



Specific Language Impairment

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Some children have language disorders and impairments. Although many of these children are classified, other children have what is called "Specific Language Impairment." This term refers to those students who are classified for speech and language therapy only, due to difficulties with their expressive and/or receptive language.

Some signs of a Specific Language Impairment are:

1. The child seems to have difficulty understanding word meanings.
2. The child has a below average vocabulary.
3. The child has a hard time formulating sentences and/or has other noticeable grammar skills.
4. The child rarely volunteers an answer, or becomes terribly nervous when asked to speak verbally.
5. The child scores much lower than age/grade level on standardized vocabulary tests.
6. The child speaks in incomplete sentences, or spoken language has little meaning.
7. The child has sequencing and problem-solving difficulties.
8. There is a notable difference in written-language abilities.

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Specific Language Impairment often goes unresolved because the teacher thinks it is a learning or reading disorder. In some cases, the teacher does not realize that these problems should be reported to the Speech Pathologist.

So, just what do we do about Specific Language Impairment? The first priority is the child. The teacher can ask the school Speech Pathologist or Child Study Team to observe the student. Written language samples and documentation of difficulties are helpful.

The next step may be for the Speech Pathologist to administer standardized vocabulary, grammar, and semantic testing. These tests will give information based on age and grade levels. They will also highlight specific areas of difficulty such as auditory comprehension, auditory processing, synonyms and antonyms, auditory discrimination, pronouns, verb endings, superlatives, sentence formation, and knowledge of grammar rules.

If the child has difficulties with these skills, the Speech Pathologist will consult with the parents and teacher on a pull out speech and language program. This will help the student catch up on grade level vocabulary, and assist with other problems.

In addition, the student may need modified testing such as visual cues, multiple choice selections, word banks, and/or extended testing time.

If you suspect a student may be present with a Specific Language Impairment, please consult with the Speech Pathologist as soon as possible.

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