We believe in starting small and thinking big.
We believe in little ones with big plans.
Plans to play ball or ride the yellow bus with their brothers and sisters.
Plans to grow up to be doctors, coaches, gardeners, lawyers, singers, writers, teachers and community leaders.
Plans to be parents, mentors, dreamers and doers.
We believe in a future where children who are deaf or hard of hearing have the potential to be whatever they want to be.
We exist to power their potential.

This is our vision at Hearing First, an educational endeavor of the Oberkotter Foundation. We launched in October 2015 based on the premise that hearing is a foundational building block for children to learn to listen and talk, become healthy readers and do well in school. Through collaborative efforts, our activities are dedicated to ensuring that children who are deaf or hard of hearing have opportunities to reach their full potential.

Hearing First recognizes that families and professionals are partners when it comes to improving outcomes for children. The Hearing First website is a multimedia digital experience and connection point designed to link families who have chosen listening and spoken language (LSL) for their children with hearing loss, and the professionals who work with them, with the resources, information, tools, community and learning experiences they need to ensure the children in their lives succeed.
Hearing First Powers Potential
We believe every parent needs to know the status of their baby’s hearing first — because the first days, weeks and months of a baby’s life are critical. These early experiences develop the neural pathways and networks in the brain for future success. Families and professionals need to understand the importance of hearing screening because the earlier a child who is deaf or hard of hearing is identified, receives a diagnosis of hearing loss, starts wearing appropriate hearing technology and begins receiving intervention, the more opportunities that child will have.

Hearing First Powers Listening and Spoken Language
The general public and most parents today remain unaware that children who are deaf or hard of hearing can learn to listen and talk just like their friends with typical hearing. Hearing First promotes LSL as an early childhood developmental approach for children with hearing loss. Using an integrated strategy, Hearing First celebrates listening, spoken language and literacy outcomes through its website, social media channels and collaborative messaging with other LSL organizations. Through a website designed around the family journey, parents, family members and professionals have access to easy-to-read, understandable information about why LSL matters, what it takes to maximize outcomes and how to access LSL services. The Hearing First digital ecosystem, including blog, social media platforms and paid and earned social media, positions the LSL message to proactively find and educate millennial parents and soon-to-be parents.

EXPLORE OUR DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM ONLINE AT HEARINGFIRST.ORG OR ON OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS.

Hearing First Powers Partnerships
Quality parent-professional partnerships are the foundation for successful LSL outcomes. The Hearing First ecosystem fosters this partnership by providing family-friendly materials ready to be shared with parents. In particular, sharing videos and stories celebrating LSL outcomes, from and within the Hearing First community, can provide families with critical support and guidance as they make decisions about what is best for their child and family. Extended family members and other adults engaged in a child’s life can also participate in the Hearing First digital ecosystem, creating a valuable community of support for a child and family.
Hearing First Powers Collaboration

LSL as a developmental approach is in alignment with the early learning field and literacy development. The current national and international focus on the importance of early learning and grade-level reading by third grade reinforces the goals and strategies that LSL professionals use daily with children and their families to develop language.

By collaborating with partners beyond the LSL community, we take what we know about listening and language development, and share it outside our field with more organizations and professionals. By raising general awareness of the importance of newborn hearing screening and the LSL opportunities today, we will broaden our reach and develop more channels to reach families quickly so they can access LSL intervention services from supportive professionals throughout their journey.

POWERING DISCUSSIONS, CONNECTED LEARNING & LSL OUTCOMES

LISTENING & SPOKEN LANGUAGE (LSL)  LSL SERVICES & SUPPORT
HEARING TESTING & DEVICES  LEARNING & GROWING LSL
LISTENING & READING CONNECTION  CELEBRATE LSL

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY  FAMILY SUPPORT COMMUNITY

Hearing First Powers Connections

Parent-to-parent support is important in the family journey. Yet families are often isolated in early intervention services outside of specialized LSL programs, and have limited contact with other families who understand the decisions and challenges they face. Through a parent support community, Hearing First will be a connection point for families looking for a supportive online community, not limited by geography, schedules or time zones, to provide encouragement, insight, leadership and guidance.

Just as parents seek support from other parents, professionals seek support from other professionals throughout their career journey. Too often, LSL professionals are isolated in their work place and have limited opportunity to connect with LSL peers to receive support, ask questions, solve challenges and grow in their LSL knowledge and skills. Through a professional learning community, Hearing First will provide a LSL connection point across the career journey for professionals to have access to peers and thought leaders. Through a community of practice, professionals, from novice and aspiring to advanced, will have a wide range of opportunities to share and grow in their skills, participate in coaching and mentoring activities, advance the LSL field and improve child outcomes.
**Hearing First Powers Innovation**

Unprecedented advances in digital technology provide the opportunity to advance LSL outcomes for children and families in new and different ways. Technology, as a tool, allows us to overcome challenges in distance, time and capacity. Hearing First harnesses the power of today’s technology to extend the reach of the LSL message to families, professionals and the general public while connecting families and professionals and celebrating LSL outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Hearing First is helping to create a future in which all children who are deaf or hard of hearing—regardless of their hearing status, zip code or economic circumstance—have the opportunity to reach their full potential. A world where families who have children with hearing loss, even in the most remote locations, receive complete information about the listening and spoken language outcomes possible today. A world where families have real choice and receive support from other parents and from well-equipped professionals to reach their desired LSL and literacy outcomes for their child. Envision a world where all children with hearing loss are on a trajectory to read at grade level by third grade. For this vision to become a reality, it will take all of us learning, working and co-creating the future together.

Join us at Hearing First. Sign up at www.hearingfirst.org to receive the newsletter and updates. Share the website, downloadable materials and videos in your daily life and work. Send us your feedback, thoughts and ideas. Let’s join together for collective impact to co-create the future we envision for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. Together, let’s power potential.