

Episode 50: An Interview with 2 Undergraduate CSD Students {Graduate Student Journeys}

Meet Jordyn Barber and Abbey Earl, two undergraduate students at Texas Christian University planning on pursuing careers in speech-language pathology. On this week's episode of The Missing Link, Jordyn and Abbey will interview Mattie, flipping the script and sharing some questions they have about graduate school, working in speech pathology, and more.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

1. What exactly do you learn about in a graduate program for speech pathology?
2. Should you seek out a graduate program based on what area of speech pathology you'd like to go into?
3. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give yourself as an undergraduate student?
4. Is it easy to change the area of speech pathology you work in? Or are you kind of nailed down once you start working in one area?
5. What types of internship opportunities would you recommend in the summer between junior and senior year of undergrad?
6. What is the most rewarding thing about being an SLP?
7. What are some opportunities you can pursue in the medical SLP world?
8. What are the pros and cons of working as an SLP in a hospital setting?
9. What is the difference between working in a medical or hospital environment and working in private practice?
10. What types of cases might you see working in private practice? What could a typical day look like?

Jordyn Barber

Third-Year Undergraduate Student at Texas Christian University



Jordyn Barber is a junior undergraduate student at Texas Christian University, where she studies speech-language pathology as her major and child development as her minor. She is currently a literacy teacher for a tutorial center called Reading Ranch, teaching children from Pre-K to 5th grade how to improve their reading and writing skills. She also works as a research assistant for a lab at TCU

called Genetics of Aural Perception and Plasticity, which explores the influence of genetics on communication disorders and neural plasticity during language and reading intervention. Jordyn's career goal is to be a pediatric SLP in the healthcare system. She has a great passion for helping children with physical, intellectual, and academic disabilities and wants to base her career on helping this population.

Abbey Earl

Third-Year Undergraduate Student at Texas Christian University



Abbey Earl is pursuing a degree in speech pathology and child development at Texas Christian University. She hopes to eventually work in a hospital setting. Speech pathology originally caught Abbey's attention when she was working at a summer camp and had a camper who had Down Syndrome. Abbey

felt blessed by the opportunity to love her and find ways to communicate with her. From learning a little bit of sign language to watching her learn new words, she knew this was

something she wanted to pursue for the rest of her life. Currently, Abbey works as a Registered Behavior Technician, where she's been able to observe speech therapy with kids with autism. She has loved learning about the broad profession of a speech-language pathologist and cannot wait to gain even more knowledge about this amazing career.

To the speech path student, one of the biggest pieces of advice I could ever tell you as a student is to advocate for yourself and to work hard. Don't be afraid to ask and question your professors in a way that is respectful. Asking questions is how you can learn and grow.

Keep the Conversation Going



Thank you for listening to *The Missing Link for SLPs* podcast! **If you enjoyed the show, I'd love you to subscribe, rate it and leave a short review.** Also, please share an episode with a friend. Together we can raise awareness and help more SLPs find and connect those missing links to help them feel confident in their patient care every step of the way.

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*Do you have a question you'd like answered on the show?
Interested in sharing your experience as an SLP with our audience?
[Send a message to Mattie@FreshSLP.com!](mailto:Mattie@FreshSLP.com)*

Not a substitute for a formal SLP education or medical advice for patients/caregivers.

Mattie Murrey

Oh my goodness, I am so excited for today's episode. I have not one, but two, guests with me today. And they are both undergraduate SLP majors looking to go on into graduate school. I found them — well, they found me — on a Facebook site. And they started asking questions, and I said, "Hey, why don't you guys come on, and we'll ask these questions on the podcast? And we'll record it and we'll put it out there for the rest of the world." And they all agreed. We've all agreed. So, this will be great. You're going to be hearing from Miss Jordyn and Miss Abbey.

Mattie Murrey

Hello, and welcome to The Missing Link for SLPs podcast. I'm glad you're here. Remember what it was like back in graduate school? Or maybe you still are in grad school. Today's episode is part of the CSD Graduate Students Journey series. In this series, I talked to students who are either in school or fresh into their clinical fellowship year. We talk and cover real subjects, like how to get into graduate school, how to find and prepare for a medical internship, thoughts on teletherapy from a student's perspective, and lots more. Get ready for some real conversations with SLP students who are at the very beginning of their careers.

