



Universal Strategies for the Classroom

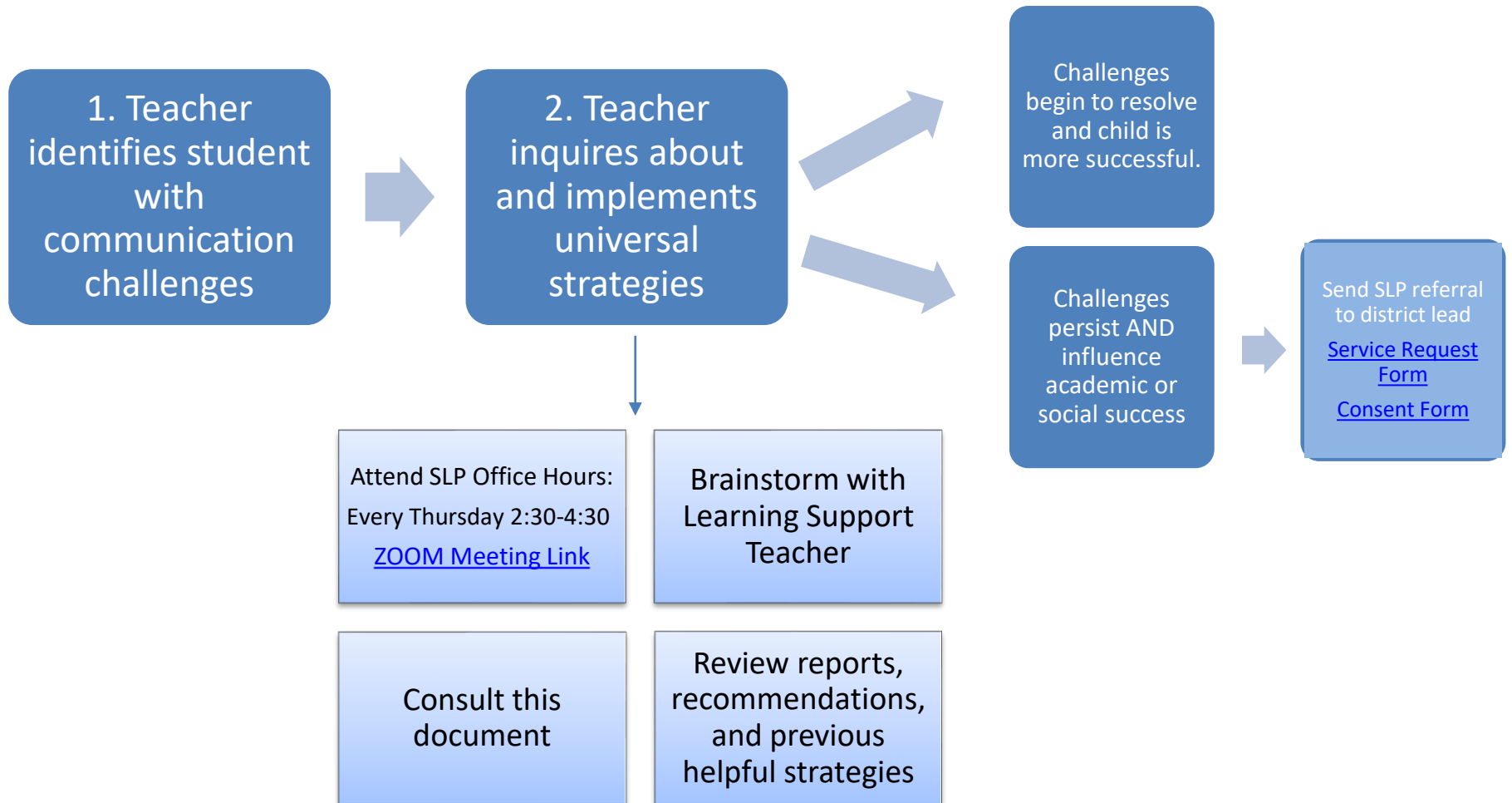
Speech Language Therapy

Adapted from: Central Alberta RCSD (2013-2019)

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Pre-Referral Steps

*Please note referral steps and service eligibility may vary slightly by school division



SPEECH/ARTICULATION

Questions to ask myself:

- Is it difficult to understand the student?
- What sounds are incorrect?
- Does the speech difficulty limit peer interactions?
- Is the student frustrated?
- Is the student able to participate in discussions?
- How does the speech difficulty impact academic goals?
- How am I trying to support sound production in my class?

