SCHOOL-BASED SLPS INFO SERIES TOPIC #4: SERVICE DELIVERY

WHAT IS SERVICE DELIVERY?

"Service delivery" consists of the who, where, when and how of school-based speech language intervention. Service delivery models address "who" (SLP, SLPA, classroom teacher, etc.) is involved in the intervention, as well as where that intervention takes place (the classroom, the speech room, teleintervention, etc.). Service delivery also refers to the "when" of the intervention (how often it happens and for how long), as well as the scheduling model that is followed. Additionally, the "how" of intervention is addressed: Is the student seen individually or in a group? In-person or online? Is direct or indirect service provided?

Dynamic Service Delivery

Service delivery for speech-language pathology in schools should involve a range of models and approaches to meet the diverse needs of students with communication disabilities. No single service delivery model is right for every student. Therefore, service delivery should be "dynamic", involving a flexible and responsive approach to providing services. Dynamic service delivery is a fluid process that can adapt to the ever-changing needs of students, allowing for the fulfillment of FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education), while balancing it with participation in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). All service delivery decisions should be decided by the IEP team.

SOME POSSIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

Blast: Services are delivered in short, frequent bursts enabling individualized support with minimal travel and reduced time out of class. Examples: 15 minutes, 3 times a week; 5 minutes, 4 times a week

Blocked: Sessions are longer than traditional sessions but occur less frequently. Longer sessions can include both skill practice in a pull-out environment, as well as in-class generalization. May be particularly useful in secondary education programs because of alignment to blocked schedules. Example: 2 hours, 1 time per week

Receding: Direct services are provided on an intense basis at first for the purpose of skill-building, then reduced over time with indirect supports provided to promote independence. Example: 1 hour twice a week, reduced to half an hour twice a week, then 15 minutes, then indirect

Cyclical: Direct services are provided on a cyclical basis, interspersed with indirect services, allowing the SLP to engage in supportive activities, like collaboration, observation, and consultation. Examples: 3 weeks of direct services, 1 week of indirect (3-1 Model); four days of direct services, 1 day of indirect
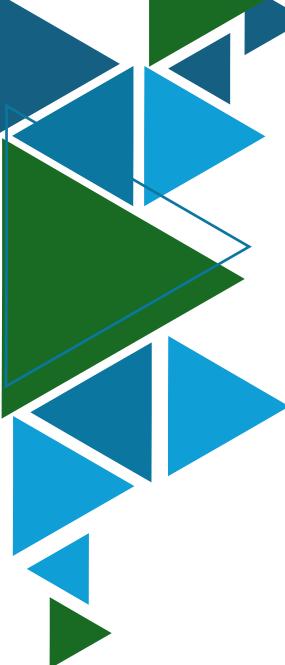
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why should SLPs in the schools use different modes of service delivery?

A school-based speech-language pathologist must provide varied dosage and frequency of services that are individualized because federal and state special education laws require services to be tailored to each student's unique needs as outlined in their IEP. This individualized approach ensures compliance with IDEA and ethical standards by addressing the student's specific communication challenges in a way that supports access to and progress in the general education curriculum. Service models must consider format (individual sessions, group therapy, or consultation), dosage (frequency, intensity, and duration of treatment), and setting (such as classroom, pull-out, home, or community-based environments). By customizing these elements, SLPs promote equity, optimize outcomes, and uphold professional responsibility to deliver student-specific interventions rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Additionally, dynamically changing service delivery over time allows SLPs to be proactive as students' needs change.

Do speech-language services have to be delivered in the "speech room"?

Speech-language services can be delivered in either a push-in or a pull-out environment, as well as via teleintervention. Delivering services in a pull-out environment (like the speech room) can provide students with more individualized attention in a more private environment and can be more conducive to initial skill-building. However, delivering services in a push-in environment (in the classroom, during extracurricular activities, at a job site, etc.) promotes generalizations of skills, collaboration among team members, and an increased awareness of the school curriculum.

Can SLPs provide "indirect" services to speech-language students?

An SLP may provide either direct or indirect services to students. Direct services consist of the SLP providing intervention in any environment, including pull-out, push-in or teleintervention. Indirect services consist of the SLP consulting and collaborating with teachers, staff, and families to provide them with strategies and approaches to facilitate students' communication development. Sometimes students' needs can be solely met in the classroom environment with only indirect speech-language services necessary, while at other times a combination of both direct and indirect services are provided.

What are some tips for providing speech-language intervention in a group?

Group intervention can be a very effective way to provide speech-language services, as it provides opportunities for peer interaction and may promote generalization. With careful management, SLPs can ensure that all students in a group are able to complete an appropriate number of trials to practice a skill. However, there are a few considerations to keep in mind. Ask yourself whether the student can effectively learn in a group environment. For example, a student engaging in initial fluency treatment who is working on exploring feelings may not feel comfortable doing so in a group. Additionally, carefully consider which students are being grouped and try to match students with similar needs. Keep the groups small and ensure you have an effective way of collecting data for all students.

Tips for Promoting Changes to Service Delivery

- Discuss potential service delivery changes with all educational partners – this is a team decision!
- Build collaborative relationships with all educational partners, including classroom teachers
- Provide data on service delivery models to any partners requiring clarification
- Complete any necessary documentation when changing services in the middle of the IEP cycle
- Use flexible IEP writing strategies, such as describing speech service time in "minutes per quarter"
- Document all direct and indirect service delivery activities
- Speak to administration and explain reasons why a change in service delivery may be beneficial
- Start small – for example, choose a few students with whom to begin using the blast model or start doing push-in with a classroom teacher with whom you already have a collaborative relationship

Questions?
Contact the PaTTAN Speech-Language Initiative at afoor@pattan.net.