Mattie Murrey

Here we are with Jordyn and Abbey. Hi, guys. Thanks for coming on.

Jordyn Barber

Thanks for having us.

Mattie Murrey

This is going to be fun today. Before we start, there is going to be, for our listeners, a little bit of a learning curve because there's three of us on this Zoom call. And we're going to be trying not to bump into each other as we talk. So, welcome. I'm glad you're here. You guys are undergraduates. Tell me about where you are and what you're studying and where you want to go.

Jordyn Barber

I can go first. So, my name is Jordyn. I go to TCU. Me and Abbey both go to TCU. And I'm studying speech-language pathology. And I love this field. And I kind of got into it because I've always wanted to help people who have disabilities or are unable to function as people who it just comes naturally for. And then, communication is such an essential thing to life. And so, I kind of got into speech pathology because I want to help those who can't be able to have access to that normal communication. And I hope to go to grad school still at TCU. And I want to definitely work, when I become an SLP, as a pediatric SLP. And maybe in the medical field.

Mattie Murrey

Wonderful. Where is TCU, and what does TCU stand for?



Jordyn Barber

TCU is Texas Christian University, and it's in Fort Worth, Texas.

Mattie Murrey

And it's snowing there, right guys?

Jordyn Barber

Yes, it's snowing.

Mattie Murrey

Jordyn, you said you were up at 3 a.m. playing out in the snow.

Jordyn Barber

Oh, yes. Me and my friends got up, and we were so happy — like big kids, making snow angels and everything.

Mattie Murrey

Wonderful. Abbey, tell us about your journey, your path.

Abbey Earl

Yes. So, I'm Abbey, and I'm from Fort Worth, Texas. And I go to school at TCU, like Jordan said. I'm a junior in my undergrad in my spring semester there. And I became an SLP because I had this amazing experience with this little girl. I worked at a summer camp out here in Texas. And so, I was working with this little girl, and she had Down Syndrome. She was recently adopted from out of the country, and so, she had almost no language. And I got to spend the entire week just loving on her and getting to see so many milestones with her, and just being able to, not teach her language, but to see different sounds coming out, and just working with her on sign language. And that was just an incredible opportunity to see what it was like to love someone so much and just be able to help them in something that seemed almost so important, just a necessary skill that you think everyone would have: to be able to communicate. And she didn't really have that. And so, just for me to come alongside her and to be able to be a part of her story was absolutely incredible and life changing. And I realized that I wanted to do that for everyone else. And her mom was actually a speech pathologist. And so, I decided that I wanted to study that too, and just be able to help her and other people like her. And I would love to work with kids in the future. Maybe adults. I'm kind of learning more about that field and that world, too. And I also really love working with kids with autism. So, that's an area of study that I'm really interested in, and that I have a lot of experience in. And I would love to go to University of Texas at Dallas for grad school.

Mattie Murrey

And that sounds exciting. That's one of the things I love about our field, the many, many things we can do and where we can go and who we can work with. It's really neat. I often hear from graduate students that they don't know where they want to go or what they want to do yet. And



my words of advice there are: Don't limit yourself early on. Just really open your eyes and be open to whatever your instructors are teaching you. And look for those opportunities to learn where a speech pathologist can shine. Well, thanks for sharing those stories. They're always fun to hear. So, you guys have some questions. And we're going to talk about those questions today.

Jordyn Barber

Yes. We have some general questions, and then questions about what it's like to work in private practice and what it's like to work in the medical scene. I guess we can start with our general questions, Abbey, if you wanted to start?

Abbey Earl

Sure. We just kind of wanted to know what exactly they're teaching you in grad school. Like, specifically, do they teach you about different job opportunities out there? And then, do you need to kind of choose your grad school based on what profession that you want to do and what they're going to teach you? If that makes sense.

