

Program for Students with Disabilities – Autism Spectrum Disorder

Supplementary Guidelines for Speech Pathologists – Pragmatic Language

ASD CRITERION B

A score of two or more standard deviations below the mean for the student's age in expressive and receptive language skills.

There are a small number of students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) whose functional oral language skills are in the '*severe language disorder*' range, but whose performance on a standardised test of oral language does not adequately reflect the extent of their difficulties.

For these students, an argument may be made that, although they do not technically meet the above eligibility criterion based on their test scores alone, they *functionally* demonstrate expressive and receptive skills in this severe range. When the language skills of these students are considered in the context of the classroom, they may therefore be considered to meet the language requirement.

All students with an ASD (and some students without an ASD) will demonstrate some degree of pragmatic language difficulty. In order to meet the language eligibility criterion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder category of the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD), the student's functional or pragmatic language deficit must impact on their expressive and receptive language abilities to the extent that they demonstrate the equivalent of a '*severe language disorder*' in the context of the classroom. It should be noted that a pragmatic language disorder alone is not sufficient to meet the language criterion; it is the impact of this disorder on the student's expressive and receptive language abilities which must be demonstrated.

Because functional or pragmatic language competence is a dynamic, context-dependent set of skills and abilities, it can be difficult to quantify. Therefore an assessment of the student's pragmatic language difficulties should contain a number of elements. This could include:

1. Pragmatic Profile/Checklist e.g. CELF-4 Pragmatic Profile
2. Standardised assessment e.g. Test Of Pragmatic Language (TOPL)
3. Classroom observation
4. Interviews with parents/teachers

All reports must contain:

5. Discussion/analysis/synthesis of information gathered to demonstrate the functional impact of the student's Pragmatic/Severe Language Disorder, particularly in the school context.

Test/profile scores, information from interviews and observations provide the raw data which contribute to the profile of the student's abilities. Analysis and discussion of these data is essential to demonstrate:

- the extent of the student's pragmatic difficulties,
- the severity of these difficulties in comparison with age peers,
- how these difficulties impact on the student's expressive and receptive language skills,
- and how the severity of this functional language disorder affects the student's ability to access the learning of the classroom.

In order to meet the language eligibility criterion, there must be evidence for, and a cohesive case presented that, in the context of the classroom, the student's expressive and receptive oral language skills are functionally within the '*severe language disorder*' range.