

I would like to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to share my passion about being a school Speech Language Pathologist and also by congratulating all of you for choosing a career path that will provide you with a life-time of joy, reward and job security!!!

Thirty-two years ago I began my SLP career in the private practice setting. Since then I have worked for Head Start, in a hospital setting, and spent 15 years as an SLP for Woodland School District. Nine years ago I was asked by the superintendent to consider taking on the role as Director of Special Services. After spending a month lamenting about the decision I decided I could impact students in a different way and took on the challenge. Since then I can say my perspective and passion for our profession has been magnified. I have become a vocal advocate for promoting young people to look at the career of becoming an SLP in the school setting.

Being an SLP in the school setting has so many positive aspects it's difficult to capture all the benefits. I'm going to use one of David Letterman's summarizing strategies.

Here are the Top 10 REASONS to become an SLP in the school setting:

- 10) Schools provide SLP's the opportunity to become an active member of a professional learning community. You serve as an integral member of the schools team contributing vital information about speech and language development.
- 9) You are able to develop deep, lasting relationships with students, families, communities and colleagues.
- 8) School districts offer many continuing education opportunities to ensure life-long learning.
- 7) You are able to provide a vast array of therapy techniques to a wide range of disabilities and see substantial growth over time.

- 6) Districts allow SLP's the flexibility to determine their work schedule from 1 day up to 5 days a week.
  
- 5) Within the school setting most all paperwork is generated via a computerized system that saves a tremendous amount of time which allows for maximum student contact.
  
- 4) School settings provide SLP's the chance to incorporate many creative flexible therapy models to allow for maximum student success.
  
- 3) Working for a school district allows for 180 days of teaching and 180 days of time off!!
  
- 2) There is always something new or challenging to do every day.
  
- 1) You are able to see students from the start of therapy to the "graduation" from SLP services and there is no greater feeling!!

This profession is a people position. It's about developing relationships and connections and there is no better place than the schools to do this. You're able to combine your knowledge about speech and language development and naturally infuse it into the K-12 learning environment. You make the biggest difference in a child's life by improving their success in school and the joy from that experience is life changing. You will have lots of choices when you complete your program here at Western Washington University. My hope is that you take your time, keep your options wide open and locate a place where you find a group of people that will embrace you, mentor you and provide you with the professional learning community that is vital to our success as an SLP. My advice to you is to ask lots of good questions and make your decision based on the people that will surround you and the support they have to offer.

I want to close by again congratulating you on your choice for a career and wish you the best of luck in pursuing your dream. All the work you're doing right now will seem so worth it when you're out working as an SLP in the school setting. It's so much fun!! Thanks for giving me the opportunity say a few words today. I look forward to meeting with all of you later this afternoon.