

What is a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)?

We are professionals who have obtained a Master's Degree in Speech-Language Pathology (or related major such as Speech and Hearing Science, or Communication Disorders), a California State special services teaching credential, a state speech-language pathology license, and an American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) Certificate of Clinical Competency.

Critical Roles of SLP's in the schools —

- **Working Across All Levels** — SLPs provide appropriate speech-language services in Pre-K, elementary, middle, junior high, and high schools with no school level underserved. (Note: In some states infants and toddlers would be included in school services.)
- **Serving a Range of Disorders** — As delineated in the ASHA Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology and federal regulations, SLPs work with students exhibiting the full range of communication disorders, including those involving language, articulation (speech sound disorders), fluency, voice/resonance, and swallowing. Myriad etiologies may be involved.
- **Ensuring Educational Relevance** — The litmus test for roles assumed by SLPs with students with disabilities is whether the disorder has an impact on the education of students. Therefore, SLPs address personal, social/emotional, academic, and vocational needs that have an impact on attainment of educational goals.
- **Providing Unique Contributions to Curriculum** — SLPs provide a distinct set of roles based on their focused expertise in language. They offer assistance in addressing the linguistic and metalinguistic foundations of curriculum learning for students with disabilities, as well as other learners who are at risk for school failure, or those who struggle in school settings.
- **Highlighting Language/Literacy** — Current research supports the interrelationships across the language processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. SLPs contribute significantly to the literacy achievement of students with communication disorders, as well as other learners who are at risk for school failure, or those who struggle in school settings.
- **Providing Culturally Competent Services** — With the ever-increasing diversity in the schools, SLPs make important contributions to ensure that all students receive quality, culturally competent services. SLPs have the expertise to distinguish a language disorder from “something else.” That “something else” might include cultural and linguistic differences, socioeconomic factors, lack of adequate prior instruction, and the process of acquiring the dialect of English used in the schools. This expertise leads to more accurate and appropriate identification of student needs. SLPs can also address the impact of language differences and second language acquisition on student learning and provide assistance to teachers in promoting educational growth.

Why are our caseloads so high?

- Addition of TK classes districtwide
- Addition of PreK classes SDC classes
- Increase in referrals, assessments district wide
- Increase in preschool referrals, PreK students entering SPED
- Increase in AAC assessment and implementation districtwide (we do not have an AAC specialist and most districts do)
- Recently increased scope of practice
- Increase in the amount of IEP meetings

High caseloads result in many different negative outcomes

- Many SLPs are no longer able to provide much needed additional resources including social skills groups/clubs, site trainings, community outreach, vocational activities
- Majority of SLPs are doing work from home after contracted work hours and on weekends including report writing, lesson planning, etc.
- Not able to use our contracted “prep time” due to impacted schedules
SLPs frequently working while sick, working from home while out sick to avoid further loss of work.
- High caseloads are leading to low morale/burnout
- It is not best practice for caseloads to be so high. It results in needs not being met and students remaining on IEP's longer than necessary.

Our neighboring districts including OMSD, Pomona, LAUSD, are implementing caseload caps and stipends while also offering competitive salaries comparable and higher than Claremont (see OMSD MOU, payscale).

Range of Responsibilities of an SLP

- **Prevention** — SLPs are integrally involved in the efforts of schools to prevent academic failure in whatever form those initiatives may take; for example, in Response to Intervention (RTI). SLPs use evidence-based practice (EBP) in prevention approaches.
- **Assessment** — SLPs conduct assessments in collaboration with others that help to identify students with communication disorders as well as to inform instruction and intervention, consistent with EBP.
- **Intervention** — SLPs provide intervention that is appropriate to the age and learning needs of each individual student and is selected through an evidence-based decision-making process. Although service delivery models are typically more diverse in the school setting than in other settings, the therapy techniques are clinical in nature when dealing with students with disabilities.
- **Program Design** — It is essential that SLPs configure schoolwide programs that employ a continuum of service delivery models in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, and that they provide services to other students as appropriate.
- **Data Collection and Analysis** — SLPs, like all educators, are accountable for student outcomes. Therefore, data-based decision making, including gathering and interpreting data with individual students, as well as overall program evaluation are essential responsibilities.
- **Compliance** — SLPs are responsible for meeting federal and state mandates as well as local policies in performance of their duties. Activities may include Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, Medicaid billing, report writing, and treatment plan/therapy log development.

