

LICA In Action

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Dear LICA families and friends,



The change to cooler weather is a sure sign of new beginnings for anyone who has ever been a student – and who hasn't?

On the topic of new beginnings, this issue of *LICA in Action* is all

about preparing for the future. In these pages, you'll read about LICA's approach to helping students develop social skills, self-control, and conflict management strategies that will serve them throughout their lives.

We also share the story of a LICA alum who is now a graduate student excited about her future. And speaking of graduate students, we're highlighting the ongoing partnerships that bring graduate students in psychology to

LICA programs to learn from our students and teachers about the unique needs of those with hearing loss.

Finally, you may notice that we refer to students in our programs in different ways. Sometimes we use hard of hearing, and sometimes we use deaf or Deaf. These terms are not interchangeable; they are intentional distinctions made by the students themselves as the article on page 4 explains.

As always, your questions and comments are welcome. Call me at 847.803.9444.

Sincerely,

Executive Director

Learning life skills through role play

As children grow and mature, their social and emotional competence helps in building and navigating relationships. Understanding another person's perspective, controlling oneself, and managing conflict are important behaviors to learn.

More and more schools are introducing social skills curricula to ensure that students fully develop these critical life skills. For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, social delays may accompany academic delays, so teaching these skills is a priority for LICA.



Terri Bernstein engages a young group with a *Second Step* lesson.

A team including psychologist Linda Kaskel, social worker Bonnie Koss, and instructional interventionist Terri Bernstein, researched and selected *Second Step* for LICA. This social skills curriculum, by the Seattle-based non-profit Committee for Children, is being taught to LICA students for the second year.

Second Step covers three broad topics: empathy training, impulse control, and anger management. "We chose this curriculum because it aligns with Illinois state standards for social-emotional learning; it's research-based, and it includes support materials as

Continued on page 2.

LICA

1601 Feehanville Drive
Suite 400
Mount Prospect, IL 60056-6016
847.803.9444
info@lica.k12.il.us
Hours: M – F, 8-4
Contact: Becki Strait,
Executive Director



Programs and services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing

well as an assessment component,” Dr. Kaskel said. The team piloted *Second Step* with LICA’s lower elementary and middle schoolers, customizing it to the unique needs of LICA students while retaining the sequence of lessons and core curriculum. Some of the adaptation included establishing specific expectations for how each group will work together, building in time to focus on new vocabulary, and providing extra materials that emphasize visual clues to how people are feeling and reacting.

This year, the team is bringing a weekly *Second Step* lesson to pre-K through junior high classrooms and to some of the high school students as well. “Our students look forward to it as a fun activity,” Dr. Kaskel said. “The program involves a lot of

role-play, so we teach it in teams to give the kids a model of how it works. The group work gives them a chance to practice communicating effectively peer to peer.”

Ms. Bernstein is working with groups that include the youngest and oldest LICA students. “Regardless of level,” she explained, “our first goal is to help students name and understand emotions and feelings in themselves and others. We start with happy, sad and angry, and progress to surprised, worried, afraid, and disgusted. Recognizing these emotions is the first step in empathy training and the basis of the whole curriculum: You can’t solve problems if you can’t understand and accept another person’s point of view.”

Partnerships provide experience to future professionals

Hearing loss can have a significant negative impact on academic success without appropriate interventions. LICA is strongly committed to creating opportunities for current and future education professionals to develop an understanding of the unique needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. One way LICA does this is through partnerships with graduate programs that train future school and clinical psychologists.

Early in graduate-level studies, students participate in practicums, that is, supervised practical work in their specialized field. LICA has a long history of providing practicum experiences. Guided by LICA psychologist Linda Kaskel, graduate students focus on how to select and use assessment tools and instruments. The tools that they learn to use can be applied to future work with a broad range of students who have communications difficulties.

Nearer to the end of professional training for Ph.D. students, an internship is required. Natasha Ferrell, now a school psychologist in California, was a full-time intern with LICA



LICA intern, Nicolette Zubay, works one-on-one with a student.

in 2008-09 as she worked toward her degree from University of California, Riverside.

As an intern, Dr. Ferrell conducted a variety of assessments working with both translators and interpreters. She also partnered with classroom teachers to develop academic and behavioral interventions with the goal of helping LICA students develop the best possible learning strategies.

“Working with LICA was a wonderful experience and it really set me apart in a tough job market,” Dr. Ferrell said. “Linda [Kaskel] was truly committed to helping me become a well-rounded school psychologist.”

