

# LICA In Your School

Volume 3, Issue 1

Winter 2011

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## Introducing Peter Artinian, Yolanda Pelley, and Melissa White

In social studies class, Mr. Rice is posing questions about events that led to the Revolutionary War. As the class brainstorms reasons for the tension between American colonists and British troops, seventh grader Peter Artinian listens attentively, takes notes, and occasionally

refers to the notebook computer on his desk. It's only after some time that an observer might notice that Peter is the only student with a computer and that he focuses on it briefly and occasionally, mostly when a particularly soft-spoken classmate is speaking.

### Laptops link Peter to in-class conversations

There is another computer user in the room, though. Yolanda Pelley sits in the back, listening closely to the classroom discussion and typing everything that's said into her laptop. Ms. Pelley's transcription is wirelessly transmitted to Peter's computer so that Peter, a deaf student whose hearing depends on cochlear implants and an assistive listening device (ALD), doesn't miss a thing.

Later, after school, Peter will log on to his computer at home and access an emailed version of the notes to do his studying. His LICA itinerant teacher, Melissa White, will also receive a copy of the email so that she knows what has been covered in each class and where to focus her time with Peter the next day.



From the left: Melissa White, Peter Artinian, Yolanda Pelley

### Planning for effective support

Peter is new to Winnetka District 36 this year, but Carleton Washburne School and LICA were more than ready to greet him on the first day of school. Peter's parents contacted the district administrative team when they knew they

were relocating to the Chicago suburbs from New York last summer. District 36 Special Education Director Mark Ditthardt alerted LICA that they would be enrolling a new student with a hearing loss and veteran itinerant teacher, Melissa White, was assigned to work with Peter.

Even before meeting Peter and evaluating how she could best support his academic strengths, Ms. White facilitated an in-service to help his new teachers understand the particular kinds of challenges a deaf or hard-of-hearing student faces in a mainstream classroom. Some of what she shared reinforced best practices for teaching, like remembering to face the students when talking rather than presenting material verbally while simultaneously writing it on the board. Other aspects were new to them, such as how to use an ALD.

### Teamwork creates a smooth transition

Ms. White, Ms. Pelley, the educators at Washburne, other LICA staff and Peter's parents form his educational team.

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## LICA

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

Introducing continued

“This is an incredible team and Peter’s transition has been as seamless as we could possibly make it,” said Ms. White. “He’s not the only LICA student at Washburne, but he is the first LICA student with a text interpreter like Yolanda Pelley on his team. She has been

just great to work with.”

Back in Mr. Rice’s social studies classroom a banner at the front of the room reads: *Democracy is not a spectator sport*. And neither is learning. Peter Artinian and his team demonstrate that in every class. □

Myths Busted

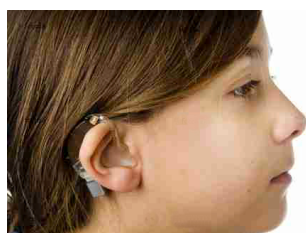


## Diagnostic team busts common myths

The LICA diagnostic team (three audiologists, a psychologist, a social worker, and three speech/language pathologists) isn’t really made up of superheroes, but the team can

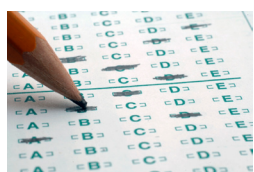
rescue district staff from falling into common misconceptions about students with hearing loss.

**Myth #1:** *My student wears a hearing aid. That should take care of the problem, right?*



Not always, and not in every educational setting. Wearing a hearing aid is not like putting on a pair of glasses. They may not help much in noisy classroom settings because they don’t amplify selectively. And they don’t fix the problem when students have gaps in their background knowledge or vocabulary – especially when kids don’t know that they don’t know.

**Myth #2:** *My student’s skills look just fine on benchmark assessments of reading and math skills. That’s all I need to be concerned about, right?*



Benchmarks of reading and math skills are important, but they don’t probe every skill important to acquiring academic information. Hard of hearing students may need additional supports to have access to classroom communication. They may need amplification equipment, supplementary help with vocabulary or background information, visual access to routines and rules, or supports to clarify or recheck comprehension. Providing those supports does not necessarily mean that a student will be eligible for special education services, but interpreting evaluation data on hearing loss requires that someone on the team have appropriate background. Developing appropriate interventions requires the involvement of staff who understand the impact of hearing loss on students across a variety of learning environments.

