

Frequently Asked Questions about the Speech or Language Impairment Criteria and Making Eligibility Determinations in the area of Speech or Sound Production

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding the speech or language impairment area of speech or sound production.

1. When would the SLP use the standard for 90% acquisition of typically developing children to assess speech or sound production?

When norm-referenced tests of articulation or phonology are not appropriate, a child must demonstrate consistent errors in speech sound production beyond the time when 90 percent of typically developing children acquire the sound.

2. What does the term *consistent errors in speech or sound production* mean under the 90% acquisition standard?

The term “consistent” is not defined in the rule.

How do we quantify *significantly* unintelligible? What does significantly unintelligible mean in terms of a percentage or criteria?

The term “significant” is not defined in the rule as far as a percentage or set criteria. However a speech disorder may be considered significant when it negatively affects conversational speech intelligibility and interferes with functional communication. For example, when a student who four years old is four exhibits a phonological disorder as evidenced by a standard score below 74 on a test of phonology, and produces phonological processes that should have disappeared by three years of age, then he or she has a speech delay. If this same student’s speech intelligibility is also 62 percent, and there is evidence from observing the child, in his or her natural learning contexts, that he or she is unsuccessful communicating with peers and educators, then this child has a speech impairment.

4. The eligibility criteria requires any sound error to affect conversational intelligibility so how is it possible for a child to meet the criteria with a single sound error?

Describing a student’s conversational speech intelligibility, and the severity of the student’s reduced intelligibility, are key components of the eligibility criteria for a sound production impairment. There are several intelligibility assessment procedures that can be utilized to determine the effect of the sound error on conversational speech intelligibility.

5. Could a child qualify as having a speech or language impairment if the only error they exhibited was a /w/ for /r/ substitution and the child’s conversational intelligibility was not affected?

A student may have a possible articulation deficit that may not cause a significant deterioration in conversational speech intelligibility or functional communication. For example, a three-year-old child may have many articulation errors thus suggesting a possible articulation delay. However, the child’s speech intelligibility may be measured at 88 percent, which is a score well within the average for a three-year-old child. Additionally, parents may report that the child is

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successful communicating in most contexts, suggesting that functional communication is not significantly affected. In this example, the child demonstrates a possible articulation delay but it is not causing deterioration in speech intelligibility that limits effective communication. Thus, this child does not have speech impairment.

6. A standard in the eligibility criteria states “one or more of the child’s phonological patterns of sound are at least 40 percent disordered.” What does this standard in the criteria mean?

An impairment of speech or sound production may be determined by the administration of a standardized norm-referenced test of phonology, or through analysis of a sample of the child’s speech. When norm-referenced tests of phonology are not appropriate, an analysis of a sample of the child’s speech may be utilized. The standard requires evidence of one or more phonological patterns of sound to be at least 40% disordered in an analysis of the speech sample.