

PAUSD Occupational Therapy

School-based occupational therapy practitioners are occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) who use meaningful activities (occupations) to help children and youth participate in what they need and/or want to do in order to promote physical and mental health and well-being. Occupational therapy addresses the physical, cognitive, psychosocial and sensory components of performance. In schools, occupational therapy practitioners focus on academics, play and leisure, social participation, self-care skills (ADLs or Activities of Daily Living), and transition/work skills. Occupational therapy's expertise includes activity and environmental analysis and modification with a goal of reducing the barriers to participation.

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What services do occupational therapy practitioners provide in schools?

Occupational therapy practitioners provide a continuum of service and support to students and personnel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the reauthorization of ESEA, most recently enacted as The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including:

Services for struggling learners in general

education: Practitioners can contribute in an early intervening, multi-tiered approach (i.e., Response to Intervention) within general education. Occupational therapists can assist with periodic screenings/probes (including both data collection and analysis), provide teacher training, model activities to whole classrooms or small groups, and assist with team problem solving.

Services for individual students in

special education: Evaluation services assist the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team with identifying the presence of a disability and whether there is an educational need for occupational therapy services. Occupational therapy intervention is provided directly “to the child, or on behalf of the child, and [as]...program modifications or supports for school personnel” (IDEA, 20 USC, Section 1414

Services take place in natural school settings during the beneficial when beneficial when they occur at the location and time that the student is experiencing challenges. Services are designed to support progress on the student’s IEP. Students who are not eligible for special education may receive occupational therapy services under a Section 504 plan. Services are designed to ensure students have equal access to all aspects of the school day and support student participation and success in general education.

Training and resources for school

personnel and families: Practitioners can provide training in typical and atypical child development and the impact of physical and mental health on learning and participation at school. Training of school personnel in lifts and transfers can ensure student safety and prevent staff back injuries. Occupational therapy practitioners can contribute to universal design for learning (UDL), support the use of assistive technology, and provide information on positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) including bullying prevention.

Participating on collaborative teams: As members of IEP teams, technical assistance teams, problem solving teams, and

committees, practitioners bring their unique skills to aid students in accessing learning opportunities. They support student participation in school routines while promoting independence

Partnering with districts: Occupational therapy practitioners focus on helping students achieve their academic and behavior outcomes which in turn improve school districts’ ability to meet state and national achievement standards (i.e., Common Core State Standards). Practitioners can help students prepare for future employment and life skills needed for community integration. improve school districts’ ability to meet state and national achievement standards (i.e., Common Core State Standards). Practitioners can help students prepare for future employment and life skills needed for community integration.

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