Mattie Murrey

Yes. That's a very good question. When you move into a graduate program, you're moving into an accredited program by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. So, your graduate program, if it's an accredited program, will be following ASHA guidelines and standards on what they need to teach you as you move out into the field to get your Cs. So, you will be learning all about ASHA's Big 9. Do you guys know about ASHA's Big 9?

Jordyn Barber

No, I don't think so.

Mattie Murrey

Oh, spontaneous quiz for me. There are nine areas that a speech pathologist and an audiologist can treat. So, if you go on to ASHA's website, there's ASHA's Big 9. And I've got a really neat download that I can put with the show notes here. It's a really neat visual of the nine areas that a speech language pathologist or an audiologist will treat. It includes language, voice, speech, pragmatics, social language, fluency, dysphasia. It covers all of those different areas. So, when you move into a graduate program, you're going to find that your coursework is very, very focused on ASHA's Big 9. You're going to be learning about how to understand, how to assess, and how to treat any one of those areas. So, by the time you graduate from graduate school, you're going to know a lot about a lot. As you move forward into your careers, you're not going to have to know everything about ASHA's Big 9. For example, working in a medical setting, I don't work with fluency, so I don't use the fluency. I don't have to keep those skills up and current because it's not something I treat. Good graduate programs will teach you about job opportunities. You want to find a program with graduate professors who have interest in your area of study. So, Abbey, I know you mentioned autism. When you interview for your graduate schools, one of the questions you may want to ask the graduate panel that is interviewing you



is, "Tell us about your interests and your areas of research or passions in our field." Because you want a professor who's really going to be alive for what you are alive for. And I do a lot of voice work. And I have a lot of students in my graduate program come and say, "Tell us about the voice." So, you want to find a program that has teachers who are passionate about the areas that you're in as well.

Jordyn Barber

I have a question kind of going off of that. So, if I am interested... Abbey, you said your main area of what you want to focus on is autism. I'm not too far off. I want to focus on neurodevelopmental disorders in general. So, do you think that when looking for a grad program, I should look for something that encompasses, or a research lab that encompasses, all types of these neurodevelopmental disorders? Or do you think it's better to look for something that's more specific, like autism or Down Syndrome?

Mattie Murrey

You're going to want to look for a program that is going to give you a wide base in everything. Every accredited program is going to be following ASHA's standards for an accredited program. They all have to meet those standards. So, on that basis, every graduate program is going to have those bits and pieces. The additional parts that you're talking about are going to be cultivated by a professor, or somebody who, that's their interest. For example, I interviewed Dr. Katie Strong. She's from Central Michigan University. And she's very big into aphasia. And she has My Strong Lab, or, I think it's the Strong Story Lab. She was in a previous episode, and so, the students who are really interested in aphasia may search her graduate program out because they know that she's going to have this program for them, or like the labs that you're looking at. So, you're going to get a base foundation of everything. And then, as you work your way through your graduate school, those extra opportunities that you have available to you are going to be what really advances your specific area of skill. So, when you go on and you start building your resume... You should be starting to build your resume now with these volunteer opportunities, Abbey, like you said at the camp. And these are things that, in addition to your graduate program, are really going to set you up for when you roll out of your graduate program into your career. You'll have so much more experience.

Jordyn Barber

I can ask the next question. So, what advice would you give your undergrad self knowing what you know now as an SLP?

Mattie Murrey

I would say, be open to anything and everything that comes along, and don't think you might not like something, but be open to learning and exploring those options. And off of that first question that you asked, I don't think that grad programs talk tons and tons and tons about job opportunities and things like that. I think you're going to find that out in the Facebook community. I'm a Future Professionals Committee Advisor for MNSHA, and we do a lot of work there. NSSLA does a lot of work introducing students to opportunities and hosting webinars



and things like that. A lot of the guests that I pull on here are people who are experts in their field, and they're talking at the graduate student level, telling them where their careers can go and what they can do. So, I think those you're going to want to search out in addition to grad school.

Abbey Earl

I can ask the next question. I just kind of wanted to know, is it easy to change the area that you work in? So, for example, going from a school SLP to a medical SLP? How difficult is it if you change your mind that you don't want to do something?