Collaboration —

SLPs work in partnership with others to meet students' needs.

- **With Other School Professionals** — SLPs provide services to support the instructional program at a school. Therefore, SLPs' unique contributions complement and augment those made by other professionals who also have unique perspectives and skills. Working collegially with general education teachers who are primarily responsible for curriculum and instruction is essential. SLPs also work closely with reading specialists, literacy coaches, special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, audiologists, guidance counselors, and social workers, in addition to others. Working with school and district administrators in designing and implementing programs is crucial.
- **With Universities** — SLPs form important relationships with universities in which both the SLPs and the universities can benefit from shared knowledge and perspectives. Additionally, SLPs can serve as resources for university personnel and the university students whom they teach.

- **Within the Community** — SLPs work with a variety of individuals and agencies (e.g., physicians, private therapy practitioners, social service agencies, private schools, and vocational no rehabilitation) who may be involved in teaching or providing services to children and youth.
- **With Families** — For students of all ages it is essential that SLPs engage families in planning, decision making, and program implementation.
- **With Students** — Student involvement in the intervention process is essential to promoting personal responsibility and ownership of communication improvement goals. SLPs actively engage students in goal planning, intervention implementation, monitoring of progress, and self-advocacy appropriate to age and ability level.

Leadership —

SLPs provide direction in defining their roles and responsibilities and in ensuring delivery of appropriate services to students

- **Advocacy** — To assume productive roles, SLPs must advocate for appropriate programs and services for children and adolescents, including reasonable workloads, professional development opportunities and other program supports. Because some of the roles SLPs assume may be new or evolving and may not be clearly understood by others, SLPs have a responsibility to articulate their roles and responsibilities to teachers, other school professionals, administrators, support personnel, families, and the community. They also work to influence the development and interpretation of laws, regulations, and policies to promote best practice.
- **Supervision and Mentorship** — SLPs play a vital role in inducting new professionals. They are involved with supervising student SLPs and clinical fellows, as well as in mentoring new SLPs. They also may supervise paraprofessionals.
- **Professional Development** — SLPs are valuable resources in designing and conducting professional development. Given their expertise in communication and language, SLPs have much to offer other educators, including administrators, teachers, other educational specialists, and paraprofessionals in the collaborative effort to enhance the performance of students in schools.
- **Parent Training** — SLPs are in a position to provide training to parents of students of all ages with regard to communication development and disorders. They may be especially helpful to families in creating a language- and literacy-rich environment
- **Research** — Federal law requires the use of scientific, research-based practices. It is important for SLPs in the schools to participate in research to generate and support the use of evidence-based assessment and intervention practices.

ASHA (our national organization) considers the factors listed below to be essential in implementing these roles and responsibilities.

- **Role and Responsibility Realignment** — The current educational context for speech-language services requires reflection on and a possible realignment of existing roles and responsibilities to make maximum use of the SLPs' expertise. SLPs and school systems can then carve out a set of roles and responsibilities that is both manageable and efficacious for the diverse student body in today's schools. Establishing workload priorities is crucial. Further, these roles and responsibilities should be viewed in the larger context of the array of programs and services provided to students, including those with disabilities, and in light of the responsibility for student achievement that all educators share.
- **Reasonable Workloads** — For SLPs to be productive in the many roles and responsibilities for which their expertise prepares them, they must have reasonable workloads. Therefore, school systems and SLPs themselves must make ethical and judicious decisions, consistent with legal mandates, about the services they provide. They must balance their scope of work to use their expertise most effectively and efficiently. New or expanded roles cannot merely be additions to an already full workload.
- **Professional Preparation** — SLPs must be fully prepared to meet the needs of the diverse student body they will be called upon to serve in the myriad roles and responsibilities outlined in this document. The range and complexity of student problems require at a minimum well-prepared, master's level professionals with a strong knowledge base in speech-language/literacy development and speech-language/literacy disorder, as well as a strong skill set in diagnosis, intervention, and workload management at the pre-service level. New or expanded roles may require high quality professional development for SLPs already in the schools.
- **Lifelong Learning** — To keep abreast of changes in education and speech-language pathology, it is essential that SLPs seek out and be permitted to engage in continuing.

