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| **Abstract submitted for the 5th NSW Rural Health and Research Congress**  **Twin Towns,Tweed Heads 9 - 11 November 2016**  **Congress Stream:** No. 5 Technology in healthcare: innovation in action  **Alternate Stream:** N/A  **Abstract Title:** Using telehealth to support students with language and phonological awareness needs   * **Author/s:** Ellen Stolp, Jessica McGrath and Louise Davies   Royal Far West, Sydney NSW 2095 Australia      **Background**  8.9 per cent of four to five year olds are developmentally vulnerable to language and literacy disorders (McLeod and McKinnon, 2007)[[1]](#footnote-1). Australian teachers reported 21% of children entering school have an expressive language difficulty (Harrison and McLeod, 2008)[[2]](#footnote-2). 3.9% of Speech Pathologists practice in rural and remote communities. Families face barriers such as travel time, costs, eligibility, consistency and awareness of needs.  **Approach**  In 2015, the Speech Pathology team at Royal Far West piloted group therapy and staff training using telehealth to provide access to specialist services for children in rural and remote schools.  **Outcomes / Results**  96% of children in group therapy met or exceeded their language and phonological awareness goals (using Goal Attainment Scales). Training increased staff confidence in their ability to identify students with speech, language and communication difficulties as well as the provision of classroom based strategies to support children with such needs.  **Take Home Message**  Group therapy via telehealth is a successful intervention approach. Training school staff increased confidence and competence in identifying and supporting children with communication difficulties in the school context. |

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1. McLeod, S., & McKinnon, D. H. (2007). The prevalence of communication disorders compared with other learning needs in 14,500 primary and secondary school students. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 42(S1), 37-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Harrison, L. J. & McLeod, S. (2008, November). School adjustment and achievement in children identified as having speech and language impairment at age 4-5 years. Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)