



From Everyday Needs to Everyday Strategies: Co-Creating Embedded Preschool Supports Through Occupational Therapy and Teacher Partnerships

Jessica Adams, OTS
Lisa Fyffe, PhD, OTR/L, Assistant Professor
Kara Alcorn-Borodach, OTD, OTR/L
Julie Silver Seidle, PhD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

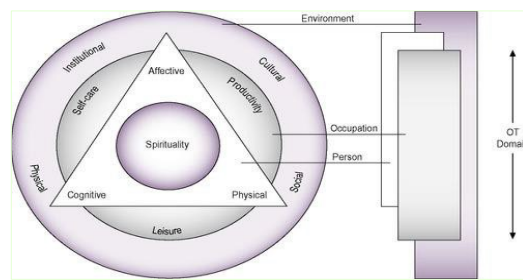
Preschool participation requires foundational skills:
(1) self-regulation (2) social participation (3) independence in daily routines

These skills support engagement in **group learning, peer interaction, transitions, and classroom routines** (Muir et al., 2023; McClelland et al., 2017).

Teachers are supporting increasingly diverse participation needs, and differences in training and access to interdisciplinary support may influence teachers' ability to address these demands (Bierman et al., 2021; OECD, 2021).

Embedded Occupational Therapy (EOT) integrates OT supports within natural classroom routines to **promote participation and build teacher capacity** (Fyffe, 2024).

The Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E) supports this project by emphasizing how person, environment, and occupation interact to enhance children's participation within classroom routines.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal: Identify the everyday support needs of preschool children and examine how EOT can best support both children and teachers through collaborative, classroom-based strategies that promote participation, self-regulation, and independence.

Conduct classroom observations and a needs assessment to identify key barriers to participation in preschool settings.

Collaborate with teachers to co-develop and implement EOT strategies within classroom routines.

Gather data on classroom supports and the effectiveness of EOT using interviews and focus groups.

Analyze data using tracking forms, reflections, and post-intervention feedback to understand the impact of EOT.

METHODS

(1) What are the everyday support needs of preschool children and
(2) What impact does EOT have on teachers' ability to support those needs?

A phenomenological, case-study approach exploring the impact of OTEEC at Teaching Tree Early Childhood Learning Center, a non-profit organization serving families in Larimer County.

Classroom
Observation

10 Week
OTEEC Trial

Focus
Group
Interviews

Data
Analysis

ACTIVITIES

Activity	Phase
Initial Site Observation	Pre-Implementation
Needs Assessment	Pre-Implementation
Collaborative Planning with Teachers	Implementation
Implementation of EOT 10-week trial	Implementation
Modeling & coaching teachers	Implementation
Progress monitoring & reflection	Implementation
Focus Groups & data analysis for manuscript	Post-Implementation

FINDINGS

Classroom Readiness

- Developing regulation through manageable stress
- Independence in everyday routines
- Social participation within peer contexts

Childhood Looks Different

- Caregiver capacity and family stress
- Parenting practices and opportunities for independence
- Media exposure and reduced boredom tolerance

Tools That Work

- Embedded tools increase teacher capacity
- Sustained presence builds relationships and trust
- Collaborative strategies support implementation

OUTCOME EVALUATIONS

- Classroom documentation field notes & reflection
- Teacher & admin feedback
- Semi-structured focus group interviews

Discussion

- Changing childhood experiences (caregiver stress, media exposure, reduced boredom tolerance) may influence development of persistence, flexibility, and engagement.
- Teachers are increasingly supporting foundational participation skills.
- EOT supported sustainable strategies to promote regulation, independence, and social participation.



Conclusion

EOT is a promising, sustainable model for integrating OT into early childhood settings

Supports teacher capacity to meet diverse participation needs in real-world contexts

Highlights the value of OT in promoting school readiness through everyday classroom routines

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to **Lisa Fyffe, PhD, OTR/L**, Capstone Site Mentor and research partner, for her guidance and collaboration throughout this project.

I am grateful to **Teaching Tree Early Learning Center** for their partnership and support.

I also appreciate the mentorship of **Kara Alcorn-Borodach, OTD, OTR/L**, Faculty Mentor, and **Julie Silver Seidle, PhD, OTR/L**, Doctoral Capstone Coordinator, whose support contributed to the successful completion of this doctoral capstone experience.

REFERENCES

Bierman, K. L., Heinrichs, B. S., Welsh, J. A., & Nix, R. L. (2021). Supporting preschool children's social and emotional development through teacher professional development. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 56, 159-172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2021.03.005>
Fyffe, L. (2024). Occupational therapy embedded in early childhood education (OTEEC): Developing a population-focused, place-based approach to early intervention through occupational therapy and early childhood education center partnerships. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools, & Early Intervention*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10445243.2024.2442915>
McClelland, M. M., Cameron, C. E., Duncan, R., Bowles, R. P., Acock, A. C., Miao, A., & Pratt, M. E. (2014). Predictors of early growth in academic achievement: The Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders task. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 599. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00599>
Muir, R. A., Howard, S. J., & Kervin, L. (2023). Interventions and approaches targeting early self-regulation and executive functioning in preschool-aged children: A systematic review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35, 27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09740-5>
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2021). *Starting strong VI: Supporting meaningful interactions in early childhood education and care*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f2608ae-en>