Guidelines for Caseloads by Professional Organizations:

American Speech-Language Hearing Association: Although outdated, in 1993, ASHA had recommended a caseload maximum of 40. In June 2002, this policy was replaced by ASHA's recommendation of a workload based caseload standard.

Per ASHA:

- There is no research to support a specific caseload size, rather workload should be considered
- The needs of students receiving speech-language services vary greatly, and a specific caseload number does not take into account this variation.
- For example, a caseload of 40 students with very mild communication disorders could be manageable, whereas a caseload of 40 students with severe disabilities is not likely to support the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

According to the ASHA 2016 Schools Survey, the median monthly caseload size of ASHA-certified, school-based SLPs who were clinical service providers working full time was 48, with an individual caseload range of 31–64 (ASHA, 2016).

California ED CODE Caseload language

(Please see attached letter from CDE regarding caseload language)

- 56363.3. The average caseload for language, speech, and hearing specialists in special education local plan areas shall not exceed 55 cases, unless the local plan specifies a higher average caseload and the reasons for the greater average caseload. (Amended by Stats. 2007, Ch. 56, Sec. 58. Effective January 1, 2008.)
- (a) The maximum caseload for a speech and language specialist providing services exclusively to individuals with exceptional needs, between the ages of three and five years, inclusive, as defined in Section 56441.11 or 56026, shall not exceed a count of 40.(b) The superintendent shall issue caseload guidelines or proposed regulations to local educational agencies for individuals with exceptional needs between the ages of three and five years, inclusive, by January 1, 1988.
 - This was put into EdCode 40 years ago and hasn't changed. It is currently being looked at to change with a push from CSHA (California Speech and Hearing Association)
 - Carrying a caseload of over 55 is not best practice and also if done for longer periods of time, can start to put into question our code of ethics in Speech. We are required to meet each students individual needs which is why 55 was determined decades ago. In reality, this number should be much smaller now that SLP's job descriptions have significantly increased as well as students individualized needs.

SELPA GUIDELINES AND OTHER DISTRICTS

This is a random group of California state SELPA's guidelines, for reference.

Los Angeles Unified- (See attached) Cap of 55

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://utla.net/app/uploads/2023/04/UTLA-LAUSD-TA-2022-2025-CBA-Signed-4-24-23.docx-1.pdf> (page 118)

Ontario-Montclair- 55 CAP

<https://www.omsd.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=6711&dataid=22318&FileName=OMTA%20Agreement%202023-2024%20-FINAL.pdf> Page 24

Central Unified School District- Hard Cap of 55

https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1437/CSD/2720558/CTO_Contract_2022-25.pdf

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Chaffey Joint- Cap of 55

<https://4.files.edl.io/6dfa/02/09/24/164511-db1c6c32-b638-436a-95b2-bc435ce5c52b.pdf> (page 46)

ABC Unified

<https://4.files.edl.io/f4f8/07/26/23/161447-78d7884d-7ce3-4103-bede-59f9aa61a53d.pdf> -

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Wilsona School District

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IGtImIUaMT9J4m-2QVvDN2Nk0G7L7wdb/view> - Page 12

Riverside County SELPA: Follows Ed Code (55, 40 for preschool only)

West End SELPA: Follows Ed Code (55, 40 for preschool only)

San Diego Unified: Follows a 55 cap (40 for preschool) and allows for a cushion of 10 for RTI students to count for the total

