

SAC Shining Lights Podcast: Episode 3 Transcript

Intro: Welcome to the SAC Shining Lights S-LP Schools podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Lisa Archibald from Western University. As you know, many speech-language pathologists in Canada are employed in schools. Their job is to support children with communication disabilities in accessing the curriculum and achieving their academic and personal potential. It's a challenging job. So many schools, so many students and not many SLPs. Across the country, S-LPs are finding unique solutions to providing the best possible services to the students and school teams with whom they work. In this podcast, our guests describe their innovations in school-based speech language pathology. Thanks for listening, as we shine a light on some brilliant projects.\

Lisa Archibald:

Well, welcome to the SAC Shining Lights S-LP Schools podcast. And I'm really happy today to have my colleague MaryAnn Schouten join us. MaryAnn would you introduce yourself, please?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Sure. So I'm MaryAnn Schouten actually, and I am the supervisor for Communication Language and Speech Services at the Upper Grand District School Board.

Lisa Archibald:

Thanks, MaryAnne. Sorry about that Scouten. You'd think after all these years I would be getting that right. Thank you for your grace. So will you tell us there about your, your service delivery model, your resource context there at the Upper Grand?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Sure. So at the Upper Grand we have 10 s-lp's and we have nine CDAs. And our service delivery model is, or I should say our service priorities are primarily supporting students oral language in the early years and identifying students with developmental language disorder. And then also another area where we find ourselves work with a lot of involvement is in the area of augmentative and alternative communication where we're supporting students from school entry to school exit, which could be age 21. So we do a lot of work in between in terms of language assessments and also, you know, referrals for school based rehab services. And we are integrated into the into system initiatives such as the literacy initiatives that are that are happening right now across the province. But I'd say in terms of our direct student contact, our primary focus is oral language in the early years and supporting students who are minimally verbal or nonverbal throughout the school years.

Lisa Archibald:

Great, Thanks for that, MaryAnne. So you guys have a particularly unique aspect to your service delivery model. We're gonna talk a lot about that, but tell me, first of all, what were some of the major challenges that you noticed that spurred you onto that?

MaryAnn Schouten :

So many years ago we had, we were finding that many of our referrals were coming from classroom teachers who actually were concerned about the students literacy skills. So that was more of the typically grade one referrals. So kids who are struggling with learning to read or they were for students in kindergarten who had pronoun errors or articulation errors, which may or may not have been you know, developmentally appropriate. So they were, the referrals were not necessarily capturing the population that we felt we could make the greatest impact with. So we needed to support our educators in identifying oral language difficulties and identifying children who are struggling to be put forward for an assessment. and also we needed to educate our, our educators on who to help us, who to refer to us. And then we needed to and then we needed to have a plan for supporting our, supporting these students in a way that was then systematic across the entire board. So we had a lot of, we had kind of a patchwork approach where so we were getting a lot of students who weren't really our ideal candidates for a speech language pathology support. And then we were also finding that, you know, some SLPs were comfortable providing sort of a discreet skills sort of approach for intervention. Others had a different approach that was more classroom based. And, and so we also recognized in, in helping the educators identify who to bring forward, then we needed to tighten up our approach by ensuring that we had a universal system for how we were assessing and what are our pathways for providing intervention.

Lisa Archibald:

Right. Thanks. So those are two really good reasons, right? So that to think about coming together right, is not only, you know, who's coming in, but what you are offering as well. You know, I really like that, that you were considering those, both of those aspects. So tell me about what you came up with then. What did you do?

MaryAnn Schouten :

So we had the great fortune of attending an ASHA conference back in 2007. And while we were there, we listened to Sandra Gillam speaking about literacy based language intervention. And so literacy based language intervention was a method of intervention, which was where you were providing a contextualized approach. So you had a large goal that, or sorry, you had a context that would, a storybook would provide, and then you, you had smaller strands of skills that you were working on that were all connected to the to the context. So you would do little bits, you would do syntax, you'd do vocabulary, you'd do grammar, but it was all, it was sort of a whole part, whole approach. And we sat my colleague Trudy Counter, and I sat in this workshop and we were just buzzing because we thought, you know, this is what we, this is what we need to do.

