As I look back at the past 44 years that I have been at St. Rita School for the Deaf, working in multiple capacities. I am so grateful to the community for listening and responding to our calls for help. Due to the support we have received, thousands of children have grown into productive, educated and compassionate adults.

When parents first learn that their child has a disability, they begin a journey that takes them into a life that is often filled with strong emotion, difficult choices, interactions with many different professionals and specialists, and an ongoing need for information and services. Our goal each year is to provide love, hope and encouragement to every parent and student in every measure of practical support and in every prayer. The Greater Cincinnati community gave their time, talents and treasures, and help was given, hope was restored and lives were renewed, and it is with heart-felt gratitude that I say thank you.

God bless you for all you have done to help,

Gregory Ernst
Our Programs

The Montessori preschool classrooms at St. Rita School for the Deaf are multi-age groups of 3-5 year-old children, comprised of hearing, deaf, and apraxic children. The use of comprehensive communication, with fluently signing teachers, staff, and peers, allows for all children to communicate directly with peers and adults in all aspects of their school environment. There are no interpreters at St. Rita School for the Deaf, as there are no barriers to communication between a signing child and his or her peers.

The philosophy of comprehensive communication is more than just using spoken English and American Sign Language together, but also includes the use of a print-rich environment, photos and pictures to illustrate concepts, and interactive technology to enhance children’s understanding of the world around them.

Built upon the Montessori philosophy, small class sizes and low teacher-child ratios create an environment that is conducive to every child’s growth and development. Our program encourage a child’s sense of independence: Children are always asked if they want to try a task, if they need help doing it, or if they feel they aren’t ready. We also like to involve parents closely in their children’s education — the teacher-student-parent bond is carefully cultivated. Toys and other developmentally appropriate learning materials are laid out in the classroom so a child can see what her choices are and then pick a task — called “work” — according to his / her interests. Work options include books, puzzle games, art projects, toys that test spatial relations, and more. When they’re done, children put their work back on the shelves and move on to something else. St. Rita’s Montessori Pre School classrooms emphasize learning through all five senses, not just through listening, watching, or reading. Our children learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities.

Every classroom at St. Rita School for the Deaf uses comprehensive communication to maximize each child’s potential for academic achievement and social & emotional development.

Sign N Say

Sign n’ Say is an innovative system for teaching children with oral and global apraxia. The program was developed as part of St. Rita School’s “Comprehensive Communication” philosophy. Sign language gives the apraxic child another way to communicate; removing the pressure to learn to talk that would often prevent them from learning. Our small class size allows our students to get the individual attention that they needed to overcome the delays in motor skill development and other sensory issues usually associated with apraxia. These components are combined with the Sign n’ Say adaptation of curriculum and teaching techniques to create an environment where children can succeed both academically and socially.

What is Apraxia?

Apraxia is a motor speech disorder. For reasons not yet fully understood, children with apraxia of speech have great difficulty planning and producing the precise, highly refined and specific series of movements of the tongue, lips, jaw and palate that are necessary for...
Giving a child his voice

Jude is the youngest of four boys. He is a confident, active little boy who loves the color blue and is excitedly awaiting his third birthday. But Jude’s mother, Jules, has only known for two months that she can describe her little boy this way.

Jules knew right away that something was wrong when Jude was an infant. “He didn’t babble and could only hum a song,” said Jules. “People would ask him a question and think he was rude or didn’t have the capability to answer the question.” Doctors soon diagnosed Jude with apraxia and Jules began to search for ways to help Jude learn and overcome.

“To not understand your children, and to not know what their fears are or what is making them happy is heart breaking,” said Jules. “Now, Jude has learned to sign the word ‘blue’. So everything is blue: blue forks, we get the blue plates, he loves the blue yogurts. It’s all because he is understood.”

“Since Jude has started at St. Rita School the changes have been profound,” said Jules, just two months after Jude was enrolled at St. Rita School. “He has this confidence that he didn’t have before. It’s almost a swagger when he runs down the hallway now. He embraces it so much, the excitement for him is to be understood and he just runs with it now.”

“Walking down the halls you wouldn’t know it is home to some of the most innovative, high-demand and forward thinking educators,” said Jules. “The teachers at St. Rita School believe every child deserves a voice, and every little one deserves to be understood, despite their parents’ ability to pay. It was such a blessing to not have that worry on top of everything else. I cannot thank the generous people who support the school enough. It is because of them that I am able to finally get to know who my son is after three long years.”

