

Roles of Speech-Language Pathologists in Regard to Reading

Background

The 2004 Florida Legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 364 (CS/SB 364), which includes extensive provisions related to students with reading deficiencies and to student progression. A three-tiered academic support plan for kindergarten through third grade students has subsequently been created by the Florida Department of Education in response to this legislation. Tier One includes students who have never been retained but have identified reading deficits. Tier Two involves students who have been retained once and also have identified difficulties in reading. Tier Three includes students who have been retained two times in the third grade and also have diagnosed reading deficits.

CS/SB 364 requires schools to establish an intensive acceleration class (IAC) for students retained twice in third grade who score at level 1 on the reading portion of the FCAT (Tier Three students). The students in the IAC are at a critical period because continued difficulty in learning to read can place them at risk for falling further behind in their development of literacy skills and, consequently, more at risk for school failure (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000). The students in the IAC are expected to increase their reading levels by at least two grade levels in one school year. The IAC must include the provision of a reading program that is scientifically research-based and must involve the participation of a speech-language pathologist (SLP) in providing intensive language and vocabulary instruction, again employing the use of scientifically research-based methods.

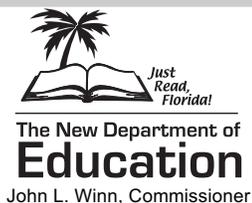
It is important for the SLP to participate in the remediation of reading deficits in students when these deficits are the result of difficulties in the area of language. The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to provide school district personnel with information regarding the role of SLPs in joining the efforts with general and special education teachers to provide intensive language and vocabulary instruction to students with reading difficulties.

Introduction

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) states that SLPs play a “critical and direct role in the development of literacy for children and adolescents with communication disorders” (p. 1, ASHA, 2001). The importance of collaborative partnerships between SLPs, teachers, administrators, and other professionals to nurture literacy skills of students experiencing reading problems is emphasized (ASHA).

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The rationale behind these roles is the fact that the connection between spoken language and reading is undeniable. Table 1 illustrates the links between the five components of effective reading instruction and the five areas of language. Deficiencies in reading can involve one or more of the components of language: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and/or pragmatics. Difficulties can be observed in the comprehension, production, and awareness of language at varying levels, including the sound, syllable, word, or sentence level. Students with reading deficits may not have gained some of the literacy skills that they are typically expected to, including mastery of basic phonic patterns, use of word analysis skills when reading, use of contextual clues found within a text, ability to predict subsequent events, ability to ask and answer questions regarding a text, and use of acquired information to learn about new topics (Owre & Brennan, n.d.).

Table 1
Links between Language and Reading

	Phonology	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics	Pragmatics
Phonemic Awareness	✓	✓			
Phonics	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fluency	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Vocabulary Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comprehension			✓	✓	✓

SLPs' Roles and Responsibilities

Appropriate roles and responsibilities identified by ASHA for SLPs, as they relate to working with students with reading deficits include

- preventing reading deficits by nurturing the development of spoken language and emergent literacy
- identifying children at risk for reading deficits
- evaluating and assessing reading skills
- providing individual and group instruction and remediation for reading
- providing assistance to general education teachers through consultation and collaboration
- training parents and others to help support children's reading success.

An important role of speech-language pathologists involves consultation and collaboration with the general education teachers in regard to assessment and remediation. Another significant role may involve training parents and other professional and community members on how they can foster children's reading success. In doing so, they may prevent unnecessary or inappropriate placements of students into exceptional student education programs.

It is important to note that the roles SLPs take in providing support to the teachers and students will likely be a continuation of the roles they currently hold but with a broader scope of students. It is important to remember that the SLP must continue to provide appropriate services to those students currently on their caseloads identified as speech or language impaired.

The following is a description of some of the specific roles speech-language pathologists may have:

- assessment

The speech-language pathologist may participate in the administration and interpretation of assessments with students with suspected language deficits. Aiding the teacher in determining the student's specific areas of strengths and weaknesses by interpreting the assessment results is critical to developing remediation goals and activities to ensure the student's progress in reading. Caution should be used to ensure testing does not interfere with the SLP's ability to continue providing speech and language services to current ESE students. Appendix A provides information on diagnostic instruments that meet psychometric standards.

- remediation

SLPs may provide support and remediation in a number of ways in order to address the various areas of reading, as listed in table 1. The SLP may be involved in addressing the following areas of reading when providing interventions for students whose reading deficits are related to speech and language deficits.

