A SHARED PATH TO SUCCESS

SPECIAL EDUCATION REFORM
NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Best Practice in Occupational Therapy

How OTs Contribute to Student Success

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Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Introduction: What We Will Cover Today

- What is the role of an Occupational Therapist in our schools?
- What are an OT's areas of expertise?
- What is "Sensory Processing?"
  - > A first-hand account of a student with sensory processing issues
  - > Adult Sensory-Motor Checklist
- How do sensory processing issues impact student success?
- How OT's help students with sensory processing needs get ready to learn.

Related Services Guiding Philosophy

- "Related services are provided to advance the achievement of a student with a disability in connection with his or her educational program."

- "The fundamental objective of related services is to help maximize each student's ability to achieve his or her educational goals."

As Referenced in Chancellor's Memo, 3/20/2012 Principals' Weekly

OT – NOT Just Handwriting!

- Occupational Therapists (OTs) in the school system help children fulfill their role as students and prepare them for transition to college, career, and community. They utilize prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies for mental and physical health and well-being.

- OTs help all students, regardless of their ability, come to know that they have gifts to offer the world around them-- that they have the power to live a purposeful and meaningful life.

Adapted from: http://www.aota.org/en/Practice/Children-Youth/School-based.aspx

Areas of Expertise

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

- Managing clothing fasteners/dressing oneself
- Hygiene
- Use of utensils and manipulating lunch tray items
- Organization of personal items and materials

MANAGEMENT OF CLASSROOM TOOLS OR MATERIALS

- Coordination of hands and fingers to manipulate small items
- Adequate pencil control
- Use of classroom tools (e.g. scissor skills, tape dispenser)

Areas of Expertise, cont'd.

VISUAL-MOTOR PROCESSING

- Drawing, coloring, illustrating written work
- Keeping pace with classroom writing demands
- Legible handwriting
- Copying with accuracy (near and far point)
- Eye motor control during reading and writing

SENSORY PROCESSING

- Ability to regulate level of activity and alertness for learning readiness
- Ability to maintain personal space boundaries
- Ability to respond appropriately to sensory input (e.g. touch, sound)
- Safety awareness during play/transitions and gym/dance/recess

A Child's View of Sensory Processing

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1G5ssZlVUw

Your Sensory Preferences

- Adult Sensory-Motor Checklist

The 3 Hidden Sensory Systems

How We Process the World Around Us

- Sight
- Auditory
- Taste
- Touch
- Smell

How We Process/Manage What is Going on Inside Us

PROPRIOCEPTION

How we know where we are in space

VESTIBULAR

How we know in which direction we are going

TACTILE

How we register sensations on our skin

Being Available to Learn

Our minds can be in one of two states:

Ready to Learn

NOT Ready To Learn

- When we are ready to learn we are attending. Our brains are available to process incoming information.
- *Example*: when you are exhausted and can't focus on what a person is saying…when you are hungry…stressed out and someone tells you something that you don't remember later.

Another Way of Looking at This

PARASYMPATHETIC

- Our stress hormones are low
- Our coping tank is full
- We are in "rest and digest" mode
- SAFE and SECURE

SYMPATHETIC

- Our stress hormones are high
- We have exhausted our coping chemicals
- We are ready to "fight or flight"
- DANGER

How Does OT Support Students?

- Occupational Therapy as it relates to sensory processing gets a child READY TO LEARN.
- OTs replace maladaptive behaviors with interventions that help the student remain engaged with their educational environment.
- ***OTs help students be purposeful in their role as a student regardless of their ability.***

Research

SENSORY STRATEGY RESEARCH

- SI approach: A systematic review of 27 primary sources examined the effectiveness of interventions using a sensory integrative approach for children. Children who received SI treatment made positive outcomes (May-Benson & Koomar, 2010).
- Classroom yoga: Use of daily classroom-wide (Get Ready To Learn Program) yoga interventions for children with ASD were paired with significant decreases in teacher ratings of maladaptive behavior (Koenig, Buckley-Reen and Garg, 2012).

