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**Literacy Connection imparts importance of reading**

The correlation between students’ reading levels and their success in school and beyond is self-evident, and Sacramento State’s Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology has made a difference in the community since its inception six decades ago by producing highly trained practitioners specializing in speech, language and literacy.

The department has also collected and disseminated more than 70,000 books to parents and children, and Professors Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin and Robert Pieretti appeared last year on *Studio Sacramento* on KVIE Channel 6 to emphasize the importance of Roseberry-McKibbin’s “Love, Talk, Read!” campaign ([http://bit.ly/1mBOVAJ](http://bit.ly/1mBOVAJ)).

The Sacramento State Literacy Connection, sponsored by Pieretti and the department’s Applied Communication Sciences Lab, has generated student interest as well. Pieretti and his five undergraduate research assistants believe improved student literacy begins with persuading parents to incorporate books into quality time spent with their children.

“From kindergarten through second grade, children learn to read,” Pieretti says. “From then on, they are reading to learn.” He believes it’s crucial to get them hooked on reading early so that they get in the habit of doing something they enjoy that, in turn, will make them more likely to do well in school.

Research assistant Nora Shimoda agrees. The mother of two adult children became intrigued with the power of speech-language pathology when her youngest child, a son, was diagnosed with a language delay. Shimoda and her husband redoubled their efforts to correct the problem by enrolling him in speech-language therapy at their neighborhood elementary school. After two years of intervention, the boy was able to catch up to his peers.

Shimoda now is pursuing a master’s degree in the discipline at Sac State. She’s also assisting Pieretti by coordinating, for the Sacramento State Literacy Connection, four parent-training classes that stress the importance of diverting children from electronic toys and gadgets, and communicating with them through words and pictures.
on the printed page. These classes at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS) sites in Oak Park and North Sacramento have generated considerable interest among parents and children alike.

Sarah Wessel, who will earn her bachelor’s degree this spring with a speech-language pathology major, is no less convinced that reading to children works. She assisted Pieretti in developing Sac State’s Storytime Connection, in which a dozen or so student volunteers read stories to large groups of kids at the SFBFS sites. Sessions include arts and crafts activities to promote discussion and language development after student volunteers model effective reading and dialogue-building strategies for parents. Handouts of questions that parents can ask children when reading are provided in 11 languages. Attendance began to rise when word spread, and Wessel, whose mother is a librarian, proudly notes that fathers as well as mothers are coming to Storytime.

“We will be collecting and analyzing the data from these Literacy Connection programs,” Pieretti says, “but so far, the anecdotal evidence suggests that they are succeeding.” He notes that several public agencies have inquired about incorporating these services.

To learn more about Literacy Connection, visit: http://www.csus.edu/HHS/SPA/The%20Sac%20State%20Literacy%20Connection.html. For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Alan Miller

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