



Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Guidelines for Implementing Educator Preparation Rules 505-3-.71 and 505-3-.73 Speech-Language Associate Program and Alternative Preparation for Speech- Language Associate Program Effective January 1, 2025

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Introduction

Georgia is currently experiencing a severe personnel shortage in the area of Speech and Language Pathology. The certificate for a Speech-Language Associate (SLA) is designed to provide support to Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) by reducing the incidence of high caseloads and allowing districts to meet the Individualized Education Program (IEP) obligation to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. The SLA will serve students in school settings within a specific and well-defined Scope of Practice under the supervision of a fully certified SLP. GaPSC-approved program providers will design instructional programs that provide the knowledge and skills required to perform all duties and responsibilities of an SLA. These programs will also require school-based internships to familiarize SLA candidates with school and special education policies, procedures, and practices. The internship will provide direct, supervised experience with students exhibiting various speech and language disorders within the SLA's Scope of Practice. The qualified SLA will perform tasks prescribed and supervised by a fully certified SLP. They will deliver individualized services to students with disabilities in school settings. They may work with a small group or one-on-one.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for interpreting and implementing Rules 505-3-.71 Speech-Language Associate Program, and 505-3-.73 Alternative Preparation for Speech-Language Associate Program. It was developed with the input of a task force comprised of individuals with Speech and Language expertise, to describe the essential knowledge and skills that candidates should possess upon program completion. Guidance and links to external resources are provided for each of the ten standards in the rules, as well as the required internship.

Alternative Preparation Program Requirements

The Alternative Preparation for Speech-Language Associate Program allows for job-embedded training for candidates enrolled in non-traditional educator preparation programs. In addition to the SLA content standards, alternative preparation programs must adhere to admission and Candidate Support Team (CST) requirements.

Admission Requirements:

- Candidates must hold a Bachelor's or higher degree in Speech-Language Pathology or Communication Sciences and Disorders.
- Candidates must be employed by a local school district.

Candidate Support Team:

- CSTs shall consist of a school-based administrator, EPP Supervisor, and GaPSC-certified Speech Language Pathologist.
- Work together to plan the candidate internships and meet the individual needs of the candidate.
- Guide the SLA candidate throughout the program, ensuring that the candidate demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the SLA content standards.

Guidance Topics

Content Standards

Standard 1. The program shall prepare candidates who know the principles of biological sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, and the social/behavioral sciences.

Candidates must successfully complete coursework in biological sciences, physical science, mathematics, and the social/behavioral sciences to possess the required foundational knowledge and skills for the academic major in Speech-Language Pathology or Communication Sciences Disorders. This required coursework aligns with the Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CFCC) SLP Standards for Certification and may be completed in the core (general education) curriculum for all academic majors. SLAs need to be able to support SLPs in serving students with speech-language impairments.

<https://www.asha.org/certification/2020-slp-certification-standards/>

Standard 2. The program shall prepare candidates who know basic human communication and swallowing processes, including their biological, neurological, acoustic, psychological, developmental, linguistic, and cultural bases.

Candidates must successfully complete coursework addressing the professional knowledge specified in this standard and demonstrate knowledge in the following areas:

- Normal and abnormal human development across the lifespan;
- Communication and swallowing disorders and differences;
- The concept of a linguistic system and its various components;
- Personal and cultural biases and differences that affect one's practices;
- Language differences manifested by culturally diverse children;
- Characteristics of language disabilities in school-aged children;
- The effect of speech and language development on academic and nonacademic learning; and
- The development of oral and written communication.

