

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



K12: 2007-137
Date: October 10, 2007

JEANINE
BLOMBERG
Commissioner of
Education

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER



Questions and Answers Regarding Speech-Language Impaired Associate Certification

Summary: Since the initial implementation of the associate certificate, a critical shortage of master's-level speech-language pathologists has persisted. Thus, districts have expressed the continued need for the option of hiring bachelor's level speech-language personnel through the associate certification option, or speech-language associates (SLAs).

The purpose of this technical assistance paper (TAP) is to provide updated guidance regarding the speech-language impaired associate certification. Rules 6A-6.03012, Florida Administrative Code (FAC.), *Special Programs for Students Who Are Speech and Language Impaired*, and 6A-4.01761, FAC., *Specialization Requirements for Certification in the Area of Speech-Language Impaired Associate-Academic Class*, allow bachelor's-level speech and language personnel to provide services to school districts that qualify for sparsity supplement.

Contact: Lezlie Cline
(850) 645-7132
lezlie@fcim.org

Status:

- New Technical Assistance Paper
- Revises and replaces previous Technical Assistance Paper on Speech-Language Impaired Associate Certification dated June 2002

Issued by the
Florida Department of Education

Division of K-12 Public Schools
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese>

Table of Contents

1.	In which districts is the speech-language impaired associate certificate available?.....	1
2.	What are the procedures for obtaining a speech-language impaired associate certification?	1
3.	What components must be included in the speech-language associate (SLA) plan?	2
4.	If a district submitted a SLA plan to the Department of Education in the past, is the district required to submit another plan before requesting a speech-language impaired associate certificate?	2
5.	Can a district request another speech-language impaired associate certificate for a SLA at the end of the three-year certification period?	2
6.	Is a district required to submit a new plan to the Department of Education when another speech-language impaired associate certificate is requested, as mentioned in question 5?.....	3
7.	May a SLA perform the same duties and responsibilities as a master’s-level speech-language pathologist?.....	3
8.	What is meant by “under the direction of” as stated in Rule 6A-6.03012(6)(b)1, FAC.?	4
9.	How much direction/supervision should be provided by the master’s-level speech-language pathologist?.....	4
10.	Is a SLA required to participate in professional development/continuing education activities?	4
11.	Who has ultimate responsibility for the SLA?.....	5
12.	May a district contract with a speech-language pathologist to provide direction/supervision to a SLA?.....	5
Appendix A – Florida Schools That Qualify for the Sparsity Supplement Based on Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) 2007-2008.....		6
Appendix B – Speech-Language Associate Plan.....		7

Questions and Answers Regarding Speech-Language Impaired Associate Certification

In June of 2002, a technical assistance paper (TAP) was disseminated providing information on the speech-language impaired associate certification. This TAP was developed after the State Board of Education approved Rule 6A-4.01761, FAC., *Specialization Requirements for Certification in the Area of Speech-Language Impaired Associate-Academic Class* and amendments to Rule 6A-6.03012, FAC., *Special Programs for Students who are Speech and Language Impaired* on August 14, 2001. The new rule and amended rule allowing implementation of the associate certification came as a result of the recommendations of a task force appointed by the Commissioner of Education to address the critical shortage of master's-level speech-language pathologists available to provide services to students with speech and language disabilities, particularly shortages in Florida's sparsely populated districts. The rules allow bachelor's-level speech-language personnel to provide services to school districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement.

Since the initial implementation of the associate certificate, a critical shortage of master's-level speech-language pathologists has persisted. Thus, districts have expressed the continued need for the option of hiring bachelor's level speech-language personnel through the associate certification option, or speech-language associates (SLAs).

1. In which districts is the speech-language impaired associate certificate available?

The speech-language impaired associate certificate is available to school districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement funding pursuant to Section 1011.62(7), Florida Statutes (F.S.). The sparsity supplement is part of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) established by the Florida Legislature in an effort to guarantee the availability of appropriate programs and services for every student. The sparsity supplement is designed to mitigate the higher per student costs of providing services in sparsely populated districts. The number of districts that qualify for the sparsity supplement may vary from year to year. A list of districts eligible for the sparsity supplement in the 2007-2008 school year is provided in Appendix A.

