

LISCP Graduate Heads Learning Services at Children's Hospital Colorado

Colorado Literacy & Learning Center LISCP graduate Michelle Qazi, M.Ed., CALT, is leading the way for Learning Specialists at Children's Hospital Colorado. As Associate Clinical Manager of Learning Services, Qazi oversees both inpatient and outpatient learning services. To learn more about the important work Qazi is doing, please read our interview with her.

What do you do in your role as Associate Clinical Manager of Learning Services?

Learning is a department that covers both inpatient and outpatient children. With inpatients, I manage two learning specialists who provide bedside school for patients that are hospitalized longer than two weeks. We partner with the schools to maximize learning retention while they are in the hospital, and create a smooth transition back to their school or homebound tutoring once they are discharged. Also, there is one learning specialist who works with our rehab team and patients who experience traumatic brain injury and/or spinal cord injury. In addition, we have an educational specialist in the Sie Center for Down Syndrome.

On the outpatient side, Learning Services provides diagnostic evaluations for children and adolescents suspected of having a learning disability. We also provide research based therapy for children and adolescents diagnosed with dyslexia. Recently, our Learning Specialists began providing Parent Education Nights on dyslexia. During these sessions, parents come together to learn all they can about dyslexia and how they can best advocate for their children, as well as share their experiences and support each other.

How many Learning Specialist do you oversee, and where are they located?

We have 12 Outpatient Learning Specialists providing services at the Anschutz Medical Campus, as well as in Broomfield, Parker, Highlands Ranch, and Pueblo. I'm excited to announce that we now are adding Learning Services in Colorado Springs.

What are your goals for CH's Learning Specialists?

In order to make sure the learning specialists have all the knowledge needed to provide the most current research-based therapy, I plan professional development opportunities for trainings and conferences they can attend. My primary role is to develop, coach, and evaluate team members as well as mentoring them in creating/evaluating projects focused on improving clinical practice.

What is your favorite part of this position?

One of my favorite aspects of this position is rounding with patients, families, and team members to promote positive patient family experience and quality patient care. Another great aspect of this job is serving as the primary clinical liaison with families and referring providers,

assisting with triaging and scheduling of new patient referrals, and providing expertise in clinical consultation as needed to meet the needs of the community.

How long have you been at Children's, and what did you do before this job?

I've been at Children's for one and a half years now. Before that, I was a teacher and literacy specialist in public school for fourteen years. I taught K-6th grades during my tenure as a teacher. As a literacy specialist, I worked mainly with undiagnosed dyslexic students to help them understand the structure of the English language. I was also able to coach and mentor teachers and the paraprofessionals I oversaw.

What prepared you to take this job?

By far, the training I received from the Literacy Intervention Specialist Certification Program was invaluable! I remember sitting in my 3rd grade classroom my first year teaching this age group and thinking "I am not equipped to teach these kids how to read and write. I better figure out why they are not reading and how I can help them." My students led me down a path of learning that changed my whole outlook on teaching.

In your opinion, what are the biggest needs in the clients you see at CH?

They are the same needs I saw in the classroom. Our patients and families need to learn about the structure of the English language as well as how to advocate for themselves. They need to know that accommodations are available to them. These accommodations level the playing field and help them access the text necessary to learn. Most importantly they need to know that they are incredibly intelligent and valuable.

What are your goals for the future?

I hope to continue to grow the learning program in order to reach and help as many children as possible to read and spell accurately. I also hope to partner with undergraduate programs to develop an internship program so we can not only give educators the tools they need to teach kids, but also to give patients access to our services in a timely manner. Mainly, I dream of being part of a world where all children learn to read and spell without frustration.

Michelle Qazi, M.Ed., CALT, is the Associate Clinical Manager of Learning Services at Children's Hospital Colorado. She received her master's degree from Arizona State University. She is a Certified Academic Language Therapist and is currently training with the Colorado Literacy & Learning Center to become a Qualified Instructor. Qazi holds Colorado licensure in Education (K-8). Michelle currently serves as the Exhibit's Chair for the national Academic Language Therapy Association, is President-Elect of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Academic Language Therapy Association, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. Helping all students to read and spell is her passion. Most

importantly, she is mom to two beautiful adult daughters, Jennah and Saleema, who are the light of her life. Michelle and her husband, Jameel, live in Denver, Colorado.