LICA staff has expertise on hearing loss in educational settings. We can work with your team on meeting the needs of individual students. Contact Melissa Wells at 847.803.9444 for more information or help. □

Tech Tools



## High-tech solutions beyond AIDs

Have you ever found yourself in an environment in which you did not speak the language? You probably used gestures and exaggerated facial expressions in an effort to make yourself understood. If so, you were using a basic form of Augmentative and Alternative

Communication (AAC). And while you probably managed to accomplish your goal—order the meal or purchase the souvenir—you also may have been left with a sense of frustration from the interaction. The ability to communicate effectively, to convey to others

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

### High-tech solutions continued

what you think, feel, need, or desire, is essential to successful social interaction.

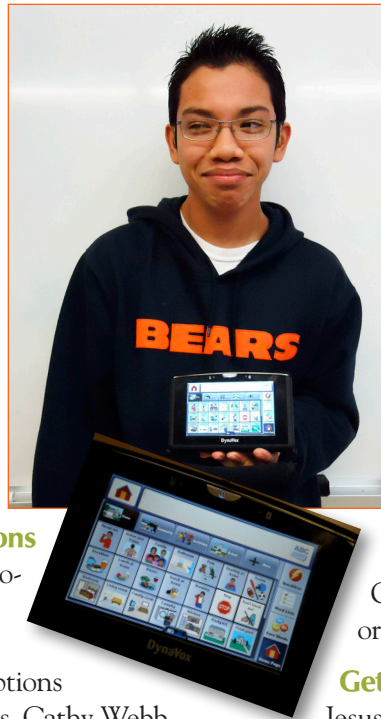
For LICA students who rely primarily on signing (another type of AAC), a potential communication barrier persists when they are interacting with others who do not sign. That's where assisted AAC using innovative technology can make a critical difference by facilitating self expression.

### Identifying technology options

LICA's speech-language pathologists keep current on various kinds of devices and their purposes in order to identify options that will work for their students. Cathy Webb explained, "When we evaluate a device for use by a particular student, it's a top priority to keep the student's wants and needs in mind. If we get something that they're unwilling to carry around because it's too bulky or 'uncool,' then it's probably not the right fit even if the programming would make them more proficient communicators."

### There's an app for that?

Christian Ortiz is a great example of a busy, tech-savvy student who makes the most of assisted AAC. According to Ms. Webb, Christian has an incredible ability to make people understand his meaning even if he doesn't have the full vocabulary. He is on




in the track team, attends football games, and has a part-time job. Christian carries an iPod Touch wherever he goes.

This is not unusual for a high school junior, but what makes Christian's iPod special, is an app called Proloquo2Go that provides him with a dictionary of symbols that he can use to make his iPod generate sentences. He can also hand it to someone who doesn't sign, to type in a message that Christian reads in either words or symbols.

### Getting the picture

Jesus Sanchez is a freshman who uses a Dynavox Xpress (see photo) that similarly translates pictures into both written and spoken sentences. The picture dictionary associated with Jesus's device uses Boardmaker images that are widely used in special education classrooms. They are organized around familiar scenes, such as a dinner table, with associated vocabulary in subsets like foods, silverware, and people.

You may be more familiar with assisted AAC than you know! The next time you send a text or instant message, you're using the kind of technology that makes communication easier for some LICA students. 

## More technology in action

Another technology-based solution that assists students in accessing curriculum is software called Typewell. This is the program that text interpreters like Yolanda Pelley in our story about LICA student Peter Artinian (see page 1) use for rapid transcription of spoken communication into written communication.

## LICA's role in RTI

Response to Intervention is a problem-solving approach to student learning mandated by the Illinois State Board of Education. The RTI framework aims to prevent academic failure through

1. use of research-validated core curricula,
2. frequent progress measurement, and
3. research-based instructional and behavioral interventions of increasing intensity for children who continue to have difficulty in general education settings.

Most districts implement RTI by first establishing core curricula. Benchmarks in reading fluency and math skills allow school teams to identify struggling students in a timely way and to intervene quickly with supports. LICA's role is to help teams identify issues that may be related to a student's hearing loss.

For students in general education classes who have mild-to-moderate hearing losses, the primary concerns are full access to classroom communication, self-advocacy, and the development of vocabulary and language skills



that allow for the rapid processing of information required in the classroom. Because deficits in those areas are not necessarily revealed in benchmark testing, it's important for LICA staff members to work with school teams whenever there's a child with hearing loss being discussed.

With the advent of RTI, LICA services are increasingly aimed at supporting school teams to make sure that students can access curriculum and classroom communication. We do that in a number of ways, including:

- Itinerant teacher support for individual students
- Our dedicated Assistive Listening Device Technician who helps students and teachers evaluate and maximize the effectiveness of assistive technology and provides support to guarantee that equipment is functioning properly
- Consultation with LICA audiologists, program supervisors, or other members of LICA's diagnostic team. ▣

### 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](mailto: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!