About the clinic

The mission of La Trobe Communication Clinic is to:
- Provide speech pathology services that are informed by client need and best practice
- Achieve excellence in clinical education
- Create research opportunities for Human Communication Sciences students and staff.

The clinic is located on the Bundoora campus of La Trobe University and is accessible by trains, buses, trams and by car. There is free car parking facilities for clients in the Visitors Car Park. Security personnel at the Central Control Gate will issue a parking permit that is to be displayed on the car dashboard. Our administrative staff will provide you with an appointment card and map/directions.

 Fees

Assessment: $60 ($30 concession)
PAL 5 week program: $450 ($225 concession)

 Registration

To register for PAL at La Trobe please contact clinic reception between 9:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday to Friday, or download application forms from our website (3: Request for Service, Consent, PAL Client Information). These forms should be completed, signed and returned to the clinic.

 Other clinic services

La Trobe Communication Clinic also offers the following speech pathology and services:
- A preschool speech and language clinic funded by Community Health
- A child fluency (stuttering) clinic funded by Community Health
- An adolescent and adult fluency (stuttering) assessment and treatment program
- A voice clinic for children and adults

For eligibility guidelines and other information on these services please contact clinic reception.

 How to contact us

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What is phonological awareness?

Phonological awareness is the understanding that words are made up of smaller parts (e.g. syllables and sounds). A very strong relationship exists between phonological awareness and the development of reading and spelling skills.

Children with phonological awareness difficulties may:

- be confused about the difference between letters and sounds
- have difficulty in recognising the same letters/sounds in different words
- tend to have difficulty with sound-letter correspondence, especially for vowels
- be slow at sounding out words when they read, and forget what they’ve sounded out before getting to the end of the word
- guess words from the initial letter
- have difficulty blending sounds together
- alter the sound sequence, e.g. clamp > camalp
- omit syllables when spelling, e.g. paradise > perdise
- have difficulty identifying the sounds in consonant clusters, and omit or add letters when spelling, e.g., stamp > stap, cold > clold
- omit or substitute vowels from multisyllabic words, e.g., beneath > bnith, orchestra > ochsta.

PAL at La Trobe

PAL stands for Phonological Awareness for Literacy.

It is based on a program developed over the past decade at the University of Queensland. It was extensively revised and republished in 2008. The program was developed to be run by speech pathology students under the supervision of qualified speech pathologists and is strongly evidenced based with published outcome data. La Trobe Communication Clinic has been running the PAL program since 2004.

The objectives of PAL at La Trobe are to:

- Improve students’ phonological awareness skills including identifying sounds in words, segmenting words into individual sounds, blending sounds into words
- Improve the accuracy and efficiency of students’ letter-sound knowledge
- Make explicit to students the relationship between phonological awareness skills, letter-sound knowledge, word reading and word spelling.

The program is organized into three stages:

The first stage focuses on simple words with regular spelling (2-3 sound words)

The second stage focuses on more complex words (i.e. those requiring advanced segmentation, blending and manipulation skills) with regular spelling.

Finally, the third stage focuses on the reading and spelling of multisyllabic words where the spelling is not always regular. Rules for syllable breaking, and the addition of grammatical morphemes are included in this stage.

The PAL program at La Trobe Communication Clinic involves 5 weekly sessions of three hours each, for 5 consecutive weeks (a total of 15 hours of instruction). Students normally commence with Stage 1 and depending on need may attend further blocks of intervention to continue through more advanced levels.

The program involves student clinicians who work under the supervision of a qualified Speech Pathologist. Children work at their own pace through a mixture of group and one-to-one work. Group sizes are small.

Parents should note that the PAL program is not a comprehensive literacy program. It does not go beyond the word level and it targets very specific skills. These skills are fundamentally important for the acquisition of effective reading and spelling skills but some children with literacy difficulties will have moved beyond the skills targeted by PAL.

Eligibility

This program is recommended for children in Grades 2 – 6 with a specific reading disability; that is children with unexpected reading difficulties in view of their other abilities.

It is not recommended for children with a significant language delay or disorder, moderate to severe visual or auditory impairment, intellectual disability, or behavioural problems.

Children are assessed before they commence the program in order to confirm that the program will suit their needs.