

School-Based Workload: What's the Magic Formula?

Jodie Williams, OTR/L, MHA,

*Occupational Therapy Manager, Anne Arundel County Public Schools,
Annapolis, MD*

Susan Cecere, PT, MHS,

*Physical Therapy Instructional Specialist, Prince Georges County Public Schools,
Landover, MD*



© Original Artist
Reproduction rights obtainable from
www.CartoonStock.com

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion participants will:

- Understand the need for school-based OTs and PTs to transition from a caseload perspective to a workload perspective
- Learn to create and analyze time study data to determine practice trends **specific to your jurisdiction**
- Understand the need to collect individual practitioner's statistics beyond what is indicated on the IEP to determine actual time spent in the provision of student service

OBJECTIVES (continued)

- Analyze time study and individual practitioner data **specific to your school district** data to create a workload formula to meet practitioners' roles and responsibilities within allotted work hours
- Develop the ability to utilize the information from this presentation to support **your own transition** from caseload to workload



First, a bit of disclaimer....



What is Caseload?

- Caseload is simply the number of students assigned to a practitioner at any given time
 - All students are of equal weight
 - Considers neither the duration nor the intensity of services

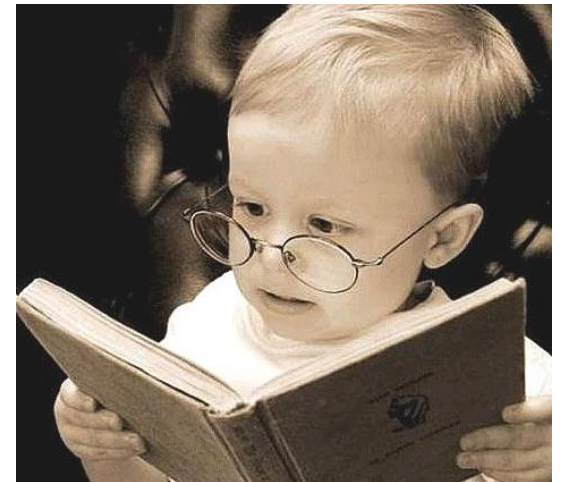


What is Workload, and How does it Differ from Caseload?

- Workload refers to all the activities required and performed by a school-based OTs and PTs
 - Includes activities necessary to support students' educations, implement best practices, and ensure compliance with IDEA and other mandates (Cirrin et al., 2003)
 - Considers time required for face-to-face service with students as well as consultation with team members, travel, documentation, meeting attendance, etc.

Why Should School-Based Practitioners Study Workload?

- A commonly asked question on both OT and PT list serves is, “What is an appropriate caseload size?”
- Concerns have been raised about job satisfaction
- Concerns abound regarding recruitment and retention of shortage category practitioners in school systems, including OTs and PTs
- Minimal research is available for OTs and PTs in the area of caseload and workload



DANGER!



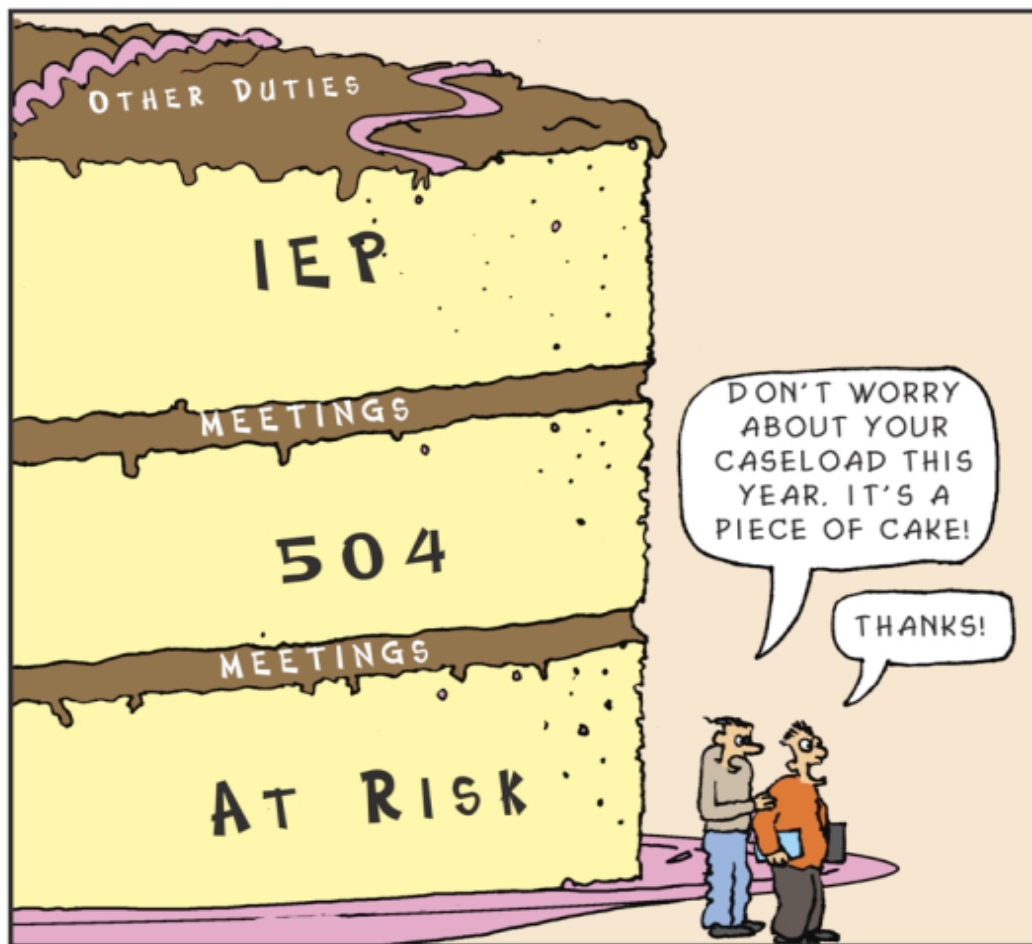
**RISK OF
WORKLOAD
AVALANCHE**

Why is Workload Superior to Caseload?

