



**CHILDREN'S
LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION
SUPPORT
SYSTEM**



Children's Language Acquisition Support System

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mother Starts Non-Profit to Advocate for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Non-Speaking Children

Portugal Cove-St. Philips, NL (August 29, 2018) – **Children's Language Acquisition Support System (CLASS)** was officially launched today by Chair of the Board of Directors, Kimberly Churchill. Over the last two years, Churchill has been actively engaged in advocating for equitable education for her seven-year-old son Carter who is Deaf. CLASS, a non-profit organization, was established in direct response to the growing number of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children not receiving comprehensive information on all methods of communication as well as the number of DHH and non-speaking children attending school without full time access and support to American Sign Language and language development.

Churchill, recently spoke at TEDxStJohns on the ***“Forgotten Language: The Transformative Power of Signing”*** and says “more than 90% of babies who are Deaf have hearing parents and often these parents are told that they have to choose between speaking or sign language for their child. For most families, their baby is the first time they’ve met someone deaf. Many do not receive enough support after diagnosis and are left to navigate the transition on their own.” Churchill recounted her own experience of being ‘overwhelmed’ and not knowing how she were to communicate with her child. “Having an organization available to support families going through what we did, who could offer Deaf mentorship, parental support, education, advocacy and comprehensive information on communication and language choices would have been life changing for our family.” Churchill cited, “that is what CLASS aims to do and why it was established. I didn’t want to see any more families or children go through the struggles we have.”

Approximately **six** in every thousand babies born in Canada have some degree of hearing loss, including profound deafness. The World Health Organization estimates “that by 2050 one in every ten people will have disabling* hearing loss.” CLASS supports families with children from birth to 18 and commits to providing programs and services focusing on education and empowerment. The organization aims to end language deprivation through supporting families of DHH and non-speaking children as well as advocating for DHH children rights to their language choice. CLASS is governed by a Board of Directors of fourteen persons including members of both the Deaf and hearing community. The Board is responsible for overall planning and policy development for the organization. For more information about CLASS, please visit www.nlclass.com.

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For media inquiries, contact Kimberly Churchill, CLASS Chair, at 709-730-6906 or info@nlclass.com

*Disabling hearing loss refers to hearing loss greater than 40 decibels (dB) in the better hearing ear in adults and a hearing loss greater than 30 dB in the better hearing ear in children.

Shaping a world where all children can thrive and communicate with one another.