



SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND LEARNING CONFERENCE

Emergent Literacy Interventions for Pediatric AAC Users with Extensive Support Needs

Sofia Benson-Goldberg, PhD, CCC-SLP
Monday, April 20, 2026

Children's Hospital Colorado
2nd Floor Conference Center, Aurora, CO

Video Conferencing Available



Children's Hospital Colorado



Anschutz

Overview

Children and adolescents who cannot use speech to be heard and understood require access to literacy, specifically spelling and writing, as a means of communicating precisely what they want, to whom they want, when they want. Learning the literacy skills required to support this precise communication requires a range of opportunities to learn emergent language and literacy skills and concepts. At a minimum, this includes opportunities to develop conceptual knowledge about the functions of print; procedural knowledge related to letters, sounds, and words; oral language understanding and use; and metalinguistic skills related to phonological and syntactic awareness (National Early Literacy Panel [NELP], 2008; Sénéchal et al., 2001). Without these emergent literacy skills, students struggle to learn and apply conventional literacy skills (i.e., the ability to read independently with comprehension and write to convey meaning to others; Connor et al., 2006). Though most students acquire emergent skills and concepts before or shortly after beginning kindergarten, many students who use AAC, especially those with extensive support needs, require instruction throughout their school career to acquire them (Burnes & Clark, 2021). This workshop will offer an instructional framework and practical approaches to address the emergent literacy learning needs of children who are not able to rely solely on speech to be heard and understood. The focus will be on comprehensive approaches to emergent literacy with an emphasis on application and use rather than skill mastery.

Objectives

At the end of the conference, participants will be able to describe:

- Three or more distinctions between emergent and conventional literacy instruction.
- Three or more critical conditions of successful emergent literacy and communication instruction.
- Three or more ways to integrate symbolic communication intervention into emergent literacy instruction.

Continuing Education Credit



**ASHA CE
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Intermediate
0.65 ASHA CEUs

Children's Hospital Colorado is approved by the Continuing Education Board of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) to provide continuing education activities in speech-language pathology and audiology. See course information for number of ASHA CEUs, instructional level and content area. ASHA CE Provider approval does not imply endorsement of course content, specific products or clinical procedures.

This program is offered for 0.65 ASHA CEUs (Intermediate level; Professional area).

Attendees are expected to be present for the entire program. Individuals who are not present for the full program will not receive ASHA CEUs. No partial credit will be provided. Participants are also expected to complete and return a learning assessment/survey based on course objectives provided at the end of the session.

Further Information

For additional information, please email the Committee at LanguageLearningASL@childrenscolorado.org, or call Chris Moores at 720-777-5470.

Registration Fees

Register by April 20, 2026

Professional	\$175
Students	\$100

Please register at ce.childrenscolorado.org/

Cancellation Policy

A refund, minus a \$25 processing fee will be granted if cancellation is requested by April 13, 2026. No refunds will be granted after this date or for non-attendance, although you may send a substitute.

The Planning Committee reserves the right to modify the agenda content while keeping consistent the time and content requirements for ASHA CEUs, or cancel this conference, or if minimum acceptable registration is not attained by April 13, 2026, with a full refund to participants.

Agenda

Monday, April 20, 2026

8:20 – 8:30 a.m.	Welcome/Introductions
8:30 – 9:15 a.m.	Sofia Benson-Goldberg, PhD, CCC-SLP The Link Between Literacy and Communication
9:15 – 10:15 a.m.	Early Symbolic Communication Development
10:15 – 10:30 a.m.	Morning Break
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Conditions for Effective Instruction
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 – 1:45 p.m.	Shared/Independent Reading
1:45 – 2:30 p.m.	Alphabet/Phonological Awareness
2:30 – 2:45 p.m.	Afternoon Break
2:45 – 3:30 p.m.	Independent Writing
3:30 – 4:00 p.m.	Putting It All Together
4:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Question and Answer

Faculty

Sofia Benson-Goldberg, PhD, CCC-SLP, is an Assistant Professor in the Communication Disorders and Sciences Program at the University of Oregon. Prior to Oregon Dr. Benson-Goldberg was a postdoctoral research associate at the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Benson-Goldberg's research and clinical interests focus on the language, communication, and literacy experiences of individuals who are non-speaking and use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems. She is particularly interested in how to improve access to reading and writing instruction and intervention for individuals with high support needs who use AAC. Dr. Benson-Goldberg is a nationally-certified Speech-Language Pathologist who has worked with children, adolescents, and young adults who use AAC and their families in home-based, clinical, and school settings.

Faculty Disclosure:

Financial: Dr. Benson-Goldberg received financial compensation via an honorarium and reimbursement for travel-related expenses. She has no additional financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

Nonfinancial: None