

Indicators for Referral to Speech-Language Pathology

Kindergarten – 2nd Grade

Speech:

- Child frequently substitutes one sound for another (example: “tup” instead of “cup”)
- Has difficulty combining sounds and/or deletes a sound entirely (example: “top” instead of “stop”)
- Conversation is difficult to understand for unfamiliar listeners
- Speech looks labored/effortful (grimacing, twisting of the mouth, tongue sticking out)
- Has difficulty imitating sounds
- Difficulty recalling sounds associated with letters
- Difficulty separating words into sounds

Language:

- Speaks in fragments
- Errors in verb tenses that are not appropriate for their age
- Difficulty maintaining a topic of conversation
- Lacks variety in vocabulary (example: using “that thing” instead of labeling)
- Difficulty following directions
- Difficulty understanding questions
- Relies too much on context to understand what is said
- Lacks understanding of spatial and temporal concepts (example: left/right, front/back, before/after, morning/evening)

Social Communication:

- Does not adapt language to the person they are speaking to (most children will speak different amongst friends vs with their teachers)
- Does not use language for various purposes (should be able to greet, demand, question, etc.)
- Difficulty with maintaining a conversation topic, changing the subject appropriately, recognizing when a listener is uninterested, and generally missing the general rules of conversation flow
- Trouble interpreting and using nonverbal signals (personal space, facial expressions, inflection)
- Does not ask appropriate questions
- Describes pictures instead of storytelling

3rd Grade – 6th Grade

Speech:

- By 3rd grade, a child should be able to make all speech sounds
- Difficulty making any speech sound including blended sounds (example: SL in "slide") including the R sound
- Conversation is not 100% understood by an unfamiliar listener
- Voice is unusually hoarse, strained, breathy

Language:

- Does not utilize language for higher-level thinking skills (categorizing, comparing and contrasting, making inferences)
- Difficulty identifying the main idea or theme of a reading or lecture
- Difficulty making predictions in conversation or in reading
- Difficulty with abstract language (idioms, proverbs, metaphors, similes, and humor)
- Does not think critically when it comes to fact vs opinion

Social Communication:

- Does not adapt language to the person they are speaking to (most children will speak different amongst friends vs with their teachers)
- Difficulty with maintaining a conversation topic, changing the subject appropriately, recognizing when a listener is uninterested, and generally missing the general rules of conversation flow
- Trouble interpreting and using nonverbal signals (personal space, facial expressions, inflection)
- Does not ask appropriate questions
- Difficulty with abstract language (idioms, proverbs, metaphors, similes, and humor)