

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Job Descriptions for Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist and Speech-Language Pathologist

Type of Executive Summary:

- Action
- Action on First Reading
- Discussion
- Information

Policy Implications:

- Constitution _____
- General Statute # _____
- SBE Policy #QP-C-009
- SBE Policy Amendment
- SBE Policy (New)
- APA # _____
- APA Amendment
- APA (New)
- Other _____

Presenter(s): Elsie C. Leak (Associate Superintendent, Curriculum and School Reform Services) and Mary N. Watson (Director, Exceptional Children Division)

Description:

Occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech-language pathologists all perform vital roles in the education of children in North Carolina Public Schools. These professionals serve students who have, or are suspected of having, disabilities in a variety of areas and also serve these students' teachers, schools and families to promote improved educational outcomes. The job descriptions for these professionals have been updated with input from a variety of stakeholders to be reflective of the current nature of work and the requisite knowledge, skills, training and licensure necessary for these positions in North Carolina Public Schools.

Resources:

No additional resources are requested.

Input Process:

The job descriptions were written by NCDPI staff within the Exceptional Children Division, with input from university program faculty, related service personnel in local educational agencies (LEAs) and professional organization representatives.

Stakeholders:

LEAs, university programs, current and prospective related service personnel in North Carolina Public Schools

Timeline For Action:

This item is presented for discussion at the June State Board of Education meeting and will be presented for action at the July State Board of Education meeting.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the State Board of Education adopt the job descriptions as listed.

Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

- Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)
Specify: _____
 - Audio Requirements (computer or other, except for PA system which is provided)
Specify: _____
 - Document Camera (for transparencies or paper documents – white paper preferred)

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Motion By: _____ Seconded By: _____
Vote: Yes _____ No _____ Abstain _____
Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Postponed _____ Revised _____

*Person responsible for SBE agenda materials and SBE policy updates: Tish Bynum

POSITION: Occupational Therapist

SALARY GRADE: 7678

NATURE OF WORK

~~An employee in this class participates in the development, implementation and coordination of an occupational therapy program to provide screening, evaluation and treatment of exceptional students. The employee must select, from a wide range of activities, the program activity appropriate for each student. Problems that arise in the treatment program are expected to be resolved independently. Errors in the treatment could cause serious harm to students and potential liability to the school system. The employee receives general direction from the Director of Exceptional Children. Direct supervision may be exercised over support personnel.~~
An occupational therapist leads the process in development, implementation, and coordination of the occupational therapy program. Screening, evaluation, educational program and transition planning, therapeutic intervention, and exit planning is provided for students identified with or suspected of having disabilities that interfere with their ability to perform daily life activities or participate in necessary or desired occupations. Professional judgment and clinical knowledge are used to develop individualized programming based on occupational performance deficits in the areas of personal care, student role, interaction skills, process skills, play, community integration/work, and graphic communication. An occupational therapist regularly collaborates with other disciplines and services at departmental and system levels. An occupational therapist is expected to independently review outcomes and modify intervention programs. Clinical reasoning and professional judgment are essential to ensuring the safety of students and protecting liability of the school system and the therapist. Errors may result in serious harm to students. Direct supervision may be exercised over support personnel, such as occupational therapy assistants and clerical staff.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK

- ~~• Evaluates students' abilities through a variety of functional and behavioral assessments and collection of information.~~
- ~~• Provides direct therapy through various activities to develop and maintain living skills.~~
- ~~• Participates in the multi-disciplinary meetings to develop Individual Education Plans.~~
- ~~• Designs and constructs or modifies special equipment to meet individual needs.~~
- ~~• Instructs and monitors educational personnel, community agencies and parents in the program to increase strength and dexterity of exceptional students.~~
- ~~• Coordinates the development and evaluation of a school-wide occupational therapy program.~~
- ~~• Projects budget needs, prepares and maintains budget.~~
- ~~• Documents needs for equipment and materials.~~
- ~~• Maintains clinical and administrative records in accordance with State guidelines and school policy.~~

Identification, Evaluation, and Planning

- Collaborates with other disciplines to ensure team understanding of student occupational performance strengths and needs, through evaluation, educational program planning, and

service delivery.

