



## GREETINGS FROM OUR THERAPISTS!



I hope you all are having a nice start to the summer. The first half of 2012 has been very exciting for us personally: Julie is having a baby, I am getting married in September, and Blair will be joining us July 1st. We are also excited to be launching a literacy program, Chicago Reading Services, this summer. With the addition of Julie, and now Blair(!), to our team, we have been able to increase collaboration, and bring our own unique backgrounds and specializations to support each other. It's been a fun journey this year, and we are so grateful to share it with you and your families! Kathleen



It's been a pleasure getting to know all the families I've worked with this year. I'm happy to have seen speech-language gains from all the kids! Thank you, parents and caregivers, for being active participants in your child's therapy. I will be taking maternity leave this August for my third child. I hope you have a great summer! Julie



Hi, my name is Blair. I received my Master's Degree in Speech-Language Pathology at Northwestern University. I love working with children and have worked in hospital, school, clinic, and home settings. My goal is to make therapy fun while focusing on everyday activities and functional skills. My husband and I just moved back to Chicago after living in Indianapolis for a year. When I'm not working, I enjoy spending time with family, friends, and our puppy, Ruby. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you and your child! Blair

### SUMMER FIELD TRIP

Our summer field trip to Lincoln Park Zoo will be Saturday, July 14th from 11:30 am until 1:00 pm. Our hope is that this field trip will be a good opportunity for our families to network, as well as provide a fun, language-rich experience in which our kiddos can meet other children who are working on their speech. Siblings and friends are welcome to join. For more information, please email Kathleen at [kathleen@holmantherapy.com](mailto:kathleen@holmantherapy.com).





If you are joining us on the summer field trip, or if your family is taking your own trip to the zoo this summer, consider using this opportunity to encourage speech and language development:

- The zoo is a fun way to target that pesky “R” sound. It’s simple, but practicing a roar is a great way to work on “r” because a hardy roar naturally creates the tongue tension required for the sound. You can also have your child push their hands against their seat as they are roaring to add to this tension.
- Don’t forget the Farm-in-the-Zoo. If your child has motor planning difficulties and you are working on simple CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) and CV utterances, Lincoln Park Zoo’s farm has a lot of animals with earlier developing bilabial sounds (b,p,m) to imitate: consider focusing on the earliest developing bilabial sounds such as “peep,” “moo,” “bah,” etc. Wagner Farm in Glenview, also free, is another great language-rich spot.
- For older children, practice categorizing the animals that you will see at the zoo. Prairie animals versus arctic, or desert animals. Have your child draw a jungle scene, and discuss which of the zoo animals are from the jungle. When you are at the zoo, visit animals by these categories. This will help develop meta-linguistic and organizational language skills that are important skills for promoting word retrieval, categorical speech, and vocabulary development.
- Have your child help you prepare a fun zoo snack. Spread some frosting (or peanut butter) on a graham cracker. Stick either small pretzel sticks or twizzlers on the cracker to create bars for your animal cage. You can then place animal crackers in the cage. Make sure to explain each step to your child to help them with multi-step directions and sequencing skills. You can discuss each animal that you place in the cage, and take turns putting animals in your zoo.



## IEP PREPARATION

**MANY INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLANS (IEPS) TAKE PLACE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR. AS YOU ARE PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD’S IEP, YOU MAY CONSIDER UTILIZING THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:**

- Family Resource Center for People with Disabilities (academic/IEP assistance): 312.939.3513
- Communities in Schools of Chicago: 312.829.2475

IEP meetings can be overwhelming. The conference room is filled with administrators, teachers, and therapists each reporting his/her own perception of a child’s needs. Many parents walk away from IEP meetings very pleased, feeling as if this school team understands, and appropriately challenges and supports their child. Very frequently, parents agree with the therapy minutes discussed at an IEP meeting, and are happy with the progress made toward therapy goals. Some parents may disagree with part, or all, of the school’s plan to best support their child. It is a good idea to know your rights ahead of time, and to



know what to expect at the meeting. Also, never feel embarrassed to request your therapists and other specialists working with your child to attend the IEP meeting. Parents who feel well-prepared and empowered at the IEP meeting may hopefully find the experience less overwhelming and more positive. The following resources may be useful in preparation for your IEP meeting:

