



Speech and Language Support Services

PREFACE

West Allegheny School District provides Speech and Language therapy for any student in grades K-12 who demonstrates significantly delayed or disordered communication skills. These services are designed to assist students in improving their speech and language skills so that they may function successfully in both classroom and social settings.

Q - What is a speech and/or language disorder?

A - Speech and Language difficulties appear in many forms. Typically, they can be characterized as follows:

Articulation - substituting, omitting, or distorting specific speech sounds. For example, saying "wabbit" for "rabbit" or "thun" for "sun".

Fluency - inability to maintain a continuous flow of speech, i.e. stuttering. Please note that hesitations and sound repetitions are normal from ages 3 to 6.

Voice - using a pitch, volume or quality of voice considered appropriate for age or gender. The individual may sound unusually hoarse or nasal.

Language - an inability to understand or express ideas effectively. This includes difficulties in formulating grammatically correct sentences, understanding word meanings, summarizing or describing, or understanding conversational "rules".

Q - When should I be concerned about my child's communication skills?

A - You may want to request that a speech and language screening be conducted if your child demonstrates the following characteristics:

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- Substitutes/omits or distorts sounds. Generally, children should make the following sounds correctly by the ages indicated.
3-4 yrs. - m, b, n, t, p, d, k, g, w, h, and vowels
5-6 yrs. - sh, ch, l, and l blends
7 yrs. - v, j, th, s, z, r, s and r blends.
- Has difficulty naming or describing familiar objects
- Struggles with speaking
- Avoids speaking situations
- Uses poor sentence structure
- Uses gestures in place of words to communicate
- Frequently experiences loss of voice or often sounds hoarse

Although these are indicators of communication difficulties, many young children (below the age of seven) demonstrate a wide range of speech and language skills that are appropriate for their developmental level. For example, if a five-year-old says "wead" instead of "read" or "thick" for "sick" or "I throwed the ball" instead of "I threw the ball" it may be a sign that speech and language skills are still developing at a normal rate. However, if the child is still speaking in the same way in second grade, an evaluation may need to be conducted.

Q - What can I do at home to promote good speech and language skills?

A - Many things that you are probably already doing help your child to develop a good communication system. Provide a good model for your child and do not use "babytalk" when speaking to children. Use correct terminology with your children. For example, in the car, use terms like billboard, traffic signal, vehicle, etc. Encourage thinking skills through conversation. Pose questions to your child such as "what would happen if . . ." or "how are these two things the same." Read to your child and talk about what you've read. Make communication fun by having pleasant, relaxed conversations sharing your daily experiences while listening and providing an opportunity for your child to share theirs.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's communication skills, contact the clinician in your school.