

PHYSICAL THERAPY AT NIS

October is National Physical Therapy Month!
(watch for our display ... coming soon to the lobby!)

“NIS PTs ... help get your kids off on the right foot!”

Starting with a definition ... Physical Therapy at NIS is the process by which a child's gross (large) motor ability is evaluated, and developed, in a structured and organized way. The goal is to enable each individual child to participate in all of the motor activities for that child's age, in a safe and effective manner.

Included at NIS is global developmental reinforcement ... we are all very proud of the way in which all the teachers and therapists work together with our families to bring out the very best that every child can be. For example if we're working on balance and in the classroom they're working on colors; one activity might be carrying pieces to a color-sorting puzzle back and forth across a balance beam and naming them as they are put into the puzzle tray. Certainly we overlap a little with the OTs; we work on posture for climbing, hopping, and skipping while they work on posture for better shoulder and fine motor control.

What does this mean in English? It means that preschoolers should be able to climb, to jump, to hop, to skip, and to ride a tricycle. They should take appropriate risks while learning what their bodies are capable of; and yes, sometimes get into trouble because at this age they lack judgment and a sense of consequence.

It also means that a solid foundation of motor control affects every other area of their development. If your balance is off and you're working to stay in your chair you aren't hearing what your teacher is saying. If your friends are climbing on the playground equipment and you are just running in circles because you feel insecure trying to climb it's going to affect your social relationships and may lead to frustration.

PTs at NIS are very interested in what the children take with them from the physical therapy room. We work closely with Mary our gym teacher to see how skills developing in one-on-one physical therapy translate into more satisfying group gym activities for our children. We contribute to total plans and provide suggestions at team meetings. We're in the classrooms every day observing children, helping with appropriate seating, and running group gross motor games. For the past 2 years PT Valerie has been introducing pediatric yoga to all the classes.

The bottom line? When children are born they know how to suck (eat) and to cry. It has been shown that after 9 months in the womb they can recognize their mother's voice and are comforted by it. They have certain "primitive" reflexes that help to protect them and help them find a source of food. Their very first environmental interaction after that is their attempt to lift their head ... their first attempt to rise against and control gravity; a gross motor task. In order to not only survive in this world but to be effective in it we have to be comfortable with our bodies and we have to be able to control them. That requires a good foundation of gross motor ability and the NIS physical therapy team is dedicated to helping each child become all that they can be.