

# **Beyond Speech: Literacy Achievement of Deaf Learners**

Connie Mayer, *York University*

Beverly J. Trezek, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Research evidence on the literacy achievement of deaf students has consistently indicated performance that is not commensurate with hearing age peers, with reports that the median literacy rates of deaf high school graduates are at the level of an 8 to 9-year-old hearing student. However, two developments in the field of deaf education—the widespread implementation of newborn hearing screening in conjunction with historic improvements in hearing technologies including cochlear implants and other implantable devices—have converged to affect a shift in these outcomes, as they now afford early meaningful access to spoken language for most deaf children. This access has increasingly allowed for the age-appropriate language development that serves as the foundation for improving outcomes in reading and writing. At this juncture in the field, it would be important to demonstrate the extent to which achievement levels in reading and writing have been impacted and moved beyond the outcomes of the past. In this session we will present the findings of an investigation of the reading and writing outcomes of a cohort of school-aged deaf students ( $N = 70$ ) instructed in inclusive, mainstream settings—the most common educational placement for deaf students in the current environment.

## **Biography**

**Connie Mayer** is a Professor and Academic Coordinator of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Teacher Education Program in the Faculty of Education at York University, Toronto, an Honorary Professor in the Division of Human Communication, Development and Hearing at the University of Manchester, UK, and Senior Associate Editor of the *American Annals of the Deaf*. Her research focuses on language and literacy development in deaf learners, cochlear implantation, communication approaches and bilingualism, and models of teacher education.

**Beverly J. Trezek** is an Associate Professor and the Tashia F. Morgridge Distinguished Chair in Reading in the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research focuses on teacher preparation in reading as well as literacy development for beginning and struggling readers, with a particular emphasis on students who are deaf or hard of hearing.