

## **Communication Disorders in the Classroom**

### **Tips for Helping Students with Speech and Language Impairments**

*Students who have communication disorders will need special help from teachers in the regular education environments*

Being able to communicate opinions and ideas verbally is one of the most important skill that students will learn in school. When a child has a communication disorder, it can adversely impact both speech and language development, resulting in the student falling behind both socially and academically. Teachers can help by first understanding what type of communication disorder the student has.

#### *Is it a Speech Disorder or a Language Disorder?*

Communication disorders are some of the most prevalent problems in children's early speech development. A student with a communication disorder may be suffering from difficulties in either speech or language development. In a speech disorder, a child may have trouble forming the typical sounds of verbal speech, omitting or adding consonants to words and distorting or substituting incorrect sounds. A child with a speech disorder may also stutter.

A language disorder is indicated when a child has difficulty understanding language, both verbal and written. Students with language development disorders often have trouble with sentence formation, word sequencing, clarifying ideas, following directions, and may demonstrate poor classroom participation.

#### *Effective Teaching Strategies for Speech and Language Impairments*

Students with communication disorders will most likely have a speech therapist, and in many cases that resource will be available in the classroom. Working with a speech therapist either within the classroom or as a collaborative resource outside of school will immensely help the regular teacher with speech and language disorders. Additionally, the following tips may be helpful in the inclusive setting:

1. Show understanding, patience, and acceptance.
2. Provide extra time to answer questions.
3. Encourage speech practice by having one-on-one conversations with the student about his or her interests.
4. Keep lectures clear, simple, pronounced, and in proper language syntax (no slang).
5. Make eye contact with the student when listening and speaking.
6. Repeat mispronounced phrases properly as a question so it does not seem like criticism.
7. Never mimic a child with a speech disorder.
8. Don't avoid calling on children with language development problems, and particularly if the answers are to be short (a couple of words).
9. Make sure the student speaks in front of the class, answers a question, etc. at least once per day.
10. Set up practice verbal skills sessions between pairs of students where they read aloud, work on a problem orally, or play games that encourage speech.
11. Do not tolerate teasing or bullying by other students.
12. Do not point out communication disorders to others in the class.
13. Keep the classroom environment relaxed and organized.

When a student has a communication disorder, teachers can be immensely helpful by learning about the particular speech and language disorder afflicting the student, following a few straightforward teaching strategies, and working cooperatively with the child's speech therapist either within the classroom setting or externally.