

The Role of the Occupational Therapist in Seine River School Division

What is an Occupational Therapist?

A school-based **Occupational Therapist** is a trained health care professional who examines children and identifies specific physical, cognitive, emotional and sensory problems that may hinder a child's academic performance or success at school.

The **Occupational Therapist** is a member of the Seine River School Division Student Services team.



Credentials

Occupational Therapists have a Bachelors or Masters Degree in Medical Rehabilitation—Occupational Therapy. They are professionals who respect the **ethics, standards, and guidelines** set forth by their Provincial Association, meet school clinician certification standards for the **Province of Manitoba Occupational Therapists**.

What do Occupational Therapists do?

An **Occupational Therapist** provides consultation, assessment and intervention to enable individuals to participate in day-to-day activities as independently as possible.

These activities may include self-care activities such as feeding, dressing or toileting, hand use and fine motor skills. Handwriting problems and visual perceptual difficulties are also addressed in school-aged children.

A child's occupational performance may be impaired by physical, developmental, sensory, attention and/or learning challenges.

The goal of occupational therapy is to improve the student's performance of tasks and activities important for successful school functioning.

The **Occupational Therapist** is concerned with ensuring an understanding of and match between the student's skills, abilities and the expectations placed on him/her in the school setting.

Occupational therapists will:

- Observe students in classrooms
- Assess students in identified areas of concern
- Provide suggestions and recommendations to parents and the school team
- Follow up on student progress
- Work with the school team
- Support in-class programming

When to ask for a referral to an Occupational Therapist?

There are many reasons you may want to talk with your school team about a referral for an occupational therapy involvement.

- Environmental barriers/adaptations
- Difficulty with sensory regulation
- Delayed gross and/or fine motor skills
- Difficulty with pre-writing and handwriting skills
- Difficulty with motor planning and sequencing activities
- Delayed or limited repertoire of play skills
- Difficulty with oral-motor control for feeding (sucking, chewing, swallowing)
- Delayed or limited self-care skills (i.e., managing clothing fastenings, self-feeding, preparing a simple snack, managing money)
- Difficulty with Social Skills or behavioral-adaptive skills (i.e., coping skills, establishing friendships, cooperative play with peers)
- Difficulty with organization, transitions and attention

