Speech-Language Pathology
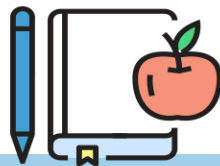## SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

ASHA

Speech and language services in public schools are available to eligible students at no cost to families as part of special education, under U.S. federal law (through the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA). Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) help students in many different areas.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Speech and language disorders are among the **most common disabilities** for which students receive treatment services in schools— **more than 1 million schoolchildren** nationwide do so each year.

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WHO:

School-based SLPs work with students in grades K–12 as well as children ages 3–5 years.

WHAT:

SLPs help students effectively use their speech and language skills to be successful within the educational environment. SLPs tailor evaluations and treatment as needed to a student's national origin, ethnicity, race, gender identity, and other individual factors. These all may play a role in a child's communication. Here are some areas where SLPs help students:

- **Speech sounds**—Children may substitute one sound for another, leave sounds out, add sounds, or change a sound. It may be hard for others to understand them.
- **Spoken and written language**—A student may have trouble understanding what others are communicating to them and may have problems explaining what they are thinking or feeling. They may also have difficulty with reading and writing.
- **Stuttering (fluency)**—A child may get stuck on certain sounds or words. They also may have tension or negative feelings about talking. This can get in the way of how they talk to others.
- **Cognition**—A child may have problems with long- or short-term memory, attention, problem solving, or staying organized.
- **Social communication**—A student may have difficulty understanding how others feel or following the rules of conversation, such as knowing how to take turns.
- **Voice**—A child might lose their voice frequently or use a hoarse or breathy voice. They could also speak with strain or effort.
- **Augmentative and alternative communication**—Children may need or choose to use other ways to communicate besides talking. Options include pointing or gesturing, picture boards, and speech-generating devices.
- **Feeding and swallowing**—A student may need help to eat and swallow safely. Feeding and swallowing problems can lead to other health issues and interfere with a child's ability to learn.

WHERE:

SLPs work with students inside or outside the classroom, one-on-one or in groups. They also work in preschools and Head Start programs—and with children who are home-schooled. In some cases, SLPs provide services to students via an online platform (remotely).

HOW:

Children must qualify for speech and language services in schools. This involves the following steps:

1. Parents/caregivers can **ask the principal or teacher for an evaluation** of their child's skills. Sometimes, the school initiates this process if a teacher or other staff has concerns, but a parent or guardian *must agree* to an evaluation first.

2. Results are discussed with the family at a meeting with school staff. Interpreters are required if a family does not speak English. **If a child is found *ineligible*** for services because they are determined not to have a disorder/disability—or if they do, but it is not interfering with their academic or social success—families can appeal this decision. SLPs can also provide recommendations/strategies based on parental concern.

3. If a child is found *eligible*, treatment will follow an individualized education program, or IEP, that defines the student's goals for speech, language, cognition, or feeding/swallowing—as well as the type(s) of services that the student will receive (and how often they will receive them).

WHY:

SLPs can help children meet their full academic and social potential—and help them be confident communicators. **This sets them on a course to success in school and in the future**.