Resources:

- [Building Communication Skills](#)
- [Building Connections with Students from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds](#)
- [Cultural and Linguistic Differences](#)
- [Culturally Relevant Education Multimedia Resources](#)
- [GaDOE Special Education Implementation](#)
- [Speech and Language Impairments](#)

Standard 3. The program shall prepare candidates who know the nature of speech, language, hearing, and communication disorders and differences, including the etiologies, characteristics, anatomical/physiological, acoustic, psychological, developmental, and linguistic, and cultural correlates. Specific knowledge shall be demonstrated in the following areas:

- Speech sound disorders;
- Receptive and expressive language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in speaking, listening, reading, and writing);

- Hearing, including the impact on speech and language;
- Cognitive aspects of communication (attention, memory, sequencing, problem-solving, executive functioning);
- Social aspects of communication (including challenging behavior, ineffective social skills, lack of communication opportunities); and
- Communication modalities (including oral, manual, augmentative, and alternative communication techniques and assistive technologies).

Speech-Language Associate candidates must successfully complete specific coursework from a regionally or nationally accredited institution of higher education in all areas listed above. Additionally, candidates must understand the communicative intent of behavior and the importance of serving as a positive role model. Programs must prepare candidates to understand collaborative problem-solving, conflict management, and self-advocacy. Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of strategies to facilitate the maintenance and generalization of learned skills. They also need to know augmentative and alternative communication skills, other assistive technology, and the use and maintenance of educational and assistive technology.

Resources:

- [Assistive Technology](#)
- [Augmentative and Alternative Communication](#)
- [Addressing Challenging Behaviors - Elementary](#)
- [Addressing Challenging Behaviors - Secondary](#)
- [Behavior is Communication](#)
- [Assistive Devices for People with Hearing, Voice, Speech, or Language Disorders](#)
- [Deafness and Hearing Loss](#)
- [Hearing Loss](#)
- [Relationships with Other Children](#)
- [What is Executive Function](#)
- [Supporting and Responding to Students' Behavioral and Social-Emotional Needs](#)
- [8 Working Memory Boosters](#)
- [Assistive Technology for Writing](#)

- [Instruction in Self-Advocacy](#)
- [Social Emotional/Behavioral HLPs](#)

Standard 4. The program shall prepare candidates who possess knowledge of the principles and methods of prevention, assessment, and intervention for students with communication disorders, including consideration of anatomical/physiological, psychological, developmental, and linguistic and cultural correlates of the disorders.

Programs must prepare candidates with the knowledge of cultural perspectives related to speech-language impairments, the effects of culture and the contributions of culturally diverse groups, characteristics of their own cultural and language use and how they differ from others, the implication of language levels for students with disabilities learning the dominant language, and the implications of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication. Additionally, the candidate must have knowledge of assessment purposes and the importance of self-assessment. Lastly, they must know how to reflect on their performance to improve it.

Resources:

- [SOS: Helping Students Become Independent Learners](#)
- [SRSD: Self-Regulated Strategy Development](#)
- [Helping Students Develop Self-Regulation](#)
- [Using Cognitive & Metacognitive Strategies HLP Video](#)

Standard 5. The program shall prepare candidates who know standards of ethical conduct.

Speech-Language Associate candidates must adhere to professional values and expectations as outlined in the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the [Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators](#). These values and expectations may be addressed in Professional Practice seminars and/or specific coursework and demonstrated through supervised Practicum experiences. Standards of ethical conduct refer to not only service delivery but also to interactions with colleagues, supervisors, students, caregivers, and any others involved in the scope of practice.

ASHA Code of Ethics: <https://www.asha.org/policy/et2016-00342/>

Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of the principles that guide ethical practice. Programs must prepare candidates to know the importance of maintaining the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of all students, families, and school employees, knowing the local policies for confidential communication, and conducting activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies. Candidates must know how to report suspected child abuse, suicidal ideation, and dangerous behavior as required by law, policies, and local procedures. Additionally, they need to know universal precautions to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment and protect the health and safety of students.

Standard 6. The program shall prepare candidates who demonstrate processes used in the integration evidence-based clinical practice.

