

THE FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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Table of Contents

Why an Educational Specialist Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist is Important	1
Preparing Highly Effective Pennsylvania Educational Specialists Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist in a Standards Aligned Instruction System.....	1
Program Design	2
Candidate Competencies.....	3
Alignment with Pennsylvania’s Core Standards and Assessment Anchors	8
Field Experience.....	9
Verification of Experience with Students PreK-21.....	9
Accommodations and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Setting and Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners.....	9
Testing Requirements	10
Faculty.....	10
New Speech and Language Pathologists Support.....	10

Why an Educational Specialist Certificate Program for School Speech and Language Pathologist is Important

The creation of the new Educational Specialist Certificate will increase the number of qualified candidates who are able to provide school-based speech therapy services without reducing the quality of services provided by making the certificate appealing to already state licensed speech and language professionals. The benefits of creating a Speech and Language Pathologist Educational Specialist Certificate Program include:

- Candidates for the Educational Specialist Certificate will be required to take only the Praxis II content area test in Teaching Speech and Language Pathology versus the five Praxis exams currently required for a Speech and Language Impaired Instructional I certificate.
- Removing such testing requirements removes road-blocks and provides an incentive for professionals to seek out service in public schools in lieu of hospital settings.
- The Educational Specialist Certificate would properly align the types of service being provided by many speech and language professionals.
- A pathway is provided to certification for licensed speech pathologists to perform services in a public school that may significantly reduce the number of emergency permits issued.

Preparing Highly Effective Pennsylvania Educational Specialist Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist in a Standards Aligned Instruction System

The standards-aligned system defines six core elements of Pennsylvania's emerging instructional system: standards, curriculum, instruction, materials and resources for instruction, fair assessments and appropriate interventions. Together, these system components are intended to produce strong results for students. For this to happen, the work encompassed in each circle, such as instruction, must build capacity for the activities captured by the other five circles. In the case of the Educational Specialist Certificate for Speech and Language Pathologist and their contribution to (1) *instruction*, all programs are expected to align their course content with (2) *state standards*. All Educational Specialist Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist preparation programs are expected to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills to deliver (3) *standards-based curriculum* effectively and successfully. Through university coursework and extensive, well-designed clinical experiences, all candidates for the profession are expected to learn how to use (4) *materials and resources for instruction, intervention and programming* (including technology to meet the needs of each student in their individual small group).

Candidates for the Educational Specialist Certificate for Speech and Language Pathologist should spend extensive time in school settings, beginning early in their preparation program sequence, guided by university faculty and appropriately prepared PreK-12 mentor speech and language pathologists.

Program Design

The fundamental purpose of a School Speech and Language Pathologist preparation program is to admit, prepare and support candidates for the speech and language pathology profession who have the knowledge and skills to enable PreK-21 students in Pennsylvania to achieve academic success. Pennsylvania's preparation of Speech and Language Pathology Educational Specialists is one component of a standards-based instructional system and supports the standards aligned system with a framework that supports academic, career and personal-social development.

The professional education program provides evidence that candidates complete a clearly articulated program in speech and language pathology or communication disorders. The program requires candidates to demonstrate knowledge of and competence in the fundamental concepts of speech and language necessary to teach at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels (PreK-21).

Speech Language Pathologists have integral roles in education and are essential members of school faculties. The critical functions of a school speech and language pathologist are:

- **Working Across All Levels** – Speech Language Pathologists provide appropriate speech-language services for individuals from birth to age 21 in community, home, early intervention environments, pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle, junior high and high schools with no school level underserved.
- **Serving a Range of Disorders** – As delineated in the federal regulations, Speech Language Pathologists work with students exhibiting the full range of communication disorders, including those involving language, articulation (speech sound disorders), fluency, voice/resonance and swallowing. Myriad etiologies may be involved, including autism and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).
- **Ensuring Educational Relevance** – The litmus test for roles assumed by Speech Language Pathologists with students with disabilities is whether the disorder has an impact on the education of students. Therefore, Speech Language Pathologists address personal, social/emotional, academic and vocational needs that have an impact on attainment of educational goals.
- **Providing Unique Contributions to Curriculum** – Speech Language Pathologists provide a distinct set of roles based on their focused expertise in language. They offer assistance in addressing the linguistic and metalinguistic foundations of curriculum learning for students with disabilities, as well as other learners who are at risk for school failure, or those who struggle in school settings.
- **Highlighting Language/Literacy** – Current research supports the interrelationships across the language processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speech Language Pathologists contribute significantly to the literacy achievement of students with communication disorders, as well as other learners who are at risk for school failure, or those who struggle in school settings.

