

Better Together: OT and SLP Co-Treatment in Action



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Presenter Disclosures

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Co-treating in the Schools

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Logistics

Co-Treatment

“When practitioners from different professional disciplines can effectively address their treatment goals while the patient is engaged in a single therapy session.”

The American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA)

WHO

High Support Needs Profiles



Children who have significant behavior, sensory, or motor needs.

WHO

- For a student using AAC or other assistive tech, SLP focuses on language use while OT ensures the student can physically access and manipulate the device.
- Joint sessions help the student process sensory input more effectively while working on functional communication and motor planning.
- OT can support core stability and positioning while the SLP works on breath support and voice production in the same session.
- OT works on grasp, tool use, manipulation of objects while the SLP targets 1-step directions and functional imitation.



Positives

- Improved outcomes on IEP goals
- Increased attention & motivation
- Team approach to behavior
- Sensory regulation support
- Efficient goal achievement
- Increased modeling
- Less time pulled from LRE
- Reinvigorate yourself!
- Flexibility to engage with different toys and activities
- Creating consistent strategies and expectations across domains

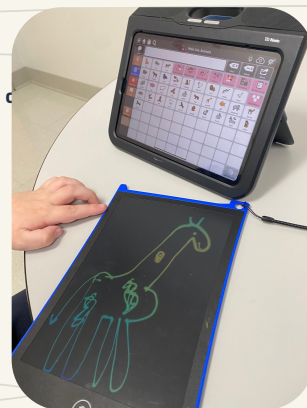


Negatives

- Fewer total service minutes
- Competing attention to two adults
- Overstimulation
- Possibility of less \$ recouped by Medicaid billing
- Perception from others

Barriers

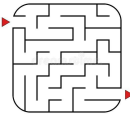
- Scheduling conflicts (shared spaces, in buildings on different days)
- Billing and reimbursement
- Lack of administrative support
- Lack of cooperation with other professions (OT, SLP, PT, teacher)
- Differing therapeutic approaches
- Caseload/workload restrictions



Stakeholder Buy-In

Path to approval for co-tx:

Direct supervisor buy-in
Pilot groups
MTSS/Behavior Team Strategy



**You can do imperfect work,
In an imperfect system,
And still make a difference.**

@GrowingJoyOT

IEP Documentation

Present Level of Performance:

Rationale for co-treatment explained.
Current functioning and specific minutes.

Service Delivery:

"Speech/language therapy in an individual setting (may include push-in, pull-out, and/or in conjunction with other disciplines as needed to best meet student needs) focusing on functional communication skills including expressive and receptive language using modeling, visual/verbal cues, corrective feedback, and repeated practice.

IEP Documentation

Progress Report

Clearly state if student is participating in co-tx.

Clearly state when that changes.
"Student participated in co-treat session with SLP and OT until March 10. (Insert Data). Student began 1:1 session with the SLP from March 10-May 25. (Insert Data.)

Billing

- Medicaid specific to your state
- Billing company specific

Our Experience

- Ohio - OT is "timed" and Speech is "un-timed"
- Can bill same times or divide the time and each service bills for half.
- Make sure your documentation lists CO-TX every time!

Scheduling

- Plan for your co-tx kids first.
- Leave flexibility in your schedule, especially if you qualify many kids over the year.
- Consult other service providers to reduce overlap.



Collaboration & Planning

Elevator Pitch

In therapy, I love to begin a session with an FUN-ctional sensory preparatory activity.

I focus on functional fine motor skills, such as foundational play skills, pre-writing skills and cutting skills.

I bring in a variety of activities that can be easily graded up and down. I like to collaborate beforehand if I need to address specific goals or collect specific data!



In therapy, I like to encourage play and focus a lot on imitation of play!

I focus on total communication and try to model AAC without expectation.

If I need something specific targeted, I'll tell you before a session!

I have a terrible memory and am NOT offended if you remind me of something multiple times.

I'm flexible to bail if something isn't going well or stay with something that works.

Vulnerability

It takes bravery to sign up to co-treat!

