

Staff Resumes

Gemma White, MS, CCC, SLP is a speech language pathologist who graduated from University College London in 1999. She has worked in a variety of settings with multidisciplinary teams including schools, hospitals, outpatient clinics, and home care including early intervention. She has been specializing in Augmentative and Alternative Communication for over 20 years and has worked with children and adults covering the lifespan of AAC implementation. Gemma has presented both nationally and internationally running continuing education programs to share her AAC expertise. Gemma has served on the Professional Development Committee for SIG 12 at ASHA and works to improve the understanding and implementation of AAC in the profession; she currently holds NY and NJ state licenses and coordinates the AT program at WIHD.

Kimberly Neal MS, CCC-SLP is a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist who joined the WIHD team in 2016. She graduated in 2008 from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She has experience working with early intervention through adult populations. Kimberly became interested in working with AAC when she was working at a school for children with Cerebral Palsy. Kimberly has worked across various settings including home care; special needs schools and day programs. Kimberly is a NY state licensed SLP evaluates clients for AAC across the lifespan as well as provides on-going therapy. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two young boys.

Katie Cohen, MA CCC-SLP is a licensed speech-language pathologist who joined the WIHD Assistive Technology Program in 2021. She graduated from Hofstra University in 2015 with an M.A. in Speech Language Pathology. She has since gained clinical experience across the lifespan working with both children and adults with developmental disabilities. Katie first became interested in AAC while working with preschool-age children at The Shield Institute where she saw firsthand what an enormous positive impact was made by providing students access to robust communication systems. She currently evaluates clients across the lifespan for AAC systems and services. She currently provides AAC evaluations and therapy in home, clinic, and school-based settings. Katie is also a trained opera singer and enjoys doing flamenco dance in her spare time.

Rita M. Ricciardella M.A. CCC-SLP is a nationally certified Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) with the American Speech & Hearing Association. She obtained her undergraduate and graduate degree with St. John's University. Her career has focused on the evaluation and treatment of pediatric patients, with a special interest in working with children with complex communication needs and pediatric feeding disorders (PFD). She has experience in treating children with developmental delays, language-based learning disabilities, phonological/articulation disorders, Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS), and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Rita takes pride in her efforts to be a life-long learner, staying up to date with evidence-based therapy and diagnostic approaches in the areas of AAC and PFDs. She was an ACE award recipient from the American Speech and Hearing Association in 2017 and 2020. She was accepted into the ASHA Leadership Development Program in 2018, where she completed a year-long leadership project on Assistive Technology implementation in the school setting. In

2019, Rita completed an advanced certificate in pediatric dysphagia with New York Medical College. In the Summer of 2021, she completed the Healthy Children's Project Lactation Counselor Training.

Karen Van Den Heuvel, MS, OTR/L has been a licensed occupational therapist for 20 years, working with both adult and pediatric populations. She has been employed at WIHD part to full time since 2003. Currently, she is also working part-time at Stepping Stones Day School as staff therapist, while also helping to coordinate and implement assistive technology services. Additional professional interests include accessible web-site design and volunteer puppy-raising for Canine Companions for Independence. She evaluates clients across the lifespan related to technology needs; trains clients, families, caregivers, team members and other staff regarding specific technology use; carries out community training and technical assistance activities; conducts evaluations and intervention services in the areas of computer access, writing support, positioning and ADL's.

Catherine Arora PhD, OTR/L is a licensed occupational therapist who joined the WIHD team in 2022. Following a ten year career as a research scientist, Catherine was inspired to pivot into a therapeutic career by her daughter who has been the beneficiary of therapeutic services across the spectrum. Catherine graduated in 2022 from Mercy College in New York and has experience working with school-aged children and their parents and teachers conducting evaluations and training for assistive technology learning supports. When not working, Catherine enjoys spending time with her husband, three children, and two dogs.

Breda MacCurta, MS, OTR/L is an occupational therapist who has been working with the assistive technology for a number of years now providing direct occupational therapy services in school districts as well as integrating assistive technology solutions for students in schools. Ms. Mahoney received her Master of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, in 2005. Before that she worked as an occupational therapy assistant in the Bedford school district. Ms. Mahoney has extensive experience working with pediatric clients from birth through school aged. She has exceptional organizational and clinical skills and is a great team member in any clinical environment.

Ninette Smith, B.OT, OTA is an occupational therapy assistant who has a Bachelors degree in Occupational Therapy from Pretoria University in South Africa and is also qualified in Sensory Integration. She has over 20 years experience working with children and adults in various settings in South Africa. She has specialized in the treatment of children with developmental delays that include gross and fine motor problems, visual perceptual problems and concentration issues. Ninette has since relocated to New York and joined the team at WIHD in 2011 and is currently work with children in the New York State School System.

Noella Alessandro, M.S., CCC-SLP is a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist who joined the WIHD team as a full-time therapist in 2023. She graduated in 2019 from Sacred Heart University located Fairfield, CT. She has experience working with early intervention through adult populations. She has experience working with clients eligible for early intervention within their homes and a clinical setting, working with clients within a rehabilitation center post acquired diagnoses, working with clients within WIHD'S Speech-Language-Hearing Center and Assistive Technology Department whom are diagnosed with intellectual disability, autism, aphasia, and other speech-language relative diagnoses, and working with clients in pre-school whom are benefiting from AAC. Noella finds interest in developing cognitive-communication skills that can best support a client's functional participation in activities of daily living or school curriculum. She enjoys learning new ways to better remediate her client's deficits and incorporating creative and functional materials into her sessions.

Amanda Sciola M.S., CCC-SLP is a licensed speech and language pathologist in New York and Connecticut with experience with school-age children and adults. She graduated with her master's in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Emerson College in 2020 and has over 8 years of experience working with those with complex behavioral needs that co-occur with language, cognitive, and genetic disorders. She is trained in Dr. Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Framework and practices a holistic, client-lead approach to intervention. Since starting at WIHD in 2022, Amanda has provided evidence-based intervention for moderate to severe speech intelligibility, language, pragmatic, literacy, and fluency deficits. Amanda has a passion for evaluating and providing skilled intervention for those that use AAC. A major career focus for Amanda is providing skilled training for teachers, administrators, therapists, parents and caregivers on the use of AAC and fostering an environment for learning that promotes independence, self-advocacy, and determination. Additional special interests include gender-affirming voice therapy. Amanda is a graduate student supervisor for those pursuing their master's in speech and language pathology (SLP), a supervisor for SLPs who are completing their Clinical Fellowship, and helps to teach Assistive Technology at the graduate level. In her spare time, Amanda enjoys being active outdoors, cooking fresh new recipes, and relaxing with her cat.