- Before you go to an IEP meeting by By Terri Mauro, <http://specialchildren.about.com/od/ieps/bb/beforeIEP.htm>
- Preparing for an IEP meeting: IEP teams develop individual education programs by Ann Longsdon, <http://learningdisabilities.about.com/od/publicschoolprograms/a/iepteameetings.htm>

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Check out our new blog:

[Literacy Chicago](http://literacychicago.wordpress.com) [literacychicago.wordpress.com](http://literacychicago.wordpress.com)

a blog about literacy resources in Chicago, IL

## **Book Review: What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy, James Paul Gee**

James Paul Gee, a Professor of Reading at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, offers an intriguing perspective on how children learn in his book, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. Gee argues two main points throughout the book: (1) Playing video games supports the acquisition of a variety of literacy and science skills and general cognitive development; (2) The methodology of instruction that videogames provide may be emulated by educators. While I take Gee's first point with a rather large grain of salt (I have a hard time supporting any time spent playing "Call of Duty" or this year's equivalent), I find Gee's second thesis about the successful methodology of videogames well-researched and, in the very least, thought-provoking. Gee points out that both parents and educators concede that kids are willing to work long and hard to gain the skills necessary to play a video game successfully. His book offers a serious analysis of this dynamic methodology that video games offer children for acquiring these skills. Gee is not arguing that video games should replace other forms of standard instruction. His argument pertains to "the potential of video games" (9), and believes that the method of instruction embodied in video games has potential for academic disciplines. Gee's analysis offers 16 key principles to video games. Below, I summarized the five principles that I found most compelling to the discussion of literacy instruction:

Principle 4. Risk Taking: Good video games lower the consequences of failure; players can start from the last saved game when they fail. Players are thereby encouraged to take risks, explore, and try new things.

Principle 6 Agency: Thanks to all the preceding principles, players feel a real sense of agency and control. They have a real sense of ownership over what they are doing.

Principle 9 "Just in Time" and "On Demand": People are quite poor at dealing with lots and lots of words out of context; that's why textbooks are so inefficient. Games almost always give verbal information either



“just in time”—that is, right when players need and can use it—or “on demand”, that is, when the player feels a need for it, wants it, is ready for it, and can make good use of it.

Principle 10 Situated meanings: People are poor at learning what words mean when all they get is a definition that spells out what a word means in terms of yet other words. Research suggests that people only really know what words mean and learn new ones when they can hook them to the sorts of experiences they refer to—that is, to the sorts of actions, images, or dialogues the words relate to (Barsalou 1999; Glenberg 1997). Games always situate the meanings of words in terms of the actions, images, and dialogues they relate to, and show how they vary across different actions, images and dialogues.

Principle 16 Performance before Competence: Good video games operate by a principle just the reverse of most schools: performance before competence (Cazden 1981). Players can perform before they are competent, supported by the design of the game, the “smart tools” the game offers, and often, too, the support of other, more advanced players.

While I cannot imagine advocating more time spent video gaming (particularly over time spent reading!), I do agree with Gee that as educators we can take a look at the dynamic, if not addicting, ways in which videogames promote the learning of new principles. Imagine the literalness of the marketed term “Hooked on Phonics” if we could utilize these gaming principles in our reading instruction.

Kathleen Holman, M.A.,CCC-SLP



## Top of the charts: Summer Hits

- 1) *Do the Monkey* by the Wiggles
- 2) *Green Grass of Summer* by Dog on Fleas
- 3) *Mr. Sun* by Barney and Friends
- 4) *Surfin USA* by the Beach Boys
- 5) *Swimming Swimming Swimming* by Adam and the Couch Potatoes