Vulnerability

1. Admitting Knowledge Gaps Across Disciplines

SLPs and OTs must acknowledge when they don't fully understand the other's methods or rationale. Being open to learning—without fear of appearing unskilled—builds mutual respect and deepens interdisciplinary understanding.

2. Avoid Assumptions!

Have the best intentions and expect the best intentions too. Model phrases while you work together like you might say to a family you work with. "I know you might know some of this already but the strategies I'm using are _____. I might cue using _____. I specifically don't want to _____."

Vulnerability

3. Sharing Responsibility for Outcomes

Co-treatment requires both professionals to take joint ownership of successes and setbacks. It can be vulnerable to let go of sole responsibility and trust that both contributions are equally valued and impactful.

4. Navigating Disagreements Honestly

Differences in priorities or treatment styles are inevitable. Being willing to respectfully voice concerns and work through conflict, rather than avoiding it, fosters authentic collaboration and growth.



Lean on each other!

- Brainstorm with your co-tx partner before, during, and after the session about ways to facilitate progress for each student
 - Some of our most productive sessions have occurred from changing something or everything on the fly!
- Reflect on what went great and what could be done differently next time!
- Gain insight into each other's techniques and encourage professional growth through shared learning moments.

Lean on each other!

- Laugh!
 - It's okay to laugh when a student (or the adult) does something silly
- Reduce professional isolation.
 - It can be fun and rewarding to problem-solve together!

Interpersonal Collaboration

1. **Schedule Regular Check-Ins**
 - Set brief weekly or biweekly meetings to align on student goals, session plans, and progress.
 - Use shared calendars or digital planning tools to streamline scheduling.
2. **Establish Clear Roles**
 - Define and respect each other's expertise and scope of practice.
 - Clarify who leads which parts of sessions and how roles may shift depending on the child's needs.
3. **Set Shared Goals**
 - Collaboratively write functional, integrated goals that reflect both disciplines' input.
 - Use joint data collection and progress monitoring methods.

Interpersonal Collaboration

4. **Create Joint Session Plans**
 - Develop co-treatment plans together, ensuring activities address both motor and communication objectives.
 - Plan ahead to avoid overlapping or conflicting strategies.
5. **Use Open Communication**
 - Be transparent about concerns or suggestions, using respectful, solution-focused language.
 - Actively listen and validate each other's perspectives.
6. **Engage in Collaborative Problem Solving**
 - When challenges arise, approach them as a team and brainstorm joint solutions.
 - Avoid blaming—focus on what works best for the child.

Interpersonal Collaboration

7. **Share Professional Knowledge**
 - Take turns explaining new techniques or strategies relevant to your field.
 - Offer to observe each other's individual sessions for better understanding.
8. **Celebrate Wins Together**
 - Acknowledge successes, big or small, in team meetings or informal conversations.
 - Share positive feedback about your collaboration with school staff and families.
9. **Be Flexible and Respectful of Time**
 - Understand each other's caseload pressures and deadlines.
 - Be open to adjusting plans if needed to support collaboration.
10. **Document Collaboratively**
 - Use shared digital forms or notes to track co-treatment plans and progress.
 - Align documentation styles where possible to streamline reporting.

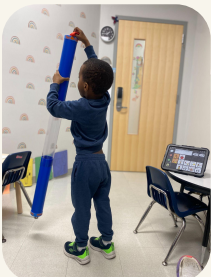
Planning

Alternating Activities:

Each therapists bring their own materials. We alternate activities that each has brought, both joining in on all activities.

Joint Planning:

Therapists plan all or some activities together for the session.



Planning

- When we alternate activities, we alternate who "leads" but no one is disengaged.
- It takes real SLP effort to not "cue" or "model" non-stop but we need to focus on the task and adjust.
- If a student struggles with a lot of input, adjust to just one adult speaking/providing visual cues but the other adult still engages and supports.

Learning to Read/Cue Each Other

- More time together, more insight into the other person but until you have built that relationship:
- Explicitly tell your partner what you will need/want.
- Determine in advance how you will handle behaviors or who will take the lead on behaviors that day.

Service Location

Choose a room and maintain that space for routine and consistency.

Utilize having two people to your advantage for out of the office activities.

