

**Review of Speech/Language Associate Certification for the Provision of
Speech/Language Services to Students with Disabilities
Fact Sheet
September, 2003**

Background - Student Data

- Currently, there are 386,909 students (grades PreK – 12) with disabilities in Florida. Of those students with disabilities, 166,760 or 43% are identified as having a speech/language impairment as a primary or secondary disability (Survey 9, December 2002).
- Students identified with speech/language impairments may have articulation, voice, fluency, or language disorders (receptive, expressive, spoken or written language). These students may also require assistive technology or alternate communication systems.

Background - Speech/Language Personnel Standards

- Since 1991, professionals providing speech/language services to eligible students in public schools are required to be certified by the Department of Education (DOE) or licensed (via the Department of Health) as a speech/language pathologist. Such certification and licensure requires a master's-level degree.
- Historically, there has been an insufficient number of master's-level professionals available to provide services to students in the public schools.

Background – Legislation and Task Force Recommendations

- To address this shortage of personnel, the 2000 Legislature created Section 231.167, Florida Statutes, (now 1012.44, Florida Statutes – attached) which required the Commissioner of Education to appoint a task force to recommend rules to the State Board of Education to address the needs of Florida's sparsely populated districts.
- The work of the Commissioner's Task Force on Speech and Language Services represented the culmination of ten years of problem-solving efforts between school districts, professional associations, state agencies, and Florida legislators to resolve these workforce issues.
- The Task Force recommended the creation of a certification at the bachelor's level for the provision of speech/language services under specific circumstances for selected districts.
- In September 2001, the State Board of Education approved the rules necessary for the creation of such a bachelor's-level certification (see Rule 6A-6.03012(6)(b), FAC, *Special Programs for Students Who Are Speech and Language Impaired* and Rule 6A-4.01761, FAC, *Specialization Requirements for Certification in the Area of Speech-Language Impaired/Associate* – attached).

- Section 1012.44, Florida Statutes, and Rules 6A-6.03012(6)(c) and 6A-4.01761, FAC, (see attached) require the State Board of Education to review the continuation of this certification by October 1, 2003.

Background – Requirements for a Speech/Language Associate

- Personnel hired under Rules 6A-4.01761 and 6A-6.03012, FAC, have a limited scope of practice and must be under the direct supervision of a certified or licensed master's-level speech/language pathologist (SLP).
- Prior to using this option, school districts are required to submit a plan to DOE for approval.
- Consistent with section 1012.44, Florida Statutes, this option is available to only school districts that qualify for sparsity supplement funding pursuant to Section 1011.62(6), Florida Statutes. The thirty-four school districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement as of December, 2002, are:
 - Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, Charlotte, Citrus, Columbia, DeSoto, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington.
- Services under this option can be provided for a period of no more than three years.

Personnel Data

- Currently, there is a demand for 3,216 speech/language pathologists (SLPs) to work in Florida's public schools. Of those positions, 3,054 are filled by "in-field" staff, 29 are filled by out-of-field personnel, and 133 positions are vacant. (Personnel Data Report, December 2002)
- Currently, eight districts (Bradford, Citrus, DeSoto, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Gulf, Highlands, and Wakulla) have submitted plans for the use of the speech/language associate. All eight plans were approved by DOE.
- Five certificates have been issued for speech/language associates working in Citrus, DeSoto, Gadsden, Gilchrist, and Wakulla counties.

Recommendations for Action to the State Board of Education

Based on the above information, it is recommended that the State Board of Education:

- authorize the continuation of the speech/language certification option for school districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement, consistent with the provisions of section 1012.44, Florida Statutes, and Rules 6A-4.01761 and 6A-6.03012, FAC, for an additional 3-year period.
- Require that the Commissioner's Task Force be reconvened within the next three years to make recommendations to the State Board of Education by October 1, 2006, on the continuation of this certification option.

K-20 EDUCATION CODE Chapter 1012

1012.44 Qualifications for certain persons providing speech-language services.--The State Board of Education shall adopt rules for speech-language services to school districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement as described in s. 1011.62(6). These services may be provided by baccalaureate degree level persons for a period of 3 years. The rules shall authorize the delivery of speech-language services by baccalaureate degree level persons under the direction of a certified speech-language pathologist with a master's degree or higher. By October 1, 2003, these rules shall be reviewed by the State Board of Education.

History.--s. 719, ch. 2002-387.

6A-4.01761 Specialization Requirements for Certification in the Area of Speech-Language Impaired/Associate -- Academic Class.

A bachelor's degree with an undergraduate major in speech-language pathology or speech-language impaired. This coverage is limited to a period of not more than three (3) years for the provision of services in school districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement as described in Section 236.081(6), Florida Statutes. This coverage shall be identified on the temporary certificate when requested by the superintendent of an eligible school district. This rule shall be reviewed by the Florida Board of Education by October 1, 2003.

Specific Authority 231.15(1), 231.17, 231.167 FS. Law Implemented 231.02, 231.15, 231.17 FS. History - New 9-17-2001.

