

# School-Based Physical Therapy

<b>Definition by Federal Law IDEA</b>	<p>Help a child with an educational disability benefit from his/her special education program in the least restrictive learning environment. Physical therapists (PTs) address performance skills where a child's disability impacts or compromises their ability to access, participate, and/or make progress in their natural learning environments.</p>
<b>Who can get school-based physical therapy services?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PT is a related service, not a stand-alone service.</li> <li>• Student must be identified as having a disability that interferes with education under the criteria of IDEA.</li> <li>• Physical therapy is not based on specific test scores or discrepancies, but rather on whether the unique expertise of the therapist is required for the student's educational participation.</li> <li>• Medical diagnosis itself does not determine eligibility under IDEA.</li> <li>• The disability must "adversely affect the child's educational performance" (Part B).</li> </ul>
<b>What does school based physical therapy work on?</b>	<p>Gross motor deficits that impact academics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Posture and positioning</b>—Symmetry of positions, handling and transfer methods</li> <li>• <b>Neuromuscular and musculoskeletal systems</b>—Range of motion, control of muscle tone, muscle strength, endurance, gross motor coordination, and motor planning</li> <li>• <b>Sensory processing</b>—Equilibrium and protective reactions, proprioceptive and kinesthetic input, and bilateral coordination).</li> <li>• <b>Functional communication</b>—Classroom positioning, recommendations for adaptive devices or equipment</li> <li>• <b>Environmental adaptations</b>—Evaluations and recommendations for modifications of architectural barriers and children's equipment.</li> <li>• <b>Adaptive equipment</b>—Skin care, recommendations for splints, bracing, and positioning devices</li> <li>• <b>Functional mobility</b>—Transfer skills, gait evaluation and recommendations, wheelchair mobility</li> <li>• <b>Mobility and transfer skills</b>—Adaptive equipment, wheelchair and equipment care, and use for self-help</li> <li>• <b>Physiological function</b>—Functional muscle strengthening, cardiorespiratory function and fitness, body mechanics, energy conservation techniques</li> <li>• <b>Prevocational and vocational skills</b>—Generally strengthening, sitting and standing tolerance, motor coordination, adaptive equipment</li> <li>• <b>Education/Communication</b>—Information on disability and educational impact, staff training and development, liaison between medical and education staff (Martin, 1992)</li> </ul>
<b>What is <u>NOT</u> in a PT's realm of practice?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal trainer             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Weight loss specialist/sports motivator</li> </ul> </li> <li>• "Toe Walking"             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ How is this adversely impacting student's education?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Acute orthopedic injuries</li> </ul> <p>Students may have a diagnosed disability that impacts their motor skills BUT if it is not impacting their ability to participate in the educational program, then school based related services are not indicated.</p>