

Speech and Language Strategies For Classroom Teachers

Teachers frequently approach the speech therapist with questions and concerns regarding how a student is functioning within the classroom. Often these concerns are brought up at a Needs Assessment Team Meeting. In addition, parents also express concerns about the student and are an integral part of the team. Strategies can be provided to both teachers and parents as a part of the Needs Assessment Team process or on an individual basis as concerns arise.

These speech and language strategies were primarily developed to provide classroom teachers with ideas to implement within the classroom prior to considering a referral for a speech and language evaluation. A chart to facilitate documentation of prior interventions is included also.

When developing the strategies, efforts were made to address the most common areas of need. Please note that all suggestions may not be appropriate for every student and you may need to modify them on an individual basis.

Speech-Language Strategies

Articulation

These strategies are intended for students for whom you have Articulation concerns. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Articulation/Phonology:

1. Talk with parents about your concerns and share strategies that seem to help.
2. If you cannot understand a student and you have asked them to repeat themselves, it might help to ask the student to show you or say it in a different way. For example, ask the student to write the word if they are able to do so.
3. If the student's response contains a known sound error, it's important to repeat what the child said with an appropriate model. (e.g., If the child says 'nak' for snake, you would say, "Oh, you want the snake"). This way you are not focusing on the error or calling negative attention to the child, but providing an appropriate model.
4. With younger children bring whatever you are talking about closer to your mouth so that the child is more apt to focus on speech production.
5. If you hear a consistent speech sound error use written text to increase the child's ability to see, hear and be aware of that sound. (e.g., Ask the student to find all of the words containing the error sound in a page of a story. Make this a routine in your classroom so that no student is singled out.)
6. If you have a student who is able to make a sound correctly some of the time when they know an adult is listening, set up a non-verbal cue with that child to let them know that you are listening. (e.g., for example, putting your hand on the student's shoulder, before you call on them to read aloud.)
7. Highlight words in their own writing or in classroom worksheets that contain sounds that the child is misarticulating.

***** Please make sure to discuss any concerns with parents.**

Speech-Language Strategies **Grammar/Sentence Structure**

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have Grammar and/or Sentence Structure concerns. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Grammar and/or Sentence Structure:

1. If the child says something incorrectly repeat it for them correctly in a natural way. Be sensitive about not calling negative attention to their language. For example, if the child says “I goed to the store.” You’d say, “Oh you went to the store.”
2. When the child’s speech or writing contains grammar or word order errors, show them in writing the correct form.
3. When working with the child individually with written or oral language, repeat the error and ask the child how the sentence sounds. For example, the child says or writes, “I goed to the store.” You say, “I goed to the store? Does that sound right?” If the child is unable to correct it give them a choice. For example, “Which sounds better, ‘I goed to the store.’ or ‘I went to the store.’?”
4. For frequently occurring errors, build it into daily oral language as practice for the entire class.

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Speech-Language Strategies

Vocabulary/Word Meanings

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have vocabulary/word meaning concerns. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Vocabulary and Word Meanings:

1. Prior to introducing new units/stories compile a list of key vocabulary words. Discuss words and possible meanings with students.
2. When introducing words, try using a graphic organizer or visual mapping to come up with word relationships including antonyms, or synonyms.
3. When possible pair a visual picture with the vocabulary words. When vocabulary is abstract and pictures are not available, try to relate the words to a personal experience for students to relate to.
4. Place words and definitions on note cards. Use cards to play games such as matching or memory.
5. Create word list with vocabulary and definitions to display in a visible place within the classroom.
6. Provide student with vocabulary list including definitions one week prior to beginning a new unit.
7. Encourage use of word-games with family (Tribond, etc.).
8. Consult with a speech therapist for ideas using graphic organizers.

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Speech-Language Strategies

Social Communication

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have concerns with social communication skills. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

*** Social and pragmatic skills can differ significantly from child to child. Due to individualized differences, we recommend that you consult with the speech therapist, special education teachers and/or the school counselor. Below are some general strategies that may be used within the classroom.

Basic Social Language Skills/Pragmatics:

1. Social Stories (Stories written to positively depict a situation in which a student has a difficult time- providing the student with appropriate ways to interact or respond.) *Please contact speech therapist for assistance.
2. Visual schedules (Provide students who may need visual input to assist with transitions, expectations for the day.) *Please contact speech therapist for assistance.
3. Allow student to work in a group with students who are accepting and supportive.
4. Search for opportunities that support appropriate social interactions. (i.e. 'Bobby, will you please go to Sue's desk and ask her to bring me her Math folder.')
5. Avoid having activities where students 'pick' a partner. Assign partners instead to avoid feelings of rejection.
6. Board games and card games can be beneficial as they promote turn taking and sportsmanship. Be available to support sportsmanship and help to remember that playing the game is more important than winning the game.
7. Comment on positive models for targeted social skill when used by other students in the classroom. (Jenny, I really like how you raised your hand instead of interrupting me when I was talking to the class.)

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Speech-Language Strategies

Following Directions/Processing Information

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have concerns with processing information and following directions. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Following Directions:

1. When giving directions, repeat them again using different words.
2. Using gestures when giving directions can be beneficial.
3. If there are several directions, give one to two directions at a time versus all at one time.
4. Be specific when giving directions.
5. If possible, give a visual cue. For example, if making an activity you can demonstrate the steps as you go along. Showing the completed project would also provide them assistance.
6. When working with projects that have multi-step directions, it may be helpful to write the directions on the board.
7. Create a list of common directions that are used throughout the day. When needed, they can be laminated and placed on the board for the entire class, or can be smaller to be placed on the individual's desk.
8. The student may benefit from sitting next to an individual who would be willing to provide assistance with multi-step tasks.

