

TALKING ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION SERIES

VOLUME 5

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

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.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Speech, language and communication are essential for nearly every activity of daily life. These skills are critical for meaningful participation in our communities and they allow students to access the academic curriculum. Listening and speaking skills are important in the classroom and provide the foundation for reading and writing. Language also helps students interact with others and build relationships with their peers.

- Speech is the physical production of sounds that become words
- Language is the system of using words to communicate
- Communication is a broad term and refers to the exchange of information using words, actions and other mechanisms

Speech and language difficulties are common in school-aged children. They can occur on their own or in combination with other challenges. The nature of speech and language difficulties varies from child to child but may affect a child's ability to understand, talk, read, and/or write.

Providing interventions early can lessen or eliminate the need for speech and language supports later in life. Students with speech and language difficulties benefit from assistance from family/ community members, school staff and specialists. In order to participate fully at school, it is critical that students are fully supported if they have any speech and language related challenges.

NOTE: in this pamphlet, we use the term "parent" for simplicity, but the information is intended to be inclusive of all family members/caregivers of students with special needs. FNECS and the FNSA respect and appreciate the invaluable contributions of everyone who works to support all First Nations students - regardless of their special talents, gifts, or challenges.

THE ROLE OF A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST/SPEECH THERAPIST

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs), also known as speech therapists, have specialized training and skills to help children develop speech, language and communication skills.

SLPs support children with a wide variety of challenges, ranging from mild difficulties (e.g., pronunciation of a speech sound) to more complex conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, hearing loss, or other developmental concerns.

SLPs help students develop speech, language, and communication skills so they can fully participate at school, providing assistance with the following issues.

SPEAKING SO OTHERS CAN UNDERSTAND

- Producing speech sounds correctly
- Using speech sounds correctly in conversation
- Speaking fluently (without stuttering)
- Speaking at an appropriate rate, volume, etc.

EXPANDING LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Talking in sentences and using vocabulary to express ideas
- Increasing understanding and use of grammatical rules
- Remembering instructions and following directions
- Understanding and asking questions
- Expressing sequential ideas, as in narratives
- Developing the language needed for executive functions and self-regulation

DEVELOPING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

- Understanding the connection between speech sounds and letter symbols
- Manipulating the sounds that make up syllables, words and sentences (phonological awareness)
- Writing in sentences using new sentence structures
- Comprehension of written language
- Expanding and using new vocabulary in writing

- Bridging the connection between oral language and reading/writing
- Connecting ideas using sequential language when writing stories
- Increasing awareness of the differences in oral versus written language styles

HELPING STUDENTS INTERACT WITH PEERS AND TEACHERS

- Developing foundational communication skills such as tuning in to others, turn taking, and using gestures
- Using language during play
- Listening and participating appropriately in a group
- Starting and maintaining a conversation to build friendships and relationships
- Negotiating and problem solving for successful social interactions
- Learning language to identify and express emotions
- Promoting behavioural success in the classroom by developing language skills

SLP SERVICES IN SCHOOLS MAY INCLUDE ...

- assessing students who may need additional assistance and developing individualized intervention programs for students
- supporting the development of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)
- recommending supports for use in the classroom
- recommending and building the capacity of school staff and students for using alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices
- building the capacity of school staff for supporting students with speech and language needs
- working with Speech Language Assistants (SLAs)
- connecting with families
- working with other professionals to design comprehensive approaches for students with complex needs (e.g., audiology, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, behavior specialists)

5 WAYS SCHOOLS CAN HELP STUDENTS WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

- 1.** Ensure the student's hearing and vision have been screened.
- 2.** Connect with an SLP if there are relevant concerns about a student.
- 3.** Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students.
- 4.** Include families in their children's speech and language learning, especially in developing and implementing IEPs.
- 5.** Encourage oral language practice in all classrooms.

WAYS FAMILIES CAN HELP STUDENTS WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Families are vital members of their child's learning team and they know their child better than anyone else. Family members have information about their child that can be invaluable for the development and implementation of meaningful IEPs.

In addition, language learning occurs through everyday activities in the home and community, and families can promote children's speech and language abilities by spending time together talking, informally interacting, and communicating about the world. Children learn language best through fun and positive social interactions, including playing games with others, singing together, and talking at meal times. Reading and talking about books with children is also a very valuable way to build their vocabulary, encourage them to think about the thoughts and feelings of other, and help them develop problem solving skills.

Schools should consistently respect and reinforce families' fundamental role in their child's development, and school staff can promote positive partnerships with families to help all students develop their speech and language abilities.

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 THERAPY

VOLUME 6: ATTENTION DEFICIT / ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVE
DISORDER

VOLUME 7: FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS

VOLUME 8: AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

VOLUME 9: GIFTED EDUCATION

VOLUME 10: TRAUMA

VOLUME 11: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

VOLUME 12: PHYSIOTHERAPY

VOLUME 13: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME 14: POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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