

Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD)

Educational Benefits of Speech and Language Services

Excerpt *From Talking to Writing: The Critical Connections*,
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- Numerous important **educational benefits** have been **demonstrated** with speech and language services for students with a wide variety of special needs and for students *at risk* for poor school achievement. Speech-language pathologists are **preventionists, collaborator, & interventionists** in **oral** language and in **written** language
- There is clear evidence that **language intervention** is **effective** (Nye, Foster, and Seaman, 1987) and that the **earlier treatment** is initiated, the **better the outcome** (Schery, 85). **For school children with weak language skills**, language **services** which are **integrated** into the **education setting** by school Speech-Language Pathologists have **resulted** in important educational outcomes:
 - ↳ **Significant gains in reading skills** for elementary school children (Hoffman & Norris, 1994).
 - ↳ **Phonological awareness training** in children with **language impairments in preschool and kindergarten** has revealed that children who have participated in early training programs have **performed better on reading measures in first and second grade than have children without** phonological awareness intervention (Magnusson & Naucler, 1992; Warrick, Rubin, & Rowe-Walsh, 1993)
 - ↳ **Significant improvements in reading accuracy and comprehension** with **spoken language training in phonological processing and semantic-syntactic** skills with 10-12 year old children evidencing severe difficulties in written and higher-level spoken language (Gillon & Dodd, 95)..
 - ↳ **Significant gains in vocabulary use and generalization** for young children when **vocabulary** training was integrated into the classroom setting by the SLP and teacher. (Wilcox & Caswell, 91).
 - ↳ **Significantly greater** acquisition of **curricular vocabulary** for **typically developing students** with a **collaborative or classroom-based** assistance from the **SLP** than with only regular instruction from the **classroom teacher**. **Significant acquisition of curricular vocabulary** for children with **speech and language impairments** when the **SLP** taught **collaboratively** with the classroom teacher (Throneburg, Calvert, Sturm, Paramboulas, & Paul, 2000).
 - ↳ **Significant improvements in basic concept acquisition** (Ellis, Schlaudecker, & Regimbal, 95)

- ☞ **Meaningful improvements in adaptive behaviour** in the **classroom** (Schery & O'Connor, 1992)
- ☞ **Significantly higher scores on listening & writing; higher abilities in understanding vocabulary and cognitive-linguistic concepts; increased writing skill development for producing relevant sentences with correct mechanics and spelling;** improved ability to **follow directions** with new concepts, and **heightened phonemic awareness**. **Carry-over** of increased student **verbal skills** within **other curricular areas** was also evident. (Farber & Klein, 99).
- ☞ **Improved student questioning & problem solving** skills (Kaufman, Prelock, Weiler, Creaghead, & Donnelly, 94)
- ☞ **Substantial reductions** in the **drop-out rate** for students in secondary school (Larson & McKinley, 1995)
- ☞ For **at risk children, lasting benefits representing a significant savings** to the social support system and society (Schweinhart, Berrueta-Clement, Barnett, Epstein & Weikart, 1985; Warr-Leeper, 01).
- ☞ Preliminary data from the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) *Partnership for Excellence* Schools showed programming **improved phonological awareness** scores, a critical attainment for learning to read. In addition, **programs implemented** in small groups by the **SLP** or in collaboration with the SLP resulted in the **largest gains** for children at risk for reading failure.
- ☞ Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) data from a brief oral language and then text-embedded program resulted in **significant improvement in reading** for older elementary students with resistant reading difficulties.

- A **full range of services** within the school boards from direct treatment to group treatment to collaborative teaching to consultation require speech-language pathologists **Effective management** in school of all exceptionalities necessarily includes management of the typical speech and language problems , e.g., behavioural disorders.
- To further the mission of education for the majority of children with communications disorders, **speech and language services must be integrated into** the overall **curriculum** at school. **Only school-based management** can provide the **continuous services** that ensure the progress of children throughout their school careers. As the child moves through the educational system and the demands for communication change, **speech and language services support** the **child**, as well as the **parents** and **teachers**, who will help the child meet these changing demands.

Development for all -----> **Facilitation for weak skills** -----> **Intervention for disordered**
 [e.g., staff training, [e.g., partnership school [e.g., individual treatment,
 curriculum development] programs] collaborative programs]

- **Strong language skills** are associated with **success** in school and in life (Nelson, 1993). Further, good verbal language skills can act as a **protective factor** making children *at risk* for failure more resilient (Herrero & Hechtman,

1994; Hechtman & Weiss, 1986).

- Some **communication disorders** may be dealt with only once and effectively remediated (e.g., pronunciation difficulties, mild difficulties in verbal expression) while others require a continuum of care with differing types and levels of support at different times during a student's educational career (e.g., pervasive language impairment, language-based reading disability). This **support may vary** from a one-time consultation resulting in minor accommodation in the classroom to cycles of more intensive service **when the demands exceed the student's ability** and **when the student shows the most potential for improvement**. A **language impairment**, not unlike a hearing impairment, is a **persistent problem** requiring continuous support and adjustment to ensure success in the classroom. The classroom must be a place where teachers can understand and be responsive to the needs of their students. Students with weak or disordered language can access the curriculum with some support and adjustment in teaching strategy.

- Similar supports are warranted for students whose school success is jeopardized by **weak language skills**. This group of students often includes children *at risk* due to traditional risk factors, such as economic stress. The expertise of speech-language pathologists utilized to manage "disordered" children have shown educational benefits when applied to children with weak language skills (Hadley, Simmerman, Long, & Luna, M. & Luna, 00; Warr-Leeper, 01)

- **Programs jointly managed** by the speech-language pathologist and teaching personnel can **enhance curriculum, modify classroom strategies and optimize outcome**. For example, specialized programs within JK and SK which specifically target language skills may be implemented (Clark-Stewart & Fein, 1983; Hoffman & Norris, 1994; Masland & Masland, 1988). Reading recovery programs may target grade 3 students and writing programs may target grade 5 students. A communications class may be included in grades 8, 9 or 11 curriculum to target higher level receptive and expressive language skills, study skills, social skills, and vocational language (Buttrill, et al., 1989; Larsen and McKinley, 95).



What does the SLP have to offer

The knowledge and training SLPs allows for supporting the development of:

- spoken language as a foundation for learning to read and write;
- ☞ sound and word level awareness for grasping the alphabetic principle;
- ☞ comprehension and formulation skills for using complex semantics and syntax;
- ☞ knowledge of literate discourse structures for comprehending and producing coherent spoken and written texts.

The SLP=s role includes:

- ☞ preventing written lang problems;
- ☞ identifying children at risk for reading and writing problems before they experience failure;
- ☞ assessing reading and writing
- ☞ providing early intervention and documenting outcomes.

Conclude: SLPs understanding of the language development, language and literacy disabilities, and strategies to facilitate performance contribute to their making curriculum modifications in collaboration with general and special educators.

- There is no doubt that **untreated speech and language disorders hinder** a person=s ability to learn in school and to survive in our increasingly literate world.
- The schools are the only **universally accessible, publicly funded** place where **all** children have a chance to develop the oral and written language skills needed to enjoy a life time of opportunities.

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