

The Link

ISSUE
20
2021
SOUVENIR
edition

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Reaching their GOALS



I TALK LIKE A RIVER

By Jordan Scott, children's author
and poet

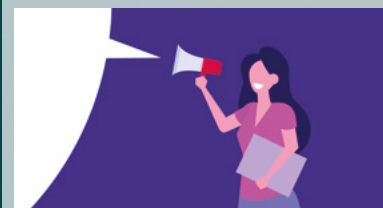
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SPEAKING IN SCHOOL

By Simon Bucknall, professional
speaker

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INVEST IN YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TOOL... VOICE!

By Louise Bingham, SaLT

Page 6-7



We are delighted to bring you this special, souvenir edition of *The Link*. In this issue, we are looking forward and we want to inspire you to join us in this outlook. It has been a joy to select articles from our contributors which celebrate creativity, innovation in education, and self-care. We are also excited to announce **The Link Live**, our first ever virtual SLCN conference.

We have had many specialists write for *The Link* and their expertise and guidance, we know, has helped many readers who support young people with specific SLCN diagnoses. In this issue, we are thrilled to hear from someone with first-hand experience. Poet and author, **Jordan Scott**, has a stammer. His children's book '*Talk Like A River*' is a beautifully illustrated reflection on how, as a child, a conversation with his loving father, helped him understand his voice. Find out more about this exquisite book on page 4.

Public speaking is something many people fear and undoubtedly there is a real skill to doing it well. On pages 14-15, public speaker **Simon Bucknell**, recalls the surprising 'speech' a challenging pupil made at the end of one of his public speaking school workshops. We can see why Simon believes public speaking should be taught in all schools.

Talking of public speaking, did you know that voice difficulties are 8 times more likely to develop in teaching than in any other profession? **SaLT, Louise Bingham**, provides information on how to protect your voice, your most important tool, on page 6.

SaLT, Kate Freeman basks in the joy of spring and summer as she shares her best activities for

learning crucial language skills while spending time in the great outdoors on page 16. Meanwhile, **Sophie Mustoe-Playfair** offers some guidance on managing a SLCN caseload effectively – a difficult and often overwhelming task for any SENCO. Find her tips for success and peace of mind in our Ask a Therapist feature on page 18.

Most exciting for us at Speech and Language Link has been putting together the programme for our SLCN conference, **The Link Live**. Taking place online on 21-22 May, our excellent line-up of 9 specialist speakers is hosted by a regular *The Link* magazine contributor, **Kate Freeman**. Find out more about the speakers and their presentations in our Link Live special on pages 9-13.

A Speech and Language Link subscribing school (with a current subscription) will get a free ticket to **The Link Live** - read more about the benefits of being part of the Speech and Language Link school community on page 3.

We hope this term goes well – thank you for all you do for our children and we look forward to 'meeting' you at **The Link Live** in May!

Best Wishes

Best Wishes, The Speech and Language Link Team

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The Link Live 21 - An SLCN conference - 21-22 May

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By Kate Freeman, consultant – speech and language in education

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Ask a Therapist: "Lots of children in my school need support with their speech and language skills. How can I manage my caseload?"

By Sophie Mustoe Playfair, SaLT



Tickets: event.bablglobal.com/tll2021/home

www.speechandlanguage.info

Contact our Help Desk at
office2@speechlink.co.uk
or phone 0333 577 0784



INFANT LanguageLink

We know extra support is essential to help narrow the SLCN gap that has been exacerbated by Covid disruption. Infant Language Link can help schools close this gap and raise attainment of children with SLCN by:

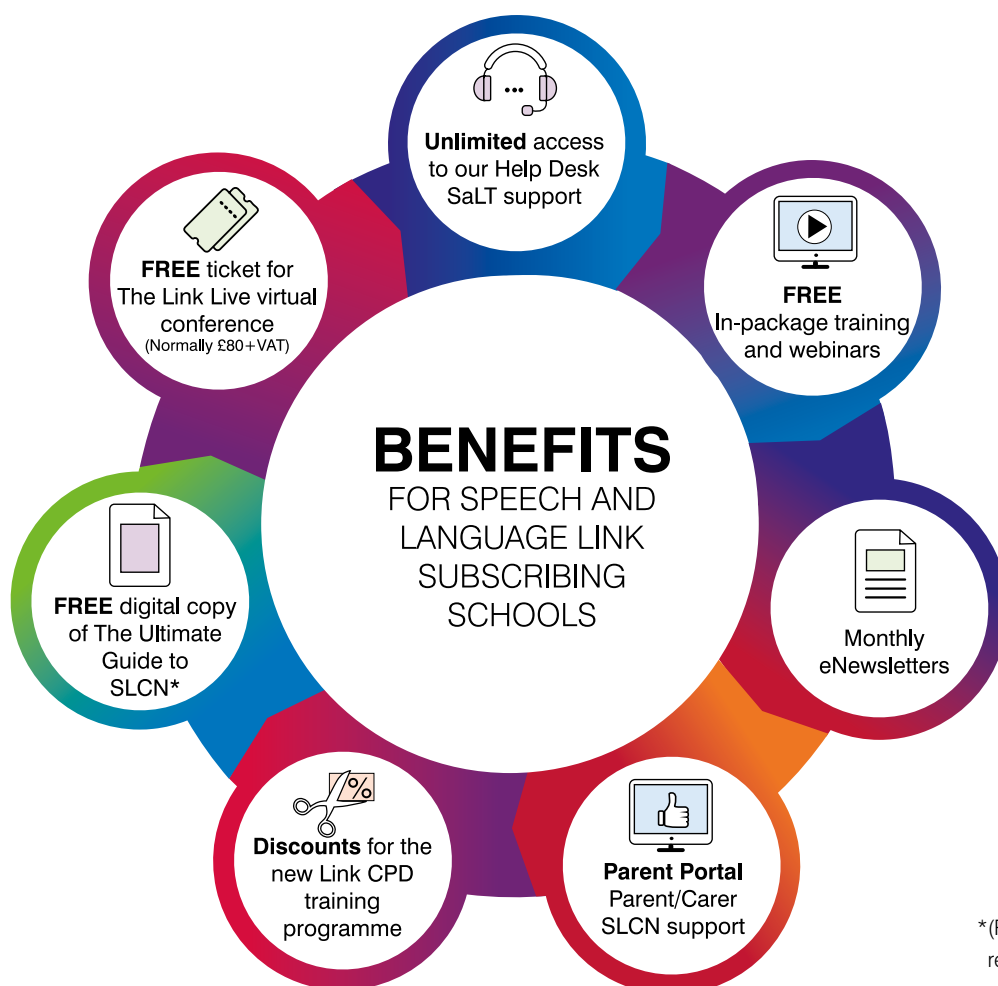
Identifying **EVERY** child with SLCN in Year R/P1 - Year 2/P3 using unlimited, standardised, child-friendly, online assessments.

