

Case Study

Embargoed to: 21 August 2011

Loving life and literacy – how seven year old Peter learnt to read

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

When seven year old Peter first met Sydney speech pathologist Vicki Selwyn-Barnett, he had great difficulty reading, was 18 months behind the other children in his class and had great difficulty pronouncing the sounds that make up words.

Five months later, he now reads at the same level as the rest of his class and is much more confident tackling unfamiliar words – all down to hard work, home practice and a little help from his local speech pathologist.

As a toddler, Peter was slow to speak and had difficulty concentrating for any length of time. His parents were concerned about his issues and general lack of confidence and decided to look for the underlying reason for their son's difficulties.

"Peter's school identified issues with his reading and attention during class – he was getting into trouble for being deliberately disobedient when he came across tasks he found difficult and even though he'd taken part in other catch-up programs, he was still unable to find ways of tackling the words on the page in front of him," Peter's mother Nicole said.

"Following the recommendation of a friend, we got in touch with Vicki who diagnosed an 18 month literacy delay, which was affecting Peter's confidence and many areas of his school and home life."

Speech pathologists play a vital role in the development of key speaking and listening skills, including awareness of the sounds in words and language comprehension, both spoken and written. These skills provide the foundation upon which literacy is built.

Using a method that taught Peter to link letters and sounds, break words into sounds and syllables and using these words in sentences, Vicki helped Peter to make 21 months progress in his reading skills in five months. During his initial assessment, Peter was only able to read 18 words; only five months later, he could read 52.

Peter's reading is becoming more fluent, so he is much more confident to tackle reading comprehension and his handwriting is much better, resulting in a much happier, motivated child.

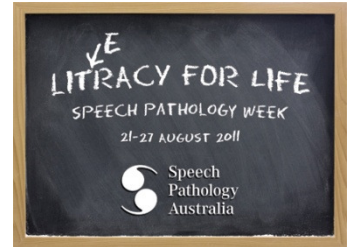
"The difference in Peter is amazing – a few weeks ago he actually wanted to read his school book to me at home – a first for both of us!" Nicole said.

"He also has much more self-confidence to tackle difficult or unfamiliar words and tasks that may have made him play up in the past."

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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Signs your child might need literacy support

1. A preschool child avoids listening to stories, or doesn't enjoy book sharing time
2. A child about to enter school has trouble remembering the alphabet or identifying the separate letters (rather than being able to name the letters and know what they look like)
3. A child about to enter school can't play 'I Spy', as they are unable to guess words that begin with particular sound
4. A child in early primary avoids reading at home or simply learns books by heart without reading the words
5. A middle primary child has trouble remembering or summarising what they have read
6. A middle primary child reads aloud haltingly and with effort, struggling to recognise the words on the page

To arrange an interview with speech pathologist Vicki Selwyn-Barnett and Nicole and Peter, please contact:

- Emily Sloan – Keep Left PR
- Joanna Wood – Speech Pathology Australia 03 9642 4899/0430 633 234

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.