

Early Literacy

Being **literate** involves **knowing how to read and write**. Literacy is important for *all* children who are capable of reading and writing. Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing will learn much about the world through reading. Being able to communicate thoughts in writing is also very helpful in participating in society.

Language, reading and writing skills develop at the same time and are closely linked. A strong emphasis on communication in infancy is very important for reading and writing skills later in life. Through their daily activities, children learn language, especially if you talk about what you are doing. Everyday routines such as meals, diaper changing, baths, play, and shopping are great times to introduce new words.

Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing have the same aptitude for language development as children with typical hearing. REMEMBER: It is never too early to focus on literacy, especially with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing!

Examples of Early Literacy Behaviours

- *Book handling* – letting children physically manipulate and handle books in the earliest stages. They will learn how the pages feel and how to turn them. They will learn to hold the book right side up.
- *Looking and recognizing* – behaviours related to how children pay attention to and interact with pictures in books, such as gazing at pictures or laughing at a favourite picture. Behaviours that show recognition and an understanding of pictures in books, such as pointing to pictures of familiar objects.
- *Picture and story comprehension* – behaviours that show a child's understanding of pictures and events in a book, such as imitating an action seen in a picture or talking about the events in a story.
- *Story reading behaviours* – behaviours that include children's verbal and signed interactions with books and their increasing understanding of

print in books, such as babbling in imitation of reading, page turning, or running their finger along printed words.

Strategies to Promote Early Literacy

- Expose the child to a variety of print formats (i.e., books, newspapers, magazines, etc.)
- Enable captioning on the television whenever it is on.
- Let your child see you read – children will imitate what they see others do.

Strategies to use with the Child when Reading Together

- Let the child choose what book he wants to read. If the child is still too young to choose a book, pick age appropriate books. For infants and toddlers, board books are wonderful. They contain bright, simple pictures, are sturdy and easy to hold. They can withstand toddlers' hands and mouths and are stiff enough to prop up.
- Prop a book up anywhere the infant can see it: crib, floor, bouncy seat.
- For infants and toddlers, stick to the main idea when reading a book. Do not sign or read every word. The child's attention span will only allow you to focus on the main concept.
- Let the child decide how he wants to read the book. Let children turn the pages, skip pages, go back and forth. As they get older, they will grow to understand that there is a story in between the covers. The important thing, initially, is to foster their love of reading. Use big books and flannel boards. Flannel boards engage the use of tactile skills too.
- Don't be limited by the words. Expand on the book's ideas. Talk about what you see in the book and apply it to the child's life. "See that doggie? We have a doggie. Your doggie's name is Max."
- Be dramatic. Make reading fun and interesting. You may even want to act out the story after you have read it. If the child is old enough, involve him in the story. Give the child a part to play.

- Read it again and again and again. Babies and toddlers love repetition. They may begin to memorize the words to the story and eventually associate their memorized words to the ones written on the page.

Tips to use When Signing a Story with a Child

- Whenever possible, learn and practice new sign vocabulary contained in the story prior to reading the book with the child.
- You may want to use a mirror. Some children prefer to sit in an adult's lap, therefore signing can be difficult. Using a mirror allows the child to see your facial expressions, a very important element in sign language.
- Sign on the baby's body and in their space and on the book. They will be focused on the book and may not want to look at the reader/adult.
- Bring the book up to your face. The child can then see facial expressions in relation to the story. This helps keep a young child's attention.
- Sign even if the child is not looking at you. Most children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing are visually oriented and have good peripheral vision. They will catch some of the signing, even when not looking at you.
- Use props when reading a book. For example, let the child see that the bear they see in the book and the stuffed bear they play with use the same basic sign.
- If you don't know some signs, don't panic. Use gestures, point to pictures, and act out that part of the story.
- Keep a sign language dictionary close by when reading to look up signs you don't yet know. It is a good way to expand your sign vocabulary. But be careful - if it takes too long to find the word you may lose the child's interest in the book.
- Fingerspell – children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing need to know the alphabet and see the connection between letters and words/signs. They are also interested in forming the letters on their little hands.
- Consider reviewing the article, The 15 Principles for Reading to Deaf Children - Reading to Deaf Children; Learning from Deaf Adults from the

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University. This article is available from the Alberta Hands and Voices Lending Library.