Mattie Murrey

That's a good question. It is not that easy to change. Normally, once you get started on a career path, whether it's the academic or the medical setting, most clinicians tend to stay on that path. Because in the medical setting, you have to cultivate a different set of skills that aren't reinforced to the school setting. And likewise, the school setting you cultivate different skills that you don't have in the medical setting. Julie Horner was an interview I did earlier, and she had been in the schools for 12-14 years and decided she wanted to go into the medical setting. And she took maybe a year and a half to two years of medical courses before she was feeling confident she could step into the medical setting.

Abbey Earl

That is good to know.

Mattie Murrey

I do know, also, some school speech pathologists who will work PRN in a hospital, like over weekends, as needed, once a month. But working PRN in a medical setting or any setting, is tough because you just don't get the exposure to keep your skills as strong as they need to be. In the medical setting, you're working with complicated medical patients, and it's not something you can just step in and do over the weekend once in a while.

Jordyn Barber

I have the next question. So, I was wondering, what types of internships or opportunities that you would recommend in the summer between junior and senior year of undergrad, when you're about to apply for grad schools. I know that Abbey... I think she has an internship as a behavioral technician. I am a literacy teacher for a program called Reading Ranch. I was wondering if there was something more that we should do, or any other areas that you think would be good to have on our resumes.

Mattie Murrey

I think you're spot on with what you're doing. I've heard of other students taking some time and working at camps over the summer. But really, anything that will give you more experience in the field that you're wanting to work in. So, both of you are thinking peds, and you're both working with peds. That's neat. That's exactly what you want to be doing: gathering that



experience, working with the population you want to work with, and also networking and doing some interprofessional teamwork with other students and other professionals. Sounds like you might have those opportunities at your settings. That's good.

Abbey Earl

Thank you. I just kind of wanted to know, within the SLP world, is it easy to advance or to get promotions? Or is that something that you kind of need to get your PhD for?

Mattie Murrey

Good question. We all graduate with our Master's degrees. Many people stay with their Master's degrees and work in the school or the medical setting. If you want to advance, you can take some additional coursework, and really begin to niche down into your specialty. Like, one of my specialties is swallowing. So I've taken a lot of, you know, very skilled swallowing courses and some voice courses. If you're in a rural setting, you will take those courses, but you may be the only speech pathologist in that rural setting. If you work in a big medical setting, like a university setting, you will complete competencies to advance your skill set. And then you can take on some of the harder, more complicated patients. Does that answer your question?

Abbey Earl

Yes. Thank you.

Mattie Murrey

You do have to self-advocate for yourself. I had a student with me one time, and we were up talking with some doctors. And we told them what we were doing and why we were doing it because we were, you know, changing our diet levels from MDD to IDDSI. And on our way back to our charting area, I just popped my head in my director's office and said, "Hey, I just talked to these doctors. And this went really well." You need to keep your skills, accomplishments, things that you do well, you have to keep them in front of your your supervisor and let people know what you're doing. You're not bragging. You're just making sure that people know what you're doing and why you're doing it. And when it comes around to advancing, that's how you advance. One of the ways.

Abbey Earl

That's good advice. Thank you.

Jordyn Barber

I was wondering, what is the most rewarding thing you feel about being an SLP?

Mattie Murrey

A medical SLP? Or one working with pediatrics? I can tell you both.

Jordyn Barber

Yeah, both would be awesome.



