

**A Parent's Guide to:**  
**Shaping Speech –**  
**One Sound at a Time.**

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Speech - Language Pathologist

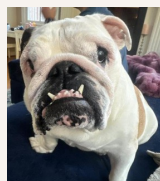

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## About Me

Talk Tools Instructor  
Therapist Mentor  
Mother, wife, business owner


- 24 years as an SLP
- 18 years of direct work with the DS community
- Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area - Northern California / Paso Robles
- Live and Virtual Therapy/Intensives in Paso Robles, CA
- Feeding/Speech Classes


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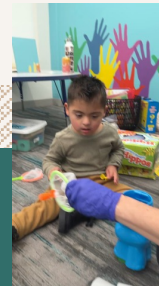
## Infusion of Hope - Luke



**Start of therapy**  
1 syll  
Tongue protrusion



**6 mos of therapy**  
1-2 syll  
Tongue integrated



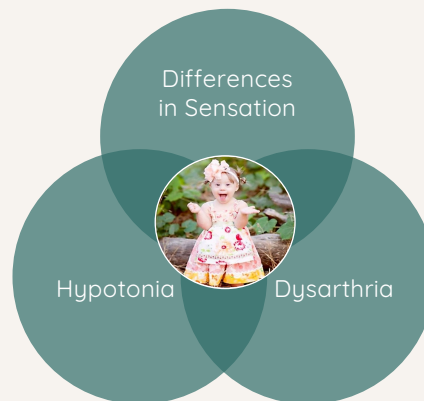
**1 year of therapy**  
2-3 syll  
Active oral muscles

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## Why do children with DS speak the way they do?


When the inside of your mouth is numb, it makes it very difficult to move muscles to imitate or initiate speech.



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### Common Profile of Child with Down Syndrome




- Decreased Oral/Facial Sensitivity
- Jaw Weakness
- Tongue Protrusion
- Limited Cheek/Lip Activation

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### Oral Sensory-Motor Therapeutic Approach


- Activate** Turns on muscles, and directs their movement
- Balance** Balances use of lips, cheeks, jaw, tongue
- Strength** Creates the appropriate amount of strength in the muscle per the task.



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### If you are treating the muscles in your child's body – why aren't you treating the muscles in their mouth?




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### Dissociation

The separation of movement, based on stability and adequate strength, in one or more muscle groups.

**We Need Complete Dissociation for Clear Speech!!**



- Tongue
- Lips
- Jaw

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## Awakening the Sensory System

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- 1) Facial Massage
- 2) Oral Stimulation

This was my favorite video of doing facial massage last week. Then look what he did ...

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## Jaw Work

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- 1) Super-imposed Jaw Support
- 2) Bilateral Bite Tubes
- 3) Jaw Grading Bite Blocks

Because life is so much better when you share it with someone

#jawwork  
#speechclass  
#karajo.king  
#siblinglove

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## Cheek and Lip Strategies

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- 1) Cheek suction
- 2) Lip closure, rounding, lower lip retraction

Week 4 homework: Working on the /m/ sound

@happykidstherapy

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## Tongue Work


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- 1) Proper straw drinking (tongue retraction)
- 2) Tongue tip lateralization, elevation, back side spread


Week 4 homework: Working on the /m/ sound

@happykidstherapy

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 Children who start oral sensory – motor programs often see increases in:  
babbling, imitation, variety of sounds  
spoken, control over speech sounds,  
increased syllable complexity, better oral  
rest posture and improved speech clarity.

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 Reason I am teaching this class today...

→ Parents deserve to have a step by step framework when helping their children develop speech.

**Today's Goals:**  
1) Establish current syllable shapes.  
2) Learn how to progress to next level.

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**Building Clear Speech in Children with Down Syndrome**

**Muscle Based Work**

- Strengthens, balances, and connects child to their body for improved: babbling, imitation, sound placement, breathing, oral rest posture.

**Oral Placement of Sounds**

- Use of supports (tools and facial prompts/cues) to help move a child's mouth into the shape for each sound production.

**Increasing Syllable Shapes**

- Helping a child improve the complexity of their words /phrases / sentences in a systematic way.

Today's Topic →

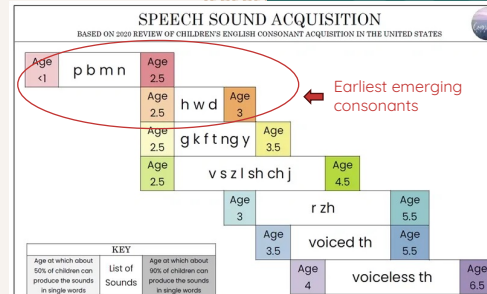
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**Speech Development**

- VOWELS first...** then consonants.
- Sound development is based on muscle development.
- Muscle development is based on feeding development.
- Target sounds from early (vowels + earliest emerging consonants first) to latest.

