

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

September 30, 2009

This is a special year for you and your child. You are preparing for Kindergarten and it is a very exciting and important time for your family. Congratulations!

Kindergarten is a year full of fun and adventure however; it is around this time when parents are often faced with making tough decisions for their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. As children transition from preschool into Kindergarten, some parents may find it scary and stressful as well as exciting and new. This is not a transition that takes place overnight, it takes months of planning and working with your early intervention team professionals to determine your child's needs, classroom supports that will be needed and what school placement will be most appropriate for them and their learning style. Starting this process now and becoming involved in a program such as PEER can help ensure you have the information you need to make informed choices and that your child is set up for the most successful transition possible.

The PEER Program, developed by BC Family Hearing Resource Centre, is designed to educate parents about how to effectively advocate for their child's specific needs as related to hearing loss in school settings. PEER is delivered by highly trained staff including certified teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech and language pathologists and our family support parent. PEER teaches parents about challenging situations children who are deaf and hard of hearing face in school settings. These challenges present themselves in many ways and research shows that children with hearing loss are at risk for social, emotional and academic difficulties. PEER can help families recognize signs and symptoms of these issues and help alleviate any potential fears about entering Kindergarten. PEER also provides an opportunity for parents to ask questions and engage in discussion with staff and other parents (past and present) who are also experiencing or who have already experienced this journey.

The PEER program consists of 6 evening sessions once a month that are 1 hour in length with an additional half hour for general discussion and a question and answer period. You will find the 2009-2010 PEER Parent Agenda enclosed with this letter. All families have the option of attending these sessions in person at the BCFHRC or via webcam for those who live too far to travel to Surrey each month. If you would like to participate in the monthly PEER sessions and need a webcam but do not have one, please notify our centre staff of this when you call to register and we will make arrangements to loan you a webcam for the duration of the program.

PEER is for your children too! Getting ready to go to Kindergarten can also be a worrisome time for children as they leave their familiar preschool/daycare setting where they were the oldest children in the group (the leaders) and they enter into an unfamiliar setting where they become the youngest children in an even larger group...the school community.

At the end of the 6 evening monthly parent sessions, you and your child are invited to join us for a three day culminating activity weekend on April 22-24, 2010. This is a chance for parents to meet the parents they have been communicating with via webcam in person, and to meet school district professionals, participate in panel conversations with teenagers who have hearing loss and their parents, itinerant teachers of the deaf and hard of



hearing and more. You will also have the opportunity to observe your child in a totally accessible classroom setting while they are getting to know other children who have hearing loss, hearing aids, FM, and cochlear implants. You will see firsthand how they are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own equipment and listening checks, are taught to advocate for themselves in challenging listening situations, and are encouraged to become the “Boss of their Hearing Loss”!

These monthly evening sessions and weekend hands on workshop are filled with information and ideas that are designed to support you as you begin this journey with your child and early intervention specialists. Your child’s formal educational career is about to start which means your job as their first and most important teacher and advocate is more important than ever!

Registration for PEER is available by phone (604) 584-2827 (local) or 1-877-584-2827 (toll free). If you have any questions or require further clarification about the PEER group program please contact Cathy Luther at the above phone numbers or by email at cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com

We are looking forward to working with you and your child during this extraordinary time in your life.

Sincerely,

Kristyn Payne, Judy Chrastina and Cathy Luther



PEER SESSION AGENDA – PARENTS

Session 1- October 28, 2009

- TIME: 7:00pm – 8:30pm
- TOPIC: PRACTISE SESSION & SIGN ON via webcam: Welcome, Introductions & Logistics

Session 2- November 18, 2009

- TIME: 7:00pm – 8:30pm
- TOPIC: KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION & READINESS, “Why Start So Early?”

Session 3- December 2, 2009

- TIME: 7:00pm – 8:30pm
- TOPIC: “ACCESS” in Classrooms,
Communication Strategies: Inclusion, Integration & Mainstreaming

Session 4- January 27, 2010

- TIME: 7:00pm – 8:30pm
- TOPIC: My Child’s Hearing Loss & Equipment

Session 5- February 24, 2010

- TIME: 7:00pm – 8:30pm
- TOPIC: Social Emotional Development – “I Want to Play Too”- Child Self Advocacy

Session 6- March 24, 2010

- TIME: 7:00pm – 8:30pm
- TOPIC: Parent Advocacy

Session 7- April 22.23.24, 2010

- TIME: 9:45am-3:00pm (daily)
- TOPIC: 3 DAY WEEKEND WORKSHOPS in SURREY at the BCFHRC for parents & children.

