



New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association

203 Towne Centre Drive • Hillsborough, NJ 08844
(908) 359-5308 • www.NJSHA.org

How Speech-Language Specialists Help Children Communicate Better & Succeed in School

Do you know preschoolers who started speaking later than expected or cannot be understood by people outside of the home?

Do you know older children who have difficulty reading, learning, understanding or taking tests?

Do you know children who have trouble communicating because of physical impairments such as hearing loss, cleft palate or cerebral palsy?

Do you know children who experience trouble swallowing, sucking or chewing?

If so, you know children that should be evaluated by a speech-language specialist.

What do Speech-Language Specialists do?

Speech-language specialists work with children – preschool through grade 12 – to evaluate speaking, listening and comprehension skills in order to determine if their ability to communicate is typical, delayed or disordered. If there is a communication problem, speech-language specialists will develop and implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) based on each child's needs.

What areas do Speech-Language Specialists evaluate?

Speech-language specialists evaluate children in four areas of communication.

- 1) **Articulation/Phonology** – Are children difficult to understand when compared to other children their age? They may:
 - Substitute certain sounds for others
 - Omit, distort or add sounds

- Sound unclear or difficult to understand
 - Display weak oral/motor functions
- 2) **Fluency** – Do children have difficulty speaking with ease? They may:
 - Avoid talking
 - Seem tense when speaking
 - Speak too quickly or slowly
 - Hesitate, prolong or repeat sounds, syllables, words or phrases
 - Make inappropriate facial expressions or gestures when speaking
 - 3) **Voice** – Are children's voices appropriate for their age, gender or stature? They may:
 - Speak in too high or low a pitch
 - Speak too loudly or softly
 - Sound as if he/she always has a cold
 - Sound as if he/she speaks through his/her nose
 - Often have a hoarse or harsh voice
 - Run out of air when speaking
 - Frequently lose his/her voice
 - 4) **Language** – Do children have the signs of a language disorder? They may:
 - Have trouble putting thoughts into words or understanding others
 - Have trouble following directions, answering questions, solving problems
 - Misuse grammar
 - Speak in poorly constructed sentences
 - Have limited vocabulary
 - Find it hard to describe objects or events
 - Have illogical or disorganized thoughts
 - Have trouble with humor, inferences, idioms and multiple meaning words
 - Have literacy limitations

If you know any children who regularly demonstrate one or more of the above conditions, it may be beneficial to arrange to have them evaluated by a speech-language specialist.

How can parents arrange for children to be evaluated?

Parents should ask their school administrators to arrange a meeting to discuss their interest in having children evaluated. Parents have this right according to federal and state laws.

These same laws protect the rights of children who have been found to have speech-language challenges. Eligible children are entitled to receive special services (according to their IEPs) to improve their ability to communicate at appropriate age and cognitive levels and meet NJ State Core Curriculum Content Standards.

The earlier such difficulties are diagnosed and treated, the better success children will have in school and in life.

How do Speech-Language Specialists help children communicate better?

Speech-language specialists assess and diagnose communication problems on a case-by-case basis in order to create and implement individualized education programs. As children progress, speech-language specialists reevaluate and revise the services provided.

- **Eligible students of all ages** can receive speech-language services.
- **Parents** get help understanding their children's needs and receive advice on how they can help children achieve communication goals.
- **Teachers** may collaborate with speech-language specialists to prepare special class activities that improve communication skills for all students and those with special needs.
- **Administrators** may collaborate with speech-language specialists to evaluate existing educational programs, design new ones and provide in-service workshops.

- **School nurses** may confer with speech-language specialists when they suspect that speech, hearing or other medical conditions could be contributing to communication problems.
- **Audiologists** may provide a comprehensive hearing evaluation and test for central auditory processing disorders (trouble understanding information). When problems are found, audiologists can confer with speech-language specialists about treatment.
- Speech-language specialists may work with **other professionals** – guidance counselors, learning consultants, physicians, dentists, psychologists and social workers – to create an appropriate treatment program.

***Parents, Guardians & Educators
Can Help Children
Communicate Better &
Succeed In School***

By contacting:

- **Your School or District
Speech-Language Specialist**
- **Your Local Board of Education's
Dept. of Special Services**
- **NJSHA's School Affairs Committee
(908-359-5308)**