Hallways, wagon rides, tricycle rides, playground, trampoline, swings, animal walks



Goal Writing

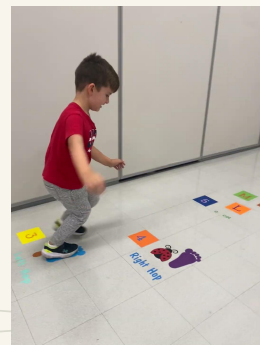
Goals

- Use overlapping goals to drive session planning
 - Examples
 - Tracing and directional language
 - Non-preferred fine motor activities and functional play
 - Imitating- puzzles, blocks, simple pre-writing
- For new IEP periods, brainstorm goals and objectives that could be serviced collaboratively
 - Examples
 - Closed- ended tasks (puzzles, string beads, etc.)
 - AAC/ touch screen device accessibility

Therapy

Transitions

- Transition objects
- Sensory Paths
- Strategic trampolines
- Physical activities (bike)
- Wagon rides
- Ready, Set, Go, RUN!
- Fly home!
- Picture cards

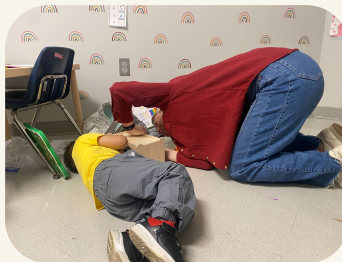




Ms. A

*Autism Spectrum Disorder
Non-speaking
Seeks hugs and lap sitting.*

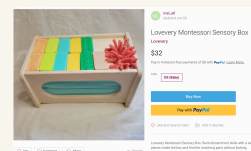
*Goal Focus
SLP: AAC, Joint Attention, basic commands
OT: Stylus for AAC access, effect media, engage with fine motor activity 1 min.*



Activity: Lovevery Montessori Sensory Box

OT: Relationship Building

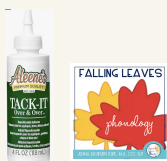
SLP: People > Things



Activity: Fall Minimal Pair Phono Cards

OT: Regulation/movement, turn-taking, hand strength

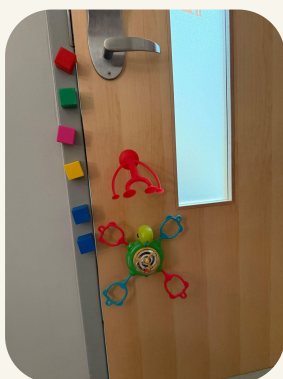
SLP: Imitating actions, single-step directions,



Activity: Magnetic Blocks

OT: Blocks Stacking!

SLP: Imitating actions, single-step directions,



Activity: Door Toys

OT: Manipulating Blocks, pulling off suction toys for hand strengthening

SLP: Imitating actions, single-step directions,

Not eloping!



Activity: Ice Painting

OT: Tool use/grasp

SLP: Descriptors (cold, wet), actions (paint, squeeze)



Activity: Peppa Pig Toys

OT: Imitation, Regulation

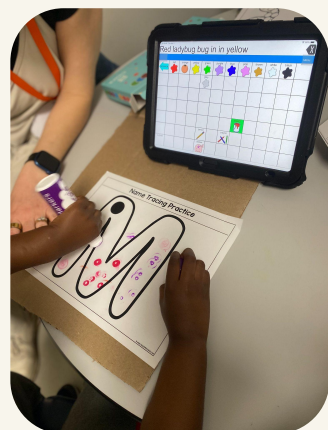
SLP: Learning verbs, imitation, engagement with toys



Activity: Tot Tube Playset

OT: Bilateral coordination, grasp and release, visual tracking,

SLP: cause/effect, building anticipation (ready, set, go), "oh no"



Activity: Dot Markers

OT: Tool grasp, effecting media, letter ID for their name, task completion

SLP: cause/effect, imitating, AAC colors



Activity: Little Tikes Rolling Xylophone Toy

OT: Tool grasp, bilateral coordination, following patterns

SLP: cause/effect, imitating



Mr. J

Autism Spectrum Disorder
Difficulty transitioning.

