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 narrative3 as well as vocabulary and phonological awareness interventions2,3 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
- 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

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

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

1. Gradual Release of Responsibility
- 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

2. Assuming Competence
- “sparkle words”
- Complex concepts (e.g. digraphs)
- Whole-group activities
- Peer support
- Decodable texts

3. Individualization
- Responding to the needs of individual class
- Tier 1, 2 and 3
- Push-in and pull-out models
- Parent involvement
- Teacher confidence

4. Incorporating Language/Literacy in Everything
- Morning message
- Poem of the week
- Literary games
- Book exploration
- Guided reading
- Math number talks
- Whole-group oral discussions
- Word walls
- Weekly question

5. Barriers are Inevitable
- 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