Speech-Language Associate candidates need to be familiar with evidence-based practices. Evidence-based practice integrates three major components: expertise, evidence, and student perspectives to make informed, evidence-based decisions and provide effective, high-quality services to students with communication disorders. Programs must prepare candidates with the knowledge of evidence-based strategies to prompt active student engagement, increase student motivation, increase opportunities to respond, and enhance self-regulation of student learning. Candidates must understand different learning and cognitive strategies and study skills students need to become independent learners. They also need to know strategies that promote literacy, students' positive sense of identity, self-control, self-reliance, and strategies to remember verbal and written directions. Additionally, candidates must have knowledge of professional growth opportunities for continued learning.

Resources:

- [Clarify Simplify Repeat Directions: Research](#)
- [Balancing Fidelity and Implementation](#)
- [Strategy Instruction](#)

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Introduction to evidence-based practice*. Retrieved from www.asha.org/Research/EBP/Evidence-Based-Practice/

Standard 7. The program shall prepare candidates who have knowledge of certification, specialty recognition, and other relevant professional credentials.

Candidates must have basic educational terminology knowledge.

Resources:

- [Special Education Terms](#)
- <https://www.gapsc.com/Certification/CertFieldsAndEndorsements/service.aspx>

Standard 8. The program shall prepare candidates who understand the supervisory nature of working under a certified Speech and Language Pathologist.

Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of their roles and responsibilities related to interventions and direct services. Programs must prepare candidates to understand the importance of requesting and using feedback and recognizing the role of the SLP as their supervisor.

Standard 9. The program shall prepare candidates who understand the collaborative nature of working with all stakeholders.

Candidates must understand the purposes of collaborative teams and the roles and relationships of the SLA and other special education stakeholders, including families. Additionally, programs must prepare candidates with the knowledge of:

- The chain of command to address policy questions, system issues, and personnel practices;
- The roles of all educators and service providers;
- Respectful relationships with educational stakeholders, including families;
- Effective stakeholder communication;
- Individuals who have the need and right to know student information; and
- School conferences and meetings.

Resources:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2003). *Evaluating and treating communication and cognitive disorders: Approaches to referral and collaboration for speech-language pathology and clinical neuropsychology* [Technical report]. Available from <http://www.asha.org/policy/>
- [The Importance of Family Engagement](#)
- [Related Services](#)
- [Collaboration HLP](#)
- [A Model for Collaborative Service Delivery for Students with Language Learning Disorders in Public Schools](#)
- [How SLPs and Teachers can Effectively Collaborate](#)

Standard 10. The program shall prepare candidates who have the knowledge of individual education programs, individual learning differences, learning environments, instructional planning, and student engagement.

Speech-Language Associate candidates must be familiar with the federal and state legal aspects of special education, including Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), and Transition Plans. The candidates must demonstrate knowledge about the present levels of performance, goals, accommodations, and behavioral strategies for hypothetical or real students. The program shall prepare candidates with the skills to collect and record data in various formats and provide objective, accurate information for the instructional team. Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of the Georgia Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Response to Intervention procedures. The program must prepare candidates with the knowledge of routines and procedures to create safe, caring, respectful, and productive learning environments.

Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of learner similarities and differences and be able to describe the purposes of supports and services. Programs must prepare candidates to understand the rights and responsibilities of all special education stakeholders, including the rules and procedural safeguards regarding behavior interventions. Programs must prepare candidates who understand the purposes of special

education supports and services and the student's social, emotional, and educational well-being.

Resources:

- [Instructional Accommodations](#)
- [Providing Instructional Supports](#)
- [Accommodations](#)
- [IEPs](#)
- [10 Basic Steps in Special Education](#)
- [Contents of the IEP](#)
- [How to Read an IEP](#)
- [RTI Overview](#)
- [Related Services in the IEP](#)

Internship: The candidate for the Speech-Language Associate certificate will participate in a school-based internship for one semester (15 weeks), and during that semester, a total of 100 hours of direct service with students in either small group, individual sessions, or in an inclusion model will be completed under the direct supervision of a GaPSC certified Speech and Language Pathologist.