This is what we're already walking, we're already beginning down that road in terms of more of a narrative approach. And this sort of, this gave us a framework to investigate further and to develop into a program. So what we did was we started with one lesson plan which is how it always starts. One lesson plan for a for a student who was struggling with oral language in grade one. And where we are today is we have a language intervention program, which we call language intervention through engaging stories, so LITES, where we have four strands where we take students from, where students can be anywhere from senior kindergarten until the end of grade two. And we work, we use stories to provide a narrative framework. And then we develop we work on specific language goals, such as oral language, grammar, verbal reasoning, using sort of complex sentence constructions. And then also story structure. And it's expanded into a four stage program because we very quickly realized as we were working with students and getting feedback from s-lp's and CDAs who were implementing our program, that we needed to be more were looking at story structures, which are more temporal stories and our grammatical goals tended to be more like compound sentences and then in our second stage, we are working with students who are ready to begin learning early grammatical story grammar. And we are introducing a little bit more complex sentence constructions and so more of the tier two vocabulary that we're targeting. And then in stage three, we expand further to stories which have multiple episodes and obstacles in them and more advanced verbal reasoning tasks. And then finally in the final stage, we're working with chapter books where the students are learning to apply their knowledge of story grammar. And as it, in these chapter books, it occurs that in each chapter there's a tight story grammar. And so we, and then we compare chapter to chapter and then over chapters, and we compare sort of character traits and so forth. So really bringing it all together sort of at a higher, at a higher language level in the final stage.

Lisa Archibald:

Wow. So that's quite a beautiful program and that evolution of those stages. Let's talk about their design just a little bit more before we, and then, we'll, you know, I know folks will wanna hear about how you execute it, but first of all, the lesson plans, the work themselves. So their the stories, you're all where are you getting your books from, your stories from MaryAnne?

MaryAnn Schouten :

So it was important to us that we were using authentic children's literature, and so we wanted stories that were engaging and we also wanted to have tight control over the, the story complexity. And so we had our own rubric that we were using. and typically the stage one books were like the Eric Carle type books that were where there were temporal sequences. So you think about the Hungry Caterpillar, for example, when we went to introducing Story Grammar, again, we wanted to have quite tight control over over the elements of a story. So we chose the Usborne books, Farmyard Tales, because they had very simple story structures, and the characters and settings were typically the same across stories. So we could gradually build children's knowledge of story grammar and story structures and the icons that we used without sort of, without having any kind...we controlling the variables of having, you know different illustrators,

different story different characters, different sort of different types of, of books. When our goal was to establish the student's understanding of story grammar. When we get to the third stage there, things open up wide, and there we have storybooks like Russell The Sheep, How I Became a Pirate. Yes, of course the names escape me right now, but they're all very engaging. And of course we've been doing this for a while. And so, you know, everyone had their ideas already about, you know, what were the books that kids really responded well to? And then we'd look them over and we'd, we'd say, Okay, that's a stage two, that's a stage one, that's a stage three. and then finally with our, with our final stage, we did the Magic Tree House. And again, we were increasing the complexity by, by introducing a chapter book. And we didn't have, you don't have pictures like the picture books in the previous stages. So again, we wanted to control other variables so that the the chapter books have the same characters and the same, the same setting that starts the book with with the st the Children climbing into the tree house that goes into another time and place. And we wanted the Magic Tree House series, not just because it had a there was a constant across the different books in terms of the characters but also because there were parallel stories where we could make connections between you know, the story and the setting and all of the, and history and so forth. So making you know, when we think about text to text and Text to World, we were, the connections that we work on with kids, we were very intentional and explicit about helping children you know, move beyond, move beyond the story and make connections to their world.

Lisa Archibald:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. So that's interesting. I was just gonna say that text the, the comment a bit more on that text to text, text to World there. What, what are you meaning by that phrase?

MaryAnn Schouten :

So that is very much from as you speak, I suppose. I've been in school boards for most of my career, and I've learned that through my work with teachers. So when you're working on, when you're working on comprehension of a story teachers are teachers to help children to to make text to sort of text to self connections, text to text connections, and text to world connections. So they'll use prompting questions like I remember when that happened to me, when they're reading a story. And so that's text to self. Text to text is, you know, when they're making connections between, you know, the actions or the setting of a previously read story that the class has read. And then Text to World is making those leaps from, from the textbook or sorry, from the storybook to world events or what they know their experience in the world. And so we try as much as, as possible with our language intervention program to use our goals are the goals that are important for supporting students oral language so that they can achieve social success because it's group work and academic success.