Workload addresses:

- The changing roles of school-based OT and PT practice due to IDEA 2004 and the emphasis on Early Intervening Services and Response to Intervention (RtI)
- Practitioners' concerns regarding quality services and ethical practices to support positive outcomes in the best interest of students
- Development of staffing models that will meet the needs of students, schools, and practitioners

In addition, workload is better aligned with practice in an educational setting than is caseload, which is more medically-based



© 2000 MICHAEL F. GIANGRECO, ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN RUELLE
PEYTRAL PUBLICATIONS, INC. 952-949-8707

HOW MUCH CAKE CAN ONE PERSON EAT?

The History of Our Journey

- Counting heads
- Weighting students
 - Adding intensity (significant health issues, demanding principals, high needs issues, challenging family dynamics)
- Staffing based solely on direct services
 - Little recognition of the time requirements for effective consultative services on behalf of students
- **As staff therapists, we thought....**
.....“there must be a better way!”

Multiple Concerns

Practitioner Concerns

- How can I:
 - Provide ethical services?
 - Be a good team member?
 - Pick up yet another student?

Team Concerns

- Will the OT and/or PT:
 - Join us for collaboration?
 - Be part of our IEP and Team Meetings?
 - Provide assistance for students with challenging issues?

Administrative Concerns

- How much service is required to promote positive student outcomes?
- When will I know an OT or PT cannot take another student?
- How many staff members do we need?

All Issues Boiled Down to Time

- Collaborating and problem solving with teams
- Attending multiple meetings
- Contributing to positive student outcomes
- Communicating with team members, parents, and administrators

- How do we support therapists given the demands on their time?
- We needed to develop a hypothesis!!!!



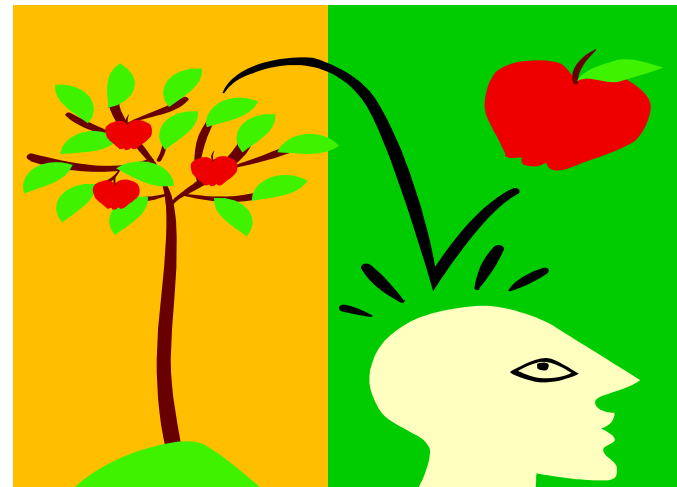
HMMM....Could it be a Workload Approach?

- Involves a complex interaction of factors
- Varies from school system to school system
- As caseload increases so do does workload
 - But not just working with student
 - increased time in meetings
 - increased paperwork
 - perhaps increase in travel



Development of Our Hypothesis

- Hypothesis:
 - Services on behalf of students (indirect services) are equivalent to services to students (direct services)



