



How Speech and Language Affects Your Child's Reading

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When we hear that a child is receiving speech-language therapy, many people immediately think that the child needs help pronouncing sounds and words. Yes, Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) certainly work with individuals who may need help saying the S, R, L, and TH sounds, but your SLP can also play an important role in the acquisition and development of your child's early literacy skills.

Approximately 60% of children with speech and language difficulties also have difficulty in the acquisition of literacy skills. In school, these students generally struggle, have problems reading, and have difficulty making themselves understood. They also find it difficult to demonstrate their understanding of material to teachers, both verbally and in writing.

Since spoken language provides the foundation for the development of reading and writing, it makes sense that instruction in spoken language, or speech-language therapy, may result in the growth of a child's reading and writing skills. The early support of an SLP can impact a child's development of basic literacy skills in areas such as phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, oral reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.

On-going reading and writing problems may greatly contribute to an older student's difficulties in using language strategically to communicate, think and learn. SLPs have specialized knowledge and the experience needed to identify communication problems and to provide the help that children need to build critical language skills so that they can be successful in school.

SLPs are often the first professionals to identify root causes of reading and writing problems through the child's difficulty with language. With their help, children can build the skills they need to succeed in school, and in life. An SLP's knowledge of normal and disordered language acquisition, their understanding of sequential skill development, and their clinical experience in developing

individualized programs for children, prepare them to be an important part of the reading instruction team.

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