- Evaluates the student's ability and formulates the student's occupational profile through a variety of functional, behavioral, and standardized assessments, skilled observation, checklists, histories, and interviews.
- Synthesizes evaluation results into a comprehensive written report which reflects strengths and barriers to student participation in the educational environment; directs program development; and guides evidence-based intervention.
- Develops occupationally based intervention plans based on student needs and evaluation results.
- Participates in multidisciplinary meetings to review evaluation results, integrate findings with other disciplines, offer recommendations, and develop individual education plans and intervention plans to achieve Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals.

Service Delivery

- Provides targeted, evidence-based therapeutic intervention to facilitate student participation and occupational performance within the school environment.
- Consults with the school-based team to achieve student outcomes.
- Adapts and modifies the environment, including assistive technology and training instructional staff, to meet individual needs and to help students function as independently as possible.
- Educates student, educational personnel, and family to facilitate skills in areas of occupation as well as health maintenance and safety.
- Monitors and reassesses the effects of occupational therapy intervention and the need to continue, modify, or discontinue intervention.
- Documents occupational therapy services to ensure accountability of service provision and to meet standards for reimbursement of services as appropriate.

Program Administration and Management

- Prioritizes and schedules work tasks independently.
- Manages inventory of therapeutic equipment and assessments, and projects needs for budget planning.
- Maintains clinical and administrative records in accordance with professional standards, state guidelines, and school system policy.
- Provides legal and ethical supervision of occupational therapy assistant assuming responsibility for the students served by assistant.
- Supervises non-occupational therapy support personnel.
- Adheres to federal and state legislation, regulation, and policies that affect occupational therapy practice.
- Reviews occupational therapy services for quality improvement and makes changes as needed to ensure quality of services.

Education

- Teaches, monitors, and collaborates with educational personnel, community agencies, parents, and students to increase understanding of the student's occupational performance.
- Provides continuing education and in-services for educational personnel, parents, and

community based service providers.

- Provides fieldwork education and supervision for occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students.

Professional Growth and Ethics

- Participates in continuing education for professional development to ensure practice consistent with best practice and to meet N.C. Licensure requirements.
- Uses professional literature, evidence-based research, and continuing education content to make practice decisions.
- Uses professional Code of Ethics and standards of practice to guide ethical decision making in practice.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ACTIVITIES

- ~~Thorough knowledge of the theory, principles and methods of occupational therapy.~~
- ~~Working knowledge of normal child development.~~
- ~~Working knowledge of general management practice.~~
- ~~Skill in adapting or designing equipment for individual needs.~~
- ~~Skill in administering treatment.~~
- ~~Ability to select and administer appropriate assessment and treatment activities.~~
- ~~Ability to plan, implement, administer and coordinate a physical therapy program.~~
- ~~Ability to plan, coordinate and conduct on the job training and continuing education for a variety of individuals.~~
- ~~Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.~~
- Knowledge of human development throughout the lifespan and integrates with students unique developmental status.
- Knowledge and appreciation of the influence of disabilities, socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors on student's ability to participate in occupations.
- Knowledge and use of occupational therapy theories, models of practice, principles, and evidence-based practice to guide intervention decisions.
- Knowledge of the federal, state, local legislation, regulations, policies and procedures that mandate and guide occupational therapy practice in schools.
- Ability to gather and assess outcomes program evaluation data and to use to modify services at the programmatic level.
- Ability to maintain current reporting, documentation, scheduling, and billing in accordance with professional standards, state and local guidelines, and reimbursement requirements.
- Ability to determine the need for an occupational therapy evaluation and to select and administer appropriate assessment tools to evaluate the student.
- Ability to interpret the evaluation data and write a comprehensive report that reflects strengths and barriers to student's participation and occupational performance.
- Ability to participate collaboratively with multi-disciplinary educational teams to develop IEPs to meet student needs.
- Ability to develop occupationally based intervention plans based on evaluation information.
- Ability to provide evidence-based occupational therapy intervention to improve student's performance, skills and participation.
- Ability to adapt and modify environments, equipment, and materials including assistive

technology.