Providing resourced interventions for small group work, for **ALL** identified children along with whole class strategies.

Measuring and recording progress with Teacher Engagement Ratings and Progress Measures.

Producing dynamic reports and provision maps to ensure your school is inspection ready.

But did you know subscribers of Speech Link or Language Link receive many other benefits that we don't often shout about? Here are just some of the additional features enjoyed by our Speech and Language Link community:



*(RRP £23.99) on renewal of 2021 subscription

Why not see for yourself how Infant Language link can help: speechandlanguage.info/trial

I TALK LIKE A RIVER

By Jordan Scott, children's author and poet

I DO NOT STUTTER BECAUSE I AM NERVOUS.

I DO NOT STUTTER BECAUSE I AM WEAK OR FEARFUL.

I DO NOT STUTTER BECAUSE I'M UNINTELLIGENT.

I DO NOT NEED HELP FINISHING MY THOUGHTS.

I DO NOT NEED HELP SAYING WHAT I AM ABOUT TO SAY.



When I was a boy my dad would sometimes pick me up from school on 'bad speech days' and take me down to the river. On those days, my mouth would just stop working. Every word was painful; the laughter from classmates unbearable. I just wanted to be quiet. Along the river we skipped stones, watched for salmon, picked up bugs, and plucked blackberries, all without saying a word.

One particular day, while watching the water move against the shore, my dad said: "You see how that water moves, son? That's how you speak." Since then I have always imagined that my teeth grinding on difficult words are like plate tectonics, my chin spasms are bee swarms.

Stuttering is often mocked because it is seen as unnatural. For many, listening to and watching someone stutter is not a comfortable experience because language and sound are stretched to their limits. Strange noises burst from a contorting mouth and what the listener thinks of fluency or 'normal speech' explodes. To stutter is to be dysfluent; and fluency, my speech therapist used to say, 'is the ultimate goal.'

But at the river, I learned to think differently about fluency. The river has a mouth, a confluence, a flow. The river is a natural and patient form, forever making its way toward something greater than itself. Yet as the river moves, it stutters, and I do too.

Take a moment to listen to the way you talk. How do you sound? What would happen if you concentrated on the feeling of speaking? Where do you feel words in your body? Do you speak without pauses or hesitations? How often do you slip up, forget words, or have difficulty finding them in the first place? Do

you sometimes shy away from speaking? Do you sometimes not want to say anything at all?

My dad took me to the river to feel less alone. When he pointed to the river, he gave image and language to talk about something so private and terrifying. In doing so, he connected my stuttering to the movements of the natural world and I delighted in watching my mouth move outside of itself.

Everyone who stutters does so differently. A stutter is never just a stutter but a set of intricately intimate labours with words, sound, and body. My stutter is my own and also part of larger confluence of dysfluent mouths going about their day: ordering food at a restaurant, making small talk about the weather, or talking to loved ones. Stuttering makes me feel profoundly connected and profoundly alone. Stuttering is terrifyingly beautiful. Sometimes I want to speak without worrying; sometimes I want to speak with grace, finesse, and with all those words you can think of for smooth. But that is not me. I talk like a river.

This book is a continuation of a decade's long inquiry into the poetics of stuttering and cultural representations of dysfluency. In *I Talk Like A River*, I wanted to find a way to share this knowledge with children and hopefully change the way stuttering is perceived.

I have heard stuttering described as a medical condition, an issue of mental capacity and stamina. Even Joe Biden's intelligence was questioned by senior politicians who don't understand what a stutter means. It's these kinds of false connections between stuttering and

intelligence that makes it so difficult to live in the world as a stutterer.