Ideas and Strategies:

- Interpret unclear messages (guess!). Pick out what you did understand as a starting point.
- Ask for repetition, “My ears weren’t working well. Tell me again”
- Repeat the phrase back, emphasizing the correct sound. Child: “I need thome thoap”, Adult: “Here you are. Here’s **Some Soap**”
- Be a good model. Speak slowly and clearly.
- Encourage the student to watch and listen when you are modelling a sound
- Point the sound out in reading and make connections to classroom work throughout the day

Considerations:

- Do not worry about every single error
- Do not expect a child to be able to fix errors immediately
- Be patient. Speech can be tricky!

More tools and resources:

- [Teacher Screening Checklist](#)
- [AHS Speech Recipes](#)
- [AHS How to help a student in class](#)
- [Private SLPs in AB](#)

COMPREHENSION/UNDERSTANDING

Questions to ask myself:

- Do I see...
 - Confused looks?
 - Difficulty following directions?
 - Difficulty answering questions?
 - Difficulty remembering long pieces of verbal information?
 - Watching and following peers?
 - Off topic answers, comments, or actions?
 - Difficulty participating in classroom discussions?
- How is this impacting academic and social success?



Things to try:

- [Help your students follow directions](#)
- [Help your students answer questions](#)
- [Self-Advocacy](#)

More tools and resources:

- [Listening to Learn Handout](#)
- [Teaching strategies to help problem listeners](#)

COMPREHENSION/UNDERSTANDING: HELP YOUR STUDENTS FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

Things to consider

- Clear speech (loud and clear)
- Get the students attention before speaking
- Reduce background noise and distractions
- Cue important topics
- Break long directions into shorter chunks
- Be aware of [basic concepts](#)
- Use many visual supports and cues as possible
- Show or model the direction
- Have students repeat the direction
- Use a buddy system
- [Teach children to ask for help, clarification, or repetition?](#)

More tools and resources:

- [Creating good listening environments](#)
- [Strategies for Developing Listening and Attentiveness](#)
- [Building listening skills for following directions](#)



COMPREHENSION/UNDERSTANDING: HELP YOUR STUDENTS ANSWER QUESTIONS

Questions to ask myself:

- Do I wait and give thinking time?
- Do I restate or rephrase the question?
- Are questions short and simple?
- What kind of questions do I ask – wh questions, open ended, etc.?
- Do I introduce choices?
- Do I facilitate, prompt and cue?
- Does the difficulty seem due to comprehension difficulties or attention?



Things to try:

- Use visuals that can support students in answering
- Provide listening guides or graphic organizers
- Prep the student by providing the questions BEFORE the listening or reading activity
- Present choices
- Repeat the most important information
- Rephrase, simplify
- Pre-teach important vocabulary
- [Teach how to ask and answer WH questions](#)
- [Teach the child to ask for help, clarification, or repetition](#)

COMPREHENSION/UNDERSTANDING: HELP YOUR STUDENTS SELF-ADVOCATE/ASK FOR HELP



Questions to ask myself:

- Are my expectations reasonable and consistent?
- Do I model how to ask for help?
- Do I allow sufficient time?
- Do we have or need class rules around asking for help?

Things to try:

- Create a system to confirm a student's understanding (e.g., thumbs up or down)
- Teach the student to ask specific questions such as:
 - I don't know what _____ means?
 - Can you please say that louder?
 - That was too long for me to remember.
- Practice asking for help in games such as Simon Says by giving long, complicated, or wordy directions.
- Use a buddy system

BUILDING VOCABULARY

Questions to ask myself:

- Does the child use many 'empty words' (e.g., stuff, thing)
- Does the child participate in classroom discussions?

