



It's Your Turn... We can't wait to hear from you!

Thanks to those who responded to the first question for this column in the previous issue.

This issue's question is:

WHAT IS THE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO GRADUATES WHO ARE NEW TO OUR PROFESSIONS?

If you remember your first years as an audiologist or speech-language pathologist, there is a good chance that there was a time when you thought, "I wish someone had told me that," or "That would have made my job a lot easier!" Well, now IT'S YOUR TURN to share those brilliant pieces of advice with our new colleagues. Please take a moment to send your ideas to **Ellen Bennett** at ebennett@elp.rr.com by February 26th for publication in the April 2007 issue of the *Communicologist*.

And You Said... 'It's Your Turn' Answers from December 2006

The December 2006 *Communicologist* posed the question:
What is your school district doing to handle the current speech-language pathologist shortage?

Two individuals responded to the inquiry. From Alpine to Pasadena, school districts are recognizing the need to utilize creative recruiting and retention strategies. The following is a summary of ideas submitted to this column.

Districts are handling the current personnel shortage in the public schools by:

- Utilizing a speech-language pathologist assistant (SLP-A) in coordination with the fully credentialed therapist to reduce caseload size. However, one district takes its commitment to employing individuals at the highest educational level seriously through tuition assistance for graduate students who commit to work for the district after obtaining their Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC).
- Assigning a "communication aide" to each speech-language pathologist assistant to perform an assortment of tasks, from clerical to walking students back to class. The aide allows the speech-language pathologist more time for therapy preparation and documentation.
- Purchasing enough assessment and therapy materials for each speech-language pathologist so that therapists do not have to waste time tracking down tools to use in their job.
- Providing laptop computers for each speech-language pathologist or speech-language pathology assistant to facilitate report writing.
- Eliminating the School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program, thus freeing therapists to do work-related preparation.
- Utilizing the TSHA templates for eligibility and dismissal to provide uniform standards across the districts' various therapists.
- Providing incentives for retention of therapists through stipends, clerical assistance, and encouragement toward therapist specialization.
- Copying the Response to Intervention (RTI) model to establish short-term, intensive, and systematic intervention for children with articulation disorders. These articulation labs would provide intense drill stations customized for each student.

The most impressive attempt to address the personnel shortage in the public schools comes from Pasadena Independent School District (ISD), whose administration and therapists embraced the concept of 'caseload' versus 'workload.' Caseload traditionally looks at the number of students each speech-language pathologist (SLP) is responsible to serve; whereas, workload more accurately reflects the multi-faceted job of the school-based SLP who must juggle many differing roles. This paradigm shift requires SLPs to set their schedules based on the Oregon model of 3:1 (3 weeks of intensive therapy and 1 week of indirect services to students). This flexible workload model was piloted during the 2005-2006 school year with positive results.

Thanks to **Christine Einkauf** and **JoAnn Wiechmann** for their submissions on this important issue facing SLPs employed in the public schools.

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