

School Programs *in* **Speech-Language Pathology**

Organization and Service Delivery

SEVENTH EDITION

EVOLUTION OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

In U.S. schools, speech, language, and hearing services are a critical component of education and special education programs. Our model reflects our democratic philosophy of education. We believe children have a right to education and to receive support personalized to their needs if they struggle. This education model is ideal for many reasons. Acquisition of communication skills is critical for school success. Our mission is to prevent, alleviate, and remove barriers to communication that may interfere with students' ability to fully participate in the education process. Students who demonstrate communication impairments and struggle to succeed in school may be eligible to receive instruction and intervention that is personalized to meet their needs. Legal mandates for provision of services are backed up by local, state, and federal funding and support systems.

Figure 1–1 illustrates the evolution of speech-language pathology services over several decades and projects into the future. Column 1 indicates the decade or timeframe. Column 2 indicates the aspects of communication that were the SLPs' focus for treatment. Column 3 highlights key roles clinicians have assumed in their service delivery. Column 4 lists the emerging educational and discipline-related issues under professional consideration. Column 5 illustrates relevant treatment considerations for that time frame. This chart demonstrates major changes in service delivery practices over the years. SLPs' roles have paralleled the increased understanding of communication disorders and its impact on learning and literacy. As issues have emerged and educational environments changed, practitioners have strived to adapt to new demands.

As noted in the figure, the speech-language pathology profession has experienced numerous major turning points. In fact, the field is currently

undergoing a metamorphosis in the way services are delivered. Significant modifications are taking place in national, local, and educational settings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, advanced technology, and innovations in intervention and service delivery. Change motivates SLPs to reflect on their options and models for service delivery. In educational forums, public education laws and policies are continually reviewed and rewritten to clarify the meaning and intent of providing services within the classroom setting and in the least restrictive environment. Recent perspectives propose an expansion of service delivery approaches based on goals to achieve functional communication and to serve all children in the learning environment that best fits their individual needs. There is growing support for employing multiple systems of support for children with learning challenges, including those with communication disabilities. Practitioners are encouraged to integrate technology and artificial intelligence.

Currently, school SLPs are gravitating toward using inclusive models of service delivery that merge speech and language services with educational curriculum and programming. Inclusive practices can be described as intervention services that are based on the unique and specific needs of the individual and that are provided in a setting that is least restrictive. As the field, professionals, and states continue to evaluate their frameworks and efficacy of services, more options will evolve for all children with special needs. Schools must demonstrate that the services offered will support students so they can participate to the maximum extent possible in learning and social contexts. Based on these directions, the best practice for speech-language pathology service delivery within the school setting would indicate that the general education classroom should be the first step in the continuum of service delivery options available for students with communication disabilities.

Success is defined in terms of helping students reach measurable, functional outcomes so

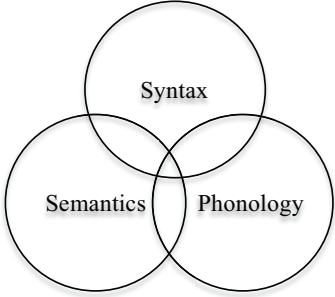
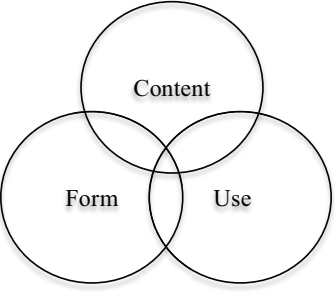
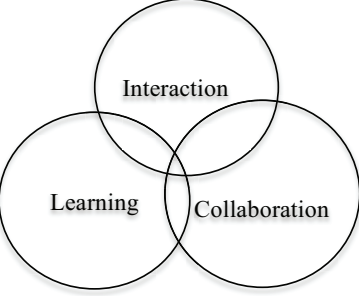
	Focus of Services	SLP Role	Emerging Issues	Treatment Considerations
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanistic view of language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language use is important 	
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pragmatics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language and learning are linked 	
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional, interactive communication Preparation for learning, living, and working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative-consulting model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion Transition Efficacy Accountability Outcomes 	

FIGURE 1-1. Evolution of school-based speech-language pathology services. *continues*

they can participate in family, community, learning, and work activities. Models of service provision are expanding to now include families, peers, and educators where possible.

TODAY'S SLPs WEAR MULTIPLE HATS

SLPs play critical roles in schools throughout the United States. Speech-language and hearing ser-

vices are offered as a component of the educational program within the public schools. Over half of ASHA members are employed in school settings. This is unlike the delivery system in other countries, wherein speech, language, and hearing professionals often follow a “medical model” and provide services through health and medical facilities such as hospitals. Our system undoubtedly reflects our democratic philosophy of education, whereby children have a right to education and our function in school is to prevent, remove, and alleviate communication

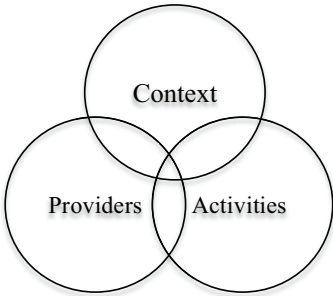
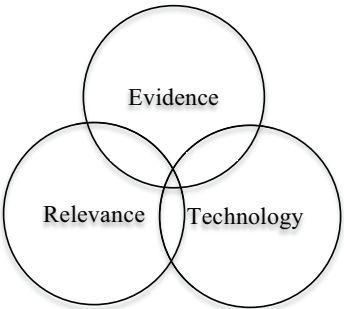
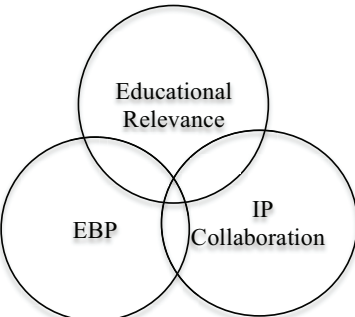
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator of the service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education standards • Alternative schools • Efficacy • Outcomes 	
2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link therapy to academic performance • Communication for work and college • Cultural diversity and sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education team member/coach • Multiple certification levels • Data oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Core curriculum standards • Communication for work/college • Integrate technology • Integrate services into classrooms • Evidence based 	
2020s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and functional performance outcomes • Educationally relevant communication • Preparation for postsecondary experiences • Expand providers and environments for treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor, facilitator, change agent • Identify evidence-based treatment • Collaborate • Broaden knowledge of other disciplines • Expand use of technology for virtual delivery, treatment, and compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interprofessional practice and collaboration • State and local policy/funding • Intervention to improve literacy • Engage in MTSS • Address complex workload issues • Plan for diversity, equity, inclusion 	

FIGURE 1-1. *continued*

barriers that may interfere with the child's ability to benefit from the education offered.

Furthermore, the schools constitute an ideal setting in which to provide speech-language intervention services. There is an identified population that are "consumers" of services, there are legal mandates for implementation and carrying out the services, and there are local, state, and federal support systems. Competency in oral and written communication is a priority education goal. Assessments in these curricular areas are mandated. Speech, language, and

hearing services support students who struggle to achieve these competencies.

All administrators and educators, including SLPs, share responsibility for educational equity and supporting students' well-being and success. The critical roles of the speech-language pathologist as described in ASHA's document entitled "Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists in Schools (2010c)" include the following elements: working across all levels (ages and grades), serving a broad range of disorders, ensuring educational relevance, providing

unique contributions to the curriculum, supporting students' acquisition of language and literacy, and providing culturally competent services. This comprehensive list of roles and responsibilities captures the SLP's important contributions in the educational setting.

Successfully executing each element requires professional knowledge, skills, and preparedness. The SLP plans, directs, and provides diagnostic and intervention services to children and youth with communication disabilities. SLPs' caseloads are generally quite diverse and complex. He or she works with students who present impairments in speech sound production, language, voice, fluency, and hearing as well as communication problems associated with neurodiverse, cognitive, neurological, physical, medically fragile, and/or social emotional conditions. Examples include autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, English as a second language (ESL), developmental delay, social-emotional and behavioral disturbances, and swallowing disorders to name a few.

Many SLPs serve high-risk infants and toddlers from birth to age 5 in community or school district-operated child developmental centers, Head Start programs, early intervention preschool programs, schools, or home settings. Also served are children with severe disabilities or multiple impairments in various settings as well as elementary, middle, and secondary grades. Education settings can include public as well as private and charter schools.