- Ability to plan, coordinate, and conduct continuing education for educational personnel, parents, and students.
- Ability to use professional literature, evidence-based research, and continuing education content to make practice decisions.
- Ability to provide legal and ethical supervision of occupational therapy assistants.
- Skill in effective oral and written communication.

SUGGESTED TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

~~Graduation from a four year accredited program of occupational therapy and two years of experience or a master's degree in occupational therapy.~~

- Has successfully completed and graduated from an accredited occupational therapy professional program recognized by the National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) and has completed all fieldwork requirements.
- Two years of experience as an occupational therapist, preferably in school system or other pediatric practice setting.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

~~License as an occupational therapist in North Carolina.~~

- Initial certification by the NBCOT.
- Current license by the North Carolina Board of Occupational Therapy.

POSITION: Physical Therapist

SALARY GRADE: 76 78

NATURE OF WORK

~~An employee in this class participates in the development, implementation and coordination of a physical therapy program to provide screening, evaluation and treatment of exceptional students. The employee receives medical directions as to the specific results to be achieved and then exercises discretion in determining the clinical procedure to follow. The employee is expected to resolve most problems that do not require additional medical diagnosis. Errors in treatment could cause serious harm to students and ensuing liability for the school system. The employee receives general direction from the Director of Exceptional Children with the results measured by the referring physician. Direct supervision may be exercised over support personnel.~~

The school physical therapist, as a member of the educational team, supports the education of students suspected of and/or diagnosed with disability in their least restrictive environment. The school physical therapist develops, implements and coordinates a physical therapy program within the local educational agency (LEA); providing screening, evaluation and intervention services. Skilled provision of physical therapy prevents injury (acute or chronic) of both students and educational staff. Working with students with disabilities and serious health impairments, the physical therapist is expected to analyze risk, problem solve effectively and demonstrate a high level of professional judgment when recommending and providing services, making environmental modifications and training staff to manage physical needs at an appropriate level of supervision. Direct supervision may be exercised over support personnel and must be provided to physical therapy assistants at least every 30 days. Consultation with educational and community personnel is also an essential component of the physical therapist's roles/responsibilities. The physical therapist, though working as a team member serving students, is autonomous in applying principles of physical therapy and responsible for working within the North Carolina Physical Therapy Practice Act, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other legal mandates.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF WORK

- ~~• Evaluates students using appropriate tests, clinical observation and supplementary information from other agencies and records.~~
- ~~• Develops individual treatment goals and activities.~~
- ~~• Administers treatment and evaluates its effect.~~
- ~~• Participates in the multi-disciplinary meeting to develop Individual Education Plans.~~
- ~~• Instructs and monitors educational personnel, community agencies, and parents in the management of the therapy program.~~
- ~~• Coordinates the development and evaluation of a school-wide physical therapy program.~~
- ~~• Participates in documenting material needs, developing policy and preparing budgets.~~
- ~~• Maintains clinical and administrative records in accordance with State guidelines and school policy.~~
- ~~• Inventories equipment, materials and supplies.~~
- Adhere to professional, ethical and legal standards of practice

- Provide direct supervision of physical therapy assistants in accordance with North Carolina's Physical Therapy Practice Act (currently, at least every 30 days)
- Develop, implement and coordinate the physical therapy program within the LEA, including philosophy, vision, departmental procedures and goals
- Evaluate students using appropriate tests, skilled professional observation and supplementary information from other agencies and records
- Interpret assessment findings and appropriately convey information to parents and school teams
- Participate with the school team to develop Individualized Education Programs and Section 504 Plans
- Develop and implement intervention strategies
- Develop physical management plan for daily classroom routines and train staff in its safe implementation
- Plan for transition from school to community, preparing student to function independent from therapy service when targeted outcomes are achieved
- Evaluate and report on student progress
- Communicate and consult with school staff, parents, administrators, physicians, community and other professionals
- Serve as resource to parent, school team, staff and administration on disabling conditions and their effects on education
- Collaborate with community based therapists and other healthcare providers for effective coordination of service
- Assess need and recommend assistive technology necessary for function at school
- Contribute to planning safe transportation of students with disability
- Provide consultation regarding emergency evacuation of students with disability
- Participate with improving school accessibility and planning environmental modification
- Maintain student service, administrative and other departmental records in accordance with the Physical Therapy Practice Act as well as school district, State and Federal policies
- Participate in budget planning and policy development
- Document need and advocate for personnel and equipment
- Procure, maintain and inventory equipment, materials and supplies
- Seek regular opportunities for professional growth
- Provide clinical educational opportunities for students of physical therapy

