



LEADING OUTSIDE THE BOX:
CHALLENGING YOURSELF,
ENCOURAGING YOUR TEAM, & FACING
THE FUTURE – TOGETHER

2023 OPTION Annual Meeting

April 23-25, 2023
Atlanta, Georgia



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for the Deaf***Ashley Ellis***

The Atlanta Speech School

***Melanie Morris******Sherri Nighbert******Kelly Jenkins***

Georgia Department of Education - Mobile Audiology Team

***Julia Stoll***

The Atlanta Speech School



SUNDAY, APRIL 23 Hotel Indigo Atlanta-Vinings

8:30 AM - 2:30 PM ET - OPTION Executive Board Meeting
OPTION Executive Board Members Only
Crossroads Board Room

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM ET - 2023 OPTION Annual Meeting Registration
Riverside Ballroom

3:30 PM - 6:00 PM ET - OPTION Business Meeting
OPTION Regular Members Only
Riverside Ballroom

6:30 PM - 9:30 PM ET Welcome Reception and Registration
All 2023 OPTION Annual Meeting Registered Attendees
The Atrium

MONDAY, APRIL 24
The Atlanta Speech School

7:00 AM ET - Shuttle Begins Running from Hotel Indigo to The Atlanta Speech School

***Bring all items you will need through dinner.**

7:30 AM - 7:35 AM ET - Welcome & Announcements

Andrea Osman, OPTION President

7:35 AM - 7:45 AM ET - 2023 OPTION Annual Meeting Attendee Introductions

All Attendees

7:45 AM - 8:45 AM ET - MED-EL Updates

2023 OPTION Annual Meeting Platinum Sponsor: MED-EL

8:45 AM - 9:45 AM ET - Keynote Speaker

Malcolm Mitchell

The State of American Literacy

The ability to read proficiently is foundational to learning. The disruption in education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted access to quality instruction, remediation, and intervention, heightening the barriers that already existed to advance their literacy skills. Here's what we know: Children who struggle to read often drop out of school, live in poverty, interact with the criminal justice system, and have a decreased life expectancy when compared to their more literate peers. If reading proficiently impacts the quality of life then I'm forced to ask the question, how do we get communities of children reading to a better future?

9:45 AM - 10:00 AM ET - Break/Lightning Tour of The Atlanta Speech School (OPTIONAL)

Led by Comer Yates, Executive Director of The Atlanta Speech School

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET - Presentation

Comer Yates

Our Enduring Promise

Our promise to children has endured since the Atlanta Speech School was founded in 1938 – this is the place where you will find your voice for a lifetime. Today, for us, a child's discovery of their "voice" means gaining access to their right to decide their own future and their abilities to make the greatest difference possible in the lives of others. I look forward to sharing the work of my colleagues – grounded in the sciences of early healthy brain development, language acquisition and explicit reading instruction - in pursuit of this promise and Deep Reading Brain construction for each child on our campus and for all our children. Said more simply, my colleagues seek to act in every moment on the truth as shared by Frederick Douglass, "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

MONDAY, APRIL 24
The Atlanta Speech School**11:00 AM - 11:15 AM ET - Break and Grab Lunch****11:15 AM - 12:00 PM ET - Lunch & Learn Presentation by: *Decibel Therapeutics*****Paul Sommer, MBA, CPXP****Tera Quigley, AuD, CCC-A*****Genetic Hearing Loss, Importance of Genetic Testing, and Update on Future Gene Therapies***

Decibel Therapeutics is a clinical-stage biotechnology company dedicated to discovering and developing transformative treatments to restore and improve hearing and balance, one of the largest areas of unmet need in medicine. Decibel has built a proprietary platform that integrates single-cell genomics and bioinformatic analyses, precision gene therapy technologies and expertise in inner ear biology. Decibel is leveraging its platform to advance gene therapies designed to selectively replace genes for the treatment of congenital, monogenic hearing loss and to regenerate inner ear hair cells for the treatment of acquired hearing and balance disorders. Decibel's pipeline, including its lead gene therapy product candidate, DB-OTO, to treat congenital, monogenic hearing loss, is designed to deliver on our vision of creating a world of connection for people with hearing and balance disorders. For more information about Decibel Therapeutics, please visit www.decibeltx.com or follow us on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/decibeltx>).

