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Improving quality of schoolwork performance through short term school-based consultative occupational therapy

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Introduction and Objectives

Occupational therapy (OT) is not a routine service for children in schools in Sweden. The main purpose, therefore, was to evaluate the effectiveness of school-based OT services for students at risk for or with mild disabilities when provided on a short term basis through collaborative consultation with the teacher.

Research question

Do short term school-based consultative OT interventions increase the quality of schoolwork performance for students at risk for/with mild disabilities?

Methods

A pre-test, post-test without control group design was used and the School Version of the Assessment of Motor and Process Skills (School AMPS) was used to evaluate each student's quality of schoolwork performance. To date there are data from 30 students that range from 5 to 12 years of age (5 girls and 25 boys). The majority of the students have no known diagnosis but are described by their teachers as experiencing problems with task performance in the regular classroom. All students were referred to OT by their teachers. The interventions were based on the Occupational Therapy Intervention Process Model (OTIPM) and involved collaborative consultation with teachers and mainly compensatory strategies (adaptive occupation) were used. Our plan is to implement two paired t tests, one for school motor and one for school process quality of schoolwork performance. While lack of a control group is recognized as a limitation of this study, existing School AMPS data for students with mild disabilities indicate that school motor and school process quality of schoolwork performance does not increase with age.

Results

We anticipate significant improvements in quality of schoolwork performance.

Conclusion and contribution to practice

In Sweden, schools have not created supportive environments to enable students at risk for/with mild disabilities to actively participate and perform their schoolwork tasks. It is hoped that this demonstration project will lead to enhanced services for these children as well as contribute with evidence of the effectiveness of school-based OT services.

Key references

Fisher, A. G., Bryze, K., & Griswold, L. A. (2007). School AMPS: School Version of the Assessment of Motor and Process Skills (2nd ed.). Fort Collins, CO: Three Star Press.