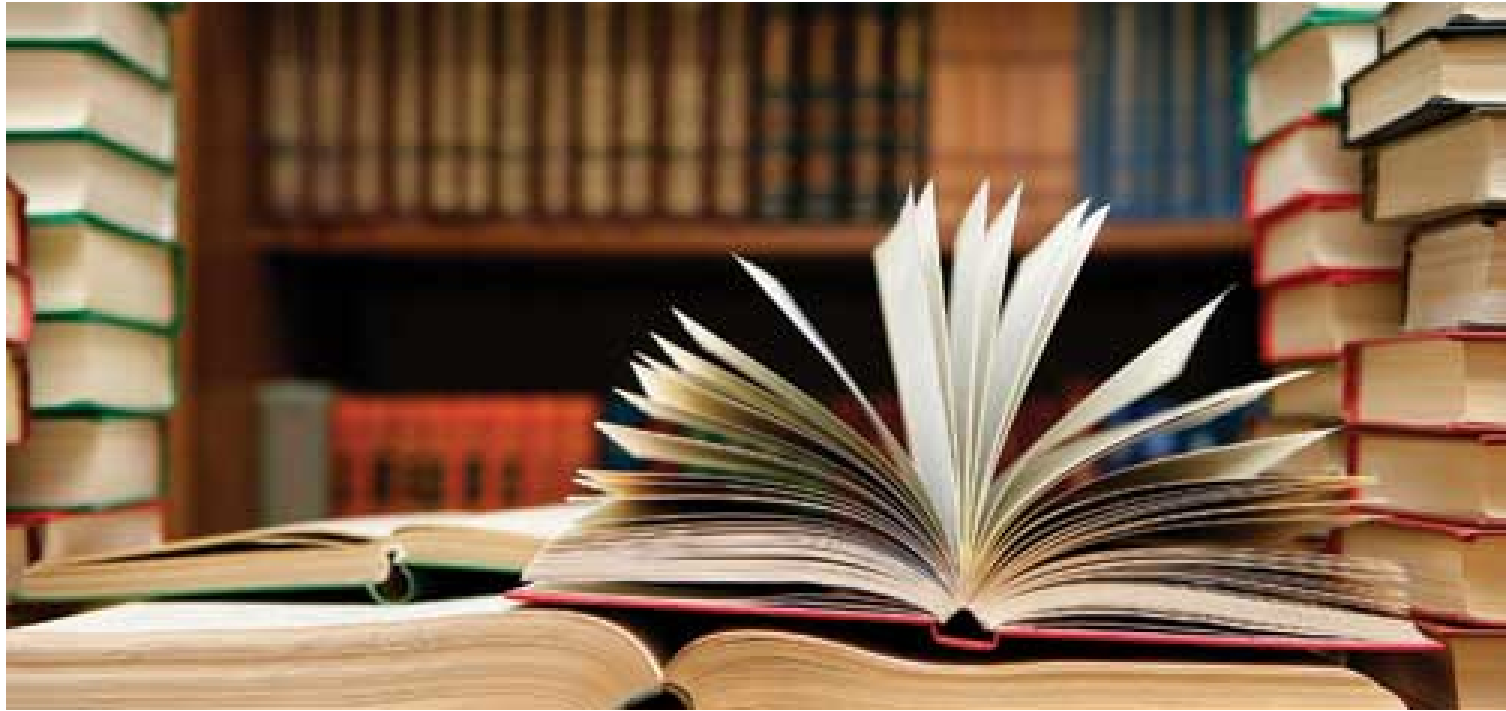
Sue & Jodie's Excellent Adventure



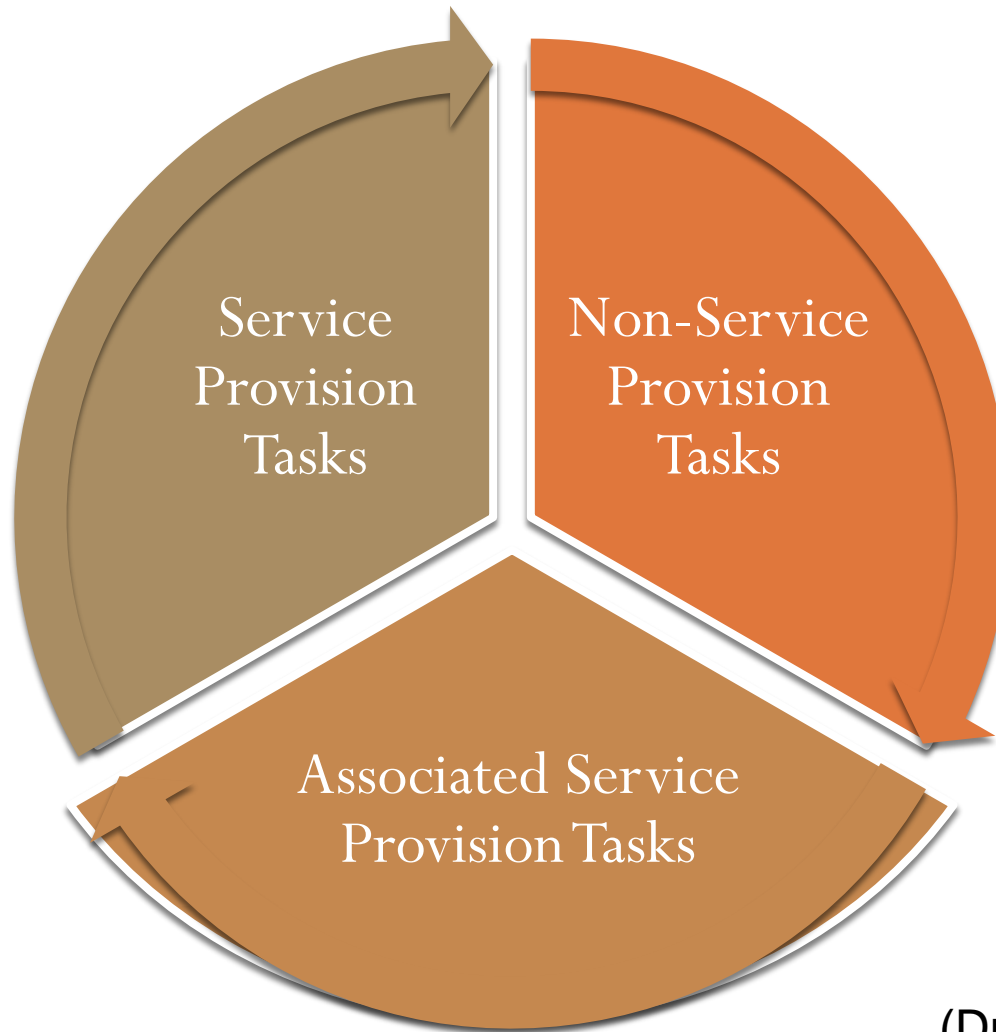
Steps of Our Adventure

- Defined workload
- Identified stakeholder concerns
- Developed hypothesis
- Conducted a literature review, examining our own professional organizations as well as others
- Brainstormed categories of work activities and developed a time study
- Analyzed results
- Identified our own staff's practice trends
- Recognized the need to take the workload a step further

We Conducted a Literature Review



Workload Activities by Clusters



(Dunn, 2000, p. 15)

Other Professional Organizations

- For further guidance, we began looking to other professional organizations with school-based practitioners, including the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)



Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)

