



Speech Link and Language Link – are they viable options?

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Speech Link and Language Link in DECS

- The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) in South Australia provides a primarily consultative speech pathology service to schools and preschools across the state
- The demand for speech pathology services exceeds available resources



Speech Link and Language Link in DECS

- Pre-referral discussions with speech pathologists are in place to assist with prioritising children
 - Children with mild difficulties are not a high priority and receive, at best, a limited speech pathology service
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Speech Link and Language Link in DECS

- Speech Link and Language Link were developed in the United Kingdom as multi-media packages
- Provide screening and support for children with **speech** and/or **receptive language** difficulties





Speech Link and Language Link

Benefits:

- Assist with prioritising for speech pathology services
- Enable teaching and/or support staff with knowledge and skills to screen children's communication skills and carry out programs
- Link staff to the site's speech pathologist for advice and support
- Provides intervention programs and resources

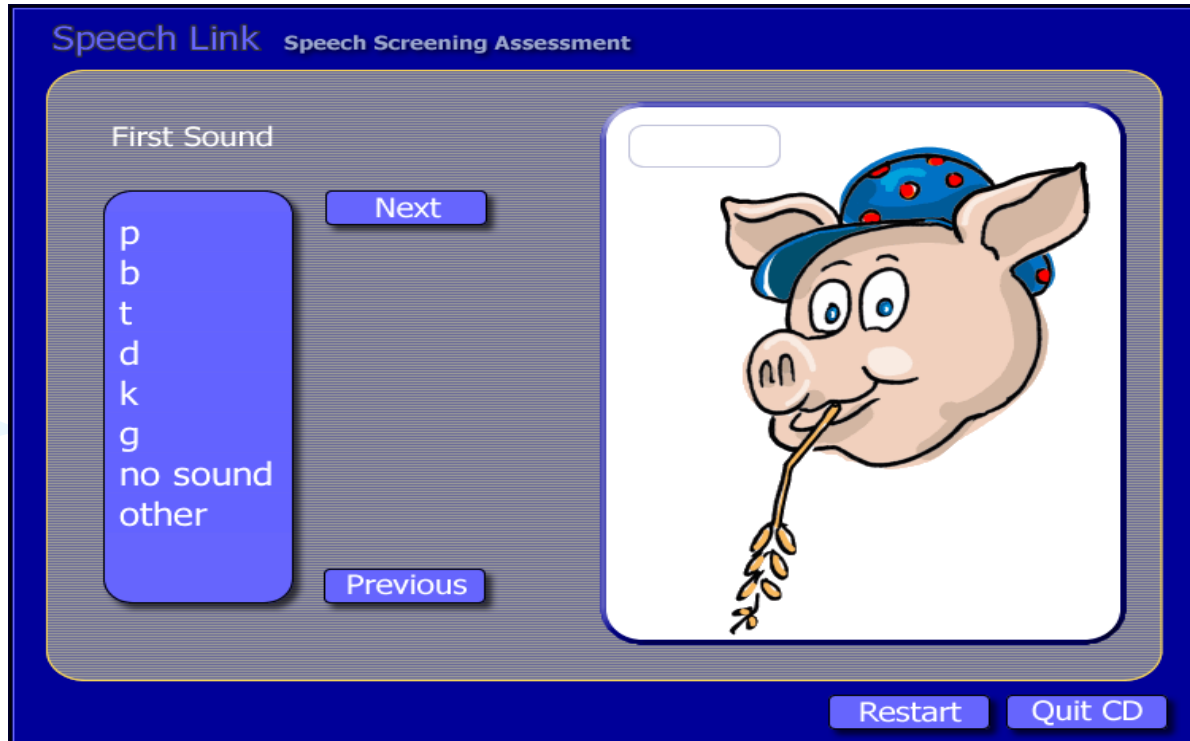


Speech Link and Language Link

- In DECS - currently no formal systemic process for screening speech and receptive language
 - The packages were seen to provide a potential means of supporting pre-referral processes and addressing the needs of children with mild difficulties
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Speech Link


Speech Link provides a means for pre/school staff to screen children's (4 – 8 years) **speech development**



Language Link

Language Link screens children's (4–5 ½ yrs)
receptive language skills (not expressive)

Speech Link Language Screening Assessment



The lion is sleeping and the elephant is drinking

Quit Previous Next



Speech Link and Language Link

Screening result:

