



## Help your child improve pronunciation skills

For students in primary grades

Pronunciation can sometimes be difficult for children to master. Pronunciation plays an important role in communication skills and careful preparation and support from parents is crucial in helping children to develop these skills. Good pronunciation skills can boost self-confidence and improve social interactions.

### Be supportive

Here are a few things you can do with your child at home to enhance pronunciation:

- **Create a positive speaking experience** by being a good listener. Avoid interrupting, ignoring or constantly correcting his speech.
- **Make an effort to understand the message.** Ask your child to show you what they mean. Ask her to tell you more and ask questions to guide her answers.
- **Know when your child is getting frustrated** and don't add to the pressure.
- **Always model good speech.** Do not use immature speech when speaking, pronounce sounds and words distinctly, pleasantly and in a relaxed manner.
- **Make eye contact** when you are talking with your child.
- **Provide opportunities to use speech.** It is only through practice that your child will be able to use new speech skills successfully.
- **Give your child the chance to take an active role in communicating** at home and during car and family outings.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Changing the way you speak takes time. It is important to praise your child's success.
- **Put the responsibility on the listener, not always on your child.** Say, "I'm having

trouble hearing you today. Can you help me understand?"

### Correct your child in a positive way

When your child makes an error in pronunciation follow these steps to help him realize his mistakes:

- **Look at your child with a questioning look.**
- **Provide a physical cue.** Cue a specific word by asking "You want \_\_\_\_?" Point to your mouth as you say the word correctly.
- **Repeat back the error.** Say, "You ate thoup (Soup)?"
- **Give him a choice** between the correct and incorrect pronunciation. Say, "Do you want the tar or car?"
- **Model the correct sound.**

### Avoid things that might discourage your child

- Don't talk for your child. Give her the time she needs to say what she wants to say.
- Don't use baby talk. Give your child an excellent model.
- Don't nag or scold your child for bad speech and never laugh at your child's attempts at speech.
- Don't call attention to your child's speech in the presence of others. Don't ask him to "show off" his speech.
- Don't work with your child on her speech if she or you are feeling frustrated.
- Don't expect too much too soon. Remember that changing the way you talk takes time.

This tip sheet was prepared by Jamie Sanders-Lofaso and Carol Sturup, Speech-Language Pathologists.