Mattie Murrey

My most rewarding medical SLP moments are in the swallowing world, when somebody is having some problems swallowing. For example, I'm thinking of somebody that I saw a while ago. They had come with their wife. He had come with his wife, and he had a progressive disease. And his swallowing was just getting worse. And he didn't want to let go of his oral intake. He was getting to the point, though, where it was so hard for him to eat safely because he coughed and he choked and had lots of troubles with water. So, when we did the swallow study, we did the trials, and then I turned the camera around and showed him the videos that we had captured. And I said, "When you swallow, this is where your food goes and this is where it doesn't go. And these are my recommendations for moving forward with you." And I seldom do it, but with that gentleman, when he swallowed, nothing went down. Multiple swallows. Multiple swallows. And his risk of aspiration was so high. He was currently a tube feeder, and he was wanting to eat again. And I said, "This is why I would not recommend that you eat again." And he started to cry happy tears because I was able to give him the answers that he wanted to live the less struggle-free life that he had. And so, I love it when I can answer questions for people and help them with their decisions that they have to make. With the little kiddos? Oh, my goodness. I feel like I've got these little children in my hands, and when I'm discharging, I'm just like, "Fly, little bird." Because we've done so much good work, and these kiddos have just blossomed. And they meet their goals, and then they discharge. And I wish we could kind of know, "Hey, who are you 20 years down the road? Do you remember your speech teacher?" It's just a very rewarding field to be able to help each individual person that I have the privilege to work with.

Jordyn Barber

Thank you.

Abbey Earl

I think my last question for just the general questions of this world is, could you tell us something about your post-graduate — like, immediately after you graduate from your master's degree — your clinical fellowship year? What does that exactly entail? And what does it look like right after you graduate?

Mattie Murrey

Your clinical fellowship year, if you're working, I think it's 32 to 40 hours a week, will be nine months long in whatever setting you're choosing to go into. And you will have a clinical fellow supervisor, hopefully on premises where you are, but that doesn't always happen. You will step in and start resuming a caseload, like a credentialed speech pathologist would. You work out your work hours in your setting. You're going to meet with your supervisor before you start, and you're going to go over what your goals are. ASHA has standards and things you have to meet every three months, according to, you know, hours. There's a way you work through your clinical fellowship with your supervisor. And you start stepping into your careers, picking up the caseloads that you will see in that setting.



Jordyn Barber

I have a follow-up question to that. So, if you're working in a particular location for your fellowship year, is it typical, if you're in an area, if you're working somewhere that is really a good fit for you, do they typically hire you right off the bat after your fellowship year?

Mattie Murrey

Yes. Normally, you start your clinical fellowship, and then it just continues on. And when you're done with your nine months, it just extends. It just means that you're supervised during that time. One of the things that I've heard some clinical fellows say is that, after their nine months, they get a raise, because they're no longer a clinical fellow. They're fully credentialed speech pathologists. And I've heard other ones say that, after a year's mark, they get a raise. But there should not be a hiccup at all. After your clinical fellow is done, you and your supervisor will meet. I always meet mine over a cup of coffee and a sandwich, but that was pre-COVID. I don't have a clinical fellow now because I'm at a university. And then we sign the papers off, and then the clinical fellows become credentials and off they go into their careers. You should have a very good working relationship with your supervisor. You should be able to reach out to him or her frequently, and you should be able to get a hold of them. They should be very accessible to you. For example, I've had clinical fellows, where they've been in a nursing home, and I've been hired as a consultant by the nursing home contract company. And they can call me. "Hey, what do I do about this? I'm having a problem with the patient here." Or this or that. So, when you guys are getting ready to do your clinical fellows, you're interviewing for that job, that's a good question to ask: How accessible is the supervisor?

Jordyn Barber

Well, I guess we can go into our questions about being a medical SLP, or working in the medical setting. The first one that I had was: What type of cases would you see in a hospital, but a pediatric hospital? Since we're both wanting to work in peds.

Mattie Murrey

Sure. If it's an inpatient pediatric, you're going to see pediatric clients, patients that have typical pediatric disorders. You're going to be seeing [patients] that have them. They're medically complicated, though. So, your feeding and swallowing incident. Our caseload is going to be much, much, much, much higher. In an outpatient pediatric setting, your kiddos are going to be coming mostly for speech and language work. The inpatient will be much more medically complex. You're going to be working with ventilators and medically complicated little kiddos. Outpatient settings [are] not as medically complicated. You will see speech language and some swallowing and feeding in the outpatient setting. ASD pragmatics. The typical pediatric caseload that is covered in school is also covered in a pediatric outpatient setting.

Jordyn Barber

Okay, thank you.

