

Partners for A Greater Voice, Inc.

Making the world a bigger place for a child with hearing loss

September 8, 2011

Considerations for Fostering Parent Participation in Habilitation:

- Assess and identify priority needs *perceived* by parents.
- Identify parents who can become Change Agents and who have leadership qualities or potential.
- Prioritize your objectives as related to the capacity of parents.
- Incrementally transfer knowledge based on the mentality and culture of the parents.
- Provide meaningful learning experiences that break down misunderstandings.
- Invoke a realistic vision of what is possible.
- Empower the parents you train and hold them accountable; knowledge breeds confidence.
- Work with teachers, churches, and other leading groups in the community to instill collaboration.
- Motivate parents by sharing visions of hope, good outcomes achieved by others, a child's progress.
- Continually encourage the parents you work with to talk with other parents.
- Follow through on your promises and all you offer.

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Parent Participation; it's Vital! *by Joanne N. Travers, B.A. MIM*

Parent experiences are best described by parents. Their fears, their worries, their shame, their hardships that cast a shadow or a commitment to love and to care for deaf or hard of hearing children, are best told by parents. With support from humanitarians and charitable groups parents learn new realities, and thus begins a journey of discovery and hope. A parent may dream their child learn to read, to speak, to get married, or to find a job. Yet, it is more palpable and attainable when someone else is near to guide and support them.

More and more work is being done across the globe in all sectors of the developing world. Clinicians, teachers and specialists who share a commitment to establishing hearing health services for the deaf need to recognize the importance of long term, sustainable hearing habilitation programs that involve parents! Habilitation at a school or a clinic is important, but on-going care in the home is vital. For children receiving hearing aids and cochlear implants, the necessity of parent involvement is apparent. If a parent chooses to teach listening and spoken language, the commitment is even greater. The care a child receives, particularly in the youngest years, demands parent participation. Yet this is not so easily attained.



Parents talk in Boca Chica, DR.



Supporting parents in Pune, India.



Joanne counsels a parent and child.



Training Diorka in the DR.

Parents need other parents who live and breathe the realities of living with a child who is deaf. They shouldn't feel alone in the process of raising and caring for their child. Clinicians and teachers who educate parents and supply resources vital to the growth and development of the parent and child is important, but on-going parent to parent interaction is essential to encourage and motivate parents and to instill essential responsibilities.

Often, parent emotions, burdens of life, other health concerns, and the economy take priority. To care wholeheartedly for a child's hearing loss, humanitarians need to break into the thoughts, emotions and critical needs of parents. Having worked with more than 800 parents, I've learned that

solutions to parent participation vary. Even still, there are some common threads...

Find ways to group parents together so they can share daily, ordinary experiences. Encourage parents to share personal stories with each other in safe and confidential environments. Give parents knowledge that fuels confidence to walk the streets *with* their child. Explain grief and teach parents everything they are ready to learn. Help parents work through frustration, despair, and shame. Have conversations about the intelligence of a child. Focus on the positive, but be honest. Remain clear on expectations and outcomes.

Humanitarians, doctors, teachers and specialists able to foster effective parent support should make it a priority.

A Parent Focused Collaborative and Conversational Approach to Language and Literacy Intervention

Working with Deaf Children in the South (adapted from Susie Miles, April 2004 - deafchildworldwide.info)

- A clear vision and strategy which will lead to the empowerment of the children and their families.
- An understanding of the social model of the disability.
- Open minded attitude to communication approaches.
- Preparedness to involve deaf adults (and their beneficiaries) in the delivery of services.
- A commitment to the empowerment of parents and careers.
- Working in partnership with local institutions.
- Networking and collaborating with other organizations working with deaf and hard of hearing children.
- Innovative programs.
- Visibility within the community.

Miles, Susie, (April, 2004) Working with Deaf Children in the South, An Editorial, from Deafchildworldwide.info/learning_from_experience/resource_library/working_with_1.html

Topics presented at the Coalition for Global Hearing Health conference. Los Angeles, California.

www.greatervoice.com

Unique Challenges and Solutions for Teacher Training

Teachers of deaf children and volunteer or visiting teaching missions face unique challenges in extremely poor communities. Although we are highly aware of challenges such as basic health needs; school issues; and teaching dynamics, research in the areas of early intervention and special education strongly encourages us to focus on the challenges of parents in order to obtain success in child development, teacher training and subsequent individual effectiveness of listening, language and literacy intervention. Solutions for teacher training will likely be more highly effective if we address the parent link to school communities and use conversations as a scaffold for language and literacy training. Deliberate planning, modeling, and structuring of conversations for teacher trainers in the home enables a child and family facilitates a school literacy connection. In the interim, we help parents stay motivated, engage in talking with their child, and partner with their child's teacher to develop their child's literacy. By engaging parents in one-to-one and group conversations related to topics in early hearing intervention and the value of listening and literacy, we are raising their awareness of the elements of teaching and learning which ultimately af-



Snack time and conversation!



Nancy converses with her child



Laura and children of C.A.S.S.A. (DR)



Laura demonstrates listening therapy to Jacquelin - a parent.

fects their children's cognitive and linguistic development. A scenario, analytic, or topic-comment structure for conversation translates into answering questions such as "What if?" "If-then?" "So what?" according to individual parent (adult) learning styles, and the process transfers nicely to training beginning literacy and reading activities at school. Using conversations based on local folklore and other culturally relevant schemata, families and local teachers address the early forms of listening and oral language stimulation and may facilitate implementation of instruction in more complex skills in listening, language development, and reading. By acknowledging and including parents' own

educational and language challenges, we may effect modifications in the way teachers in poor communities think about teaching spoken language and improve the consistency of educational involvement of family members. Deliberately planned conversations not only address several parent challenges but also helps effectively manage other home to school transitions including spoken language therapy, organizing classes, and monitoring professional self-improvement.

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