When speaking, don't we all forget words? Don't we all hesitate or pause? Don't we all sometimes wish we said something else or found a better word to express ourselves?

This is what I often refer to as the regime of fluency or a structure of continually promulgated beliefs about how someone should sound or speak in order to be considered credible and intelligent.

I think fluency is a fiction.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[https://holidayhouse.com/
book/i-talk-like-a-river/](https://holidayhouse.com/book/i-talk-like-a-river/)
[@jscottwrites](https://twitter.com/jscottwrites)

INVEST IN YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TOOL... VOICE!

By Louise Bingham, SaLT

A teacher's voice is their most important tool; for engaging and motivating pupils, delivering important information clearly, supporting social and emotional development, and managing behaviour.

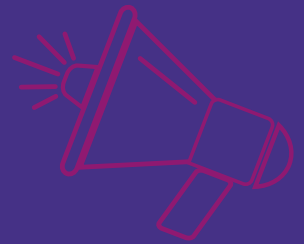
Due to the nature of the job, and a lack of training of how to look after the voice, teachers are at a considerably greater risk for voice difficulties. According to a report from the National Education Union, teachers are eight times more likely to suffer voice problems than any other profession. Many teachers experience periods of discomfort, hoarseness and vocal fatigue, which in severe cases can result in voice disorder. Common factors contributing to voice difficulties are speaking for long periods of time when tired or stressed, and vocal strain from teaching against background noise. Like any other part of the body that we regularly use, our voice needs to be looked after, so that we can rely on it to continue to work in the way that we need it to.

With the risk of voice difficulties already high for teaching staff, the

impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the pressure of remote teaching, is only likely to have exacerbated this risk. During the third period of lockdown, teaching staff were expected to teach keyworker pupils face to face, often in large and increasing numbers, whilst also providing remote provision for those learning at home. Add to this the need to equally support pupils with and without access to technology or internet, and to navigate the logistics of supporting pupils who only have access to devices at certain times of the day. The ability to achieve this whilst maintaining motivation and engagement for learning, and coping with constant change, is bound to take a toll. Looking after the voice has always been important for teachers, however, many factors during this time are likely to have caused or contributed to voice difficulties for many.

Posture

When using electronic devices, we are all guilty of adopting 'tech neck' posture, where the head juts forward of our shoulders and droops down. This is especially true when sitting for long periods of time, slumped in front of a laptop or phone. During the pandemic, we have all spent increasing amounts of time in this position for communicating with friends and family, and for attending meetings and training. This has been particularly true for teachers in delivering learning for pupils remotely. The spine is designed to hold the weight of the head balanced and centred above the shoulders. As the head juts forward and down, additional pressure is placed on the spine, resulting in the muscles of the neck tightening to compensate. Not only can this result in pain in the back, neck and





shoulders, but it leads to increased tension in the throat and more effort needed to produce voice. Additionally, sitting in a slumped position, reduces our lung capacity and breath support, again resulting in vocal strain.

TOP TIP Imagine a piece of string attached to the crown of your head that is pulling upwards, to create a long free neck. Try to sit with the shoulders directly over the hips, increasing lung capacity and breath support for voice. Think about how you position your laptop, tablet or phone when speaking, especially for prolonged periods of time, to support your posture. If you can, set yourself up so you can stand and talk.

Prolonged Talking

Whether delivering live remote teaching or recording lessons, teachers have been using their voices throughout the pandemic in

a very different way. It has not been possible to achieve the same back and forth interaction during live delivery of remote lessons, as within face-to-face lessons and often this means that teachers are doing more of the talking. Supporting a range of different pupils has also meant increased time preparing, delivering, and recording lessons, meaning that teachers are likely to have been talking for longer periods of time.

TOP TIP No athlete would attempt to perform without warming up, and as vocal athletes, teachers need to warm up their voice. Start with shoulder shrugs and neck rolls to loosen up the neck and shoulders, then move onto the face by tightening and relaxing muscles to release tension, for example by exaggerated yawning and smiling. Gently yawning and exhaling with a sigh can help to relax the voice.

Social Distancing and Face Masks

Social distancing rules in place such as spacing of desks and use of screens may mean that teachers need to project their voices more in order to be heard and understood. Having windows open to provide ventilation can result in increased background noise and a need to compete with this. Children are likely to find it more difficult to understand teachers wearing face masks, as the voice sounds more muffled, and they are not able to use lip reading clues.

TOP TIP Use amplification within the classroom so that you don't need to strain your voice in order to be heard. Think about the key messages you want to deliver and use visuals and gestures to back up this information, so that children are not relying only on your talking. Try to ensure the general level of noise in the classroom is kept low, to reduce what you are competing against!

Stress and Anxiety

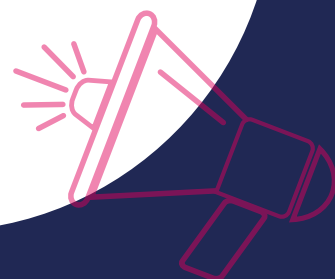
It is an understatement to say that teaching during the pandemic has been extremely stressful and anxiety inducing. Stress and anxiety can affect the voice by making our throat and the muscles used for producing voice tight, tense, and strained. This means that the voice is unable to work effectively.

