The Grade One Language and Literacy Project: A Collaboration Between Speech-Language Pathologists and Educators

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Introduction

- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) have an important role to play in early education

- A variety of studies have identified the benefits of SLP-led narrative[1] as well as vocabulary and phonological awareness interventions[2,3] in classrooms

- Combining the unique knowledge of SLPs with the expertise in classroom pedagogy of educators allows for a more informed approach to language and literacy instruction

- Classroom implementation of these approaches often varies due to contextual constraints and prior training

- Effective professional development involves teaching plus coaching

- **Research Question:** What is the efficacy of a supportive team approach to the implementation of a grade 1 language and literacy program involving collaborative planning and co-instruction between SLPs and classroom educators.

Methods

- 22 SLP-educator pairs from 21 schools
- Schools selected for participation by the school board
- Participation occurred over the course of the 2018-2019 school year

Professional Development Session #1 → Implementation → Professional Development Session #2 → Implementation → Professional Development Session #3

- 3 single-day, whole-group workshops over the school year run by 2nd & 3rd authors

- Focused on: understanding/effectively using assessment results and planning evidence-based language and literacy instruction (phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension)

- Between workshops, SLP-educator pairs met individually to coach each other on the concepts covered and to plan for classroom implementation

- Outcome measures: (1) Implementation ratings of goals set after each workshop (ease; students involved; frequency); (2) Non-participant observation of collaborative meetings between participant pairs

Results

Implementation Period #1
- Average Ease of Implementation Rating: 4/10
- 80% implemented with all students
- 20% implemented with just a few students
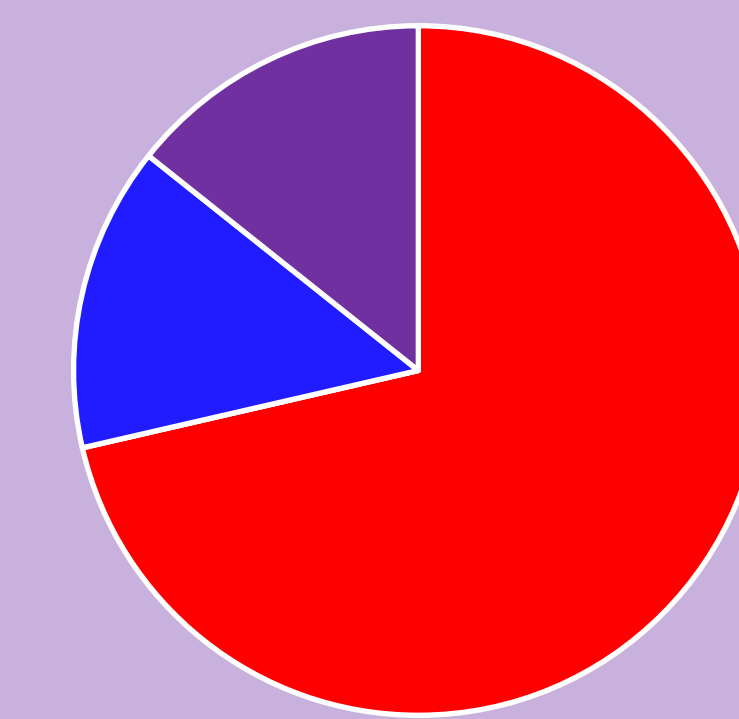
Frequency of Strategy Implementation
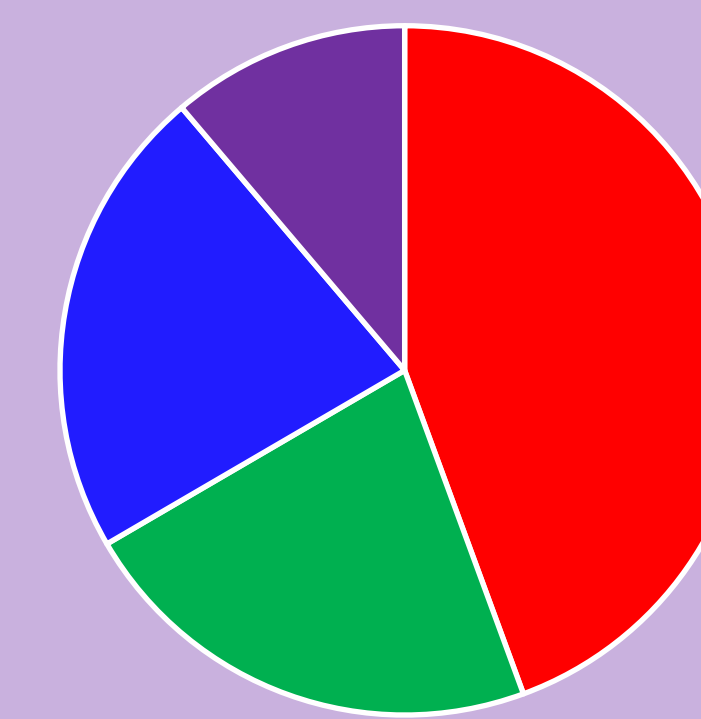
Once/Week ■ Once/Day ■ >Once/Week ■ >Once/Day ■

Implementation Period #2
- Average Ease of Implementation Rating: 4/10
- 57% implemented with all students
- 43% implemented with just a few students

Frequency of Strategy Implementation

Once/Week ■ Once/Day ■ >Once/Week ■ >Once/Day ■

"It has been amazing having her come in and implement literacy strategies in her teaching. Elongating words like a robot and having students say them back, clapping syllables, vocabulary, etc. I then have taken those strategies and applied them to my language instruction and guided reading groups." —Teacher Participant

Non-Participant Observation – Themes in Successful Collaboration and Program Implementation

1. Gradual Release of Responsibility	2. Assuming Competence	3. Individualization	4. Incorporating Language/Literacy in Everything	5. Barriers are Inevitable
• More heavy SLP involvement in early stages • Team teaching • Mix of whole-group and small-group activities • Planning together, sharing lesson plans, consultation via text	• "sparkle words" • Complex concepts (e.g. digraphs) • Whole-group activities • Peer support • Decodable texts	• Responding to the needs of individual class • Tier 1, 2 and 3 • Push-in and pull-out models • Parent involvement • Teacher confidence	• Morning message • Poem of the week • Literacy games • Book exploration • Guided reading • Math number talks • Whole-group oral discussions • Word walls • Weekly question	• Wide range of needs • Gaps in knowledge • Lack of buy-in • Behavioural issues • Assignment of participants • Time commitment • Complexity of PD information

Implications

The findings of the current study inform and refine our present understanding of the importance and effectiveness of SLP-educator collaboration in early years language and literacy instruction. Various facilitators and barriers to successful collaboration were identified.

References
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