12:00 PM - 12:15 PM ET - Break**12:15 PM - 1:15 PM ET - Presentation****Ryan Lee-James, PhD, CCC-SLP****Sondra Mims, M.A., CCC-SLP*****Literacy and Justice for All: A Roadmap to Equitable Instruction***

The purpose of this presentation is to share how the programs of the Atlanta Speech School and its partners operationalize the sciences of healthy early brain development, language, and reading through application of the research in our classrooms. Specifically, we will discuss how, when given the right amount of input, oral language develops along an expected continuum and when combined with diagnostic, explicit, systematic, and cumulative skill instruction, establishes the path to constructing deep reading brains for ALL children.

1:15 PM - 2:15 PM ET - OPTION Committee Meetings**2:15 PM - 2:30 PM ET - Break**

MONDAY, APRIL 24
The Atlanta Speech School**2:30 PM-3:30 PM ET - Presentation****Kate Bousum, CFRE****Licia Green****Zareena Safdar Koch***Send Money - No, Seriously...Fundraising Strategies & Support*

Join three seasoned development/nonprofit professionals with a combined 60 years experience and \$75M raised as they share how to better collaborate with your development staff, brainstorm innovative fundraising methods, and sustain your incredible OPTION programs.

3:30 PM-3:40 PM ET - Closing Remarks**Andrea Osman, OPTION President****3:40 PM-3:45 PM ET - 2024 OPTION Annual Meeting Host****Texas Hearing Institute****Sarabeth Fly****3:45 PM ET - Bus Ride to Ebenezer Church****4:30 PM-5:00 PM ET - Ebenezer Church Visit****5:00 PM - Bus Ride to The Alliance Theater****5:30 PM-6:00 PM ET - Cocktail Hour at The Alliance Theater****6:00 PM ET - The Alliance Theater: Workshop (Included in Registration)**

Join Atlanta's Alliance Theater, an art partner of the Woodruff Arts Center, for an engaging workshop that you're sure to pack away in the memory bank!

7:00 PM-7:30 PM ET - Bus Ride to South City Kitchen - Vinings**7:30 PM-10:30 PM ET - Dinner (Ticket/Registration Required)****South City Kitchen - Vinings****10:30 PM ET - Bus Ride to Hotel Indigo Atlanta-Vinings & Marriott Atlanta Vinings/Galleria**

TUESDAY, APRIL 25
The Atlanta Speech School

7:00 AM ET - Shuttle Begins Running from Hotel Indigo to The Atlanta Speech School

8:30 AM - 8:45 AM ET - Welcome & Announcements

Andrea Osman, OPTION President

8:45 AM - 9:45 AM ET - Atlanta Speech School On-Site Tour

All Attendees

9:45 AM-10:00 AM ET - Break

10:00 AM-11:00 AM ET - Presentation

Ashley Ellis

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging: The Essential and Ongoing "Heart Work" of Healthy Organizations

DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging) is about who we are BEING and HOW WELL that “being” is. When organizations approach DEIB with the goal of BEING WELL, transformation replaces transaction, and DEIB as a lifestyle replaces DEIB as a destination.

11:00 AM - 11:15 AM ET - Break and Grab Lunch

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM ET - Lunch & Learn Presentation by:

Georgia Department of Education - Mobile Audiology Team

Melanie Morris, Au.D.

Sherri Nighbert

Kelly Jenkins

Meeting Families Where They Are Through Parent Navigation, Tele-Audiology and Mobile Clinics

This presentation will provide an overview of Parent Navigation and cross-training as an Audiology Assistant. Attendees will better understand tele infant hearing clinics - Specifically, How, Who, and Where? Attendees will also understand the Parent Navigator's role after initial diagnosis & understand the importance of collaboration with Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program.