1. No problems detected
2. Program(s) recommended
3. Programs recommended + discuss with site Speech Pathologist



Speech Link and Language Link

- Initial trial conducted in 2 DECS preschools in terms 3 and 4 in 2007
- Speech Link trialled in 1 preschool while the other preschool trialled Language Link



Speech Link and Language Link

- Funding secured to support this expanded trial
- 15 Speech Link & 15 Language Link licences were purchased
- Each licence covered the school and the main 'feeder' preschool site



Speech Link and Language Link

Licences allocated according to:

- Speech pathologist recommendation
- Site willingness
- Metro and non-metro sites
- High, middle and low SES



Requirements of Trial

- Attend training
- Complete checklist prior to screening (indicating level of concern)
- Conduct screening
- Implement screening recommendations
- Provide information/programs to parents
- Participate in evaluation of trial

Speech Link Trial Participants

| | Metro | | Non-metro | |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| | Sites | Number Screened | Sites | Number Screened |
| Low SES | 2 schools 2 preschools | 68 | 3 schools 1 preschool | 103 |
| Middle SES | 1 school 1 preschool | 135 | 1 school 2 preschool | 41 |
| High SES | 1 school 3 preschools | 120 | 2 schools 1 preschool | 30 |
| | | 323 | | 174 |



Speech Link Results

Training

- 81 staff attended training at the commencement of the trial
- All staff reported the training was sufficient for them to commence screening and working with children
- All but 1 of the staff that conducted screening participated in training



Speech Link Results

Screening

Teachers - 39% of screenings

Ancillary staff - 38% of screenings

Directors – 22% of screenings





Speech Link Results

Staff perceptions vs screening results

| | Staff no concern | Staff concern |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Screen ok | 77% | 33% |
| Screen - program(s) | 23% | 67% |



Speech Link Results



- 14% of children screened already receiving a speech pathology service
 - 31% of the children screened were recommended for program(s)
 - 20% of the children screened were recommended for discussion with a speech pathologist
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Speech Link Results

Staff feedback on screening:



24 respondents

- Easy to use (96% of respondents)
 - Child friendly – apart from some pictures
 - Some IT difficulties (saving)
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Speech Link Results

Staff feedback on screening:

- Immediate results/recommendations great!
 - Opportunity to spend focussed time with children – speech and language info
 - Time an issue
- 
- 



Speech Link Results

Didn't like
it at all

Ok

Loved it!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Directors
Teachers
Ancillary

Range

7-10

Mean

8.7

5-10

7.3

8-10

9.4



Speech Link Results

Time well spent

- 67% always
- 33% sometimes
- 0% never





Extra support

92% sought extra support





Speech Link: Programs

- Ancillary staff loved the programs – saved preparation time
 - Some Directors/teachers had concerns re: appropriateness and clarity of some programs
 - Concerns re: budget for printing programs & time for implementation
- 
- 



Speech Link: Parents

- 14 Parents responded to questionnaire
 - 11 were able to support their child and 10 found the programs easy to follow
 - 10 had concerns prior to screening
 - Most were happy with way they were informed about screening results



Speech Link: Parents

Improvement



4 - reported improvement

2 – no improvement

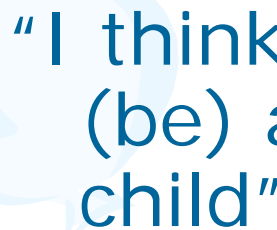
5 - unsure (limited time)






Speech Link: Parents

All were happy to see continued use of
Speech Link in Pre/school



“I think it’s a terrific program and lets parents (be) aware of any speech problems in their child”



“Speech Link is useful as a stop-gap measure where a speech therapist is not immediately available however it is **NOT** a replacement for the speech specialist”



Speech Link: Speech Path

DECS Speech Pathologists

8 respondents

- Rate of pre-referral discussions and referrals – little or no change
- 4 out of 5 respondents believed staff found programs easy to use



Speech Link: Speech Path


- 3 speech paths had infrequent requests from the site for support
- 4 out of 5 respondents felt that the time spent screening was time well spent

“I think it gave the site more ownership of speech/language intervention

Language Link

Language Link screens children's (4–5 ½ yrs)
receptive language skills (not expressive)

Speech Link Language Screening Assessment



The lion is sleeping and the elephant is drinking

Quit Previous Next

Language Link Trial Participants

| | Metro | | Non-metro | |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| | Sites | Number Screened | Sites | Number Screened |
| Low SES | 2 schools 3 preschools | 23 | 2 schools 3 preschools | 82 |
| Middle SES | 1 school 2 preschools | 18 | 1 school 3 preschools | 20 |
| High SES | 1 school 2 preschools | 69 | 2 schools 1 preschool | 4 |
| | | 110 | | 106 |



