

What does the Speech/Language Pathologist Do?

A Speech/Language Pathologist identifies and provides services for children with difficulties in the areas of articulation, language, fluency, pragmatics, and voice.

Articulation- Articulation errors occur when children substitute, omit, or distort speech sounds. No two children learn speech sounds at exactly the same age. The vowel sounds are the very first to appear and are evident in babbling and crying. They are usually mastered before 3.

Speech sounds usually develop in a sequence, some sounds being more difficult than others. Your child has been developing communication skills since birth and sound development is not complete until around the age of 8 years.

These are approximate ages for consonants:

2-3 ½ years...b,p,m,h,n, &w

4-5 ½ years...k,g,t,d,n,y,ng,f

6-7 years.....l,v,sh,th(voiced-the, them)

7-8 years.....ch,j,th(voiceless-thumb, think),r,s,z

Language- Language development is a broad term that includes listening and understanding what others say, building vocabulary, and putting thoughts into words and then into sentences. Language development is an ongoing process. The number of words a child understands and uses as well as the complexity of sentence structure increases as your child develops.

By three years of age, your child should be able to:

- Name body parts, common objects and familiar people

- Follow two simple requests
- Enjoy being read to and point to pictures of familiar objects in a book
- Know a few rhymes or songs
- Understand the meaning of words such as big/little, up/down, in/out, hot/cold, and on/off
- Ask “Why” and “What” questions
- Use three to four word phrases

By four years of age:

- Tell about events that happened recently
- Follow a 2-step direction (find Susie and tell her to wash for dinner)
- Respond appropriately to questions
- Talk extensively as he/she carries out activities
- Continue to make grammatical errors

By Five years of age:

- Speech should be easily understood by others outside the family in spite of articulation errors
- Your child should carry on a conversation and verbally take turns
- Your child should be using fairly long sentences
- Your child’s speech on the whole should be grammatically correct
- Your child should be able to follow a three step command
- Your child should be able to tell the use of common objects
- Your child should be able to tell a simple picture story

Fluency/Stuttering- Between the ages of two and six, many children repeat sounds, syllables and whole words during conversation. This should not be confused with stuttering, as it is normal non-fluency in the developing system of the child. As his/her skills develop, these episodes should decrease. During periods of non-fluent speech you should do the following:

- Model a slower rate of speech. Do not say “stop and start over” or “slow down”.
- Let your child speak, no matter how long it takes.
- Be a good listener. Look at your child when he/she talks and remember the most important thing is what your child is saying, not how it is said.
- Avoid supplying words for your child.
- Avoid calling attention to your child’s non-fluent speech in any way (such as facial expressions, body language, teasing, or interruptions).

Pragmatics- Pragmatic language refers to how people use language during social interactions with others. This includes what we say, how we say it, our body language, and whether it is appropriate to the given situation.

Voice- A child may have a voice that is excessively high, deep, loud, soft, hoarse, breathy or nasal. Voice problems are medically related (allergies, environmental smoke) or caused by vocal abuse (excessive screaming, crying, coughing, non-speech noises). Voices are unique, so a wide range is acceptable. However, when a child’s voice detracts from what is being said, “retraining” may be necessary. If you suspect a problem in this area, consult a pediatrician or otolaryngologist (ENT) before contacting your speech/language pathologist.