Best Practice in the Schools

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Goals for the Session

▪ Participants will experience a variety of tools and resources for successful school based practice.
▪ Participants will identify constraints of school based practice.
▪ Participants will identify resources for questions, problems and opportunities.

School Based OT

1. What is the role of an occupational therapy practitioner in school settings?
   The role of the occupational therapy practitioner in school settings involves supporting engagement in the occupations that comprise the school experiences of children and youth. The focus of occupational therapy is on participation. Occupational therapy interventions are designed to help children and youth participate successfully in the daily occupations that occur within their relevant learning environments (e.g., home, daycare, school, community), depending on the age of the child. Services may include working with children with and without disabilities; training school personnel, families, and caregivers; collaborating with teams; and supporting district initiatives (such as positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS), response to intervention (RTI), healthy schools, and anti-bullying campaigns).
How do we determine Effective School Based Occupational Therapy?
Look at Best Practice - Values
- continuing competency
- performance assessment
- outcome measurement
- coupled with explicit, systematic, and intentional professional development opportunities

- AOTA (2013) Performance Evaluation School Based Therapists

Effective OT Practice in the Schools
- Builds relationships and work collaboratively and flexibly with all stakeholders
- Assess access, participation and occupational performance needs
- Prioritize and make decisions based on the strengths and weaknesses of the student, data progress, expectations of the environment and expected outcomes after school
- Interventions are embedded in everyday routines and occupations
- Facilitate capacity of stakeholders to promote student engagement

What does this look like?
Adapts/modifies school environments and instruction to promote access and optimal participation and learning for all students: classroom, building, district, intermediate (county) and state levels
- Physical setup of classrooms
- Universal Design for Learning
- Response to Intervention
- PBIS

Naturally occurring contexts provide setting for observations and interventions
Promotes student participation across contexts
What does this look like in your practice?

What Doesn’t It Look Like?

▪ Therapy only occurs in therapy room or contrived setting
▪ Only therapist directed interventions and activities
▪ Work done in isolation without input from other team members

What Does It Look Like

▪ Understands regulatory, guidance and policy requirements
▪ Influence of legislation and regulation such as IDEA, ESSA, Section 504 and licensing
▪ Understands and can explain the unique value of OT in the schools
▪ Data based decision making (should be reviewed more frequently than IEP and progress report periods)
▪ Evidence based assessment and intervention
Assessment and Intervention

- Thorough Background Analysis
- Collaboration to design evaluation process looking at strengths in various settings, environments and contexts
- Understands the factors that influence access, participation and occupational performance
- Addresses meaningful school roles, routines and activities and how a student's strengths and needs impact these

Intervention

- Should not be the same for everyone
- May include:
  - Direct
  - Group
  - Push-in
  - Consultation
  - Collaboration

School-based Occupational Therapists demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaborative and ethical practice.

- Element A. Leadership. School-based Occupational Therapists support and promote high professional standards for themselves and for their colleagues. They are knowledgeable of and actively implement school, department, LEA, State, and professional goals and provide guidance to others in doing likewise.
School-based Occupational Therapists demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaborative and ethical practice.

- **Element b. Teamwork.** School-based Occupational Therapists work collaboratively with school and LEA personnel to create professional learning communities that enhance student learning and create positive working environments. School-based occupational therapists provide input into the selection of professional development to build staff capacity and address the needs of students. They anticipate, problem-solve, and share the workload of the department.
School-based Occupational Therapists demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaborative and ethical practice.

- **Element c. Vision.** School-based Occupational Therapists embrace, communicate, and contribute to the strategic vision of the local district, department and assigned schools to help ensure that all students are equipped and prepared with life skills for the 21st century. School-based occupational therapists articulate core beliefs and values of the profession, department and local district. They establish standards of excellence to create a professional learning community.

- **Element d. Ethics.** School-based Occupational Therapists exhibit high ethical standards. School-based Occupational Therapists demonstrate honesty, integrity, fair treatment, and respect for others. They uphold relevant codes of ethics and standards of professional practice.
School-based Occupational Therapists demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaborative and ethical practice.

- **Element e. Advocacy.** School-based Occupational Therapists advocate for positive changes in policies and practices affecting student learning and occupational therapy service delivery. They participate in the implementation of initiatives designed to improve educational and support services to promote positive student outcomes. They advocate for occupational therapy services to address student needs and support learning.
School-based Occupational Therapists demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaborative and ethical practice.

- **Element f. Supervision and Oversight.** School-based Occupational Therapists value supervision that provides support, education, monitoring of service delivery, and creates a safe forum to reflect on professional practice to positively impact student learning outcomes.

School-based Occupational Therapists promote a respectful environment for diverse populations

- **Element a. Communication.** School-based Occupational Therapists use language that is appropriate and easily understood by the listener, and they adapt their communication for their audiences. They are active listeners, respect cultural differences, and assist others in communicating effectively.
School-based Occupational Therapists promote a respectful environment for diverse populations

- **Element b. Least Restrictive Environment**: School-based Occupational Therapists help to ensure that every student receives services in the least restrictive environment. They continually monitor service delivery to reflect the least restrictive environment for the students they serve. They actively assist other school personnel to develop and implement appropriate contexts and strategies for students with differing needs.
Element c. **Embraces diversity.** School-based Occupational Therapists recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, health, culture, ability, and other factors on development and personality. They adapt professional activities to reflect these differences among the students, families, and staff they serve. School-based Occupational Therapists create and encourage an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible for every student.