12:15 PM - 12:30 PM ET - Break

TUESDAY, APRIL 25
The Atlanta Speech School**12:30 PM ET-1:30 PM ET - OPTION Program Share Time***Tucker Maxon School – Employee Retention Tax Credit: Scams, Spam, and the Real Jam***Glen Gilbert***Planning & Building a New Magnolia Speech School***Valerie Linn & Joshua Friedel***Research Partnerships: Teachers College, Columbia University and OPTION Programs***Maria Hartman & Elaine Smolen***Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech Program Updates***Judy Sexton****1:30 PM-2:50 PM ET - OPTION Committee Share Time****Communications Committee (Pam Dawson)****Teacher Shortage Workgroup (Lindy Powell)****Legislative Committee (Danette Driscoll)****2:50 PM-3:00 PM ET - Break****3:00 PM-4:00 PM ET - Presentation****Julia Stoll, PhD, LPC***Sunshine Circles - Using Relationship Building and Play-Based Learning as a Road Map to Social-Emotional and Executive Functioning Development*

Sunshine Circles is an interactive play-based curriculum designed to teach social skills and promote executive functioning development in the large group classroom setting. Skills such as empathy and perspective, joint attention, sharing and taking turns, body awareness, and impulse control are taught through large and small group social play activities. Each Sunshine Circles session is split into three categories of engagement in play; nurturing play, mastery play and challenging play. Nurturing play models relationship building by allowing teachers opportunities to nurture their students and build attachment and trust. Mastery play builds self-confidence in students through play that is familiar and fun. Challenging play is used to introduce new social concepts that require practice and development. This session is designed to review the basic tenants of the Sunshine Circles programming and provide specific examples of play-based activities used within the model.



TUESDAY, APRIL 25 The Atlanta Speech School

4:00 PM-4:15PM ET - Closing Remarks

Andrea Osman, OPTION President

**4:15 PM ET - Shuttle Begins Picking Up from the Atlanta Speech School to Hotel Indigo
Atlanta/Vinings**

7:20 PM ET - HEY, BATTER BATTER!

Atlanta Braves vs. Miami Marlins

(Ticket/Registration Required)



Malcolm Mitchell

The State of American Literacy

Malcolm Mitchell is a native of Valdosta, Georgia. As a high school senior, he was an Under Armour All-American and went on to finish in the top ten all time receivers during his playing career at the University of Georgia (UGA). After graduating from UGA with a degree in Communications in 2015, Malcolm was drafted by the New England Patriots, becoming a Super Bowl Champion in February 2017.



Comer Yates

Our Enduring Promise

Comer Yates has been the Executive Director of the Atlanta Speech School for 25 years. The Speech School is the nation's most comprehensive language and literacy center with four schools, clinical programs and the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy. The focus of the Rollins Center and its free online Cox Campus is to break the cycle of illiteracy for children whose families have experienced generational denied access to educational opportunity. A former high school teacher and 16-year practicing lawyer, Mr. Yates chairs the Atlanta Rotary Education Foundation, is a member of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Defamation League SE Region, serves on the cabinet of Get Georgia Reading, and is on the Board of Directors of Camp Twin Lakes. He is past Chair of Georgia's Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.



Paul Sommer, MBA, CPXP

Decibel Therapeutics

Paul Sommer is Global Head of Patient Experience and Innovation for Decibel Therapeutics. Prior to joining Decibel, Paul spent nine years at Geisinger as Senior Director of Patient Experience and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Before that, Paul spent eight years leading patient engagement, advocacy, education and marketing programs for life science companies, including Hologic and Biogen, and six years as an Accenture consultant for Fortune 500 healthcare companies. Paul also spent seven and fourteen years on the board of directors for the A.G. Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Helen Beebe Speech and Hearing Center, respectively. Paul has previously served on advisory boards for Krames/Staywell, CipherHealth, and The Beryl Institute. Paul graduated from Haverford College (BA) and Babson College (MBA), and is a Certified Patient Experience Professional.



