

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

**Written by Erin Tinkham MS CCC-SLP  
Speech Language Pathologist  
Hocking Valley Community Hospital**

As our kids head back to school there are many thoughts and questions that go through our minds as a parent, including “what concerns do I have regarding my child’s speech and language skills, and how do they affect their school performance?”

Your child may have difficulty in the following areas which could translate into challenges in the school setting:

- **Speech sounds.** He or she may have trouble pronouncing sounds appropriately, speaking clearly, and is perhaps difficult to understand.
- **Language and literacy.** Does your child have trouble understanding what he or she hears? Does he/she follow directions or answer questions well? It may be hard for them to tell others about their thoughts. He or she may say words incorrectly or use only short sentences. Language problems can also make reading and writing a struggle for your child.
- **Social communication.** Your child may have trouble talking with other children. He or she may not make friends easily. They may not understand what others think or how they feel.
- **Cognitive communication.** These are the thinking skills your child uses to remember, solve problems, and use his/her imagination. Learning disabilities and brain damage can cause problems in these areas.
- **Feeding and swallowing.** It may sound strange to think that something as simple as eating could be a problem for your child in the lunchroom setting, but it can be. Challenges with feeding and swallowing can make it hard for your child to eat and drink enough during the day. This can make it hard to learn. It can also make social times, like lunch or snack harder for your child.
- **Stuttering.** Does it seem difficult for your child to speak smoothly? Does he or she repeat sounds or words, or take long pauses when talking? Stuttering can make it hard to answer questions or give speeches in class. It can also make it hard to talk to friends.
- **Voice.** Your child may sound hoarse or lose his or her voice. They may sound like they talk through their nose, called nasality. Their voice may be too loud or too soft. Voice problems can make it hard to talk in class or with friends.

You need language skills to communicate, and you need to communicate to learn. Reading, writing, gesturing, listening, and speaking are all forms of language. The better your communication skills, the better you will do in school.

Do you feel like your child may have speech or language problems? They may not be able to do grade-level work. They may have trouble reading, writing, and spelling. They

may not understand social cues, like what a person means when he nods or looks away as you speak. They may have trouble taking tests and may not want to go to school.

If you feel like any of these difficulties could be happening with your child there are many ways to obtain help. Start with your child's medical provider. Ask for a referral for speech language evaluation and treatment. Then seek out your nearest speech language pathologist (SLP) at Hocking Valley Community Hospital who specializes in helping children and adults of all ages with the above mentioned difficulties.

Additionally, outpatient speech language therapy in the school is another place your child can receive help. Schools employ speech language pathologists, so talk to his/her teacher and request an initial evaluation with the school SLP to have your child evaluated and initiate treatment if difficulty is found.

Like children, adults can have speech and language impairments as described above although often due to a different reason. Adults typically have experienced an accident causing these difficulties, including a brain injury, a CVA or aneurysm, head and neck cancer or a progressive disease such as Parkinson's.

With both children and adults, the earlier you receive treatment, the better the outcome. To speak with Erin regarding this topic or to learn more about speech therapy, please call 740-8182 today.