**SPEECH SOUND ACQUISITION**  
BASED ON 2020 REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S ENGLISH CONSONANT ACQUISITION IN THE UNITED STATES



**KEY**

Age at which about 50% of children can produce the sounds in single words	List of Sounds	Age at which about 90% of children can produce the sounds in single words
<1	p b m n	2.5
2.5	h w d	3
2.5	g k f t n g y	3.5
2.5	v s z l sh ch j	4.5
3	r zh	5.5
3.5	voiced th	5.5
4	voiceless th	6.5

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## Babbling & Imitation

### Babbling

- Starts after 4-6 months
- Includes vowels and consonants
- Reduplicated syllables "buh buh buh"
- Variegated syllables "muh, guh, buh"
- Babies gain control of babbling over time.
- Children with DS have delayed babbling and limited sound development due to oral motor disorders.**

### Imitation

- Copying gross motor, fine motor, facial and speech sounds.
- Various levels of imitation (sound, syllable, word, phrase, sentence)
- Various syllable shapes and complexities (V, C, CVCV, CV, V-V, VC, Cv1CV2 etc.)
- Requires engagement with a partner / joint attention.
- Requires control of oral movement.
- Imitation can be extremely difficult based on the complexity of speech development and delays in oral motor development.**

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## Find Where Your Child Falls – 8 Steps to Verbal Imitation

- Imitates actions with objects – banging blocks together
- Imitates Communicative gestures – waving, pointing, clapping, blowing kisses, hi/bye, signs
- Imitates nonverbal actions with face and mouth – raspberries, tongue out, pucker for kiss, open mouth
- Imitates Vocalizations – panting, fake cough, grunting, screeching, elongated vowels
- Imitates exclamatory words – uh-oh, ow, oops, vroom, weel
- Verbal Routines: Fills in words in common songs (Ready set GO!)
- Imitates functional single words (approximations) – Or starting use word approx.
- Short phrases / sentences

### STEPS TO BUILD VERBAL IMITATION

**Citation:** This information is from: @speech.allisonfors

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**Happy Kids THERAPY**  
Speech • Feeding • Occupational

**Speech = the sequencing of sounds into various syllable shapes.**

**Syllable shapes vary in complexity.**

**Children use simpler shapes at first and more complex shapes over time.**

**Goal:** Make speech achievable by breaking it down into simple shapes per the stage of the child.

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## Imitation & Syllable Shapes

**Noises:**

Grunts, sneezes, coughs, intonation raspberries, exhaloes, shrieks, slurping, eating noises, snoring, yawn, baby crying, whisper, animal noises

**Goals:**

- Joint attention
- Oral Motor Development
- Gestural Imitation

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## Imitation & Syllable Shapes

### Vowels, Consonants and CVCV

**Beginning Phase** - It make take minutes for a child to produce a sound. Applaud all approximations.  
**Goal: Child to feel successful.**



Vowels + /m, b, p, h, n, d, k, g, w/ - Early emerging sounds

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## Vowel, Consonant and CVCV words

“oh” - open	Mama
“ee” - wee!	Baba
“ow”	Papa
“m” - more	Dada
“ah” - all done	Peepee
“oo” - oops!	Poo poo

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## Early Sound Imitation Rules

- Model/prompt for a sound, wait 10 seconds for child to imitate. Repeat.
- Try multiple ways to help your child achieve the sound. (Use tools, hand prompts, imitations, gestures)
- Focus on a new sound for a couple minutes before moving on to another sound.
- Place a toy next to your mouth so that your child can see what you are talking about - AND - they can also see your mouth shape.

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## Imitation & Syllable Shapes

### Vowels, Consonants and CVCV

**Advanced Phase** - in this phase children's motor planning is faster and they can imitate sounds quicker and multiple times in a row.

**Goal:** Getting as many trials of the same sound in a row.




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## Using Songs to Target Speech Sounds

- Icky Sticky Bubble Gum – “Bubble”
- Old Mc Donald – “Oh (old) (far) “m”, “EIEIO”, Sign the animal name, animal sounds
- Baby Shark – “do” or “duh” and Family names “mama, dada, baby”
- Slippery Fish – “sh” approximation, “wawa” = water, “oh no!”, do all actions
- BINGO – B I N G O, “oh!”
- Elmo’s Song (La La La La) – “lalalala” “elmo”
- Where is Thumbkin? – “he”(re) I am! – “away” – focus on actions
- Wheels on the Bus – “weee ah buh” (wheels on bus) “ahh oo tow” (all through town), people’s names, funny sounds
- Boom Chicka Boom – “Boom” Oh yeah, uh huh, wah (one) ma “more” “ti” (me)
- Down By the Bay – “Dow by bay” “oh” (grow / home / go), “do” “ay” say
- Ba Ba Black Sheep – “Ba ba” “seep” (sheep) “wooh” (wool) “ee-ehs” (yes)
- ABC – any letter approximation, “ow I oh my ABC” “ti(me) oo (you) “me”



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## Imitation & Syllable Shapes

### CV & V+V

Word approximations are very appropriate at this stage.