TOP TIP Take time to relax and look after yourself; complete activities in your spare time that you enjoy. Use relaxation techniques, mindfulness, exercise, and breathing techniques to relax the body, and the voice.

Pushing Through Problems

If you are experiencing difficulties with your voice; it sounds a bit hoarse, you have some discomfort in your throat, or you lose your voice at points during the day, it is very tempting to push on and continue to use the voice in the same way. However, if the voice is pushed to work, we can develop an unhealthy pattern of straining the voice too hard to get it to work, causing further irritation.

TOP TIP Resting the voice is the best way to speed up its recovery. If you know that you are going to be speaking for long chunks of time, try and space these out with time for voice rest in between. Identify time in the evenings or at weekends when you can have complete voice rest. If your voice is tired, avoid shouting, screaming, singing and whispering as these put additional strain on the voice. If you experience difficulties with your voice that go on for longer than three weeks, it is important that you speak to your GP about this.





Top Tips for the Trip

How many outings will be possible this term remains to be seen, but with the warmer weather there are more opportunities to take learning outside, perhaps to the park, the local beach or woods. Kate Freeman's article on page 16 provides lots of ideas for practising speech and language skills outdoors.

There's always plenty to get in place, even for the seemingly most straightforward trip: get the risk assessments updated and laminated, first aid kits restocked, and yes, a fresh liner for the sick bucket. But a seasoned TA, with plenty of trips under their belt, can usually be relied upon for that special something that ends up saving the day.

AKA 'Queen of The Bag', Lyn Williams is a very experienced teaching assistant from Eglinton Primary school in Southeast London and is celebrated for somehow always having the essential piece of kit that has averted many a crisis. She explains:

"It has taken 10 years and more trips than anyone I know to perfect the bag, but it seems that I've finally got it right. Once I return from a trip, I restock it immediately and ensure it is never used until the next trip. All our staff know that I will have everything that is needed and am as prepared as possible for every eventuality. There is a laminated checklist in the bag - just in case I'm not in school.

The bag itself is a large picnic style rucksack and of course has the usual first aid kit, plastic bags, tissues and water, and now of course requisite facemasks and sanitiser (although sanitiser was always there - we're dealing with kids, remember) but these are the other things that I include:

- Nappy sacks and age-appropriate underwear/bottoms (for accidents)
- Spare child's rucksack (for the inevitable carrier bag collapse)
- Re-useable plastic cups and cutlery (for water and yoghurts)
- Large bottle of water (for forgotten drinks)
- Hand cream (for chapped hands)
- Hottie handwarmers (for shivering staff)
- Fold up raincoat (for wet staff)
- Paracetamol (for stressed staff)
- Indigestion tablets (for burpy staff)
- Phone charger power pack
- Lip balm (see chapped hands)
- Diarrhoea tablets (see burpy staff)
- Bag for life (for scooping up lost property and collected treasures from the trip)
- A spare packed lunch from the school kitchen (to replace the one that got trodden on/ left behind /already eaten by an unknown culprit)

I have worked with the most experienced teachers who are prepared for everything, nevertheless when we are on a day out, we always check "Who's got the bag?"

Packing THE BAG

One TA to Another

By former TA, Claire Chambers
and guest TA, Lyn Williams

What has been the piece of kit that has saved the day on your school trip?

Please email us at
office2@speechlink.
co.uk

The LinkLive

2021

21
MAY
22
MAY

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

An SLCN journey
from 4-14 years

Friday 21 May, 13:00



HOST KATE FREEMAN,
CONSULTANT

Speech and Language
in Education

We're so excited to launch our virtual conference focused on identifying and supporting SLCN from 4-14 years. We're even more thrilled to include such eminent speakers from fields of speech and language, education, psychology and family support.

Our programme promises to provide something for everyone, from academic to practical, best equipping you to support children and young people's vital communication skills.

I look forward to seeing you there!



#LinkLive21

KEYNOTE
SPEAKER

Friday 21 May, 13:10



LINKING LANGUAGE AND WELLBEING AT A TIME OF RECOVERY

Jean Gross CBE, Author,
Speaker and Consultant

Interest in children's wellbeing has never been greater. So, it is a good time to think about the way speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and wellbeing are intertwined. The Bercow 10 Review I chaired noted, for example, that 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have unidentified language difficulties.

The explanation may lie in some children's earliest years, since it is warm, responsive parenting that strongly predicts language development, and the same responsiveness also develops the secure attachment that underpins later mental health. But for other children the link will be the difficulty that children with SLCN may have in communicating their needs, making friends, and developing the internal talk that means they can label and manage their emotions.

My top tips for schools, then, would be:

- Screen every child with social, emotional and mental health needs for potential SLCN
- Teach **all** children to communicate how they are feeling, scaffolding with visual support – like emoticons, or simple nonverbal 'check-ins' such as putting thumbs up/down/sideways
- Help children with SLCN manage their emotions, for example helping them put together a personal box of things that help them calm down

www.jean-gross.com



Tickets: event.bablglobal.com/tll2021/home



THE IMPACT OF VOCABULARY TEACHING USING SOUND AND MEANING CUES

Rose Brooks, Advisory Teacher at Babcock International Education

Friday 21 May, 14:00

I am delighted to be able to share my PhD research on vocabulary teaching at The Link Live conference. The study looks at a holistic method of vocabulary teaching that may develop not only spoken vocabulary, but also phonological awareness and phonic reading. Originating in the field of speech and language therapy, this approach involves attention to both sound and meaning aspects of words. In addition to improving vocabulary, the extra phonological awareness input is likely to benefit all children at the early stages of literacy development. In Key Stage 2 and secondary school, it remains a valuable evidence-based tool for targeted intervention.

