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Top 10 tips for interdisciplinary collaboration between speech pathologists and educators.

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<https://speechpathologyaustralia.cld.bz/JCPSLP-Vol-22-No-1-2020/4/>

# Top 10 tips for interdisciplinary collaboration between speech pathologists and educators.

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Education systems are one of the largest employers of speech pathologists in Australia. Working in education can be a complex and dynamic role, as every school has its own culture, processes and ways of working. In this Top 10, Haley and Jaedene share some important resources and tips to help speech pathologists maximise their impact through interdisciplinary collaboration with educators.

## **1. Understand what genuine inclusive education is.**

Education is a human right and students with disability have the right to an *inclusive* education. Historically, there have been different interpretations of what inclusive education is (and is not). Australia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and in 2016 the United Nations defined inclusion through General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 (Education) of the CRPD. All stakeholders must understand this definition to ensure genuine inclusion is enacted for all students. To refine your knowledge of inclusive education, read more on the All Means All website [www.allmeansall.org.au](http://www.allmeansall.org.au) or participate in this free, 2-hour online course <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/inclusive-education>.

## **2. Understand the legal and policy foundations**

As education employees, speech pathologists must be aware of the legislative and policy foundations that exist. The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the subordinate Disability Standards for Education (2005) govern the education of students with disability and outline the obligations of those working in education (such as consultation with students and parents/caregivers and provision of reasonable adjustments), including speech pathologists. A working knowledge of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for school students with a disability (NCCD) process

and the Australian Curriculum is also essential for our work with teachers and school leaders. For more information, try the NCCD eLearning modules <http://www.nccd.edu.au> and the ACARA Students with Disability page <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/students-with-disability/>.

### **3. Use SPA Resources.**

Educational speech pathology can be exciting, varied and unlike working in other contexts. To be authentically helpful to students and teachers, new perspectives need to be taken and the Speech Pathology Australia resources ([www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)) have been designed with these factors in mind. The *Speech Pathology in Schools* booklet is a great place to start. It outlines the educational context, the impact of speech language and communication needs on learning and the response to intervention (RTI) model. There is also the *Speech Pathology in Schools* YouTube series, *Speech Pathology in Schools Position Statement*, the *Literacy Clinical Guidelines* and the *Practice Guide for the Assessment of School Aged Children in Educational Contexts*.

### **4. Negotiate an evidence-based model of practice.**

Models of educational speech pathology service provision will vary across schools, education systems and states. You will find useful information about models of practice in the *Speech Pathology in Schools* booklet. The model/s that are adopted will be impacted by school-based factors and factors related to the individual speech pathologist. Importantly, the way a speech pathology service is enacted must be negotiated collaboratively between the school principal, the speech pathologist, relevant school leaders and at times, the speech pathology supervisor. Across all models of service provision, interdisciplinary collaboration is essential and can benefit everyone involved: teachers, speech pathologists, students and families.

### **5. Have an elevator pitch.**

It is (unfortunately) common for the role of the educational speech pathologist to be poorly understood in schools, with popular myths about the scope of our practice refusing to be busted

(trigger warning: lisps and stuttering). To help educate teachers and other professionals about what we can contribute in an education setting, we suggest having an “elevator pitch” at the ready. This is a brief, succinct overview of what you do, stated in simple language. Memorise it, and share it widely!

## **6. Information translation: Find a shared language.**

The philosophical traditions of speech pathology differ from the traditions of education, meaning that sometimes speech pathologists and teachers will approach situations with different perspectives. Speech pathologists and teachers can also use different language to talk about the same thing. We need to be aware of these differences when communicating important information such as assessment results, details about students’ language and learning profiles, suggested adjustments and possible goals. By taking care to develop a shared language with educators, students and their families, we can maximise the translation and uptake of the important information that we have to share.

## **7. Find and use teacher friendly resources.**

Working in schools and with teachers means finding not only a common language, but also ways of working that promote inclusion and are practical in the busy world of schools. There are some high-quality, research-based options available, including the Department of Education Queensland’s Read It Again – Foundation Q resources <https://earlychildhood.ehe.osu.edu/research/practice/read-it-again-prek/> and Julia Starlings’ Linking Language with Secondary School Learning (LINK-S) Program Manual: A resource for speech pathologists [www.linksresources.com.au/](http://www.linksresources.com.au/). Also check out Pamela Thuan’s Language in the Classroom website and resources [www.languageintheclass.com](http://www.languageintheclass.com).

## **8. Listen in – there’s a world of education podcasts out there.**

Podcasts are a great way to listen in and learn. Education Services Australia produces the *NCCD: Classroom Adjustments* series with personal accounts of disability and educational

impact along with advice on adjustments from experts in the field <https://www.nccd.edu.au/resources-and-tools/professional-learning/format/podcast-8>. Emily Hanford, American education journalist, has posted two enlightening podcasts on literacy: *At a loss for words: What's wrong with how schools teach reading* and *Hard words: Why our kids aren't being taught to read*. We also love the *School Psyched!* podcast <https://www.schoolpsychedpodcast.com>. This is just the tip of the iceberg, just keep in mind that the world of podcasts can be a rabbit warren, so be a critical consumer of information.

## **9. Linking to literacy.**

Literacy is a domain of significant overlap between the work of teachers and speech pathologists. Finding a way to understand literacy from both a speech pathology and a teaching perspective can facilitate professional collaboration. For a structured step-by-step guide covering theory and teaching strategies, try Reading Rockets' online modules *Teaching reading 101: A guide to teaching reading and writing* <https://www.readingrockets.org>. SPELD SA offer a host of free online resources to support teaching of students with learning disabilities <https://www.speld-sa.org.au/resources.html>.

## **10. Get connected to an online professional network.**

Social media offers endless opportunities for expanding your professional network. Facebook Groups are a great place to start, for sharing resources or engaging in discussions with like-minded folk (across the globe). We love the SINE School Inclusion Network for Educators (All Means All) group and the School-Based SLPs: For Professionals Only! group. Twitter can be daunting at first, but with a little practice (and regular use) this platform can link you with generous academics and professionals who readily share research and are happy to answer questions. Dr Caroline Bowen's Twitter recommendations are a great place to start [https://speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=154](https://speech-language-therapy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=154). We recommend following

@SPAPresident @PamelaSnow2 @SpeechWoman @drNatalieMunro3 @talkinged19  
@RADLDcam @shaunziegenfusz @Suze\_Freogirl @EduTweetOz and @C4IE\_QUT.

### **Author biographies**

**Haley Tancredi** (@HaleyTanc) is a doctoral candidate at Queensland University of Technology and a certified practising speech pathologist. Her PhD research will investigate the impact of teachers' use of inclusive pedagogical practices on the classroom experiences, engagement and learning outcomes of students with language and attentional difficulties in Year 10 classrooms.

**Jaedene Glasby** (@jaedene\_g) is a certified practising speech pathologist with experience working in the education sector. Jaedene is also a registered teacher. She is currently completing a Master of Philosophy (Education) investigating teachers' knowledge and inclusive practices related to students with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD).