

Christine's Chronicles: SLP Transitions - Does This Story Sound Familiar?

Follow along with one parent on her journey to make inclusion a reality for her son.



by Christine Lindauer

I spoke too soon in my November blog “What’s Next?” declaring that all was perfect working with my son’s team of teachers and therapists. I knocked on wood, but shortly thereafter, I discovered what would be next for Luke. Another speech therapist.

Speech therapy is the most important service my son receives. At four years of age, he has about 10 words, most only recognizable by his family and service providers. His primary means of communication is through modified signs and his augmentative communication device. So this continued disruption of service is particularly painful for us.

In the last six months he’s had four different therapists, and now in a few more months his current therapist will go on maternity leave, to bring the total up to five. And not that I had any particular issues with any of these therapists. They all had their strong points. I was sad each time we had to say goodbye knowing it was time to start over, again. The weeks or months it took for the therapist to develop a rapport, to get to know Luke, to not only understand his needs, but also his abilities. How many times did I hear, “Wow, did you know that your son can say ‘<insert some simple sentence here>’ on his communication device?” Yes, yes I know. He’s been able to do that for more than a year now. All that time was lost, during a time which some of his therapist specifically pointed out as being particularly crucial for him. A time when he seems to really want to talk, to try to talk, and we have to respond and take advantage of it now.

I will say that this most recent transition went the most smoothly. The therapist and I spent several hours together going over Luke’s device and his abilities. She then requested a home visit, which I eagerly agreed to. She attested that the home visit was immensely helpful in speeding up that

introductory period with Luke. She was able to insert herself much more easily into his play routines having observed his favorite activities at home.

When my son was in early intervention and received home based therapy, we went through a few therapists then too. But it was different, because I was always there. Every session I was the thread that kept the continuity. That transition time was kept to a minimum. I want that continuity again. Should I be leaning on my son's teachers to maintain that? But I still want to play an integral part in my son's education. I'm thinking about going outside of my son's inclusive child care setting, and getting additional clinic based therapy. Therapy that I can participate in, learn from, and maintain a continuum of strategies and interventions at home.

But is that potentially adding another level of complexity for effective team collaboration in the school environment?

I am grasping, trying to remain a part of my son's education, realizing that it is only going to get more and more difficult as Luke gets older and moves into the public school system. Should I start letting go now?

My family is lucky that we could afford this additional therapy. But a lot of families can't.

Community Question

Are there other resources out there a parent like me could consider?

Add Comment

SLP

Christine,

While I have no children of my own, I can sympathize with you as I have seen many parents in your shoes. I am an inclusion Pre-K teacher and have five students this year working with some of the same devices and boards you mentioned. I have witnessed the powerful connections students with language delays have made with our school's speech teacher. I work hand and hand with her to ensure that the goals of our students are reached in both her classroom and in mine.

I think it is wonderful that you want to play an integral role in your son's education. Parental advocacy goes a long way in my county in Maryland and is a great asset to the child's entire educational team. In my opinion I believe that you can do both. You can get additional clinical based therapy and have faith that his teachers will effectively carry out his learning goals.

Having another professional provide outside supports can provide the continuity you desire and assist new therapists in the child care setting get the information they need quickly to address your son's needs. This year a speech therapist from outside of our school provided great insight to our team at school about a young man in our class. At an IEP meeting the outside therapist was able to advocate for the family and child as well as establish a partnership with our team to ensure everyone was on the same page.

I think it is also important to note that while being present for therapy sessions can supply parents with direct models of what to do at home; we must also realize that at times students may act differently when their parents are around. As children enter the public school setting, there will be numerous opportunities for parents to attend IEP meetings, conferences, receive quarterly goal updates, and volunteer in the classroom. In fact, I feel more of a connection with the families of special needs students in my class because of the frequency of our contact.

As far as other resources, I always propose that parents simply search online for tools to use at home. "Success Stories" on Sandbox-learning.com provides a way to customize children's books.

Adaptedlearning.com offers communication boards to use at home. You can always ask speech teachers to make copies of any communication boards they are using. Through the Mayer-Johnson BoardMaker program, creation of the boards is fairly simple and the teachers should have no problem tailoring the boards to address things you do at home. I hope you find some of these thoughts useful to you. Best of luck!

Reply