

Strategies for Effective Push-in Therapy as a School-Based SLP

michelle_andrews: [00:00:00] Hey there. I'm Michelle Andrews and I'm your host for the Pep Talk podcast. This episode is all about effectively using a push-in model for speech therapy in the schools. hope we can shed some light on why push-in therapy is important and break down some walls of fear or uncertainty when it comes to walking into a teacher's classroom and trying to work on your speech goals. guest speaker today is Marie Muratalla. Hi there, Marie.

Marie: Hi. Thank you for having.

michelle_andrews: Hi. I'm so excited. Let me tell everyone a little bit about you.

michelle_andrews: Marie is a preschool in Southern California. She is passionate about making sure her, her students enjoy communicating with their friends, and teachers. Marie believes in the power of collaboration with IEP teams wants the parents and caregivers she works with to feel empowered to use speech and language strategies at home and with their little ones. When she isn't running play based speech therapy sessions or attending IEP meetings. Marie is mentoring fellow SLPs and [00:01:00] confidently and maintaining life work balance while going about their daily and work related routines. You can find more about her mindset strategies, say thanks More gratitude journal SLP coaching thanksmorris.com. Okay. First, we do need to go over some formalities for the course by going over our financial disclosures. My financial disclosures include, I have a Teacher's Pay Teachers boom, Teach with Medley store all under Pep Talk llc. I am also the founder and manager of Pep Talk in the Pep Talk podcast. Teach With Medley is also a sponsor for this podcast. My non-financial disclosures include I have a stock participation plan with Teach with Medley. Now, Marie, would you like to go over your financial disclosures real quick?

Marie: Yes. , I do have my journals and say, thanks more, Mer and my, , SLP courses, as you mentioned, those are all a part of my own business and website thanksmorris.com. I am also an affiliate for like [00:02:00] to know it, an Amazon, have an Amazon storefront, , where I share lists, um, whether it's, you know, SLP outfits or toys you can use in therapy sessions.

Marie: So, , I do, like I said, I have an affiliate link for those. So I do, , make a commission on those links. And then my non-financial disclosures, I do, um,

just disclose that I am a public school based speech pathologist. , and that I believe is it.

Michelle Andrews: Okay. Awesome. Thank you for that. All right, so here are the learner objectives for this course. , number one, you'll be able to benefits of push in speech therapy. Number two, be able to explain why collaborating with other school profession, other school professionals is so important for the success of push in therapy. three, you'll be able to describe examples of effective push in therapy. Okay, now let's get started. So this episode of the Pep Talk podcast is all about push in speech therapy. I don't know about you all listening, but [00:03:00] I have felt very intimidated and unsure of exactly how to implement push in therapy in the classroom. My guest speaker today, Marie, is going to walk us through the best ways to do this. Hi there Marie, can you go ahead and tell us a little bit more about yourself?

Marie: Absolutely you did already kind of mention, but, um, which thank you by the way for that introduction. , I am currently a preschool speech language pathologist for a full inclusion preschool program. I do work for a public school district in Southern California, so it's actually a very cool. Program that I've gotten to be a part of, because every other grade level, um, above preschool, you don't see this kind of an inclusion program.

Marie: My hope for, you know, all of the, all of the schools in the country is that one day every grade level has some sort of inclusion opportunity. But right now I get to see the benefits of it with my little ones, my [00:04:00] three and four year olds in preschool. Um, I completed my clinical fellowship in the elementary school setting, so I got to have experience with all grades, transitional, kinder through fifth grade for my school based internship.

Marie: Just before my cf I did also get the chance to work in the middle school grade level. So I've had a little bit of experience. All of those grades, and I really felt my heart was with the littler ones in that TK and kinder age. And when in my second year, the opportunity to become a preschool speech pathologist presented itself, I decided to say yes.

Marie: At the time, I didn't know that it was a full inclusion program. I also didn't realize what full inclusion meant. so it was one of the probably most challenging years as a speech pathologist, just because I was coming out of my CF still brand new with this whole other perspective on what a school based SLP does to then [00:05:00] go into a full inclusion preschool program.

Marie: That relied heavily on my collaboration, not only with my colleagues, but those push-in therapy type of services to provide for students that had AAC that maybe had very limited language when they were starting out school. I've worked a lot in collaboration within our preschool program with physical therapists and occupational therapists, which I didn't have a lot of exposure to before that in the schools.

Marie: So it's been a really great experience and I absolutely love it, but was definitely, uh, a little bit terrifying at first because I didn't feel like I was competent enough. I didn't feel like I had training and I didn't, I, I didn't have training in push in therapy and collaboration. And I think that is kind of across the board.

Marie: What I hear a lot of school based SLPs, especially newer ones saying, is that they don't really understand how you're supposed to go into a classroom and help a teacher use different materials or supports for specific students in those [00:06:00] individual accommodations that we might write in on IEPs. But I love.

Marie: I've, because of this program, I've gotten this perspective on collaboration and push in therapy that allows me to collaborate with those teachers, the instructional aids, all of the service providers. And it also gives me this opportunity to learn more about ways that they're already doing a lot of great things in the classroom.

Marie: so I, yeah, I'm so excited to get to share this with, with you and everybody listening on the podcast because I do think that based on, you know, six years of experience now I, I have some things I want to be able to share.

michelle_andrews: That's incredible. cfy year was also in an elementary school setting and , I really felt like I was of thrown in there without too much knowledge of how to do inclusion therapy. I totally get the struggle there of, trying to figure out how to implement that. So you said you started out going into that school setting [00:07:00] without a lot of knowledge of how to implement

Marie: Mm-hmm.

michelle_andrews: therapy to now you thriving at it, and that's what you do pretty much the whole time. Tell me how you got there, tell me about your experience with push in therapy and how you became so knowledgeable.

Marie: definitely. I, like I said, was super intimidated, so if you know you're. Listening and you're like, Yeah, I feel intimidated by the thought of this. We, we all have those moments of intimidation and it does sound overwhelming and it can be overwhelming when you're just starting out really trying to implement different strategies when they are in that collaborate, collaborative model and they are kind of surrounding what the student needs within the classroom, not when you're pulling them out to speech, because those are two very different environments and.

Marie: Grad school didn't always prepare us for those kinds of things. Um, maybe some of us had that training, but some of us didn't. And [00:08:00] so when it was my turn to try it all out in my second year of being a speech pathologist, I was fortunate enough at the time that I was also with my family and friends, uh, in my local community.

Marie: We were taking a comedy improv class, which is something totally random, and I didn't ever see that relating to my life as a speech pathologist. It was actually my way of taking time out of being a speech pathologist, um, in the middle of every week and just having fun with my family. It wasn't, it was just to goof around and, , take a break from all of the responsibilities of being a new school based slp.

Marie: but what I figured out was that was actually a really great foundation for saying yes to things that make you uncomfortable. Stepping into the classroom my time to really practice the, the enthusiasm that being, you know, on a comedy improv stage and being with, your scene with a partner and not knowing what's [00:09:00] coming because the audience is giving you suggestions, um, is the same kind of idea as doing something like pushing into a classroom.

Marie: You've never walked into asking a teacher questions about a student that you're just meeting for the first time. Um, or training staff members that maybe, you know, the whole idea of training a staff member on AAC is a little bit intimidating. And so just being able to go in there and share as much as you can and, and give information in a very positive, enthusiastic way was a background that I'd had from a year and a half of comedy improv classes.

Marie: , That helped me. It helped me really step into the uncomfortable and embrace it and learn from it and make mistakes and be okay with making mistakes. , , and knowing that I could learn from those as well. Because the nature of our preschool program is that you do that, you do the push in therapy,

and it's a huge part of helping students make the progress that we wanna see them make on their IEP goals.

Marie: So it, I couldn't really walk in and say, Well, I don't do push in [00:10:00] therapy. That's just not what I do as a speech pathologist. You know, I pull all the kids out, I'm just gonna change their services and only see them in my speech room. You, I couldn't do that. I had to adapt because that was what the program was, was proving to be beneficial for the students.

Marie: More importantly, it was what some of my students needed. It was what their individualized education program called for. And so as the clinician, as the professional, I needed to figure out how to make it work and how to learn to be a push-in therapist. In a sense.

michelle_andrews: That's so interesting. I love that, that the comedy improv really helped prepare you for that role.

Marie: It did it, I highly recommend it for anybody who, uh, who is looking for ways to kind of just, I don't know, broaden your perspective and give you maybe some, uh, some skills on, whether it's public speaking or again, working with, with new team members or collaboration or anything [00:11:00] like that.

Marie: It's a great way to give you some foundational life skills, I guess.

michelle_andrews: Yeah, yeah. Working with, uh, adults in different situations and maybe even kids in therapy,

Marie: Ab Oh, absolutely.

michelle_andrews: what do I do now? You know, trying to get them to, to be entertained and focus on what you're doing. That's cool.

Marie: That's exactly it. And I will say too, just within this same kind of, just to keep answering that question a little more, cuz I just thought of this response in my improv brain, but another thing about push in therapy, you don't always, you can plan for it. And I know we're gonna probably talk about this a little bit later on, but I didn't know how to plan push in therapy because I was taught in grad school, you know, you have to have a lesson plan and you have to be specifically looking at what goals you're targeting.

Marie: And sometimes when you push in you don't have that full plan because you're kind of going in to follow the child's lead depending on how your

pushing is looking. And so having that improv background too also helped me kind of let go of the need to plan and just walk in and let the situation present itself.

Marie: So that's [00:12:00] another thing that, um, that after, you know, five years or six years now of doing this, I've realized is it's okay to not have that.

michelle_andrews: , that's exactly how I felt when I walked into the classroom is don't have a plan. Like I don't know what the

michelle_andrews: now. I don't know what the kid's gonna be

Marie: Mm-hmm.

michelle_andrews: a very good point. So it sounds like there really are lots of benefits to push in therapy. go over some of those. What are some of the benefits for doing therapy? This.

Marie: first and foremost, it's the student's growth and development. So getting to have them in an environment that promotes that. Like I said, I am pushing in in within classrooms that are. Um, their model is this full inclusion model where half of the students in the classroom are identified with some sort of needs.

Marie: We have specialized academic instruction services, We have speech and language services. There might be more than that. There [00:13:00] also might be occupational therapy. Um, we might have extra behavior supports for some students or physical therapy services, and so all of those students would be identified as, or they would be on an individualized education program.

Marie: And then the other half, the other 50% are what we call our general education students, so they don't have any identified needs. The classroom also has, because it's preschool, we have more staff in the classroom. So there are two instructional aide that I get to work with, which is an awesome thing because sometimes those aide.

Marie: They know the students best because they're spending the most time with them. The teachers might be focusing, not that they're always the, the teachers know the students best too. They always are the ones that are in the classroom the whole time. But sometimes those a pick up on things that not even the teachers see because the teachers are leading a circle time and the aids are actually watching the behaviors and helping kind of support that.

Marie: Um, and so there's those two A and then there are, there is a general education teacher in the classroom at all times and a special education [00:14:00] teacher. So it's really cool. So the classroom is set up to support the needs of the student. It's not like we have one teacher in there. We're saying, now you're full inclusion.

Marie: You have half on an iep, half of the students are not, have fun and go with it, but there's actual, know, um, specialized staff in there at all times. And then there's a speech pathologist on site, which would be me and my preschool site to also go in and support some of those communication needs. And, um, so it's, it's set up to benefit the students from the get go, but then, One of the main benefits I see is those students now have access to their peers.

Marie: And so instead of me pulling them out and working with them in a small group, they're able to see their peers learning from maybe me if I'm running a center or something like that. And then they are maybe imitating their peers before they imitate me. So we do see, in research shows, we see progress sometimes a lot quicker when we are doing more of this full inclusion slash push and model when we're [00:15:00] servicing our students.

Marie: Um, the preschool program and most transitional kindergarten, kindergarten programs are what we would call language rich environments. And so when our students are working specifically on language goals, whether it's to, you know, use functional communication, whether it's to we're working on vocabulary specifically, They are in an environment that's already supportive of that.

Marie: So having the specialist go into the classroom and just keep determining what supports need to be in the classroom versus what supports are should be out of the classroom, which isn't as normal to them, is very beneficial as well. So getting to go in and provide supports to the staff, to the students.

Marie: And then also another thing that's very beneficial is you are going in and maybe modeling while you're doing your push in services or. Push it or collaborative services. And when you leave the room, you're leaving the staff with the strategies you just used so they can continue [00:16:00] using them all day long with the students.

Marie: So that's another huge benefit. I, for instance, have a student right now who has a device. We're using Proloquo two. He's doing really awesome with it. He has a new instruction or he has a new one-on-one aid this year. Um, I should

say para too, cuz I know we don't always use the same lingo, but instructional aids or paras, same thing.

Marie: Um, but he has a new aid and the other day she came out to me and was like, Miss m I just put on a new button. I, I programmed a button onto his prolo quo that he needed during a center. And I just, I wanted to cry. I was so excited because that's the benefit of me going. Once a week, I pull him out once a week.

Marie: But I'm always working with that staff member and she's always watching to be able to then do it when I'm not there, because I'm not even at that site every day. And so she can be, you know, my hands in a sense. So that's a really cool thing that I've seen. Just, you know, in kind of that empowerment, [00:17:00] empowering the staff to, to help use the strategies that we're using when we do pull our students into the speech room or when we're there pushing in.

michelle_andrews: , all those reasons are so important for each child. and in the classroom, that's where the child is most of the school day.

Marie: Exactly.

michelle_andrews: for us to go in there and be with all those professionals that are around them and with that child and their environment and the peers that they're, that they sit next to in class

Marie: Mm-hmm.

michelle_andrews: random ones that we made a group with that fit our It's, it just, it really makes a lot of sense. It really does. So for the most successful push in therapy, we need to collaborate with other professionals. Who all does that include? I know you mentioned some, but let's go over

michelle_andrews: includes and why it's so important.

Marie: so teachers, like I said, and in my program that's specifically a special education teacher and a gen ed teacher, my first year I was so intimidated, so I mainly just kind of clung to my special ed teachers cuz they were, you know, within my, what I would see as my department. [00:18:00] Um, but as the year went on I kind of learned, oh no, like gen ed teachers are there just as much.

Marie: And again, every teacher's gonna have a different perspective. So getting to collaborate with both and then have both on board for whatever

strategies I'm implementing is huge because that's just one more person that is working with our students and understanding their individualized needs. I said earlier too, the paras or the instructional aids are really.

Marie: Staff members to be working with as well. And =typically, there's a balance. It's, um, don't want to be giving too much information in one push in session because that can be overwhelming for both the staff and the students, but you also wanna be open to supporting their needs.

Marie: So I always try and ask questions of my instructional aids and the teachers make sure that I'm providing the information that makes sense to them. , and then you might collaborate, depending on what the student needs.

[00:19:00] You might be collaborating with other service providers as well, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavior, um, intervention therapist, or however, there's like so many different names for all of , all of these service providers.

Marie: But at the end of the day, all the service providers I love, I, I typically, Work the most with my behavior interventionist and my, uh, occupational therapists. That just seems to be, because we're doing a lot of sensory support, what behaviors are, some sort of communication from our students.

Marie: So that's typically what I'm doing there. Also, parents are sometimes who you're collaborating with. Last year I had a great relationship for, with one of the families I worked with who would be emailing me and sending me maybe pictures that they used at home that I could use on communication boards or, um, you know, for certain goals that we're working on.

Marie: And so those are definitely people we wanna be. If, if that's what our student needs. Just because we're in the [00:20:00] educational setting doesn't mean, especially in preschool when they're that little, we're, we're working on a lot of functional things. So if something's working at home, we wanna make sure that we're bringing that into their school day and into the classroom.

Marie: Um, sometimes we're even collaborating with admin. And then you might collaborate with an assistive technology team and outside service providers. I've definitely had times where I'm on the phone with the private practice SLP for my students, talking about the strategies that work for them with their fluency goals or with their expressive language goals.

Marie: So those are all people, and there's probably, there could be more to add to that list. Those are the ones that I've seen, um, or I've, I've myself,

collaborate, collaborated with in the past. And again, at the end of the day, this is all important because we are working on a child, you know, enjoying their interactions, enjoying their communication, and making progress on their speech and language goals.

Marie: So, [00:21:00] I don't rule out collaboration for any student. I would. I always, especially again, when we're working on some of these really functional things, whether they have an articulation and phonology goal, or if they have an AAC device and we're working on programming that I'm always collaborating with my teachers because I know it benefits my students throughout their school day.

michelle_andrews: That's so true. Working as a team and collaborating with them is so crucial. And speaking of that, so we need to build rapport. Say we're first meeting them, we're

michelle_andrews: relationship to have a better experience with the push in therapy. I know you have some strategies for rapport with our colleagues.

michelle_andrews: Um, what are some of those strategies?

Marie: I would say first and foremost, it's the same way we build rapport with our students. I always, the first two weeks of the school year when I'm, whether I'm meeting new students or I have my returning students coming back from summer, we're focusing on building a connection, so, We are, I'm pulling out toys they like, or I'm getting to see what, [00:22:00] or I'm, you know, bringing them into this speech room and I'm observing and watching what they play with because maybe that's the way that I learn what they like.

Marie: Things that I can always incorporate. Well, when I'm meeting a new staff member and I'm walking into their classroom for the first time, same thing. I'm not gonna go in there and be like, Hey, you have these three students. This is what they need. They need these visuals in the classroom at all times. Here you go.

Marie: I'm gonna get to know my colleagues and I'm going to ask them questions about their life. Find out, you know, what they like to do outside of being a teacher or an instructional aid or occupational therapist, and, and really make a point to build that connection. Just like we build, you know, when we're focusing on communication with little ones, I'm a big believer in relationship driven communication, and that connection is very important to my student making progress on their goals.

Marie: And so that relationship doesn't stop with just my student. I want to make sure that I'm building that with the people I'm collaborating with on a daily basis [00:23:00] to promote that growth in my students. Um, thing that I learned my first year, you know, I, at the time when I first started this, I was very fortunate that all of my preschool program, of my preschool classes were on at one school site.

Marie: So I was at the same school site five days a week, and all three of those classes were not too far away. I could pop in every day or whenever I needed to push in or just talk to a colleague. But what was interesting was I would walk into classroom A and they would be doing things one way and I'd walk into classroom B.

Marie: They'd be doing things completely the opposite way, and I'd walk into classroom C and they'd have their own way of doing things. Every classroom had a different culture. They had different perspectives, different ways of talking about behavior, different ways of maybe targeting some of their own specialized academic goals.

Marie: And being open to it as the one, the one speech pathologist that was there [00:24:00] was really important. Um, and offering my own perspective was also important, but I knew that I needed to be open to learning from each of these perspectives. Some I might agree more with, some I might not, but it didn't matter. At the end of the day, we're all here trying to.

Marie: You know, work for these students. And that was one thing that, um, I knew for me, even if I didn't agree, well, I had to remember my why and understand, okay, well I'm here for this student, so I'm gonna work with this individual. I'm still gonna offer my perspective. I'm gonna offer, you know, advice and things like that.

Marie: Um, also make sure that if this is for the student's communication, like if, if what I'm asking a classroom to do, maybe use a certain language board or something like that. For a specific goal, and I'm not seeing it used in the classroom. Then to be mindful of, okay, well maybe why have I not trained them?

Marie: Do they not feel confident in using it versus getting upset because they don't have it out? So kind of, I don't know, just being mindful [00:25:00] of maybe what needs to be done in order to implement the things that I'm asking them to implement. Um, but maybe they've found a better way to do something and I also need to be open to that.

Marie: So it's kind of that balance of being open-minded, but also having the confidence to make sure you share what you know, but at the end of the day, make sure it's always for the student. It's not an ego thing, right? It's, we're focusing on that, greater picture of it being for the students benefit.

Michelle Andrews: That's right. That's right. And so building rapport with colleagues and other professionals, it's like somewhat like making friends, even as a child, you know, you have to try to get to know them a little bit. How do they like to do things? You know, where, where can we, are we on the same page? You know, how can we, just build a relationship so that we can have free communication to

Michelle Andrews: with each other about all the things that, that will benefit the child at hand.

Michelle Andrews: Exactly. okay, so before we get into exactly what you do and push in therapy, [00:26:00] let's go over, um, who all can we use the push in therapy model? Wh who all can we use the pushin therapy model with? Just anyone? I know you say you would argue that Yes. Anyone, But let's go into some of those details. Like, um, who is a good candidate for pushin therapy model?

Marie: I. Sometimes, and again, it just like, I, Yeah, you already said it, but I would argue every student could benefit from it. Um, and with that chance to generalize skills in their environment at some point in their development. So you might not have a push and therapy goal for a student who is I don't wanna say severe, like maybe severe AP apraxia, I would think, because we know that having that time to make sure we get discreet trials and repetition and things like that is important for a student that has those goals.

Marie: But again, sometimes we have to think a little bit bigger picture. I, for instance, have a student right now that [00:27:00] does demonstrate some of those AP apraxia, like things. Um, we're working on also possible aac I'm gonna need to be able to push in for an, you know, when we're working with alternative communication, because that is something that.

Marie: I know for this student I might need to model with AIDS and teachers. Um, so it just depends on the student's goals. If I have a student that is working on straight articulation and phenology, I probably won't write a push in service for that student because getting them out into this speech room where there's less distractions is going to be, we're gonna get a lot more done and learn the placement of those sounds or learn, get that chronological awareness down.

Marie: Um, in the speech room where it's quieter, where maybe we only have one other peer in there that's also acting a little bit like a model. You know, cuz we're both working on articulation and phonology goals. Um, but. We'll always push in for students that have more [00:28:00] of those language, language based goals.

Marie: So any vocabulary goals, we could even think more like along the lines of using language for getting their wants and needs met. Those are definitely goals that I want to be able to provide support for in the classroom because where are they most of the time trying to get their needs in, wants met in the classroom.

Marie: So I think more along those lines of , where do we need them to be , most functional. Um, I've even written only push and services for some of my students that are demonstrating those very early maybe. Preverbal skills, like we are maybe working on getting some imitation. And so going into the classroom where they're around their peers more, and we're kind of trying to really just work on that social piece before we're working on vocabulary and you know, all the semantic things.

Marie: We want to first start with having them be motivated and having them feel connected and sometimes keeping students around their peers to build preliminary [00:29:00] skills is going to be more beneficial to them and we're gonna see more progress that way. Then we might start bringing them into the speech room.

Marie: So it just kind of depends on the student, it depends on their goals. Um, but again, those, those language goals are typically where I'll push in more in, in the classroom.

michelle_andrews: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense that those would be. the goals that would be easiest to go into the classroom

Marie: Mm-hmm.

michelle_andrews: Okay. So when you go into the classroom, do you bring with you? What resources, motivators, you, you know, I know you're kind of improving when you go into the classroom,

michelle_andrews: bring with you though, um, to use or if anything, to do push in.

Marie: One of my favorite materials that I talk a lot about on my social media is my apron. I call it my push in apron now. Cause I used to wear it all the time and now I just wear it when I go push in. But I still push in all the time. So I'm always wearing that apron. [00:30:00] And it's just a little like a, it's like a cocktail waitress apron that I found on Amazon that I have put, I've attached Velcro to and then I attach functional core words to.

Marie: I also sometimes put, I change 'em out and I put song choices on. So if I'm running a center in a classroom and I have time to lead the children in a song, they can choose what song, cuz I have it there. I don't. in a bunch of stuff or wheel my roll cart down to the preschool classroom to bring in all these things.

Marie: I like to have something that I, I like to bring things that are easy to take in and easy to take out. Um, having an apron is just easy, , to keep little manipulatives in if I need to. So that's one of my favorite materials to have. Just to, again, I have my little yes no icons on there. I have those functional, like open, close, um, stop go that I can pull out for any, any activity.

Marie: So if I bring in a sensory bin and we're taking off the lid, I can model with my little icon for [00:31:00] open because I brought it in cuz it's just sitting there on my apron. Uh, so that's a really fun one to, to always get to share because I think a lot. We like that idea of having something really easy and simple and we can just grab it and go.

Marie: I typically always have either already in the classroom because I've equipped my classrooms with some sort of core board. Um, I really love the, I think it's, it's project cores. They, you can get a bunch of free core boards on their website. They're just board maker boards, but they've already made 'em for you.

Marie: So they have, they have different grid sizes too. You can do four or nine grids so that way you have bigger images and less, um, to look at. You can do the big 36 grid, which is what I typically recommend. And research shows it doesn't really, there's not a lot of difference between using less pictures versus more.

Marie: I think it's easier for adults to use less, but it's easier for the kids actually in the end to, to have the big 36 1. Um, so I always bring that in, or like [00:32:00] I said, it's already in the classroom. , Then what else was I thinking of? Oh, um, I might come in with, adaptable materials. So again, like I said, I, if

I'm running a center and I maybe bring in a, so like something to sing a song, I might also have some sort of language board to go with that.

Marie: Or if I am doing a story with the kids, I might bring in some sort of tactile, like if you do brown bear, Brown bear, I bring in my book if we read the book and then I have a sensory bin that has all of the animals in it. So it's something that if my students who aren't so interested in books yet, um, they can be pulling things out of the sensory bin when it's their turn to maybe turn the page or whatever.

Marie: So I always have things that are adaptable for the students as well, or provide some sort, some sort of, um, way for them to interact , with a group

michelle_andrews: I love that and I love the apron idea. Just throwing some things in there, not having

michelle_andrews: cart or giant bag. [00:33:00] I love, it's just right there, like huge pockets. That's . a great idea. Um, that's great. Those are, those are really great ideas. So let's go over what this looks like in real life. So what are some examples of push in therapy?

Marie: My first one that I love doing is circle time and, Okay, so I should preface this with saying, I'm definitely looking at this through the lens of a preschool speech pathologist or, you know, more, more that early intervention and what they're doing in those, classrooms. There's always circle time, but also in transitional kindergarten and kindergarten, there's circle time as well.

Marie: Um, and I love that time because you can, the other day I did, I did a circle time session in my preschool classroom and I read a story to them and. That's a great time to work on different, different language skills. It's a great time to also be observing kids and kind of seeing how they interact in a larger group.

Marie: I have one little girl who [00:34:00] six weeks ago wasn't talking very much. I went in and read a story in her class and she's sitting there and the teacher's having to remind her to listen because she wants to talk to her little friend. And I thought, you know, I know that, that that's not a behavior we necessarily find appropriate during circle time, Right?

Marie: They're supposed to be listening to the teacher. But as a speech pathologist, I went back to her data sheet and wrote that down and was talking about how many words I heard her saying and her utterances. I was so thrilled,

and so it's a great time to kind of see what you don't get to see when you are constantly, you know, doing the whole back and forth of pulling kids in for different sessions.

Marie: , I also love songs. I talk a lot about songs too on my social media, and the benefit of getting to lead the children in a song without the cd or, you know, just turning on, the computer version or the, you know, iTunes or whatever. Because sometimes those songs, while they're great and there's a lot of great songs out there, they might go too fast for some of our students who are, you know, just learning the, [00:35:00] the vocabulary or we want them to participate, but there's too much going on at the time when we turn on the, the soundtrack.

Marie: And so I love taking in again, on big on visuals, especially for preschoolers, um, whether they're on an IEP or not. And I bring in my song boards where they can take turns taking off, you know, for doing five little ducks and they take off a duck every time the ducks go over the hill to play.

Marie: Having the opportunity to slow down, give pauses so that way the kids can fill in some of those repetitive phrases in the songs, but also, um, I might build in hand motions and get some imitation. And again, the push in the beauty of the push in for this is that I'm doing this whole group activity and I might be, you know, moving my hand every time we say over the hill and I'm moving my hand over the, you know, doing the motion for over the hill and maybe my students that I want to be imitating more who don't do it when we're just in the speech room together, see all of their peers [00:36:00] imitating me and they're looking around and they might start imitating their peers because what I've found is that students typically are more, they're more likely, I shouldn't say they all do this, but they're more likely to imitate some of their peers than they are to imitate me.

Marie: The adult, especially when we're by ourselves in the speech room. Um, it's just more motivating for them. So that's another really great way that I like to go and push in. And it also models the benefit of doing those songs slowly for the staff too. Um, and, and I love it because you can do songs at any time with kids and they're all about it.

Marie: So it's just, it's a lot of fun. , I also like to, , Go in during center times and run maybe some sort of language based center. Typically for my classrooms, they do, um, 10 to 15 minute centers. It just kind of depends on what they're doing that day and how many, how many kids are in the classroom.

But at a 10 minute center, I can read a story or maybe sing a song and then lead some sort of language based activity.

Marie: Or [00:37:00] I can run a play center and bring in my core board and we can, I can kind of follow the kids lead a little bit more and it's a little bit less structured, but there's so much language we can work on when we're playing in the kitchen center or when we're building blocks on the floor. , and again, that gives me a chance to see all of my students in a 10 minute chunk.

Marie: And then I might also lead a story time for a 10 minute chunk. Um, but to be able to see them in those smaller groups playing with their peers is a really great way to maybe do observations again, , model some like vocabulary and language goal. What am I trying to.

Marie: I don't know, but just to model language, that's all I needed to say for that. , and then you can also spend time with a student individually. And when I started pushing in, this is where I really focused on it because I didn't know what I was doing, but I had students that had those collaborative services written into their iep.

Marie: So I made my schedule for them. On more of that individual. I'll go into this classroom at this time, see this student, versus I'll go in and run a center [00:38:00] on this day and see students A, B, and C. Um, but starting out, I think that's a great way to do it. You know, what your student's working on.

Marie: You can take a couple of those push and se sessions in the beginning to get to know how they interact in the classroom and kind of see what will work when you push in. Maybe what won't work when you push in. Maybe pushing in at snack is a good idea because you can model, you know, requesting you can.

Marie: It's, it's a highly social time, so there's other students that can act as peer models during that time. You can maybe decide to push in during outside play time where there's a lot of movement stimulation. Some of my students love that. And so I go out there and we, we are using language like go up down the slide.

Marie: Ready, set, Go. 1, 2, 3. , You might go in, like I was talking about earlier, I have a student using an AAC device, and so for his push in sessions, I'm going in specifically to be modeling at center time where we. What ways we can use his [00:39:00] AAC and how he can use it to interact with his peers. Um, there's a lot, there's a lot you can do.

Marie: I really love how I've kind of worked up to feeling like I can push in now at any time of the day, and that's part of building that relationship with my teachers. But also it takes a little bit of planning. I have one classroom right now where every Thursday I push into their classroom to specifically run a center.

Marie: Um, and so every Wednesday I'm texting the teacher like, Hey, do you, what, what's your theme for tomorrow? What, you know, what letter are you working on? Is there something I can bring specifically to assist you guys? Or, Hey, I wanna come in and, and do brown Bear at my center. Are you okay with that? So that's a little bit of planning, maybe not too much, um, once you kinda get used to it or you just know you have different things you can grab or whatever you're feeling like.

Marie: , but yeah, so again, those are three ways I like to do it, but there's. There's probably more. There's probably more I do that I don't even realize because I've gotten so used to it and [00:40:00] I've kind of fallen in love with being able to co-teach and be in the classrooms

michelle_andrews: Those are such good example. It got me thinking about scheduling then and, and how, you know, when we talked about before collaborating and building relationships with teachers, it sounds like that is a huge part of this and

michelle_andrews: it is scheduling too. It sounds like you have to schedule with the teacher, I'm gonna do a center or, what about when you, you were talking about circle time. you leading circle time with the whole classroom and the teacher just, plans for that. Plans a time, a check of time for you to take over? Is that how that works?

Marie: typically what I do. So if I say, Hey, I wanna push in and lead a circle time, I typically, again, it's very. First and foremost, collaborative with the teachers. So I always ask, is there a specific day I can do that? They, the classrooms have a schedule. So from, let's say nine to nine 20 [00:41:00] every morning they're doing their morning circle time.

Marie: Um, so I just keep my own mind, I guess my schedule I've learned, especially as a preschool, SLP has to be flexible. And that's what I've loved about it too, is that if a student's not here, for instance, I'll just go grab another student because in preschool that's our life. It's flexibility and the teachers are all pretty good with that.

Marie: Um, I know as you get up into the higher grades in most schools it's a little bit different because there's, so, there's just all kinds of different things. There's, you know, a whole curriculum and there's state testing some days, or I don't know, in my school district is already testing and they do this on certain days every week.

Marie: Um, there's PE classes and so. It gets a little bit trickier as they get older, but for, for my scheduling, I am very grateful that I can be so flexible and kind of adhere to the cla. Again, it's part of that honoring the classroom culture. I'm not gonna say, Hey, I, I only can come in from eight to eight 15 tomorrow, [00:42:00] so that's when I'm gonna do my circle time, because that's changing it up for a whole class versus one person.

Marie: And I know I have my speech schedule to keep up with, but a part of it is just me being mentally flexible and able to say, Okay, so if I'm in there from nine to nine 20, even though that's when I would see a student from another class, maybe I can flip my schedule a little bit or maybe see that student on a different day.

Marie: Um, because in the end, I wanna be able to have that collaborative relationship with my teachers. So it does, it just comes down to a little bit of flexibility. But if I am planning on doing it on, let's say a weekly basis, then I just make sure that that's my scheduled time. To go into that classroom and then I build my schedule around it.

Marie: So it depends on how often I guess you wanna do it too. Another thing that I didn't mention, and this is gonna be different for every state, and probably it maybe every district, I can't remember if this falls on like a district level or a state level, but when you're [00:43:00] billing for your sessions, it can get tricky when you're pushing in and running groups larger.

Marie: Like for me, I can't bill for a session if it's a group session, um, for a group larger than eight kids. And now I'm just, that's an example. But that's, that's, that's my reality. So it could be different in Texas or anywhere else. Um, but you do have to be mindful of that too if you want to push in. So that's why I like running the center times.

Marie: Then I definitely have a group less than eight, and I can ask them to maybe have longer centers that day if the students can handle it. So that way I can get those 20 minutes when I'm pushing in. Or what I'll do is I get, you get creative, we're LPs, we can do those creative things. So if I'm pushing in for

center time, I also make sure that maybe I've blocked out another half hour to hour of the day, depending on how many students have those push-in services.

Marie: So that way I am spending that other half of their service time. So let's say they get 20 minute [00:44:00] push-in services a week. So for 10 minutes of that school day that I'm pushing into their classroom, I'm running a center. So I'll see them for 10 minutes, but that's still, they're still losing another 10 minutes of service time and I can't bill for that.

Marie: Um, so what I'll do is then maybe I'll push in with them during recess and spend 10 minutes with that student at recess. Does that make sense? So I'm still seeing. For, you know, and make sure I'm working on their goals and I'm pushing into the classroom because that's what they need, but I'm determining where they need it.

Marie: And center time I think is always going to be that area. It's always gonna hit that area of need because there is a lot of language that we work on in those centers, but then there maybe is also a social piece. And so pushing in that recess is gonna be a great idea too. Or maybe snack time or so. It's just, it's just a Teris game.

Marie: know, Or a puzzle and

michelle_andrews: where they need it. That

Marie: Yeah. But when you're a part of it is just that mental flexibility, which I had to really, I had to gain as I went through it and realized, Oh, I need to just [00:45:00] be flexible and creative and, And it works. We make it work.

michelle_andrews: I'm trying to think back to when I was at an elementary school and I know. and this might depend on the district and the state and different rules that

michelle_andrews: for those things. Um, but I think that there were different requirements on, counting the time for groups,

michelle_andrews: like say you had more than one child in your center, can you count for 10 minutes?

michelle_andrews: Can you count that time for both kids just like they were in a group in your speech therapy room? Or would you need to see them in

individually? But in a group like count 10 minutes for this child in center time and then 10 minutes for this other child, , doing some other

Marie: See, and that's, again, like you said, it just just kind of falls on knowing the rules that you are adhering to at a state level, and then your district or your, like your program area. Like it's, there's so many levels, you know, there's, [00:46:00] there's the state for me, and then there's like the special ed program area, which is.

Marie: couple different districts, or probably more than a couple, but then there's also my district that falls on that. So it, it just really comes down to knowing the rules and, and asking the right questions. I mean, that's something like I would ask at an slp, a district SLP meeting, like, Hey, has anybody encountered this before?

Marie: If you're pushing in, can you split your time for me, I know that I can, as long as, like I said, if it's, if I'm billing specifically for a group, I know it has to be less than eight students in that center. So I can bill if, if there's a, if there's four or 5, 6, 7 kids, which there's not going to be, um, that's not manageable.

Marie: But if I'm, if I am pushing in and I'm specifically doing a story time, I probably, that's me pushing in, um, to support staff. It's not necessarily a time when I'm billing for a session, because that's gonna be a larger group. [00:47:00] What you can do, if you, , again, this just comes with collaborating and knowing what, what serves your classroom best, but there's different models you can have.

Marie: If you specifically wanna go in and run a, a small group story time for eight kids or less, then you wanna ask the teachers to maybe split up that way, like split the story times. Maybe that's something that could work, but it just depends on where you're at and what you can bill for. really,

michelle_andrews: Yeah.

Marie: know, did I answer your question?

Marie: Okay.

michelle_andrews: you did. And it sounds like making sure you're asking the right questions and you do know the rules for your

Michelle Andrews: and making sure you're following those, just just something to keep in mind. Yeah.

Marie: exactly. It does, it gets, it's always tricky when we're talking, especially I think as school based SLPs, to talk about the certain, you know, the ways we do things. Cuz then as it sounds so good to do, to able, able to do, but then you have to go and check on it with, with your district. But again, like you said, it's just about asking the right questions and making sure that you, um, you're able to do.

Marie: What you [00:48:00] want and just stay, stay flexible.

Michelle Andrews: That's right.. Are there any more scheduling tips, that you have for us? It sounds like that's a big part of this is.

Michelle Andrews: to see each kid in different classroom and the dynamics of all of.

Marie: It is. And I think, and I, I'm sure every school based slp, well, I shouldn't say every, I can't speak for all of us, but I know a lot of us will say that scheduling piece is sometimes it can be the most stressful. It's also the least finite part of our job as school based LPs. I still change my schedule and we're like nine weeks in now and.

Marie: It wasn't until four weeks ago that I decided, you know what, Hey, on Thursdays I'm just gonna come in and push into this classroom all day long, and I'm just gonna stay here and, and collaborate and co-teach. Um, and so I had to completely shift my schedule again. And so it's just kind of, I think my biggest tip for scheduling in the schools [00:49:00] in general is going to be stay open-minded and stay flexible because it's, it's gonna change.

Marie: You're gonna think your schedule is great and then you're gonna pull kids for that first week of speech therapy and you're gonna be like, Who? I can't do this. Maybe the groups are, they just don't mesh. The kids don't mesh and you're like, they're, we're not gonna get anything done. Um, maybe you realize you are spending too much energy trying to get all these sessions done in a day.

Marie: You didn't give your, I have a friend who was like, I didn't even schedule my lunch break. I can't believe I did that. And she went into the first week, like, I don't have a lunch. You know, and had to, had to be flexible. So you, you know, that's already a big piece. So when you are trying to do more of

this push in, but you still have students that have individualized services and you have to pull them out as well.

Marie: It just, it does take a lot of, sometimes trial and error. So just being open to that trial and error and letting yourself give yourself grace. If you're like, Whoa, I'm not gonna make it in for my push and session today, because I [00:50:00] didn't, I didn't think this piece of my schedule through tell the teacher like, I am so sorry I this, there's a little delay, or I can come in for 10 minutes, but I ha you know, I, not happening today.

Marie: Um, you know, to obviously try to give 'em 24 hours notice. That's, that's the biggest piece is just communicating and, and, um, giving. Grace where you need to give it with yourself and taking that time to figure out what works. Cuz I can guarantee you, if you were to ask me in January, if I still have the same push and schedule that I do right now, I'll probably say no, it's gonna change cuz I'm gonna get new students on my caseload that have different needs.

Marie: Um, and, and that's just kind of the nature of it all. But it's, it's making us better clinicians

michelle_andrews: Exactly.

Marie: it Yeah,

michelle_andrews: background of yours really

Marie: it is,

michelle_andrews: the,

Marie: It is.

michelle_andrews: skill to have, cuz that's true. That's speech therapy is a lot of improv and

Marie: It is

michelle_andrews: therapy [00:51:00] and then with, uh, scheduling and dealing with all that it involves. Absolutely.

Marie: Yeah.

michelle_andrews: Do you have any stories, about maybe a time when something you planned or, um, improved, went really well, or a time you. Uh, planned or had something that you thought you were gonna do and it did not go well, and how you improved and, and got things to work out, or maybe it just didn't work out.

michelle_andrews: I don't know. Do you have any

Marie: Oh.

Marie: I'm like which one should I choose? , We'll start, Let's, let's start with, well, okay, here's, I'll just give you my most recent, So I, for my latest push in session, this was just this past Thursday, um, the teacher actually came to me and was like, I found this really cool Pinterest activity. And, and she's an amazing teacher.

Marie: And I, you know, I trust her like with, I'm like, Yeah, you could throw anything at me. And that's part of, again, doing this for a few years now and being like, Yeah, you, I didn't, I, [00:52:00] whatever you want me to do, I'll do it. I'll run the center that you've already planned. So she was really excited. She found this really cute Pinterest activity where you take , Okay, this is already gonna sound like, it's like we didn't think this through.

Marie: You take blue food coloring and put it in a cup of water . And each student gets a little dropper and then they're dropping water into little silicone like cupcake, um, sheets or whatever. And they're counting like,

michelle_andrews: year olds. Three year

Marie: are three and four, three and four year olds.

michelle_andrews: and four year olds.

Marie: And some of them have, I mean, you know, in our program we have, um, children with a range of, needs and some are more on that severe end and have, you know, they're just more impacted and have a lot of needs or maybe there's a lot of sensory needs.

Marie: So it, it was just funny because we're going through different groups of kids in this center and some of them are like really into it and they love it. then

some of 'em, I mean, there's water on the table and they're more into the sensory play of [00:53:00] like, smearing the water on the table. I'm sitting here with food coloring, like, why am I even tempting these kids?

Marie: Because they all wanna see what's in the blue bottle of food coloring. And so I'm trying to hide that, getting food coloring all over my hands like

michelle_andrews: is a very nice way to put it, I think when you're making such a big mess.

Marie: It was, it was so funny, but the teacher even was like, Oh, maybe this wasn't like, maybe I should have researched this, activity a little more.

Marie: Cuz we thought, I mean it was cute and it was great and some of the kids did love it, but I was kind of like, uh, I don't know if I'm cut out to have all of, all of these steps in one activity. Like, I'm so used to, again, like leading a song, , Or doing a story or you know, I mean I could bring in a sensory bin, but the water was a little bit much for me at the table.

Marie: And I think it just was kind of like, okay. I think in that sense I was, you know, you learn, you learn from those experiences. I'm like, I'm happy to go outside and run like the water table center. I think that would be awesome cuz it seems like [00:54:00] those kids would love it. But maybe having the water at a sit down tabletop center wasn't the best.

Marie: Cuz then, you know, I'm, I'm just glad nobody was trying to start any like water fights. Cuz that was, that was my fear the whole time. And so I was like a little on edge, like, please don't sport water on me. I was wearing white. It was so, such a bad idea.

Marie: but you know, again, I didn't know I was running the blue food coloring center.

Marie: but it, it was fun. was, That was just an experience of like, we're gonna just try something and see if, see if it works, see if it doesn't. , and it like, it moderately worked, I will say, but it was just kind of funny. I think I was a little on edge about the whole getting. , food coloring all over.

michelle_andrews: ,

michelle_andrews: Right. It sounds like there might have still been some great opportunities for language

Marie: oh, there were, there were so many, but it was, what was, I think what's so funny too, I should have mentioned this. So she told me about this in the morning and I was like, Okay, great. I'm gonna prep a language board on my iPad cuz I have prolo quo. So sometimes that's easier for me than like, especially at that school site because I don't have access to board maker at [00:55:00] that school site.

Marie: So it's not like I can just go quick, make a quick board, laminate it and come into the classroom with it. Which honestly, in the end would've been so much better. I do have a core board that I bring in that's very general we can use. Um, but I was like, no, Like I'll put it on my iPad and then the kids will love that.

Marie: They can touch it and it'll, it'll say, Well, I tried it with the first group and I was like, there's no , I can help them learn how to use these little pipe pipette things and then also have them use the language board like this. There were just too many steps. It was too much. Even my little guy that has a device, we were trying it and his aid was like, I think he just wants to do the water.

Marie: Like, I think, And I was like, That's fine. You know? And so it's things like that where I think , even after so many years, I have all these high expectations. Like, we're gonna incorporate all these things in 10 minutes. It's gonna be great. And then you get in there and you realize like they just wanna play with the water.

Marie: And so it's a moment where I always have one of my mentors voices in the back of my head. Like, Hey, at the end of the day, [00:56:00] you gave them some narrative language input. You know? So instead of expecting too much out of them, because they're really focused on this water in whatever capacity they wanna focus on and in, I'm just like, Oh yeah, you like the way that feels on the table?

Marie: Oh yeah, you're, you know, you're dropping that water in the cup and sometimes that's, that's what you're doing and you just, you're modeling language and I just have to remind myself of that, you know, cuz trying to, to plan all of these things and incorporate it sometimes doesn't go the way you hope.

Marie: And then sometimes it does and it's really great. ,

Michelle Andrews: a, that's a very fun example of when something you planned or someone else planned doesn't always go the way you wanted it to, but still some great out of it and doing what you can. That's

Marie: Yeah, exactly.

Michelle Andrews: All right, Marie, this has been awesome. Can you give a quick little summary of all of your amazing points that you've shared with us today?

Marie: Yes.

Marie: some takeaways. I would want everybody to feel kind of confident in when you think about pushing [00:57:00] therapy. Um, first and foremost, the benefits of pushing therapy. Just that students have access to their peers. That's a huge one. Um, in my district we call, we have something called the least restrictive environment, which I'm sure is a very common thing among all districts.

Marie: And so making sure that students have access to their general education classrooms and their peers is beneficial for them. And so being able to provide a form of push in therapy for them versus always pulling them out into the speech room has shown to be important in their progress. Um, it's also awesome that when you do have some sort of push in model for your students, you're also able to provide supports for the staff, um, that will then only help the students make progress.

Marie: And you can do this in a variety of ways, whether you're actually in there working with students and modeling those things. In real time, or if you're taking time [00:58:00] to provide any sort of mini trainings or, or big trainings for your staff. Those are always helpful. , it's also a huge benefit when we have a form of push and therapy that students can generalize their skills, again, they have access to their peers.

Marie: They also are in the environment, they're in most of their school day. So they, they know those routines and they're following those routines a little bit more maybe than they would when you pull them out because that's not as frequent. then I do love that when I'm pushing in, I'm also able to monitor other students.

Marie: Maybe parents have had questions about their kids needing speech therapy and they've specifically come to me and so I can be in there and kind of

responding to that as well. Another takeaway is just the effects of collaboration and why this is so important to be collaborating with our other, our colleagues and other professionals and service providers.

Marie: , the first reason being that it supports the students' needs. It also provides us other perspectives when we're saying open-minded and [00:59:00] we're learning. I mean, I've learned things about being a clinician, about maybe facilitating language expression because of things the teachers have taught me by being in the classrooms because of things they're doing.

Marie: I've learned different strategies. You know, when I'm singing songs or reading a story, I've picked up things from those teachers, which has been really awesome. also, well kind of goes with that, but it provides us opportunities to grow as, as clinicians. And then we're also, again, we're supporting our staff and we're providing them opportunities to learn and grow as well.

Marie: And then another takeaway, just ways that you can do push in therapy. If you're like, You know what, I wanna try and push in for this one student that's on my caseload. This sounds like it'd be awesome and beneficial for them. Well, what are ways you can do that? You can either go in and help them just with their individual needs at a time that's most motivating to them.

Marie: You can go in and run a small group or a center, , or maybe you go in and do a larger group activity if that's something that you have the ability to do in your, in your setting.[01:00:00]

michelle_andrews: Awesome, Marie, this has been incredibly useful information that I know School SLPs will benefit from. so thankful that you took the time to speak to me today.

Marie: Thank you so much.

michelle_andrews: , and thank you all for listening. We hope you learned something today. All of the references and resources throughout this episode are listed in the show notes and also listed on the Pep Talk podcast for SLPs website. If you've been listening while you're driving on a run cooking dinner, this entire episode is transcribed for you to refer back to easily. you want to learn more about Marie, make sure to check out her Instagram at Thanks Morris, and also her website, www.thanksmorris.com. And that's M O R R I S. Just so I'd clarify

Marie: Thank you,

michelle_andrews: She shares helpful information about collaboration, push in therapy, mindset strategies and gratitude.

michelle_andrews: Marie, thank you again for joining me here today.

Marie: Thank you.