Lisa Archibald:

Maybe was just gonna get you to think describe it a little bit more about those lesson plans. Right. So a little bit more about the structure of that lesson and how, the way you've designed that allows for flexibility of meeting the needs of different students..

MaryAnn Schouten :

So every lesson plan has the same overall structure. So we start with a read aloud, it's an interactive read aloud, and then we move to and then we move to a vocabulary task or a grammatical task, or a sentence structure or something related to a sentence structure. So for example and we always, we, we make connections. The kinds of sentence structures that we're working on would match would match a concept that was taught in the book. So if we were working on the sentence construction of if, then and we're doing, let's say the, the gingerbread man we would say, you know, if the gingerbread man gets, if the gingerbread man gets wet, then he's going to, then he's going to break. Or if the gingerbread man gets caught, then the cow is gonna eat him. So we're, this is how we're making, So when I had mentioned earlier how we'd move from whole to parts to whole we're always even in our smaller discrete skills, we're making the links to the context of the story at the, the stories lesson plans tend to run over two sessions. And our second session with the story is again, a dialogic reading of the book. We're using Bloom's questions as we're reading the book. We may have in either the first reading or the second reading, we'll have selected our tier two vocabulary that we've explained in the context of the book we'll continue from the, the second reading into another activity, which might be it might be creating the story grammar map. So we use icons and we develop, we are teaching the children to draw pictographs to represent the main elements of a story. And then at the very end, so here we go, When we get said hold parts to whole, at the very end of the second session, we're putting it all together with a story retell and using our story maps with the pictographs, the clinician will have, you know, also written on the story map, you know, the cohesive tie or the vocabulary, a vocabulary word that was highlighted. So as visual cues, because these are non-readers typically to enhance the storytelling, the story retelling at the end. So it's a very rich it's a very rich two-part lesson plan. And we are using what we researched as to the, as the methods that are evidence based to promote oral language, whether it be vocabulary or expressive language or sort narrative skills. Right,

Speaker 3:

Right. Nice. Does a parallel story come in then? Where does that fit?

Yeah. That after this children have established an understanding of story grammar. So by the end of stage two, and kids in that eight point are probably end of their end of SK, beginning of grade one. At that point we introduce a parallel story. So, and we do that you know, as I had mentioned earlier, we're we introduce in stage two, we're using the Usborne books where we have similar, the same characters in the same setting. And that's how we intentionally and build the child's knowledge of a story grammar. Well, once we have that, then we read another a Usborne Farm Tales book. And that at that point we do a comparison and we use that as a parallel story. So when we, and then, so we've established it with this, this very controlled Usborne stories. And then after that, we've now broke, we go into more varied authentic children's literature where we use parallel stories that are often, you know, created by the same author and illustrator. And we have students again, use their story grammar map, and they will create pictographs for the parallel story. And then they have this visual to help them explain how the stories were the same and how they're different. So comparing and contrasting two stories.

Lisa Archibald:

Right. Thanks. Yes. And so all of that is written out in your lesson plan so that your clinician can be moving between them depending on those child's goals. So let's talk about how the clinicians now and how the program itself is executed. How is it set up?

MaryAnn Schouten :

So we see children in groups of two or three, and they're grouped according to their to, you know, their goals, whether they're in stage one, stage two, stage four, stage three, or stage four. And some elements of LITES are optional. So we have our main framework for LITES which is, you know, the interactive story that it's repeated. That's a constant. Teaching story grammar is a constant, grammar might not be as a goal for some children. And so it might be something that is is not a part of certain groups lesson plans or direction following might not be part of some lesson plans. So we individualize the group according to what our assessment results have shown us about what these children need. But the overriding, so there's differences between between groups who are doing the same program. And so in that way we've individualized, but we've also maintained a consistency. So that we know the trajectory of, of what we want to achieve for that child's block of therapy based on the stage that they're in. And should that child move to another school with another s-lp it's a very clean transfer into another school because the s the receiving s-lp understands, you know, what has been achieved. They have the same lesson plans that the CDA has written notes on and then she can move along with that child's program in a new group in the new school.

