



**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-**

## Learning More About Literacy, Together

OTTAWA (January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012) - Today is National Family Literacy Day and, to mark the occasion, the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) wants to encourage parents to read and write with their children and engage in fun literacy activities. By reading to children, parents are actively keeping their own skills sharp while, at the same time, strengthening the relationship between families which, in turn, encourages lifelong learning.

Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs) and supportive personnel play a pivotal role in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of individuals with literacy disorders. Their expertise is increasingly important in ensuring Canadian's literacy continues to grow. To communicate effectively, children must master language, the conventional code used to convey thoughts and ideas, and speech, the complex and rapid motor movements that translate ideas into spoken words.

“Both language and speech are essential for sharing feelings, ideas, and information with others,” explained CASLPA President Gillian, Barnes. “Most young children acquire these communication skills effortlessly, but some experience difficulties in learning to understand and use the language they hear around them. These children may have speech or language disorders, which may put them at high risk for associated learning, social, and behavioural problems. Research shows that early experiences help to determine brain structure which in turn shape the way we learn, think, behave and respond to challenges for the rest of our lives.”

Literacy involves more than just reading and writing. It also requires the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, calculate and use printed and written materials in context. It is important to recognize that literacy focuses on a continuum of learning, which enables an individual to achieve goals, develop knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in society.

“One strategy S-LPs use to help individuals with literacy disorder is to show families how to include stories in everyday life; and to encourage families to read together,” said Sara Turner, an S-LP in Calgary. Turner also suggested taking advantage of the programs and supports offered within the school system for reading and vocabulary development. “There are many ways to strengthen your family's literacy skills,” continued Turner. “All it takes is 15 minutes a day of reading, writing, playing a game, following a recipe or even singing a song.”

While the terms vary - literacy, lifelong learning, adult education, foundational skills – the goal remains the same: to improve the skills of individuals in order to improve their quality of life at home, at work and in their communities.

If you or someone you know has a communication problem or limitation, CASLPA recommends consulting an S-LP or audiologist. For more information about the role these professionals play in the management of communication disorders or to find an S-LP or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA's website at [www.speechandhearing.ca](http://www.speechandhearing.ca).

-30-

***CASLPA**, with over 6,000 members, is the only national body that supports and represents the professional needs of speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel inclusively within one organization. Through this support, CASLPA champions the needs of people with hearing and communication disorders. Visit CASLPA at [www.caslpa.ca](http://www.caslpa.ca) or learn more at [www.speechandhearing.ca](http://www.speechandhearing.ca).*

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