Processing Information:

1. Ask basic questions that have the answer in a picture or hands-on activity.
2. Provide small group opportunities where the children can discuss newly learned concepts or ideas.
3. Provide adequate time for the child to process what you have asked and form their answer. If the child does not respond after a given period of time, ask the question in a different way.
4. Use several modalities when teaching materials (speaking, reading, writing, listening, visual, hands-on).
5. Do frequent comprehension checks when teaching. Stop periodically and discuss the information you have presented.
6. Encourage the child to ask for help.
7. Provide additional support for writing down information, such as assignments in the student's homework notebook. Actual pictures could also be taken of what needs to go home (i.e. Math book, writing notebook, etc.). Some students may need written directions on how to complete assignments so that parents can assist them in the home.

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Speech-Language Strategies

Expanding Limited Expressive Language Skills

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have concerns with their ability to express themselves. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Expanding Expressive Language Skills:

1. When interacting with a young child, repeat what the child says, and add a word that is appropriate to the context. For example: While playing with a toy car, the child says “car”, you could respond “Car. GO car.” If the child uses two words- expand to three words, etc.
2. Speak in sentences that are one to two words longer than the child’s typical utterances. If a child usually combines two words, you should be modeling 3-4 words in your interactions. You may feel that your speech sounds silly, you are eliminating complex structures that the child is not yet ready to use, which allows the child to concentrate on the next level of development.
3. It is also important to expose the child to adult and peer models of conversation. Although they are not yet ready to use these structures, they are exposed to the appropriate models.
4. Introduce new words or concepts to a child by using the word in a variety of situations as well as using the word repetitively. For example, when teaching colors: show a blue ball, a blue car, the blue sky, etc. Also, use pictures or objects when available to help reinforce the ideas.
5. Music, movement, nursery rhymes, fingerplays, and storytime are very motivating times for children to promote spontaneous speech production.

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Speech-Language Strategies

Stuttering

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have stuttering concerns. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Stuttering:

1. Allow the student to complete his/her thoughts without interrupting or completing the sentence for them.
2. It is important not to ask the child to stop or start over their sentence. Asking the student to 'take a breath' or 'relax' can be felt as demeaning and is not helpful.
3. Maintain natural eye contact with the student. Try not to feel embarrassed or anxious as the student will pick up on your feelings and could become more anxious. Wait naturally until the child is finished.
4. Use a slow and relaxed rate with your own speech, but not so slow that you sound unnatural. Using pauses in your speech is an effective way to slow down your speech rate as well as the students.
5. Give the student your full attention when they are speaking so that they know you are listening to what they have to say. It is helpful that the child does not feel that they need to fight for your attention. With younger children it is also helpful to get down to their level, placing a hand on their chest as well as using eye contact assures them that they have your attention.
6. After a student completes a conversational turn, it would be helpful for you to rephrase what they said in a fluent manner. This can be helpful as the student realizes you understand what they said, but also provides a fluent model for them.
7. Try to call on the student in class when you feel that they will be successful with the answer (when the student raises his/her hand) versus putting the student on the spot when they have not volunteered information. In addition, new material or complex information may cause the student to feel more stress and thus, increase dysfluencies.

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Speech-Language Strategies

These strategies are intended for students about whom you have concerns with understanding concepts. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Basic Concept Understanding and Use:

Pre-K through Grade 1

1. Provide a visual demonstration of the concept. For example, if working on the concept 'on,' actually put an item 'on' a table.
2. Have the children physically demonstrate the concept when possible. Have the student actually get 'on' a carpet square.
3. Let the student use objects to demonstrate comprehension of the concept. Have the student verbalize comprehension by explaining what they did with the object. 'Where did you put the bear?' 'I put it on the table.'
4. Have the student use the concept in a variety of situations throughout the day. Use their bodies, pencil and paper, in different places of the school, etc.

2nd through 5th Grade

1. Allow students to use manipulatives to solve math problems to give them a visual cue.
2. When working on time and measurement concepts use visual organizers (i.e., timelines, thermometers, graphic organizers, etc.). Allow students to use these visual organizers on tests or projects.
3. Keep a running list of concepts the student is having trouble with and utilize others (i.e., classroom aids or student teachers) to help work on those concepts individually.
4. Give students time to talk through new concepts in social studies, science, math, etc.

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Speech-Language Strategies

Vocal Quality

These strategies are intended for students with whom you have about voice quality. Try these strategies before you make a referral.

Voice:

If you have a student whose vocal quality is consistently poor (hoarse, breathy, rough, or they have no voice) or their vocal quality gets progressively worse as the day wears on try the following:

1. Allow them to have a water bottle at their desk for the student to take frequent sips of. (If necessary, use a visual aid for student to track intake- a reward may be needed.)
2. Discuss healthy ways for students to use their voices, i.e. drink water, no caffeine, no yelling or making strange noises, or to use a quiet voice, but NOT to whisper.
3. Provide a positive comment to a student for using good vocal hygiene, such as not shouting to get attention.
4. Place a visual cue on students' desk (like a picture of someone talking). When you hear vocal misuse, touch the picture on the desk to help remind the student to use good vocal techniques.

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Documentation of Prior Interventions/ Speech and Language Strategies

Concern Area: _____

Strategies Implemented:

_____ Dates: _____

Comments:

_____ Dates: _____

Comments:

_____ Dates: _____

Comments:

_____ Dates: _____

Comments: