



Strategies & Tips: How Special Education Teachers and Speech Therapists Can Work Together to Close Out the School Year

The end of the school year is not the time for the special education teacher and speech therapist to work in separate lanes. This is the season for teamwork, documentation, and making sure no student's services, goals, or progress notes fall into the "summer mystery folder."

1. Hold a quick "end-of-year student check-in"

Special education teachers and SLPs should meet briefly to review students they share.

Focus on:

- IEP goal progress
- Related service minutes
- Missed sessions or make-up needs
- Upcoming annual reviews or reevaluations
- Students transitioning to a new grade, school, or program
- Parent concerns that may need follow-up

This does not need to be a long meeting. A focused 20–30 minute check-in can prevent several August headaches.

2. Compare progress data before reports are finalized

Before final progress reports go home, both professionals should compare notes.

For example:

The special education teacher may see that a student is struggling with reading comprehension, while the SLP sees language-processing or vocabulary needs connected to that same challenge.

That collaboration helps ensure progress reports are aligned, accurate, and not sending mixed messages.

3. Make sure IEP goals "talk to each other"

Speech goals and academic goals should not live on different islands.

A student working on expressive language may also need support with written responses, classroom discussions, or explaining math reasoning. A student working on social communication may need support during group work, transitions, or peer interactions.

End-of-year collaboration is a good time to ask:

Are our goals connected to the student's actual school day?

4. Create a short transition note for next year's team

A transition note can be a lifesaver for the next special education teacher, SLP, or related service provider.

Include:

- What worked well
- Communication strengths and needs
- Behavior or regulation tips
- Successful accommodations
- Preferred prompts or visuals
- Parent communication notes
- Any unfinished concerns for next year

Think of it as a "please don't make the next team start from zero" document.

5. Review service delivery before summer

SLPs and special education teachers should review whether services were delivered as written in the IEP.

Check:

- Speech minutes
- Special education minutes
- Push-in/pull-out services
- Consultation time
- Missed sessions
- Documentation logs

This is the compliance clean-up moment. Better to catch issues in May or June than explain them in September.

6. Discuss ESY needs together

If a student may need Extended School Year services, the special education teacher and SLP should compare data.

Questions to consider:

- Did the student regress after breaks?
- How long did it take to recoup skills?
- Are speech/language needs tied to access to academics?

- Is communication progress fragile without continued support?

ESY decisions should be based on data, not panic, pressure, or vibes.

7. Align parent communication

Families should not hear one message from the teacher and a completely different message from the SLP.

Before final meetings or progress updates, collaborate on the main message:

- What progress was made?
- What still needs support?
- What strategies can continue at home?
- What should the next team know?

A unified message builds parent trust.

8. Share simple classroom strategies for summer and next year

The SLP can give the special education teacher easy language strategies to pass along, such as:

- Give extra wait time
- Offer sentence starters
- Pre-teach vocabulary
- Use visuals
- Check for understanding
- Model complete responses
- Break directions into smaller steps

The special education teacher can share what strategies actually worked in the classroom, because theory is nice, but “this worked during third-period chaos” is gold.

9. Celebrate student growth together

Closing out the year should not only be about paperwork.

Take time to recognize wins:

- A student who finally used self-advocacy language
- A student who improved peer interaction
- A student who participated more in class discussion
- A student who used communication supports independently
- A student who made progress toward reading, writing, or comprehension goals

Small wins are still data. And sometimes they are the most important data.

10. Build the bridge to next year

The best end-of-year collaboration makes the next school year smoother.

Before leaving for summer, identify:

- Students who need immediate attention in August
- Evaluations due early next year
- Students with complex communication needs
- Assistive technology needs
- Parent concerns
- Staff training needs
- Materials or visuals that should be ready before school starts

The goal is simple: **future-you should not be mad at end-of-year-you.**

Data King Closing Thought

Special education teachers and speech therapists are not separate superheroes working in different buildings of the IEP universe.

They are a tag team.

When they collaborate at the end of the year, students get better support, parents get clearer communication, and next year's team gets a clean handoff instead of a compliance scavenger hunt.

Close the year with data, teamwork, and a little professional mercy for whoever opens the file next year.