

# Speech Language Pathologist

## Anglophone School District South



The S-LP position was a complimentary initiative within the When Children Succeed portfolio, which funded the role of a Speech Language Pathologist who helped equip teachers with the skill set to teach reading in a way that includes the foundational building blocks of literacy and close reading gaps.

Professional learning on oral language, specifically vocabulary, provided by S-LPs in this project, has helped make teachers more aware of the importance of oral language development on overall student growth.

The data collected as part of the enhanced S-LP services demonstrates an increase in the number of students who scored within the average range for vocabulary, grammar, and sentence recall. There was consistent improvement during the school year while school was in session with supports in place. The 2018 Kindergarten cohort showed growth in the number of students who fell within the average range for vocabulary through the 2018-19 school year. However, regression occurred for this cohort after school closures for over 3 months due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, followed by another 2 months of summer vacation. Growth was seen again after school resumed for the 2020-21 school year for both vocabulary and grammar measures at the end of the school year. Data for the 2018 grade 1 cohort showed overall improvement in vocabulary and grammar measures for the 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 school years.

One way we attempted to alleviate some of the education disruption of the pandemic was through coordination of the Books, Books, Books program which provided books to help build a more literacy rich environment at home. The S-LP assisted with the proposal accepted by the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation and ASD-S received a grant for \$23,000.00.

Our S-LP carefully selected high-interest books which met oral language needs identified through the fall assessments and provided vocabulary rich learning opportunities. Book companions were created to provide parents with guidance on how to best introduce and reinforce vocabulary concepts at home. Newsletters containing language and literacy-enhancing activities, strategies and suggested books related to a theme were provided to schools and families monthly.

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Access to S-LPs in our schools is paramount for improving speaking, listening, reading and writing outcomes for our students. The current number of S-LPs employed by schools in our province and district is not adequate to provide the service necessary for our students due to caseload sizes in schools; This lack of resources complicates the strategic choices S-LPs must make about how to provide the best possible services and what role(s) they can have in individual schools. Increasing the number of S-LPs in our schools will provide better support to students and teachers, contributing to improved academic performance overall. The average caseload size in American schools is reported to be 47 students for 1 S-LP. The average caseload size of a full time S-LP in our district was 106 students as of June 2021. Currently there are 685 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 2 in our seven priority schools, and 4837 K-2 students in all ASD-S. There are currently 10.5 Full-time S-LPs in ASD-S, with 5.4 Full-time S-LPs in Saint John Education Centre. These S-LPs are mandated to service K-12 students, covering a range of communication issues and needs. The Standards of Practice for school-based speech-language pathology in New Brunswick indicate that the model for student support in NB schools is Response to Intervention (RTI). The framework of this model aims to focus on prevention, as well as intervention, by providing high quality instruction and intervention to meet the needs of all students. The NB RTI model is intended to improve outcomes for all children. It includes academic as well as behavioral instruction and interventions.

Due to high caseload numbers in relation to the number of S-LP positions, the current service delivery model as of the 2021-22 school year in ASD-S requires S-LPs to focus on direct services for children with severe/profound communication needs (and moderate needs, if possible) in K-3, and consultation for students in grades 4-12. Given the current student enrollment numbers and the number of S-LP positions, combined with the concomitant needs of children in our priority schools, the students at risk for literacy difficulties are not able to receive sufficient attention.

In addition, the S-LPs are not able to provide the tier 1 prevention service indicated in the Standards of Practice.