As LICA contributes to their training, practicum students and interns add value to LICA programs. New relationships provide opportunities for positive interactions for LICA students, and these partnerships ultimately add to new research that builds the body of knowledge in educational psychology.

A student becomes a teacher

Kelly Wilson is 21 years old. That means she was born well before full enactment of the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening law in Illinois in 2002. Her hearing loss was discovered when her concerned mother insisted on comprehensive testing at her two-year-old health exam.

“Kelly had an Old MacDonald video that she just loved to watch over and over,” her dad, John Wilson, recalls. “But she kept turning up the volume on the TV and when she sang along,

she didn’t pronounce the consonants. It was my wife, Patty, who really kept on the doctor about Kelly’s hearing.”

Testing done at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge confirmed that Kelly did, indeed, have a hearing loss. “I was so naïve, I just thought they’d give her hearing aids and off we’d go,” Mr. Wilson said. Instead, the family was referred to LICA where Kelly began attending weekly individual sessions and joined a weekly playgroup.

A year later, Kelly started in LICA’s self-contained preschool program. She fondly remembers that it was her first teacher, Chris Sepsakos, who instilled the idea that learning was fun, and reading especially so. (See *LICA in Action*, January 2010,



Kelly then and now: as a LICA first-grader and as graduate student this year.

for more on LICA’s current early childhood programs.) In kindergarten, Kelly also began participating in LICA’s Extended School Year (ESY) program (see box below), a summer activity that she continued through fifth grade.

As a LICA student at Hersey High School, Kelly was asked to return to ESY as a one-on-one aide for the program. “I had been thinking about college and about majoring in education, social work, or psychology.

That first summer working at ESY was very frustrating and a lot of work,” she remembers, “but it was also a decisive factor in narrowing my focus to education. I’ve been back to work in ESY for each of the past six summers, and those experiences helped me choose to become a teacher of the deaf. I’ve finished college and just began graduate school this fall.

“I can’t wait to work in Deaf education,” she adds. “I feel that there’s a benefit to students in having an adult who is Deaf like they are model the value of Deaf culture. It will help them develop a stronger identity early in life.”

Summer program builds skills

LICA’s Extended School Year (ESY) summer program is designed to help students in kindergarten through seventh grade retain what they’ve learned during the school year.

Kelly Wilson got her first teaching experience in LICA’s ESY program as an aide while a high school junior. Program coordinator Melissa Wells is enthusiastic about the two-way learning that takes place between ESY elementary students and their older peers working as aides and junior counselors. “It’s a positive experience for the high schoolers who are working in a supportive environment in which they are surrounded by others who sign,” she said. “They also act as role models for the younger students who may not have had much exposure to older peers who share the experience of hearing loss.”

LICA featured on ABC 7 News

A Channel 7 camera crew recently visited LICA at Forest Elementary School in Des Plaines. The story about teaching through direct instruction aired on November 4. You can watch the video on LICA’s website: www.lica.k12.il.us. You can also read more about direct instruction in the January 2009 issue of *LICA in Action* that is archived on the website.

LICA

1601 Feehanville Drive
Suite 400
Mount Prospect, IL 60056-6016

LICA In Action

Deaf with a capital D

I'm Deaf with a capital "D" because I grew up with a Deaf family and I'm very involved in the Deaf community. Allison (Junior)

"Everyone wants to feel that they belong and at no time in life is that feeling stronger than in adolescence," said Pam Wechman-Mueller, lead LICA teacher at John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights. "That is why high school students may begin to identify themselves as Deaf rather than deaf, or vice-versa."

I identify Deaf and deaf. My parents are Deaf so when I'm with them and other members of the Deaf community I identify D, but when I'm talking to teachers or ordering pizza I consider myself deaf. Kyle (Sophomore)

At Hersey, students are given increased responsibility for self-advocacy. They attend their IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings and establish goals for themselves post-graduation. They also have increased access to deaf

peers through extra-curricular activities and have more interaction with deaf adults who visit their classroom. One result is that some students want to express their pride in successfully navigating the challenges of hearing loss. They may begin to identify more strongly with others who are Deaf and embrace Deaf culture.

I identify hard-of-hearing because sometimes I join activities with hearing people and sometimes with deaf. I really don't know. Maybe I'm more deaf. I guess I'm still trying to identify myself. Sahir (Sophomore)

This is very much a personal preference. Given two students who have virtually identical audiograms, Ms. Wechman-Mueller explained that it's entirely possible for one of them to identify as Deaf and the other to identify as deaf. "It's a matter of relative connection to the Deaf community, preferred means of communication and where he or she feels most comfortable," she said.