

Common Characteristics of the Speech and Language Impaired Student

Articulation Disorders:

A student with an articulation disorder may exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- The student substitutes one sounds for another. (example: wabbit for rabbit)
- The student omits or distorts his speech sounds, making his speech difficult to understand. (“top” for “stop”)
- The student’s speech differs significantly from his peers of the same age, sex, or ethnic group.
- The student exhibits poor speech intelligibility which interferes with his ability to participate in oral classroom activities.

Language Disorders:

A student with a language disorder may exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- The student exhibits difficulty with receptive and expressive vocabulary. (example: He is frequently unable to name or identify objects known by same-age peers.)
- Often experiences difficulty constructing sentences of appropriate length and/or complexity.
- The student uses improper word order in sentences.
- The student displays immature sentence constructions, frequently using incorrect verb tenses and/or pronouns in conversational speech.
- Frequently exhibits word retrieval difficulties. The student appears to know the word he wants to say, but can’t recall it. He may often “talk around” the word, describe the object, use gestures, or in-class vocabulary substitutions. (Example - naming a spoon when looking at a fork).
- The student exhibits a short auditory memory span. May have difficulty following simple auditory instructions.
- Experiences difficulty answering age appropriate “wh” questions.
- The student is frequently off-topic during classroom discussions.

- The student's general language skills are significantly different from his peers of the same age, sex, or ethnic origin.

Fluency Disorder (stuttering):

A student with a fluency disorder may exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- The student frequently repeats sounds, syllables, or words during classroom discussions. (suh-suh-sun, birth-birth-birthday.)
- The student frequently prolongs sounds in words. (sssssssun, baaaaby.)
- The student appears to be aware of or disturbed by his fluency difficulties.
- Other students tease him about his speech difficulties.
- The student displays facial grimaces, eye blinks or other unusual body movements when attempting to communicate.
- The student is unusually quiet and avoids answering questions in the classroom. This may occur even though the teacher is certain the student knows the correct answer.

Voice Disorder:

A student with a voice disorder may exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- The student exhibits an unpleasant vocal quality.
- The student's vocal pitch is higher or lower than most of his classmates.
- The student's voice is chronically hoarse, harsh or husky.
- The student's voice quality is noticeably nasal.
- The student frequently exhibits vocally abusive behaviors, such as screaming, yelling, or throat clearing.