Abbey Earl



My question for you... I guess you kind of touched on it a little bit with Jordyn. I was just wondering if you could go into a little bit more detail of, what are all of the opportunities in the medical SLP world? As in, what are the jobs, and what do the jobs entail? What will you be doing as a medical SLP?

Mattie Murrey

Well, to anybody who's listening to this that is out in the field and a medical SLP and wants to jump on for a podcast interview, I'd say reach out to me. Because my experience is just my experience, and there are medical SLPs out there who are really, really, really niched into the medical setting. For example, Dan Sherwood was Episode 43, I believe, and he is a vocologist, which is a voice specialist. And he works in a voice clinic. And a vocologist would be considered, I guess, maybe a medical SLP. You can have patients or speech pathologists who are specialized. You can work in inpatient settings, outpatient settings, home health settings, which is where you go out to the patient's home. You can work in private practice settings. You can work in rural hospitals, rural clinics. You can work in downtown big city clinics. You can work through medical centers, big universities that have research teams, and be part of a research team. I know you asked earlier about PhDs. Do you have to have your PhD? A lot of medical speech pathologists go on and get their Doctorate of speech pathology, which is different from a PhD. PhD speech pathologists tend to go into the academic and research setting, and they do teaching and research. Speech pathologists who get their Doctorates become more and more entrenched in the clinical setting, and they just become much more focused in their work. There are swallowing specialists who, in addition to being a medical speech pathologist, become very specialized in FEES, and only do FEES, or only do mobile videofluoroscopies or mobile FEES. Your profession can go anywhere you want it to go. Anywhere around the world. There are people who practice [around the world]. And I myself have practiced around the world. Not a lot, but it's a great field. Wide open.

Jordyn Barber

What are the pros and cons of working in a hospital as an SLP?

Mattie Murrey

The biggest cons if you work [in a hospital setting]... if it's a holiday, you might get it off. You might not get it off. You work five days a week, if you're full-time, or four days a week. And every year, you do get vacation and some main holidays off. The school setting speech pathologists get the summers off. That was always a big, big, big, you know... I always wished I had the summers off. But I so loved my medical SLP job. It's just, I got up and went to work. It's great. It's a great job. I think that's like the only con is you have to work weekends sometimes. If you're in a skilled nursing facility, you don't get holidays off. You work through. For example, if Christmas is on a Friday and you're scheduled to work on Christmas, on a Friday, you may be able to shift that Friday to a Saturday, but you have to cover those five days a week. So, I guess the biggest con is the schedule. It's a very demanding schedule, and you go. If it's 52 below, like it was two years ago, I made arrangements to have my car plugged in, and I went and stayed



overnight at the hospital, so I could make sure I was there for my shift the next day. You just go, unless you're sick. The biggest pro is, I love the challenging work. I love that every day is a puzzle for me. It's a challenge for me to analyze and come up with a treatment plan and work with those patients, and they respond. So, that's been the biggest, biggest reward for me, those connections I make and the influence that I have in their medical journey.

Jordyn Barber

That's awesome.

Abbey Earl

My next question for you is: In the medical SLP world, is this something that you could do part time easily? A lot of our professors talk about how, at one point, they started a family and they didn't want to work full-time. So, they worked maybe one day a week so they could keep up their credentials, so that one day when their kids are grown up, they can go back to it full-time. Is that something you can easily do in this world of speech path as well?

Mattie Murrey

You can if you're not in the super, super high-technical, demanding medical centers, I believe. Just because when you're seeing such critically ill patients, you really need that skill level that's developed, in my opinion. I hope I don't get people listening to this who are mad at me. But in my opinion, it just isn't something that you can do once in a while. So, if you want to stay in the medical field, there are less demanding jobs as a medical speech pathologist, and by all means, continue with those. And it is good to keep your foot in the door and keep that skill level up where you can.

Abbey Earl

So, what would some of the less demanding jobs be that you just mentioned?

