



Articulation Disorders in Children

Many students at school are eligible for Speech and Language Services due to problems with articulation. This means they have problems producing a phoneme or group of phonemes (sounds).

There are many opinions on when sounds should be acquired and mastered. Here is a general guideline:

3 years: vowels, p, m, h, n, w

4 years: b, k, g, d, f

5 years: y, t, ing

6 years: j, l, sh, wh, ch, zh

7-8 years: r, s, z, v, th, blends

All children ages 1-5 have sound errors due to an immature speech pattern. For example, they may say *thoup* for *soup* and *dop* for *stop* and *tookie* for *cookie*.

Usually children outgrow this pattern, but some do not. Errors you may see include:

- ◇ leaving the sounds off the ends of words
- ◇ omitting sounds
- ◇ distorting sounds
- ◇ substituting one sound for another

The most common sound problems include:

- s
- z
- r
- l
- th
- sh
- ch



There are different reasons why this incorrect pattern persists:

1. The child has a problem with movement of the tongue, lips, and teeth. This is called an oral-motor problem or apraxia.
2. The child has an auditory discrimination problem and/or recurrent ear infections leading to periods of temporary conductive hearing loss.
3. The child has not developed a mature speech pattern.

Therapy techniques for the above cases are often similar. Auditory discrimination, visual cues (mirrors, drawings) and actual "placement cues" are common techniques. Language is often used to highlight the difference between 2 sounds. For example, the child is shown that a *sink* is much different than the verb *think*.

Tips for helping children with articulation difficulties in the classroom:

- ◆ Whenever you hear a mispronunciation, repeat the word correctly, emphasizing the error sound (ie, "I see a wainbow," "Yes, I see a rainbow, too.")
- ◆ Frequently praise the student's speech efforts to improve confidence
- ◆ Try and explain what he/she needs to do differently (*Sam, don't forget to say the sound at the end of a word.*)
- ◆ When helping, use the sound that is being targeted, not the letter ("lll", not "ell").