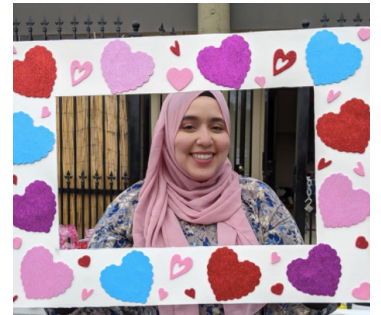


# Aspire News

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ASPIRE SPEECH AND LEARNING CENTER



## *What's New*

### **WE ARE GETTING VACCINATED!**

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This month marks a year since the pandemic hit and we are turning a corner. Our therapists are getting vaccinated and coming back to see their clients in person. While we will continue to follow recommended precautions, we are so happy to see your smiling faces again. (And not through a screen!)

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### **NEW EMPLOYEES**

We are so excited to welcome Sarah Attia and Humberto Bejarano onto our team!

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### **THIS MONTH**

March 21st is Down's Syndrome Awareness Day

## ***Total Communication***

by Sarah Attia, M.A. CFY-SLP

In speech therapy, a total communication approach is a combination of verbal (using our voice) and nonverbal (using sign language, gestures, etc) methods to facilitate and improve communication skills. This method is especially favored in children with Down Syndrome, who tend to develop nonverbal communication before verbal communication. Teaching a total communication approach uses skills your child already possesses to facilitate further speech and language development.

So how do you do it? Pair functional signs with verbal expression of people, objects, and actions. For example, at mealtimes, when your child signs "more", reinforce the request by simultaneously signing and verbally saying "more". This allows your child to match the verbally expressed word with the sign and provides an additional method for expression. This is a great method to introduce new concepts to your child as well; provide sign and spoken word simultaneously when talking about new foods, toys, feelings, etc. Practice makes perfect, so this method can be used across settings, such as at mealtimes, bedtimes, at the playground, etc. Everyone loves to be told they are doing a good job, so make sure you encourage and praise your child whenever and however they communicate!

## ***How Books and Print Work***

by Lorraine Bukilica, M.A. CCC-SLP

Books don't come with operating instructions, but we do use them in certain ways.

As you are reading with your youngster, he can begin to learn the basics of book handling and how print works. As you look at the book together, you can point out the parts of the book. "This is the front and this is the back. Just like your body has a front and a back. This is the spine of the book, just like you have a spine. It helps hold the book together. Inside the book, we see the pages. We turn the pages as we read our book. The words and the pictures are on the pages and we read the words." Have your child look at the pictures in the book, talk about how it relates to the words. "Look, that's the yellow duck. This word says duck." Talk about the top of the book and the bottom. "When we read our book, it's important to hold it the right way so that we can see the pictures and the words."

Cue your child to the front of the book. "When we read, we always start at the front of the book." Talk about what is on the front of the book. "We see the name of the book. That's called the title. This is the name of the person who wrote the words. S/He is called the author. The person who draws the pictures is called the illustrator." As you read a book with your child, review what the author and the illustrator do. The author writes the words and the illustrator draws the pictures. Print awareness can also begin here.

Point to the title of the book and count the words, ie; "This book is called The Very Hungry Caterpillar. It has four words in the title." Point and count to each word. Point out that some words are long like caterpillar and others are short like the. "We read the words starting at the left and moving to the right." You can point to each word as you read. Have your child help you count the number of words in the title of the books you read.

Do this kind of activity occasionally with your preschooler who is able to sit and attend to your explanations. Focusing your child's attention to these beginning reading skills will help him learn to better handle books and begin to develop print awareness. He will soon notice print all around: on storybooks, cereals boxes or especially on signs like McDonalds.



## ***Valentine's Drive By event***



In previous years, our staff has celebrated Valentine's day with "We Heart Our Clients" week. This year, we adapted and held a Valentine's day drive by event for some social distance celebration! Many things have changed this year but at least one thing is still true; we heart our clients!