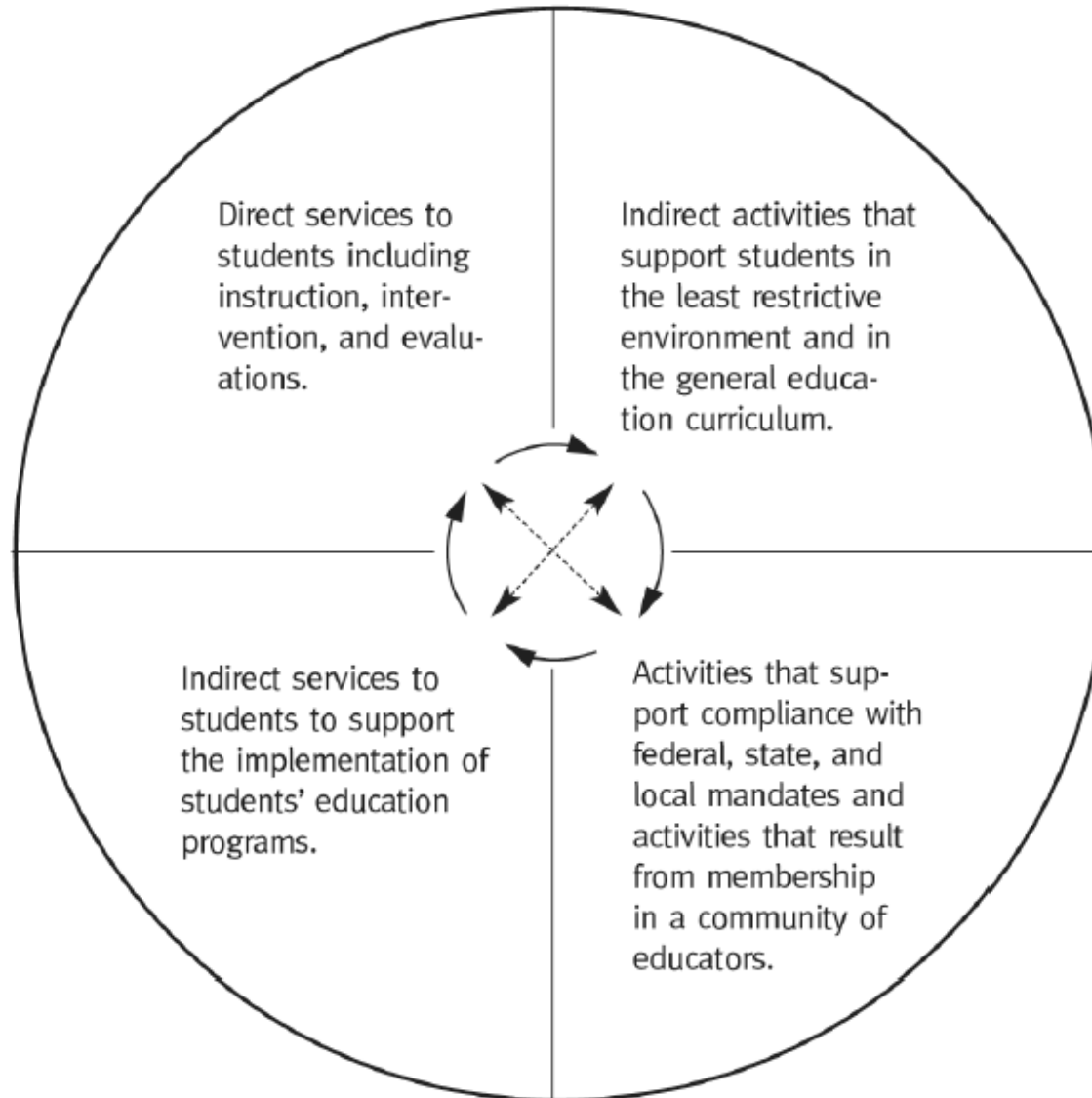


- Caseload standards should be based on the analysis of workload activities
- There is no maximum or minimum regarding caseload
- Consider how much time is available – each day, week and month
- Consider the expanding responsibilities of SLPs

ASHA position paper (2002)

“A workload analysis approach to setting caseload standards is necessary to ensure that students receive the services they need, instead of the services SLPs have time to offer or services based on administrative convenience. “

SLP Activity Clusters



Workload Analysis

It is necessary to document all workload activities to:

- Provide appropriate services to meet students' needs
- Ensure compliance with education agency mandates
- Implement evidence-based practice (EBP)

(ASHA, 2002)

We Brainstormed!

- Created lists of all the different types of activities that encompass our roles as school-based practitioners
- Divided lists into discrete categories of activities



Our Categories*

*unique to each jurisdiction

- Direct services
- Indirect services
- Meeting attendance
- Travel
- Program documentation
- IEP documentation
- Supervision/Mentoring
- Pre-intervening services
- Professional development
- Other

A Time Study was Born!



Our Time Study

Book1 - Microsoft Excel

File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View

M6

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	2012-2013 School OT/PT Program											
2	Enter an x in the box where appropriate											
3	Day	Time	D	I	M	T	PD	IEP-D	ProfD	Sup/ Men	Pre	Other
4	Tues	7:00										
5	Tues	7:15										
6	Tues	7:30			X							
7	Tues	7:45			X							
8	Tues	8:00					X					
9	Tues	8:15		X								
10	Tues	8:30	X									
11	Tues	8:45	X									
12	Tues	9:00		X								
13	Tues	9:15	X									
14	Tues	9:30		X								

