

How to Support Children with Speech and Language Impairment

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

What is Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)?

Language is the basic element for constructing knowledge and is also an important tool for thinking and communication. SLI not only affects the communication of children with others but also hinders academic, emotional and social development. There are four major categories of common types of SLI:

➤ Articulation Problem (Speech Sound Disorder)

Owing to different reasons, the pronunciation is not accurate and causes confusion of speech. For example (in English): "son" is said as "done", "toy" as "tall", etc.

➤ Language Problem (Language Disorder)

For comprehension, inability to fully understand the message in discourse causes misunderstanding and thus the answer provided is not what being asked. For expression, due to the weak organization ability or inability to use appropriate vocabularies, the speech is difficult to be understood.

➤ **Fluency Problem (Fluency Disorder)**

Commonly known as stuttering. While speaking, there are multiple repetitions of syllables or words, prolongation of syllables, excessively fast or slow speech rate, abnormal pauses in speech, or inability to speak for a long time even with the mouth opened.

➤ **Voice Problem (Voice Disorder)**

Owing to different reasons, hoarseness of voice, loss of voice, difficulties in volume control, excessively high or low pitch, hyper- or hypo-nasality, etc., were caused.

Roles of Parents

I suspect that my children may have SLI...

Should initiate contact with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), class teachers, student guidance personnel or school social workers so that the school can refer your children to school-based speech therapists (SBSTs) to receive follow-up services.

My children are assessed to have SLI...

- Should provide the information on SLI and other related SEN of your children to the school as early as possible and proactively.
- Maintain communication with the SBSTs, SENCO, class teacher, subject teachers, etc., to understand the communication and learning performance of your children in school. Participate in discussion regarding appropriate support strategies if necessary.
- Be more understanding with your children, talk more to them, and demonstrate different vocabularies and sentences in daily life. Use guiding questions to help them think and organise the content of the speech so as to enhance their expressive language abilities.
- For articulation errors of your children, help them practice more at home to develop skills from simple to complex targets. Encourage and praise more, remind them to pay attention to the areas that need improvement,

enhance their confidence and sense of success.

- If your children have stuttering problem, build up their confidence in speaking first. Listen patiently, and remind them to pause appropriately while speaking. For example (in English), pausing after the word “pool” in “swimming pool” is more meaningful than pausing after the word “swimming”.
- For voice problem, if your children have hoarse voice, remind them to minimize vocal abusive behaviours, such as excessive yelling or crying, effortful throat clearing, overusing their voice, etc. Remind your children to have adequate voice rest, drink more water, eat more fruits and vegetables, eat less deep-fried food or spicy food, exercise regularly and maintain good mood to prevent deterioration of the problems.

Support Measures and Strategies

In general, schools will provide the following support according to the needs of the students:

- If schools have implemented the “Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service (SBSTS)”, they will employ SBSTs, while other schools which have not yet implemented the “Enhanced SBSTS” will utilise additional resources such as “Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant” or “Learning Support Grant” to arrange SBSTS that covers the scope of prevention, remediation and enhancement through collaboration between SBSTs, teachers and parents, so that students with SLI can receive timely, comprehensive and appropriate support, and the overall language abilities could be enhanced. The services include:
 - Establish a school-based mechanism on the identification and referral of students suspected of having SLI
 - Provide speech and language assessment and support for students
 - Provide consultation and training for teachers and parents
 - Collaborate with subject teachers to develop teaching strategies for enhancing the “listening, speaking, reading and writing” skills of students

- Integrate speech therapy elements into teaching and learning and allow students to flexibly apply related language skills in lessons so as to enhance their communication and learning abilities.
- Encourage teachers and parents to participate in therapy sessions so as to enhance the understanding of the needs of students and support skills.
- Use training materials, resource packages, guidelines, etc., that help students with SLI so as to enhance their learning and communication effectiveness.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en>

Hong Kong Regional Education Office	2863 4646
Kowloon Regional Education Office	3698 4108
New Territories East Regional Education Office	2639 4876
New Territories West Regional Education Office	2437 7272
General Enquiries on Special Education	3698 3957
Speech Therapy Service Section	3698 3790

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Website

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with SLI

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/speech-and-language-impairment/index.html>

- Supporting students with SLI -- Resources for Parents

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/speech-and-language-impairment/resources/resources-for-parents.html>

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- Operation Guide on the “Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<https://www.swd.gov.hk>