

Ingham Impact Episode 28 – Occupational Therapists

Jodie Fowler: As a school-based OT (Occupational Therapist), our job is to Help the child be successful in the curriculum in the classroom. There's kind of two different components that we work with; the self-regulation skills, so the focus and attention within the classroom, and then the pull out piece is when we're working on the visual motor skills, the visual perceptual skills, the fine motor skills, all of those combined. Tyler Allen: We work with a range of students from all populations throughout our local districts. We kind of focus on academics, leisure, participation, self-care skills. We kind of go through a lot of different facets to make students successful. So our main goal is to kind of break down those barriers, and provide the strategies and plans and supports the students need going forward to be successful. Jodie Fowler: We can service kids in a variety of different settings; I'm in an early childhood classroom one whole day, where I'm in a preschool program supporting that preschool program. Some of our OTs support the ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) programs, there's also the high school programs; we have OTs over at Heartwood, so none of us are going to be doing the exact same thing. And our goals could be word for word verbatim, but the way we're going to approach and work on those goals is all going to be different based on our personality, based on the student that we're working with; just a variety of different things can be done. Tyler Allen: We provide a lot of direct servicing, that can be working directly with the student, either in a one-on-one setting, or in a group, we can push into classes or pull out, and usually we provide a lot of other ends, so, we go off on consultations, so we'll meet with teachers, staff members, any other support staff or team members that we need to meet to help provide strategies for students to be successful in the classroom, and throughout their whole school environment. Jodie Fowler: When a kid comes to work with me, they don't necessarily know that they're coming to do work and to work on the skills; if my student that just worked with me can come leaving with a smile, I feel like that's been a success. We might not have even touched on all of the goals, but I know that I've been a bright spot in the day for that child, while we're working on some of those skills. As OTs, we're constantly advocating for the independence of the kids. That's part of our role as the OT; we're trying to put accommodations into the classroom so that they can be successful in the classroom, and still focus and attend so that they can do things independently in the classroom, such as writing or cutting, without having to have a para-professional next to them, so we're advocating for that independence. Collaboration: if you're on an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) there is a team: the special ed teacher, the gen ed teacher, the parents, any of the other service providers. So, we're constantly collaborating with team members to make sure that we're all on the same page and doing the same thing for the student. Tyler Allen: In providing the necessary tools that student needs; so if it's working on pencil grasp, it's providing grips, it's working on a functional way to hold the pencil so they're successful when completing hand writing tasks. That's just kind of an example that I love to see kids grow because you can really seem them progress throughout the year. Whether it's that or working on different visual motor controls or visual perceptual things that they need to work on throughout the day to be successful in the classroom, whether that's transferring information from a board to paper, whether it's finding certain details on your paper or looking through words in columns in a book, it kind of just varies on a day to day basis, but I love watching kids grow and that's probably one of my favorite parts of my job.

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