Sheet1 Sheet2 Sheet3

Ready 100%

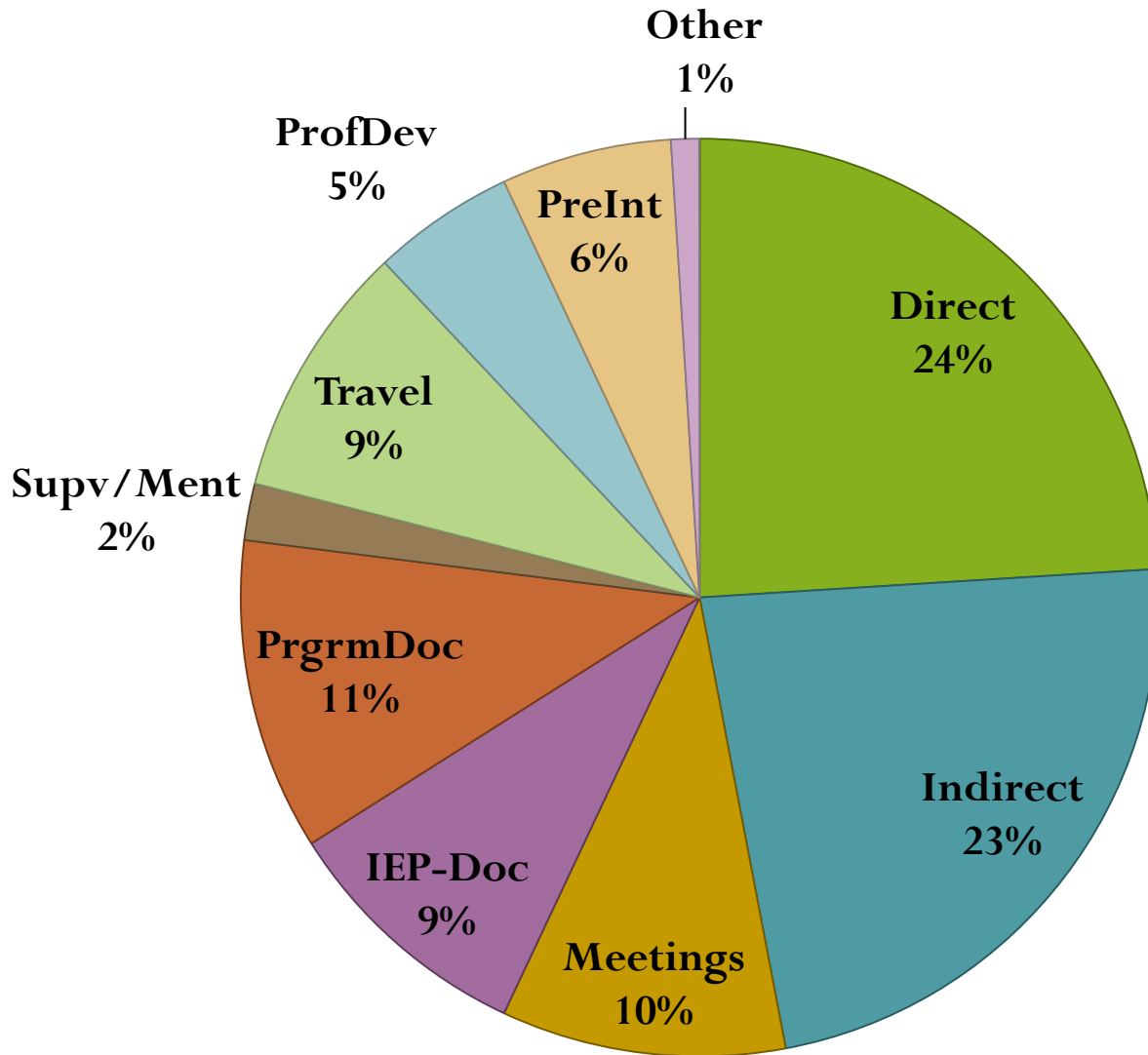
- Created a time study reflecting our categories
- Collected data from practitioners

Indirect Services and IDEA Law

Federal special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), makes no reference to direct or indirect services, but it does state that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must include a statement of the special education and related services *... to be provided to the child or on behalf of the child...* 300.320(a)(4)(i).

We Analyzed Results





Professional Validation

Practice Tips for Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants
From the American Occupational Therapy Association

Transforming *Caseload* to *Workload* in School-Based and Early Intervention Occupational Therapy Services



Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants working in schools and early intervention (EI) settings often are faced with growing caseloads, and so they ask “What is a reasonable caseload?” Expanding caseloads can involve increased demands on time, including use of consultation; innovation in direct services in general education environments; meetings with teachers, families, and others; obtaining and evaluating information about children’s performance; and traveling between schools or homes. How well one manages these and other tasks will affect the quality and availability of occupational therapy services, student outcomes, and a child’s success in the natural environment or at school.

Transforming caseload into workload requires thinking not only about caseload “numbers” but also about what is the most effective “work” that occupational therapy professionals can perform. The question for therapists and administrators is not “Are you doing things right?” but rather “Are you doing the right things?” Recognizing and defining what is appropriate work in school-based and EI practice are important tasks for occupational therapy practitioners and their supervisors.

What Is the Difference Between *Workload* and *Caseload*?

The concept of *workload* encompasses all of the work activities you perform that benefit students directly and indirectly. *Caseload* refers only to the number of children seen by occupational therapy as part of the individual education program (IEP) or individualized family service plan (IFSP).

A traditional caseload “counting” approach does not fully appreciate the complexity of the occupational therapy role in current best-practice scenarios. Pull-out services built around a clinical model of predictable, routine “appointments” have limited support in the educational literature and do not necessarily promote the generalization of skills to the classroom or other appropriate settings. Many school districts still use this approach. A simple caseload also does not recognize the potential occupational therapy contribution to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004’s (IDEA’s) participation focus or its mandate that services support access to and progress in the general education curriculum or natural environments.

AOTA's Workload Concepts

- Develop a workload approach by:
 - Collecting data:
 - Grouping tasks into categories
 - Completing a time study
 - Calculating the percentage of time spent in each category
 - Analyzing results
- (Jackson, Polichino & Potter, 2006)

AOTA's Viewpoint

“A simple caseload (approach)...does not recognize the potential occupational therapy contribution to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004's (IDEA's) participation focus or its mandate that services support access to and progress in the general education curriculum or natural environments.”

(Jackson, Polichino & Potter, 2006, p. 1)

Light Bulb Moment!!



Remember Our Hypothesis?

