

Nurturing All Areas of Development at Clarke



In addition to a rigorous auditory, speech, language and literacy curriculum, Clarke's whole-child approach to education creates a multitude of benefits for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Clarke educators know—and **research confirms**—that a healthy, happy child is better equipped to reach their full potential. In fact, in UNESCO'S **Education 2030 Framework for Action**, an internationally recognized guide for educators, thought leaders conclude: "Relevant learning outcomes must be well defined in cognitive and non-cognitive domains, and continually assessed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Quality education includes the development of those skills, values, attitudes and knowledge that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions and respond to local and global challenges."

That's the thinking behind the initiative known as the whole-child approach to education, launched by the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) in 2007, and in practice at Clarke. The whole-child approach expands the focus on academic achievement, incorporating the whole spectrum of a child's development, including social, emotional, mental, physical and cognitive skills, to ensure they're poised for success.

When the whole-child approach is used effectively, each student:

- has the opportunity to practice a healthy lifestyle
- feels physically and emotionally safe
- is actively engaged in learning
- can access personalized support from qualified educators and other adults
- is challenged academically to prepare them for educational or employment opportunities
- is connected to others within their school and community
- has the sound access they need to follow along in educational and social settings

The whole-child approach is especially important for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. For students with hearing loss, educators, audiologists and families must also ensure they have optimal access to sound to support the development of listening, spoken language and learning they need to meet their potential.

Parent Education Series Bolsters Whole-Child Support

At Clarke Florida, where Clarke educators host a regular Parent Education Series, families find community support and learn from guest speakers on a variety of topics. An important topic at these events is the holistic approach to each child's education, particularly in social-emotional learning.



A survey following the series in the 2020-2021 school year **found that 93% of participating families increased their ability to support their child's social-emotional needs.**



Families gather for a Clarke Parent Education Series in 2019.

The Whole-Child Approach at Clarke

Clarke's educational and hearing health professionals provide this crucial support for children from infancy through the teenage years. Clarke may be best known for its expertise in helping children with hearing loss develop their listening and spoken language skills, but this process takes place within a larger framework of support to develop many other crucial skills, like executive function and interpersonal communication.

Clarke teams work closely with families to support universal skill development across diverse cultures based on individual family interests, means and needs, starting as early as possible. Teachers are in close communication with families in order to plan for and support the child's learning both at school and at home. Beginning with infants, parents learn to support their baby's foundational communication skills of social attention, turn-taking and responsiveness. Families and Clarke professionals support children in learning to identify and talk about emotions, think about and choose actions, and problem-solve to care for themselves and others. Children are guided to learn through natural home and school routines, play, literature and subject areas, as well as individualized lessons.

To be most effective, this whole-child approach must be enacted during all program sessions, at school *and* at home, which is why Clarke's early intervention model includes families, other caregivers and even a child's siblings. Families rely on this supportive coaching.



Julian, left, with mom, Alexandra.

Alexandra's son, Julian, began receiving early intervention services from Clarke at age two, shortly after he was diagnosed with a hearing loss. Like many caregivers of children with hearing loss, Alexandra acknowledges that at the time, she and her family had little understanding of what that meant for her son or what support he would need. "We had no experience with early intervention; no idea where to start," she recalls.

Through their experience with Clarke, Alexandra said the entire family now understands what hearing loss is like for her son. "Clarke guided us. Clarke taught us. Clarke helped us to understand and appreciate what our son was—and is—going through," Alexandra says. "[Clarke] gave us the tools and education so that we can do our best to support him the way that he needs. We have the confidence ... in raising our child with his special needs because of Clarke."

Julian continued his education at Clarke through preschool until he entered a mainstream kindergarten. He's currently in fourth grade, where he excels in a Spanish-language immersion program, and Alexandra notes

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that he doesn't see himself as different from any other child in his school. "Clarke is largely responsible for the confidence my son displays and his self-acceptance—the value of which can't be quantified," she says.

Benefits Continue as Children Advance

As children progress from early intervention to preschool and beyond, Clarke helps the child and their family navigate the transition and develop needed skills.



