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OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM SPEECH-LANGUAGE & AUDIOLOGY CANADA (SAC)

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) Official Statement on Evidence-Based Speech-Language Pathology Practice in Schools

The principles of evidence-based practice (EBP) inform effective, high quality speech-language pathology services in schools for students with speech, language and literacy challenges.

Evidence-based speech-language pathology practice in schools involves interpreting the best available research evidence in combination with practice-based evidence and consideration of student and family preferences and values (Archibald, 2017; Dollogan, 2007; Gillam & Gillam, 2006; Justice & Fey, 2004; Lof, 2011; Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996).

[Speech-language pathologists \(S-LPs\)](#) monitor research and apply EBP criteria to determine optimal prevention, screening, assessment and intervention practices as well as [models of service delivery in schools](#). Speech-language pathology professional Master's programs prepare S-LPs to critically evaluate scientific evidence. In addition, Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) members and associates are bound by the [SAC Code of Ethics](#) that promotes high standards of competency supported by current scientific and professional research.

EBP is key in all aspects of speech-language pathology service delivery in schools, with S-LPs being uniquely positioned to make evidence-based contributions to literacy education. S-LPs are essential members of school literacy teams because of the breadth and depth of their knowledge about normal and disordered speech, language and literacy development, in both monolingual and multilingual environments.

Research shows that teachers want support to adopt literacy practices aligned with current scientific evidence (Buckingham & Meeks, 2019; International Literacy Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 2017; Washburn et al., 2015). S-LPs can help educators plan and implement evidence-based literacy practices that address students' interrelated language and literacy skills. Reading and writing are dependent on oral language abilities. The meaning of written words, sentences and text can only be accessed if their spoken form is understood. Both delayed and disordered language development as well as incomplete second language acquisition can interfere with this process (e.g., Geva & Massey-Garrison, 2013). Furthermore, the mechanics of decoding and encoding written language are dependent on the capacity to attend to and manipulate individual speech sounds orally. A large body of robust research evidence suggests that, along with building oral language skills, explicit and systematic instruction in the foundational skills of decoding – letter-sound knowledge and phonemic awareness – is critical for reading success (Petscher et al., 2020).

S-LPs and the speech-language pathology assistants they supervise help all students - including children with speech, language and literacy challenges - to access the curriculum and reach their full potential through the provision of evidence-based services.

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This SAC Official Statement has been developed based on the best available evidence in the context of a rapidly evolving health care emergency and is subject to change as additional information becomes available.

About SAC

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) is a member-driven organization that supports and promotes the professions of more than 6,500 members and associates. We are the only national organization passionately supporting and representing speech-language pathologists, audiologists and communication health assistants inclusively. Through this support, we champion the needs of people with communication disorders. Visit www.sac-oac.ca to learn more.

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