SLP: Mitigating gestalts to express novel ideas, simple what doing/personal questions, directions with simple positional concepts

OT: Prewriting shapes, name tracing



Activity: Butterfly Coffee Filter

OT: Pre-writing strokes, task sequencing

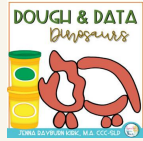
SLP: Novel phrase development, modeling variety of sentence structure types



Activity: Play Dough, Dough and Data Progress Monitoring Sets

OT: Hand strengthening, bilateral coordination,

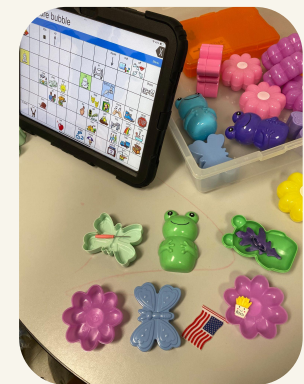
SLP: Simple WH questions



Activity: Melissa & Doug Tops

OT: Pincer Grasp

SLP: Action verbs, Location concepts



Activity: Mini Objects in Easter Eggs

OT: pincer grasp, bilateral hand coordination

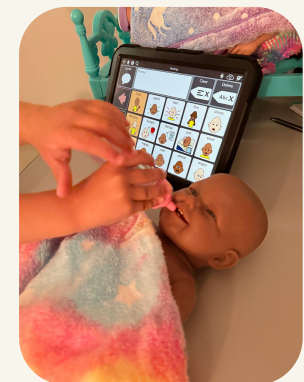
SLP: vocabulary, object functions, wh questions



Activity: Sensory Bin

OT: Tong Grasp

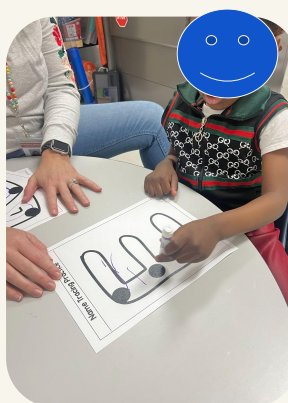
SLP: vocabulary, object functions, wh questions



Activity: Babies

OT: Dressing Dolls

SLP: pretend play, emotion words



Activity: Letter Prac

OT: Grasp, tracing

SLP: Action verbs (cut, squeeze, twist), descriptive words (down, over), and tool names (scissors, marker, tweezers) during activities.



Activity: sticker pages

OT: pincer grasp, bilateral hand coordination

SLP: vocabulary, object functions, wh questions



Activity: Lava Course

OT: Sensory Regulation

SLP: vocabulary, location concepts

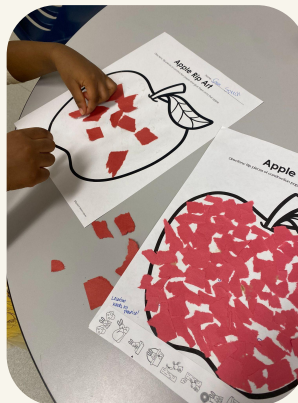


Activity: Beads on Straws

OT: Grasp, Bilateral Coordination

SLP: Core Vocab

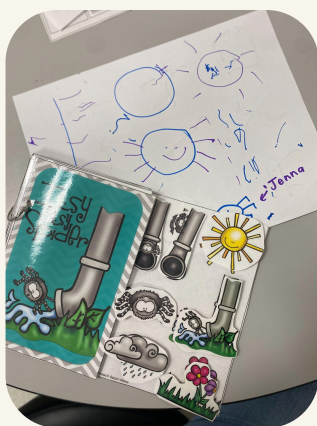
- Small parts warning!



Activity: Rip Art

OT: Hand muscle development, pincer grasp

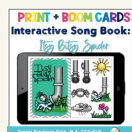
SLP: positional concepts, imitating, matching



Activity: Itsy Bitsy Spider Interactive Vocabulary Book

OT: Imitating (gross motor), prewriting shapes, strengthening

SLP: Singing, imitating, matching



Activity: Torn Paper Flower

OT: Paper Tearing, precision, using glue, sequencing

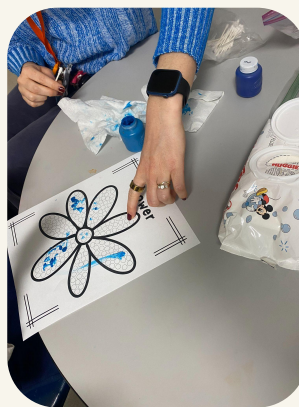
SLP: Describing using "I" sentence models



Activity: Paper Strip Art

OT: Cutting

SLP: Verbs, 1-step directions



Activity: Q-tip Painting

OT: Precision, grasp, tool use

SLP: Engagement, turn-taking



Activity: Caterpillar Bead Craft

OT: Pincer grasp, bilateral coordination, and eye-hand precision while the child picks up and strings beads.

SLP: Sentence formation, focus on modeling & expansion



Ms. C

Autism Spectrum Disorder, Sensory seeker, Climber, Non-Food chewing

SLP: AAC user, single word requests for objects/actions, simple classroom directions, imitate play/gestures

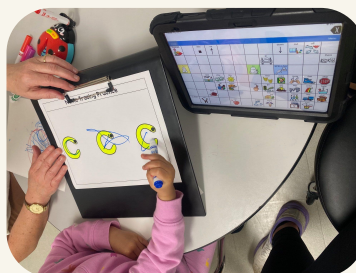
OT: Bilateral coordination to string beads, Effective distal rotation skills to complete small knob inset puzzle, sensory regulation, utilize tools to effect media (trace in the direction of lines, point daubers within 2 inches of defined space, colors within the boundary),



Activity: Instruments & Melissa & Doug Sound Puzzle

OT: Puzzle completion, bilateral coordination on xylophone/drum

SLP: Expressing emotion words (happy, sad, excited), loud/quiet, imitation of instrument play, verbalizing along to songs



Activity: Letter Tracing on Easel

OT: Tool use, grasp, endurance for single-hand use

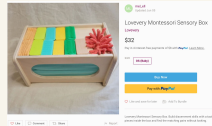
SLP: imitating actions, labeling the shapes ("curve around and stop")



Activity: In/Out Chaos

OT: Tong use for bees into hive, bilateral hand coordination for velcro pieces and turkey bodies

SLP: In/Out, Colors, Animals, Engagement



Activity: Max the Moose

OT: Bilateral coordination, precision, engagement

SLP: Colors, shapes, on/off, requesting



Activity: Peg Board Flowers

OT: Bilateral hand coordination for stacking pegs, creating rows and patterns, scanning, turn-taking building, impulse control,

SLP: Anticipation building!, core vocabulary (up, top, help, down, again), bug noises, pretend play



Activity: Witches Brew

OT: Isolate items, tongs/scoops

SLP: AAC, requests

Activity: Discovery Toys Busy Bugs

OT: supports alignment and precise placement of pieces by matching position, size, and orientation, targets pincer grasp, hand strength, and manipulation as the child picks up and places bugs or pieces onto the pattern card

SLP: Color matching, positions, patterns, concept focus same/different, core vocab (like, don't like)



Mr. G

Hx: Autism. Start school at 5.

SLP: Imitate actions, Total communication requests (word, sign, AAC), Simple directions

OT: Basic Chunk/Inset puzzle (6-8 pieces), Imitate pre-writing strokes, Engage after a sensory activity.



Activity: Cutting Fruit/Vegetables

OT: Bilateral coordination, grasp patterns on tools, planning and executing meal routines

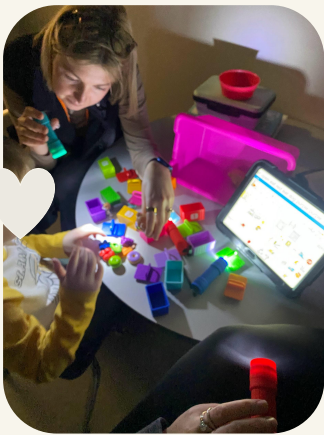
SLP: Vocabulary, actions words (cut, look, eat), simple pretend play, sharing materials and engagement



Activity: Bug Sensory Bin

OT: Grasp strength, precision, and tool use (e.g., using tongs to pick up bugs), tactile exploration, sequencing complex motor activities (finding specific bugs), visual scanning, pre-writing circles

SLP: Simple "where" questions, AAC core vocabulary (in, out, here, off), bug vocabulary, requesting, "ew, oh no, yuck"



Activity: Picnic Baskets + Flashlights

OT: Visual scanning and tracking, hand strength & pincer grasp, bilateral coordination,

SLP: Simple directions (lights off), core focus vocab: "open", "find it", "in/out", sorting by color/attributes, social routines for picnic, simple WH questions,



Activity: Pumpkin Pie Craft

OT: Functional tool use (scissors, glue stick, paint brush), sensory exploration, aligning/matching model, sustained attention at task

SLP: Sequential vocab (first, next, last), requesting materials, imitating actions, descriptive terms (colors, size, shape), sharing materials,



Activity: Fisher-Price Giant Rock-A-Stack & White Board

OT: Prewriting circles, reaching, grasping, and release skills, using both hands or whole-arm movements to place rings, motor planning for size stacking, vestibular and proprioceptive input by encouraging sitting, kneeling, or crawling during play

SLP: Core vocabulary "big", "on", "off", making requests, imitating motor movements (stacking rings on our heads, arms), turn taking



Activity: Prewriting Stroke Worksheet

OT: Tracing and copying pre-writing strokes and endurance, coordinating visual input with motor output to follow paths and copy shapes

SLP: Simple verbal commands paired with each stroke/shape "Line down" "down and over" "Down, stop. Over, stop". Model shape/line names, verbs (draw, write, copy)



Mr. A

*Hx of TBI
Wheelchair user, non-speaking*

SLP: AAC with eye gaze, routine 1-step directions

OT: Visual attention & tracking

AAC Access



1. **Positioning and Seating:**
 - Ensure optimal head, neck, and trunk alignment for effective and consistent eye gaze access.
 - Adjust seating systems to reduce fatigue and support posture.
2. **Visual Attention and Tracking:**
 - Develop skills for maintaining gaze and visually scanning across the screen.
 - Support visual-motor integration and reduce visual distractions in the environment.
3. **Motor Planning:**
 - Address motor planning challenges that may affect the student's ability to initiate and maintain gaze.

AAC Access



4. **Endurance and Fatigue Management:**
 - Build tolerance for eye gaze use over time through structured practice.
 - Incorporate breaks and environmental modifications to reduce visual and cognitive fatigue.
5. **Device Access Optimization:**
 - Collaborate with the AAC team to calibrate the eye gaze system based on the student's physical and visual abilities.
 - Recommend mounting solutions and device placement for consistent access.
6. **Sensory Regulation:**
 - Help manage sensory processing needs that may interfere with device use (e.g., light sensitivity, overstimulation).
 - Incorporate sensory strategies to support attention and engagement.

Final Thoughts

When To Discontinue Co-Tx

1. **Targeted Goals Have Been Met Through Co-Treatment**
 - The shared goals that required both disciplines have been achieved.
 - The student now demonstrates independence or improved function in the context of those co-targeted skills.
2. **Minimal Added Benefit from Joint Sessions**
 - Data shows that the child is not demonstrating additional progress in co-tx compared to individual sessions.
3. **Differing Therapy Priorities or Goals**
 - The current goals of each discipline no longer overlap. For example:
 - Speech is now focusing on articulation or higher-level language.
 - OT is focused solely on handwriting or other higher-level fine motor skills.
 - Separate settings may better support individualized skill development.

SLP must-haves

What's in Jenna's Co-Tx Cart?

- Bubbles
- Stacking Toys
- Blue Ramp
- Puzzles
- Hidden Box
- Interactive Vocabulary Books
- Spinning Tops
- "Easter Eggs" in all themes



OT must-haves

What's in Katie's Co-Tx Cart?

- Bingo daubers, markers, various art supplies
- Dry erase sheets + markers
- Tweezers/ tongs
- Box of various fidgets
- Play-doh
- Musical chunk puzzle
- Magnetic blocks
- Bubbles + bubble squeezer toy
- Feed the tennis ball activity



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