

SPECIAL EDUCATION
Davis Joint Unified School District

Occupational Therapy Basics for Parents

Brought to you by: *DJUSD Occupational Therapy Team*

DJUSD Occupational Therapy Team

Early Learning Center

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Montgomery Elementary, Holmes Jr. High, Emerson Jr. High, DaVinci Jr. High, DaVinci High School, and Davis High School

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- Sydney Bessner

Birch Lane Elementary and Cesar Chavez Elementary

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Learning Objectives

What is Occupational Therapy?

- What role does the occupational therapist have on the IEP team?
- How does school based OT differ from medical based OT?
- What does OT service look like in schools?
- How can parents support their children at home?

What is Occupational Therapy?

Building skills for the job of living...



School-Based vs. Medical Model

School-Based:

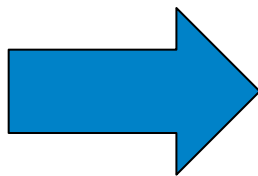
- Address and assess areas of need that are *educationally relevant and impact access to educational material*
- OT is a “related service” for students with qualifying educational eligibility
- Treatment takes place in the school setting

Medical:

- Address and assess areas of need that impact the *home, school, and/or community environments*
- Typically initiated by medical diagnosis or referral
- Treatment takes place in a clinic, medical facility, or in the home

Occupational Therapy as a Related Service

School-based occupational therapy is not a “stand alone” service



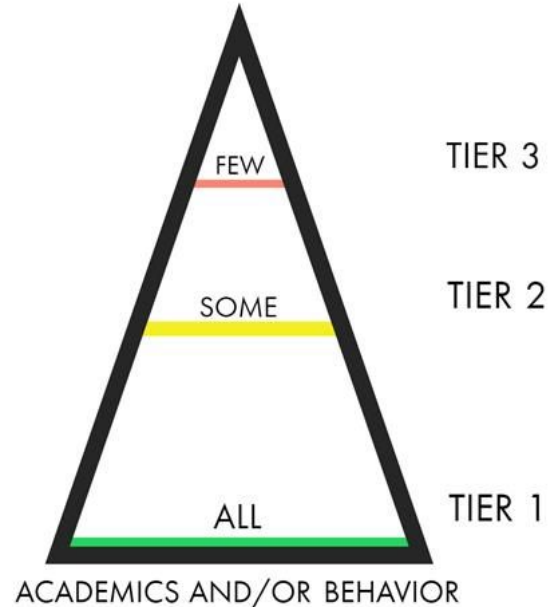
Students must qualify through assessment to receive direct or consultative OT services

Multi-Tiered Support Services

A Multi-Tiered systems of support (MTSS) is a framework DJUSD uses to give targeted support to struggling students

Link:
[AOTA Practice Advisory on Occupational Therapy in Response to Intervention](#)

MULTI-TIERED FRAMEWORK



Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Tier 1: Universal learning

Occupational Therapy Role:

- Collaborate with general education staff on techniques, strategies, and screenings that could benefit the whole class
- Conduct in-service workshops for educators on sensory processing & handwriting
- Provide recommendations for classroom management

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Tier 2: Short term intervention

Occupational Therapy Role:

- Teacher coaching based on student work samples with accommodations/modifications to assignments
- Recommendations for students with similar area of needs in the general education setting (i.e. seating modifications, adaptive paper to improve legibility)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Tier 3: Intensive intervention

Occupational Therapy Role:

- **OT Assessment:** recommendation of direct services and/or consultative services and accommodations based on student's areas of need
 - **Direct Services:** pull-out or push-in services provided by OT
 - **Consultative Services:** collaboration with special education and general education staff to support students

Assessment Tools:

- Standardized assessments
- Non-standardized assessments
- Rating scales
- Teacher/parent reports
- Observations
- Work samples



Areas of Need/Present Levels

Occupational therapy typically assesses the following areas:

- **Fine Motor Skills:** use of smaller movements in the hand and wrists needed for school-related tasks
- **Visual Motor Skills/Handwriting:** student's ability to coordinate their eyes and hands for school-related tasks
- **Sensory Processing:** student's ability to maintain an appropriate level of attention and regulation across school environments
- **Self-Help Skills:** educationally-related activities of daily living and functional/vocational skills

Common Goal Areas

- Pre-Handwriting/Handwriting
- Scissors Skills
- Keyboarding/Typing
- Multi-Step Task
- Organization
- Coping/Self-Regulation



Fine Motor Skills

Commonly Recommended Accommodations

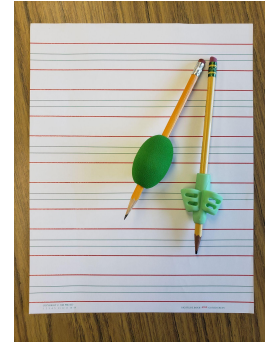
- Access to adaptive tools to support grasping
 - Pencil grips
 - Golf pencils
 - Weighted pencils
 - Erasable pens
 - Twist-n-Write Pencils
- Adaptive scissors
 - Spring-loaded
 - Loop scissors
- Slant boards