Mattie Murrey

Maybe a skilled nursing facility. Or home health. Because there, the patients aren't as medically complex. And you're not working with ventilators and things like that. It's still just as important. So, I'm not saying that a home health speech pathologist, the skill level isn't as important. Just the setting is different. Demands are different.

Jordyn Barber

So, I have kind of a two-part question. First, do you need special training to be a medical SLP? And if so, or just in general, do you choose your grad program that you want to go to? Are you looking for something that will say that there's more of a medical area? Like, I know how we were talking about, if we were interested in autism, looking for professors that work with people with autism. So, are we supposed to look for something that's more medically based for the program?



Mattie Murrey

Yes. You are going to have to go where your professors are definitely more to the neuroanatomy, like you were talking about, with your neuroscience labs. So, if you are wanting to go that route, then look for those programs that have those opportunities for you. There's different levels. I feel like, from that previous question, there's different levels in any field. You can have a general medical SLP, who works with some of your general medical SLP patients. And then — and it's the same in the schools — you can have a general school speech pathologist, and she works with general disorders. And in both the school and the medical setting, you can take your career as far as you want it to go. If you want to be really specialized in ASD and AAC systems, or social systems, social pragmatics, then you take those courses. You seek those opportunities, and you advance your career in that direction. And the same with the medical SLP. If you want to be a general medical speech pathologist, that's fine. That's great. Excellent. And because there's a very big need for general medical speech pathologists, and there are also needs for speech pathologists who have really niched down into the pediatric specialty world, like pediatric swallowing and ventilators. And those are the jobs that would be harder to do on a once-in-a-while basis. Does that make sense?

Jordyn Barber

Yes. Thank you.

Abbey Earl

Jordyn, do you have any other questions for the medical SLP world? Because I think she answered all mine for this section.

Jordyn Barber

Um, yeah, I have one more. So, when you're in a medical setting, do you choose your own workload, or does the hospital kind of like assign you your cases?

Mattie Murrey

It depends on how big the setting is. When I've worked at University Hospitals, I arrive and I'm credentialed for certain types of patients. And I may be working with a team of maybe seven or eight other speech pathologists that day. And there are some who have passed the credentialing, all they do all day long is video swallow studies, or maybe FEES or, or stroboscopies. Or they have a variety of those specialty patients, and then some of the more generalized patients up on the floor. If I'm working in a setting with a team of that many speech pathologists, it's going to depend on where I credentialed into, and pass those competency courses off. Because those bigger hospitals, they have more testing and credentialing to pass you off on to some of those more challenging cases. If you are in a rural setting, or an outpatient clinic, you may be the only speech pathologist. That means that everything that comes through that door is yours. So, you're going to have to understand a lot of different etiologies and be able to handle basically what you need to do. The really complicated patients are going to be life flighted down to the bigger university centers, or sent somewhere because



they're more challenging. I have worked at some kind of rural hospitals, but they're still part of a main hospital system coming out of the cities. And there's been, for example, there's three of us. And one of them is a pediatric specialist for the outpatient clinic. But she does not do any inpatient care. And I am on the other side. I do a lot of the adults, and I do a great majority of the inpatient care. And I do all the videos. And then we have a third person who doesn't do any of the videos. She does some of the inpatient care, and she does some of the pediatric. So, when you have a bigger team, people are going to complement one another. And your skill set may be here, and somebody else's may be here. And more of those patients will go on whoever's schedule it's appropriate for them to go on to. If you're talking outpatient, then the schedulers are going to know who to send the different evals that come through [to]. I'm going to take the adult neural evals that come, and the voice evals, and the swallowing evals that come into our outpatient clinic. The pediatric specialist is going to take the peeps that come to the clinic. Unless there's... like, I've had the babies that come for the feeding. Because I do swallowing, I'll see them. And then the third speech path on our team, she'll take what's appropriate for her. But we don't really get to choose. We choose when we pass our competency courses. For example, you're not going to be seeing a video swallow patient, if you haven't had a course on how to do video swallow study. Same with voice.

Jordyn Barber

Gotcha. Thanks.

Mattie Murrey

Sure.

