Speech-language pathologists are members of the educational team

The speech-language pathologist (SLP) working in your school is part of the educational team that can provide support to students with special needs in communication. The overall aim of speech-language therapy (SLT) support is to help schools meet the educational needs of these students.

Deaf/Hearing Impaired (HI) students may form a part of this student population depending on the impact of their hearing loss on their classroom performance.

Education Queensland employs SLPs to work with teachers, school staff, visiting support staff and parents and carers so that SLT services to Deaf/HI students are delivered as part of students' educational programs.

As a member of your school’s support staff, the SLP consults and collaborates with school personnel to plan how SLT support will be provided in your school in accordance with any agreed school-based and/or regional processes.

Speech-language therapy services for Deaf/HI students

SLPs may provide support to Deaf/HI students enrolled in any state school facility including Prep classes, primary and secondary schools and special educational facilities. SLPs may also provide support to children aged 0–3 years who are enrolled in early special education programs.

Students do not need to be diagnosed with a disability, nor do they need to be managed under the EAP process to receive SLT support.

The role of SLPs in Education Queensland

SLPs in state schools work within the educational team to:

• assist schools to identify students with special needs in communication
• assist schools to determine the educational needs of these students
• assist schools to develop appropriate educational programs for these students

SLPs have specialist knowledge related to:

• speech sound production
• phonological awareness
• understanding language
• using words and sentences to convey ideas
• how language is used as a tool to interact socially with others

Students who have difficulties in any of these areas can be considered to have special needs in communication. Some Deaf/HI students have special needs in communication and may benefit from SLT support.
SLPs can support Deaf/HI students using a variety of service delivery models

SLT support to Deaf/HI students enrolled in your school may consist of any of the following:
- Assessment of a student’s communication skills
- Verbal and/or written reporting about the student’s strengths and weaknesses
- Classroom-based therapy support
- Support to teachers in the development of a specific student’s class program
- Individual and/or group therapy support
- Support to the EAP process
- Support in the development of an IEP
- Consultation and collaboration with school staff and parents/carers about a student’s abilities, needs and/or therapy support
- Development of specific programs and resources
- Support to your school in the development of programs that enhance educational outcomes for students with special needs in communication
- Provision of training to your school staff and/or parents and carers
- Liaison with other agencies (for example, Australian Hearing, Queensland Health, Hear and Say Centre.)

When determining the most appropriate SLT support for a student, it is useful for all staff to consider what type of intervention will maximise educational outcomes for that student.

In order to provide appropriate support to students the SLP requires a quiet room and facilities that allows for work with students as well as performing administrative tasks.

For more information on SLT services in your school contact:

Utilising speech-language therapy support in your school

Some regions have processes for referring and prioritising students for SLT support. These are used in conjunction with school procedures for identifying and supporting students with special needs. Typically, these would be used for all students with SNIC, including Deaf/HI students. Your school’s SLP or the speech-language pathologist-in-charge (SLPIC) for your education region can provide information on regional SLT processes.

To make the most of SLT support, it is essential that school staff and the SLP spend time planning the best ways to support the educational and communication needs of identified students. For Deaf/HI students it is important to consider the following:
- the array of support options the SLP can provide
- the personnel and resources available within the school community
- the support provided by the class teacher, other specialist support personnel (for example, AVTs-HI, Teachers of the Deaf), teacher aides and volunteers
- the training and skills of school staff
- the available resources (human and material)

It is useful for the SLP and school staff to develop a negotiated service plan for SLT support and review this plan at agreed intervals throughout the year. Students benefit most from SLT support when consistent follow-up of their program occurs in the classroom and at home.

Signed parent/guardian permission must be obtained before the SLP can support a student. The principal is also required to give signed approval of the provision of SLT services to any students at his/her school. It is necessary for schools to organise both of these prior to the SLP working with a student.