



WCASS Special Projects Committee Report:
*Guidance to School Districts Facing Shortage of Speech & Language
Pathologists*

Guidance to School Districts Facing Shortage of Speech & Language Pathologists

August 2014



This publication is designed to assist school districts in:

- (1) Recruiting and retaining fully licensed Speech and Language Pathologists (Wisconsin DPI 820 licensed).**
- (2) Identifying options when facing a shortage in employing fully licensed Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP)**

Special thanks to Wisconsin DPI staff for ensuring that all options described in this publication are in compliance with IDEA 2004 and Wisconsin 115 Statutes.



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Recruitment and Retention of Speech Pathologists

- **Job Vacancies Postings:** Wisconsin DPI provides free of charge vacancy posting at Teachers-Teachers.com, and at the State of Wisconsin *Job Seeker* Portal.

- **Tuition Reimbursement Program:** Information about tuition reimbursement available to university students who commit to teach in high-need fields, including SLP, at various Wisconsin public schools, has been made available by DPI to the IHE preparation programs. Information is posted online at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/types/grants-scholarships/teach>

- **Contracted Services:** Contracting with outside vendors for fully licensed speech and language pathology services, as well as speech and language pathology assistants (SLPAs), under the paraprofessional license is allowable. These contracted services are aidable and may also be charged to the IDEA grant.

- **Incentives:** School districts may attract SLPs by offering various financial incentives which may include reimbursement for American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) dues.



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- **Student Teaching Opportunities:** Districts employing SLPs who are currently ASHA Certified are eligible to offer a student teaching placement for graduate level SLPs. SLPs who have a positive experience during their externship are likely to pursue ongoing employment with the school district.

- **University Partnerships:** Many universities welcome school district representatives to speak with their students about future employment opportunities.

- **Focus on Workload:** Consider options in determining caseloads. The DPI document found at dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/doc/cseldoptn.doc contains the Statewide Caseload Formula and the Statewide Caseload Numbers. The charts are designed as starting points to guide discussions about caseload determination, if the LEA chooses to use one of these models for discussion.

Also, please review the DPI page on ***Services for Students with Speech & Language Disabilities***. It includes a guide on speech & language assessment, an eligibility criteria PowerPoint presentation, checklist and much more:

http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_speech



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**Identifying options for school districts that are facing a shortage in
employing fully licensed Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP):**

**Option 1: “Support from Teachers”: The Individual Education Program
(IEP) Team utilizes the Language Arts skills and knowledge of special education
teachers to support language related IEP goals.**

The IEP Process: Once the IEP team determines that a child meets eligibility in one of the impairment categories and needs special education, the team determines goals and objectives related to the child's needs that affect educational performance. When a child has language needs, the IEP team should also consider whether the child’s language and communication needs could be met through other special education services, or by other special education providers. The team can decide to write goals that will be addressed in a program area other than speech and language. When writing the IEP, the team will describe the special education services needed (for example, language instruction, amount, location & duration) to address the goals. The services could be provided by a different special education teacher. It's important for the IEP team to consider whether there are reasonable alternatives to speech and language, such as regular education program modifications or supplementary aids and services.

Issues like pragmatic language skills, vocabulary, and augmentative communication can be



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addressed in a variety of ways. Just because the SLP evaluated and found skill deficits does not automatically mean that his/her services are required. For example, children who require services to improve their vocabulary may be receiving this service from a regular education teacher or another special education provider who teaches vocabulary development. As another example, a CD teacher or assistive technology specialist may have sufficient training and experience to meet the needs of a child who requires services for augmentative communication needs, such as picture communication boards or electronic communication devices. An IEP team could, therefore, determine that a particular child's augmentative communication needs could be met through a service provider other than a speech and language pathologist.

Pragmatic language skills are defined as the social rules for using language. Pragmatic language is the ability to communicate effectively in a variety of social contexts. Social skills instruction provided by a special education teacher often addresses pragmatic language needs. The IEP team may decide that a particular student's pragmatic language needs could be met through the special education teacher providing social skills instruction rather than through the SLP.

It is important to remember that decisions regarding services must be made on a case-by-case basis through the IEP process. Please see the DPI Speech and Language Technical assistance guide chapter VI located at:

<http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/pdf/slguide.pdf>



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Option 2: The Use of Paraprofessionals in Speech and Language Programs

The special education program aide license allows an individual to assist as a paraprofessional in a school-based speech and language program. The use of support staff may allow the Speech & Language Pathologist to increase his/her frequency and amount of services to students, focus more on professional-level tasks, and achieve more efficient/effective use of time and resources.