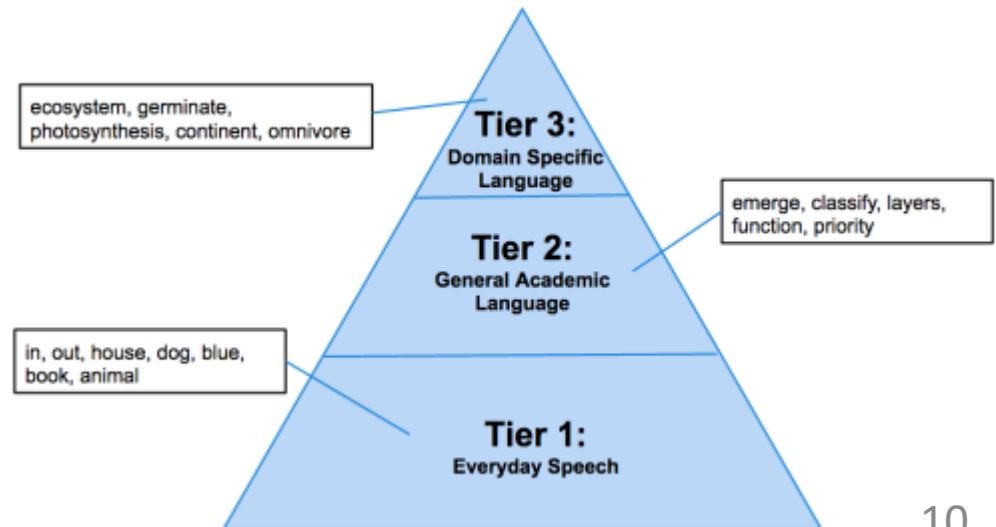
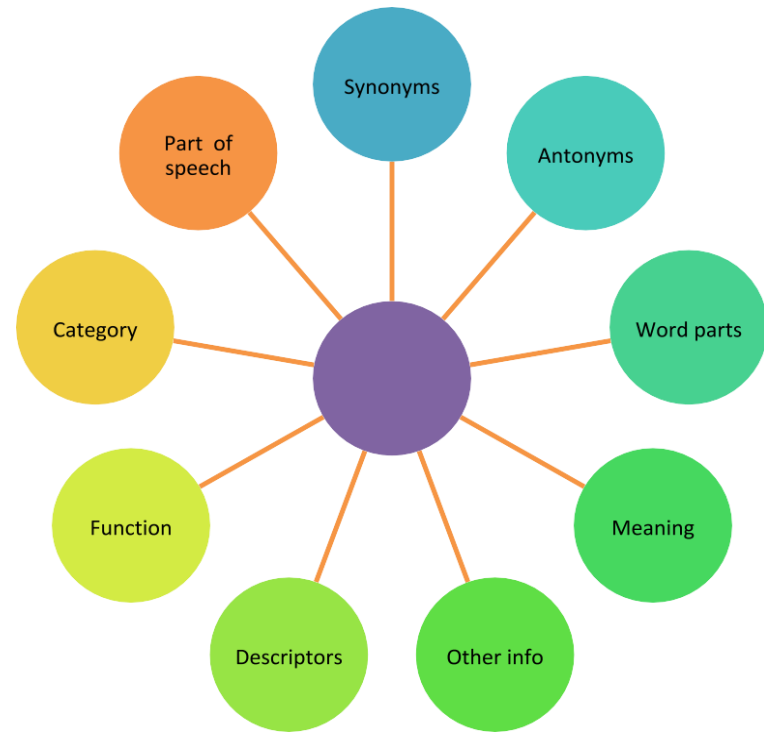
Things to try:

- Make words interesting and memorable through interactive, fun activities
 - Use objects as opposed to 2D pictures
 - Incorporate more than one sense (see, taste, touch, hear)
 - Use new words in meaningful ways throughout the day
- Use [word webs](#) to help form connections to pre-existing knowledge
- Use sorting and matching vocabulary games
- Brainstorm 'fancy words' to teach new vocabulary
- Consider teaching [Tier II vocabulary words](#)
- Take time to explicitly teach new words (i.e., don't assume the child will understand a new word based on the context in which it is used).
- Teach [basic concepts](#)

BUILDING VOCABULARY (cont'd)

More tools and resources:

- [Make Learning Language Fun, Practical and Easy](#)
- [Play Language Rich Games](#)
- [Oral Language Development](#)
- [Three Tiers of Vocabulary](#)
- [Tier II Vocabulary by Grade](#)



BUILDING VOCABULARY (cont'd): BASIC CONCEPTS

Be mindful of using and teaching BASIC CONCEPTS

Descriptive (describe)	Spatial (position)	Temporal (time & sequence)	Quantitative (amount)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Size •Colour •Texture (ie. rough/smooth) •Shape •Same/Different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •In front/Behind •In/out •Between •Over/Under •High/Low •Around/Through •Beginning/End •Right/Left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •First/Second/Third/Last •Night/Tomorrow •Yesterday/Tomorrow •Always/Never •Seasons •Before/After 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More/Less •Many/Few •Empty/Full •Both •Whole/Half •All •Each •Every •Pair

Questions to ask myself:

- Basic concepts are used often in directions and academic work
- A student may appear to not understand, not be listening, etc. when they actually are not familiar with a basic concept
- You can teach 'basic concepts' similarly to how you teach [vocabulary](#)

More tools and resources:
[Basic Concepts Handouts](#)

EXPRESSION: GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

Questions to ask myself:

“Do I hear any of the following?”