<https://www.sandiegounified.org/common/pages/DownloadFileByUrl.aspx?key=Jbwqb512ABCIo4G33w%2b%2f9bDdrPI3p%2fbmE9s0%2fyjmZDLy7OEEJ0CilDcufaMJ7u914wrx3Wc8aLn0jNZjlvLqeAt%2bUHglCpjVIWojdZkbAV38h4LXeAB%2f5aLJTKPiMBcltnBwrtQ4TrLag1B6LIDOSwi8kTTfDFTQql%2fN62zdDA8r4%2bwPIWDIMX0fNbt8I55BXWrVvINonQ0dSmdayUasV3qJ5JdioWUTsa6BnlAICL%2bryqVxZQ%2bpOZmoLd44NZly5TjKx4Xf%2bNiTyMEhrNm96qzccEWLMJYzjoGjWisg23CBi8x> (page 104)

Colton Joint - Hard cap of 55 (40 for preschool. Hire SLP's when over 55

<https://www.cjusd.net/cms/lib/CA02218339/Centricity/domain/64/22-23%20ace%20contract%20updates/ACE%20Article%209%20-%2022.23%20Update.pdf>

Saugus School District- (see attached) Hard cap of 55 (40 for preschool).

Compensated \$16.00 a day per day for each additional student on the caseload.

Sacramento School District- Hard cap of 55 (40 for preschool). Paid overage for going over 55.

ALVORD District- 55 cap and pays % when over cap

Antelope Valley- Just filed a CDE complaint and heard from CDE that CDE looks at it as a cap not an average and directive was made to hire another 1.0.

Merced County SELPA: The average caseload for language, speech and hearing specialists serving students with exceptional needs in grade K-12 in Merced County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) shall not exceed 55, unless the threshold for extenuating circumstances is documented (Ed Code Section 56363.3).

California Teachers Association

CTA Recommends a caseload of 40

<https://www.cta.org/our-advocacy/class-size-matters>

California Speech and Hearing Association

- Cites ASHA's NOMS data, there is no doubt that the number of children on a caseload is one of the important factors for clinician effectiveness. NOMS data (2000) found students on a caseload of less than 40 improved much more quickly than those on higher caseloads.
- California has implemented class size limits for K-3 classrooms, and limits caseloads to 28 for resource specialists.
- Per multiple studies, as speech therapy caseloads crossed the threshold of 45 students and into the 46-50 range, approximately 40% of SLPs felt their caseload was unmanageable. 45% of SLPs considered caseloads of 51-55 students unmanageable. 60%-70% of those with caseloads of 56-90 students, and 100% of those with caseloads over 90 students considered their caseload unmanageable. This information is summarized in the table below.

Speech Therapy Caseload Size	% of SLPs who considered caseload unmanageable
46-60 students	40% considered unmanageable
51-55 students	45% considered unmanageable
56-90	60-70% considered unmanageable
91+	100% considered caseload unmanageable

Per the results-- **the higher the caseload, the more likely SLPs plan to leave their school-based speech-language pathology job as soon as possible.** This is based on a study in which more than 8,000 interviews of service providers were conducted.



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

JACK O'CONNELL

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

December 12, 2009

Deirdre Casparian
28585 Hell Creek Road
Valley Center, CA 92082

Dear Ms. Casparian:

Subject: Caseload Size for Speech and Language Specialists

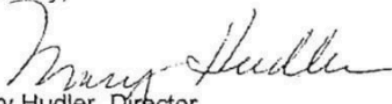
Thank you for your inquiry regarding caseload size for speech and language specialists. Your letter was forwarded to me from the office of California State Senator Dennis Hollingsworth for a response.

Your letter referenced *Education Code* sections 56441.7(a) and 56363.3, and you asked "If there is a mixed preschool, elementary caseload, how should these two sections be interpreted?"