**Standard 3: School-based Occupational Therapists apply the skills and knowledge of their profession within educational settings.**

- **Element a. Program Administration and Management.** School-based Occupational Therapists effectively structure work tasks in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements and best practice guidelines. School-based occupational therapists assume professional responsibility for safe, effective, and timely delivery of occupational therapy (OT) services; and the oversight and/or improvement of occupational therapy systems and services.
Standard 3: School-based Occupational Therapists apply the skills and knowledge of their profession within educational settings.

- **Element b. Policies and Laws.** School-based Occupational Therapists are knowledgeable and skilled regarding state and federal legislation, professional standards, best practice guidelines, and local policy.
Standard 3: School-based Occupational Therapists apply the skills and knowledge of their profession within educational settings.

- **Element c. Work behaviors.** School-based Occupational Therapists are flexible, efficient, timely, reliable, and competent. They are engaged and responsive team members, as evidenced by adhering to deadlines, setting priorities, and setting appropriate limits. They are productive and complete assigned work with a positive attitude. They demonstrate safe, healthy, and ergonomically correct work practices.

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<th>Performing</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Accomplishing</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
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<td>The Occupational Therapist:</td>
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Standard 4: School-based Occupational Therapists facilitate student learning for optimal student performance and functional independence.

- **Element a. State Standard Course of Study.** School-based Occupational Therapists ground their practice in school-related occupations and support student progress in the State Standard Course of Study (Common Core and Essential Standards).
Standard 4: School-based Occupational Therapists facilitate student learning for optimal student performance and functional independence.

- Element b. Evidence-based Practice: School-based Occupational Therapists plan, deliver, and revise appropriate interventions based on evaluation data. They use reliable, valid assessments, plan interventions based on research, build and work from their own clinical knowledge and expertise, and evaluate the effectiveness of their work based on analysis of evidence.
Standard 4: School-based Occupational Therapists facilitate student learning for optimal student performance and functional independence.

Element c. Evaluation and Identification. School-based Occupational Therapists gather information through observation of student performance in natural environments, direct assessment, systematic observations, interviews, and student work samples. They may use a variety of methods to identify appropriate performance goals. They identify performance goals for the student to assist with implementing interventions. They perform observation and other methods as deemed appropriate. Evaluation data is interpreted for the student’s team to assist with decision-making regarding special education eligibility, goals, placement, accommodations, supports, and services. School-based Occupational Therapists serve on student intervention teams as appropriate, consult on classroom interventions, and provide strategies to build teacher capacity for instructing a variety of learners.

Standard 4: School-based Occupational Therapists facilitate student learning for optimal student performance and functional independence.

Element d. Planning and Intervention. School-based Occupational Therapists carefully consider evaluation data, IEP goals, ongoing progress monitoring data, and the least restrictive environment as planning services that meet the needs of students. They plan and implement interventions in the context in which the student routinely performs. These strategies are connected to student participation in learning the curriculum, demonstration of knowledge, life skills, career skills, socialization, and transition.
Standard 5: School-based Occupational Therapists use all available data to examine their effectiveness and to adapt and improve professional practice.

- **Element a. Professional Development.** School-based Occupational Therapists continually participate in high quality professional development specific to school-based occupational therapy practice that reflects a global view of educational practices, includes 21st century skills and knowledge, and aligns with the State Board of Education priorities and initiatives. They use input from stakeholders, to continually assess, maintain, expand, and document their competence in school-based practice.
Standard 5: School-based Occupational Therapists use all available data to examine their effectiveness and to adapt and improve professional practice.

- **Element b. Outcomes.** School-based Occupational Therapists systematically and critically evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive occupational therapy services on student performance. They collect and interpret data from a variety of sources to assess student response to intervention and progress, plan future services, and adapt practice to best meet the needs of students, staff, and families.

### How do these categories reflect your school based practice?

- What are you currently doing well?
- What might you change in your current practice as a result of reviewing this document?
AOTA Resources

FAQ About Practice in the Schools
https://www.aota.org/~/media/Corporate/Files/Secure/Practice/Children/Member-Questions-about-Schools-20170413.pdf

Guidance for Performance Evaluation of School Occupational Therapists
https://www.aota.org/~/media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/Performance-Evaluation-School-based-Therapists-20131113.pdf

Occupational Therapy in the Schools
https://www.aota.org/~/media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/Professionals/OT/CY/Fact-Sheets/School%20Settings/factsheet.pdf

Books

- Collaborating for Student Success: A Guide for Occupational Therapy, 2nd Edition Edited by Barbara Hanft, MA, OTR/L, and Jayne Shepherd, MS, OTR
- Best Practices for Occupational Therapy in Schools, Edited by Donna Fossel, Ph.D, OTR/L, BCP FAOTA and Barbara E. Chandler, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
- Occupational Therapy Services for Children and Youth Under IDEA, 3rd Edition Leslie L. Jackson, MEd, OT Editor
- Best Practices for Documenting Occupational Therapy Services in Schools By Donna Fossel, CHTC, PhD, OTR/L, SCSS, BCP, FAOTA, and Debbie Handley-More, MS, OTR/L
CEU’s – AOTA has a full series from **Best Practices for Occupational Therapy in Schools**

*Also*

- CE Article: Providing Collaborative and Contextual Service in School Contexts and Environments

Questions?

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