

Talking Matters

www.talkingmatters.com.au Ph: 8255 7137
 Helping your child to reach their potential



How speech pathology can help children struggling at school.

If your child is not doing as well as you would like they may have a language based learning problem. Language skills affect many aspects of schooling from reading, writing and spelling to concentration, behaviour and social skills. Difficulties with language vary from child to child and so do the effects on schooling.

Students with difficulties with language skills may have difficulties with:

- reading
- understanding and remembering what they read
- putting ideas down on paper
- sounding out words when writing
- sounding out and blending sounds when reading
- writing sentences that make sense, with correct grammar and word order
- spelling
- attention, concentration and memory
- learning and remembering new information and concepts
- listening and following instructions
- completing tasks
- getting along and working with others
- making and keeping friends



Teachers may make comments such as:

- has difficulty staying on task
- difficulty listening and following instructions
- needs support to finish activities
- has difficulty retaining information and concepts
- is not at age level for reading, writing or spelling
- has difficulty understanding or remembering what is read
- is easily distracted



Children with language based learning difficulties benefit from support targeted at their specific needs. As each child is different a language assessment can help determine each child's specific strengths and weaknesses and pinpoint the most effective support and strategies.

Language assessments usually include assessment of:

- receptive language including the child's ability to listen, follow instructions, understand words, sentences and concepts
- expressive language including using vocabulary, forming sentences and stories
- for school aged children written language including writing sentences and stories
- phonological awareness including sounding out and blending sounds in words, understanding syllables and rhyme
- where indicated use of speech sounds

The assessment then allows the speech pathologist to determine the child's strengths and weaknesses and to compare their skills to other children of the same age and year level. The speech pathologist can then suggest strategies which may help the child in the classroom as well as suggest activities for therapy and/or home practice to build the child's skills in areas of greatest need.

The following example shows how an assessment and therapy can help:

Amy was near the end of year one. She seemed quite bright but was not progressing in reading or writing. She was becoming unhappy about going to school and was avoiding written work as much as possible. She was refusing to do her reader or sight words at home, which was further affecting her progress. Amy had a language assessment which showed good expressive and receptive language skills but very poor phonological awareness skills. Amy could not hear rhyme or syllables or break words into separate sounds, so literacy was a huge struggle for her. She attended half hour therapy sessions with a speech pathologist each fortnight and did paper based and computer based activities at home, targeted specifically to her skill level. Because the activities were at the right level for Amy she became more confident and more willing to practice. She was soon enjoying her practice activities, wanting to write and showing progress with her reading. Within three terms she had literacy skill levels at her age level, was more cooperative with school and home work and was enjoying school.

Parents if you are concerned about your child's progress at school a speech pathologist can provide you with the help you need to develop your child's skills.

Teachers if you have concerns about children in your class let parents know that a speech pathology assessment would help.

Don't wait to provide help to a child who is struggling at school. Early intervention can prevent or reduce longer term problems with learning and self esteem.

