



## American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Making effective communication, a human right, accessible and achievable for all.



# Strategies for Implementing Workload

Ideas offered here are examples that SLPs in public schools have used successfully.

### Supportive Teaching

The SLP teaches information related to the curriculum while incorporating IEP goals into the lesson. Rather than holding only pullout sessions, the SLP does a pre-teaching, pullout session in the therapy room. The second session is conducted in an in-classroom, large group lesson with the classroom teacher present. The classroom teacher observes and monitors the children and adolescents with special needs while the SLP does the lesson. A third session may be another pullout session again held in the therapy room for post lesson clarification or test adaptations. The SLP and the classroom teacher share responsibility for planning the program, monitoring the progress of students, dealing with behavioral issues, and making decisions about modifying the program. Face-to-face meetings are conducted twice a month with each group of grade level teachers. By using this model, the SLP has the opportunity to model individualized strategies and adaptations for the teachers at the same time that the children and adolescents are served. The SLP is also providing curriculum-based intervention using materials from the classroom in the least restrictive environment. Time is saved because both the SLP and the classroom teacher have first-hand knowledge about how the children and adolescents are progressing. This results in streamlined collaboration and conferencing. The SLP also saves time because separate therapy materials need not be developed and specialized techniques are modeled for the teacher while the lesson is being presented.

### Complementary Teaching

The SLP provides services in the classroom setting. The classroom teacher presents most of the content of the lesson and the SLP focuses on related skills such as learning science vocabulary, sequencing the steps of an assignment, or paraphrasing the main ideas of an assignment. Both partners teach in the classroom from their own areas of expertise. They share responsibilities for planning the program, teaching the lessons, monitoring the progress of the students, and making decisions about modifying the program. The SLP and the classroom teacher address the goals on the IEPs for children and adolescents in the classroom. Some students still require services provided in a pu

program. However, by using a complementary teaching model, the SLP can free up time for other workload activities. The SLP models individualized strategies and adaptations for the teachers at the same time that the children and adolescents are served. The SLP also provides curriculum-based intervention while using materials from the classroom, and working with children and adolescents in the least restrictive environment. Time is saved because both the SLP and the classroom teacher have first-hand knowledge of the children's performance making collaboration and conferencing more streamlined.

### **Consultation**

The SLP works outside the classroom to analyze, adapt, modify, or create appropriate instructional materials. The adapted materials may be for one child, for several children, or for an entire classroom. The SLP does not teach in the classroom, but does do classroom observations. The students may come to the speech-language room for one period per day for study skill support or curriculum adaptations. The SLP and teacher plan, monitor student progress, and make decisions about materials together. The SLP is sharing intervention responsibilities with the classroom teacher. Services are provided in the least restrictive environment. The SLP may not develop separate lesson plans, organize separate materials, or spend time scheduling pullout sessions for the students.

### **Team Teaching**

The SLP, special education and regular education teachers work in teams. They address IEP goals for all children. The students come to the speech-language room, by grade level, one period per day. The SLP assigns grades on their report cards. The SLP may be able to free up several class periods per day to deal with workload issues as a result of shifting to this model because the SLP is sharing intervention responsibilities with a team of educators who are all working on the same goals for the students. Instead of scheduling several pullout sessions per week, the students are getting intensive individualized attention in each class all week long.

### **Resource Room**

The SLP, learning disabilities teacher, behavioral disabilities teacher, and cognitive disabilities teacher provide language, academic and study skills support. The students come to a resource room one to two periods per day instead of going to a study hall. The special educators integrate the IEP goals into curriculum-based support as the students complete homework assignments.

### **Speech Club**

The SLP is assigned to lunchroom duty Mondays through Thursdays. The SLP uses this time to monitor students on the caseload who are in carryover stages of their program. Each student invites a classmate to join them for lunch at the Speech Club table. The SLP monitors the communication skills of the students in this unstructured setting. This allows more time during the day for workload issues. The SLP takes advantage of duty time to document student's progress in an unstructured setting thus cutting down on the time spent doing observations. The half-hour, duty-free lunch break is taken at a different time of the day.

## **Teaming for Reading Instruction**

Two SLPs team up with a reading specialist, learning disabilities teacher, occupational therapist, and an educational assistant to teach all children in regular education and special education reading instruction. The program operates Monday through Thursday. All the children in first grade are given 30 minutes of the reading curriculum four days per week. This is accompanied with twenty-five minutes of language comprehension instruction four days per week and twenty-five minutes of fine motor instruction one day per week. This project results in a coordinated language and reading program for all children. It includes a sequential, multi-sensory phonics instruction, phonological awareness, story grammar, vocabulary development, comprehension development, reasoning skill development, letter formation, and fine motor skill development. Each educator involved in the program teaches to their strength. The SLPs focus on phonological awareness, story grammar, vocabulary building, comprehension, and reasoning skill development. The occupational therapist focuses on letter formation and fine motor skill development. The reading specialist and learning disabilities teacher focus on phonics instruction. By using this inclusive practice approach, SLPs have more time to devote to workload aspects of their positions rather than just dealing with caseloads because they are sharing intervention responsibilities with an entire team in a more intensive effort.

