**Clinical Framework for Simulated Therapy Group Composition**

This document outlines the principles and strategies for creating realistic and clinically appropriate therapy groups for school-based scenarios, ranging from Pre-K to 12th grade.

**I. Guiding Principles for Group Composition**

These foundational rules apply to the formation of all therapy groups:

* **Group Size:** Groups should contain **2-4 students**. The most common and ideal size is 2 or 3 students.
* **Grade Level Proximity:** The grade level difference between students in a single group should not exceed **two grade levels**.
  + *Example:* A Pre-K student could be grouped with a 1st grader, but grouping with a 2nd grader would be clinically inappropriate. While exceptions exist, they are rare.

**II. Communication Disorder Categories & Definitions**

For the purpose of this project, communication disorders are categorized as follows:

**Speech Sound Focused Disorders:**

* **1. Speech Sound Disorder (SSD):** A general category for difficulties with speech sound production, including both articulation and phonology.
* **2. Articulation Disorders:** Difficulty with the physical production of specific, residual speech sounds (e.g., /r/, /l/, /s/, /th/).
* **3. Phonological Disorders:** Predictable, rule-based errors affecting entire classes of sounds (e.g., Final Consonant Deletion, Stopping, Fronting).
* **9. Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS):** A motor speech disorder involving difficulty with planning and sequencing movements for speech, often characterized by inconsistent errors, vowel distortions, and prosodic irregularities.

**Language & Social Communication Disorders:**

* **4. Language Disorders:** An umbrella term encompassing difficulties in understanding and/or using language.
* **5. Receptive Language Disorders:** Difficulties with comprehension, such as following directions, understanding stories, or grasping concepts.
* **6. Expressive Language Disorders:** Difficulties with using language to communicate wants, needs, and ideas, affecting semantics, syntax, and morphology.
* **7. Pragmatic (Social Communication) Disorders:** Difficulties with the social use of language, including maintaining topics, turn-taking, and using/interpreting non-verbal cues.

**Fluency Disorders:**

* **8. Fluency Disorders:** A disruption in the flow of speech, such as stuttering or cluttering.

**III. Grouping Strategies and Permissible Combinations**

The primary goal is to create clinically effective groups where students can work on similar or complementary goals.

* **Homogeneous Grouping (Primary Strategy):** Whenever possible, group students with similar disorder categories together.
  + **Speech-Focused Groups:** Can include students from categories **1, 2, 3, and 9**. These students all benefit from work on motor planning, phonological awareness, and sound production.
  + **Language-Focused Groups:** Can include students from categories **4, 5, 6, and 7**. These students benefit from activities targeting vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and social interaction.
* **Heterogeneous (Mixed) Grouping (Secondary Strategy):** Certain combinations are clinically appropriate and common in school settings.
  + **Speech + Language:** Students from the Speech-Focused categories (**1, 2, 3**) can be paired with students from the Language-Focused categories (**4, 5, 6**).
  + **Fluency & Pragmatics Pairings:** Students with Fluency (**8**) or Pragmatic (**7**) disorders are highly versatile. They can be effectively grouped with each other, with students working on Language (**4, 5, 6**), or with students working on Childhood Apraxia of Speech (**9**), as these groups often target pacing, self-monitoring, and social communication skills.

**IV. Special Considerations**

* **Co-Occurring Disorders:** It is common for a single student to present with multiple communication disorders (e.g., both a speech sound disorder and an expressive language disorder). These students are versatile and can be placed in groups targeting either or both of their areas of need.