An important aspect of the school speech-language pathologist's duties includes cooperation and collaboration with other school and health specialists, including administrators, teachers, audiologists, nurses, social workers, physicians, dentists, special education teachers, psychologists, interventionists, mental health professionals, and guidance counselors. This type of ongoing collaboration, cooperative planning, and coordination results in effective diagnostic, facilitative, educational, and intervention programs.

SLPs collaborate with fellow education colleagues to implement procedures that will improve students' communication skills. Working with parents and other caregivers is an essential aspect of each professional's role and responsibility. School administrators are key to high-quality educational programming. Therefore, it is critical that SLPs develop close working relationships with principals, supervisors, case managers, curriculum specialists, and other program administrators. SLPs also serve as a resource to colleagues and organizations in the community by sharing information about communication disorders and the availability of services.

Speech-language pathology researchers are leading the way in our field by providing evidence of the effectiveness of specific treatment methods. Many SLPs initiate best practices for program organization and management as well as service and treatment procedures. The speech-language pathology field is constantly broadening. Therefore, school SLPs must keep abreast of current information by reading professional journals and publications, attending seminars and conferences, enrolling in continuing education programs, and sharing information and ideas with colleagues through state, local, and national professional organizations.

Because SLPs are considered important members of the total educational program and team, the size and structure of the local school district can have much to do with the organizational structure of the school SLP program as well as with the focus and nature of the services provided. Often SLPs travel from school to school within a district or region throughout the week. Others are assigned to a single school building, whereas others may work in regional centers, special classes, resource rooms, within classrooms alongside teachers, or in self-contained classrooms. They may be full-fledged members of the special education team or student services team or work as program administrators.

As the SLP's role as a collaborator and/or consultant becomes more prevalent, expectations

and responsibilities increase. General education teachers, special education teachers, and personnel in other specialized fields may depend on SLPs to provide information on diagnoses, assessment, and treatment of students with communication disorders or learning challenges. As a result, SLPs must be knowledgeable about the school curriculum, the impact of communication disabilities on learning and school performance, and the classroom instruction and intervention strategies needed to ensure that students' performance improves and meets required educational standards.

REVOLUTIONARY RESPONSES TO COMPLEX CHALLENGES

School SLPs must be very strategic in their efforts to predict and cope with change as well as create innovative solutions to the unexpected or emerging challenges and situations they encounter. In addition to the influence of national or state legislation, schools and educators often encounter unexpected circumstances that lead to changes in long-standing instruction and intervention services. A prime example is the education community's response to the impact of the 2021 COVID pandemic on education. Suddenly, schools, like other public and private institutions, were caught off guard when they had to close their doors. Teachers and students could no longer be in the same space, usual methods of delivering instruction and intervention were interrupted. The pandemic changed how educators could teach and support students with learning differences and disabilities. Students experienced setbacks and historic declines in critical academic areas. Fortunately, administrators, educators, and special educators rose to the occasion and reconsidered the delivery of instructional and intervention services. Three major steps forward were the integration of advanced technology and artificial intelligence into all aspects of services, the delivery of services virtually brought

into students' homes, and parents' increased awareness of what and how their children are taught and learn. Two critical steps backward were the "learning loss" students experienced and the great divide between those who could access education through technology and those who could not. These issues have fostered great innovation as well as concentration on the need to consider ways to resolve problematic circumstances.

Here's a glimpse at the wide range of personal and professional characteristics, qualifications, and skills that enable SLPs to succeed in complex and varied school environments and demands. SLPs must be well educated, skillful, and flexible. Given the composition of American society, the SLP should strive to understand and respect the cultural and social backgrounds of their students and communities. They must be able to implement strategies for predicting and coping with change as well as create innovative solutions to arising circumstances and challenges. They are required to incorporate evidence-based assessment and intervention practices. They are expected to skillfully collaborate with education colleagues as well as students' families. Given the increasing emergence of technology in instruction and intervention, SLPs must be prepared to incorporate technology solutions into all aspects of their service delivery including diagnostics, intervention, collaboration, documentation, reporting, and meeting local, state, and national compliance requirements. They must also be prepared to embrace a variety of methods and models for reaching students on-site as well as virtually.

Diverse and complex workloads and responsibilities require the SLP to establish priorities and master time-management skills. Undoubtedly, the federal laws related to special education often serve as a catalyst to create effective speech, language, and hearing programs. It is evident that education legislation has enhanced students' access to education and services. It has also bolstered parental involvement in the educational decision-making process.