

From A-Z: Getting Started in Listening and Spoken Language

PROFILES IN LEARNING

Jenny Regnery Reeder and Amanda Tocko are graduates of Fontbonne University. The following are their stories of educational and professional development to becoming certified LSLs.

Jenny Regnery Reeder, M.S., CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT

I became interested in working with children with hearing loss while volunteering at The Moog Center for Deaf Education in St. Louis, Mo. I was extremely fortunate to receive a scholarship focusing on deafness within the speech-language pathology graduate program at Fontbonne University. This was an extraordinary opportunity many speech-language pathologists do not receive.



(L-R) Jenny Regnery Reeder, Claudia Alegria Magno and Hannia Acosta participate in a therapy session at the John Tracy Clinic.

I had excellent professors and additional coursework that focused on hearing loss issues, and I participated in graduate intern programs emphasizing deaf education.

Following the completion of my graduate degree in speech-language pathology, I began my clinical fellowship year at the House Ear Institute, CARE Center, in Los Angeles, Calif., where I was part of the cochlear implant team. My primary responsibilities included regular consultation with a multidisciplinary team, comprehensive cochlear implant pre- and postevaluations, therapy using auditory-verbal techniques and principles, and consultation regarding educational and therapeutic intervention.

In June 2006, I began working at the John Tracy Clinic where I was mentored by two LSLS Certified Auditory-Verbal Therapists (LSLS Cert. AVTs). I continued my professional development by providing family-centered therapy with a strong auditory base using auditory-verbal techniques; comprehensive formal and informal evaluations regarding speech, language, auditory and cognitive skills; consultation with a multidisciplinary team; and continuing education to families during parent workshops.

In May of 2008, I began Speech Bananas (www.speechbananas.com), a private practice in Los Angeles. Speech Bananas is committed to providing individual and family therapy based on the principles of auditory-verbal therapy, as well as guidelines and principles for speech-language pathologists.

Over the past four years, my education in the areas of auditory-verbal therapy, speech, language, audition and cognition has been furthered through in-service training, workshops, attendance at conferences and my work with families with children or young adults with hearing loss. In October 2008, I fulfilled the eligibility requirements and passed the certifica-

tion exam to become an LSLS Cert. AVT. Working with families and their children with hearing loss has been an inspiring, challenging and rewarding career. The experiences I had early on in my training served as the strong platform from which I have built my career, and I truly hope future graduate students will have the same opportunities I did.

Amanda Tocko, M.A., LSLS Cert. AVEEd

My experiences going to an audiologist and a speech-language pathologist when I was younger and having friends in my life who have a hearing loss sparked my interest in pursuing an undergraduate degree in communicative disorders. During my last year as an undergraduate student, I found some specialized programs in which you could teach children who are deaf and hard of hearing how to listen and talk. I was drawn to the early intervention in deaf education master's program at Fontbonne University in St. Louis, Mo., for a variety of reasons. Fontbonne University was located in the Midwest where I was from (Minneapolis), it had a small program of only 10 students, I could complete my master's degree in 14 months, and it was located in the city that housed three prestigious oral-deaf schools where I could gain experience learning from highly qualified and experienced professionals in the field. Before making the choice to pursue a career in deaf education, I toured Northern Voices, an auditory-oral school in Roseville, Minn. After seeing children with hearing loss who had gained the ability to listen and use spoken language, I knew in my heart that this was the job for me.



Amanda Tocko works with Jameson Williams at Northern Voices in Roseville, Minn.

Throughout my education at Fontbonne University and during my first few years of teaching, I have realized that I will always be learning and growing in my expertise as a professional because the field of deaf education is always evolving. When I first started working at Northern Voices in 2003, most of our kids received cochlear implants between 1 ½ and 2 years of age. Only a couple of our kids were bilingual and we didn't have any kids with bilateral cochlear implants. Over the past six years, all of this has changed, leading me to pursue certification as an LSLS Certified Auditory-Verbal Educator (LSLS Cert. AVEEd). As a wonderful mentor in my life once told me, "the day you are done learning in the field of deaf education is the day you should walk out the door." As a professional in deaf education, you always need to be asking yourself the question, "What can I do each day to enrich my skills and knowledge so that I can best serve children with a hearing loss and their families?"