

Best Practices Guidelines for Phonological Assessment and Treatment

Finding	Practice
Standardized assessment provides a limited picture of a child’s phonetic and phonemic inventory. (Elbert & Gierut, 1986)	Administer independent probes that target sounds across positions multiple times to choose the most optimal target sounds.
Single word assessments provide as much information as conversational samples to determine severity of need. (Masterson, Bernhardt, & Hofheinz, 2005)	Administer independent probes at the single word level.
Implicational relationships exist across all languages. Marked structures imply unmarked structures. (Elbert & Gierut, 1986)	Teach marked structure to generate change for marked and unmarked sounds.
Treating nonstimulable, later-developing sounds for children with phonological disorders yields more change throughout the child’s sound system. (Gierut, 2007)	Treat nonstimulable sounds and monitor stimulable sounds.
Three element clusters imply the presence of two-element /s/ and non /s/ clusters. (Gierut & Champion, 2001)	Teach three-element clusters to make the greatest impact IF the child has the second and third consonants already in phonetic inventory.
Clusters with a small sonority difference imply the presence of clusters with a large sonority difference. (Gierut, 1999)	Teach clusters with a small sonority difference to create change in child’s system. (Resource – <i>Sonority Sequencing for Clusters</i>)
/sp/, /sk/ and /st/ are considered to be adjunct clusters. They inhibit generalization when treated. (Gierut, 1999)	Avoid treating /sp/, /sk/ and /st/.
High-frequency treatment words lead to greater generalization than low-frequency words. (Morrisette & Gierut, 2002)	Teach the target sounds in real words. (Resource – <i>High Frequency Word List</i>)
Minimal pairs marked by maximal feature differences and a major class distinction create the most change in a child’s system. (Gierut, 2001)	Teach two unknown sounds (sonorants vs. obstruents) that are maximally distinct.
Treatment for bilingual children needs to consider sounds in both languages. There is often interaction between the two languages, but many sounds may not be impacted in such a way. (Yavas & Goldstein, 1998)	Choose phonological targets from both languages if possible.
Correct placement is essential to progress. Bauman-Waengler (2004); Secord (2007)	Be skilled in a range of elicitation methods.
Mass practice is essential to progress. (Skelton, 2004)	Each student should produce approximately 150 correct productions a session. Schedule no more than four students per group.
Cognitive monitoring of production is essential to progress. (Ertmer & Ertmer, 1998)	Build cognitive monitoring from the first session. Ask all students in group to monitor their own and each other’s productions. All students should be engaged in every moment of instruction.
There is no research evidence that oral motor exercises improve speech production. (Lof, 2006)	Differentiate between general oral motor exercises and placement methods that promote positioning of the articulators for specific sound production.

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