



Speech/Language Special Education in Missouri: Time for Change?

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Speech-Language Data Background

- Missouri child count changes
 - 2001 – 21% Speech/Language and 50% LD
 - 2010 – 28% Speech/Language and 30% LD
- National child count changes:
 - 2001 – 19% Speech/Language and 52% LD
 - 2009 – 19% Speech/Language and 42% LD
- Missouri compared to other states:

From 2004-05 to 2008-09, MO incidence rate (% of enrollment) was one of the 5 highest states.

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Data Trends

- Nationally IDEA eligible student count is declining.
 - LD continues the greatest decrease
 - Speech-Language is holding steady or slightly declining
- Missouri IDEA eligible student count is declining.
 - LD rate declining very rapidly (more than national).
 - Speech-Language is holding steady/slightly declining.
- Missouri Speech-Language eligible students
 - 67% speech and 33% language.
 - Over one third are 6-8 year olds with speech eligibility.

Missouri Compared to States of Similar Size

State	SL Child Count	Enrollment
Arizona	20,803	1,088,000
Washington	17,072	1,037,000
Tennessee	25,917	972,000
Massachusetts	24,456	959,000
Missouri	30,522	890,000
Wisconsin	22,076	874,000
Maryland	15,596	852,000
Minnesota	16,050	836,000
Colorado	14,287	818,000

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Missouri District Data

- Incidence rates (as % of K-12 enrollment)
 - Speech range 22.22% to less than 1%, state 2.38%
 - Total SL range of 22.22% to about 1%, state 3.55%
 - 67% speech – 33% language

- District Examples
 - North KC – .87% speech - .86 language incidence
50% speech and 50% language
 - Columbia - 1.14% speech – 1.39% language incidence
45% speech and 55% language
 - Blue Springs – 1.13% speech - .74% language incidence
60% speech-40% language

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Goals for Missouri

- Total incidence AT LEAST <3% (383 districts to reduce)
- Speech incidence AT LEAST <2% (422 districts reduce)
- Language % equal to or greater than speech nationally
 - Few “speech only” students found IDEA eligible
 - No research evidence that artic disorders impact academic achievement (Schuele, 2004; SD Artic Lab)
 - Recent (2010) legal decisions re: “adverse educational impact”
 - Marshall Joint Sch. Dist. No 2 v. Brian and Traci D, 7th Cir.
 - Maus v. Wappingers Cent. Sch. Dist., S.D. N.Y.
 - C.M. v. Hawaii Dept of Ed, US District Court, Hawaii



Speech Only Eligibility and Adverse Educational Impact

Typical documentation for “speech only” as an IDEA disability

- Intelligibility -- the student is very difficult for most listeners to understand resulting in a significant negative impact on overall communication and eventual ability to benefit from instruction and classroom activities. Document the poor intelligibility.
- Social Impact -- the student’s speech calls significant attention to the student resulting in a negative social-emotional impact. Document the attention and the negative social-emotional impact on the student.
CAUTION: Services for social/ emotional needs; questions about bullying, harassment or similar.

Documentation unlikely for mild speech disorders.

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What can you do?

- Look at your incidence rate.
 - Can you get to <3% total, <2% speech (if above now)?
- What is your speech/language proportion?
 - What would it take to get speech count < language?
- Things to review in your district --
 - How SL eligibility determinations are made
 - Range of service delivery options
 - Have regular education options for speech?
 - Research based service options? (not all pull-out therapy)
 - Contribution of SL services to school academic outcomes



Eligibility Determinations

- Articulation services as a regular education option
 - RTI approach especially effective for minimal and mild sound errors
 - Research based, drill-based therapy focusing on remediating the developmental error
 - Developmental error vs. disability
 - Staff, students are happier
 - Paperwork
 - Quicker progress, less time in therapy
 - Little “down” time in therapy
 - Very few materials needed



Eligibility Determinations

- Language
 - Delay vs. disorder (associated with diagnosis) vs. language impairment vs. communication difference
 - Case history
 - MO criterion and discrepancy model does not allow a way to distinguish difference
 - Varied educational impact
 - MO criterion relies heavily on two standardized tests, cognitive referencing and language sample
 - Teams have difficulty determining educational impact based upon this criterion



Comparing Language Eligibility Determination

■ States with Low Incidence Rate

- No discrepancy model
- Functional communication skills observed across settings and time
- Language Severity Rating Scale
- Standardized assessments
- Curriculum Based Assessment: review of work samples; Classroom observations; nonacademic observations; interviews with teacher and parent; checklists
- Narrative analysis and language sampling
- Language is evaluated within context of the curriculum standard
- Look at potential for change in a communication skill