My study involved nearly 300 Yr1

children divided into three groups: *combined sound-meaning approach, meaning-only teaching and a waiting control group*. Teachers delivered a daily 10 minute vocabulary teaching programme linked to high quality reading books. Results showed that the combined group made significantly more progress on the taught vocabulary and phonic reading than both other groups, and significantly better progress than the control group on a phoneme awareness task. It seems that training children to learn vocabulary in this way may have wider benefits for their language and literacy progress. Hear more about this project and watch a lesson video at The Link Live.

www.babcockldp.co.uk @Babcockldp.com



TIME TO PLAY UP!

Adam Annand
Speech Bubbles National Lead and Associate Director London Bubble

Friday 21 May, 16:00

It's time to muck about, to move, to make noise, to strike a pose, to make up a story and pretend to be the characters in it. It's time to show us your grumpy face, your surprised face and your happy one. It's time to unleash imaginations, to nurture creativity and it's time to encourage children to experience joy in the learning process and feel great about going to school. The good news is that there is growing body of evidence that creative approaches not only support this 'play up' curriculum but also lead to children having improved engagement with learning, confidence, communication and academic outcomes.

It's a win-win situation!

In my session I will:

- Introduce the Speech Bubbles drama for communication intervention.
- Share evidence that demonstrates the positive difference that

taking part in a structured drama intervention can make for children with communication needs.

- Give an update on the post lockdown adaptations we are making, enabling us to reach many more children in need of creative support to be the best 'communicators' that they can be.
- Introduce games and activities for use in the classroom and with small intervention groups to promote a positive communication environment.

Hope you can make it,
Adam Annand

Check out these free drama resources for use in school and at home www.londonbubble.org.uk/parent_project/speech-bubbles/free-drama-resources-for-home-or-school/

Friday 21 May, 15:00



DLD AND ME: SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER

Anna Sowerbutts, Highly
Specialist speech and
language therapist

£100
worth of
freebies from
our online
shop

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a lifelong condition affecting 2 children in every class of 30. DLD describes persistent difficulties with comprehending and/or using language.

Students with DLD often have an acute awareness that they are 'different', but without the tools and vocabulary to understand that difference, they are at risk of low self-esteem and feeling less 'intelligent' than their peers. Helping students understand what DLD means for them is crucial to their long-term well-being.

DLD And Me: Supporting children and young people with Developmental Language Disorder is a published resource book to help students in Key Stages 2-4 with DLD learn about their strengths and needs. After engaging in *DLD And Me*, we have seen students grow in confidence and take more active roles within their own education.

Supporting a student with DLD

- Encourage the student to explain what DLD is like for them.
- Help them share their experience with their peers, through a presentation, video, Q&A, or poster.
- Learn about DLD as a class.
- Return to the student's strengths - DLD is only a part of who they are.
- Get involved with International DLD Awareness Day on 15/10/21 (<https://radld.org>)

Teaching students about DLD can have transformative effects and can reduce any unarticulated sense of shame or self-blame, while restoring the student's sense of agency for bringing about change.

**Anna Sowerbutts and Amanda
Finer, Speech and Language
Therapists**

www.dldandme.co.uk

@pinchof_SaLT @AmandaFiner

Live chat
with the Speech
and Language
Link Team

Saturday 22 May, 09:30



'BETWEEN BRAINS': MOTIVATING TWEENS AND TEENS WITH SLCN

Juliet Leonard, SaLT

Supporting adolescents with SLCN as they move into KS3 is crucial, to ensure progress continues, but this is not without its challenges: Adolescence is a time of significant physical and emotional change, prompting sizeable shifts in communication and interaction.

A teenager's brain is still 'under construction' and remodels itself by 'pruning back' areas that it no longer needs. SLCN activities previously used may no longer feel relevant and the tone of activities will need to match students' age rather than stage.

Here are some tips for working with tweens and teens:

Relate it – Using materials which students can both understand and relate to results in greater engagement for learning. Find a 'hook', by using a game, scenario or TV show which students like and

translate this into an accessible language activity.

Invite them to take control – Give students the opportunity to teach the 'teacher', to make decisions and, with support and a little creativity, any subject can be turned into a language activity.

Leave space for responsibility – It has never been more important to foster self-awareness. Allowing time and opportunities for spoken problem solving, personal reflection and identification of strengths and needs enables students to develop self-awareness skills they can build on.

Remember their age – Ask students to doodle pictures if they are needed, use 'real life' objects for activities and jointly develop meaningful rewards for individual students.

juliet.leonard@speechlink.co.uk



Tickets: event.bablglobal.com/tll2021/home



**FREE
TICKET**
for Speech and
Language Link
subscribers



LANGUAGE FOR THINKING

Stephen Parsons,
Speech and Language
Therapist

Saturday 22 May, 10:30

Abstract questions are integral for developing children's thinking and learning. Children need to be able to respond to questions such as:

"What would happen if ...?"