Literacy Resources

ASL Mother Goose Program

The ASL Parent-Child Mother Goose Program: American Sign Language Rhymes, Rhythms, and Stories for Parents and Their Children

<http://www.deafculturecentre.ca/public/estore/Product.aspx?ID=72&n=ViewCategory-ID02018a>

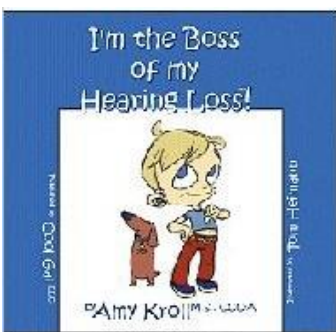
Marvel's The Blue Ear

Stories that show children that heroes wear hearing aids.

https://news.marvel.com/comics/23586/iron_man_introduces_blue_ear/

Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss: Books and Games

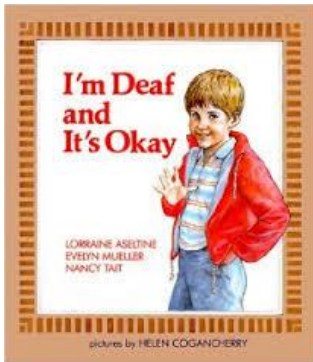
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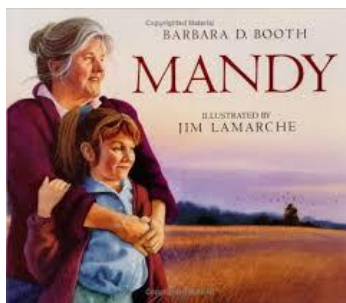
Amy Kroll – ***I'm the Boss of My Hearing Loss*** - A short children's book written to educate and encourage children about their hearing loss. It serves as a communication tool for audiologists, parents, and teachers to facilitate children's understanding of the various obstacles they may face. Its purpose is to promote encouragement through simple explanations and illustrations that break down the often complex information children receive about hearing impairment.



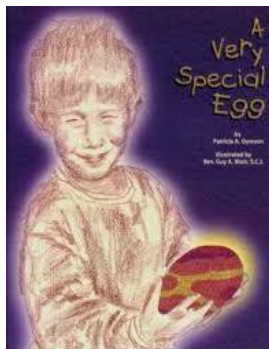
Carole Addabbo - ***Dina The Deaf Dinosaur*** - Dina runs away from home to the forest because her parents won't let her learn sign language. There she befriends an owl, a chipmunk, and a mole. Age: Five through ten



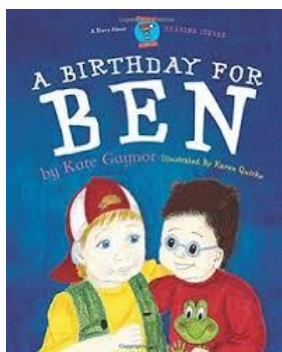
Lorraine Aseltine, Evelyn Mueller, Nancy Tait - ***I'm Deaf and It's Okay*** - A young boy describes the frustrations caused by his deafness and the encouragement he receives from a deaf teenager that he can lead an active life.



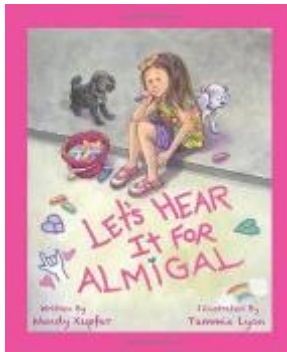
Barbara D. Booth - ***Mandy*** - This story is about a girl named Mandy who cannot hear and about her grandmother and the things they do together. When the story begins Mandy is making cookies in the kitchen with her grandmother.



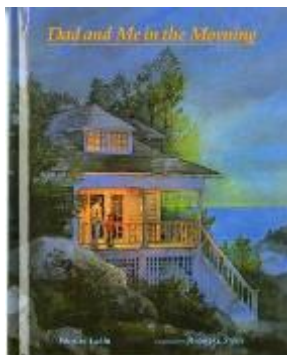
Patricia A. Dyreson - ***A Very Special Egg*** - Two children (one deaf and the other hearing) will discover the true meaning of Easter- including religious symbolism - "new life" in nature. Guy Blair's pictures capture the children's facial expressions and include hands that sign.



Kate Gaynor - ***A Birthday for Ben*** - "highlights the everyday issues that deaf children may encounter on a daily basis in mainstream schools".



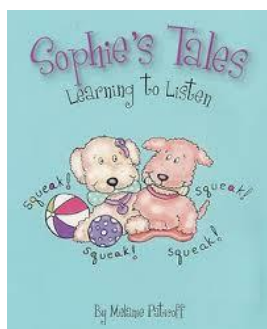
Wendy Kupfer - **Let's Hear it for Almigal** - Almigal is a young girl who is hearing impaired, but desperately wants to hear the world around her. She eventually finds a solution and is able to enjoy the little sounds around her.