- **Providing Culturally Competent Services** – With the ever-increasing diversity in the schools, Speech Language Pathologists make important contributions to ensure that all students receive quality, culturally, competent services. Speech Language Pathologists have the expertise to distinguish a language disorder from “something else.” That “something else” might include cultural and linguistic differences, socioeconomic factors, lack of adequate prior instruction and the process of acquiring the dialect of English used in schools. This expertise leads to more accurate and appropriate identification of student needs. Speech Language Pathologists can also address the impact of language differences and second language acquisition on student learning and provide assistance to teachers in promoting educational growth.

The professional education program provides evidence of the candidate’s participation in sequential and developmental field experiences under the supervision of college personnel and cooperating speech and language pathologists who are well trained, have interpersonal skills and demonstrated competence in teaching. The program also provides evidence that the criteria and competencies for completion of the program are assessed in coursework, field experiences and practicum/internship. The candidates must also demonstrate their knowledge and competence in fostering student learning through a relationship between speech and language skills, and academic success prior to exit from the program.

All coursework and clinical experience required for the certificate must have been initiated or completed in an approved program. The program will prepare candidates to be certified as a School Speech and Language Pathologist Educational Specialist in accordance with the legal and compliance issues in the Pennsylvania School Code and the Individualized Education Plan development and service delivery models.

Candidate Competencies

The candidate for certification must have completed a program of study that includes academic coursework and supervised clinical experience sufficient in depth and breadth to achieve the specified knowledge and skills stipulated in these guidelines.

I. Basic Communication Processes

The candidate will:

- A. Demonstrate knowledge of the biological sciences, physical sciences, statistics and the social/behavioral sciences, and apply the knowledge to assess and intervene with students who have a speech, language or swallowing problem.
- B. Demonstrate knowledge of basic human communication and swallowing processes, including the appropriate biological, neurological, acoustic, psychological, developmental and linguistic, and cultural bases for students who have a speech, language or swallowing problem.
- C. Demonstrate the ability to integrate information pertaining to normal and abnormal human development across the life span.

II. Disorders and Differences

The candidate will:

- A. Demonstrate and apply knowledge of communication and swallowing disorders and differences, including the appropriate etiologies, characteristics, anatomical/physiological, acoustic, psychological, developmental and linguistic, and cultural correlates in the Specific Assessment and Intervention Areas.
- B. For each of the areas specified in the Specific Assessment and Intervention Areas listed below, the candidate must have demonstrated current knowledge of the principles and methods of prevention, assessment and intervention for students with communication and swallowing disorders, including consideration of anatomical/physiological, psychological, developmental and linguistic, and cultural correlates.

Specific Disorders, Assessment and Intervention Areas Listing – Speech and language pathologists address typical and atypical communication and swallowing in the following areas:

Speech Sound Production	Phonology
Articulation	Apraxia of Speech
Dysarthria	Ataxia
Dyskinesia	Phonation Quality
Resonance	Cul-De-Sac Resonance
Hypernasality	Hyponasality
Mixed Resonance	Voice
Literacy (reading, writing, spelling)	Pitch
Loudness	Respiration
Stuttering-Fluency	Cluttering
Language (comprehension and expression)	Semantics
Social Cognition	Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
Traumatic Brain Injury	Problem Solving
Executive Functioning	Sequencing
Memory	Syntax
Morphology	Pragmatics (language use, social aspects of language)
Paralinguistic	Literacy (reading, writing, spelling)
Oral-Motor Functions	Feeding and Swallowing-Oral, Pharyngeal, Laryngeal Esophageal
Oral-Facial Myology (including tongue thrust)	Prelinguistic Communication (e.g. joint attention, intentionality, communicative signaling)

The candidate for the Educational Specialist Certificate for school speech and language must demonstrate the certificate guidelines competencies in each of the disorders, assessment and intervention areas stated in the Specific Disorders, Assessment and Intervention Areas Listing.

