 2004 issue of THE SOURCE, I will share more details about the speakers, their presentations and our plans for future conferences.

National Deaf Academy has the honor of having Dr. McCay Vernon as the President of the NDA Advisory Board and Psychological Consultant. More importantly, I am proud to say that we can call Dr. Vernon a "friend and mentor." Dr. Vernon has dedicated his lifetime of work to the study and practice of Clinical Psychology with Deaf people. He

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EDUCATIONAL FORMAT

*The Charter School at National Deaf Academy has **Changed It's** Educational Format!*

by: Amy Cohen Efron, Psy.S.
CSNDA Director



The Charter School at National Deaf Academy (CSNDA), a 501-3C organization located on the campus of National Deaf Academy (NDA), is pleased to announce the changes in our educational program. CSNDA recently started the third quarter of our year-round school year. We have implemented significant program changes that will concentrate on the individualized educational needs and progress of each student.

HISTORY

Previously, classroom assignments were based on the individual student's reading level. There were five classroom groups. Class offerings began with the pre-kindergarten/pre-primer reading level through the post 4th grade reading level. That type of reading level based grouping had several disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage was the extreme age difference between students in one classroom.

NEW CLASSROOM STRUCTURE

The CSNDA staff met several times to brainstorm, discuss and develop an educational program that would promote several important areas for our Deaf students. Our conclusions lead to the following changes:

1. Each CSNDA student now has a classroom assignment that matches him or her with other students at the same developmental level and in the same age group.
2. Each student experiences and develops transitioning skills by moving from one classroom to another classroom for different educational subjects.

3. Each student has greater opportunity to experience and develop positive relationships with more than one teacher.
4. Each student receives quality educational instruction by a teacher who is skilled to teach content areas such as: **Language, Literacy** (Reading and Social Sciences), **Logic** (Mathematics and Science), **Learning Strategies** and **Living Skills**.
5. Each classroom will be considered inclusive. This means students with different learning abilities and functioning levels are educated together.

All students have been placed into "Groups", which consist of students whose age are within similar developmental, chronological, social and emotional ranges. There are six groups:

- Group 1** Ages 9 to 14
- Group 2** Ages 13 to 15
- Group 3** Ages 15 to 17
- Group 4** Ages 17 to 19
- Group 5** Ages 18 to 22
- Group 6** This particular group is designated for students with special needs and additional disabilities which require intensive one-on-one assistance and instructional support.

Every school day each group will experience transitioning from one classroom to another. Groups 1 to 3 will attend Language, Literacy and Logic classrooms. Groups 4 and 5 will attend Learning Strategies and Living Skills classrooms.

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Dear Dr. Cohen: Would you mind explaining what is meant by the term "sensory integration?" My Deaf son is currently enrolled in a wonderful school that has helped him tremendously. In a recent meeting with his teachers, they suggested that he should be working with a specialist, like an Occupational Therapist, on "sensory integration" stuff. When I asked for an explanation, I found it vague and confusing, as did his father.

Mrs. D.P., Atlanta, GA

Dear Mrs. D.P.:

That's a great question, and one that I hear from parents and professionals alike. In its simplest form, sensory integration refers to the coordination of each of our senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) by our Central Nervous System (CNS). For example, a normally functioning person might smell freshly baked cookies, hear the oven door open and close, see the cookies on the counter, pick one up, and taste the delicious flavors - all five of the senses working in coordination to produce an experience that results in decision making and the subsequent pleasure of enjoying the cookie through all five senses.

In individuals with a loss of one or more of their senses, or with conditions such as Autism and/or other Developmental Disabilities, there is also a possibility of a breakdown in the CNS. This can result in either over or under-reactions to a wide range of different stimuli bombarding the CNS. In a wonderfully concise and well written description of these types of issues, Cindy Hatch-Rasmussen, M.A., OTR/L writes that sensory integrative dysfunction is a disorder "in which sensory input is not organized appropriately in the brain and can (consequently) cause varying degrees of difficulty in development, information processing and/or behavior." She goes on

to cite the frequently seen Autistic rocking, spinning and hand-flapping as possible results. She also notes that there are many other, sometimes more subtle manifestations of sensory integration deficits, as well. Among the common behavioral presentations are:

- **Sensitivity to clothing and how it feels on the body**
- **Unusually high or low activity level**
- **Finicky eating**
- **Sensitivity to smells and/or sounds**
- **High pain tolerance**
- **Impulsivity and distractibility**
- **Poor muscle tone and coordination**
- **Resistance to transitions and new situations**

Given the limitations of time and space here, I will summarize by stating that "sensory integration" problems are sometimes seen in Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, as well as in a wide range of Hearing individuals that suffer from Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Although the cause of these unique difficulties is controversial, many scientists believe that allergic reactions to immunizations or possible autoimmune deficiencies during childhood, when the neurological system is in evolution, are possible causes. Treatment also varies widely depending on whose perspective you might be reading, but typically interventions that work the best combine the talents of

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists, Neurologists, Psychologists, Educators, Occupational Therapists (OT) and Physical Therapists (PT). Although medication is not necessarily the single treatment of choice, it can be an extremely helpful intervention. It can help focus the attention, or limit the impulsivity of the suffering individual so that the OT and PT can successfully do their work.

If you've ever witnessed an experienced Occupational Therapist working with a child with sensory integration problems you may note practices that look physically abusive. Some employ the use of a "brushing" technique where the child is literally brushed vigorously with a specially designed "massaging tool." Others may literally wrap the child in heavy pads or encourage the wearing of a leaded vest - all intended to assist the child in receiving, processing and tolerating a wider range of sensory input. Special training is required to implement these techniques. Simply put, there is no generally agreed upon approach. The concerned parent is encouraged to work with experts who can be found through the internet by accessing "Sensory Integration International." Many books, names of experts and other helpful data, can be found on that website.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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has had professional affiliations with various State Residential Schools for the Deaf, Gallaudet University and Western Maryland University among others. Dr. Vernon has authored a number of books and articles on Deafness, Psychology and other related topics. At NDA, we certainly view Dr. Vernon as the "Father" of Psychology and Deafness in the United States.