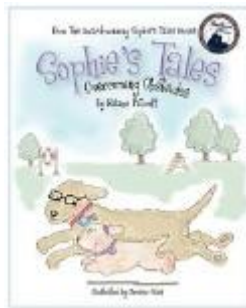
Patricia Lakin, Robert C. Steele (Illustrator) - **Dad and Me in the Morning** - Adventure of a parent and hard of hearing child at the lake.



Christy Mackinnon - **Silent Observer** - Story of a deaf child and her family's life in Canada during the late 1800s.



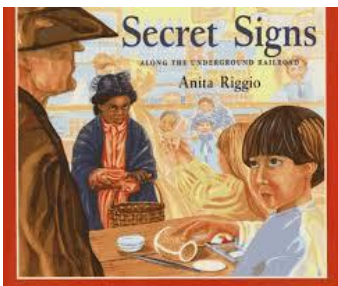
Melanie Patcoff - **Sophie's Tales: Learning to Listen** - Sophie is a little dog with hearing loss, and hears with a cochlear implant. She visits an audiologist and has cochlear implant surgery.



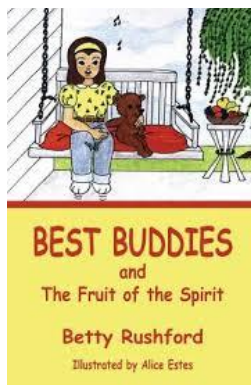
Melanie Paticoff - ***Sophie's Tales: Overcoming Obstacles***- Sophie the little dog with a cochlear implant meets Champ, a Labradoodle who wears glasses. Together they share a story of disability awareness, friendship, sportsmanship, and overcoming adversity.



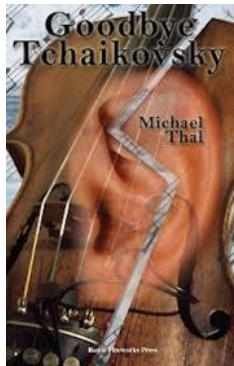
Jeanne Whitehouse Peterson - ***I Have a Sister. My Sister is Deaf*** - A young deaf child who loves to run, jump, and play, is affectionately described by her older sister.



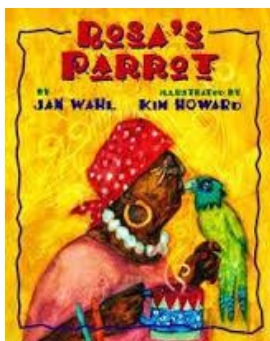
Anita Riggio - ***Secret Signs: Along the Underground Railroad*** - Luke, who is deaf, must find his contact on the Underground Railroad. His courage and quick thinking enable him to pass along the description of the next safe haven in a way no one would ever suspect.



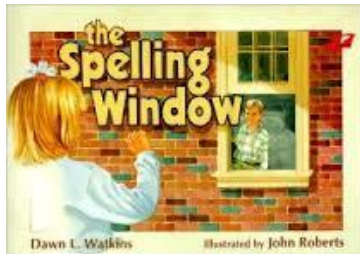
Betty Rushford - ***Best Buddies and The Fruit of the Spirit*** - The collection teaches children the importance of such things as accepting people as they are, keeping promises, obeying parents, eating vegetables, fastening seatbelts, good manners, and controlling the tongue. It contains storylines about children with disabilities and hearing loss, how to handle scary situations, and the neighbourhood bully.



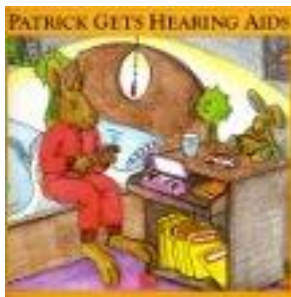
Michael Thal- ***Goodbye Tchaikovsky*** - A twelve-year-old violin virtuoso, David Rothman, is plunged into a deaf world, necessitating him to adapt to a new culture and language in order to survive.



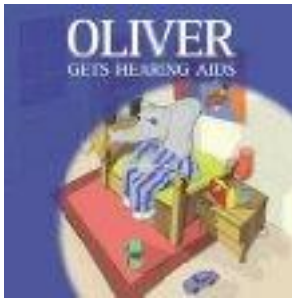
Jan Wahl, Kim Howard (Illustrator) - ***Rosa's Parrot*** - A mischievous parrot wreaks havoc when he plays a trick on his hard-of-hearing owner in this tale of friendship and forgiveness. More than just a companion, the little bird is also a help to her, repeating people's questions loudly so that she can hear.



