Strategies for School SLPs:
Identification of Solutions for the Nine Tensions

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SLPs in U.S. Public Schools
- Over 50% of the SLPs in the United States work in public schools
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides services at no cost to students who are eligible
    - 13 disability categories in the IDEA
    - Speech Language Impairment (SLI) is the second largest category of identification
- Students must be found eligible to receive SLP services in U.S. schools

SLI Eligibility in U.S. Schools
- Each state education agency and some local education agencies have distinct eligibility criteria
- The criteria and data required in schools differs from medical and clinical identification
- Overidentification of SLI under IDEA has been well documented and can result in:
    - Civil rights violations for students
    - Higher caseloads for school SLPs
    - Less services for students who really require therapy

SLPs in schools must implement rules regarding students' eligibility for services.
Implementation of rules can result in tensions within teams.

Theoretical Framework
Cultural–Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)
- CHAT provides a framework for considering all the interacting elements of an activity system
- Based on Vygotsky's model of mediated action, CHAT was expanded to include all aspects of an activity system by Engeström (1987, 2015)
- CHAT includes six elements used to study
    - The systemic whole
    - The connections between separate elements
    - Identification of Tensions Between CHAT Elements
- Identified tensions through:
    - Examination of patterns and relationships between and within CHAT elements
    - Matrix analysis of CHAT elements and demographics
    - Review of clashes between and within individual elements
- Tensions may inform solutions for either individuals or the system as a whole
- Participants reviewed major themes (member checking) to ensure the process was transparent and robust

Nine Major Tensions
Tensions Related to SLPs
    •Need for greater SLP empowerment and advocacy
Tensions Related to Data and Evaluation Practices
    •Documentation of educational impact
    •Complexities of students learning English as an additional language
    •Concerns about evaluation data for decision making
Tensions Related to Decision-Making Teams
    •SLPs' concerns regarding outcomes of eligibility decision-making
    •Overuse of SLI for students who do not qualify
    •Parents' involvement in decision making
    •Disagreement between team members

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• Administrations' adherence to the rules

Analysis for Solutions

Data from three focus groups were re-analyzed with consideration of the 9 tensions, to identify:
- Solutions already in use by focus group participants
- Participant suggested solutions

Solutions and desired solutions were grouped and examined by:
- Each of the 9 identified tensions
- The 3 categories
- Intersection with the Rules

Most frequently used and suggested solutions were described and categorized for possible use to resolve individual tensions, categories of tension, and the overall activity system

Prominence of Rules in Solutions

Solutions that are most connected to Rules are:
- Overuse of SLI for student who do not qualify (100%)
- Administrators adherence to the Rules (84%)
- Complexities of students learning English as an additional language (84%)
- Documentation of educational impact (77%)
- Concerns about evaluation data for decision making (75%)

> **Using Rules in Solutions**
> How can knowing the rules help SLPs with issues in schools?

Develop Non-preferred Styles and Skills
- Action Learning: The 3 steps
- Developing skills
  - 10% learning
  - 20% interaction
  - 70 % experiences

Intentional practice grows new skills

CRAFT Clear Communication
- Clarity
  - Is your message actually clear?
    - What will be done? By when and to what level?
  - Strategies to increase clarity of communication
    - Writing – use novice perspective – add explicit details
    - Reflective listening and Feedback
- Responsibility (Who?)
- Accountability (By when and to what degree?)
- Feedback (How will we know?)
- Timeliness (Follow up in advance of deadline, at due date and after)

Inform and Educate

Before Meetings	In Meetings
• Educate teacher, administration and families • Provide professional development and resources	• Share specific requirements for eligibility • Share examples of data to support decision making

VDOE Website for Evaluation and Eligibility
- https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education/evaluation-and-eligibility
- Evaluation and Eligibility For Special Education and Related Services: Guidance Document (Word)
- Supplemental Guidance for Evaluation and Eligibility in Special Education (PDF) - Includes state sample forms
- Required School Screenings Guidance Document for Special Educators (Word)

