

LITERACY, LANGUAGE, RELATIONAL HEALTH AND NAS



**ASHA CE
APPROVED PROVIDER**

Pennsylvania
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association
Intermediate Level
.1 ASHA CEUs

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Learning Objectives:

- Explain the incidence and prevalence of NAS in Pennsylvania and the potential impact on language, literacy, and relational health as a rationale for the study.
- Identify implementation of strategies during case study videos.
- List three outcomes of the parent coaching program that focused on language, literacy, and relational health during shared book routines.



Course Abstract

Infants exposed to opioids in-utero are at an extreme risk of developing Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS), formerly known as Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). Over 150,000 children are born each year with NOWS (Mirick & Steenrod, 2016). Children with NOWS are at an increased risk of having struggles in language acquisition, cognitive development, and academic performance (Fucile et al., 2021). A national scholastic literacy and numeracy skills assessment of 2,234 third, fifth, and seventh-grade children diagnosed with NOWS showed significantly lower scores than their 602,595 peers (Proctor-Williams, 2018). General delay in cognitive function measured at three years of age included lower verbal ability, reading, and arithmetic skills in the NOWS population (Beckwith & Burke, 2014). Opioid exposure caused lower scores on total language measures, concluding a significant language delay, measured three times higher, in opioid exposed children (Benninger et al., 2022). According to Heidlage et al (2023), shared book reading strategies that focus on literacy and language are effective for increasing rates of language, communication, and expressive vocabulary for children with disabilities. A collaborative parent-practitioner relationship can help reduce barriers affecting parent participation and engagement in parent coaching (Avendano & Cho, 2020). In the current study, parent coaching was used to investigate the effects of shared book reading between a caregiver and a child diagnosed with NAS. A 7-week program identified and measured the impact on language, literacy, and relational health of a toddler with NAS based on pre- and post-assessments. A mixed-method collective case study was completed, and data were collected via observation checklists and caregiver feedback. Research findings and impacts will be shared.

Speaker Bios

Jennifer Ferry is a practicing speech-language pathologist with 28 years of experience. She has worked with children in birth-3, preschool, and school-age and was a supervisor in an Early Intervention Preschool program. Her areas of expertise include language and speech disorders with children and early literacy. Currently, Jennifer is an Associate Professor at Lebanon Valley College in the Communication Sciences and Disorders/Speech-Language Pathology program.

Laura Richardson, PhD., CCC-SLP is an assistant professor of speech-language pathology at Lebanon Valley College and a clinical early intervention SLP. Her areas of expertise include augmentative and alternative communication, pediatric feeding disorders, pediatric motor speech disorders, research methods, and infant mental health. Laura's teaching and research are centered in open pedagogy and bridging the research-practice gap in the classroom and the clinic. Laura lives in Sinking Spring, PA with her husband, two young children, and cat.

Veronica Morris is a Speech-Language Pathology graduate student at Lebanon Valley College in the Communication Sciences and Disorders/Speech-Language Pathology program. She has a special interest in working with preschool-age children, and she is currently gaining experience with school-age children at her educational placement. Veronica holds a bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and will graduate with her master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology in May 2026.

Priscilla Domines is a third-year Communication Sciences and Disorders/Speech-Language Pathology major at Lebanon Valley College, pursuing a minor in Psychology. She has a strong interest in research and plans to continue engaging in it throughout her career. Priscilla aspires to work with both children and adults as a future SLP.

Speaker Disclosures

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Veronica Morris has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Priscilla Domines has no relevant relationships to disclose.