How Adults Get Themselves “Ready”

- Drinking coffee
- Exercising
- Tapping leg, twirling hair
- Clenching hands
- Smoking
- Medication
- Not sitting still
- Getting a massage
- Taking a bath

How OTs Help Students with Sensory Processing Needs "Get Ready"

Behaviors	Solution
Frequently hits, bumps, touches or pushes other children.	• Provide deep pressure input via therapeutic intervention.
Covers ears; yells to drown out other sounds.	• Provide child with noise-cancelling headphones and calming background music.
Avoids unexpected touch	• Allow child to stay in the front or back of line.
Constantly moves; won't stay in seat.	• Allow for movement breaks. • Make student a "monitor" to carry items throughout the building. • Provide adaptive seating. • Use a weighted or pressure vest.

How OTs Help Students with Sensory Processing Needs "Get Ready," cont'd.

Behaviors	Solution
Behavioral difficulties prior to entering loud, crowded areas, cafeterias, buses, auditoriums.	• Prepare student for transition into over stimulating environments. • Use simple/direct language, sensory stories and calming techniques.
Difficulties with transitions.	• Give transition warnings. • Use visual aids – e.g., schedules and timers.
Difficulty maintaining attention to a lesson.	• Conduct class movement breaks before a lesson (e.g., yoga). • Provide preferential and adaptive seating. • Offer behavioral supports. • Encourage use of self-regulatory strategies.
Easily distracted.	• Provide privacy shield to place around desk. • Provide gentle cues for redirection. • Provide on-task visual reminders on desk. • Keep classroom distsractions to a minimum (e.g., cover bookshelves, simplify bulletin boards, etc.).

Social Stories

- Social Stories teach children with sensory needs to successfully engage in social activities within the home, school, and community.
- Social Stories teach children to use calming sensory strategies in order to deal with the sensory aspects of particular situations.
- Social Stories help the child develop effective routines to manage sensory experiences.
- Sometimes referred to as “Sensory Stories.”
- Social Stories empower students, teachers and parents by increasing knowledge of and gaining control over potentially difficult sensory situations – e.g., school trips, school cafeteria, family and community outings, etc.

Julio the Super Student

A Social Story About Being a Good Listener

By: Lisa Brooks M.S. OTR/L

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Julio’s Social Story, cont’d.

Julio is a boy in Ms. William’s class 1-101 at P.S. 25. Julio is a super student. He likes to draw, and he is a good reader and writer.

Julio's Social Story, cont'd.

Sometimes when Ms. Williams speaks, Julio has a hard time listening and paying attention.

Julio's Social Story, cont'd.

Julio thinks of other things like….super heroes, TV, and things that happened earlier in the day.

Julio's Social Story, cont'd.

Sometimes when Julio is thinking, he talks like superheroes or makes different sounds. This is distracting to his teacher and the other students.

Julio’s Social Story, cont’d.

When Julio thinks of other things he misses important lessons in class.

Julio's Social Story, cont'd.

Ms. Williams will tell Julio to:

- PAUSE
- BREATHE
- LISTEN
- LOOK

Julio's Social Story, cont'd.

Julio will have time to think of super heroes, TV, and other thoughts during ***recess, choice time, and lunch*.**

Julio's Social Story, cont'd.

When Julio stops, Ms. Williams feels happy that he is listening and learning!

THE END

Shared Path Framework:

Aligning Services to Support Students with Sensory Needs

- **Linking to Shared Path Framework**
  - ✓ **Access to LRE**
  - ✓ **Positive Behavioral Supports**
  - ✓ **Quality IEPs**

- Service providers should participate in the RTI (Response to Intervention) process to address student needs prior to referral to special education.

- School-based CSEs (IEP Teams) should first collaborate to develop IEP goals and then determine if the expertise of a related service provider is necessary to enable the student to achieve the IEP goals.

- **Services should be provided in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and clearly linked to classroom instruction. The alignment between assessment, identified strengths, weaknesses and academic expectations should be clearly delineated throughout the IEP.**

Q&A,
and
Thank You!