

Joanne Marttila Pierson, Ph.D.

Associate Director

University of Michigan Aphasia Program

Joanne Marttila Pierson is associate director of the University of Michigan Aphasia Program, the oldest, most effective intensive program for the treatment of aphasia in North America. She provides the leadership and vision for clinical programs for children and adults with language and literacy disabilities. Her responsibilities include management of all clinical operations, including financial, personnel, marketing and development efforts.

Pierson came to the University of Michigan in 1992 as the on-site director of the University's Shady Trails Camp, a six-week summer residential camp for school-age children with a variety of communicative disorders. She began her doctoral studies in education with emphasis in language and learning disabilities the following year, while continuing her association with the camp. Between 1993 and 1999, she fulfilled a number of graduate assistantships and teaching positions in the Educational Studies Program while completing her doctoral work. She assumed the position of Associate Director of the University Center for the Development of Language and Literacy in 2000, shortly after receiving her doctorate in 1999.

Before coming to the University of Michigan, Pierson was with Portage Public Schools in Portage, Mich., from 1987 to 1993 as a speech-language pathologist. During her six years there, she participated in the development of a program to help mainstream children with significant handicaps into general education classrooms. While with Portage Public Schools, she also was a pre-service teaching supervisor for Western Michigan University, overseeing the student-teaching work of WMU's speech-language pathology graduate students.

Prior to Portage Public Schools, she was a speech-language pathologist at the Constance Brown Speech Center in Kalamazoo, Mich., from 1985 to 1987 and at the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District in Cassopolis, Mich., from 1979 to 1983, taking time between employers to complete her master's degree.

Pierson's education in speech-language pathology began at Western Michigan University, where she earned her bachelor of science cum laude in 1978. She completed her master of science in speech-language pathology at the University of Michigan in 1985, as well as her doctorate in Educational Studies, emphasizing literacy, language and learning disabilities in 1999.

She is an accomplished author and lecturer, having written and presented numerous papers and workshops on literacy, speech, education and learning disabilities. In addition to her educational and vocational pursuits, Pierson is on the advisory board of the Ann Arbor Academy in Ann Arbor, Mich., is a member of both the American and Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Associations and the International Dyslexia Association, and has served as president of the Kalamazoo Area Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1990-1992) and the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District Education Association (1981-1983).