

## Supporting Students with **Moderate to Profound** Speech Disorders or Delays

Children with unintelligible speech are confronted with many with academic and social challenges. Communicating with these children can be frustrating for the child and heart-breaking for the teacher. The following strategies can be helpful when you are having difficulty understanding your student.

**Eye contact:** Should be mutual-try to be on the same level.

**Model and encourage slower speech:** Not unnaturally slow, but if the student is speaking too fast, encourage a slower rate.

**Tell them what you've understood so far:** Repeat what you've understood back to them so they know what part of the message needs to be repeated.

**Ask them to say it a different way:** Ask if there's another way they can tell you what they mean.

**Try to find another way for the student to express himself:** Is there something the student can point to or draw a picture of?

**Repeat the message back to them:** This gives the opportunity to confirm you've understood and also provides the student with a model.

**Understanding the child's error pattern might help:** Talk with your Speech-Language Pathologist to see if there is a pattern to the child's sound errors. For example if you know the child always uses T for all beginning SSSS words, you might be able to figure out that when he said "tahdow" he meant "saddle".

**Sometimes you just might not get it:** Avoid nodding and saying "OK" even when you haven't understood because children will often know you are not being honest. You might have to say something like, "I'm not quite getting what you mean, but I really want to figure this out. Can we talk more about this again later?" You might want to make a note of what you think you heard and ask a parent, or come back to it at another time.

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