Tera Quigley, AuD, CCC-A

Decibel Therapeutics

Tera Quigley is a research audiologist and Associate Director of Medical Affairs at Decibel Therapeutics. Tera earned her Doctorate of Audiology at Indiana University Bloomington. She worked as a clinical and research audiologist at Indiana University from 2012 through 2016. She then worked as a research audiologist at the University of South Florida from 2016 through 2018 before moving to Boston to work at Decibel where she's been for the past 5 years.



Ryan Lee-James, PhD, CCC-SLP

Literacy and Justice for All: A Roadmap to Equitable Instruction

Dr. Ryan Lee-James, language and literacy expert in the context of linguistic differences and socioeconomic disadvantage; is an SLP, researcher, and published author. As Chief Academic Officer and Director of the Rollins Center for Language & Literacy at Atlanta Speech School, she and her dynamic team develop and hone academic programming across the School which serves children who have hearing loss, speech-language delays, and dyslexia. The team translates that programming to online content through Cox Campus: free, equity-based, online professional learning. Through Rollins, Dr. Lee-James also leads the design, implementation and evaluation of large-scale programs to improve language and literacy outcomes for children from birth through 3rd grade who have been systemically disenfranchised.

Previously, Dr. Lee-James served as a member of the Communication Sciences and Disorders faculty at a university in New York, and is active on numerous national and local boards to realize literacy and justice for all.



Sondra Mims, M.A., CCC-SLP

Literacy and Justice for All: A Roadmap to Equitable Instruction

Sondra Knight Mims is an ASHA certified speech-language pathologist with 46 years of experience, 36 of those gained at the Atlanta Speech School. Mrs. Mims received the Bachelor of Science in education and Master of Arts in Speech/Language Pathology with a concentration in Learning Disabilities from the University of Alabama. During her tenure at the Speech School, Mrs. Mims held positions as the Lower School Director of the Wardlaw School and was the Speech School's Chief Academic Officer until her retirement in August of 2022. Mrs. Mims has expertise in language and literacy, dyslexia, language-based learning disabilities, early reading brain construction, and improving reading and language instruction for all children. Mrs. Mims currently serves as the Speech School's Academic Consultant where she helps families in our community find direction for their children who are struggling to learn to read and assists with K-3rd course development for the Rollins Center's Cox Campus.



Kate Bousum, CFRE

Send Money - No, Seriously...Fundraising Strategies & Support

Kate's career has spanned higher education, social services, and education in both small and large advancement/development teams. She found her way to Child's Voice in 2010. Kate is responsible for individual and major gift outreach, grant writing, corporate/foundation support, special events, annual appeals for financial support, and presentations about Child's Voice to civic groups, organizations, and associations. She also provides fundraising consulting work in collaboration with Rescigno's, helping small and mid-size nonprofits increase their fundraising efforts and improve their stewardship of philanthropy.

Kate received her degree from Purdue University in Communications and Public Relations and her Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) designation in 2017. In 2022, Kate was named the Benjamin Franklin Honoree by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Chicago Chapter for, "Significant achievements in a long career who serves as a role model for our profession." In 2018, Kate received the Under 40 Leadership Award for Nonprofits by the Greater Oak Brook Chamber of Commerce.



Licia Green

Send Money - No, Seriously...Fundraising Strategies & Support

The birth of my profoundly deaf twin girls changed the trajectory of our lives. Once an elementary school teacher, my passion for making a difference in the lives of children is now fulfilled as the Development Director for the CCHAT Center – Children’s Choice for Hearing and Talking Sacramento. Now in my 13th year, I continue to educate the Sacramento region on CCHAT’s listening and spoken language services developed specifically for children with hearing loss, share my personal story of impact and raise the funds necessary to support this life-changing program.



Zareena Safdar Koch

Send Money - No, Seriously...Fundraising Strategies & Support

Zareena walked into a preschool classroom in 2006 and witnessed the miracle of listening and language in a child with hearing loss.

Sixteen years later, the miracle hasn't faded, and she's raised more than \$30 million for the agency. Her career began as a grantwriter with state and federal grants, but quickly moved into major gifts thanks to her short attention span. She throws excellent events, fully engages volunteers and Board members, and has been known to be "politely pushy" when it comes to Development expenses. In her spare time, she enjoys tying the shoelaces of said miracle in the hallway. She holds a double major in social work and chemistry from University of Missouri.



