

Speech and Language Services

AVON MAITLAND
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

A Publication of Learning Services

Information for School Personnel

Who are Speech Language Pathologists?

Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) are professionals whose practice is controlled in Ontario by the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Act. SLPs have specialized knowledge in speech, language and communication development and disorders and are key members of interdisciplinary educational teams.

Why are Speech Language Pathologists Necessary in Schools?

Language is the medium through which teachers instruct and students learn. Effective communication skills support students in accessing the curriculum, getting along socially with others and participating in school. The ability of students to understand and use oral (spoken) and written language to communicate will affect their academic, social and vocational success.

Approximately 10% of school-age children exhibit speech and language delays or disorders, which vary in nature and severity. As well, students with autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, developmental delays, behaviour difficulties, physical disabilities and hearing impairment often have co-existing speech and language delays or disorders.

SLPs assist teachers in understanding the oral language needs of students and the interrelationships between listening, speaking, reading and writing. Together with teachers, SLPs develop curriculum based strategies to address the language learning needs of students in the classroom.

What Services do Speech Language Pathologists Provide?

Speech and Language services are part of the Learning Services Department of the Avon Maitland District School Board. The Speech Language Pathologists provide a range of services to support students with speech, language and communication needs within the educational setting. The nature of the involvement is based on the individual needs of the students and may include the following:

- assessment
- consultation with parents, teachers, support staff and other professionals
- intervention (in classroom, small groups and individual)
- programming and strategies provided to home and school
- liaison with other professionals, agencies and organizations
- monitoring of student progress
- professional development
- participation in school teams
- preparation of SEA claims for students requiring specialized augmentative or alternative communication devices

When should a student be referred?

Students (SK through to graduation from secondary school) may be referred to Speech Language Pathology services if there are concerns in any of the following areas:

- articulation (pronunciation of speech sounds)
- fluency (presence of stuttering)
- voice quality (eg. excessive hoarseness)
- listening to/following directions
- understanding questions, comments, stories, conversations etc. and retelling stories
- use of appropriate vocabulary, word order and grammar
- ability to clearly and coherently express ideas
- reading and writing
- social use of language
- social interaction with peers
- lack of verbal communication

Following the assessment, children with moderate to severe articulation, fluency or voice concerns may be referred to the Community Care Access Centre for direct intervention. (as per Interministerial Guidelines for the Provision of Speech and Language Services, 1988; PPM #81).

Children aged 4 years 11 months and younger may access preschool speech and language services by calling 519-273-2222 or 1-800-269-3683 and asking for "SmallTalk".

(Adapted from School Board Speech-Language Pathology Services www.osla.on.ca).

How should a student be referred to Speech Language Pathology Services?

Teachers may speak directly with their school's Speech Language Pathologist or Special Education Resource Teacher about the student and specific concerns. The SLP may then informally screen the student to determine the need for a full assessment or proceed directly with a full assessment, pending the completion of paperwork securing parental/caregiver consent.

Should parents/caregivers have concerns about their child's speech and language development, they should contact their child's teacher who in turn will contact the school's Speech Language Pathologist.

If further information is required, please contact your school's principal