

The Speech-Language Pathologist's role in the Problem-solving Teams in North Carolina

An appropriate role for the SLP in a workload model is to be a member of the MTSS or RtI team, often described as problem-solving teams. The SLP should not serve as Chair as the problem-solving team is part of general education and school-wide improvement.

SLP's role by Levels of Support:

CORE: collaborative problem solver

SLPs can meet with the problem-solving team to help develop solutions that will help all students succeed. They may also help determine the root cause of problems and help the team determine if interventions to the instruction, curriculum or environment are warranted.

SUPPLEMENTAL: collaborative intervention planner

SLPs can contribute their knowledge of communication in all the content areas to help teams plan Supplemental interventions and help analyze progress monitoring data that is presented to the team for groups of students. At this level they are not likely interventionists but rather collaborators and team member problem solvers.

INTENSIVE: collaborative intervention planner with focus on intensifying interventions and may be the interventionist

At this level of support SLPs will help plan more intensive and focused interventions as the need becomes more clearly defined. In some cases, especially where speech-language/communication problems are manifesting themselves in the curriculum, the SLP may be the interventionist. If no disabilities are suspected and the intervention is intended for the purposes of adjustments to instruction, curriculum, or environment, the SLP may provide interventions to small groups of students. These types of interventions (e.g., speech-sound distortions, etc.) should be time limited and designed to provide the classroom teacher information to support the classroom instruction, curriculum and/or environment.

If at any time, during any level of intervention, one suspects a disability the special education referral is initiated. For example, if the intervention required is not specific to the instruction, curriculum or environment, the problem-solving team should ask the question whether a disability is suspected. If the interventions proposed are individual interventions that are determined to be unique to the individual child, a disability should be ruled out by initiating a referral to EC.

(a) Singling students out to do any kind of screening, speech and language, hearing is permissible for the purpose of informing instruction.

NC 1500-2.34 Screening (c) The screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies or curriculum implementation shall not be considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services.

For example: If the MTSS team suggests a hearing screening to rule out hearing as a cause for the team's involvement, the SLP may conduct the screening for the purpose of informing instruction. The SLP would inform the MTSS team and the teacher that hearing screening was within normal limits and so is not a factor in the student's ability to succeed.

Observing in a classroom for the purpose of informing instruction (not focusing on an individual student) is acceptable. For example: If the SLP is observing in the classroom they may provide the teacher with some strategies, like correct place by manner cues, that would help all students pronounce particular sounds correctly.

Mild problems may be remediated during interventions, then the student's support may be adjusted within the MTSS framework without the need for referral to special education.

If a speech impairment, as defined by the IDEA as a disability, is suspected, the student should be referred to the IEP Team. The use of interventions may not delay or deny an initial referral or an initial evaluation if a disability is suspected.