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- ~~Thorough knowledge of physical therapy principles, theory, methods and their proper application in the educational environment.~~
- ~~Working knowledge of normal child development.~~
- ~~Working knowledge of general management practices.~~
- ~~Skill in directly providing a wide range of treatment activities.~~
- ~~Ability to plan, implement, administer and coordinate a physical therapy program.~~
- ~~Ability to plan, coordinate and conduct on-the-job training and continuing education for a variety of individuals.~~
- ~~Ability to select and administer appropriate assessment and treatment methods.~~

- ~~Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.~~
- Knowledge of physical therapy principles, theory, methods and evidence based practice
- Knowledge of effective practice, clinical decision making, outcomes based intervention and their proper application in the educational environment
- Knowledge of areas of practice specific to pediatrics, including child development and specific diagnoses
- Knowledge of administrative management practices
- Ability to plan, implement, administer and coordinate a physical therapy program, from eligibility determination to exit, within an LEA
- Ability to select and administer appropriate assessment tools and interpret results of assessment
- Skill in selecting and providing a wide range of intervention strategies and monitoring their effectiveness
- Ability to plan, coordinate and provide training and continuing education both formally and informally to parents, school administration, school staff, community agencies, staff and other medical professionals
- Skill in effective oral and written communication
- Knowledge of current legal mandates, including: Federal and State law, compliance issues, confidentiality requirements, funding procedures and requirements
- Physical ability to execute job responsibilities that may include: transferring and/or lifting students or equipment, managing equipment

SUGGESTED TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

~~Graduation from a four year accredited program of physical therapy and two years of experience or a master's degree in physical therapy.~~

- Two years of experience (preferably in pediatric practice)
- Participation in recent continuing education programs related to pediatrics or school based physical therapy

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

~~License as a physical therapist in North Carolina.~~

- Graduation from an accredited program of physical therapy
- Certification to practice in North Carolina as evidenced by current licensure as a physical therapist by the North Carolina Board of Physical Therapy Examiners

Position: Speech-Language Specialist

Reports To: Principal/Director of Exceptional Children/Superintendent

Purpose: ~~To help students with special communicative needs to use the maximum communication possible.~~

Duties and Responsibilities:

~~● **Planning and Oversight**~~

~~The speech language specialist (pathologist) organizes the local program, cooperates with others to accomplish its goals, coordinates program services with other student services and maintains records in accordance with established rules, regulations and ethical standards.~~

~~● **Screening, Testing, Diagnosing and Advising**~~

~~The speech language specialist (pathologist) conducts screening and testing, obtains diagnostic information, analyzes information and makes recommendations regarding programs and services. The specialist supervises interns and other professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers.~~

~~● **Developing Individual Education Programs**~~

~~The speech language specialist (pathologist) develops individual education programs.~~

~~● **Managing and Conducting Therapy**~~

~~The speech language specialist (pathologist) plans therapy and uses appropriate diagnostic tools and therapy techniques. The speech language specialist (pathologist) manages time, facilities and resources to facilitate delivery of services. Promotes effective interpersonal relations and engages in continuing professional growth activities.~~

~~● **Liaison**~~

~~The speech language specialist (pathologist) provides consultation, seeks assistance of others, uses related research and makes recommendations and referrals in the implementation of services.~~

Utilizing leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, school-based speech-language pathologists provide prevention, assessment, and remediation services for students who exhibit difficulties in the areas of language, speech, voice, and fluency. These services are designed to help children meet their educational goals.

