

Ausplan Outline and Usage Guide

Ausplan is a term which stands for Auditory, Speech, and Language. This book (copyright 2003) is written by professional cochlear implant audiologists and speech therapists based at Children's Hospital Oakland. The text has been instrumental in forming a basis of understanding how language is acquired in children. By using this book, parents can be in complete synchronization with their child's speech therapist and necessary timelines for speech acquisition. This vitally important book costs approximately \$35 plus \$10 shipping and handling. It can only be purchased through Children's Hospital Oakland's Audiology department at 510-428-3885, ext. 2017.

Ausplan is a vital resource, in my opinion, for any parent or professional. The Ausplan book is based on 80 children who received cochlear implants. These children were rated as A, B, or C based on various criteria such as age of implantation, medical condition, auditory program, TC or Oral, etc. These children were then tracked for their outcomes over several years. There are three hierarchies, Auditory, Speech / Articulation, and Language, which have timelines of specific goals that each group of children achieved. So in essence a parent or professional can categorize a child, then look at the three hierarchies with timelines and know, for example, six months post-implant the child should be here, twelve months post-implant they should be here, etc.

Exercises are listed on all three tracks, which parents and professionals can follow. This is a true "manual" of how to teach a deaf child to hear, speak, and converse fluently. Items such as discriminating words in a closed set, picking out two key words in a sentence, and various open-set exercises are listed. This is just in the audition section; the speech section covers pre-speech, formation of articulation sounds, and formation of vowels, consonants, and words. The language section covers grammatical structure, conjoining sentences, and complex sentence production, etc.

Ausplan follows the natural acquisition of language from pre-speech to reciting full paragraphs, from hearing environmental sounds to discriminating five plus rhyming words. This is truly a "manual" of how language is acquired. How many parents can place their child on a hierarchy chart, know if they are making good progress, know exactly the next step in language acquisition, be able to work on these things at home, and be in sync with the speech therapist? Since this goes through the natural acquisition of language, IFSP and IEP goals become easier to write and understand for a layperson like a parent. This is a professional book written by and for professionals. Even though it is written for professionals, it is a vital tool for every parent who has a cochlear-implanted child learning oral language. To be able to know where your child is on all three tracks and exactly what the next step is in language acquisition is crucial for the best outcomes.

I will now summarize the format of this book and how to use each section to get the most out of the text.

Audition

Since children listen for many months before their first words and since receptive language comes before expressive language, the audition section should be reviewed and studied first. This section has five levels to be mastered from “Sound Awareness” (level 1) to “Processing and Comprehension” (level five).

Page 33 and page 37 lay out the “Auditory Timelines” for post-implant children. Use these pages and timelines as a guide of sufficient progress for your cochlear-implanted child.

Page 41 establishes an “Auditory Skills Pyramid.” Within this pyramid is the progression of auditory language that all hearing and deaf children go through. This is a crucial, crucial skill set for every parent and professional to know intently. Good listening is the key to good speaking.

Speech / Articulation

The speech / articulation section covers in great detail the speech level sounds and word approximations that every child goes through. It then covers partial-word and full-word production. Since all children produce a repertoire of sounds before word production, a parent and speech therapist can know if the child is mastering all the sounds necessary for his or her age level. This section has six levels to master with pre-speech being level 1 and spontaneous conjoined sentences being level 6.

Page 98 lists the speech level sounds in progression of order. Page 99 lists the hierarchy of speech intelligibility. Page 103 lists the key to pronunciation, and page 107 lists the timelines needed to master all six levels in the speech and articulation section.

Language

The language section covers six areas including word approximations, grammatical structure of sentences, and conjoining complex sentences, spontaneous production of words, use of “what” and “how” questions and even inverted questions are also covered. This section explains in detail the benchmarks and exercises needed to help any child reach complex grammatically correct language. Page 162 lays out the six language levels and what they are. Page 163 lists “Brown’s 14 Morphemes.” The necessary timelines and benchmarks to reach each language level can be found on page 165.

Since this book covers the process of language acquisition, a parent only needs to read each section to the point of where their child is at that point in time. As time progresses, further reading of the next language level can be done. So do not read this book all the way through and set it down. Read only as far as is needed, fully understand the text, and

then be able to track your child on all three hierarchies, always knowing the next step in the process.

Most early intervention and special education speech therapists will use standardized language models based on hearing children. These models explain where a deaf child is compared to a hearing child at their particular age level. By understanding these standardized language models and by fully understanding the Ausplan book, a parent can become extremely knowledgeable on speech acquisition and know whether their child is making sufficient progress or not.

This concludes the outline of this very important book. If used properly, this text will be by your side and referenced for the next two to four years as needed to help your child obtain excellent receptive and expressive language. The entire goal of this process is to have our children reach linguistic milestones comparable to their hearing peers. As parents we need to completely and fully understand the process that we will be managing for the next few years. As parents, I feel we are at an extreme disadvantage without resources such as the Ausplan book.

Good luck on your language journey.

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