The IEP Team is encouraged to discuss how the district utilizes support personnel in its Speech and Language program. Based on the provisions in Chapter PI 34, the duties of a paraprofessional in a speech and language program may include the following:

1. Providing direct support to students through the practice of IEP goals in the form of review and reinforcement after the skill has been introduced by an SLP:
 - Time spent with the paraprofessional working on review and reinforcement is counted as speech and language service indicated in the child's IEP as Special Education or Related Services on the IEP Program Summary I-9 form.
 - The SLP must ensure that the activity is appropriate for a special education paraprofessional to implement. This will vary based on the paraprofessional's skill level, the level of training provided, the model of service delivery, and needs of the caseload.



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2. Assisting the SLP with the management of student behavior and social interactions:
 - Taking a child that is challenging out of a group for short periods to allow them to calm down.
 - Providing behavior cues to a child while the SLP leads a group lesson.
 - Role play a situation in a group.
 - Video tape a child's interaction for later review.

3. Maintaining and programming equipment:
 - Program devices used by students on the caseload.
 - Make sure devices used by students on the caseload are operational.
 - Trouble shooting when device breaks down on child.
 - Responsible for charging a device.
 - Responsible to ensure batteries are charged or changed when appropriate.
 - Knows where to order or get new batteries/charger.

4. Providing clerical support:
 - Take attendance and maintain attendance records.
 - Maintain speech and language records.
 - Clerical preparation of documents as directed by the SLP.
 - Generate worksheets or copies of material that will be used for each session.



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- Photocopying and laminating.
- Put together home programs as directed by the SLP.

5. Assisting in an array of non-instructional activities as assigned:

- Make Therapy Materials as directed by the SLP.
- Know how to run Board Maker Software.
 - Create various visual representation systems needed for therapy on the low technology to high technology continuum as directed by the SLP.
- Assist in setting up learning environments.
- Complete observations and collect data for the SLP.
 - SLP creates data collection tools and does analysis

(Source, Wisconsin DPI website: http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_slpsahtf).





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Option 3: The use of Telespeech (Online/Web-Based) as a service delivery method for Speech & Language services.

Telespeech is an appropriate remote service delivery model for speech and language pathologists. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to all students enrolled in special education in the district. As part of FAPE, the IEP team may consider a number of service delivery options to meet each individual student's needs. If the IEP team determines the use of Telespeech provides FAPE to the student, it may be used as a method of service delivery. Source: DPI <http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/files/sped/pdf/bul12-02.pdf>

When a school district uses a Telespeech delivery service, information is transmitted across a telecommunication connection, (in real time audio and visual) between the provider and the student who are in different locations.

Role of the School District

- The school district must ensure that the SLP who provides the Telespeech service holds a Wisconsin DPI 820 Speech & Language Pathology teaching license.
- The school district must insure that the Telespeech provider strictly enforces Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provisions addressing confidentiality requirements. Any videotaping of sessions will require parental consent.



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- The school district must conduct an in-person IEP evaluation / reevaluation with a local speech pathologist (at this time).
- The Telespeech delivery services cannot be billed to Medicaid School Based Services at this time.
- School Districts may use their IDEA grant funds for Telespeech services if the Speech Pathologist conducting the service holds a Wisconsin 820 DPI license.

Role of the IEP Team

- Discuss with parents the potential use of Telespeech at the IEP meeting.
- If the IEP Team determines that the use of Telespeech provides FAPE to the student, it may identify Telespeech as a method of service delivery. To determine the student candidacy for Telespeech, the IEP Team may consider such variables as:
 - the student's attention skills (for example, ability to sit in front of a computer screen and attend to the provider);
 - Auditory comprehension (ability to follow directions);
 - Cognitive ability;
 - Hearing ability;
 - Visual ability;
 - Manual dexterity (ability to operate a keyboard or mouse if needed);
 - Physical endurance (sitting tolerance);
 - Comfort level with technology, etc.



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- In some cases, a Paraprofessional may be needed to assist the student in accessing the Telespeech service.
- Students who are not appropriate candidates for Telespeech will require direct in-person services from a Speech Pathologist.
- When needed, provide a paraprofessional on-site support for the Telespeech sessions.
- The IEP Team must note the use of Telespeech (in terms of location, amount, frequency and duration) on the IEP Program Summary (I-9) form under special education, or related services.