Lisa Archibald:

And so those groups then are run by the CDA and this, the timeline, how does how does that work?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Yeah, so groups are 45 minutes and so of two to three children, and we have a goal of 10 sessions, plus or minus two. So the minimum that anyone would have in a block is eight sessions, but they could have as many as 12 sessions. And some children may be seen for two blocks within a school year. And so there were, it is this children are withdrawn from their classrooms and seen in the small group with the the CDA who has, as I had mentioned earlier, that she has lesson plans which she is writing her notes on. And then that's how we can track student progress across all of the different goals. We're actually implementing a new element to it this year where we're asking, because the strategies that we're using for for our language intervention are really the same strategies that that educators can be using with all students throughout the day. And really if we're thinking of a tiered approach, and then we would want it to be a cumulative impact that our language intervention is giving an additional intensive practice for language goals that are already being supported in the classroom in the same way. So in order to achieve that high ideal, we're organizing with , every CDA is organizing with this classroom teacher a time where she can come in and she can model a language intervention strategy from LITES that can be implemented in the classroom. So the teacher has a menu to choose from. So she may choose interactive

read aloud. She may choose vocabular, how to do what we call the super six vocabulary instruction. It might be how to teach story grammar icons while you're doing a read aloud. It might be how to create pictographs to support your oral telling or to help as a pre-writing planning tool. So instead of providing a group session one day, the CDA would be in class and providing either small group or whole class modeling a high leverage strategy from LITES.

Lisa Archibald:

Right. Right. And that will make a lovely, solid tier one supporting that tier two intervention.

MaryAnn Schouten :

Yeah. So yeah, we do do in-services and we have around the strategies, and we have our teacher, our teacher directed website. But I think that a missing piece that we've been aware of is, you know, how to bridge these strategies into the classroom so that they are, that the teachers can see what they look like with their students and then can take off from there that she can implement them.

Lisa Archibald:

And you've done a lovely article for the LD@school folks, and provided some videos of your strategies, and we can link that in the show notes so people could have a look at those.

MaryAnn Schouten :

Yes. Yeah, That's a great idea.

Lisa Archibald:

So I can see how this is really getting you that sort of universal approach across your board, so that speech pathologists you know, the service is similar across your schools. Another thing you were looking to achieve is your identification, your referral. I know folks will wanna know about that, that end of things. How do kids get into the group? How, what does that process look like?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Right. Yeah. So as I had mentioned at the beginning, we were having a lot of difficulty pulling the right kids from the classroom in terms of getting them the assessment and intervention support that that they needed. So we began by using the frog one frog too many story narrative task as a kindergarten evaluation tool. And we spent quite a bit of time going at s-lp would meet with teachers and describe to the teachers, you know, who are the kids that were looking for from your, from your classroom? And so we would talk about, you know, those kids that are really having trouble relaying information about the past or the present or the future, or, you know, you need a lot of help from you with to explain or describe, so that they can get their point across, or, you know, they, they're not following your instructions or, or they're, when they answer questions, they're off topic. And so these kind of s-lp to teacher discussions help the teachers to be

thinking about the kids in their class. And then we also said, Well, you know, we know that developmental language disorder is present in two out of every 30 children in a classroom. And we use, So we said to the teachers, You know, I want you to think, So now you know, we've talked about this criteria, like who we're looking for. Now I'd like you to find two children in your class who fit that, those kind of concerns around oral language. And then, you know, will get consent. And then those are the children, then that will do our narrative evaluation. And so this, over, over a number of years, this became sort of our annual fall process until we no longer needed to have as much time in the face to face with teachers explaining the criteria, and it became better understood who were the kids that, that these speech pathologists were looking for. And then our outcomes of the narrative evaluation tool helped show us the, the students who were struggling. And then those were the children who didn't meet criterion for the, for the One Frog Too Many were ones that would be, were on case load.