Below are the major functions of the speech-language pathologist employed in educational environments. Each function is followed by related evidences. Because each work situation is

different, it is not likely that all of the evidences will be demonstrated by all speech-language pathologists.

A. Major Function: Planning and Oversight

1. Organizes a program that addresses local school speech-language goals.

- 1.1. contributes to the development of program guidelines as appropriate
- 1.2. cooperates with local education agency, community and/or state programs to affect comprehensive services

2. Works cooperatively with school personnel to accomplish the goals and objectives of the local education agency.

- 2.1. attends meetings, such as faculty meetings, special education meetings and parent-teacher conferences
- 2.2. serves on committees, such as curriculum development committee, school-based committees, and/or speech-language program development meetings
- 2.3. schedules interventions using a variety of service delivery models, including classroom intervention, consultation/collaboration and pull-out as appropriate to meet student needs in the least restrictive environment
- 2.4. applies a systematic workload model to facilitate the organization of the speech-language program within the school

3. Coordinates speech-language services with student services provided by other school personnel.

- 3.1. collaborates with school personnel, such as teachers and psychologists, to best meet the needs of all students
- 3.2. meets with related school personnel to coordinate specific objectives for individualized educational programs

4. Maintains records of the speech-language program and prepares periodic reports as required.

- 4.1. keeps data for program planning and decision making for students
- 4.2. submits reports which meet local and state requirements
- 4.3. maintains current files for use by authorized school personnel
- 4.4. safeguards confidentiality of student records
- 4.5. completes records for third party reimbursement accurately and in a timely manner as appropriate

5. Adheres to established rules, regulations, laws and appropriate ethical standards.

- 5.1. provides services which hold the well-being of each student paramount
- 5.2. guards against conflicts of professional interest
- 5.3. demonstrates knowledge of federal, state and local rules, regulations and laws
- 5.4. complies with established lines of authority within the parameters of professional standards

B. Major Function: Screening, Testing, Diagnosing and Advising

1. Conducts speech, language and hearing screenings.

- 1.1. serves on student intervention team/Individualized Education Program (IEP) team as appropriate
- 1.2. works with other professionals to carry out the screening process
- 1.3. uses appropriate screening instruments

- 2. Administers formal and informal (ongoing & curriculum-based) assessments.**
 - 2.1. observes students in educational environments
 - 2.2. selects appropriate assessments based on individual student needs
 - 2.3. administers tests according to acceptable procedures
- 3. Obtains additional diagnostic information from appropriate persons and available records for speech-language purposes.**
 - 3.1. obtains pertinent case history
 - 3.2. obtains data from other professionals and parents
- 4. Analyzes and interprets information to make recommendations regarding the need for speech-language services.**
 - 4.1. integrates data from a variety of assessment techniques and sources
 - 4.2. determines the effects of the student's impairment in regard to accessing the general curriculum
 - 4.3. presents and explains data to IEP Team
 - 4.4. prepares evaluation summary
- 5. Provides appropriate information on an informal or formal basis regarding speech, language and hearing programs.**
 - 5.1. presents information to school personnel about language disorders as they relate to literacy and interactive communication skills
 - 5.2. presents information to school personnel about speech disorders (articulation, voice, fluency) and their impact on communication and learning
 - 5.3. provides information to parents and teachers about speech, language and hearing development
 - 5.4. provides information to school personnel, parents and non-school agencies about current procedures and program guidelines
 - 5.5. speaks to community organizations and allied professionals, conducts workshops and provides public information when appropriate
- 6. Supervises undergraduate interns, paraprofessionals, volunteers and other professionals (as appropriate).**
 - 6.1. evaluates effectiveness of personnel assigned to the speech-language pathologist
 - 6.2. maintains records regarding personnel supervised
 - 6.3. cooperates with college/university training programs
 - 6.4. sponsors professionals during Clinical Fellowship Year

C. Major Function: Managing and Conducting Therapy

- 1. Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of North Carolina Standard Course of Study in management of communicative disorders.**
- 2. Collaborates/consults with classroom teachers in the management of speech-language disorders.**
- 3. Plans evidence-based interventions appropriate for individual students and groups of students.**
 - 3.1. implements the service delivery model most appropriate to the students' degree of severity
 - 3.2. provides activities commensurate with students' interests and aptitudes
 - 3.3. modifies therapeutic instructional approaches and other functions from data gathered during therapy

