

SPEECH-LANGUAGE REFERRAL GUIDELINES

For independent school referrals only

If your student has **significant** difficulty in one or more of the following areas ***in comparison to their classmates***, a referral for speech and language services may be appropriate.

Language Expression:

Compared to their peers, a student may have significant difficulty with:

- Organizing and expressing ideas: A student may have problems recalling and relating events and stories. Important information may be missed or out of order
- Communicating effectively with others: They may tend to 'beat around the bush' and not get to the point or may not give enough information for listener comprehension
- Using new words in a variety of situations: The student may have a weak vocabulary or concept base
- Finding a specific word: They may use lots of non-specific, low-information words like 'thing' or 'stuff'
- Using appropriate grammar and sentence formation: A student may use very short, simple sentences, make errors in word order or verb tenses, or use sentences that are fragmented and do not convey intended messages
- Asking and answering questions
- Giving directions and explanations: A student often gives unclear and/or inaccurate directions, which leave the listener confused
- Reasoning and problem solving skills: A student may have difficulty with activities requiring critical thinking like explaining, expressing thoughts, opinions and ideas, or have trouble generating solutions to problems
- When a student doesn't ask for help or when a student asks for help and finds it difficult to explain what they need help with

Language Comprehension:

Compared to their peers, a student may have significant difficulty with:

- Understanding what is said: They may have a blank expression when spoken to, showing little interest in what others are saying
- Following directions: A student may not follow instructions immediately, but rather watch how other students respond and copy them. A student may also not understand words such as first, then, last, next, before, after and prepositional words
- Understanding questions: A student may reply to your questions with responses that do not make sense or may take a long time to respond.
- Understanding basic classroom vocabulary, with unusual difficulty learning new words in a variety of situations (whole class, small group, one-on-one)
- Remembering what they have heard
- Following the routines and activities of the classroom
- Participating in activities requiring listening and/or concentration: A student may tire quickly
- during activities such as story time
- Processing the meaning of spoken words: a student may repeat the speaker's questions and directions before responding
- Determining the main idea of information or important details
- Understanding figurative language such as idioms, metaphors, jokes, puns and slang

- Understanding or drawing conclusions when given only some of the necessary information, for example, a student sees a friend coming in from the playground crying, with a scraped and bleeding knee. A student determines that the friend fell down on the playground
- When a story is read aloud, the student cannot answer general or specific questions related to the content

Social Communication:

Compared to their peers, a student may have significant difficulty:

- Understanding or following rules of conversation like turn taking, eye contact, starting a conversation, staying on topic, ending a conversation, not interrupting, or greeting others
- Following classroom routines/rules
- Appropriately seeking attention, asking for help and indicating needs or wants
- Making and keeping friends
- Following the rules for body space and distance
- Using different language for the different needs of the listener or situation. For example, a student might say “Hey Dude!” to a close friend but this would be an inappropriate greeting for the school principal
- Understanding non-verbal behaviours, such as body language, gestures and facial expressions

Speech Sound Development (articulation):

A student may have difficulty:

- Communicating with others: A student may be reluctant to speak
- Being understood even after they are asked to repeat what they said
- Saying words with more than one or two syllables: A student may leave out some parts of longer words or get sounds in words mixed up
- Producing speech sounds: A student may make consistent errors with more than one sound
- With facial muscle strength and movement: The student may drool or maintain an open mouth posture, have problems moving the jaw and lips appropriately, show little expression when talking or appear to exaggerate words
- With speech sounds, causing a student to be frustrated or embarrassed

Phonological (Sound) Awareness

- The student may have difficulty with pre-literacy skills, such as rhyming, identifying the beginning or ending sound of a word, determining the number of syllables of a word, or manipulating sounds/phonemes within a word.

Stuttering/Fluency:

A student may exhibit the following:

- Repeating words or parts of words, for example “go-go-go- going”
- Stretching or prolonging sounds, for example “Aaaat my house”
- Blocking or ‘getting stuck’ on words or sounds
- Struggle behaviours like facial grimaces or unusual body movements when trying to force words out
- Showing frustration or embarrassment or refusing to speak
- A student may speak with a fast rate sounding mumbly to others

Voice:

Compared to their peers a student may have difficulty with:

- Voice quality sounding too hoarse or raspy
- Pitch being too high, too low, or monotone
- Voice sounding too 'nasal' or constantly like they have a cold
- Speech quality due to a diagnosis of cleft lip or palate
- The student may not use an appropriate loudness level for the environment.

Hearing:

- A student may exhibit the following:
- Problems listening to instructions or directions in class
- Being inattentive to spoken language
- Poor articulation skills especially with high frequency sounds ('s', 'z', 'sh', 'ch', 'j')

Or:

- Diagnosed with a hearing loss
- Wears hearing aids.

Feeding and Swallowing:

A student may exhibit some of the following:

- Coughing, choking or gagging while eating or drinking or soon after a meal
- Multiple swallows with a mouthful of food
- Increased congestion in the chest after eating or drinking
- Chronic or persistent vomiting/reflux
- Poor coordination of the muscles involved in eating and breathing
- Difficulty gaining weight related to eating and swallowing
- History of frequent chest infections
- Excessive drooling
- Unable to self feed and requires adult supervision and assistance
- Transitioning from tube to oral feeding