

# **What Teachers Know that SLPs Don't Know About Literacy (and vice versa)**

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## **Children With Language Disorders: Risk For School Failure**

- Reading
- Writing
- Acquiring information in school subjects
- Social development

## **Continuum From Spoken to Written Language**

- Spoken language disorders don't "cause" written language disorders
- Written language disorders (e.g., problems with reading and/or writing) can occur separately from spoken language disorders
- Areas highly related to early and later appearing language disorders in school-age children
  - Problems in learning decoding skills
  - Difficulties in learning how to write
  - Difficulties in spelling
  - Problems in reading comprehension
  - Problems in learning content area information

## **Differences between spoken and written language**

- All communities have a fully developed spoken language, but not all have a written language
- Where there is a written form of language, many competent speakers do not and/or cannot use it effectively
- In the history of people as well as in the development of children speech comes first and reading second (not simultaneous)
- To develop speech, the normal child need only be in an environment where language is spoken: reading almost always requires teaching
- Reading requires EXPLICIT knowledge about phonological aspects of speech

## **And So?**

- With so many differences, shouldn't we just leave it all to reading teachers, regular education teachers, learning disabilities teachers...

## **Difficulties learning spoken language and difficulties learning written language**

- Can involve any of the components of language
- Can occur in production, comprehension, and/or awareness of language at the sound, syllable, word, sentence, and discourse levels
- May involve an inability to use language strategically to communicate, think, and learn

**These fundamental connections necessitate that intervention for language disorders target written as well as spoken language needs**

## **Rationale for SLPs to play a critical and direct role in literacy development**

- Spoken language provides the foundation for written language development
- Spoken and written language have a reciprocal relationship
- Children with spoken language problems frequently have difficulty learning written language
- Children with written language problems frequently have difficulty with spoken language
- Instruction in spoken language can result in growth in written language and vice versa

## **What is SLPs' role in literacy assessment and/or intervention?**

- When there are special educators, teachers, and reading specialists on staff, do SLPs have a role SLPs on the literacy team?
- Do SLPs have unique skills in literacy learning apart from skills of other professionals on the team?
- Should SLPs have an active role in literacy development only of children on their caseloads or with other children in the school?

## **If the answers are yes...**

- When?
  - Does age/grade matter?
- With whom?
  - LI kids?
  - Others?
- What?
  - Phonological awareness only?
  - Reading?
  - Writing?
  - Assessment?
  - Intervention?

## **Literacy Instruction is a Centerpiece in Schools**

- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
  - Report of National Reading Panel (2000) [www.nationalreadingpanel.org](http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org)
- Federal legislation
  - IDEA
  - No Child Left Behind [www.nclb.gov](http://www.nclb.gov)
- Professional organizations
  - ASHA
  - International Reading Association [www.ira.org](http://www.ira.org)

## **Report of the National Reading Panel**

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Text Comprehension

## **IDEA**

- Access general education curriculum
  - Related services
  - Special education
  - General or regular education
- Early intervening services
  - Prevention
  - Reduce need for services
  - Accurate identification

## **No Child Left Behind**

- Disaggregation
  - Individual child progress
  - Adequate yearly progress (AYP)
- Does your superintendent care that Johnny can't read? Now s/he does.

## **Early Reading First/Reading First**

- Oral language
- Phonological awareness
- Print awareness
- Alphabet knowledge

## **ASHA and Literacy**

•Position Statement (2001): Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists with Respect to Reading and Writing in Children and Adolescents

- Prevention
- Assessment
- Intervention
- Other
- Assistance to general education teachers, students, parent
- Collaborative literacy on behalf of all students
- Extending knowledge base for students and colleagues

**Is it my role to be overwhelmed?**

**Roles and Responsibilities: A Roadmap for Professional Development**

Vertical and Horizontal Professional Growth

- Formal professional development
- Team building
- Collaboration
- Experience

**Determine The Roles And Responsibilities Of Colleagues To Define Your Role In Literacy Learning**

**Examples:**

Classroom Teachers

- Primary role in teaching children to read and write
- Implement adopted curriculum
- Provide instruction to address district and state standards
- Evaluate children's curriculum mastery
- Whole class and small group instruction
- Limited opportunity to individualize instruction

Reading Specialists

- Small group instruction with struggling readers
- Support, supplement, extend classroom instruction
- May implement an alternative curriculum or program
- Identify struggling readers and those resistant to instruction

