

## Ooh, ah, eeh – Lauren makes all the right sounds

March 18, 2007

SIX-year-old Lauren George scrunches up her face, squints her eyes, looks in the mirror and laughs.

As part of her language class at Sunshine North Primary School she's joining in the telling of a story about emotions to help increase her vocabulary. She looks into a mirror inside her book and puts on her angry, happy, sad and silly faces.

"Do I look beautiful?" she asks as she fluffs her hair and laughs.

Lauren is one of many students at the school taking part in language groups run by the school's speech pathologist and special learning needs co-ordinator Christina Komuves.

Ms Komuves runs the language groups to help students in all grades build on their language skills.

Principal Ken Ryan said the school had decided to employ a full-time speech pathologist because oral language skills were important in the overall learning process.

For the first time this year, the school screened its preps to assess their oral language abilities.

Ms Komuves said that of the 30 preps she tested, 18 had language difficulties. She is still trying to determine the reasons for their difficulties but believes that, for many, it may be because English is their second language. "It might just be that they've never been to kinder and this is their first exposure to the English language."

Ms Komuves said the socio-economic background of children's families was also a factor in their language skills.

"There is a lot of research showing that students from low socio-economic backgrounds have lower language abilities. That depends on their exposure to the language at home. The level of the language they hear is not as complex."

She said an increase in referrals for speech therapy could stem from parents spending less one-on-one time with their children.

"It might be that there are more working mums now than there used to be, so kids are going to childcare more and don't have the one-on-one interaction with their care-giver."

She also believes higher detection rates from teachers is contributing to a rise in referrals.

---

**When you see news happening:** SMS/MMS: 0406 THE AGE (0406 843 243), or [email us](#). **More**

[Get The Age home delivered for as little as \\$3.00 a week\\*](#)