We have been advised that when a speech therapist works with preschool students, for which there is a maximum caseload of 40 students, and also works with older students, for which there is a maximum caseload of 55 students, then both case loads are prorated. So if half your caseload were composed of pupils in preschool and the other half were composed of older students, you would assist 20 pupils in preschool and approximately 27 older students.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Allison Smith, Consultant, Special Education Division, at (916) 327-3698 or by e-mail at asmith@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,


Mary Hudler, Director
Special Education Division

MH:as

cc: The Honorable Dennis Hollingsworth, California State Senate



**Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The Saugus Union School District
And
The Saugus Teachers' Association**

January 20, 2023

RSP and SLP Caseloads

The Saugus Union School District (SUSD) and the Saugus Teachers' Association (STA) tentatively agree to the Memorandum of Understanding subject to the approval of the Saugus Union School District Governing Board and the membership of STA. The Memorandum of Understanding, once approved by both parties, will become effective for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years only.

RSP and SLP caseloads vary through the school year. SUSD will review caseloads at the end of each trimester (November, March, June). The SUSD Student Support Services Department will determine if caseloads need to be adjusted for efficiency and fiscal responsibility at the end of each trimester. RSP and/or SLP teachers may be asked to travel to different sites if it is determined that caseload adjustments need to be made.

In the event that caseload adjustments cannot be made and caseloads exceed those set forth in California Education Code, SUSD will compensate RSP and SLP teachers as follows:

Resource Specialists:

- SUSD will pay Resource Specialists sixteen dollars (\$16.00) per day for each additional eligible student on their caseload over 28. Example caseload of 30 students for 30 days:
 - (30 days x 2 students) x \$16.00 = \$960.00
- Pending students do not count as part of the caseload.
- A shared spreadsheet will be created. Resource Specialists will be responsible for updating the spreadsheet with new eligible students and exited students.
- Caseloads will be reviewed at the end of each trimester to determine if caseloads need to be adjusted and/or to determine payment.
- Payment will be made after each trimester on a supplemental check.
- Caseloads will be prorated for employees working partial contracts/sharing a position.

Speech and Language Pathologists:

- SUSD will pay Preschool Speech and Language Pathologists sixteen dollars (\$16.00) per day for each additional eligible student on their caseload over 40. Example caseload of 42 students for 30 days:
 - $(30 \text{ days} \times 2 \text{ students}) \times \$16.00 = \$960.00$
- SUSD will pay Speech and Language Pathologists sixteen dollars (\$16.00) per day for each additional eligible student on their caseload over 55. Example caseload of 57 students for 30 days:
 - $(30 \text{ days} \times 2 \text{ students}) \times \$16.00 = \$960.00$
- SUSD will pay Speech and Language Pathologists who have been assigned a SLPA (Preschool SLPs and TK-6th grade SLPs) five dollars (\$5.00) per day for each additional eligible student on their caseload over 40 for Preschool SLPs and over 55 for TK-6th grade SLPs. (Note: This is in lieu of the \$16.00 per student not in addition.) Example caseload over by 2 students for 30 days:
 - $(30 \text{ days} \times 2 \text{ students}) \times \$5.00 = \$300.00$
- Pending students do not count as part of the caseload.
- A shared spreadsheet will be created. Speech and Language Pathologists will be responsible for updating the spreadsheet with new eligible students and exited students.
- Caseloads will be reviewed at the end of each trimester to determine if caseloads need to be adjusted and/or to determine payment.
- Payment will be made after each trimester on a supplemental check.
- Caseloads will be prorated for employees working partial contracts/sharing a position.

This MOU is effective for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school year only.

Date Signed: 1/24/2023

Jennifer Stevenson

Jennifer Stevenson (Jan 24, 2023 08:40 PST)

Jennifer Stevenson, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent Human Resources
Saugus Union School District

Michelle Mularky

Michelle Mularky (Jan 24, 2023 08:57 PST)

Michelle Mularky
STA Lead Negotiator

LA UNIFIED Page 118 Caseload caps per DIS Service

Preschool Collaborative Class with Expanded <u>Universal</u> Transitional Kindergarten (E U TK/PCC)	40 8
Preschool Comprehensive Program (PSC)	8
Emotional Disturbance (ED)	8
Intellectual Disability Moderate (IDM)	12
Intellectual Disability Severe (IDS)	10
Multiple Disabilities (MD)	8
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	12