Olivia, Clarke preschooler, has built a strong foundation of communication and self-advocacy skills with the support of the Clarke team and her family. "Those skills, which may seem trivial to those unfamiliar with hearing loss, are major milestones for a two- or three-year-old girl with hearing loss," says her father, Michael.

Four-year-old Olivia has been receiving services at Clarke since she was diagnosed with hearing loss at 20 months¹³ beginning with early intervention services and now as a student in Clarke's Preschool Program.

"There is no handbook for the diagnosis and the path is not an easy one to navigate," says her father, Michael. Besides learning how to listen and speak, children with hearing loss need to learn self-advocacy, develop self-esteem and confidence, and understand how to

communicate in a group setting. "The one-on-one therapy sessions at home provided necessary building blocks for our daughter... During Toddler Group, however, she was able to take those skills to the next level and learn how to implement them in a real-world, practical setting."

Michael shares that Olivia learned how to communicate with peers, tell her teacher when her hearing aid batteries died, how to listen to and follow directions in a classroom setting, and how to let her peers and/or teachers know when she needed them to repeat themselves or speak more clearly for her. "Those skills, which may seem trivial to those unfamiliar with hearing loss, are major milestones for a two- or three-year-old girl with hearing loss," he adds.

This strong foundation of communication and self-advocacy skills—built and developed over time in age-appropriate ways—means Clarke's students are well-prepared when they eventually enter mainstream schools. And it continues to serve them as they grow and develop additional interests.

"Clarke is largely responsible for the confidence my son displays and his self-acceptance—the value of which can't be quantified."

— Alexandra, mother of Clarke alum Julian

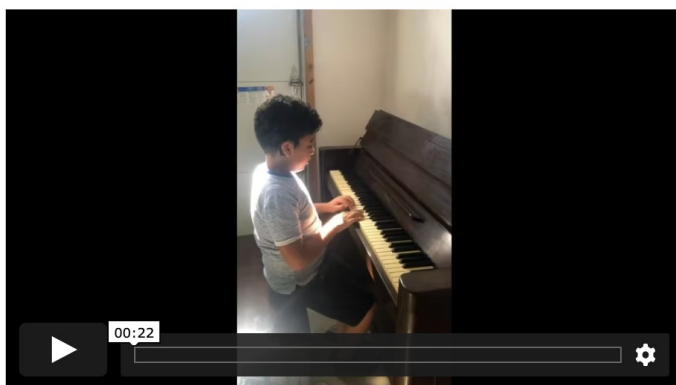
Overcoming Communication Barriers to Discover a Love of Music

Christina's son, Tony, began receiving services at Clarke when he was three—around the time he received his cochlear implants—and now attends his local public school. When he started at Clarke, he used very little language. “He couldn’t even say ‘mama,’” recalls Christina. “He said just a few words, maybe 10.”

At the time, Tony's challenges to communicate caused frustration and, predictably, some behavioral issues. “He was a good boy, but before [Clarke] he was nervous all the time because he wasn't hearing well,” Christina says. “He couldn’t ask for what he wanted.”

Christina notes that in those early days, Clarke teachers helped Tony understand appropriate behavior and communicate his emotions through songs and using pictures of people displaying various emotions.

Now, as a second-grader, Tony is doing well in school, is a capable self-advocate in the classroom, and has many friends. “[Tony’s] transition to his public school has gone flawlessly,” says Katie Jennings, MED, teacher of the deaf and assistant director of Clarke Boston. “His speech is incredible, and you would never know he was deaf if you met him on the street!”



Clarke alum Tony has taken an interest in music and enjoys playing the piano. “He likes music so much,” says his mother, Christina.

Tony has a budding interest in music and loves to play piano. Christina notes that he’s still a novice, but “I love to hear it,” she says. “He likes music so much!”

With this multifaceted focus on a child’s holistic experience, Clarke families are able to observe and support their child’s progress not just in speech, language and literacy—but in their social-emotional development, life skills, sense of community and self-confidence. These essential building blocks ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing will feel prepared for success as they face all the exciting academic, social and career opportunities to come.