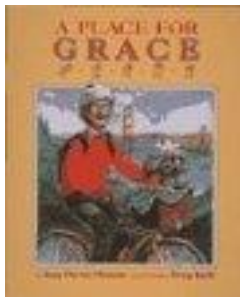
Dawn L. Watkins - ***The Spelling Window*** - Shelly is embarrassed by her deaf friend Seth's loud voice during a trip to the state capital. She changes her feelings to respect when an accident happens.



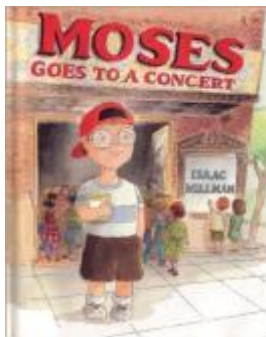
Maureen C. Riski, Nikolas Klakow - ***Patrick Gets Hearing Aids*** – published by Oticon. The story of a rabbit who teaches children about hearing aids. Contains good information about feelings, and a detailed description of the audiology visit.



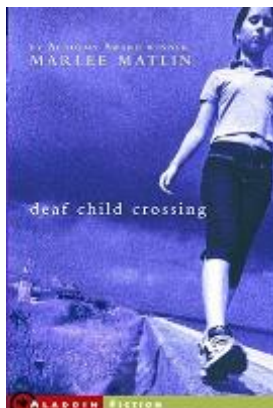
Oliver Gets Hearing Aids – published by Phonak. The story is the same as above, but features an elephant.



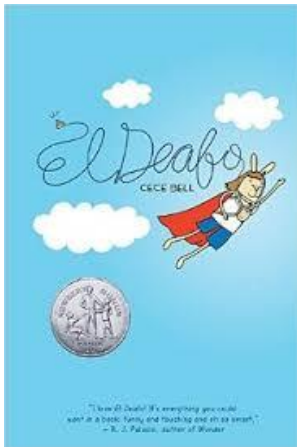
Jean Davies Okimoto - **A Place for Grace** – With the help of a man with hearing loss, a little dog finally manages to graduate from a training school for hearing assist dogs.



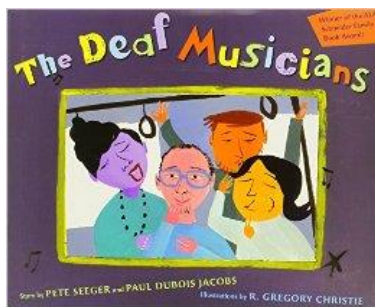
Isaac Millman – **Moses Goes to a Concert** - Moses and his school friends are deaf, and like most children, they have a lot to say. They communicate in American Sign Language, using visual signs and facial expressions. Today, Moses and his classmates are going to a concert. Their teacher, Mr. Samuels, has two surprises in store for them, to make this particular concert a special event.



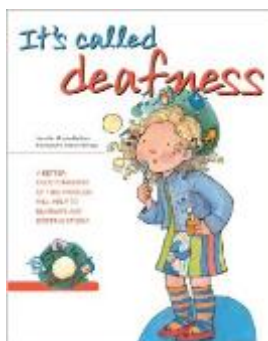
Marlee Matlin – **Deaf Child Crossing** – Oscar-winning actor Marlee Matlin teaches us about friendship, differences, and patience in this buoyant and fulfilling novel featuring Megan, a deaf girl, and her new best friend. By the end of a summer of both fun and frustration, Megan comes to realize that “no matter who you are, sometimes you’re going to need help.”



Cece Bell – ***El Deafo*** - A 2015 Newbery Honor Book Going to school and making new friends can be tough. But going to school and making new friends while wearing a bulky hearing aid strapped to your chest? That requires superpowers! In this funny, poignant graphic novel memoir, author/illustrator Cece Bell chronicles her hearing loss at a young age and her subsequent experiences with the Phonic Ear, a very powerful - and awkward- hearing aid. The Phonic Ear gives Cece the ability to hear - sometimes things she shouldn't - but also isolates her from her classmates. She really just wants to fit in and find a true friend, someone who appreciates her as she is. After some trouble, she is finally able to harness the power of the Phonic Ear and become "El Deafo, Listener for All." And more importantly, declare a place for herself in the world and find the friend she's longed for.