Special Educators

- Early Intervening: struggling readers
- Work with children eligible for special education
- Provide direct, primary instruction for some children
- Provide supplemental instruction to some children who receive majority of instruction in classroom
- May implement regular curriculum or alternative curricula

### **What's Left For SLPs?**

- Do not supplant other educators
- Supplement, augment
- Provide a *xqlt xh* contribution to the team's effort to enhance literacy instruction
  - Advocate for the unique needs of children with SLI/NLI
  - Early intervening services, especially phonological awareness
- Facilitate emergent literacy and conventional literacy
- Work with children across several consecutive years

### **Work Individually With Children In Assessment And Instruction**

- SLPs are trained to look at a child from many different perspectives to consider:
  - Where difficulties lie
  - Why child is struggling, etc.
- SLPs can:
  - Determine instructional strategies, scaffolding, and modifications to enhance success
  - Individualize instruction
  - Work one-on-one: a luxury not often afforded other team members

### **Preventing Written Language Problems**

- Work with others in direct or indirect roles to ensure that young children have opportunities to participate in emergent language opportunities
- Assure that older children with developmental delays or multiple disabilities have access to such activities
- Support emergent literacy and prevent literacy problems
  - Joint book reading
  - Environmental print awareness
  - Conventions/concepts of print
  - Phonological awareness
  - Alphabetic/letter knowledge
  - Sense of story
  - Adult modeling of literacy activities
  - Experience with writing materials
  -

### **Early Identification Of Written Language Problems**

- Design literacy-sensitive early identification activities
  - Help teachers and other professionals with early recognition of language factors associated with later literacy problems
  - Collaborate with other professionals to identify risk factors
  - Consult with others regarding when diagnostic assessments are needed
- Identification of literacy problems among older students

- Educate other professionals regarding risk factors involving all language systems
- Participate on pre-referral child study teams
- Recognize added literacy risks for children being tested for spoken language difficulties
- Interview students, parents, teachers about curriculum-based language difficulties
- Monitor classroom progress and other situations that justify formal referral
- Suggest dynamic assessment strategies to identify language difference/disorder root

### **Contexts And Activities Vary With Age And Developmental Level**

- Emergent level (preschool)
  - Family literacy, phonological awareness, print awareness, spoken language
- Early elementary level (K - 3)
  - Phonological awareness, rapid naming, phonological memory, letter identification, invented spelling, reading, writing, spoken language
- Later level (4 and above)
  - Reading, writing, curriculum-based language uses, metacognition, metalinguistic ability, spoken language
- Multiple or severe developmental impairments

### **Advocate For A Developmental Perspective, Not Just An Instructional Perspective**

- Instructional perspective: Focus is on expected outcomes and the teaching which may produce those outcomes
- Developmental perspective: Considers interactions across developmental domains
  - e.g., can the child differentiate between language for meaning and language as an object of thought (metalinguistics)

### **Link Oral And Written Language**

- Classroom literacy curricula assume that children have a good foundation of oral language: Many do not
- SLP can establish links to written language when working on oral language (despite child's age or literacy capabilities)
- Similarly, SLP can establish links to oral language when working on written language

### **Advocate For Skill Instruction As Well As For Content Instruction**

- SLPs must maintain a therapeutic focus to avoid redundancy with other team members
- Therapy is unique
  - Individualized to specific needs of child
  - Targeted to children with specific needs
  - Depends on on-line analysis of responses to achieve individualization

- Focuses on remediation and compensation
- Requires concentrated knowledge of language, language development, and language disorders

### **First: Children On Your Caseload**

- Many “at risk” children are on the caseload of the SLP
  - Children with oral LI are 6 times more likely to have difficulty with written language
- SLPs already work with children with LI - often long before reading instruction
- SLP may be only team member that appreciates links between child’s oral language problems and subsequent written language difficulties
- Establish foundation of language skills that reading and writing build upon
  - Phonological awareness
  - Answering questions
  - Summarizing and main ideas
  - Inferences and conclusions

### **Conclusions/Suggestions**

- First commitment must be to children on our caseloads
  - Group and individual sessions for children with oral language difficulties should incorporate literacy support and training in phonological awareness regardless of child’s age
  - View oral and written language as a continuum
- Second concern may be children who are struggling readers not on caseload
  - Many struggling readers have unidentified oral language difficulties
  - Partner with reading specialist/classroom teacher or be a consultant