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Presentation: Breaking the Glass Ceiling

This presentation will provide data and theoretical rationale that seeks to “break the glass ceiling”, an invisible barrier to success, and refute limit setting for children who are deaf or hard of hearing regardless of risk. Greater risk may require the need for modifications in the type and intensity of service provided to families and children who are deaf or hard of hearing in order to overcome challenges and achieve optimal developmental outcomes. This presentation is a cautionary tale against setting limitations on families and children who are deaf or hard of hearing because of greater obstacles (lower levels of parent education, cultural differences from majority culture, linguistic differences, additional disabilities, later age of diagnosis and early intervention services) through fortune-telling of a bleak or difficult future. While earlier diagnosis and earlier intervention services play a dramatic role in overcoming challenges, there are other pathways to successful outcomes. The greater the number of variables that are positive (greater cognitive skills, better hearing levels, higher levels of education, earlier identification and intervention, hearing loss only, linguistic differences), the easier the developmental pathway. However, a growing number of children and their families with greater challenges are overcoming these obstacles and achieving remarkable outcomes. There are Increasing examples of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and who are bilingual and multi-lingual, musically talented, successful in theatre, mainstreamed with autism and deafness, children diagnosed with cognitive disability or borderline cognitive potential achieving age appropriate, independent living, and sometimes post-secondary success, and late-identified children attending university. This presentation will provide longitudinal developmental reading proficiency outcomes of children who are deaf or hard of hearing from 8 to 16 years of age after establishing universal newborn hearing screening.

Biography

Dr. Christine Yoshinaga-Itano is a Professor Emerita of the Department of Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences and is currently a Research Professor, in the Institute of Cognitive Science, faculty in the Center for Neurosciences at the University of Colorado, Boulder, adjunct faculty in the Department of Otolaryngology and Audiology at the University of Colorado, Denver, Visiting Professor at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, Centre for Deaf Studies and an international doctoral faculty board member in the Department of Human Sciences, Psychology area, at the University of Verona. She developed the Marion Downs Center in 1996 and received funding from the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control, Maternal & Child Health, the Office of Special Education, Office of Education and National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research since the early 1980s.

Dr. Yoshinaga-Itano has assisted state departments of public health and education, schools for the deaf, and early intervention programs throughout the United States and its territories. In addition, she has served as a consultant for many countries who have developed early hearing detection and intervention programs. Her research has focused on the predictors of language (semantics, syntax, pragmatics and phonology), social-emotional, cognitive and auditory skill outcomes of infants and children who are deaf or hard of hearing, including those with both bilateral and unilateral hearing losses, those with and without additional disabilities, children with autism and other developmental disabilities and children from both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking homes.