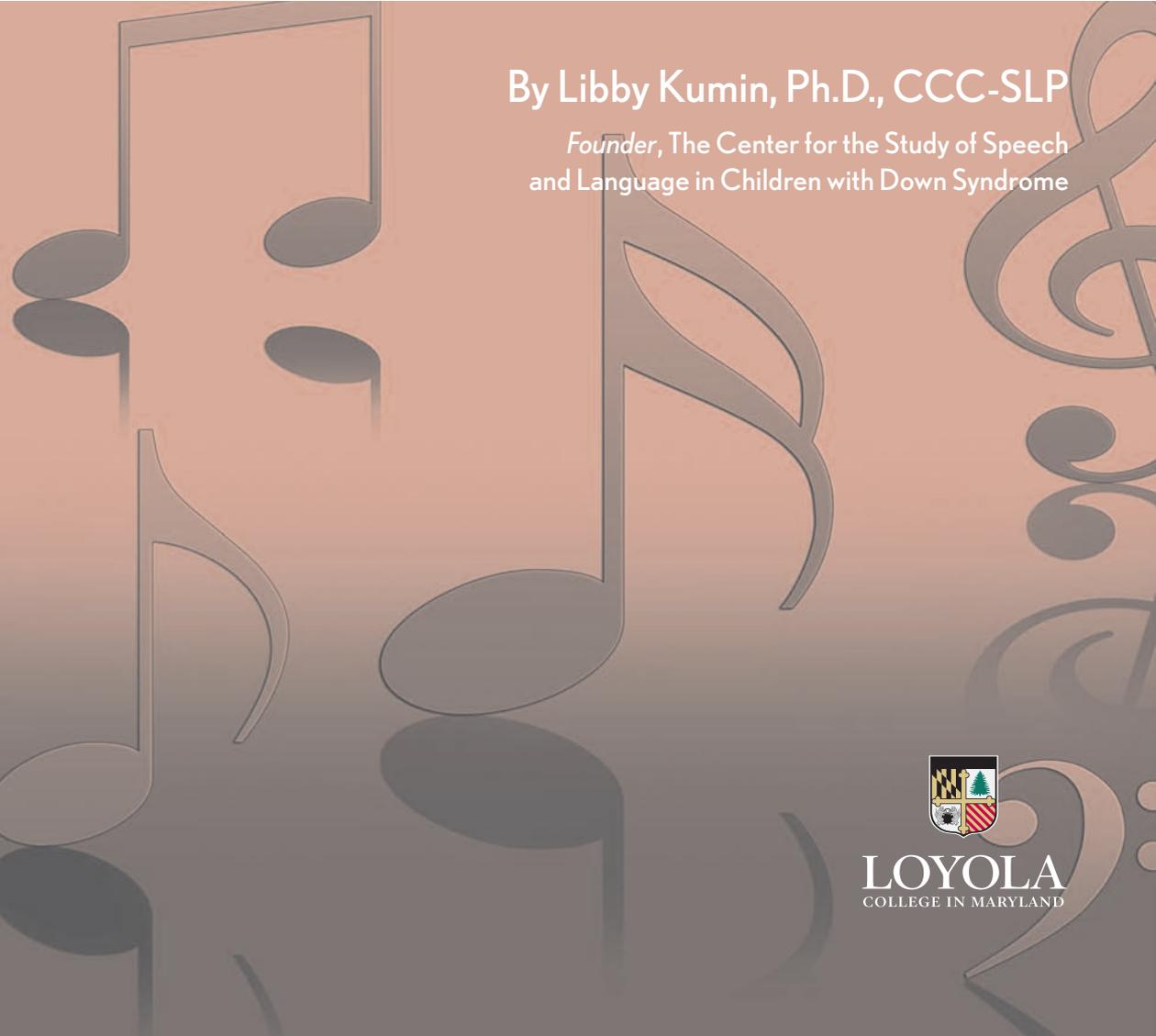




SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCE GUIDE

# For Adolescents with Down Syndrome



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**LOYOLA**  
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## Why can't my adolescent communicate?

The most common communication problems for adolescents with Down syndrome are in the areas of:

- speech intelligibility, i.e. that their speech may be difficult to understand
- conversational skills, i.e. they have difficulty with long conversations
- narrative discourse, i.e. difficulty telling about what happened to them or retelling a story
- academic language, i.e. abstract language for subject learning in middle school and high school
- asking for specific clarifications when they don't understand something.

## What type of speech and language evaluation and treatment are needed? What can I do to improve my child's ability to communicate?

In middle school and high school, communication skills need to support where the child is now (subject learning, following school rules and routines, and social language skills) and also support planning for the future (language for transition planning, job skills and community living). Classroom language skills become more difficult because your child has multiple teachers who have a variety of teaching and language styles. In middle and high school, academic subjects involve more abstract and advanced language and there are fewer contextual cues and visual models to help learning. During adolescence, if some communication skills cannot be mastered, alternate communication solutions may need to be considered. For example, if the adolescent cannot give his vital information so that it can be understood (name, address, telephone number, date of birth), business cards or an electronic communication device can be used to ensure that he is able to give that information when needed. All of the following areas should be assessed, and treated as needed:

### Receptive Language Skills

Advanced Comprehension  
Vocabulary and concept development/  
School, transition to workplace  
Auditory memory  
Auditory processing  
WH questions  
Following complex directions (written  
and verbal)  
Literacy (reading skills)

### Expressive Language Skills

Vocabulary  
Morphology  
Syntax  
Answering questions  
Giving vital information  
Encoding/sentence formulation  
Presentation skills

## Pragmatics/Social Language Skills

Requests  
Social interactive skills  
Conversational skills  
Narrative discourse  
Clarifications and repairs  
School to job language skills

## School Language Skills

Language of the Curriculum  
Language of Instruction  
Language of the Hidden Curriculum  
Language of Testing

Language of Classroom Routines

School to Job Transition Skills

## Speech Skills

Articulation  
Phonology  
Oral motor skills  
Childhood apraxia of speech (if needed)  
Speech intelligibility  
Voice  
Fluency  
Rate of Speech

## Where can I go for help?

Books, conferences and presentations will help you learn more about how to help your adolescent with speech and language. Speech and language services may be available through your local school system through the IEP process and transition planning, medical centers, community clinics, university clinics, and private practitioners. Your local parent support group is an excellent source of information to help in locating professionals in your area.

Kumin, L. (2006). *What did you say: A guide to speech intelligibility in children with Down syndrome*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Kumin, L. (2003). You said it just yesterday, Why not now? Developmental Apraxia of speech in children and adults with Down syndrome. *Disability Solutions*, 5 (2), 1-15. (on-line [www.disabilitysolutions.org](http://www.disabilitysolutions.org))

Kumin, L. (2002). Maximizing speech and language in children and adolescents with Down syndrome, in Cohen, W., Nadel, L. & Madnick, M. (Eds). *Down syndrome: Visions for the 21st century* (403-415). NY:Wiley-Liss.

Kumin, L. (2002). Why can't you understand what I am saying: Speech intelligibility in Daily Life. *Disability Solutions*, 5, 1-15. ([www.disabilitysolutions.org](http://www.disabilitysolutions.org))

Kumin, L. (2001). *Classroom language skills for children with Down syndrome: A guide for parents and teachers*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

**For more information:**

[www.ndscenter.org](http://www.ndscenter.org)

[www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org)

[www.ds-health.com](http://www.ds-health.com)

[www.downsed.org](http://www.downsed.org)

[www.nads.org](http://www.nads.org)

This work made possible by a grant from The Thomas W. Bradley Foundation.