

Speech & Language Services

Introduction

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) have expertise in communication. SLPs in the school setting assess and work with students who have a wide range of communication problems. These include:

- ~ **Speech sounds** - how we say sounds and put sounds together into words. Other words for these problems are articulation or phonological disorders, apraxia of speech, or dysarthria.
- ~ **Language** - how well we understand what we hear or read and how we use words to tell others what we are thinking. This may include problems with memory, attention, problem solving, organization, and other thinking skills. Language difficulties can impact on a child's academic achievement and social development.
- ~ **Literacy** - how well we read and write. People with speech and language disorders may also have trouble reading, spelling, and writing.
- ~ **Social communication** - how well we follow rules like taking turns, how to talk to different people, or how close to stand to someone when talking. This is also called pragmatics.
- ~ **Voice** - how our voice sounds. We may sound hoarse, lose our voice easily, talk too loudly or through our nose, or be unable to vocalize at all.
- ~ **Fluency** - also called stuttering, is how well our speech flows. Someone who stutters may repeat sounds, like t-t-t-table, use "um" or "uh," or pause a lot when talking. Many young children will go through a time when they stutter, but often outgrow it.

NVSD44 also employs a speech-language pathologist who supports students who are non-verbal or who have limited verbal language skills. This person is called an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) specialist. This specialist SLP is an expert in assistive technologies.

Assessment

What are the signs that a school-aged child may have a speech problem?

- ~ Has difficulty being understood by peers, parents, teachers
- ~ Is frustrated or being teased about speech
- ~ Is not using the following sounds at these ages:

Sounds	Age
f, k, g	5 years
l, ch, sh, j	5 ½ - 6 years
r, s, z, th	7 ½ - 8 years

What are the signs that a school-aged child may have a language problem?

- ~ Has difficulty understanding and/or remembering classroom instructions
- ~ Lacks understanding of concepts (e.g. quantity, location, time)
- ~ Has limited understanding of vocabulary and/or uses vocabulary that lacks variety
- ~ Cannot clearly express thoughts and ideas in spoken and/or written language
- ~ Relates stories or events in a disorganized or incomplete manner
- ~ Has difficulty making inferences, predicting outcomes; drawing conclusions
- ~ May talk a lot but provides limited relevant or specific detail
- ~ May make errors in grammar
- ~ Has difficulty with the social aspects of conversation, such as turn-taking, staying on topic; indicating when s/he does not understand
- ~ Has coped adequately throughout the primary grades, but struggles with the demands of the intermediate curriculum
- ~ May have been able to "learn to read" but in the intermediate grades is having trouble "reading to learn"
- ~ Students exhibiting behavioural challenges may have an undetected language disorder
- ~ Students who are learning English as an additional language (ELL) may also demonstrate the above difficulties with speech and/or language development, warranting a referral to the SLP

Information for Schools, Parents and Students

Referral Process

Parents may access speech and language services by discussing their concerns with the child's classroom teacher.

Teachers may access speech and language services by first discussing the concern with the child's parent(s). Following this discussion, the child's name can be forwarded to the School Based Resource Team.

If the School Based Resource Team determines that a formal referral is required, a speech or language referral form is completed and a parent consent form is sent home for signature. Parent consent is required to initiate Speech and Language Pathologist involvement.

Assessment:

A speech-language assessment typically occurs following discussion through the School Based Resource Team. A variety of informal (e.g. classroom observation, checklists) and standardized assessment tools may be used.

Following the speech-language assessment, results are shared with parents and school personnel.



Intervention:

Following assessment, speech-language services may be offered in a variety of ways, depending on the student's needs. Some typical options include:

- ~ **Monitoring** or periodically screening the student's speech and language skills.
- ~ **Providing** home practice suggestions and/or materials.
- ~ **Collaborating and consulting** with parents, teachers, classroom assistants and other school personnel about a student's communication.
- ~ **Setting goals** in conjunction with the parents and school team.
- ~ **Providing** therapy services in small groups, individually or in the classroom.
- ~ **Providing** various combinations of these approaches.
- ~ **Providing** modelling and support of specific language based activities such as outlined in the *Our Turn to Talk* resource.