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## CV & V+ V words

<b>Bah – bock</b>	<b>Oh oh – Uh oh</b>
<b>Me</b>	<b>Oh an – orange</b>
<b>Mo – more</b>	<b>Ow I – outside</b>
<b>Pah – pop</b>	<b>I ee – ice cream</b>
<b>Bee</b>	<b>Oh ee – lonely</b>
<b>Moo</b>	



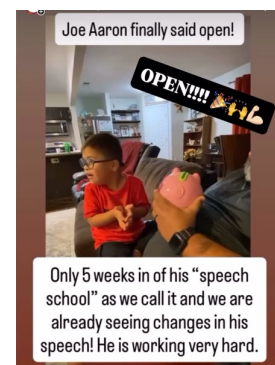
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## Imitation & Syllable Shapes

### VC & VCV

Word approximations are very appropriate at this stage.




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**VC & VCV**

Up	Ow	Opo / opeh - open
In	Eat	Ehmo - Elmo
Out	Arm	Appo - Apple
Off	Oat	Eyebah - eye ball
On	Out	Oh no!
It	At	Outeye - outside

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**Imitation & Syllable Shapes**

**CVC**




- Complex syllable shape
- Higher load on the jaw
- Ensure you have started oral motor work so the child's system can support longer lengths of utterances.

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**CVC**

Mom	Beam	Night
Bob	Beep	Pig
Poop	Mop	Bike
Pop	Hop	Hat
Peep	Map	Cup
Bib	Beep	Boot

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**Imitation & Syllable Shapes**

**CV1CV2**



These words have the same consonant but two different vowels.

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**CV1CV2**

Baby	Paper
Mommy	Purple
Daddy	People
Puppy	Baseba(l)
Tato	Poppy
Cookie	Mermai(d)

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**Higher Level Syllable Shapes:**


Cv1C2V2  
Cv1C2Vz + CVC  
3+ Syllable utterances  
Higher level speech sounds  
Consonant Blends




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**Take a Language Sample**



1 Muh (amen)	CV	6 Lola	CVCV2
2 ee (Jesus)	V	7 Lolo	CVCV
3 Oh (for)	V	8 Momo (elmo)	CVCV
4 Mommy	CV1CV2	9 Jojo	CVCV
5 Papa	CVCV	10 Uh -ee (Can I see?)	V + V

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**Syllable Shape Inventory**

1. Circle the shapes your child says


2. Write the # of times your child uses that shape.

V	2	CV1C2V2
C		CV1C2V2 + CVC
CVCV	4	
CV	1	
V+V	1	
VCV		
CVC		
CV1CV2	2	

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## Be one sound ahead of your child. Add one sound to each production.



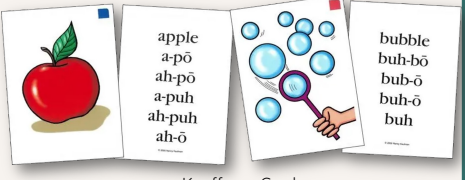
1 Muh (amen) CV <b>Ah -muh</b>	6 Lola CVCV2 <b>Lola U(p)</b>
2 ee (Jesus) V <b>Ee - uh</b>	7 Lolo CVCV <b>Lolo ea(t)</b>
3 Oh (for) V <b>Foh</b>	8 Momo (elmo) CVCV <b>Ehmo</b>
4 Mommy CVCV2 <b>Hi Mommy</b>	9 Jojo CVCV <b>Muh (my) Jojo</b>
5 Papa CVCV <b>Papa (g)oh!</b>	10 Uh -ee (Can I see?) V + V <b>Eye ee?</b>

Vowels + /m, b, p, h, n, d, k, g,w/ - Early emerging sounds

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## Successive Approximation Approach



Assisting your child to shape their word productions by helping them to move from simple to more complex syllable shapes over time.

**C = Consonant V = Vowel**

**V → C → CV → CVCV → VCV → VC → CV1CV2 → CVC → CV1CV2 + CVC**  
**Ah → B → Bah → Bah Bah → aba → ab → Baby → bob → Bobby Bed**

Kauffman Cards

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## Using the Successive Approximation Approach


- Start with a production the child can say "Buh" (Identify their imitation level)
- Break the target into small steps (Buh → Bah → Ball)
- Reinforce each step as the child moves through them.
- Use tactile supports to help make and place the child's mouth for each production. (tools, facial prompting, visuals)
- Fade cues over time until the child can produce the next step independently
- Generalize the word into many contexts to ensure it's functional.
- Ensure you focus on earliest developing vowels and consonants first. As the child's oral motor skills develop, you can push in higher level sounds.