- Services on behalf of students (indirect services) are equivalent to services to students (direct services)

Testing Our Hypothesis

Per IEP					Actual								
Dir Wk	Dir Mo	Dir Yr	OT	Rpt Mo	D (units)	I (units)	# M	M units	T U	S U	Ref date	D/C date	
		3	TZ	Mar	2	3							
	0.5		TZ	Mar	4	3	1	2					
		2	TZ	Mar	4	5	1	8					
	1		TZ	Mar	3	4							
0.5			TZ	Mar	8	9							
	0.5		TZ	Mar	2	2				1			
	0.5		TZ	Mar	2	19							
	0.75		TZ	Mar	2	4				1			
	1		TZ	Mar	4	7							
0.5			TZ	Mar	6	5	1	4			3/15/13		

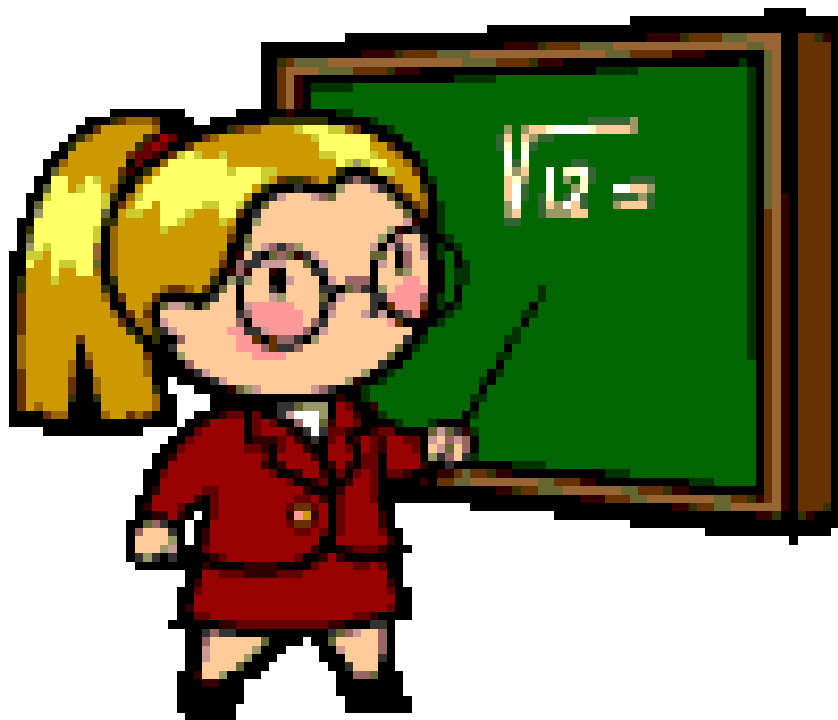
- Practitioners tracked statistics throughout the school year
 - Showed actual time spent with students
 - Included direct, indirect, and meeting time
- Actual service time was compared with our hypothesis
 - Direct service x 2 = total service time

In Addition.....

- Patterns emerged regarding time requirements for weekly, monthly, and periodic services



The “Formula” was created!!

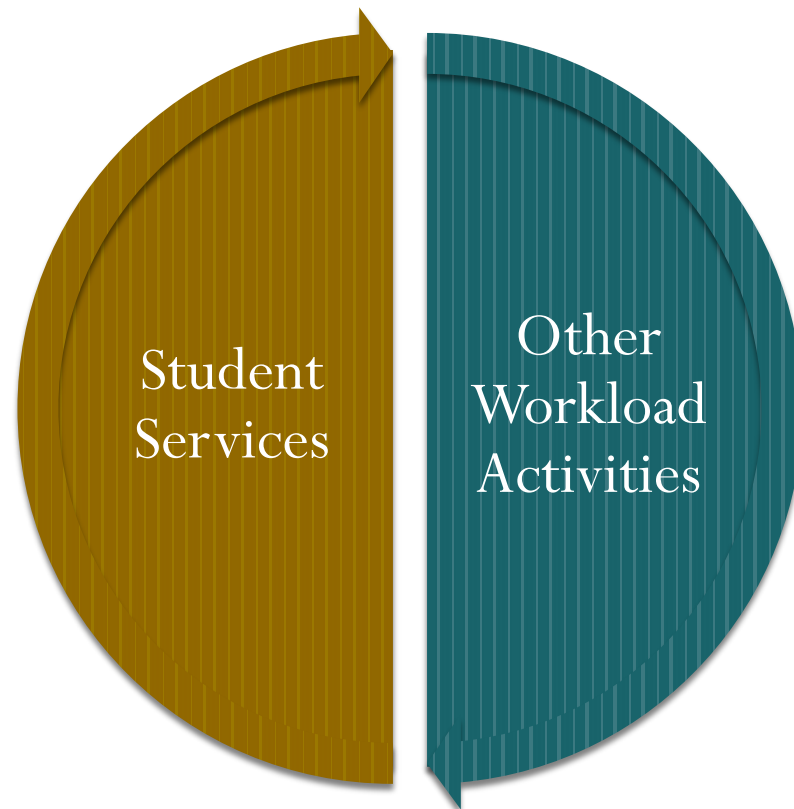


Formula for Anne Arundel Co., MD

- Weekly Students (≤ 0.5 hour/week) Required :
 - .5 hour/week direct service **AND**
 - .5 hour/week indirect service
- Monthly Students (≤ 1.0 hour/month) Required :
 - .25 hour/week direct service **AND**
 - .25 hour/week indirect service
- Periodic Students
 - .2 hour/week direct service **AND**
 - .2 hour/week indirect service

Based on our time study, remember.....

- Student service time (direct + indirect) should equal ~ 50% of a practitioner's work hours



Once a Workload Trend is Established, You Can Develop a Formula to...