Abbey Earl

I think we now have our private practice questions. Just a few left. We just kind of wanted to know, just an overview: What would it be like working in a private practice? And what does it all kind of entail? And the differences between working in medical or in a hospital.

Mattie Murrey

Private practice is different because you're the one that is making the decisions on when you start, when you stop working for the day, what type of patients you see, and how long you see them for. You're also responsible for all the marketing and getting the referrals and doing all of the billing. Making sure all of your documentation is being supported. Like, if you have a Medicare patient, there's certain things that you have to certify. And so, the bulk of that falls on you. In the medical setting, you show up for work. You pick up your caseload for the day, and you see your patients. And you make sure that your standards are met for charting and billing and everything else there. That everything is done by the end of the day. And then you go home. So, private practice can be a lot more rewarding, but it's a lot more work in my opinion. You have contracts that you are cultivating either with a hospital or with home health agencies. Or maybe you're on your own private practice and people are coming to see you. So, it's a different platform for working. But those who are... Jenna Castro-Casbon has a website called



The Independent Clinician, and she's very successful. Lots of people are doing private practice speech pathology right now.

Jordyn Barber

So, in a private practice, what are the majority of cases that you see? And how does that differ? I know you're going to see less swallowing cases, or probably not near as many swallowing cases. But what else is the difference between those?

Mattie Murrey

It depends on what your specialty is. If you are a pediatric speech pathologist, and that's your private practice... Speech of Cake is a very successful private practice, I think out in California. And they see little kiddos, and that's all that they see. There's another private practice — I don't remember her name — but all she does is FEES, which is the swallowing studies. I know when I did my private practice, I saw adults in the home-based setting. And so, I operated as kind of like my own home health, but it was private practice. So, you really can decide. You're still going to have the opportunities — not as many as in the hospital setting, because you're not going to be private practice in a hospital setting. So, it's all outpatient-based. But you're still covering the Big 9. If you want to see fluency kiddos, and that's where your passion is. Or maybe it's ASD, then your private practice is all about ASD. I know there's one private practice — I don't remember where they're from — but they're totally into AAC, which are the augmentative alternative communication devices. So, the private practice speech paths that I know have taken their passion. They've stepped out of the clinical setting. And they've said, "I'm gonna start my own practice because this is what I want to do and who I want to do it with." Sara — I don't remember her last name — On Your Voice is her private practice company, and she's the voice therapist. And she had been in the skilled nursing facility, and the demands for productivity were just becoming more and more and more unreasonable and frustrating for her because she couldn't give the quality of time. She didn't feel the support. She didn't have the resources or the materials. And her true passion was wanting to have her own voice clinic. So, she prepared for maybe a year, took a lot more specialized voice courses, and then I coached her through, and she became a private practice voice specialist. So, you're going to find that your private practice speech pathologists are much more focused in one, maybe two, areas.

Jordyn Barber

Thank you. Well, that was all the questions that we had for you, Mattie. Thank you so much.

Mattie Murrey

You're welcome. You made me think! I've not had an interview like this before. Normally, I do the interviewing. And I feel like you guys were interviewing me, but this is perfect. I'm so glad I got the opportunity to answer these questions.



Abbey Earl

We appreciate it a lot. You opened our eyes to a lot of questions that we had and all the opportunities that there are in this profession.

Mattie Murrey

Good. Well, look back and listen back to some of the previous episodes on The Missing Link for SLPs podcast because you're exactly the type of listener that I'm creating these podcasts for: the speech pathologists who want to learn more about our field and what we can do. So, if there's a specific interest you have — like, I interviewed Bob McKinney on foreign accent reduction, which is something I didn't know really existed years ago, and I don't think it did. So, our field is just growing. If there's anything else you want me to talk about, or anything else like that, let me know. And you guys want to come back on heading into grad school and do this again?

Jordyn Barber

Of course, that would be amazing.

Abbey Earl

Absolutely.

Mattie Murrey

That'd be fun. All right. We will. We'll keep in touch.

Jordyn Barber

Thank you so much, and I hope you have an amazing snow day.

Mattie Murrey

Yes, absolutely. You two have fun in the snow.

