**10 - PIL – Reading difficulties – schools and educators**

TRANSCRIPT

- A great deal of research has demonstrated strong links between early oral language skills and subsequent literacy achievements. These connections have been referred to as the "speech-to-print" continuum of development, acknowledging the foundational skills of oral language to written language. In turn, access to written print facilitates ongoing growth in oral language competency. Reading comprehension involves two primary processes, decoding printed text and understanding the language accessed through the process of decoding. In the early years of reading development, children's ability to comprehend text is largely constrained by their ability to decode text. Once decoding becomes automatic, which for most typically developing children occurs at around eight years, reading comprehension becomes more dependent on skills in language comprehension. Deficits in one or both of these areas will result in different profiles of reading disorder and different intervention strategies. Within this conceptualisation of reading disorders, the term dyslexia is used to describe those children who have poor word level reading abilities despite age-appropriate language comprehension skills. Dyslexia is a word level reading disability stemming from an impairment in phonological processing. Weaknesses in the phonological system manifests in poor phonological processing specifically phoneme level sensitivity, phonological memory, poor speech perception, and poor letter sound decoding skills. Children with age-appropriate word reading abilities but poor oral language are referred to as poor comprehenders. Poor comprehenders have no problem with phonological processing and are able to read words accurately, but they have deficits in semantics, syntax, and higher-level language processing such as inferencing, comprehension monitoring, and text structure knowledge. Weaknesses in both word reading and language comprehension, are referred to as mixed reading difficulties. In the early years of schooling, we are not looking to diagnose reading disorder, but we are looking to identify those children at risk for difficulties learning to read. Children who will become poor readers are recognisable long before formal reading instruction begins. They show lags in developing those skills that are the precursors to decoding and or comprehension. The emergent literacy skills of phonological awareness, and concepts of print and the spoken language skills of vocabulary and narrative. Preventive models focus on decreasing children's vulnerability for reading difficulties. We know for example, that with the appropriate resources, comprehension monitoring can be assessed in pre-readers. For example, children between 30 and 48 months show signs of monitoring and expressing surprise when an actor or the order of events is changed during the narration of a familiar storybook. If a child does not demonstrate these responses, this may be an indication that listening comprehension may not be developing as expected. Similarly, if a prep year child is not acquiring phonological awareness at the same pace as the rest of their cohort, we might raise concerns about the child's development of word recognition skills. Because the development of emergent literacy is dependent on many oral language skills, children with language disorder are at risk for developmental reading difficulties. Numerous studies have shown that many children with oral language deficits have co-occurring reading difficulties. These findings highlight the importance of schools including schools of distance education undertaking early identification processes such as early start for code-based and language learning needs in children both on entry to prep and throughout the early years. In addition to this, the importance of supporting language and reading acquisition in children identified at risk is highlighted because children with language disorder are incredibly likely to exhibit a reading disorder related to phonological and or non-phonological language skills, early identification and intervention of language difficulties is vital to preventing reading difficulties in children with language disorder. Identification and understanding of reader profiles for children experiencing persistent difficulties learning to read, requires a process of differential diagnosis. Thorough reading evaluation for children experiencing reading difficulties should include measures of reading comprehension, text reading accuracy, reading real words in isolation, reading nonsense words in isolation, spoken vocabulary, and broader oral language skills.