

A note about occupational therapy in schools . . .

Occupational therapists work in many places, including in schools. We work on skills for the job of living. In school there are many skills that children are building, and everyone is different in how they learn best.

Occupational therapists work with ***schools*** by:

- Helping with accessibility issues for mobility equipment or students with mobility challenges, or visual or other impairments
- Consulting with school staff about ways to use body breaks most effectively to support learning
- Consulting with staff and other professionals about ways to shape behaviours of all students to positively include everyone and to help individuals feel able to participate safely and calmly
- Working with staff to figure out ways to make calming or alerting spaces within the school for kids who are sensitive to their environment for any reason
- Helping to make movement parts of the school day, such as recess, lunch breaks, physical education and transitions between classes easier for all individuals, no matter what their abilities

Occupational therapists work in ***classrooms*** by:

- Setting up inclusive, calming, and organizing classroom layouts, keeping in mind the sensory preferences of the students and the teachers
- Helping the teacher help *all* students organize materials, time, instructions, homework, etc.
- Giving ideas to the teacher for how to allow each child to use tools to help them concentrate, including fidget tools, chew tools, seat/desk positioning or movement tools, and visual tools
- Teaching the class how to use tools to learn, and not as toys
- Teaching the class how to include children with varying abilities in everyday school activities positively and safely
- Problem-solving with the whole class based on the class' unique characteristics, to keep the classroom a safe, calm, organizing and stimulating environment that is full of "just right challenges" for everyone in it

Sometimes occupational therapists work with individual students in school. In that case, we will ask a parent's consent to provide specific individualized assessment and therapy recommendations. However, most of the work we do in schools supports normal development and enhances learning opportunities for everyone. We believe that kids in school belong with their class as much as possible and we work together with the whole staff to make school a place that offers ***excellence for every learner***.