

TALKING ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERIES

VOLUME 5

SPEECH and LANGUAGE ISSUES

INFORMATION BOOKLET



This pamphlet is one of a series of resources prepared by the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) and First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to share information about how to support all First Nations students, regardless of their needs.

FNSA MANDATE:

to collaborate with First Nation schools to create nurturing environments that develop learners' pride and competence in their First Nations language and heritage and equip them to realize their full potential within self-governing First Nations communities.

FNESC MANDATE:

to facilitate discussion about education matters affecting First Nations in BC by disseminating information to and soliciting input from First Nations. FNESC's primary goal is to promote and support the provision of a quality education to First Nations learners.

We hope that these pamphlets provide a useful overview of key special education topics, representing an introduction to issues that some people may want to investigate in more detail. Anyone who requires more information or has specific questions is welcome to contact the FNESC/FNSA special education staff.



Published 1998, Updated February 2018

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What Are Speech and Language Issues?

Difficulties with speech and language are among the most common special needs identified amongst students. Speech and language difficulties can occur either in isolation or in combination with other challenges.

The characteristics of speech and language difficulties will vary but may affect a child's ability to understand, talk, read, and/or write.

Providing support early can lessen or even eliminate the need for speech and language therapies later in life. Families are key in the development and implementation of effective support techniques.

Communication skills are a core component of the educational experience, and it is critical that students are fully supported as early as possible if they have any speech and language related challenges.

Speech-Language Pathologist. Speech Therapist. Speech Teacher.

Known by many names, children with speech and language-related special needs should get help from a relevant specialist – often known as a speech therapist.

These therapists work with children who have difficulties with speech, voice, or language skills. They work to support a wide variety of children – from those with mild trouble pronouncing words to more complex conditions such as autism, Down Syndrome, hearing impairment, motor speech disorders, and other developmental concerns.

SLPs, as they are sometimes called for short, can help students with ...

- **ARTICULATION SKILLS**, which relate to the physical ability to move the tongue, lips, jaw and palate to produce individual speech sounds.
- **INTELLIGIBILITY**, which refers to whether people can understand a student's speech. SLPs can help children improve specific speech sounds or sound patterns if they are experiencing difficulties.
- **EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS**, which refers to helping students learn new words and understand how to put them together to form phrases and sentences in order to communicate clearly.

- **RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE / LISTENING SKILLS**, especially with young children who often have stronger receptive language skills (what they understand) than expressive language skills (what they can say). An SLP can help students learn and use new vocabulary to help them follow directions, answer questions, and participate in simple conversations with others.
- **SPEECH FLUENCY**, which refers to the flow of speech. Stuttering is characterized by breaks in the flow of speech. When stuttering is more severe, it can affect a person's ability to communicate. SLPs can teach students strategies to increase their speech fluency and intelligibility.
- **VOICE AND RESONANCE**, including offering strategies related to voice disorders that may involve problems with the pitch, loudness, resonance, or quality of the voice. For example, a student's voice may sound hoarse, raspy, or harsh. SLPs can help identify ways to reduce strain and patterns of communicating that can lead to hoarseness and voice loss.
- **SOCIAL / PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE**, which refers to the way an individual uses language to communicate, such as: using language to communicate in different ways (like greeting others, requesting, protesting, asking questions to gain information, etc.); changing language according to the people or place in which it is being used (eg. we speak differently to a child than we do to an adult; we speak differently inside vs. outside, etc.); and following the rules for conversation (taking turns in conversation, staying on topic, using and understanding verbal and nonverbal cues, etc.). SLPs can work with children to teach them social language skills so that they can more appropriately participate in conversations with others.
- **COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATION SKILLS**, meaning processes such as attention, memory, abstract reasoning, awareness, and executive functions (self-monitoring, planning and problem solving). SLPs can help build these skills and/or teach strategies to assist students.

- **AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION**, also known as AAC, refers to non-oral forms of communication that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas, such as facial expressions or gestures, using symbols or pictures, or writing. If conventional oral speech may not be possible or practical for a student, an SLP may help students and their families respond appropriately, using a multifaceted approach.
- **EMPOWERING PARENTS TO HELP AND ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILDREN**. SLPs know that parents, more than anyone else, are critical for the healthy growth and development of their children. Working together, SLPs and parents can help children/students build knowledge, skills, and confidence so that they can help create positive changes in their child's communication skills.
- **SWALLOWING / FEEDING ISSUES**. Some SLPs may be trained to assist with swallowing and feeding issues in addition to speech and language issues.

Tips For Schools to Help Families

- Provide information to families about their child's speech or language difficulties. The more they know, the more they can help.
- Involve parents in the development of an Individual Education Plan. Parents should be their child's best advocate. They know their child best. Encourage them to share what they know.
- Help parents understand how to complement and enrich their child's therapy at home and in other environments. Suggest relevant activities and help them identify age and ability-relevant activities to build their children's confidence and skills.
- Be patient and listen to children and families. Help model important communications skills by not filling in gaps or making corrections when parents are speaking. Respect the many ways people communicate with each other.
- Help interested parents get connected with other sources of help and support, possibly including other parents who have had similar experiences who might be willing to help.
- Demonstrate any assistive technology a child might use at school.
- Make sure parents are comfortable and informed about their child's educational program. [They have a right to know.](#)

REFERENCE

[10 Ways a Speech-Language Pathologist Can Help Your Child.](#)
www.friendshipcircle.org

OTHER VOLUMES AVAILABLE IN THE
TALKING ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERIES:

VOLUME 1: AN OVERVIEW

VOLUME 2: AN INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS / FAMILIES

VOLUME 3: INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS

VOLUME 4: A PARENT'S GUIDE TO INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS

VOLUME 5: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE ISSUES

VOLUME 6: ATTENTION DEFICIT / ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVE
DISORDER

VOLUME 7: FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS

VOLUME 8: AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

VOLUME 9: GIFTED EDUCATION

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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