

## Physiotherapy in the NWSD

### **What is a Physiotherapist?**

A Physiotherapist is a licensed health care professional that specializes in helping individuals move as independently, efficiently, and comfortably as possible. They can assist in restoring movement and function to as near normal as possible, and help to make adaptations when necessary.

The physiotherapist does this by addressing strength, flexibility, joint range of motion, neurological and physical deficits, balance, coordination, and adaptive equipment. Techniques may include manual therapy (hands on techniques), exercise programs, education, and equipment recommendations.

### **Role of the Physiotherapist in the NWSD**

To provide services to children with disabilities (designated as intense needs), that interfere with their educational needs in the classroom, playground, and participation in peer related activities. Physiotherapists help by:

- **Developing gross motor skills:** these involve the large muscles of the body that enable functions such as balance, posture, coordination, reaching, sitting, walking and kicking. These skills provide the foundation for fine motor skills such as holding objects and writing.
- **Educating:** family, caregivers, and staff in understanding the child's physical challenges and how to assist with and maintain treatment goals at school and at home, implement safe transfers, effective positioning, and use of specialty equipment.
- **Assisting:** in selection and use of specialty equipment.
- **Acting:** as a liaison to the medical community.

### **Which students should be referred to physiotherapy?**

- students with physical/developmental disabilities
- students using wheelchairs or walking aids
- students with limited or altered physical abilities such as poor coordination, unusual walking or running patterns
- poor posture or strength compared to peers
- limited range of motion in joints.