Visual Motor Skills / Handwriting

Commonly Recommended Accommodations

- Handwriting Supports
 - Adaptive paper
 - Handwriting curriculum
 - Access to a visual model
- Access to technology
 - Keyboard
 - Speech-to-Text



Sensory Processing

Commonly Recommended Accommodations

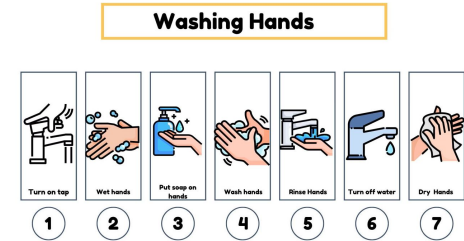
- Alternative Seating
 - Wobble chair/cushions
 - Chair bands
- Sensory Breaks
 - Additional movement breaks
 - Heavy work built into the student's day
- Sensory Tools
 - Tactile fidgets
 - Headphones
 - Weighted items
 - Visual Timer



Self-Help Skills

Commonly Recommended Accommodations

- Use of Visuals
 - For sequence of hand washing, clothing management or opening containers
- Adaptive tools
 - Zipper pulls to zip clothing, backpacks, or lunch boxes



TherapyResourcesAu



Supporting Your Child at Home

Area of Focus: **Fine Motor Skills**

Preschool:

- Provide practice with hand strengthening and dexterity activities
 - Digging for items in putty or Play-doh, using squirt bottles in play, sidewalk chalk beading on a pipe cleaner, building with blocks, lacing cards, coloring with broken crayons

Elementary:

- Select games that incorporate fine motor skills
 - Battleship, card games, monopoly
 - Sticker activities, color by number, drawing on an easel/vertical surface

Secondary:

- Help support leisure activities with a fine motor challenge
 - Building models, jewelry making

Supporting Your Child at Home

Area of focus: **Visual Motor Skills/Handwriting**

Preschool:

- Build pre-writing skills
 - Draw shapes before introducing letters
 - Use a variety of sensory-rich play to explore letters in a fun, meaningful way and minimize paper/pencil tasks or workbooks

Elementary:

- Encourage paper/pencil games
 - Step-by-step drawing tutorial, dot to dots, mazes, word searches, find-the-difference, search and finds
- Encourage digital activities
 - Typing.com (free to all DJUSD students), online mazes, drag and drop games

Secondary:

- Encourage writing for functional tasks
 - Use a diary or journal for daily practice. Writing entries back and forth between parent and child can be a good source of connection

Supporting Your Child at Home

Area of focus: **Sensory Processing**

Preschool:

- Look for patterns and preferences
 - What does my child gravitate toward? What makes them comfortable?
 - Teach and model simple co-regulation strategies
 - Use visuals to support autonomy and choice-making as much as possible

Elementary:

- Provide ample opportunities for sensory needs
 - Comfortable seating, chewy snacks, a quiet work space, frequent breaks
- Create a sensory rich environment
 - Look for activities with different textures and movement opportunities (salt painting, water play, outdoor playgrounds, sensory scavenger hunt, obstacle course with household items)

Secondary:

- Encourage movement and breaks from screens
 - Every 30 minutes for at least 5 minutes

Supporting Your Child at Home

Area of focus: **Self-Help Skills**

Preschool:

- Encourage opportunities for participation in everyday self-help skills
 - Incorporate practice with containers at mealtime, dressing boards

Elementary:

- Encourage participation in everyday routines
 - Loading and unloading their own backpack, setting the table, and helping with simple chores

Secondary:

- Involve your child in household tasks
 - Load/unload the dishwasher, complete laundry tasks, simple meal prep

Supporting Your Child at Home: Connection & Consistency

1. Practice and repetition are key
2. Embed practice in the family routine
3. Add visual support
4. Link the new skill to an interest
5. Use a multi-sensory approach
6. Consider the environment



Recommended Resources

- **Fine Motor:**
 - [8 Outdoor Summer Activities to Promote Fine Motor Skills](#)
 - [10 \[more\] Outdoor Activities to Promote Fine Motor Skills](#)
- **Visual Motor Skills/Handwriting & Keyboarding:**
 - [Learning Without Tears](#)
 - [Typing.Com Typing Games for Kids](#)
- **Sensory Processing:**
 - [Huge List of Activities for Outdoor Sensory Fun](#)
- **Self Help Skills:**
 - [Tips on Helping Kids Help Themselves](#)

Questions?

Please contact the OT at your child's school for more information:

Early Learning Center

- Stephanie Roberts: Sroberts@djUSD.net

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THANK YOU!



References

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). (n.d.) *AOTA practice advisory on occupational therapy in response to intervention.*

<https://www.aota.org/practice/practice-settings/-/media/e7371c748756467ba101d6966bb98eb2.ashx>