

LICA In Your School

Volume 2, Issue 1

Winter 2009

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Introducing ...Taylor Knapp and Beth Giannini

“Ms. G” is kind of like an extra mom, according to 15-year-old Taylor Knapp. He has known her forever (or at least since the second grade), and like his mom, she reminds him about homework, time management, and organizational skills. He explains to her how his iPod got a hole in it, and why his homework didn’t get done, and how many cell phones he tested to get just the right one.

Taylor is a freshman at Maine South High School in Park Ridge. He’s one of the 15 deaf or hard-of-hearing Park Ridge kids that LICA itinerant teacher Beth Giannini supports.

Early intervention fosters language development

“Taylor lost his hearing at age two. His speech and language development had been typical up until that point, so his parents noticed right away when there was a change,” Ms. Giannini explained. “He was fitted with hearing aids and then had a cochlear implant all within the space of one year, so the period that he didn’t have access to sound was very short.”

For Taylor, that early intervention promoted solid speech and language development, and Taylor has been mainstreamed at school with support from LICA since first grade. At



Maine South freshman Taylor Knapp (left) and LICA itinerant teacher Beth Giannini teamed up when Taylor was in second grade

Maine South, he meets weekly with Ms. G as part of his regular school-day schedule.

“In the early grades, we focused on vocabulary and language,” said Ms. Giannini.

“In middle school, we emphasized organization and advocacy. Now, we are transitioning to having Taylor act as his own primary advocate for his needs and accommodations.”

Focusing on need vs. want

Taylor is a typical adolescent first, and a deaf student second; he freely admits to sometimes using deafness as an advantage. “At Six Flags, being deaf got me to the front of every line,” he says. So part of Ms. Giannini’s job is to help Taylor distinguish an actual need for accommodation, like written notes to reinforce a lesson, from an easy way around, like moving to the head of the line.

Taylor plans to play on Maine South’s baseball team. And although Ms. G cringes at the thought of him landing on his implant, he also intends to learn to pole vault this year. ■

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From the
Executive Director 

Yearly hearing tests provide critical data



Students who have diagnosed hearing losses need regular audiologic evaluations and assessments. Yearly rechecks are important for at least two reasons: they may detect actual changes in hearing, or changes in the impact the hearing loss is having on the student.

Many children with mild to moderate hearing loss receive minimal or no services. Their visit to the LICA audiologist may be the only time that they meet with a professional who understands the potential impact of hearing loss. Often, a required accommodation does not rise to the level of special education eligibility and may not even qualify a student for a 504 plan.

Many children with a loss are not sufficiently aware of their hearing status to recognize or report a change. This is especially true for young children; children who might be described as reserved, shy, or easily distracted; and children who have challenges in addition to hearing loss.

For students with hearing aids or Assistive Listening Devices, the annual checkup helps make sure equipment is functioning as intended. LICA audiologists can measure with more precision than ever whether a child's hearing aid is doing what it supposed to do.

Even hard-of-hearing children who are making adequate academic progress still need regular reevaluations. Academic tests measure very specific skills, and it's possible for children to be progressing in those areas, while, at the same time, missing significant chunks of information presented by teachers or volunteered by peers.

Think of annual audiologic rechecks as *part* of the school team's data collection process for students with an identified hearing loss, not as the *result* of that process. In other words, these rechecks provide useful information for helping teams determine whether a student is receiving the right combination of accommodations and services to guarantee access to instruction and interactions with peers.

Becki Streit
Executive Director

Do you need an in-service?

Most staff in LICA's member districts have not had an opportunity to work with a student who has a hearing loss. If you are on a team that will be working with a student with a diagnosed loss, we encourage you to schedule a LICA in-service. An in-service can help reassure you and your colleagues and address your concerns about what it will be like to have a child with this unique set of needs in the classroom.

To introduce a school team to the effects—both obvious and subtle—of hearing loss, we usually begin by playing an audio recording that simulates how much or how little the student is able to hear. This demonstration helps teachers and other team members understand the challenge that the student faces when trying to learn in the classroom.

Our goal is to share strategies that will help students who are deaf and hard of hearing access classroom instruction and interaction with peers. Teachers can ask questions about how to adapt their teaching style or even the content of their curriculum to meet the needs of a student with a hearing loss.

