Children with Special Needs: Communication Disorders - Speech Disorders

The following speech disorders are characterized as Communication Disorders. For more detailed information about each of these issues listed please refer to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association’s web site:


Childhood Apraxia of Speech:
Childhood apraxia of speech (CAS) is a motor speech disorder. Children with CAS have problems saying sounds, syllables, and words. This is not because of muscle weakness or paralysis, but rather a brain planning problem. The brain moves body parts (e.g., lips, jaw, tongue) needed for speech and with CAS, a child knows what he or she wants to say, but his/her brain has difficulty coordinating the muscle movements necessary to say those words.

General things to look for include the following:

- Child can understand language much better than he or she can talk
- Child may have difficulty imitating speech, but imitated speech is more clear than spontaneous speech
- Child may appear to be groping when attempting to produce sounds or to coordinate the lips, tongue, and jaw for purposeful movement
- Child has more difficulty saying longer words or phrases clearly than shorter ones
- Child may appear to have more difficulty when he or she is anxious
- Child is hard to understand, especially for an unfamiliar listener
- Child sounds choppy, monotonous, or stresses the wrong syllable or word
Orofacial Myofunctional Disorder (OMD): With OMD, the tongue moves forward in an exaggerated way during speech and/or swallowing. The tongue may lie too far forward during rest or may protrude between the upper and lower teeth during speech and swallowing, and at rest.

Speech Sound Disorders: Articulation and Phonological Processes: Most children make some mistakes as they learn to say new words. A speech sound disorder occurs when mistakes continue past a certain age. Every sound has a different range of ages when the child should make the sound correctly. Speech sound disorders include problems with articulation (making sounds) and phonological processes (sound patterns).

An articulation disorder involves problems making sounds. Sounds can be substituted, left off, added or changed. In children, these errors may make it hard for people to understand what they are saying. A phonological disorder involves patterns of sound errors. For example, substituting all sounds made in the back of the mouth like "k" and "g" for those in the front of the mouth like "t" and "d" (e.g., saying "tup" for "cup" or "das" for "gas").
Implications for the classroom - It is important to understand that no two children with Speech Disorders are alike, just as no two typically developing children are alike. These strategies have been shown to be effective with many children with speech disorders, but certainly not all. Individualization should always be the overriding thought when creating strategies and plans for instruction.

Early Intervention Services

If a child is suspected of having a speech disorder, an evaluation by a qualified Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) is essential. They can help determine where the child's deficits are and design a program for explicit instruction on speech and language.

Use of different modalities of classroom communication.

Using many different modes of communication in the classroom can help support children with speech issues. Voice output devices, picture exchange communication system (PECS), sign language and even just simplifying and modifying the language that the adults use in the classroom can help a child with a speech disorder to better access their environment.

Use of visual pictures and other contextual cues when giving children classroom directions.

Children with speech disorders often have trouble comprehending directions when given by the teacher in a busy classroom. The use of contextual cues and visual pictures paired with the verbal direction will go far in supporting a child with a speech delay.

RESOURCES:

American Speech-Language Hearing Association:

Council for Exceptional Children:
http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Communicative_Disorders&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=37&ContentID=5626