

The Lewis School Expands Its Speech-Language and Auditory Training Programs

The Auditory-Language Learning We Offer Now

For more than three decades since 1973, developing auditory processing proficiency and acquiring speech-language mastery have been essential aspects of every student's daily multisensory learning experience at The Lewis School. When the school first opened, Lewis immediately implemented the routine study of auditory processing strategies, oral reading fluency, verbal articulation-expression, listening comprehension-memory and verbal analysis requiring spontaneous written responses.

Many teachers, if not most, at that time were almost exclusively reliant on visual format teaching, silent reading, flash-card learning, passive memorization or rote learning to educate children. Teaching basic phonemic awareness was not yet part of the general educational picture elsewhere, but at Lewis, we had already established Orton-Gillingham and VAKT (Visual, Auditory Kinesthetic and Tactile) learning programs, as well as original, integrated multisensory teaching methods my staff and I developed across the curriculum. This included originating multisensory materials for high school, college and adult students, materials that were not available anywhere else that we could find.

One of the significant advantages still afforded students by their Lewis School education is the daily access they have to proven, research-based, auditory training and expressive-receptive language instruction. This instruction helps our students develop the auditory processing and verbal comprehension skills they need across the curriculum. Incorporating an oral teaching tradition with auditory perceptual training methodologies within the context of small classroom environments and content subjects provides benefits that are typically not possible to accomplish in most schools.

In crowded classrooms of twenty-five or more students, the child's typical learning experience is often largely passive or auditorily distracting because the "auditory system becomes saturated or overwhelmed and then shuts down and disconnects". In environments of the other extreme, one-to-one learning situations, only limited dynamic feedback is likely other than that from a lone, familiar tutor or faithful parent. The child often has difficulty actively applying or building on what he or she learns with tutors unless continuous tutorial reinforcement and special help is provided. When classrooms are truly small, individualized, interactive-multisensory learning places that incorporate intensive, daily speech-language and auditory preparation, as The Lewis School does, students begin to achieve greater learning reliability, self-confidence and an academic success almost immediately.

Building effective auditory processing skills and verbal communication happens consistently at Lewis. Although individualized speech therapy and after school tutorials are offered, auditory learning is routinely accomplished in the structured, individualized settings and small groups of our school-wide, multisensory classrooms. However, a student may

need both approaches in order to do his or her best, and that is one of the most compelling reasons to bring new programs to Lewis.