WHAT IS SPEECH?

SPEECH refers to the system of sounds that are combined to form words for communication. Children may experience difficulty acquiring this sound system. The result may be "unclear" or "hard-to-understand" speech (otherwise referred to as "articulation"). Speech-language pathologists and assistants work with children who experience speech delays and/or disorders. If you are concerned about your child's articulation skills, contact Paula Herrington, MS CCC-SLP at CLASS, Inc. for a free phone consultation.

SPEECH DEVELOPMENT BEGINS AT BIRTH, WITH A CHILD'S FIRST CRY.

Crying is one of the first ways an infant communicates with the world. By the end of the first month caregivers can identify three different cries! These cries communicate hunger, pain, and temper. Between 3 and 6 months of age, the child "coos" using vowel-like sounds. Some consonant sounds may be produced. Between 6 and 12 months of age, the child begins "babbling with consonant-vowel c o m b i n a t i o n s. Babbling is random sound play and can vary in volume, rate, and pitch. At approximately 12 months of age, the child begins to combine his/her sounds into real words. During the first 7 years of life, a child should learn to say all of the speech sounds correctly. The rate at which the sounds are mastered differs from child-to-child. The easiest sounds to produce are made with the lips (e.g. "p, b, m, w"). These sounds are usually learned first and are initially produced at the beginning of a word (e.g. "bee"). More difficult sounds, and sounds in other word positions, are used as the child gets older.
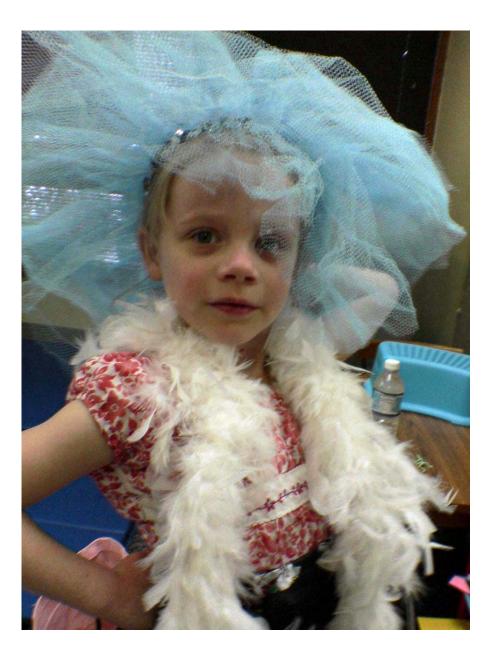
Age Ranges (in years) For The Development Of Speech Sounds

Speech Sound	Age Range of Acquisition
p	1½-2
m	1-2
h	1½-2
n	1½-3
w	1½-2½
b	1½-2½
k	2-4
g	2-4
d	2-3
t	2-3
f	2½-3½
y	2½-3½
r	3-7
L	3-6
s	3-5
ch	3½-6
sh	3½-6
j	4-6
v	3-6
z	3½-6
th	4½-6

Remember . . .

Ages for acquisition of sounds are approximate and may vary from child to child. If you are at all concerned about your child's articulation development, call Paula Herrington, MS CCC-SLP for a free phone consultation.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF SPEECH DIFFICULTIES

BY the time a child is three years old, you should be able to understand most of what he/she is saying. Normal articulation errors may be present.

AGE-APPROPRIATE speech errors are normal errors that occur when a child is learning to use the speech sounds correctly. Depending on the age of the child, the following sound substitutions can be quite normal:

Substituting "t" for "k": ....saying "titten" instead of "kitten"

Substituting "d" for "g": ....saying "daot" instead of "goat"

Substituting "th" for "s": ....saying "thoup" instead of "soup"

Substituting "w" for "l": ....saying "wight" instead of "light"

Substituting "w" for "r": ....saying "wabbit" instead of "rabbit"

Substituting "s" for "sh": ....saying "sip" instead of "ship"

Unusual or multiple errors may indicate the child is having difficulty acquiring their sound system. A referral to a speech-language pathologist may be indicated.

The following speech patterns may indicate the child is having difficulty:

- **Initial Consonant deletion:** The child omits consonants at the beginning of words (e.g. says "-oat" instead of "boat").
- **Final Consonant deletion:** The child omits consonants at the end of words (e.g. says "ma-"**instead** of "mat").
- **Backing:** The child uses sounds made at the back of the throat ("k, g") instead of sounds at the front of the mouth (such as "t, d, ch"). For example, the child may say "koe" instead of "toe" or "kair" instead of "chair".
- **Stopping:** The child uses quick ("stop like") sounds (such as "t, d, p, b") instead of prolonged sounds (such as "s, z, f, v, sh"). For example, the child may say "toup" instead of "soup" or "pour" instead of "four").
- **Syllable Addition:** The child adds a syllable when pronouncing a word (e.g. says "doga" instead of "dog").
- **Syllable Deletion:** The child omits a syllable from a two syllable word (e.g. says "da" instead of "daddy" or "a" instead of "apple".