

Talking Matters

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Dear Teacher,

Some concerns have been raised about the communication skills of a child in your class. You may well have raised these concerns, or they have been raised by somebody else involved in the care of the child. The child has now been referred to a Talking Matters Speech Pathologist for review.

There are two types of children to consider for referral to speech and language services. The first group of children is so significantly speech/language delayed or disordered that even the most casual observer knows something is wrong. The second type of child who should be referred display behaviors such as reading or learning difficulties. The classroom teacher is a key person to recognize that the second group of children simply is not learning like the rest of the class. We value your contribution and assistance in identifying and supporting this child's learning needs. We have a range of professionals working from our offices that include speech pathologists, an occupational therapist, educational psychologist, teachers and speech assistants. Therefore we are well positioned, with your support, to look at a large range of learning issues and offer assistance to children who find learning difficult. Please feel free to read more about our services from our website at www.talkingmatters.com.au. If you would like to speak to us in person please contact our office and leave a message with suggested times that you would be available to talk.

Until we can provide you with specific information about how to support this child in the classroom, the following general information may be useful.

- A. A student's attention should be gained before presenting information to him/her. A student will not be able to recall information that he/she has never actually "heard".
- B. Children will generally comprehend before they use the language expressively.
- C. Early intervention is often the key to successful and prompt remediation of a speech/language problem. When in doubt regarding the presence or severity of a problem, it is always best to talk with the speech pathologist to determine if a child requires therapy.
- D. Speech/Language problems generally do not "disappear" without direct intervention. The longer the child practices incorrectly, the more difficult it is to correct the difficulties.
- E. The context of language must be considered when evaluating a child's language skills, i.e., language skills interact with various situational factors. Does the child learn in some situations better than others (e.g. noise levels/ classroom setting/ content of material/ distractions/ teaching style)?
- F. Understanding (or comprehension) is influenced by the sentence structure and complexity of the language. If a student is having difficulty understanding a series of directions, his/her comprehension may be improved by using short, simple sentences rather than a single long command.
- G. If a student's verbal skills deviate from his/her peers, a problem may exist and further evaluation is recommended. This may be particularly true for an older student who may not have had speech and language therapy at a younger age, but whose language did not develop adequately and therefore now needs assistance.

Teacher Check list for possible Speech/Language Problems.

Check each in comparison to your average student. Place a check mark (☑) before those items that are areas of concern.

Areas of Speech Disorders	Language Problems
<p>1. Articulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty making sounds ____ 	<p>1. Social/Pragmatic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate or immature social skills ____ • Poor turn-taking ____ • Inappropriate affect (facial expressions) ____ • Decreased initiation of communication ____ • Inappropriate use of language in communicative contexts ____
<p>2. Fluency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuttering ____ 	<p>2. Linguistic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty using rules to combine sounds into words ____ • Difficulty with phonology or phonics ____ • Difficulty using correct grammar (morphology) ____ • Difficulty with word order (syntax) ____
<p>3. Voice Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathiness ____ • Harshness ____ • Hoarseness ____ • Hypernasality (too much) ____ • Hyponasality (too little) ____ <p>4. Pitch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too high ____ • Too low ____ • Monotonous ____ 	<p>3. Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with language content (semantics) ____ • Poor vocabulary - object knowledge at the word level ____ • Difficulty with object relations/concepts ____ • Literal interpretation of information ____ • Decreased comprehension of humor ____ • Decreased recognition of relationships and ambiguities ____ • Auditory processing difficulties ____ • Reduced retention and organization of information ____ • Poor synthesis of information ____ • Difficulties putting events into a proper sequence ____ • Lack of flexibility ____ • Difficulty recognizing alternative answers ____
<p>5. Rate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too fast ____ • Too Slow ____ <p>6. Loudness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too loud ____ • Too quiet ____ 	<p>4. Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading difficulties ____ • Spelling difficulties ____ • Writing difficulties ____ • Inability to write a known letter/word ____ • Inability to recall specific letters ____ • Disorganized creative writing ____ • Handwriting that lacks closure, attention to detail ____
<p>7. Slurred speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dysarthria _____ 	<p>5. Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally disorganized ____ • Poor scanning of written information ____ • Inability to recall a certain word (word finding difficulty) ____ • Decreased reasoning and judgment ____ • Poor problem solving ____ • Difficulty drawing conclusions ____

Teacher Check list for possible Speech/Language Problems.

Please provide additional information and comment here.

1. Comment on any unusual behaviours that makes them stand out from their peers?

2. How does the child relate to their peers and adults?

3. What extra assistance has the child received to support their learning needs?

4. What area of the child's learning is of most concern to you?

5. Please make any other comments you feel might be relevant.