- *Phonemic awareness* involves sounds in spoken words. It includes the ability to blend, segment, and manipulate phonemes. Phonological awareness is a term that includes phonemic awareness. Instruction and support in the area of phonological awareness may include instruction in syllable and word segmentation, syllable blending, and rhyme recognition and production.
- *Phonics* involves sound/spelling correspondence. Instruction in this area can help students learn how to figure out the pronunciation of new words that they encounter in print. Phonics instruction should be built on a foundation of phonemic awareness and include addressing decoding and spelling (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000).
- *Reading fluency* involves the rate and accuracy with which students perform reading tasks, along with prosody (e.g., intonation or inflection). Fluency can be developed through multiple opportunities to practice reading. Therefore, the main strategy in teaching fluency is to provide students with those opportunities to read extensively, which can include rereading texts (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000).
- *Vocabulary development* is a critical area for SLP involvement. There is a strong relationship between reading ability and vocabulary acquisition. In fact, the amount of reading that students do is directly related to the size of their vocabulary (Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1986). Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension in that students cannot understand written word without knowing what the words mean. The SLP can participate in supporting the development of vocabulary by explicitly teaching specific words and concepts, teaching strategies to learn new words independently, providing multiple exposures to words, and encouraging reading (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000).

- *Reading comprehension* involves constructing meaning from written texts. Teaching specific strategies to students in the context of their reading is important. These strategies can include using prior knowledge, predicting, summarizing, making inferences, and questioning. Through this instruction or support, the SLP can help the teacher give students the tools they need to make sense of what they read (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000).

Just Read, Florida! requires at least a 90-minute reading block for K through 5th grade students. In addition to this 90-minute block, they require that additional time in the school day be provided for students who are having difficulty, which includes Tier 3 students. In order to support students' growth and development in the reading areas discussed previously, the speech-language pathologist may participate in instruction and remediation in a variety of ways. One way may be to participate in or implement reading remediation activities during differentiated instruction and/or immediate intensive intervention, allowing the SLP to work with a variety of students on the foundations of reading. Another way may involve providing short-term demonstrations to the teacher of how literacy skills such as phonemic awareness can be taught. Another way might be to work with teachers to build practice and repetition into the instruction (ASHA, 2001). The SLP also may collaborate with the teachers to plan remediation goals and activities, as well as assist in modifying classroom curricula. In fact, collaboration among team members, including general education and ESE teachers, school psychologists, and SLPs, is a key ingredient in meeting the needs of students. Appendix B provides information on core intervention reading programs that may be used with Tier 3 students. It is important to note that an SLP is not considered highly qualified to teach a reading class unless he/she has the appropriate reading endorsement or reading certification. However, the SLP may participate in instructional activities using any of the following methods:

- *Co-Teaching* involves a classroom in which two teachers, an ESE and a general education teacher, share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for all students in a class, some of whom may be ESE and some of whom are not.
- *Support facilitation* is being utilized when an ESE teacher provides support for students' achievement in the general classroom. Support facilitators may work and move among two or more basic education classrooms working with the general education teachers and students identified with exceptionalities as needed. The frequency and support varies based on students' and/or general educators' need for assistance.
- *Consultation* involves general education teachers and ESE teachers meeting regularly to plan, implement, and monitor instructional alternatives designed to ensure that a student is successful in the general education classroom. All teachers providing support to students via consultation with the students' general education teachers are required to maintain a record of the teachers, courses, and students to whom they are

providing services. This method will likely be used frequently in order for SLPs to share with teachers their knowledge of the relationship between language and reading and provide teachers with classroom strategies to nurture language development as it relates to literacy skills.

- other roles

Many students in the general education classrooms, including the IAC, may not have been identified with a speech and/or language disorder. However, many students will have been diagnosed with reading deficits that are the result of difficulties with speech and language acquisition and, therefore, will receive instruction in the general education classroom with appropriate accommodations and support. CS/SB 364 requires the SLP to be involved in these classrooms and, through multi-stream funding, perhaps work with certain students within the general education classroom whose diagnosed reading deficiencies might best be addressed by an SLP.

