

State of Vermont House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 9

Offered by Representatives Burt of Cabot, Higley of Lowell, Howland of Rutland Town, Labor of Morgan, Lipsky of Stowe, Masland of Thetford, Micklus of Milton, Morrissey of Bennington, Nelson of Derby, North of Ferrisburgh, O'Brien of Tunbridge, Page of Newport City, Pinsonault of Dorset, Pritchard of Pawlet, Tagliavia of Corinth, and Wood of Waterbury

Joint resolution urging the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) to reconsider its opposition to the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) of communication instruction for students with apraxia of speech (AOS) or autism

Whereas, Vermont State law requires school districts to develop and maintain “a comprehensive system of education [that] includes a full range of services and accommodations that are needed by students in the district,” but this statute does not mandate the provision of a service that is not generally available for students, and

Whereas, apraxia is a neurological disorder resulting from damage to the brain that impedes “motor planning to perform tasks or movements”; it can occur with different degrees of severity, may often but not necessarily be concurrent with autism, and exists in several different variants, and

Whereas, one type of the disorder is known as apraxia of speech; this version of the disorder may result in a person experiencing challenges “planning and coordinating the movements necessary for speech,” and related problems may arise with respect to “verbal comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, articulation, or prosody” (following the rhythms of poetry), and

Whereas, teaching communication skills to children with AOS, or certain instances of autism, which can cause similar learning impediments, has proven difficult, and

Whereas, a pedagogic approach for instructing these children, known as RPM, encompasses “‘teach-ask’ trials of graduated difficulty, starting with the student being given or choosing a correct answer from two written options and progressing through to composing responses by pointing to printed letters on a card, stencil, or keyboard,” and

Whereas, a leading proponent of RPM is Soma Mukhopadhyay, who, through the organization Helping Autism Through Learning and Outreach, has strongly advocated for this teaching methodology, which was featured positively on the *60 Minutes* television program, and

Whereas, state education agencies and departments and local school districts across the country have not recognized the pedagogic value of or authorized financial support for RPM and similar instructional programs

because the ASHA, the national professional association of audiologists, speech-language pathologists, special educators, and other related professionals strongly reject the scientific legitimacy of RPM, and

Whereas, despite that stance, RPM has received enthusiastic support from parents, who have stated that their children benefit from this instructional method, and

Whereas, it is incumbent upon the ASHA to reexamine its opposition to RPM instruction and consider this teaching methodology's benefits for the future academic and life success of many students, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges the ASHA to reconsider its opposition to the RPM communication instruction for students with AOS or autism, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the ASHA.