■ Missouri

- Discrepancy model
- Language sampling is a component but often vague and a one-time sample
- Professional judgment is over-used and not necessarily supported by data
- Educational impact is subjective and vague



Missouri's Possible Contributors to High Incidence Rate

- Cognitive Referencing/Discrepancy
 - Little support
 - Language skills may indeed surpass cognition
 - Language and cognition are interdependent
 - The relationship between language and cognition is complex



Missouri's Possible Contributors to High Incidence Rate, cont'd

■ Standardized Assessment

- The SLP should pay particular attention to the child's communication standard in the local school community
- Determine whether the standardized assessment's standardization sample is similar to the child, school and community in order be able to interpret the scores
 - Low SES and poverty's influence on vocabulary development
 - Cultural differences influences



Missouri's Possible Contributors to High Incidence Rate, cont'd

■ Adverse Educational Impact

- In November 2006, The U.S. Department of Education clarified “adverse effect on educational performance” as it relates to a speech or language impairment: ‘speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.’ It remains the Department’s position that the term ‘educational performance’ as used in the IDEA and its implementing relations is not limited to academic performance. Whether a speech and language impairment adversely affects a child’s educational performance must be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the unique needs of a particular child and not based only on discrepancies in age or grade performance in academic subject areas. [34 CFR §300.101 (c) (11)]
- Social functioning open to judgment
- Opportunity for “future impact” subjective as well



Recognition of Contributors and Possible Alternatives

■ Contributor

- Cognitive Referencing (discrepancy model)
- Standardized Assessment
- Educational Impact

■ Alternatives

- reexamine/review; ensure adequate case history; compare and contrast student skills/needs
- Conduct informal assessments to compare
- Academic demands; utilize curriculum standards, observations, checklists, interviews and rating scales; “across time and settings”



Language, Literacy & Academics

- Does the student have the underlying language skills to learn the curriculum?
- Language skills provide the roots or the foundation for academics (learning, literacy, decoding, comprehension, etc.)
- Vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are interdependent
- Listening and speaking vocabulary is important to reading and writing vocabulary development
- Oral language skills linked directly to written language skills



Communication Assessment

- Communication is a complex process and communicative competence may vary across time, settings and communication partners.
- Standardized tests fail to provide the contextual based assessment of the child's natural school environment – the classroom.
- Information should be gathered across time, setting, and partners to determine communicative competence and strengths/weaknesses describing an adverse educational impact.



Determining Educational Impact via Communication Assessment

- Communication assessment that is based in an academic concern = adverse educational impact
- Includes functional measures of communication which include observations across time and setting, rating scales, checklists, interview, narrative samples, case history, curriculum based information; review of curriculum, etc.
 - If a child scores poorly on standardized tests but meets communicative competence expectations on functional measures, the child's communication concerns may not necessarily be adversely affecting educational performance.
 - If a child scores well on standardized tests, but does not meet communicative competence on other functional measures, the child's communication concerns may indeed be adversely affecting educational performance.



S/L Service Delivery Options

■ Traditional Caseload Approach

- Work with students with identified disability only
- Specific students, specific skills
- Traditional 20 or 30 minute sessions, 2 times a week
- Isolated service delivery, long-term therapy
- Difficultly generalizing skills across environments

■ Current Workload Approach

- Continue to work with students with disabilities
- Provide early intervention and prevention activities for students in general education
- Various service delivery methods including more collaboration/consultation, short-term/intensive therapy and/or cycles, RTI; 3:1
- Consideration to move students quickly along a continuum of service delivery models (LRE)
- Increased generalization of skills
- Allows time for more appropriate evaluations of speech-language skills



Service Delivery Models

- Research indicates collaboration and classroom-based consultative models are highly effective:
 - Consideration of least restrictive environment and individual student needs
 - Increases curriculum vocabulary in grades K-3 for students who have identified S/L needs
 - Increases curriculum vocabulary for students at risk in the general curriculum
 - Increases teacher knowledge of strategies for language impaired students
 - Increases SLPs knowledge of the curriculum
 - Increases generalization of S/L skills in the classroom
 - Uses varied methods of data collection



Service Delivery Models, cont.

- Role of the SLP is changing and will continue to be redefined:
 - Include more collaboration/consultation to complement the knowledge base of the teacher & SLP
 - Expansion of role to include prevention and at risk students
 - Provide therapy that facilitates academic success in context of curriculum
 - Highlight and support language, literacy and learning problems across the school setting



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