Recently we completed the construction of a new office building on the campus of NDA. The new building houses 11 offices, a play therapy room, a group therapy room, a conference room with video relay technology and other facilities that enhance the environment where Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients can see their therapists, psychiatrists and participate in group therapy sessions. As this building has become the site where most of the therapeutic support, exchange and healing occurs, we consider it to be the core of the campus. Given those factors, we are very pleased to have dedicated this new building to Dr. McCay Vernon. "McCay Vernon Hall" was dedicated on April 8, 2004 in heartfelt honor and appreciation to Dr. Vernon for his support, patience, mentorship and most of all, for his friendship to NDA. A portrait of Dr. Vernon was complete by artist, Dan Tashlin of Blackdog Studio. The portrait now hangs reverently in McCay Vernon Hall alongside an engraved plaque, describing our appreciation to him.

At this time we have completed another long term project at National Deaf Academy. We just recently completed the construction of a new patient wing. This building contains four patient bedrooms, each designed for two patients each. This 8 bed facility will be used for patients who experience difficulty in managing their behaviors. Staff ratios and services will be more intensive in this program. Dr. Alan Cohen, MD, one of our founders and the Medical Director will direct this new program.

This issue of THE SOURCE is dedicated to The Charter School at National Deaf Academy. As you browse through our newsletter, you will find information from the Charter School Director, Ms. Amy Cohen Efron, Psy.S. Ms. Cohen Efron gives you a detailed description of the new changes in programming in the school. In addition, in his column, "Your Kids and Mine", Dr. Cohen describes

Sensory Integration, which is a technique that we often use with Deaf children with Autism here at NDA.

Finally, I want you to be aware that National Deaf Academy serves as an intern site for several universities and colleges. We feel that this is one of our contributions to help new and upcoming young professionals in the disciplines of Clinical Social Work, Mental Health Counseling, Sign Language Interpreting and Recreational Therapy. We welcome, for consideration, students completing degree programs in a mental health related discipline to contact us to discuss their need for a unique internship experience.

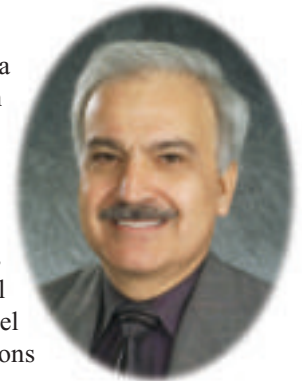
In closing, I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of THE SOURCE. As always, you are welcome to visit our campus at any time for a tour. Please call for an appointment. In addition, keep an eye on our website, which is presently under complete reconstruction. We believe the new site will be an enjoyable experience, and an easy way to keep abreast of our activities, conferences and career opportunities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



James Tresh



CSNDA Student Computer Lab

MEET THE STAFF



Patricia M. King, MA Charter School at NDA, Teacher

Patricia King, also known as "Tricia," earned her Masters Degree in Deaf Education from Teachers College at Columbia University in New York. Tricia also holds a Bachelors Degree in English from the University of Delaware. Ms. King completed her student teaching at the Lexington School for the Deaf in Jackson Heights, New York as well as Saint Joseph's School for the Deaf in Bronx, New York. Tricia began her teaching career in Paterson, New Jersey at Norman S. Weir School where she taught both third grade as well as middle school Social Studies. Ms. King later relocated to Florida where she taught Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in the 4th and 5th elementary grades at River's Edge Elementary School and grades 6th thru 8th at Southern Oaks Middle School, both located in Port Saint Lucie, Florida. Tricia recently relocated to the Mt. Dora, Florida area to work as the Language and Reading teacher at the Charter School at National Deaf Academy.

EDUCATIONAL FORMAT

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CONTENT CLASSROOMS

There are five content specific classrooms. Each classroom is led by one teacher who is trained to teach this specific content.

1. **Language Classroom:** *Ms. Tricia King* – The focus is on language development, writing, vocabulary development, grammar instruction, and English/ASL translation skills.
2. **Literacy Classroom:** *Ms. Renee Geary* – The focus is on reading, knowledge of world events and social sciences.
3. **Logic Classroom:** *Ms. Paula Gold* – The focus is on mathematics, physical sciences and logical reasoning skills.
4. **Learning Strategies Classroom:** *Ms. Heather Jilao* – The focus is on organization, study habits, integration and research skills. Independent studies are also offered.
5. **Living Skills Classroom:** *Ms. Debi Dee* – The focus is on independent living skills, functional educational skills, and transition from school to work experience.

6. **Special Needs Classroom:** *Ms. Angela Saunders* – This classroom is designed for Deaf children with Autism and other students with special needs which require intensive one-to-one instructional support for communication, socialization, personal hygiene, and living skills.

EARLY RESULTS

These program changes have already resulted in several positive changes among the Deaf students. It was reported that most of our students adjusted well and liked the new program! There is a significant decrease in the number of student disruptions and greater compliance in classrooms. Most students reported that they are more comfortable with their new peer groups. They also report that the new system is more conducive to learning! All of our teachers are delighted with this change and are seeing quick results in the pace that their students are learning.

When visiting the National Deaf Academy campus I invite you to stop by the school to see us!



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COMING SOON!

*Our exciting detailed report about the 2004 International
Conference on "Mental Health and Deafness Around the Globe"!*

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