III. Assessment-Evaluation

- A. Prevent academic failure through involvement in school initiatives designed to increase student academic success. Examples include, but are not limited to: Response to Intervention (RTI), Child Study, Student Assistance, etc. (by using evidence-based practice in prevention and assessment approaches).
- B. Conduct assessments in collaboration with others that help to identify students with communication disorders as well as to inform instruction and intervention, consistent with evidence-based practice.
- C. Specific Assessment and Evaluation Protocols
 1. Conduct screening and prevention procedures (including prevention activities).
 2. Collect case history information and integrate information from clients/students, family, caregivers, teachers and relevant others, including other professionals.
 3. Select and administer appropriate evaluation procedures, such as behavioral observations, non-standardized and standardized tests, and instrumental procedures.
 4. Adapt evaluation procedures to meet client/patient needs.
 5. Interpret, integrate and synthesize all information to develop diagnoses and make appropriate recommendations for intervention.
 6. Complete administrative and reporting functions necessary to support evaluation.
 7. Refer clients/students for appropriate services.
- D. Implement assessment and evaluation competencies for each of the Specific Assessment and Intervention Areas. The candidate must have demonstrated current knowledge and application, and the principles and methods of prevention, assessment and intervention for students with communication and swallowing disorders, including consideration of anatomical/physiological, psychological, developmental and linguistic and cultural correlates.
- E. The candidate for the Educational Specialist Certificate for school speech and language must demonstrate the certificate guidelines competencies in each of the disorders, assessment and intervention areas stated in the Specific Disorders, Assessment and Intervention Areas Listing.

IV. Intervention

- A. Provide intervention that is appropriate to the age and learning needs of each individual student and is selected through an evidence-based decision-making process. Although service delivery models are typically more diverse in the school setting than in other settings, the therapy techniques are clinical in nature when dealing with students with disabilities.
- B. Configure school-wide programs that employ a continuum of service delivery models in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, and that they provide services to other students as appropriate.

- C. Develop setting-appropriate intervention plans with measurable and achievable goals that meet clients'/students' needs. Collaborate with clients/students and relevant others in the planning process.
- D. Implement intervention plans that involve clients/students and relevant others in the intervention process.
- E. Select or develop, and use appropriate materials and instrumentation for prevention and intervention.
- F. Measure and evaluate clients'/students' performance and progress.
- G. Modify intervention – plans, strategies, materials or instrumentation as appropriate to meet the needs of clients/students.
- H. Complete administrative and reporting functions necessary to support intervention.
- I. Identify and refer clients/students for services as appropriate.
- J. Implement assessment and evaluation competencies for each of the Specific Assessment and Intervention Areas. The candidate must have demonstrated current knowledge and application of the principles and methods of prevention, assessment and intervention for students with communication and swallowing disorders, including consideration of anatomical/physiological, psychological, developmental and linguistic and cultural correlates.
- K. The candidate for the Educational Specialist Certificate for school speech and language must demonstrate the certificate guidelines competencies in each of the disorders, assessment and intervention areas stated in the Specific Disorders, Assessment and Intervention Areas Listing.
- L. Provide clinical services to each of the Specific Assessment and Intervention Areas.
 - 1. Use data to guide clinical decision making and determine the effectiveness of services.
 - 2. Make service delivery decisions (e.g., admission/eligibility, frequency, duration, location, discharge and dismissal).
 - 3. Determine appropriate context(s) for service delivery.
 - 4. Document provision of services in accordance with accepted procedures appropriate for the practice setting.
 - 5. Collaborate with other professionals.
 - 6. Screen individuals for hearing loss or middle ear pathology using conventional pure-tone air conduction methods, otoacoustic emissions screening and/or screening tympanometry.
 - 7. Provide intervention and support services for students diagnosed with speech and language disorders.
 - 8. Provide intervention and support services for students diagnosed with auditory processing disorders.
 - 9. Use instrumentation to observe, collect data, and measure parameters of communication and swallowing.
 - 10. Counsel individuals, families, co-workers, educators and other persons in the community regarding acceptance, adaptation, and decision making about communication and swallowing.
 - 11. Facilitate the process of obtaining funding for equipment and services related to difficulties with communication and swallowing.