Techniques include the use of visual supports, repetition or rephrasing, and ways to facilitate group discussion. For a student with an ALD, an in-service includes a hands-on demonstration of how to use the equipment and how to manage its use during group work.

Do you need an in-service? Call Melissa Wells, LICA itinerant program supervisor, at 847.803.9444.

Assistive Listening Device 101

An assistive listening device (ALD) has two parts: a transmitter microphone worn by the teacher (or other speaker) and a receiver worn by the listener. ALDs can help some students with hearing loss or auditory processing disorder perform measurably better in the classroom and other settings. As a classroom teacher, you can help maximize an ALD's positive impact on student performance.




Getting the most benefit

When should you suspect that you're not getting the most from an ALD? Changes in student behavior can be a clue that the ALD isn't working properly, but some students will tolerate poor listening conditions

without complaint, and others may not notice that they're missing information. There is no substitute for regular checks of a student's equipment.

Start by determining if the equipment is working. Learn whether your student can reliably report problems. Keeping the student involved helps him or her take responsibility for the equipment. LICA staff works specifically with students to develop personal responsibility and self advocacy skills.

Contact help quickly when the equipment has stopped working and you have exhausted trouble-shooting techniques provided by LICA staff. LICA supplies spare parts that can be kept on hand or delivered quickly. And we usually send someone out to provide support on the same day—often within just a couple of hours.

For ALD users, the benefit they get from the device is fuller access to instruction and interaction. It's a partnership worth protecting. 

Building a partnership

Work closely with the LICA itinerant teacher, audiologist, and/or the ALD technician to make sure you understand how the ALD operates and how to troubleshoot any problems. Effective use of an ALD depends on an ongoing partnership between the speaker and the listener. LICA offers a variety of resources (video clips, picture tutorials, checklists, email reminders) to help both you and your student become comfortable using the device.

Once you know the basics, LICA staff will make regular spot checks to be sure the device is in use during all agreed-upon parts of the day. Using an ALD is like mastering any new skill—you have to be deliberate until it becomes a habit.

Help us reach out!

We want to be sure that *LICA in Your School* reaches everyone it should. Please ask your colleagues if they've received this publication and forward the email addresses of any who haven't, but should. Send email addresses to jholtz@lica.k12.il.us.

Get help fast

Whom do you call when you have a question for or about LICA? [Click here](#) for a handy reference guide to who's who in our office and who works with your district. We're ready to help!

Early (Identification + Amplification + Intervention) = Better outcomes



Universal Newborn Hearing Screening passed into law in Illinois in 1999. Its full enactment by December 2002

has resulted in a three-pronged protocol of *early identification*, *early amplification*, and *early intervention* for hearing loss.

Early identification, early amplification, and early intervention have created a dramatic shift in terms of services that students with a hearing loss need as they enter school. Children who, prior to 2003, would have had significant skill deficits now have moderate deficits, and kids whose needs might have been in the moderate range often show just mild delays in understanding and using language.

Today's interventions promote access

The issues now tend to be about access and about the continued need for students to learn how to use the information that their technologically advanced amplification delivers to them. The listening and auditory processing



systems of children don't fully mature until at least middle school. In other words, *most* children aren't effective, disciplined, sophisticated listeners until long after they enter school. So for some

children with hearing loss, continued intervention may be necessary to minimize some of the subtle and not-so-subtle deficits in language and auditory development that can easily be missed or attributed to other problems, like at-

tention, memory, or even a learning disability.

Imagine a first-grader—normal in every respect other than a hearing loss in the mild range—who is stymied by his teacher's direction to "collect your supplies." The child may have mastered the vocabulary specifically taught as part of the curriculum, but he didn't know the word "collect" because he had missed content in television, radio, and the conversations of adults and other children—the everyday subliminal information that builds a child's background knowledge.

Identifying deficits

Similarly, think of a fifth-grader who can't remember multi-step directions because she spends most of her energy just trying to figure out the words being spoken. This kind



of deficit—not typical of kids with normal hearing—affects classroom performance and socialization as students get older, although it may not be identified in probes of reading,

math, and writing skills administered to students as part of universal assessment strategies.

Research shows that when the early identification, early amplification, and early intervention approach is followed before age one, language outcomes tend to be close to the normal range. 