- Support ethical practices
- Ensure licensure documentation is completed in a timely fashion
- Ensure quality services
- Attend IEP meetings
- Assist with managing any given practitioner's individual workload for a particular jurisdiction
- Provide data to support staffing for administrators

Workload Worksheet

The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet titled "Book1 - Microsoft Excel". The ribbon includes File, Home, Insert, Page Layout, Formulas, Data, Review, and View. The formula bar displays the formula: $=((B2*0.5)+(C2*0.25)+(D2*0.2))*X2$. The spreadsheet data is as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	School	Weekly	Monthly	Periodic	Workload					
2	A	2	5	4	6.1					
3	B	1	3	5	4.5					
4	C	6	10	3	12.2					
5	D	3	3	4	6.1					
6	E	4	7	5	9.5		0			
7	F	5	9	6	11.9					
8	G	11	8	12	19.8					
9	H	7	4	4	10.6					
10										

Multiple Ways to Use the Formula

- Knowing practitioner availabilities for student services despite working various schedules
- Calculating service time requirements of individual schools
- Easily determining who can best pick up new students or complete a special assignment
- Supporting requests for additional positions on therapy staff

Example: Using Formula to Make Practitioner's/School Assignments

OT: $37.5 \text{ hours/week} = 18.75 \text{ hours available for student service}$

Possible School Assignments:

- A: 2 weekly, 4 monthly, 8 periodic=3.6 direct=7.2 hours/week
- B: 4 weekly, 6 monthly, 12 periodic=5.9 direct=11.8 hours/week
- C: 1 weekly, 10 monthly, 9 periodic=4.8 direct=9.6 hours/week
- D: 3 weekly, 2 monthly, 6 periodic=3.2 direct=6.6 hours/week

Best combination: Schools B & D



With Respect to Workload, OTs are Not Alone!



Special Education Teachers

- According to Jackson (2003), “Over 60 percent of states have some type of regulation/policy addressing caseload/class size in regard to students with disabilities.”
 - The state of Illinois (Hanselman, 2009) limits class sizes for special ed teacher to 8 - 15 students
 - In Oklahoma, “Class Size for all placements in special education shall be no more than ten children at anytime.” (Caseload/Class Size Requirements, 2007).



School Psychologists

- “[Caseload] approaches are one-dimensional, do not provide a mechanism for evaluating the quality of services being delivered, do not take into account the needs of the particular population of students served, and do not address the many indirect activities that support staff and students.”



(Feinberg, Nuijens, & Canter, 2005)

APTA



APTA Pediatric Section Workload Study

- Student service and documentation for one work week was 63% of a FTE as compared to the AOTA recommendation of 72% of one FTE for student service & documentation.
- PT: 46% of an FTE spent in Direct and Indirect, 17% of an FTE spent in documentation tasks

As compared to Dunn's 2002 study:

- OT: 52% of an FTE spent in Direct and Indirect, 20% of an FTE spent in documentation tasks

Selling the Workload Idea to Administrators



Workload versus Caseload



“If you’re wondering why you’ve been chosen ‘Employee of the Week,’ it’s because your work load is about to increase, while your pay remains the same.”

Advantages to Workload

- Recognizes the complexity of the practitioner's role in best-practice scenarios
- Promotes occupational justice for all students
- Expands the role of school-based occupational therapy beyond direct service delivery
- Improves practitioners' job satisfaction; thereby supporting recruitment and retention efforts