- Pronoun errors (“Her is nice.”)
- Errors in verbs (“I runned to the store”)
- Errors in plurals (“I have 5 pencil”)
- Missing words or word endings (“~~when~~ are we going to recess?”)
- Incorrect word order (“my backpack is where?”)



Things to try:

- Interpret unclear messages (guess!). “Did you say...”
- Corrective modelling. Repeat the message back to the student, emphasizing the correct form.
- Support grammar in written and spoken language

More tools and resources:

- [Ideas and Activities to Support Grammar](#)
- [Sentence Structure](#)
- [Teaching a language target](#)
- [Pronouns in the classroom](#)

EXPRESSION: EXPANDING SENTENCES

Questions to ask myself:

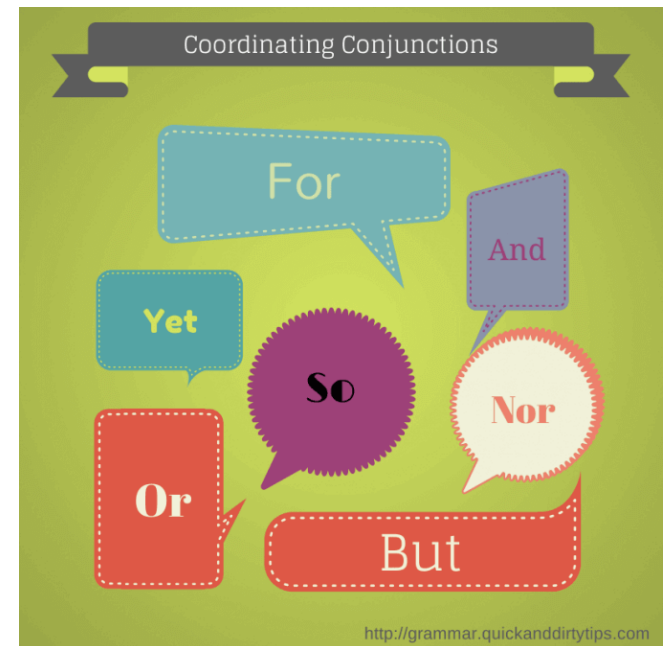
- Do I wait and give time for child to communicate more?
- Do I model language expansion?
- Do I encourage production of complete sentences?

Things to try:

- Use WH questions to probe for more information
- Give a starter phrase, “I think that...”
- Use conjunctions to encourage longer sentences (e.g., because, instead, and, but, then)
- [Build vocabulary](#)
- Support [grammar and syntax](#)

More tools and resources:

- [Contingency Feedback Handout](#)



EXPRESSION: FINDING THE RIGHT WORD TO SAY

Questions to ask myself:

- Does the student:
 - frequently use non-specific words? (e.g. 'this', 'thing' 'stuff' etc.)
 - talk around a word/use a description instead of the word? (e.g. 'temperature thing' for thermometer)
 - substitute the name of a related item? (e.g. 'knife' for 'scissors', etc.)
 - pause for a long time while they are trying to think of a word and/or fill pauses with "uh" or "it's a, it's a, it's a"

Things to try:

- [Build vocabulary](#)
- Encourage the student to think of [association links](#) to the word
- Encourage self cuing:
 - "what does it start with?"
 - "where have you seen it before?"
 - "tell me what it looks like"
 - "try writing it down"
- Play language-games (Taboo, Scattergories, Password, Outburst, Catch Phrase)



I want that
thing .that big
one that goes on
snow!

