



New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association

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How Speech-Language Specialists Help Children Improve Literacy

Did you know that...

~ Reading to infants and encouraging preschoolers to explore books is critical to their becoming literate?

~ Good listening and speaking skills developed from infancy through the preschool years set the foundation for future reading and writing success?

~ Many children who have trouble reading may have had problems communicating verbally when under the age of 5?

~ 1 out of 5 school-age children have reading problems, which if not treated, can lead to lifelong challenges?

Early exposure to good communication skills is essential if children are to develop good literacy skills. Most children learn to communicate as a result of contact with family and caregivers, shared reading with adults, and playtime with friends. Children who learn to listen and speak well are more likely to develop good reading and writing skills.

How do children become good readers?

Children become good readers by developing a solid foundation in the six key components of literacy.

- 1) **Phonemic Awareness** is understanding how sounds form spoken words. Children should be able to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words, by the end of kindergarten.
- 2) **Alphabetic Principle** is understanding the relationship between sounds and letters and how they form spoken and written words. Children should be at ease with this during the first grade.

- 3) **Fluent Decoding** is reading words and sentences accurately and easily without noticeable effort. Processing or decoding words should become automatic by second grade.
- 4) **Reading Comprehension** is understanding and interpreting written text. Children should be reading fluently with comprehension by third grade.
- 5) **Vocabulary** is understanding and using a large number of words when speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- 6) **Motivation** is enjoying reading and becoming stimulated to read by seeing and hearing adults reading for information and enjoyment.

Parents & guardians should read aloud to children as much as possible starting in infancy.

Teachers should give children time to talk about what they have read every day.

What if children have trouble learning to read?

Children who are suspected to be at risk might need individualized training in literacy skills such as phonology, vocabulary and grammar. Speech-language specialists are members of the school-based literacy teams that evaluate children and provide assistance when necessary.

Children with potential literacy problems might have difficulty:

- rhyming
- linking sounds and letters
- pronouncing words correctly
- building vocabulary
- reading familiar words fluently

How do Speech-Language Specialists help children maximize their reading skills?

Speech-language specialists collaborate with educators to:

- Teach children how phonemes (speech sounds) sound and feel when they are spoken.
- Teach children how to blend phonemes into words and segment words into phonemes.
- Help children organize words to form well-structured sentences.
- Help children enrich vocabularies by regularly teaching and using different words.
- Teach children how to analyze and combine word parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots) to understand and spell words that have not been explicitly taught.
- Help students develop the ability to deal with the demands of textbooks and classroom lessons that may be stressful at different age and grade levels.

What can parents do to help children learn to speak and read?

- **Read aloud to your children** every day at every opportunity from birth. Read stories, poems, signs, shopping lists, recipes, cereal boxes, newspapers, magazines – anything in print.
- **Talk with your children** about what you are reading as well as everyday events and activities.
- **Listen to your children** and help them practice conversational skills.
- When they have begun to read, **encourage your children to read aloud to you and explain what they have read.**

***Parents, Guardians
& Educators***

***Can Help Children
Improve Literacy***

**By encouraging the collaboration of
Speech-Language Specialists
with other educators such as:**

**reading specialists
classroom teachers
special education teachers
and child study teams.**