12. Serve as case managers, service delivery coordinators and members of collaborative teams (e.g., individualized family service plan and individualized education program teams, transition planning teams).
13. Provide referrals and information to other professionals, agencies and/or consumer organizations.
14. Develop, select and prescribe multimodal augmentative and alternative communication systems, including unaided strategies (e.g., manual signs, gestures) and aided strategies (e.g., speech-generating devices, manual communication boards, picture schedules).
15. Provide services to individuals with hearing loss and their families/caregivers (e.g., auditory training for students with cochlear implants and hearing aids, speech reading, speech and language intervention secondary to hearing loss, visual inspection and listening checks of amplification devices for the purpose of troubleshooting, including verification of appropriate battery voltage).
16. Address behaviors and environments that affect communication and swallowing.
17. Use of prosthetic/adaptive devices for communication and swallowing.
18. Provide services to modify or enhance communication performance.
19. Provide training in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), feeding and behavioral strategies with communication emphasis.

V. Interdisciplinary Proficiencies

- A. Implement data-based decision making, including gathering and interpreting data with individual students, as well as overall program evaluation.
- B. Meet federal and state mandates as well as local policies in performance of their duties. Activities may include Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, Medicaid billing, report writing and treatment plan/therapy log development.
- C. Communicate effectively, recognizing the needs, values, preferred mode of communication and cultural/linguistic background of the client/patient, family, caregivers and relevant others.
- D. Collaborate with other professionals in case management.
- E. Provide counseling regarding communication and swallowing disorders to clients/students, family, caregivers and relevant others.
- F. Provide services to support the instructional program at school.
 1. Complement and augment contributions, from a Speech Language Pathologist perspective, made by other professionals who also have unique perspectives and skills.
 2. Work collegially with general education teachers who are primarily responsible for curriculum and instruction.
 3. Work closely with reading specialists, literacy coaches, special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, audiologists, guidance counselors and social workers, in addition to others.
 4. Work with school and district administrators in designing and implementing programs.

5. Interact with a variety of individuals and agencies in the community (e.g., physicians, private therapy practitioners, social service agencies, private schools and vocational rehabilitation) who may be involved in teaching or providing services to students and youth.
6. Engage families in planning, decision making and program implementation.
7. Utilize student involvement in the intervention process to promote personal responsibility and ownership of communication improvement goals by actively engaging students in goal planning, intervention implementation, monitoring of progress and self-advocacy appropriate to the age and ability level.
8. Adhere to standards of ethical conduct.
9. Implement processes used in research and of the integration or research principles into evidence-based clinical practice.
10. Maintain demonstrated knowledge of contemporary professional issues.
11. Demonstrate knowledge of entry level and advanced certifications, licensure and other relevant professional credentials, as well as local, state and national regulations and policies relevant to professional practice.
12. Demonstrate skills in oral and written, or other forms of communication sufficient for entry into professional practice.

- VI. Systemic Change** – Studies that provide an understanding of the school speech and language pathologist’s roles in identifying and changing policies and practices that create obstacles to learning. The candidate will:
- A. Conceptualize the importance of systems-focused interventions to closing achievement gaps, correcting educational inequities and promoting the academic development of all students.
 - B. Understand the important role of the school speech and language pathologist as a system change agent.
 - C. Understand family and other systems theories along with major models of family and related interventions.

