

Physical Therapist



Roles and Responsibilities: Physical therapists (PTs) provide a wide array of services within the school setting. They bring expertise in the realms of child development, orthopedic (bone and body alignment) development and neurological and brain systems that govern motor control, sensory awareness and feedback, and emotional regulation and behavior. Additionally, they promote an environment conducive to the facilitation of developmental motor skills. They use their strategies and skills on a broader level to help ensure “every student succeeds,” as indicated in the federal mandates found within the Every Student Succeeds Act. Physical therapists promote student success in the school environment by providing direct interventions in conjunction with — or as part of — fun, creative skill building. They work to:

- Facilitate gross motor skills, including walking, standing and sitting up by providing exercises and activities to enhance general strength and endurance as well as body and extremity control;
- Maximize posture, balance and coordination and utilize standing or seated positioning devices to improve student performance and prevent deformities;
- Facilitate specific motor skills necessary for participation in physical education;
- Ensure student’s physical safety and access to their environment and the community;
- Enhance vocational and transitional skills;
- Support educational teams and staff.

Information about Physical Therapists: Physical therapists are trained to utilize knowledge and skills acquired by a competitive and challenging educational pathway. Currently, physical therapists are required to enter the profession with a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree (DPT), which generally requires at least three years of graduate school.

Physical Therapists are Trained to:

- Use their unique background and extensive problem-based learning skills;
- Serve as a bridge between the education and medical communities — physical therapists can enhance a school team’s understanding of complicated diagnoses and procedures;
- Administer and interpret sophisticated pediatric developmental tests;
- Provide gait and movement training and consultation;
- Share knowledge on the appropriate gross motor skills equipment, positioning and standing devices and transition planning for students, staff and families.

References:

- American Physical Therapy Association. (2018) The Physical Therapist Scope of Practice. Available from <http://www.apta.org/ScopeOfPractice/>.
- Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). (2004). Available from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>.
- Ohio Department of Education. (2014). Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities. Available from <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Operational-Standards-and-Guidance/2014-Ohio-Operating-Standards-for-the-Education-of-Children-with-Disabilities.pdf.aspx>.
- Ohio Revised Code 4755. Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy Board, and Athletic Trainers Board. Available from <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/4755>.
- Every Student Succeeds Act. (2015). Available from <https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>.