

# P.S. 81 Better Hearing & Speech Month Newsletter

## May 2009

May is Better Hearing & Speech Month

The month of May commemorates better hearing and speech month across the United States. The American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national organization of professional Speech-Language Pathologists who treat people with communication disorders. ASHA along with Speech-Language Pathologists raise awareness about communication disorders and their corresponding remediation methods to improve the quality of speech and language skills. In this newsletter we have provided several ways (The A-B-C's of Speech and Language Development) you as parents and educators, can help improve and enhance children's communication skills. For additional information and resources on these topics you can log onto [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org). Please feel free to contact any of the P.S. 81 Speech-Language Pathologists with any questions or concerns regarding speech and language development.



**Improving communication skills helps  
to ensure academic success!!!**

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### The A-B-C's of Speech & Language Development

What can teachers and parents do to help build children's communication skills?

#### A is for Articulation

"Articulation" refers to sound production and how sounds work together to form words. Young children need lots of practice in order to build the mouth muscles to say new words clearly. Parents and teachers can help this development with a few simple props.

You and your child can sit in front of a mirror together so he/she can watch you speak. By watching you speak and then seeing their own mouth move, he/she will become better at forming speech sounds.

Tissues can help with consonant production. By holding a tissue in front of a child's mouth he/she will be able to see the air flow out for sounds like /p/, /b/, /th/, and /s/.

Peanut Butter can be placed behind a child's front two teeth (check for allergies first!) and ask him or her to touch it with the tip of their tongue. Tell the child that this is where your tongue should be for /t/ and /d/ sounds.

#### B if for Building Vocabulary

It is so important from when your child is in his/her first year of life, up through school age (K, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>) that you expose them to as much language as possible. One key aspect to enhance vocabulary skills is to repeat yourself as much as possible, especially when a child is learning a new word. Use this word with your child &/or student in as many relevant situations as you can. This relates to teaching students new vocabulary words as well. (E.g. "I just put the backpack in between the bookshelves. and Johnny is sitting in between Christine & Frank.")

## B if for Building Vocabulary Con't...

Another technique that works great at increasing your children's vocabulary skills is using description when talking about something. Labeling objects is extremely important, but by adding details and being more descriptive enhances language development even more. Coinciding with using more description is the concept of adding on to your child's &/or student's words or utterances. If a child elicits one word or a short phrase, you can just add on to what he/she said. In addition, as a teacher or parent you can even ask the child a question to have the child/student expand on his/her words or short phrases.

## C is for Comprehension

Before children can speak, they need to make sense of how words are used and that they are symbols for objects and actions. There are many types of games and activities to help improve children's grasp of language and their ability to listen and follow directions. These are crucial skills needed throughout all levels of education. All language enriched activities which involve following oral directions at home and school will help develop children's comprehension skills. Here are a few ideas which can be used to improve language comprehension.

Simon Says Giving simple directions at first and then increasing to include multi-step directions such as "Bend down, touch your toes and then clap your hands" will allow students to increase memory skills.

Scavenger Hunts Hiding objects around a room and then giving detailed clues and instructions to determine where an object is. For example, "Find the round object under the table."

Storytime After reading to a child ask him/her to retell events from the story. For younger children, it may be helpful to stop and ask questions about the story while reading. Giving prompts such as, "Tell me why the girl is crying?" may assist the child in his/her response.

## D is for Demonstration

The more words a child hears, the more they will learn and use.

### Replay that tune

After you sing a song with your child, repeat the

## D is for Demonstration Con't...

lyrics slowly so he/she can hear each word clearly. Once they've got it down, encourage your child to sing the tune solo. For older children, you can also do this with a familiar book or poem. Ask a child to insert a character's line or a key phrase from the story or poem as you are reading together. Having children actively participate will keep them engaged and focused as you model appropriate intonation and fluency of language.

### Phone it in

Play with a toy telephone (or use a block as a stand in for one) to get a child gabbing. You might pretend to talk to Grandpa, then pass the phone to your child and encourage them to chat too. For an added challenge, have him/her pretend to talk to other familiar figures, like a friend or a neighbor. This activity can be used with older students as well. Playing the classic "telephone" game in which children need to repeat and relay a message while sitting in a circle, will help develop children's auditory memory skills. This and other role playing activities will improve children's pragmatic language skills (social language).

### Plan more playdates

When children hear other children their age speaking they want to join in. This will help them develop vocabulary skills and interpersonal communication skills. Planning time for children to interact with their peers in social settings will also assist in increasing socialization skills.

## Communication Disorders- Knowing the WARNING Signs

If you're worried about your child/student's communication skills here are some things to look out for.

- Is he/she performing below expectations in the classroom and has problem taking tests
- Is he/she having difficulty learning to read
- Cannot seem to express his/her thoughts
- Has trouble following directions
- Doesn't pick up on social cues
- Says 'huh' a lot and needs things repeated often