An articulation disorder is present when a child produces sounds, syllables, or words incorrectly so that listeners do not understand what is being said or pay more attention to the way the words sound than to what they mean. If a sound is produced inconsistently, the sound is developing, and, thus, is noted to be a positive behavior in your child's speech skills.

This process is going to be a parent-centered approach based on the selection of a sound and stabilizing that sound. All sounds are treated separately as some children substitute one sound for another (i.e. /w/ for /r/ as in /wed/ for /red/), while others may omit sounds (i.e. /at/ for /cat/) or distort sounds (i.e. lisp).

As with all new behaviors, children learn new speaking behaviors in smaller increments where they experience the most success before they are able to generalize the target skills to other linguistic contexts and even other people. Children learn their new sound production skills in accordance with the following hierarchy:

80% accuracy is considered to be mastery.

- Produce sound in isolation with 80% accuracy.
- Produce sound at syllable level with 80% accuracy.
- Produce sound at word level with 80% accuracy.
- Produce sound at phrase level with 80% accuracy.
- Produce sound at sentence level with 80% accuracy.
- Produce sound at conversation level with 80% accuracy.

A child is required to stabilize a sound at one level before moving to the next level. As children move through the hierarchy, errors are more likely to occur as tasks become more complex, and when asked to produce sounds while formulating ideas or problem solving in conjunction with concentrating on the motor components of the speech sound.

Also, your child may have difficulty producing a sound as a result of the position of the sound in a word (i.e. /r/ - red, arrow, doctor). He/she may be able to produce the /r/ sound in the initial position of a word (i.e. red), but has the inability to produce the /r/ when it is in the medial position of a word (i.e. arrow). Each position of the /r/ need to be treated separately.

It is important to remember that because your child is working on a sound and can produce it at word level that he/she may not be able to transfer the production to conversation level. Producing sounds correctly takes a tremendous amount of practice-think of it as learning a new sport; it will take time and patience. If your child is unable to maintain 80% accuracy at a particular level, decrease the complexity (move to an easier level).
Your child will be working on the sound that you discussed with the speech/language pathologist at your child’s school, which we will call the target sound. Your child will need to practice consistently in order for it to become mastered. I suggest setting aside a set amount of time each day to work on speech. It does not need to be more than 5-10 minutes. Explain to your child that it’s speech time and you’re going to work on their target sound. If your child gets frustrated, please try again later. Please do not correct your child all the time (outside of your designated speech time). We don’t want your child to start feeling defeated or frustrated. We want to reassure him or her that we’re still listening to their message, and not just their speech.

The following worksheets will enable you to help by practicing with your child at home. These activities will give you an opportunity to listen to him or her say the target sound and then to tell him or her if it is being made correctly. The activities are based upon a hierarchy of difficulty. You will begin by working on the sound, then progress on to words, phrases, and sentences.

Procedure:

ALWAYS START WITH #1 AT EVERY LEVEL

1. At the beginning of each session, read a list of the words with the target sound. It is important that your child does not talk, but only listens at this stage.

2. Next, model the sound, then have the child say the sound by his/herself.

3. When you feel your child has done the above with consistency, move to using that sound in words, which requires more concentration. Begin as directed above, read a list of words while child listens, then have child say words after you model them, then by his/herself. Use the attached activities to assist you. Only practice the sound in one word position at a time (ie: beginning of the word, end of the word, middle of the word). When putting the sound into words, your child may make a mistake. When you hear a mistake on the target sound, have the child say it over again using it correctly. Stop after two attempts and move on.

4. Move from word level to phrase level when your child can produce 8 out of 10 words correctly. At phrase level, your child will use two or more words, one of which contains the sound on which your child is working. Begin by using a carrier phrase before each target word (i.e. it’s a _____, it’s a ________) or (I have a ________, I have a ________). When working through a session, do not change the carrier phrase, as the child will have to get use to different motor movements in the mouth, which increases complexity. Use the same procedure as you would at word level (child listens to parent repeat target phrases, child practices after parent modeled, activity).
5. Sentence level is more difficult, and you may need to help your child think of words with the target sound and to make sentences with those words. Let the child do most of the work. Be available for help only when absolutely necessary. (Use pictures with target sound to assist with ideas for sentences)

Sample Lesson: word level:
- Listen to parent read words
- Practice words after parent model
- Game using target sound in words
- Goal: 8 of 10 correct or 80% accuracy

Sample Lesson: sentence level
- Listen to parent read words
- Practice using words in sentences
- Game using target sounds in sentences
- Goal: 8 of 10 correct or 80% accuracy