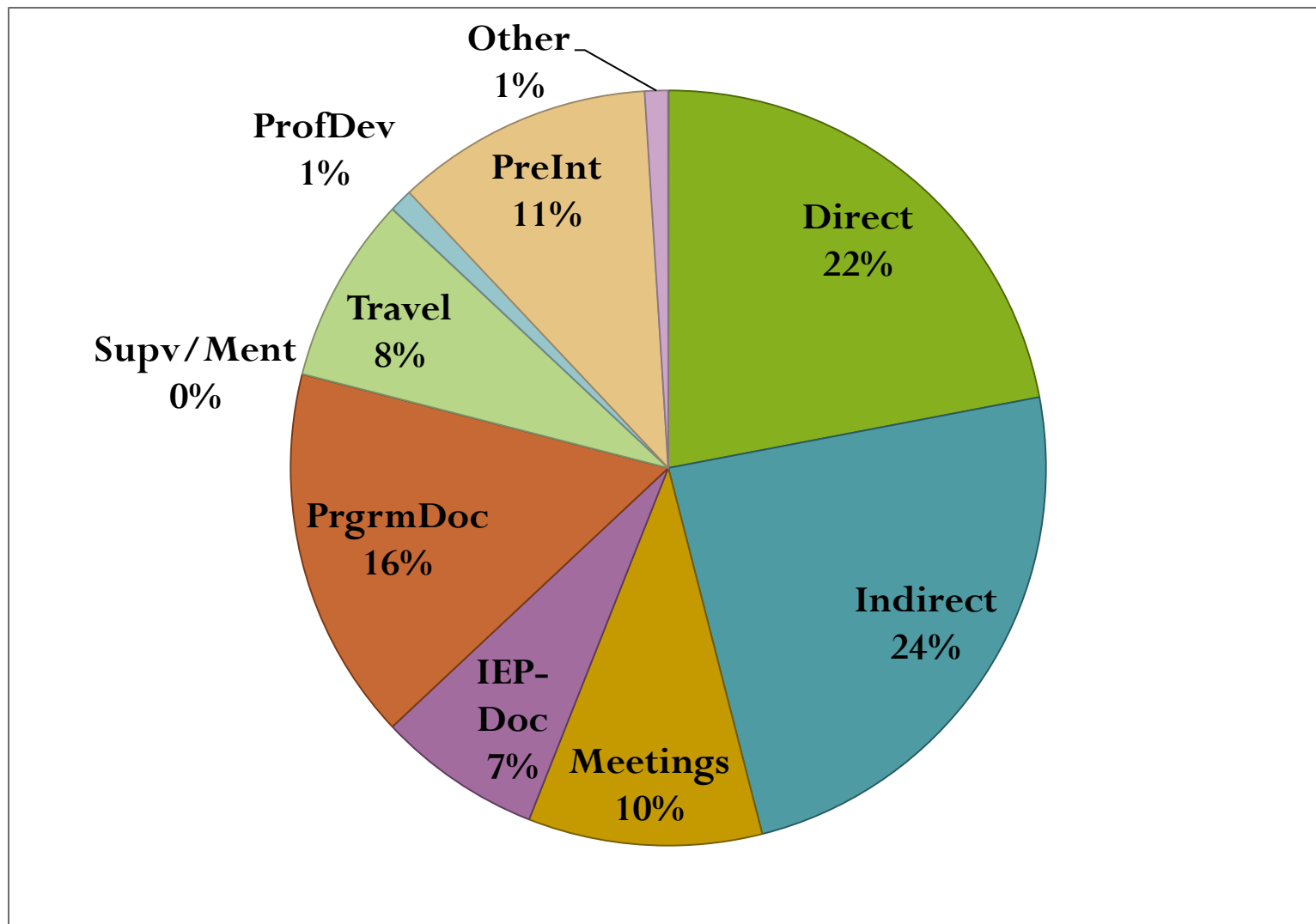


Disadvantages to Workload



- Requires administrative support
- Takes time to gather sufficient data for decision making
- Requires additional coordination and communication
- Implementation is dynamic rather than static

Workload is Ever-Evolving



On-Going Efforts and Advocacy



North Carolina

- Developed a weighted system for school based OT, PT, and SLP practitioners based on severity of disability, the number of evaluations, and the number of and distance between service sites.



(Ray, Holahan, & Flynn n.d.)

Ohio



- Ohio law recognizes workload considerations for school-based OT and PT practitioners
- Limits the number of children/students an OT or PT can carry on caseload at any given time

(Ohio OTPTAT Board, 2013)

Texas

- After implementing a workload approach, the Houston School District noted a significant decrease in SLP vacancies as well as improved quality of services, increased collaboration among service providers, and enhanced ability to identify students needing services.



(ASHA, n.d.)

AOTA, APTA, & ASHA



- Advocacy efforts by AOTA, APTA, and ASHA are currently underway to create a joint paper encouraging school systems to adopt a workload approach for their OT, PT, and SLP practitioners

Your Adventure Begins.....

- Brainstorm workload activities with colleagues in your district
- Develop categories of activities
- Document time spent in the different categories
- Analyze results
- Establish practice patterns based on information from your jurisdictions
- Join forces with other disciplines
- Meet with administrators to advocate for the adoption of a workload approach



Questions?



We're Here to Help Please Contact Us!

- Jodie Williams:

JKWilliams@aacps.org

- Sue Cecere:

Susan.Cecere@pgcps.org



Acknowledgement

- None of the work contained in this presentation would have been possible without the dedication and conviction of the occupational and physical therapists who tracked their time and provided statistical documentation for their caseloads during the period we collected data. To the fine OT and PT practitioners who worked through the Anne Arundel Department of Health providing services to children in association with Anne Arundel County Public Schools during school years 2003-2007, we offer our heartfelt thanks.

~ Jodie & Sue

References

- American Speech-Language Hearing Association (n.d.). State and local workload activity: Texas. Retrieved February 14, 2013 from: <http://www.asha.org/slp/schools/districtworkloadchart/>.
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2002). *A workload analysis approach for establishing speech-language caseload standards in the schools: guidelines* [Guidelines]. Available from www.asha.org/policy.
- Caseload/Class Size Requirements. (2007). Retrieved October 11, 2009 from: http://sde.state.ok.us/Curriculum/SpecEd/pdf/Docs_Forms/English/Caseload_ClassSize.pdf.
- Cirrin, F., Bird, A., Biehl, L., Disney, S., Estomin, E., Rudebusch, J., Schraeder, T., and Whitmire, K. (2003) Speech-language caseloads in the schools: A Workload Analysis Approach to Setting Caseload Standards. *Seminars Speech Language*. August 24(3): 155-80.
- Dunn, W. W. (2000). Best practice occupational therapy: In community service with children and families. Thorofare, NJ: Slack.
- Feinberg, T., Nuijens, K. L., & Canter, A. (2005, March). Workload vs. caseload: There's more to school psychology than numbers. *NASP Communique*, 33(6). Retrieved March 31, 2013 from: <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/cq336workload.aspx>.
- Hanselman, E. (2009, May 1). Guidance on special education class size for 2009-2010 and Beyond. Memo. Retrieved October 11, 2009 from: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/SPEC-ED/pdfs/guidance_09-01.pdf.

References

- Jackson, T. L. (2003, September). Caseload/class size in special education. Project Forum at NASDSE. Retrieved October 11, 2009 from: http://www.projectforum.org/docs/caseload_2003.pdf
- Jackson, L., Polichino, J., & Potter, K. (2006) *Transforming Caseload to Workload in School-base and Early Intervention Occupational Therapy Services*. Bethesda, MD: American Occupational Therapy Association. Available from: <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/Resources/Docs/FactSheets/School/38519.aspx>
- Ohio OTPTAT Board. (2013, March). Update from the Ohio occupational therapy board: Understanding the board and its rules. Retrieved March 31, 2013 from: <http://otptat.ohio.gov/Portals/0/ppt/2013%20youngstown%20warren%20oota.pdf>.
- Pacer Center. (2010). Direct and indirect services. Action Information Sheet. Retrieved March 31, 2013 from: <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c180.pdf>.
- Ray, L., Holahan, L., & Flynn, P. (n.d.). Guidance in determining FTE & workload for occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech-language pathology staff. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved March 31, 2013 from: <http://freedownloadb.com/doc/north-carolina-department-of-public-instruction-30048415.html>.