"Why does ...?"

"How do you know?"

Most children learn to respond to abstract language naturally, but for those who do not, there may be for a number of different reasons including difficulties with understanding spoken language, expressing themselves or 'reading between the lines'.

These children may have labels such as autism, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), but many others will not. Limited life experience or knowledge will also impact upon a child's ability to understand social situations. Unaddressed, difficulties with inference and verbal reasoning will impact on social relationships and learning and socially children will often get the 'wrong end of the

stick' or appear socially awkward. For many practitioners, inference and verbal reasoning skills are challenging to target because it is difficult to know where to start. 'Language for Thinking' is a step-by-step approach for developing children's abilities to answer increasingly abstract questions. The group intervention is based on familiar social scenarios around school and family life. Increasingly challenging questions are asked about each scenario until they require verbal problem-solving or 'language for thinking'.

My presentation will outline how 'Language for Thinking' can be used effectively and extended with the newly released 'Language for Behaviour and Emotions.'

LFT Training
bit.ly/3u0TMCg
www.thinkingtalking.co.uk
@WordAware @NAPLIC @RADLD



SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH FOLLOWING LOCK DOWN

Lorraine Petersen OBE,
Lorraine Petersen
Educational Consultancy
(LPEC)

Saturday 22 May, 13:00

Following lockdown this year schools have focused on supporting their pupils to get back into the routines of school life while assessing how much learning, if any, has been lost over the last year. This has been a huge challenge; some students will have made good progress and really enjoyed learning at home, while others have not engaged in remote learning at all and have missed significant parts of the curriculum.

Schools have also had to assess the mental health and wellbeing of all their students to ensure that the trauma of the pandemic has not impacted on them in anyway. This is going to be an on-going process for a considerable time.

By summer term 2021 all schools must be delivering the statutory *Relationships, Sex and Relationships and Health Education* curriculum. Within the health component there

is a significant emphasis on mental health and wellbeing and how this should be taught across all years.

At at The Link Live, I will refer to the RSH curriculum and how high-quality teaching in this area will support all students. I will identify some of the signs and symptoms that a student might exhibit if they are having some difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing. I will share strategies that schools may wish to consider to support students including advice on managing transitions along with a range of resources for schools to use.

www.lpec.org.uk
@Lorrainep1957

All sessions
available on
demand for
1 month



SUPPORTING CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
WITH SPEECH,
LANGUAGE AND
COMMUNICATION
NEEDS IN PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
THE CASE FOR A WHOLE
SCHOOL APPROACH

Marie Gascoigne,
Director, Better
Communications CIC

Saturday 22 May, 11:30

The past year has posed remarkable challenges for schools and those that support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs across the whole system. However, in the face of adversity there is useful learning and the findings from workshops, conducted in the midst of the first national lockdown in 2020, show that speech and language therapy services that worked with schools across the whole spectrum of universal, targeted and specialist support were better able to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs during the pandemic.

Drawing on the wide data set of information about provision for children and young people gathered by *Better Communication CIC*, my session will explore the differences in support for schools

at primary, secondary and post 16 levels. Examples from schools that have been accredited through the Balanced System® Schools and Settings joint accreditation with NAPLIC and Afacis provide evidence of 'what good looks like' for whole school support and includes reflections on the impact evidence collected as part of the process. Seeing the school provision map in the context of the Local Authority, catchment demographic and local models of support allow a 'golden thread' to be identified at school level and for resources to be targeted strategically for impact.

www.bettercommunication.org.uk

@BetterCommCIC

#BalancedSystem



BUILDING BETTER
PARTNERSHIPS WITH
FAMILIES

Sherann Hillman MBE
Head of Family Services
Seashell

KEYNOTE
SPEAKER

Saturday 22 May, 14:00

Building better partnerships with families is quite simple really, it's all about good communication underpinning everything we do. When you communicate well together this leads to a mutual respect for each other's views, with an open and honest relationship that is transparent and continually evolves to achieve meaningful and positive outcomes. This is also known as co-production, the basic principles of which are: actively listening, being open and honest,

being respectful, working together, being accountable and responsive, valuing the lived experience and doing what matters. Join me on my keynote to find out how you can embed these values and improve your relationship with families.

@sherann_hillman

@seashelltrust

www.seashelltrust.org.uk

Join us and like-minded thinkers at **The Link Live**

TICKETS COST £80+VAT AND GIVE ENTRY TO ALL SEMINARS OVER TWO DAYS.

We look forward to seeing you there



Tickets: event.bablglobal.com/tll2021/home

SPEAKING IN SCHOOL

By Simon Bucknall, professional speaker,
coach and facilitator

“COME ON, BE
HONEST... WHEN
YOU LOOK AT ME,
YOU MUST THINK:
'HA! STEVE? HE
WON'T DO ANYTHING
WITH HIS LIFE.

BUT I WILL.”



...and then one day, I was running a public speaking workshop in a school.

A teacher took me to one side beforehand.

"Watch out for Steve. You may get some challenging behaviour..."

Well, no kidding! Steve "challenged" me all day. The joker in the class, always mucking around, never taking things seriously. He wasn't nasty, he was just...

Well, challenging.

Until the end of the day, when each boy gave a short speech: on a topic of their own choice.

