A Team Approach to Meeting Aural Habilitation Competencies for Graduate Students in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Partnering Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology clinical professors, their graduate students, and young children with hearing loss in an intensive program leads to rich clinical learning experiences and improved outcomes for pediatric clients.

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History
Summer preschool program developed in 2003 to address:
- Paucity of summer services for preschoolers with hearing loss
- Need to train the next generation of professionals who work with children with hearing loss

Overview
- Six-week, summer preschool program for children with hearing loss ages 2½ to 5 years
- Integrated model of oral instruction
- Verification of audiology equipment function and auditory access occurs daily
- Graduate student clinicians are exposed to a variety of cochlear implant and hearing aid technology
- SLP and AuD student clinicians address auditory, speech, receptive and expressive language, literacy and advocacy goals collaboratively
- Group and individual models of treatment used
- Interprofessional Practice between audiology and speech-language pathology graduate student clinicians along with school and private professionals to provide coordinated care for preschoolers

SLP Student Objectives
- Develop “listening check kit” for verification of device function and troubleshooting problems
- Implement auditory goals consistent with audiological status
- Integrate auditory goals into all speech, language, literacy, and social activities
- Demonstrate awareness of auditory skills hierarchy and techniques
- Promote development of auditory/speech feedback loop
- Increase child’s self-monitoring skills of speech and language output

AuD Student Objectives
- Provide support for speech/language pathology students regarding audiological needs of children to promote competencies in teamwork, supervision, teaching and mentoring
- Design and implement plan for audiological needs of a child including audiological and amplification assessment and monitoring
- Outline appropriate therapy options given auditory history of child
- Discuss prognosis given auditory history of child
- Analyze efficacy and monitor progress of an intervention plan as it relates to auditory skills
- Summarize treatment progress as it relates to auditory skills
- Sound level monitoring – teacher’s voice and background noise

Family Objectives
- Weekly conference conducted by student clinicians to inform parents of their child’s goals and progress
- Provide forum for discussion of issues relative to access, equipment, general communication status
- Provide an opportunity for students to make suggestions for carryover in the home setting
- Weekly newsletter shared with family

Auditory Access
- The necessity of audibility prior to implementation of speech and language goals is emphasized for clinicians and parents
- Daily listening checks are performed at the start of each morning’s opening session.
- Soundfield FM system is used during group sessions.
- Personal FM systems or remote microphone systems are used during individual and group therapy sessions.
- Weekly audiological testing included:
  - Pure tone threshold testing – unaided or aided with cochlear implant systems
  - Speech perception testing – LING sounds, familiar words or phrases
  - Early Listening Function (ELF) – determines child’s listening bubble or the distance at which sounds are audible
  - Tympanometry to confirm healthy middle ears
- Verification and reprogramming of amplification settings as needed

Individual Therapy
- Twice daily, one-on-one therapy sessions allowed the preschoolers the opportunity to receive individualized attention and learn important skills relevant to their level of development.
- SLP and AuD graduate students collaborated on the development of appropriate goals for each preschooler and implementation of assessments and intervention strategies that took place during these sessions to approximate each child’s goals by the end of the program.

Group Therapy
- Three group sessions, detailed below, are held each day and included all preschool participants in order to practice generalizing the skills worked on in one-on-one meetings.
- These allowed participants to demonstrate pragmatic use of language and listening abilities through turn-taking, sharing, answering questions, and peer interactions.
- Daily opening and weekly theme introduction
- Snacks, not just for nutrition
- Literacy training
- Music therapy

References

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