

LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

A language impairment (also known as a developmental language disorder or language processing disorder) affects a student's ability to understand and use language, especially verbally.

CHARACTERISTICS

Difficulty with:

- learning and remembering new vocabulary
- following directions
- understanding figurative language
- reading and writing tasks not related to decoding
- organizing their speech and writing
- processing/answering questions quickly
- retelling stories
- morphological markers/rules (e.g. doesn't add -ed to make past tense)
- pronouns (e.g. persists using objective pronouns like "Her went to the store" beyond age expectancy)

May Look Like:

- concrete thinking
- not meeting communication milestones
- inability to follow directions
- long pauses before answering questions
- frequent filler words (um, well, etc)
- frustration with speaking, reading, and writing
- speaking and writing in simple sentences
- disorganized writing
- misusing words in speaking and writing
- forgetting the name of an object



SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT



- Language Impairment is the term given by DESE for IDEA eligibility, while the DSM-5 diagnosis is developmental language disorder. Some diagnoses further detail the disorder as expressive, receptive, or mixed.
- Language impairment and auditory processing disorder share many overlapping characteristics, but they are distinct diagnoses. Students with APD have difficulty interpreting sounds, while students with LI have difficulty interpreting the meaning of words/phrases/sentences.
- Multilingualism does not cause language disorders or make it worse. Students with a language impairment will demonstrate difficulty with expression and comprehension in every language.
- English language learners who are still acquiring English do not have (automatically) a language disorder, but some supports may be helpful to both groups of students as they learn language rules and vocabulary.

POSSIBLE SUPPORTS



- language therapy
- allow extended response time for processing
- pre-teach vocabulary and highlight key terms
- extended time for assessments
- break down instructions into simple steps
- check often for understanding
- direct vocabulary instruction
- graphic organizers for writing and vocabulary
- give concrete examples
- hands-on learning activities
- use multi-modalities to teach new concepts
- explicit teaching and multiple exposures to language rules
- narrow open-ended questions (give choices)
- teach and practice social skills
- use visual supports



MORE RESOURCES

[Google Sheet](#) with tabs for articles, podcasts, and videos
<https://bit.ly/4IXxD3v>