Ashley Ellis

*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging: The Essential and Ongoing
"Heart Work" of Healthy Organizations*

Ashley Ellis is a wife and mother who believes in carrying the transformative power of love into all of her work. She is passionate about using her platform to bolster the quality of life of those she serves. Ashley has a B.S. in elementary education from the University of Montevallo, a diversity and inclusion specialist certification from the Academy to Innovate HR, and is currently pursuing her M.Ed. in Learning, Leadership, and Organizational Development at the University of Georgia. Ashley is a former classroom teacher for Jefferson County Public



Melanie Morris, Au.D.

Meeting Families Where They Are Through Parent Navigation, Tele-Audiology and Mobile Clinics

Melanie Morris is a pediatric audiologist who specializes in early identification of hearing loss through innovative methods, such as mobile and tele-audiology. Melanie works for Georgia Mobile Audiology, a program started in 2019 through Georgia Department of Education, serving children birth-22 years of age around the State of Georgia. Melanie's background is in clinical audiology with the majority of her work experience being at a children's hospital. She has a strong interest in providing and promoting services to underserved populations, as well as educating others about the need for early intervention. Most recently, Melanie has developed and run 9 tele-ABR clinics around the State and is actively working to promote equitable access to early diagnosis of hearing loss for children in Georgia and beyond.



Sherri Nighbert

Meeting Families Where They Are Through Parent Navigation, Tele-Audiology and Mobile Clinics

Sherri Nighbert is a Parent Navigator for Georgia Mobile Audiology, a program through Georgia Department of Education, serving children birth-22 years of age around the State of Georgia. Sherri is a mother of a child who is deaf and a bilateral Cochlear Implant user, fully mainstreamed in the Cobb County school district. Sherri has a bachelor's degree in business communication from the College of Charleston. Sherri was the Grant Manager & Lead Parent Navigator under the initiative, Access to Language (AtL), a grant designed by the Atlanta Speech School and funded by the Oberkotter Foundation from 2018 to 2022. The platform uses a single Parent Navigator, who guides families through the confusing process of inpatient hearing screening, outpatient hearing screening, diagnostic testing, and enrollment into intervention (www.accesstolanguage.org). Sherri is motivated by building the DHH Georgia community to prevent loss to follow up and make sure no parent or child ever feels alone.



Kelly Jenkins

Meeting Families Where They Are Through Parent Navigation, Tele-Audiology and Mobile Clinics

Kelly Jenkins is the Grant Manager of Access to Language (AtL), a program funded by the Oberkottter Foundation. AtL partners with the Department of Education's Georgia Mobile Audiology to remove barriers by providing parent navigation services and on demand audiological care. Kelly is the mother of a child who is hard of hearing and has progressive hearing loss herself. Jenkins received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Davidson College and her Master of Business Administration from the Goizueta Business School at Emory University and is a member of the Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Her background is in parent advocacy and the implementation of legislative change. She is passionate about ensuring that every child who is deaf and hard of hearing in the state have access to any resources needed to achieve language and literacy excellence.



Julia Stoll, PhD, LPC

Sunshine Circles - Using Relationship Building and Play-Based Learning as a Road Map to Social-Emotional and Executive Functioning Development

Dr. Julia Stoll has a Bachelor and Master of Special Education from Clemson University, a Master and Specialist of Licensed Professional Counseling from Georgia State and a Doctor of Philosophy in Infant and Early Childhood Education from Fielding University. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a trained play therapist. Dr. Stoll has worked in the field of education for over 25 years as both a teacher and a school counselor. She currently works at the Atlanta Speech School where she serves as the Preschool Counselor and Child Development Specialists in the Hamm Center, Stepping Stones and Kenan Preschools.

Important Information

The Atlanta Speech School

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The OPTION Annual Meeting Committee would like to recognize and thank them for their sponsorship contributions for the 2023 OPTION Annual Meeting.

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