Due to many changes in the professional practices of Speech/Language Pathologists, it is necessary to re-define the roles of the school based Speech Pathologist. These changes must occur according to federal and state mandates such as IDEA, NCLB, ASHA, and Bulletin 1508. The most current initiative is to support students presented with deficits in literacy, numeracy, or behavior (SALSA) through efforts and expertise of school-based Speech/language pathologists (SLP). Through the SALSA initiative, SLPs will be directly involved in the prevention of academic failure for both students identified with speech or language impairments as well as other struggling learners (i.e., SLPs now support several students that have not been referred or who are not identified as a student with a disability). SLPs may support Ensuring Literacy for All (ELFA), and Response to Intervention/Positive Behavior Support (RTI/PBS). Successful implementation of this initiative and management of this expanded scope of practice will require realignment of existing roles and responsibilities. SLPs and other stakeholders must make a conceptual shift in thinking and move from a traditional “caseload approach” to a “workload approach”. The SLP’s workload should be based on the demand of specific activities and instructional contributions rather than on the total number of students served. It is possible that the SLP work with students in a variety of settings. The SLP may provide teacher, parent, and student consultations, conduct screenings and diagnostic assessments, develop Individualized Education Plans for students, attend SBLC, grade level, and faculty meetings, obtain parent permission, participate on RTI teams (team-teaching, conducting data analysis, progress monitoring, and determinations of recommendations for referrals, and providing home activities), provide direct or indirect intervention using evidence-based practices in the areas of language improvement, phonological awareness, syntactic/morphological vocabulary development, voice, and fluency deficits, provide services in the natural environment, attend district in-services and staff development meetings and provide professional development and present faculty in-services, document and account for services, gather data, maintain logs and write progress notes.

Intervention efforts of the SLP should be therapeutic, practical, and relate to current concepts or content that students are learning in school. Careful attention and consideration should be given to ensure that the SLP’s skill set and use of time are maximized at all times.
Some examples of specific skills that may be utilized by a SLP include the following domains:

Articulation- supports the student’s ability to produce, monitor, and self-correct articulation as an integral part of oral reading.

Pre-Reading and Reading- Identify and address deficits of phonological awareness, separation of meaning and form, rhyming, segmentation, isolation, word defining, phoneme blending and phoneme manipulation. Identify and address deficits in representing phonemes using written modality. Identify deficits in vocabulary, syntax, morphology, or discourse structures (narrative and conversation). Strengthen metacognitive and metalinguistic skills.

Reading- Strengthen skills associated with difficulties understanding the underpinnings of language. Increase language abilities within the context of written text. Use multisensory aids (storyboards, graphic organizers) as a text to improve comprehension.

Written Language / Expressive Language - Identify the source of written language deficits, including poor phonemic awareness, morphological awareness, syntactic awareness, vocabulary awareness, vocabulary, narrative discourse, expository discourse, inferential language, adequate background knowledge, and/or conventions for representing the elements of language in written form.

Addressing authentic language and meaning based instruction can be implemented by SLPs. Other crucial skills that can be addressed are to provide the student with opportunities to see and to experience over and over in a meaningful context, support the student with the ability to focus on the meaning rather than each individual word during reading activities. Provide activities for students to initiate and formulate topics to discuss and write about. Assist in shared reading activities and employ meaningful activities and strategies to create an empowering learning environment, Provide support and scaffolding for the student in any meaning-making task or activities. Encourage Learning Groups to provide intrinsic motivation for the students. Model “Story Talk” and “Think Aloud” to classrooms and provide pull out programs for those students that require more intensive instruction.

Other traditional therapy services include voice therapy, fluency intervention, auditory processing management, and augmentative communication/assistive technology assistance.