More tools and resources:

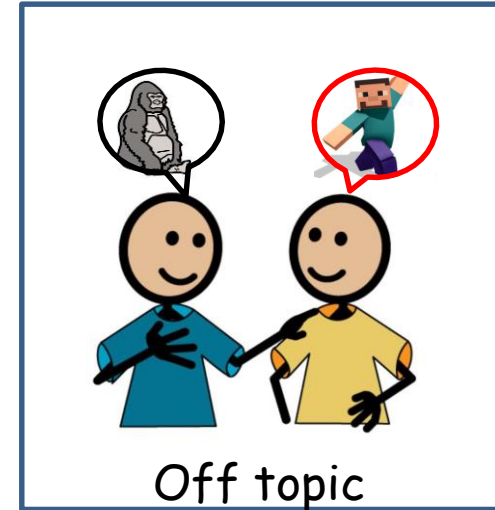
- [Understanding Word Retrieval Problems Handout](#)
- [Strategies to Help Children with Word Finding Difficulties](#)

EXPRESSION:

STAYING ON TOPIC/GETTING TO THE POINT

Questions to ask myself:

- What are my expectations?
- Do I provide sufficient time?
- Do I facilitate correct responding?
- Do I expect following of rules for discussions/conversations (e.g. listening, taking turns, maintaining topics)?



Things to try:

- Provide planned time for discussion and conversations
- Provide cues to limit content
- Use guided questioning to focus attention
- Set boundaries for discussion
- Establish working discussion groups
- Use frequent reminders of topic
- Give time to process
- Provide topics that are familiar and within vocabulary abilities
- Provide adequate response time
- Allow for partner discussions to explain topics together
- Use description, problem solving enacting scenarios or routines

SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATIONS

Things to try:

- Teach and model appropriate greetings
- [Use topic maintenance strategies](#)
- Teach and model appropriate endings/exits
- Teach sequencing for story telling
- Use visuals such as flow charts
- Provide opportunity for supported practice with peers

More tools and resources:

[Conversation Map](#)

[Story Parts](#)

[Topic Maintenance Handout](#)



PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Things to try:

- Spend time teaching rhyme, syllable and word awareness
- Build rhyming, blending and segmenting of sounds into daily routines. Doing this with sounds (i.e., while listening) is foundational for reading.
- Start with easier activities and towards harder ones ([Phonological Awareness Hierarchy](#))

More tools and resources:

[Phonological Awareness Hierarchy](#)
[What is Phonological Awareness](#)



Activities:

- Songs and books
 - Pause before a rhyming word and allow students to fill in the blank
 - Point out and emphasize repeated sounds (i.e., “Listen to the ‘ffffff’ sound” when reading One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish)
 - Clap out words
- I spy...
 - Something that starts with ‘sssss’
 - Something that rhymes with ‘cat’
- Incorporate into your daily routines
 - Line up if your name starts with ‘k’
 - “Everyone get out a P-E-N-C-I-L” (break up the sounds so the students have to blend them)
 - “Now it’s time for something that rhymes with munch” (lunch)

FLUENCY/STUTTERING

Questions to ask myself:

- Do I hear or see any of the following:
 - Repetition of sounds, syllables, words, phrases
 - Facial grimaces or twitches during speech
 - “Blocks” that sound like difficulty getting words out
- Is it worse during specific times or situations?
- Does the child’s fluency influence academic or social success?

More tools and resources:

- [The Stuttering Foundation](#)
- [ISTAR Stuttering information](#)
- [A parent and teacher's guide](#)
- Children who stutter may be eligible for AHS services. In southwest Alberta, call 403-388-6575 to inquire

DO

- Model slower speech
- Pause for second before responding to the child
- As much as possible, maintain a calm environment
- Maintain eye contact
- Listen to the message, not the way it’s said
- Encourage good talking manners in the classroom (e.g., take turns, don’t interrupt)
- Talk to the child (privately) about they feel when asked to speak in class. Develop a plan together.

DON'T

- Rush the child
- Interrupt or finish the child’s sentence
- Put child under extra pressure in speaking situations (e.g., time pressures, reading aloud in front of the class, etc.). Each child is unique and may find different situations stressful.
- Ask the child to slow down, think before speaking, etc. This usually places more pressure on the child.

VOICE

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is the student clearing his/her throat or coughing more than others?
- Is the student's voice husky, hoarse, or gravelly?

Things to try:

- Stay hydrated! Drink lots of water.
- Discourage yelling
- Encourage good talking and listening habits in your class so students don't have to speak excessively loud to be heard
- Talk about and practice appropriate volume
- Consider a signal to encourage better volume (e.g., pointing to picture, finger to your lip, etc.)
- Consult with a speech pathologist



More tools and resources:

[6 tips for vocal hygiene](#)

[Getting the most out of your voice](#)

[Using Appropriate Volume](#)