Alignment with Pennsylvania’s Core Standards and Assessment Anchors

Candidates must be able to demonstrate their awareness of standards for the earlier and later grades to ensure that there is a continuum of PreK-12 student academic growth. This knowledge will enable the candidate to address the needs of students who have not met the standards including students with disabilities or English language learners in inclusive settings. Candidates must demonstrate mastery beyond superficial levels in order to be able to prepare students to be successful on state and local assessments. This mastery will allow the candidate to guide and assist the public school student in achieving proficiency on all state assessments. The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based criterion-referenced state assessment used to measure a student's attainment of the academic standards while also determining the degree to which school programs enable students to attain proficiency of the standards. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 is assessed in reading and math. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 5, 8 and 11 is assessed in writing. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 4, 8, and 11 is assessed in science.

The preparation program requirements must function together so that candidates: understand and make effective use of the academic standards; have the skills to develop and implement appropriate interventions to improve student learning; have the content and pedagogical knowledge to teach the curriculum effectively; understand and make regular use of standardized and curriculum-based assessment data; and use the instructional materials and resources necessary to support standards-based instructional practices. Preparing institutions must provide evidence that there is an alignment of the candidates' course work, clinical experiences and assessments with the standards adopted by the commonwealth. Collaboration among professional educator faculty, and faculty from liberal arts and other academic disciplines in program planning and evaluation of all facets of the curriculum is essential to facilitating deep understanding of the standards by candidates (as regulated by 22 Pa. Code §354.26(a) (1)).

Field Experiences

Supervised practicum must include experience with student populations in PreK-21 and from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds. Practicum must include experience with student populations with various types and severities of communication and/or related disorders, differences, and disabilities. Practicum must provide opportunities for candidates to meet competencies in this document and provide documentation of the competencies being met.

Verification of Experience with Students PreK-21

Candidates for the Educational Specialist Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist must have demonstrated experience in assessment and intervention with student populations in PreK-21 and from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds. Candidates must have experience with student populations with various types and severities of communication and/or related disorders, differences, and disabilities. Experience must indicate that the candidate meets competencies in this document and provide verification of the competencies being met.

Accommodations and Adaptations for Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Setting and Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners

Pennsylvania's teacher preparation programs must include the competencies and skills needed to equip teachers to accommodate and adapt instruction for students with disabilities in an inclusive setting and to assist English language learners. At least nine credits or 270 hours regarding accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in an inclusive setting (instruction in literacy skills development and cognitive skill development for students with disabilities) must be included; as well as at least three credits or 90 hours regarding the instructional needs of English language learners. (22 Pa. Code, Chapter §49.13(b)(4)(i).

Competencies and skills to accommodate and adapt instruction for students with disabilities in an inclusive setting and to assist English language learners must be identifiable during the program review process. Candidates who apply for a Pennsylvania instructional and/or educational specialist certificate on or after **Jan. 1, 2013**, must have completed the

credits/hours described above. The guidelines can be found at:
[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_123236_588885_0_0_18/ada
ptationsaccommodationsguidelines.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_123236_588885_0_0_18/adaptationsaccommodationsguidelines.pdf).

Testing Requirements

Candidates for the Educational Specialist Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist must receive a passing score on the Praxis II Speech-Language Pathology assessment exam.

Faculty

Faculty who teach course content to candidates for the Educational Specialist Certificate for School Speech and Language Pathologist must have demonstrated expertise in providing speech and language services in PreK-21 settings, as well as have advanced degrees in the content areas they are teaching.

New Speech and Language Pathologists Support

According to the Pennsylvania code (22 Pa. Code Chapter 49.14(4)(ix), all local education agencies (LEA) must submit a plan for the induction experience for first-year teachers, which includes first-year Speech and Language Pathologists. This plan is submitted as part of the LEA's strategic plan written every six years as required by the Pennsylvania code. Preparing institutions have a role in a school speech and language pathologist's induction experience. The preparing institution shall provide, ongoing support for novice educators with local education agencies during their induction period, including observation, consultation and assessment. (22 Pa. Code 49.14(4)(ix) New Speech and Language Pathologists are to receive supervision from experienced Speech and Language Pathologists who are the most qualified persons to facilitate first-year school speech and language pathologists' capacity to fulfill the unique role school speech and language pathologists assume in promoting students' academic, career and socio-emotional development.