VDOE SLP Page
- https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/special-education/specific-disabilities/speech-language-impairment
- SLP Services in the Schools: Guidelines for Best Practice (2018)

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- [SLP Services in Schools 2020 Revisions](#)

Peer Reviewed Articles
- [Evaluation and Eligibility for Speech-Language Services in Schools](#) –
- [Evaluating Children in U.S. Public Schools With Speech Sound Disorders Considering Federal and State Laws, Guidance, and Research](#)

Key Points in IDEA and State Regulations
- Data is required to document eligibility
- SLI criteria is in state regulation (5 parts)
- Calling a child disabled when they are not is;
    - A civil rights violation
    - Discriminatory
- Those who disagree should document their thoughts in a member statement
- Medical diagnosis is NOT the same as educational identification

Educational Impact and Need for Specially Designed Instruction
- Based on data
- Documented using a comprehensive approach
- SLP test scores do NOT equal educational impact
- Dynamic assessment and student responsiveness informs specially designed instruction

Celebrating Diversity
Encourage a comprehensive frame
- Examples of diverse communicators
    - President Biden, Barbara Walters, etc.
- Discrimination and Civil Rights
- What is missed during treatment?
- How does this effect the child's view of self?

Advocate For yourself, for students, and for our profession

Avoiding Conflict and Conflict Debt
- Conflict is healthy and necessary for teams
- The cost of avoiding conflict is:
    1. Inattention to results
    2. Avoidance of accountability
    3. Lack of commitment
    4. Fear of conflict
    5. Absence of trust

Understanding Conflict
- Know your style of dealing with conflict
- https://facultyombuds.ncsu.edu/files/2015/11/Conflict-management-styles-quiz.pdf
- Special education has built in and enduring conflict

Resources to deal with conflict
https://buffer.com/resources/artificial-harmony/amp/
https://www.lianedavey.com/reducing-conflict-fatigue/
https://www.mtdtraining.com/blog/a-conflict-management-exercise.htm
https://hbr.org/2019/03/an-exercise-to-help-your-team-feel-more-comfortable-with-conflict

Limit use of sorry – Reword these statements
1. I'm sorry I didn't call you back sooner
2. I'm sorry you are having a hard time with the report
3. I'm sorry you didn't get the homework done
4. I'm sorry I can't be at that meeting

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Solutions for Tensions
Top Solutions to Address Tensions
The most prominent solutions used and suggested by participants across all 9 tensions included:
- Providing explanations of rules and evaluation data
- Using specific criteria for eligibility
- Using data to document
- MTSS supports

Other commonly referred to solutions include:
- Advocate and stay strong (e.g., increase skills to deal with conflict and disagreement)
- Strengthening relationships with parents and decision-making teams

Prominent Solutions for Individual Tensions

Discussion
- The results from this study
    - Identify solutions (proposed and in use) for each tension
    - May inform policy and practice in U.S. public schools
    - May be used in future professional development
- Future research should contextualize results with respect to the activity system
- Suggest exploration of
    - Impact of advocacy by SLPs on the activity system
    - Efforts to address tensions by implementation of solutions

Conclusions
- The nine tensions which may impact decision-making and implementation of evidence-based practice in schools may be addressed by implementing solutions.
- SLPs advocacy skills and understanding and use of Rules, including the ability to explain and discuss evaluation data and eligibility processes, may lessen tensions in the activity system.
- The CHAT framework may be used for systems and individual analysis to:
    - Examine complex systems
    - Identify tensions at the local or school level
    - Propose solutions at different levels

Practice Implications of this Research
- School-based SLPs may use this work for individual, local and national advocacy to address tensions and implement solutions
- Graduate training programs can discuss tensions and solutions with future SLPs
- School administrators may increase consistency in team decision-making by addressing tensions and implementing solutions
- State and federal education agencies may use this data for the development of future public policy
- Researchers may conceptualize future research that considers the full activity system, tensions between and within elements, and solutions to reduce tensions and improve practice