Lisa Archibald:

Right. So the speech pathologist then is receiving those referrals. And through that assessment is making plans for where they fit in the LITES program, what should be their priorities in terms of goals, and then creates the groups that the CDAs then conduct. Is that sort of the flow?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Exactly. Exactly, Yes. And so some we would also in, we have in the past done a pls screener alongside the narrative task. And more recently we're, we've moved to doing the self p along with the, because it's a fairly quick assessment tool for students who are five years old. And so the combination of the narrative evaluation and the self sort of, is sufficient. And we use the, the story retrill as our language sample as well. And so that's sufficient to for the s-lp to identify concern and what would be the stage that would be most appropriate for the student.

Lisa Archibald:

And so is everybody starting at stage one and everybody goes through to stage four? How, what's the in and out kind of like?

MaryAnn Schouten :

No, so through our collaboration with the University of Western Ontario and Dr. Lisa Archibald we have been able to develop a second narrative evaluation, which we can use as a post-test. So we use One Frog Too Many, is our identifying narrative evaluation. And then we have Frog Goes to Dinner, parallel story that we use as a post test. And so what we are and we have developed norms, local norms with Western for kindergarten and grade one and grade two. And so at this point, as children are entering, the caseload if they, so whether it's through the kindergarten, they're in kindergarten and they're identified through the kindergarten evaluation process, or they're in grade one and they were on caseload in kindergarten, at the beginning of the, of a block of therapy, the student has a narrative evaluation. And then at the end of the block of therapy the student participates in a post-test. So we have our we have our

notes from the intervention where everything is being tracked according to what are our key objectives for every aspect of the lesson plan. And then also we have our pre and post data from the the parallel stories. So the intention then is that there would be students who may reach who would reach a sufficient level that that they don't need to rotate onto into another group, but rather you know, the intentional implementation of language strategies in the classroom should be sufficient. And so when we have our discharge report for that student you know, we're making these connections to, you know, where they are in terms of their oral language skills and what are the high leverage strategies, which will help in the classroom to maintain and continue to build that student's oral language skills.

Lisa Archibald:

Mm-hmm. So that speech pathologist is then doing that work of the the pre-assessments, determining where the child fits in the program and their goals, and then their post-evaluation providing, of course some supervision during the intervention. And then at the end doing that reevaluation to decide where they should go next, I guess.

MaryAnn Schouten :

Yeah, though we're actually, we're using, initially we had we had used the s-lp and the CDA as a team when they would do the kindergarten evaluations, and then the and this was our method of having that the child would be telling, retelling the story to a novel listener. Oh, right. and so however Covid changed our practices in unexpected ways. And so we began to do the narrative evaluation as for kindergarten just the S-LP alone, but the CDAs have been well trained in how to administer the narrative bell. What are the prompts that you're allowed to use and and the extent of prompting that you can use. And so once a child is on case load, it's actually the CDA who will do the post test run, do the narrative and the transcription, and then she'll give the transcription to the s-lp to score and interpret. So we are sharing the work cuz it's certainly, it's important to maintain you know, progress monitoring that ensures that the students who need a service are receiving the service. And if they no longer need that tier of support, that we are bringing them back down to a tier one and, and supporting them in that at that level. And the only way we can really do that is if we are, if we have systems in place where we're monitoring progress in a systematic in a systematic way.

Lisa Archibald:

Right. That's a great point. So MaryAnne, you have some pretty talented and experienced CDAs. Can you talk about how that group of people are being trained and how they're coming in and getting to the point where they can manage a program like lights?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Yeah. So we have really over the years, we have really included the CDAs in the, the development of lesson plans and in providing feedback about what's working and what's not working. And so the capacity building of our that has happened in our team has

happened over, over many years. And so then when we hire someone new and we're starting at the beginning initially I think it can feel daunting for the staff member who's new. However, we provide in our orientation, we provide the overview and the rationale of the program. They receive the lesson plans and all of the materials, like the book bags that belong with the lesson plan. And then they are paired with a mentor CDA who they observe and is there go to for sort of the questions that arise as you, as you begin something new. So we've had really good feedback from the CDAs who've come on new to the board, and yeah. And it's actually been it's become an efficient onboarding process that we've that we've implemented for a new staff.

Lisa Archibald:

We're drawing to the end of our time together for this conversation, MaryAnne. But let me ask you just a couple more questions. How has the program been received by the board, the educators around you?

MaryAnn Schouten :

You know, we are, I truly feel that, that our services are valued by the educators. And when we relay the, the information about progress and the goals that we, that we have are tied tightly to the goals for like curricular expectations I feel like there is a good teachers appreciate the transparency of how this relates to the work that they are doing with kids. The challenge is always talking about something, writing about something versus showing it. And so we're hoping that in the coming year we're going to enter a new sort of, enter a new phase of our program where we're going to be better, we're going to be better at bridging that gap between clinic and classroom so that we can model. I don't feel that the language intervention in small groups for kids with oral language disorder or developmental language disorder or language disorders in general that it would be effective if it were always run in the classroom setting. But it needs to, the teacher needs a natural opportunity to be able to observe. So I'm hoping our new sort of push in model is going to help make that, make that difference.

Lisa Archibald:

Thank you. Well, yeah, and that you've talked a little bit about that challenge that you're taking on this year to have that classroom base component or piece to the work. And that's gonna be really exciting to hear about. I will just say that you've been a wonderful practice based research partner with us at Western, and you know, I think we've really been able to understand answer questions that have arisen from your own practice and also look at the effectiveness of the program as well.

MaryAnn Schouten :

Well, your support has been a phenomenal gift to the development of our program. You know, there is a lot, clinicians have, have of a lot of skill, a lot of knowledge, a lot of experience of, you know, with implementing new programs, of being creative and developing programs. But we don't have the time to analyze our practice and evaluate our outcomes. And you've provided that, our research partnership has provided that gift to us, and it has indeed made significant and valuable changes and contributions to our

to our daily practice. So I thank you, Lisa, for your your role in the development of our our programming at The Upper Grand.

Lisa Archibald:

Thank you. Let's finish up with just a couple more questions. How do you and your colleagues support one another in the work that you're doing?

Well, we do have a way of identifying between us within ourselves our strengths and our abilities to to support one another through our talents. So those clinicians in the board, we have some clinicians in the board who have particular passion for literacy, and they've taken on, they've been given time to develop that leadership in their in the area of literacy. And they give, they give that back to the rest of the team through what they learn. We have others who have really taken on leadership within the department on mentoring new clinicians, taking on student clinicians. And then that experience has also provided feedback to the group in terms of, you know, how to support how, how, what kind of changes need to happen in our language intervention, in our assessment processes. Another supervising clinician has this experience with new eyes coming on board, another clinician who has a real gift for and talent for the the early years population and support and working directly with teachers and through sort of an in class in class modeling. And that person has developed leadership skills, which have contributed to the rest of the team in terms of refining their practices. So I guess, how do we help one another? I think we are all leaders and we are all passionate and we're like a puzzle together where we each can contribute and contribute to the puzzle as a whole through through our unique angle and and providing leadership.

Right. I love that, MaryAnne. So what, last question, what something, what's one of your favorite outside of work activities?

MaryAnn Schouten :

Well, not surprisingly, I love to read.

Lisa Archibald:

Little bit outside of work, <laugh>.

MaryAnn Schouten :

Yes. But, you know, it's novels. So this summer has been a great time of, you know, digging into some, some some fiction. Some just for personal sort of yeah.

Lisa Archibald:

Escaping into the stories. A that that's a great escape.

MaryAnn Schouten :

Exactly. Exactly. Mm-hmm.

Lisa Archibald:

<affirmative>. Right. Well, MaryAnne, this has been a great conversation. I know our listeners are gonna be really interested in all you've had to say. Thank you so much for joining us on the podcast.

MaryAnn Schouten :

All right. Thank you, Lisa.

Outro: Thank you for listening to the SAC Shining Lights S-LP Schools podcast. You can find all podcasts, transcripts, and links to the episode resources on the SAC website that's at sac-oac.ca. If you'd like to be a guest on the podcast, or you'd like to suggest a guest, please email the host Lisa Archibald at larchiba@uwo.ca that's L A R C H I B a @ u w a . c a . You can listen to our podcasts on all of the major podcast servers. If you liked this episode, be sure to give it a thumbs up on your platform and share it through your social media and other channels.