“I have yet to hear Jude say, ‘I love you Mama’, but thanks to the program, I know I will one day, no matter what.”
Our Programs (continued)

Kindergarten - 6th Grade

The elementary program offers comprehensive academic instruction, with a focus on language and literacy development. Students receive highly individualized instruction in small classes to meet their unique needs. While our program uses the Common Core and Ohio Learning Standards for all our K-6th grade core content areas, modifications are made to the curriculum to make it more accessible for our students and to address the goals in their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). A variety of technology is incorporated into instruction on a daily basis to meet the visual needs of our students. Physical Education, Computer, Art, Religion and ASL classes are also included as part of our curriculum.

The development of language is an integral part of the program to help students to exchange thoughts, opinions and information with their peers, families, and others in their community. Since we believe students need to acquire both social and academic language, language instruction is provided in a variety of settings and through a variety of experiences, both in and out of the classroom. Field trips, activities, and celebrations allow students to have shared experiences with each other. Literacy development is also an important part of the elementary program. Teachers use a variety of best practices in literacy instruction (shared reading and writing, independent reading, read alouds, guided reading, writers' workshop and language experience) to create a comprehensive approach. While reading and writing are taught as their own subject areas, teachers also infuse them into all subjects throughout the school day. The wide variety of language and literacy learning opportunities offered ensures that all students learn and grow.

Grades 7 - 12

St. Rita School for the Deaf, the students enjoy small class sizes with plenty of opportunities for cooperative learning or one-on-one support from the teacher. In addition, the students rotate in and out of classrooms for the different subject areas. High School students take four years of English, literature, math, and science, three years of social sciences, and one year of financial literacy. All of the students also take electives including Art, Computer Technology, P.E., Life Skills, and American Sign Language. For religious studies, the students learn about the stories of the Bible and how those events impact our lives today as well as character education to create a strong sense of morals and values. During the students’ senior year, they take a Family Living course that prepares them to develop life-long healthy relationships. All students at St. Rita School for the Deaf are taught by highly qualified teachers who have a background in either Deaf Education or Special Education. Best practices are continuously being reviewed and shared with the teaching staff. Furthermore, instruction is matched to the needs of the students. Teachers use a variety of strategies including numerous hands-on applications to teach the content and make it achievable.

Did You Know

We are not just a school for Deaf children, we are a school that can help children who have communication problems.

70% of our students have more than one special need

Nationally, 50% of deaf students graduate from high school with a fourth grade reading level or less), and 30% leave school functionally illiterate (Deaf Stud. Deaf Educ. (2007).

On average 80% of St. Rita School for the Deaf students go on to post-secondary education or vocational training after high school.

St. Rita School for the Deaf is one of a few schools in the country with a program dedicated to children with Apraxia.
Core Values

Communication - Ensuring we allow all to communicate effectively in a respectful manner

Catholic - Recognizing that each person is unique and valuable in the eyes of God

Family - Nurturing healthy relationships with those we love and those we have yet to know

Education — Empowering each person to achieve his or her full potential through an individualized approach to learning

Innovation — Willingness to explore and support new ideas and methods in learning

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Finding her home at St. Rita School for the Deaf

When Malia was born, she was completely deaf in both ears and received cochlear implants as early as possible. Her mother, Ann, knew that she would need special attention at school to ensure she would receive the best education possible. “Just because Malia has cochlear implants doesn’t mean she isn’t deaf anymore,” said Ann. “Malia would need help early on.” The local preschools in Kentucky that Ann began visiting could not offer Malia the help she needed. The more Ann searched, the more she felt like a nuisance to the traditional school system.

Then, Malia’s audiologist suggested that Ann visit St Rita School. “When we took the tour I just knew that this was where we needed to be,” said Ann. “We walked in and Malia sat down and interact with the other kids immediately. Everyone was very welcoming.”

Despite the long drive to and from Kentucky every day, Ann enrolled Malia in classes right away. “I would drive anywhere to get her the education she needs and she is getting the best at St. Rita School,” said Ann. “The teachers focus on individual education and what is right for each child. They will do anything to help a child succeed.”

Malia is now almost 7 years old and she is making great progress. “Academically she is exceeding expectations and is a social butterfly,” said Ann. “Our whole family is learning sign language. It’s like being accepted into a family at St. Rita School. It’s a wonderful community and they take your child and your whole family in. They love and care about us and make themselves available if I have any questions.”

Teachers at St. Rita School even helped Ann learn signs so she could teach Malia herself about her oldest daughter’s First Communion.

“Malia would not be where she is if it was not for St. Rita School,” said Ann. “She would not be vocalizing, know sign language or be able to communicate with us in any way. At a traditional school she would be looked down on and would be behind in school and struggling. She has friends at St. Rita School that are both typical and deaf and she loves her teachers. It’s our family.”
Our Programs (continued)

Technology and Literacy

Millions of students across the United States cannot benefit fully from a traditional educational program because they have a disability that impairs their ability to participate in a typical classroom environment. For these students, computer-based technologies can play an especially important role. Not only can computer technology facilitate a broader range of educational activities to meet a variety of needs for students with learning disorders, but adaptive technology can enable even those students with severe disabilities to become active learners in the classroom alongside their peers who do not have the same disabilities. In our mixed school environment, 40% of the kids we serve have other special needs.