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## Syllable Shapes + Repetitive Trials

ee → pea Bah → Bock Da-da → Daddy



CV - Pea CVC - Bock CV1CV2 - Daddy

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## Homework!!

The image shows three worksheets from Happy Kids Therapy. The first worksheet is titled 'Syllable Shaping' and includes a list of instructions for parents to follow. The second worksheet is titled 'Syllable Shaping' and includes a list of instructions for parents to follow. The third worksheet is titled 'Syllable Shaping' and includes a list of instructions for parents to follow.

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## How can I find a therapist near me?

- 1) TalkTools: Therapist Locator
- 2) Contact your local DS group or your local tongue tie group and ask for an "Oral Sensory-Motor Therapist" (Speech Pathologist)
- 3) If you don't have a therapist near you, you can contact someone within your state to see if they provide online therapy.
- 4) PROMPT Institute (facial prompting)



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## Continued Support with Heather

- 90-minute online consultations (case history + video review)
- 50-minute online consultations (videos review)
- In-Person Evaluations (Danville, CA / Paso Robles, Ca)
- In-Person Intensives (Paso Robles, Ca!)



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## Intensives with Heather

- Paso Robles, CA
- 2-5 days long
- 1-2 sessions p/day
- Intense work with child
- Parent training
- Written home program
- Happy Kids Community



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## Virtual Feeding Class for Parents


*A Virtual 4-Week Feeding Class for Parents of Children With Down Syndrome*

**Empower Your Child to Eat and Drink With Confidence**

Are mealtimes a challenge? The **Virtual Feeding Class** is here to provide you with the tools, strategies, and personalized support needed to help your child thrive.

This 4-week recorded program is designed specifically for children with Down syndrome, aged 6 months and up, to improve feeding skills, muscle function, and mealtime success.

[Transform Mealtimes—Enroll Now](#)



<https://courses.happykidstherapy.com/feeding-class>

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## 6-Week Speech Class – Starts March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026

**\$50 off This week!**

- Recorded Modules
- 3x Weekly Live Office Hours
- Create an individualized home program to use for the next year
- Gain confidence in identifying your child's needs and working together.
- Connect other families
- \$400 (Reduced to \$350 this week!)**

**Virtual 6-Week Speech Development Class**

**Supporting Children with Down Syndrome**

Feel Empowered As You Support Your Child's Individual Needs: A 6-Week Guided Class for Parents of Children with Down Syndrome.

Deeply understand why your child isn't speaking clearly, and how to use simple techniques to improve their intelligibility in the comfort of your own home.

**Class starts October 6th**

Live office hours will be held at multiple times throughout each week to support various time zones.

[Join Now!](#)




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## Speech Class Testimonial – Lily (3 y/o)

**Nine months between videos**



**Before**



**After**

What do you see?

- Jaw
- Lips
- Tongue
- Clarity

Gig's Virtual Playhouse - 2025

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## Happy Kids Community

**Connection - Community - Clarity**

**First 14 days Free ☺**

Here is what is included:

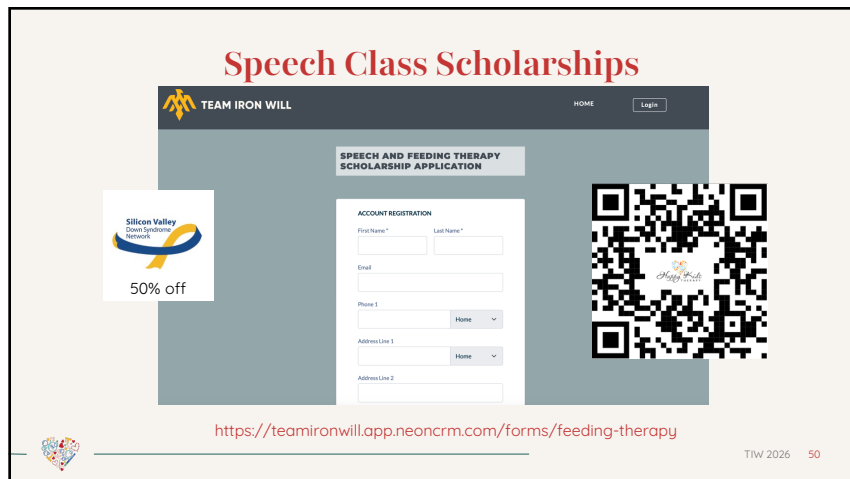
- Speech & Feeding Support 24 - 7
- 4 monthly video posts
- Bi-Monthly Office Hours
- Supportive parent community
- Constant education & troubleshooting your home program plan
- Lots of Hope Always!!

**Price: \$50 p/month**



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