- 3.4. selects/implements evidence-based practices which support the goals and objectives of the speech, language and hearing program
4. **Uses evidence-based methods and techniques appropriate to stated objectives.**
 - 4.1. designs, selects and/or modifies special curricula/therapy content
 - 4.2. uses a variety of equipment, materials, devices and aids
 - 4.3. uses systematic and evidence-based intervention strategies to foster communicative competence
 - 4.4. provides feedback and reinforcement to students
5. **Manages the facilities, materials and equipment, including assistive technology, necessary to the delivery of services.**
 - 5.1. requests adequate facilities, materials and equipment
 - 5.2. uses and maintains facilities, materials and equipment in an optimal manner
 - 5.3. arranges therapy environment to create optimum learning conditions
 - 5.4. chooses therapy materials to meet the needs, age, cultural differences and interests of individual students
6. **Adjusts intervention strategies based upon student performance.**
 - 6.1. uses systematic procedures for review of student progress
 - 6.2. changes activities on basis of student progress
7. **Promotes effective interpersonal relations with students.**
 - 7.1. uses language appropriate to the listener
 - 7.2. maintains confidentiality of information received
 - 7.3. promotes respect for cultural differences
 - 7.4. encourages others to understand and respect those with disabilities

D. Major Function: Adhering to Local, State, Federal Regulations and Ethical Practices

1. **Completes procedural documentation appropriately.**
2. **Demonstrates knowledge and use of statewide testing procedures.**
3. **Abides by professional code of ethics.**
4. **Develops appropriate IEPs based on students' strengths & needs.**
5. **Demonstrates awareness of professional performance in due process matters and litigious environments.**
6. **Manages time efficiently.**
 - 6.1. submits to the appropriate person(s) and maintains schedule for speech-language screening, hearing screening, diagnostic assessments, therapy/instructional services and other activities
 - 6.2. provides and follows schedules for assigned schools and informs appropriate personnel of departures from schedule
 - 6.3. keeps an updated schedule of each student's therapy
 - 6.4. arranges travel time to maximize contact with students and to accomplish other duties
7. **Engages in continuing education and professional growth activities related to speech-language-hearing and education.**
 - 7.1. participates in professional meetings, symposia and workshops directly related to the speech-language-hearing profession
 - 7.2. reviews speech, language and hearing literature and makes use of new information during therapy and instructional procedures

- 7.3. applies knowledge gained from continuing education activities
- 7.4. explores and disseminates information about new and/or improved methods for serving students

E. Major Function: Liaison

- 1. Provides consultation to parents, teacher and other appropriate school personnel.**
 - 1.1. consults with parents and teachers relative to identified and non-identified students
 - 1.2. consults with other personnel such as the principal, nurse, occupational therapist, physical therapist, psychologist, director of exceptional children, social worker, home-school coordinator, guidance counselor, other speech-language pathologists and special educators
- 2. Seeks the assistance of teachers, parents and others to meet the communication needs of students.**
 - 2.1. gives written information to teachers, parents and others on ways to foster speech-language growth
 - 2.2. talks with teachers formally and informally about individual student's needs and progress
- 3. Consults/communicates with non-school agencies to enhance services.**
 - 3.1. requests specific information on individual student's receiving services from non-school agencies (e.g., clinics, hospitals, physicians, health departments, day care centers, etc.) with signed release of information
 - 3.2. gathers general information about services offered by non-school agencies
 - 3.3. coordinates students' therapeutic service with those provided by non-school agencies by telephone, written communication and/or formal meetings
- 4. Makes recommendations and referrals for audiological/medical and related services.**
 - 4.1. determines needs for referrals, collaborates and consults with audiologist regarding hearing services
 - 4.2. performs hearing screenings in a timely manner
 - 4.3. collaborates appropriately with other allied health professionals (e.g., physicians, therapists, etc.)