For Deaf and hard of hearing students, English is a second language, and writing is truly challenging and intimidating. These children must receive special instruction in order to develop writing skills and fluency. The key to understanding deaf education is that deaf children learn through visual and tactile learning experiences. They need every available accommodation in their learning environment to assist in their learning.

Deaf and hard of hearing children can learn and comprehend just as fast as hearing children given the appropriate technology, instruction and learning environment that best supports their special needs. Technology has been and continues to be of paramount importance in educating our students we consistently rely on Laptops, iPads, Various Software & Apps, FM Systems, Interwrite Boards, and Projectors in order to better enhance visual methods of instruction thus helping our students achieve their educational goals. Access to technology engages students and makes them excited about learning. St. Rita School for the Deaf realizes that children with disabilities do not learn like the masses and that is why with the help of our extensive technology program we are able to provide an individual academic plan for each student.

Charlene Walker with her students

Deaf and Hard of Hearing children can learn and comprehend just as fast as hearing children given the appropriate technology, instruction and learning environment that best supports their special needs.....
St. Rita School answers a family’s prayer

St. Rita School for the Deaf offers a career preparation program for students with multiple disabilities, who may not be able to handle a course load in college, yet have the ability to learn to become self-sufficient. These students take core subjects such as English, reading, math, science, and social studies in addition to independent living skills and work study. This class is taught by the school counselor and focuses on a wide array of subjects including but not limited to conflict-resolution techniques, time management skills, study skills, obtaining services from Vocational Rehabilitation, using an interpreter, applying for jobs, applying for college, building a resume, etc. These students are taught the necessary skills to be as independent as possible and are given opportunities for various work experiences that teach positive work habits and appropriate social behavior. The two major goals of this program is to create independent individuals and get them ready for the workforce so that they become productive, contributing members of society.

“Jack” age 16 is mentally handicapped, partially deaf and has physical disabilities as well. When his family brought him to St. Rita School for the Deaf 3 years ago he was struggling not only academically but socially as well as he had never had the chance to interact with children with similar disabilities and was unable to perform simple tasks like tying his shoe or washing his hands without assistance. Although he was in a special needs class at his old school they focused only on academics and not the social or life skills that he needed so that one day he could live independently. We are teaching him functional academics and community based instruction. Jack is thriving, he has many friends and he likes to learn new skills and perform them on his own. Through the vocational part of our program Jack will be getting a job this year and he has been telling everyone what he is going to do with his own hard earned money. We have no doubt that Jack will someday be able to live on his own with minor assistance. Jack’s future dreams include someday having a girlfriend and living in his own apartment, where he can display his coin collection that he started 10 years ago with his dad and brother. Over the years, Jack’s parents spent many hours praying and lost a lot of sleep wondering and worrying if Jack would ever be able to live a life like his siblings, and now they know that although they might not go down the exact same paths, all of their children will become happy, productive members of the community.
Financials

Did you Know
You can watch videos of stories from the families whose children attend school here on our website? Visit www.srsdeaf.org

Your engagement goes a long way, like us on Facebook and/or sign up for our e-newsletter

Income

Contributions $489,909.00
Festival $149,000.00
Wills & Bequests $931,151.00
Archdiocesan / Endowment $615,000.00
United Way $160,160.00
Government Fees $53,000.00
Tuition $2,964,000.00

Total Income: $5,362,220.00
Total End of Year Net Assets: ($75,772.00)
Did you Know

St. Rita School must raise over 5 million dollars this year so that every student who needs to attend school here can regardless of their families ability to pay. You can help by making a gift online at www.srsdeaf.org

Expenses

Salaries / Benefits $4,598,346.00
Support Services & Supplies $178,102.00
Building & Maintenance $214,500.00
Utilities $183,000.00
Public Relations $40,000.00
Transportation $72,500.00
Total Expense: $5,286,448.00

Programs $4,697,410—89%
Administration $316,679—6%
Fundraising $263,899—5%

Financials (continued)
You can change a child’s life...

You can make a difference, by making a gift to help us continue to provide unique and individualized learning opportunities for each child. We believe that every child is capable of learning and becoming their very best and your gift shows that you do too.

For more information about making a gift, please contact Julie O’Meara, Director of Advancement, 513-771-7600

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and products

St. Rita School for the Deaf

(513) 771-7600

Visit us on the web at www.srsdeaf.org

Dream….Achieve….Soar

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