

PATHWAYS TO PROGRESS CONFERENCE, 2026

Learner Outcomes

Session #1: Keynote

How (Multi-)Sensory Perception influences Language in Autistic Children: Research, theory, and implications for school-based practice

Jacob Feldman, PhD, CCC-SLP

Learner Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify how/why sensory functioning is foundational for typical development;
2. State at least three ways that autistic children differ from non-autistic peers in sensory development
3. Improve their practice with autistic individuals by leveraging sensory strategies

Session # 2

The Role of Sleep Difficulties in Language and Academic Performance

Krystal L. Werfel, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. Describe sleep difficulties in DHH children.
2. Describe how sleep impacts academic outcomes.
3. Describe how sleep impacts language outcomes.

Session # 3

Counseling patients and caregivers to think critically about misinformation

Emma Kate Thome, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Learner Outcomes:

Participants will be able to:

1. Explain the role of critical thinking in protecting against misinformation
2. Identify common characteristics of misinformation on social media
3. Apply the components of a debunking script to correct false beliefs

Session # 4

Hearing, Vocabulary, and Reading in Children and Adults with Down Syndrome

Heather Porter, Au.D., Ph.D., CCC-A; Natalie Mason, M.S., CCC-SLP; Susan Loveall, Ph.D.

Learning Outcomes:

Participants will be able to

1. Describe the auditory phenotype of children and adults with Down syndrome

2. Describe the receptive vocabulary performance trajectory of children and adults with Down syndrome
3. Explain the connections between reading, language, and cognitive processing skills in readers with Down syndrome

Session# 5: Keynote

Bridging the Gap: Clinical Strategies and Barriers in Supporting Autistic Children

Benjamin Harder, M.S., CCC-SLP

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. Define key characteristics of autism
2. Identify three types of evidence-based strategies to support overall development
3. Identify three barriers when working with the autistic population
4. Explain two strategies to reduce barriers affecting autistic individuals

Session # 6

Collaboration in Motion — How Gestures Strengthen Learning

Karla McGreggor, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-CL; Justin Kueser, Ph.D., CCC-SLP; Jessica Hawthorne, M.Ed.; Desire Townsell

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. Describe the evidence for gesture as a means for supporting classroom learning
2. Construct a process for SLP and classroom teacher partnership
3. Connect with classroom teachers for gesture-based support lesson planning

Session # 7

Understanding and Handling Assessment Bias on Standardized Tests

Hope Lancaster, Ph.D.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. Explain the sources and impact of assessment bias for students
2. Evaluate standardized assessments for bias
3. Justify test selection when trying to reduce assessment bias

Session # 8

Implementing the Research

Facilitated by Conference Speakers: Jacob Feldman, Krystal Werfel, Emma Kate Thome, Heather Porter, Natalie Mason, Susan Loveall, Benjamin Harder, Karla McGreggor, Justin Kueser, Jessica Hawthorne, Desire Townsell, and Hope Lancaster.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. Apply ASHA's [Code of Ethics](#) to the research presented during the Pathways to Progress Conference
2. Apply ASHA's Code of Ethics to scenarios from their practice or others' practice