6A-6.03012 Special Programs for Students Who Are Speech and Language Impaired.

(1) Definition. Speech and language impairments are defined as disorders of language, articulation, fluency, or voice which interfere with communication, preacademic or academic learning, vocational training, or social adjustment.

(a) An impairment in the language system is abnormal processing or production of:

1. Form including phonology, syntax, and morphology,
2. Content including semantics, or
3. Function including pragmatics.

(b) An impairment in articulation is substitutions, distortions, or omissions of speech sounds which are of a nonmaturational nature.

(c) An impairment in fluency is abnormal flow of speech which impairs rate and rhythm and may be accompanied by struggle behavior.

(d) An impairment in voice is absence or abnormal production of voice quality, pitch, loudness, resonance, or duration.

(2) Criteria for eligibility. A student is eligible for special programs in speech and language if the student meets criteria as determined by the procedures in Rules 6A-6.0331 and 6A-6.0341, FAC., and if a disorder exists in one (1) or more of the following:

(a) Language. A language disorder is present when:

1. For students below age five (5), there is a significant language delay based on criteria presented in the test or evaluation manual and at least one (1) of the following is met:

- a. There is a significant difference between language performance and other developmental behaviors; or
- b. There is a significant difference between receptive and expressive language abilities.

2. For students ages five (5) and above, the language scores on standardized tests are more than one (1) standard deviation below the mean for the student's chronological age and at least one (1) of the following is met:

- a. There is a significant difference between language performance and nonverbal performance; or
- b. There is a significant difference between receptive and expressive language scores; or

c. Two (2) or more, but not all, components of the language system are moderately or severely impaired on a language severity rating scale.

(b) Articulation. An articulation disorder is present when at least one (1) of the following is met:

1. Based on normative data, the frequency of incorrect sound production and the delay of correct sound production are significant; or
2. The error pattern is characteristic of disordered rather than delayed acquisition; or
3. Articulation is rated as moderately or severely impaired on an articulation severity rating scale.

(c) Fluency. A fluency disorder is present when:

1. Fluency is rated as mildly, moderately, or severely impaired on a fluency severity rating scale, and
2. There are supportive data presented by a primary caregiver, a teacher-educator, or the student when appropriate, in addition to a speech-language pathologist, that a disorder exists.

(d) Voice. A voice disorder is present when:

1. Voice is rated as moderately or severely impaired on a voice severity rating scale, and
2. There are supportive data presented by a primary caregiver, a teacher-educator, or the student when appropriate, in addition to a speech-language pathologist, that a disorder exists.

(3) Procedures for screening.

(a) Students being considered for language or speech programs shall be screened for hearing and vision.

(b) Students being considered for exceptional student programs, excluding gifted and homebound or hospitalized who may be screened on a referral basis, shall be screened for language, articulation, fluency and voice disorders prior to staffing for eligibility.

(4) Procedures for student evaluation.

(a) Speech-language pathologists shall be responsible for implementing and conducting diagnostic assessments of language, articulation, fluency, or voice disorders.

(b) A case history shall be included as part of the assessment data when determined appropriate by the speech-language pathologist.

(c) Medical and psychological evaluations shall be requested by the speech-language pathologist when appropriate.

(5) Procedures for determining eligibility and educational assignment.

(a) A speech-language pathologist shall be a member of any eligibility staffing committee reviewing speech and language evaluation data.

(b) A speech-language pathologist shall be involved in the development of the individual educational plans for eligible speech and language impaired students.

(6) Instructional Program.

(a) The instructional program shall be based on the student's individual educational plan or family support plan.

(b) Speech-language services shall be provided by a speech-language pathologist, pursuant to Rule 6A-4.0176, FAC., a licensed speech-language pathologist pursuant to Section 468.1185, Florida Statutes, or a speech-language associate, pursuant to Rule 6A-4.01761, FAC.

1. Speech-language services provided by an associate, as specified in Rule 6A-4.01761, FAC., must be under the direction of a certified or licensed speech-language pathologist with a master's degree or higher. Services under this subsection can be provided for a period of no more than three (3) years as described in Section 231.167, Florida Statutes, in districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement as described in Section 236.081(6), Florida Statutes.

2. Districts shall submit a plan to the Department of Education for approval before implementation of Rule 6A-4.01761, FAC. The components of the plan must include a description of:

a. the model specifying the type and amount of direction including, but not limited to, direct observation, support, training, and instruction;

b. the rationale for using this model;

c. the manner in which the associate will demonstrate competency;

d. the process for monitoring the quality of services; and

e. the measurement of student progress.

This plan must also describe the process for changing the intensity of direction for the associate based upon the associate's demonstrated competencies and their students' needs and progress.

(c) This rule shall be reviewed by the Florida Board of Education by October 1, 2003.

Specific Authority 231.15(1), 231.167, 231.17 FS. Law Implemented 230.23(4)(m), 231.02, 231.15 FS. History - New 7-1-77, Amended 7-13-83, Formerly 6A-6.3012, Amended 8-1-88, 9-17-2001.