

Motor Skills in the school setting:

Physical Therapy (PT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) both in the school setting address motor abilities/ skills in children who have delays in development. PT primarily works with gross motor activities and OT primarily works with fine motor activities to assist children in progressing their delayed skills hopefully to catch up with their peers the same age that have normal abilities for their ages. Improving both areas of motor skills assist in helping the brain of delayed kids to perform at or closer to the levels of their peers that are not delayed.

There often is some overlap between PT and OT with both being trained in portions of both gross and fine motor work and so neither therapist are restricted to just their usual areas of motor work.

Definition: Gross Motor Skills = larger movements that your child makes with their arms, legs, feet, torso (core), such as crawling, standing, walking, running, jumping, going up and down stairs, catching, throwing, twisting, turning, pushing, pulling, balancing, and climbing.

Fine Motor Skills = smaller movements that your child makes with their hands, elbows, and shoulders that require accurately controlled finely coordinated movements often involving learning of controlling pencils or crayons to color, draw, and paint as well as writing. Also included with fine motor skills are coordination for dressing, successfully putting on gloves without help in addition to activities involving crossing of midline of the body that delayed children frequently have difficulty with performing.

Who qualifies for school based PT and OT services: Children who have difficulty interacting with peers physically or show deficits during classroom, gym, and/ or recreational activities. As well, kids that have problems due to long standing medical conditions, kids that medical problems that limit their abilities to move around in school and kids that have deficits managing classroom, cafeteria, bathroom or gym activities (following Federal Government guidelines and criteria).

There are also additional areas that OT can qualify kids for school base therapy including cognitive processing, visual or perceptive problems, difficulty staying on task, disorganization, and/ or inappropriate sensory responses (again per Federal Governmental guidelines).

Typical PT Interventions: Training and practice of gross motor skills in areas of deficits such as going up and down stairs, standing balance activities, training to improve walking and running abnormalities, strengthening of arms - legs – and torso (core), as well as functional activities of throwing, catching, kicking and/ or gym/ playground utilization improvement and opening and closing of doors. Also, coordination of arm and leg use at the same time activities as needed. Maximizing the child's abilities in these areas assists in improving the individual's ability to access school to its highest potential.