Designated Instruction and Services	Caseload
Adapted PE	70 <u>60</u> students
Audiology	80 students
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	35 students
Language/Speech	55 students
Orientation and Mobility	15 students
Visually Impaired	30 students

Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 5, § 3051.1 - Language, Speech and Hearing Development and Remediation

(a) Language, Speech and Hearing Development and Remediation services include:

(1) Referral and assessment of individuals suspected of having a disorder of language, speech, or hearing. Such individuals are not considered as part of the caseload pursuant to Education Code section 56363.3 unless an IEP is developed and services are provided pursuant to sections 3051.1(a)(2) and (3).

(2) Specialized instruction and services for individuals with disorders of language, speech, and hearing, including monitoring of pupil progress on a regular basis, providing information for the review, and when necessary participating in the review and revision of IEPs of pupils.

(3) Consultative services to pupils, parents, teachers, or other school personnel.

(4) Coordination of speech and language services with an individual's regular and special education program.

(b) Caseloads of full-time equivalent language, speech and hearing specialists providing instruction and services within the district, SELPA, or county office shall not exceed a district-wide, SELPA-wide, or county-wide average of 55 individuals unless prior written approval has been granted by the SSPI.

(c) Language and speech development and remediation shall be provided only by personnel who possess:

(1) a license in Speech-Language Pathology issued by a licensing agency within the Department of Consumer Affairs; or

(2) a credential authorizing language or speech services.

(d) Services may also be provided by speech-language pathology assistants working under the direct supervision of a qualified language, speech, and hearing specialist, as defined in Business and Professions Code section 2530.2(i), and if specified in the IEP. No more than two assistants may be supervised by one qualified language, speech, and hearing specialist. The caseloads of persons in subdivision (b) shall not be increased by the use of assistants.

EXAMPLE WORDING FOR MOU

District ("District") agree to the following terms for Speech Language Pathologist caseload compensation.

- Speech Language Pathologists will be paid up to 6 hours at \$50/hour per student beyond their caseload to assess and hold an initial IEP meeting for **speech-only students**.
- Speech Language Pathologists will be paid up to 8 hours at \$50/hour per student beyond their caseload to assess and hold an initial IEP meeting for **fluency evaluation**.
- Speech Language Pathologists will be paid up to 12 hours at \$50/hour per student beyond their caseload to assess and hold an initial IEP meeting for **full evaluations**.

After testing and the initial IEP meeting, a time card indicating the type of completed evaluation, including the length of time for observations, assessments, report writing, and holding the IEP meeting, should be submitted to the special education department.

SLP Overage:

Our Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 13.4 states, "Speech and Language Pathologists shall have a district-wide caseload average of fifty-five (55) students per FTE." While the current district-wide caseload average is below fifty-five (55) students per FTE, there is an imbalance that is challenging to resolve due to the time remaining in the school year. To address this imbalance, SLP's whose caseloads have exceeded the average, as reflected in SEIS, shall be compensated as follows:

- September - December 2023
 - SLP's whose caseloads exceed 55 by 11 (66, or prorated by FTE) or more students shall receive an overage of .2 FTE prorated in eligible months.
- January - June 2024
 - SLP's whose caseloads exceed 55 or partial FTE equivalent for less than 1.0 FTE, shall be compensated as follows:
 - The SLP will be compensated \$200 per student/month for each student added to the caseload.
 - Payment will be discontinued should the student leave the site or program or change carriers.
 - Overage compensation for the month of June will be for **direct services provided to the student or an IEP meeting** for the student (\$100 per student).

Additional Compensation for Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP)

Overage compensation for each additional student beginning after the 15th of the month will receive one-half of the monthly compensation for the first month, pending documentation that service minutes were provided.

This MOU is non-precedent-setting and shall constitute the entire agreement of the parties as to these issues. It may only be modified in writing and signed by both parties. This agreement expires on June 13, 2024.