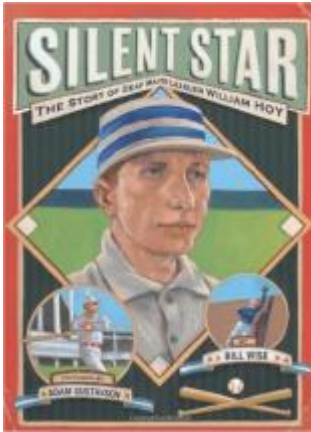


Pete Seeger & Paul Dubois Jacobs – ***The Deaf Musicians*** - Poor Lee! He used to be a jazzman who could make the piano go yimbatimba- TANG—zang-zang. But now he's lost his hearing, and the bandleader had to let him go. So Lee goes to a school for the deaf to learn sign language. There, he meets Max, who used to play the sax. Riding the subway to class, they start signing about all the songs they love. A bass player named Rose joins in and soon they've got a little sign language band. And in no time they're performing for audiences in the subway, night after night.



Jennifer Moore-Mallinos – ***It's Called Deafness*** - Titles in the Live and Learn series take a child's point of view - especially the view of children who either suffer from some physical challenge or lack self-confidence in going about their everyday activities. This book describes challenges that hearing-impaired children face, and how one child overcomes them to live a normal, happy life. This attractively illustrated picture storybook series encourages kids to understand themselves and overcome problems that have troubled them. Following each story are four pages of suggested activities that relate to the book's theme. A final two-page section offers

advice to parents. Live and Learn titles are available in both English and Spanish language editions.



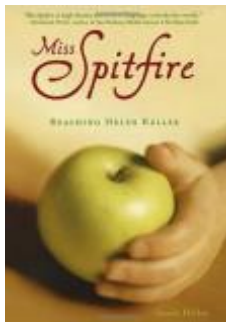
Bill Wise & Adam Gustavson – ***Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy*** - William Hoy loved baseball. Growing up in the 1860s and '70s, he dreamed of one day playing in the major leagues. A far-off fantasy for many boys, fulfilling this dream was even more of a long shot for William, who was deaf. Striving to find his place in a hearing world, Hoy became a shoemaker. He took pride in his work, but baseball was still his real love. When an amateur team coach saw him playing behind the shoemaker's shop, Hoy dazzled the coach with his hard-hitting skills. Moving from amateur clubs to the minor leagues and eventually to the majors, Hoy proved himself again and again—overcoming obstacles and becoming a star both on and off the baseball diamond.



Myron Uhlberg – ***Dad, Jackie, and Me*** - An inspiring and sentimental tale of one famous summer in Brooklyn in 1947. It is the summer of 1947 and a highly-charged baseball season is underway in New York. Jackie Robinson is the new first baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers—and the first black player in major league baseball. A young boy shares the excitement of Robinson's rookie season with his deaf father. Each day he listens eagerly to the Brooklyn Dodgers games on the radio. When his father arrives home from work, the boy uses sign language to tell him about the Dodgers. His father begins to keep a scrapbook, clipping photos and articles about Jackie. Finally one day the father delivers some big news: they are going to Ebbets Field to watch Jackie play in person!



Elyse Salpeter – ***Flying to the Light (Flying #1)*** - Seventeen year old Michael Anderson and his deaf kid brother, Danny, find themselves in mortal danger after their parents are kidnapped. Michael discovers Danny has a special gift - he knows what happens after a person dies - and now others want to know too. The brothers must outwit and outrun Samuel Herrington, a lethal biophysicist, the FBI, and even fellow Americans in a harrowing cross-country chase, because whoever gets to Danny first will have the power to rule the world.



Sarah Miller – ***Miss Spitfire: Reaching Helen Keller*** - Annie Sullivan was little more than a half-blind orphan with a fiery tongue when she arrived at Ivy Green in 1887. Desperate for work, she'd taken on a seemingly impossible job - teaching a child who was deaf, blind, and as ferocious as any wild animal. But Helen Keller needed more than a teacher. She needed someone daring enough to work a miracle. And if anyone was a match for Helen, it was the girl they used to call Miss Spitfire.



Chrissie Keighery – ***Whisper*** – “I’m always trying to figure out what’s really going on. Always having to fill in the gaps, but never getting all the details. It’s like trying to do a jigsaw when I don’t even know what the picture is, and I’m missing one of the vital middle pieces.” How do you know if your friends are talking about you behind your back or if a boy likes you? They could act innocent, but you’d know from the rumours. You’d hear the whispers. But what if you couldn’t hear those whispers anymore? What if everything you took for granted was gone? Being a teenager is hard enough. But being a deaf teenager?

-Adapted from [Babies & Hearing Loss Notebook: An Interactive Resource for Families of Young Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)