Language Link Results

Training

- 76 staff attended training at the commencement of the trial
- 92% staff who conducted screening attended the training
- 79% of the staff reported that the training was sufficient for them to commence screening and working with children



Language Link Results

Screening

Teachers - 41% of screenings

Ancillary staff - 31% of screenings

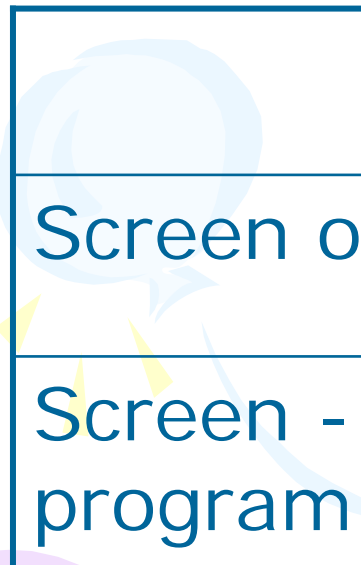
Directors – 27% of screenings



Language Link Results

Staff perceptions vs screening results

| | Staff no concern | Staff concern |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Screen ok | 82% | 48% |
| Screen - program(s) | 18% | 52% |





Language Link Results

- 23% were already receiving a speech pathology service
- 41% of the children screened were recommended for program(s)
- 6% of the children screened were recommended for discussion with a speech pathologist



Language Link Results

Staff feedback on screening:

24 respondents

- Easy to use (92% of respondents)
- Child friendly – apart from some pics
- IT difficulties!
- Time to conduct screening *
- A valuable resource
- Availability of staff (2 staff centres)



Language Link Results

Didn't like
it at all

Ok

Loved it!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Directors
Teachers
Ancillary

Range

7-9

7-10

8-10

Mean

8.2

8.0

8.0



Language Link Results

Time well spent

- 54% always
- 38% sometimes
- 0% never

Extra support

71% sought extra support



Language Link: Programs

- Supported programming for children both in and out of the classroom
- Suggested activities – valuable resource
- Assists with planning
- Supports both individual and group intervention
- Supplements resources already used

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features a large green balloon at the top, a blue balloon in the middle, and a purple balloon at the bottom. Yellow streamers and triangular flags are scattered around the balloons.

Language Link: Parents

7 Parents responded to questionnaire

- 6 were able to support their child and found the programs easy to follow
- 2 had concerns prior to screening
- 6 happy with way they were informed about screening results



Language Link: Parents

Improvement

3 - reported improvement

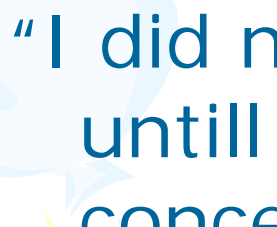
1 - no improvement

1 - unsure




Language Link: Parents

All were happy to see continued use of Language Link in Pre/school



“I did not realize (sic) how far he was behind until (sic) I started to teach him some basic concepts”



“Any tool to improve your child’s development outside what’s normally provided should be encouraged”



Language Link: Speech Path

DECS Speech Pathologists

6 respondents

- Rate of pre-referral discussions and referrals – little or no change
- 3 respondents believed staff found programs easy to use (3 did not respond)



Language Link: Speech Path

- 3 speech paths had infrequent requests from the site for support (3 never)
- 4 respondents felt that the time spent screening was time well spent (2 unsure)

“I think it has helped staff to identify RL difficulties in some children that may previously have been missed”



Positives

- Despite IT issues – sites were overwhelmingly positive about both screeners
- Training for site staff was effective
- Provided a means for targeted intervention for children (who otherwise would not be identified)
- Good support from Speech Link publishers/developers



Recommendations

Training

- Include some follow up training for programs
- DECS site speech pathologists to have greater involvement
- Include case example/s of a speech screening (highlighting potential issues)



Recommendations

Screening/Programmes

- Verification of recording accuracy
- Another step before program sent out
- Review the language used in the programmes (eg a parent thought s-z program meant work on all sounds s to z)



Recommendations

Parents

- Provide extra support

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a thin, curved string and has several small, yellow, triangular shapes radiating from its base, resembling streamers or confetti.

What next?

- Changes in allocation of licences?



Speech Link & Language Link

<http://www.speechlink.net/>