

Media Release

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For immediate release

Literacy is a language problem – speech pathologists

Speech Pathology Week 2011 '*Literacy for Life*' (21 – 27 August)

One quarter of Australian pre-school children have difficulty speaking and making speech sounds, while fewer than half receive specialist treatment from a speech pathologist.

Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) National President, Christine Stone, says that oral language underpins all learning and that early speech pathology intervention is crucial to ensure children are able to understand what they learn.

“Between 20 and 25 per cent of children entering primary school have difficulty understanding and using language – if children are unable to understand what they hear or form words and sentences, there is little chance they will be able to learn to read and write easily.”

“It’s important to focus on the underlying speaking and listening skills, such as being able to hear the different sounds in words and break words down into these sounds, as these are foundation skills on which literacy is built,” Ms Stone said.

According to Ms Stone, parents can foster good oral language skills at home by talking with their child, engaging in play, reading books together and looking at pictures.

Early speech pathology intervention is highly effective for young children prior to and in the first few years of primary school, and parents should watch for the tell-tale signs their child might have an oral language or literacy difficulty.

Ms Stone suggests visiting your local speech pathologist if your child exhibits any of the following signs:

- Avoids listening to stories, or doesn't enjoy book sharing time.
- Trouble remembering the alphabet or identifying the separate letters.
- Can't play 'I Spy', as they are unable to guess words that begin with particular sound.
- Instead of reading books, simply learns books by heart without reading the words.
- Can't remember what they have read or has problems summarising what they have read.
- Reads aloud haltingly and with effort, struggling to recognise the words on the page.

If you are concerned about a friend or family member who might have literacy or communication difficulties, encourage them to visit a speech pathologist or make enquiries at their local educational or health service.

For more information about speech pathology and Speech Pathology Week, visit www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with Chris Stone please contact:
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About Speech Pathology Week 2011 'Literacy for Life':

Speech Pathology Week 2011 (21 – 27 August) celebrates the speech pathology profession and the important role speech pathologists play in acquiring and maintaining literacy skills.

About Speech Pathology Australia

Speech Pathology Australia is the national peak body for more than 4,500 members. The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members. The Association also lobbies and advocates for people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