2. What are the procedures for obtaining a speech-language impaired associate certification?

First, a school district must submit a SLA plan to the Program Specialist for Speech and Language Impairments in the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services. The plan will be reviewed by the Program Specialist and approved or returned to the district for revision. If returned to the district for revision, the district must revise and resubmit to the Program Specialist. Once the SLA plan is approved by the Program Specialist, an approval letter will be sent to the district. The Bureau of Educator Certification will be copied on the approval letter to inform Bureau staff that the district's SLA plan has been approved and a speech-language impaired associate certificate may be issued when requested by the district. Once the letter of approval is received by the district, the district must submit, as a package

to the Bureau of Educator Certification, the individual's application for a speech-language impaired associate certificate and the district superintendent's request for the issuance of the certificate. The temporary certificate will then be issued for a period of three years.

3. What components must be included in the SLA plan?

The components of the plan include:

- A description of the model specifying the type and amount of direction including, but not limited to, direct observation, support, training, and instruction
- The rationale for using the model
- The manner in which the SLA will demonstrate competency
- The process for monitoring the quality of services
- The measurement of student progress

Additionally, the plan must describe the process for changing the intensity of direction/supervision for the SLA based upon the SLA's demonstrated competencies and their students' needs and progress. It also is recommended that districts include information as to how the SLA will participate in professional development/continuing education activities. Finally, monitoring/evaluation forms should be included with the plan. See Appendix B for an outline of the required components of the SLA plan.

4. If a district submitted a SLA plan to the Department of Education in the past, is the district required to submit another plan before requesting a speech-language impaired associate certificate?

Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, districts are being asked to submit a new SLA plan to the Department before requesting a speech-language impaired associate certificate. If a district submitted a plan in the past, the district should review the previous plan, determine if any revisions or additions are warranted, and resubmit to the Department for review and approval. Once this plan is approved, the plan will remain approved and districts will not be required to submit another plan in the future.

5. Can a district request another speech-language impaired associate certificate for a SLA at the end of the three-year certification period?

Yes, if a district feels that the SLA has demonstrated competency in providing quality services to students with speech and language impairments, the district may request that another temporary certificate be issued. The certificate will be issued again for a period of three years. Districts may continue to follow this procedure as long as a certificate is desired for an individual.

6. Is a district required to submit a new plan to the Department of Education when another speech-language impaired associate certificate is requested, as mentioned in question 5?

No, once a district has submitted a plan and received approval, beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, that plan will remain approved by the Department.

7. May a SLA perform the same duties and responsibilities as a master's-level speech-language pathologist?

A SLA must work with a limited scope of practice, under the direction/supervision of a master's-level speech-language pathologist. In assigning duties and responsibilities of the SLA, the communication needs of the students must be paramount at all times to ensure quality services. The SLA may implement a variety of tasks as long as the directing/supervising speech-language pathologist provides sufficient training and direction. The amount of direction/supervision may vary with the complexity of students' disabilities and the level of experience and training of the SLA and may change over time based on the SLA's demonstrated competencies and his or her students' needs and progress.

SLA responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting speech/language screenings (without interpretation) following specified screening protocols
- Developing and maintaining lesson plans based on objectives designated on a student's individual educational plan (IEP) or family support plan
- Providing appropriate speech/language intervention services to identified students as designated on the students' IEP or family support plan
- Collecting data to document student performance and progress toward meeting established goals and objectives as stated in the IEP or family support plan
- Performing checks and maintenance of equipment
- Reporting behavioral observations to the directing/supervising speech-language pathologist
- Participating in parent conferences or interdisciplinary team meetings
- Participating in the development or modification of a student's IEP or family support plan

SLA responsibilities should *not* include:

- Conducting or interpreting diagnostic assessments of language, articulation/phonology, fluency, or voice disorders
- Participating in the review of speech/language evaluation data to determine initial or continued eligibility without the presence of the directing/supervising speech-language pathologist
- Developing or modifying a student's IEP without the recommendation and guidance from the directing/supervising speech-language pathologist

8. What is meant by “under the direction of” as stated in Rule 6A-6.03012(6)(b)1, FAC.?

A speech-language pathologist who holds a master’s degree in speech/language pathology, communication disorders, or other comparable degree, and a Florida educator certificate in speech/language impaired or license in speech/language pathology pursuant to Chapter 468, F.S., may provide direction/supervision of a SLA.