The Speech-Language Associate candidate must complete a total of 100 hours of direct service in school settings under the direct supervision of a certified SLP. Direct service is defined as therapy/treatment completed in the presence of the individual and/or caregiver. Speech-Language Associate candidates may deliver direct services to individuals or small groups using the prescribed treatment plan or screening protocol provided by the supervising SLP. It is recommended that a maximum of ten direct service hours may be completed through simulation experiences within coursework or practicum experience. Indirect hours to include time for discussion of caseloads, treatment plans/notes and client progress with the supervising SLP are expected to be completed weekly.

Direct supervision must be provided by a clinician who is a GaPSC-certified Speech and Language Pathologist. Direct supervision is defined as on-site observation of the Speech-Language Associate for a minimum of ten percent of the direct service time.

Prior to completing their program, candidates must demonstrate the ability to:

- Follow Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), including Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP).

- Implement individualized reinforcement systems and environmental modifications at levels equal to behavior intensity as determined by the instructional team.
- Use strategies, routines, and procedures to create safe, caring, respectful, and productive learning environments and facilitate smooth transitions.
- Implement and document evidence-based interventions as developed by the supervising SLP.
- Use evidence-based strategies to prompt active student engagement, increase student motivation, increase opportunities to respond, and enhance self-regulation of student learning.
- Support students' social, emotional, and educational well-being.
- Demonstrate respect and appreciation for differences in values, languages, and customs.
- Facilitate friendships as determined by the instructional team.
- Promote choice and voice of students on caseload.
- Establish and maintain rapport with students.
- Adapt physical environments to provide optimal learning opportunities as determined by the instructional team.
- Promote self-advocacy and independence as determined by the instructional team.
- Use universal precautions to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment.
- Protect the health and safety of students.
- Model and facilitate the use of collaborative problem-solving and conflict management.
- Use strategies in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills.
- Support students in following classroom routines.
- Use basic educational terminology.
- Implement academic and other appropriate supports as determined by the instructional team.
- Adapt strategies and materials as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Make responsive adjustments to services as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Record information in various formats as determined by the supervising SLP.

- Assist in collecting and providing objective, accurate information for the instructional team.
- Follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed.
- Prepare and organize materials as determined by the instructional team.
- Use age- and ability-appropriate materials, strategies, and technology as determined by the instructional team.
- Use time effectively.
- Support the use of learning strategies and study skills as determined by the instructional team.
- Reteach and reinforce essential concepts as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Use strategies to facilitate the maintenance and generalization of skills as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Use responses and errors, especially a pattern of errors, to guide services and provide ongoing feedback as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support the use of self-assessment, problem-solving, and other cognitive strategies as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Use strategies to promote students' positive sense of identity, self-control, and self-reliance as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support the development of oral and written communication by reinforcing the language and speech skills of students as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support students' effective use of vocabulary as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support the use of strategies to remember verbal and written directions as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support the use of strategies to enhance literacy as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support maintenance and generalization of strategies for effective oral and written communication across environments as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Support the use of augmentative and alternative communication skills and other assistive technology as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Use and maintain educational and assistive technology as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Practice within the limits of the defined SLP role.
- Practice within one's skill limits and obtain assistance as needed.

- Practice with competence, integrity, and sound judgment.
- Maintain the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of all students, families, and school employees.
- Use local policies for confidential communication.
- Conduct activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies.
- Report suspected child abuse, suicidal ideation, and dangerous behavior as required by law, policies, and local procedures.
- Reflect on one's performance to improve practice.
- Request and use feedback from supervising professionals.
- Recognize the role of the SLP as the leader of speech-language services.
- Follow chain of command to address policy questions, system issues, and personnel practices.
- Respect role differences of all educators and service providers.
- Forge respectful relationships with teachers, colleagues, and families.
- Communicate effectively with stakeholders as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Provide accurate and timely information about students with individuals who have the need and right to know as determined by the supervising SLP.
- Participate actively in conferences and meetings as determined by the supervising SLP.

Resource:

SLA knowledge and skills adapted from: Council for Exceptional Children. (2015). *What every special educator must know: Professional ethics & standards* (7th.). Section 7: Paraeducators Serving Individuals with Exceptionalities.