Up steps Steve... Shabby jacket, scuffed shoes.

"When you look at me, you probably think I'm a joke."

"But I'm not!"

"You probably think... dead end kid, probably end up in a gang."

"But I won't!"

"Come on, be honest... when you look at me, you must think: 'Ha! Steve? He won't do anything with his life.'"

But I WILL."

If you could have seen the impact he had! Steve wasn't perfect. Far from it.

But what he was... was honest.

We've long known the importance of healthy eating.

Good nutrition and a balanced diet promote physical, mental and emotional well-being.

What if the same were true for healthy speaking?

What if our approach to how we speak – to each other and to ourselves – were to yield physical, mental and emotional benefits every bit as vital?

I write these words on the very day that schools across the land open fully.

A matter of hours ago, our daughter (aged 9) and son (aged 7) skipped into their own primary school for the first time in months.

Were they excited? Certainly.

But a little guarded, too. After all, they're not quite sure what to expect.

Fully reopening will involve, it seems, more than just school facilities.

It'll involve hearts and minds too.

So, what are the ingredients for healthy speaking?

Well, it starts with setting the stage for a safe environment.

In my experience, this can be trickier than it sounds. It requires time, space and an environment that's distinct from the normal day-to-day chat of a classroom.

For any person to truly open up and dig deep requires trust: absolute confidence that they can be vulnerable without being judged or viewed as in some way 'weak'.

It took Steve the best part of six solid hours of public speaking activity (on a single day!) before he felt willing to embrace genuine emotional risk.

That's fast.

For me, back in 2005, I'd been an active member of a public speaking club for two years (meeting for two evenings every month) before I took that same step.

That's as an adult.

Secondly, stories are gold.

If a child has lived and breathed the experiences they're relating, how much easier it is for them to find the words.

Too often, we assume that impactful speaking stems from well-researched rational content, meticulously scripted.

In practice, the reverse is often true. Emotional impact comes from a speaker digging deep *in the moment* and finding the words to relate simply what they know to be true.

Thirdly, encourage speakers and listeners to identify the underlying message, point or 'moral of the story'. What meaning or 'value' can be drawn?

When asked for his top tip on effective public speaking, Bill Gove, 1st President of the U.S. National Speakers Association, replied:

"Make a point, tell a story. Or tell a story to make a point."

In doing so, you equip children as speakers with a critically important, empowering life skill. You also open the door to a higher value audience experience.

For the speaker, this latter point can be nothing short of life-changing. To realise, perhaps for the first time, that *one's own story* might be of genuine interest and value to *other people*!?

Now, that's a big deal.

Steve's classmates witnessed not only a remarkable display of honesty. They played an important part in triggering a seismic shift in a young boy's confidence, self-esteem, and in his sense of what it might be possible to achieve.

For this reason, when invited to speak at TEDxLondon in 2017, I took as my topic: "Why public speaking should be taught in schools."

Because when we speak, we not only tell *the world* who we are.

We tell *ourselves*, too.

I can think of no better reason for inspiring all our young people to speak.

To reaffirm who they *really* are.

And to speak healthily.



Simon Bucknall is an award-winning speaker, coach and facilitator
"The Public Speaking Expert For More Inspiring Leaders"

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View Simon's TEDxLondon talk: "Why Public Speaking Should Be Taught In Schools":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MP5FQ5AXcM&t=5s>


 A photograph of a woman and two children sitting on a log in a forest. The woman is in the center, wearing a white jacket and red pants. To her left is a young girl in a pink jacket and red pants. To her right is a young boy in a blue jacket, camouflage pants, and a red beanie. They are all looking towards the camera.

OUTDOOR LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

By Kate Freeman, consultant – speech and language in education

There has been a strong movement over the last few years to encourage the use of outdoor spaces to support learning. *The Forest School Association* describe these as “a unique way of building independence, self-esteem and a positive attitude towards learning in children and young people as they explore and experience the natural world for themselves.” They go on to say that “A combination of freedom and responsibility is beneficial to children with little confidence or challenging behaviour. Valuable life skills are learnt - communication, team working and responsibility.”

The mental health charity, *Mind*, with mental health problems, describes researched benefits of including anxiety and depression. spending time in nature as helping *Mind* identifies research into

ecotherapy (a type of formal treatment which involves doing activities outside in nature) and reports that it has been shown to help with mild to moderate depression. This might be due to combining regular physical activity and social contact with being outside in nature.

Being outside in natural light can also be helpful for people who experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD), although as we head towards lighter days, this feels less of an issue.



Being outside is also a great place to learn and develop the crucial skills of language and communication. It enables children to be more physical in their learning and has the extra advantage of a bigger space for pairs or small groups to talk together.

Here are a few activities to try with larger or smaller groups outside, along with linked opportunities for language development:

- **Go for a listening walk** – build children's attention skills and encourage them to focus in on different sounds by listening to those in the environment. It may be a bird singing or a distant siren – good listening is the foundation of good language development. There is also an opportunity to learn new vocabulary e.g. for different kinds of birds or more unusual sounds. Encourage children to share information with others about what they heard. This sharing can include role playing – include roles such as 'researchers' or 'interviewers' to help structure children's conversations.
- **Turn the outdoor space into a supermarket** – group the children in small groups or pairs and, depending on their ages, give them a shopping list that is either written or with pictures, or ask the groups to find individual items that they are given verbally. The rules of the game include the fact that each member of the group is responsible for finding an individual item but that the children must always stay together in their group. The 'shopping list' items can include specific objects, such as a stick, or a leaf. Or they could be descriptions e.g. something 'rough', 'yellow' or 'knobby', or involve more creative descriptions e.g. 'something a mouse could make a bed in'. This activity helps develop listening, understanding and vocabulary development. It also encourages use of language in planning together.
- **Colours in nature** – as larger groups, look for colours in the outside environment that match the clothes that you are wearing – a red sign to go with your jumper or a black car that's the same colour as your shoes. This activity can be used for vocabulary development or development of listening and understanding skills e.g. "We're looking for something the same colour as Ahmet's top pocket." An alternative activity is to see how many different items of a particular colour you can see.
- **Starting sounds** – in smaller or larger groups, look for things that start with a certain letter of the alphabet. Perhaps try the first sound of one of the children's names, or spell out a whole word across each day of the week. This activity helps with phonological awareness and segmentation skills for literacy development.

Whatever you choose to do, make sure that children have plenty of opportunities to learn outdoors, even if it is only for a short time each day. Above all, use the time to chat about what you see. This will help develop children's language skills as well as gaining all the benefits of being outdoors.

In addition to the benefits above, we know that children (and adults) benefit from getting outside every day for the following reasons:

- the exercise boosts our physical fitness (as well as our mental health)
- it encourages greater environmental awareness
- it helps to make children more tired (making it easier for them to sleep)
- it provides a frequently needed change of scene and
- when it is cold, it makes us feel warmer when we come back inside

Help parents/carers get involved with practising language skills while outside with their children; more ideas for outdoor activities can be found below (please share with your parents/carers):

Family activities for outdoor adventures | National Trust

Activities | Scouts

Activities for kids - Woodland Trust Ideas | 37 Fun Outdoor Activities for Kids (hobbycraft.co.uk)

USEFUL LINKS:

<https://ukforestschoools.com/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

ASK A THERAPIST:

By Sophie Mustoe-Playfair, SaLT

Q. “Lots of children in my school need support with their speech and language skills – How can I manage my caseload?”

A. Managing a large caseload of children is a daunting and unenviable task. Therapists will usually call this ‘prioritisation’: the need to decide how time and resources will be divided fairly so that the needs of all children are met as well as possible. It’s never a perfect science. There is no single right answer. To do the most good with limited resources requires a systematic approach, a long-view, and patience.

The first step towards successfully managing a caseload is identification. Accurate information about the needs of all your pupils is essential for allocating resources so that they will be most effective. While it can be daunting to uncover the scope of the needs in your classroom, especially if you have already identified a large number of children that need support, not looking for children’s difficulties does not mean that they are not there and impacting on learning. Universal screening will give you the information you need to make plans. Once you have identified your pupils’ needs, you can take stock of the resources and time you have, as

well as the specialist services which may be available in your area. It’s important to work in partnership with your local services to ensure that the support which is offered to pupils operates efficiently and has the maximum impact.

Next, consider your whole school environment, and classroom support strategies in particular. In-class support needs to be effective so that pupils can make the most of their opportunities in the classroom, and also to reduce the pressure on small group and 1:1 interventions. If large proportions of pupils have identified speech and language needs, consider how aspects of

intervention can be embedded into classroom practice alongside the usual curriculum. Ideally, strategies should be consistent between classrooms so that pupils know what to expect. A whole school approach will be more effective.

Keep the intensity of your small group and 1:1 interventions in check. Sessions may not be as effective if they are only scheduled once per week, groups which are too large will mean each pupil has fewer turns, and these watered-down interventions may not be a good use of time. Maintaining the recommended intensity of interventions often means



Managing your SLCN caseload



that you will be able to move children along to their next steps more quickly.

With this in mind, it may not be feasible to start all of your pupils off on their interventions at the same time. Consider a rolling timetable for interventions so you can show that your pupils will have equitable access over time. As part of this, make sure to plan for how to move pupils on to generalisation in the classroom. Again, high-quality support in class is essential to minimise the impact of SLCN on learning – this is true whether or not pupils are currently accessing additional interventions.

Remember that speech and language interventions are an investment. It can be difficult to allocate resources and change practice in the beginning, but time invested in addressing underlying difficulties is time saved when those difficulties are resolved.

- 1 Accurate identification of the needs of all your pupils is essential for allocating resources so that they will be most effective. Universal screening for hidden needs such as language difficulties will give you the information you need to make plans.
- 2 Investigate and access specialist services where appropriate so that you are making effective use of all of the resources available and maximising the impact of the support that you provide.
- 3 Put high quality classroom support strategies in place to ensure that pupils with SLCN can make the most of their learning opportunities. Consider how aspects of intervention can be embedded into the classroom alongside the curriculum.
- 4 Keep in mind the intensity of interventions you are delivering. Maintaining the recommended intensity of interventions will mean they are more likely to be effective and you will be able to move children along more quickly.
- 5 Schedule a rolling timetable for interventions so that pupils will have equitable access to support across the school year and use this to plan how you will support pupils to generalise the skills they have learnt in interventions within the classroom.

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