Direction/supervision includes training, observation, and consultation. Some examples include:

- Scheduled and unscheduled observations of the SLA providing services and carrying out assigned duties and responsibilities, with feedback and suggestions
- Exchange of information between the SLA and directing/supervising speech-language pathologist with an opportunity for questions and answers
- Communication by phone, fax, or electronic mail with the directing/supervising speech-language pathologist
- Training in school district policies and program procedures, screening and data collection, behavior management, and therapy techniques for articulation/phonology, language, fluency, and voice
- Completion of performance evaluations

9. How much direction/supervision should be provided by the master’s-level speech-language pathologist?

Direction/supervision should be provided weekly during the SLA’s first year of employment. More direct observation may be needed during the initial months of employments. As a SLA gains experience, the amount of direction needed may change and the speech-language pathologist may alter the frequency and intensity of observation, guidance, and training activities according to the SLA’s strengths and needs. Direction/supervision should continue to be provided to the SLA throughout the certification period.

10. Is a SLA required to participate in professional development/continuing education activities?

A SLA should participate in professional development/continuing education activities. Professional development plays a significant role in attaining the goal of higher student achievement. It is essential that all educators, including SLAs, keep current with the latest research and innovations if higher student achievement is to be realized.

Professional development activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Monitored observation by the SLA of evidence-based intervention practices at a variety of sites
- Attendance at monthly meetings for all district speech-language professionals
- Participation in conferences, inservice presentations, and university or community college classes
- Monitored/supervised individual self-study of written information or videos on topics related to the practice of speech/language pathology

11. Who has ultimate responsibility for the SLA?

Districts must make determinations of responsibility based on the policies of the local school board.

12. May a district contract with a speech-language pathologist to provide direction/supervision to a SLA?

This may be done at the discretion of the district. However, the speech-language pathologist must be licensed by the Department of Health, as this individual would be employed on a fee-per-hour basis as a private practitioner.

Appendix A

Florida Schools Districts That Qualify for the Sparsity Supplement Based on Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) 2007-2008

Baker	Hamilton	Putnam
Bradford	Hardee	Sumter
Calhoun	Hendry	Suwannee
Charlotte	Highlands	Taylor
Citrus	Holmes	Union
Columbia	Jackson	Wakulla
DeSoto	Jefferson	Washington
Dixie	Lafayette	FAMU Lab School
Flagler	Levy	FSU Lab School
Gadsden	Liberty	UF Lab School
Gilchrist	Madison	
Glades	Nassau	
Gulf	Okeechobee	

Appendix B

Speech-Language Associate Plan

1. Describe how the district will support the employment of the speech-language associate (SLA) through direction/supervision of the master's-level speech-language pathologist, including the amount of observation, training, and instruction, along with any other supporting components.
2. Provide the district's rationale for using the SLA model.
3. Describe the manner in which the associate will be required to demonstrate competency.
4. Describe the process for monitoring the quality of services provided by the SLA to students identified as speech and/or language impaired. Include a description of the monitoring/evaluation forms, including who will complete the forms, when and how often they will be completed, and how results of the evaluation will be shared with the SLA.
5. Describe how the progress of the students being served by the SLA will be measured or monitored.
6. Describe how program outcome data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan. Include a description of how possible ineffectiveness of the plan will be addressed (e.g., a change in the intensity of direction/supervision).
7. Provide a description of how the SLA will participate in professional development/continuing education activities.