Along with the provision of the IAC, CS/SB 364 includes requirements for a review of the students' academic improvement plans; inclusion of a minimum of 90 minutes of daily uninterrupted reading instruction; and one of the following three options: (a) supplemental reading tutoring before and/or after school, (b) a "read at home" plan outlined in a parental contract including participation in Families Building Better Readers parent workshops and regular parent-guided home instruction, or (c) a mentor or tutor with specialized reading training. If schools choose to provide the second option, the implication this holds for speech-language pathologists is the importance of offering their knowledge and support to the families and caregivers of the students in the intensive acceleration class. This may involve participating in planning and/or conducting of workshops where SLPs can work with families and other community members to help them develop strategies for fostering children's language acquisition and literacy skills (ASHA, 2001).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is critical for school personnel to realize the important roles that speech-language pathologists play in reading instruction and intervention, considering their knowledge of the link between reading and language skills. As discussed, the role that is emphasized in CS/SB 364 is that of vocabulary instruction. Several models of participation that are appropriate for SLPs have been identified and described. These models will allow SLPs to participate on various levels, and the particular level should be determined by several factors, including the qualifications of the SLP, the needs of the students and teachers, the existing caseload or workload of the SLP, and other roles and responsibilities of the SLP. By analyzing his/her current workload and the needs of all students, an appropriate participation level can be established.

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Appendix A
Diagnostic Measures
Appropriate for Primary and Secondary Grades

The following chart has been adapted from the list of diagnostic measures provided by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), which can be found on their website at <http://www.fcrr.org>. The list is to be used as a resource to inform users of the diagnostic/assessment tools that meet psychometric standards, including reliability and validity.

Diagnostic	Appropriate Grade Range		Major Components				
	Primary	4-12	PA	Phonics	Fluency	Vocab	Comp
<i>Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)</i>	K-3	All	X				
<i>Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR)</i>	2 – 3	All		X	X	X	X
<i>Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)</i>	2 – 3	All					X
<i>Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA)</i>	K – 3		X	X	X	X	X
<i>Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)</i>	K – 3	All				Oral	
<i>Fox in a Box</i>	K – 2		X	X	X	X	Listening
<i>Gates-MacGinitie Reading Text, 3rd edition (GMRT)</i>	PreK – 3	All	Level PR	Level BR		Reading	X
<i>Gray Oral Reading Test-4 (GORT-4)</i>	1 – 3	All			X		X
<i>Group Reading Assessment & Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE)</i>	PreK – 3	All	Levels P & K	Level K		Reading Levels 1-A	Levels: 1-A

Diagnostic	Appropriate Grade Range		Major Components				
<i>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III (PPVT-III)</i>	PreK – 3	All				Oral	
<i>Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)</i>	1 – 3	4 – 11					X
<i>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, 4th edition (SDRT)</i>	1 – 3	All		X		Reading	X
<i>Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)</i>	K – 2		X	X		Listening K only	X
<i>Woodcock Diagnostic Reading Battery (WDRB)</i>	K – 3	All	X	X		Reading	X
<i>Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT)</i>	K – 3	All		X		Reading	X
Screening & Progress Monitoring	Appropriate Grade Range		Major Components				
<i>Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS)</i>	K – 3		X	X	X		

*The Oral Reading Fluency Subtest is required for Tier 3 students.

Key:

PA—phonological awareness

Vocab—vocabulary

Comp—comprehension

Appendix B
Intervention Programs
Appropriate for Students Needing Intensive Instruction for Remediation of Reading Deficits

The following chart has been adapted from the list of Tier 3 Intervention Programs provided by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), which can be found on their website at <http://www.fcrr.org>. The FCRR states that Florida students who have been retained two times in third grade (Tier 3) are in need of instruction that is more intensive, more explicit, more systematic, and more motivating than instruction they have previously received. The list includes intensive programs that have been reviewed by the FCRR and have been found to be appropriate for implementation with Tier 3 students.

Program Name	Type of Program	Major Instructional/Intervention Components				
		<i>PA</i>	<i>Phonics</i>	<i>Fluency</i>	<i>Vocab</i>	<i>Comp</i>
<i>SRA Corrective Reading</i>	Supplemental/Intervention	X	X	X	X	x
<i>Failure Free Reading</i>	Supplemental/Intervention			x	x	x
<i>Kaleidoscope</i>	Supplemental/Intervention	X	X	X	x	X
<i>Language!</i>	Core or Supplemental/Intervention	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Spell Read P.A.T.</i>	Supplemental/Intervention	X	X	X	x	X
<i>Success for All</i>	Core or Supplemental/Intervention	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Wilson Reading System</i>	Supplemental/Intervention	X	X	X	x	X
<i>Voyager Passport</i>	Supplemental/Intervention	x	x	X	X	X

Key:

PA—phonological awareness

Vocab—vocabulary

Comp—comprehension

X—All aspects of this reading component are taught.

x—Some or most aspects of this reading component are taught.

Please note that there are also numerous programs that involve a more prescribed focus. In other words, these programs focus on a specific component or components. A list and description of these programs can be located on the FCRR website at <http://www.fcrr.org/pmrn/tier3/tier3interventions.htm>.