## **Administrative Strategies**

### **Early Release Day**

The school district designates one day each week as an early release day or late start day. The students are dismissed one hour early, or arrive one hour late, so that regular education teachers and special education teachers can work together on curriculum modifications. SLPs may also use this time for work related activities. Collaboration is much more efficient because all professionals are available at the same time. Travel time for the SLP is reduced significantly because the SLP only needs to make one trip to each school and is assured that all the educators will be available at a specific time.

### **Program Support Teachers**

School districts may hire fully certified SLPs who work city-wide and assume some of the workload responsibilities for building SLPs. These "program support teachers" assist with evaluations and other compliance-related tasks, serve on IEP teams, assist in planning intervention strategies, coordinate communication among schools and other agencies, communicate with parents, provide resources and information, assist in procurement of appropriate materials and equipment, and assist in planning intervention strategies for specific students. These SLPs relieve some of the workload responsibilities that otherwise would fall on the building SLPs.

### **Diagnosticians**

Some SLPs in a school district are employed as diagnosticians. The diagnosticians assume all the workload responsibilities related to screening, assessment, evaluation, and IEP development for building SLPs in the district.

## Diversified Roles

More than one SLP may be assigned to each school. One SLP deals with all the students on the caseload for whom inclusive practices must be used. The other SLP deals with all the students who require pullout services. This allows both SLPs to spend more time on workload related issues.

## Flexible Monthly Scheduling

School-based SLPs have reported that the use of flexible monthly schedules for student services have a positive effect on some workload issues, including improving the quality of services to students and allocating time for compliance activities. For example, flexible monthly schedules have been used to do the following important tasks:

- Schedule time for complying with local, state, and federal mandates; preparing service documentation; and completing other paperwork.
- Schedule time to consult with teachers and paraprofessionals on student intervention programs.
- Increase the quality of services to students by allowing different types and different amounts of service to be provided throughout the year as student needs change.
- Increase the quality of services to students by allowing for a combination of service delivery options, when appropriate. For example, a student may receive classroom-based services one week and pullout services (both group and individual) the next week. Critical indirect services—including meeting and planning with teachers to support students' progress in the general education curriculum—will be ongoing.

A key concept in the use of flexible monthly schedules is for SLPs to schedule the activities that they need to perform on behalf of students rather than using the traditional approach of scheduling groups of students into 20- to 30-minute time slots. Thus, SLPs would set time in their schedules for face-to-face services, classroom observations, meetings, collaborating with teachers, and compliance-related activities.

## Contract Strategies

### Workload Week

Language is written into the teacher's contract that recognizes all of the roles and responsibilities of the speech-language pathologist. IEPs are written based on minutes per month rather than minutes per week. The first full week of each month is devoted to workload related activities. SLPs do not see students for direct services during this week unless it is for assessment and evaluation purposes. Smaller school districts do the same thing but use a six weeks rotation rather than a monthly rotation. Another option is to designate one-half day per week for work related activities. Collaboration is much more efficient because all professionals are available at the same time. Travel time for the SLP is reduced significantly because the SLP only needs to make one trip to each school and is assured that all the educators will be available at a specific time.

## **Weighted Formula**

A weighted formula is used to determine caseload sizes. The caseload numbers take into account time to do the following workload activities: professional collaboration, parent contacts, in-service training, service delivery options, supervision and communication with support staff, travel time, schedule issues, planning time, service on building assistance teams, committee work, duties (hallways, bus, playground, lunchroom, etc.), and development of communication curricula and curriculum modifications.

## **Compensation Language**

Language is written into the teacher's contract for psychologists, diagnosticians, and SLPs that specifies that additional compensation is provided when caseloads exceed a district determined maximum number. In the event that a SLP is assigned a caseload that exceeds the maximum number per a monthly caseload report, that SLP receives compensation in the amount of three percent of their salary per student. Such compensation is paid in biweekly units on a quarterly basis until such time a child is dismissed through the IEP process or until the date a child leaves the school. SLPs are also provided one-half day per week to deal with other workload activities. Choosing between compensation and assistance by additional staff is at the school district's discretion.

<sup>1</sup> Note: ASHA does not necessarily endorse these strategies.