
Educational Therapy Defined

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Ann Kaganoff and a small committee of Board members have formulated this comprehensive description of the entire scope of the field of educational therapy. We believe that this definitional material will be useful to all AET members in our ongoing efforts to educate the public and allied professionals regarding the nature of educational therapy. This information is available, upon request, from the AET office in a published leaflet entitled "Educational Therapy Defined," along with suggestions for using the information. We value comments from users of this material.

1. Definition of the Educational Therapist

An educational therapist is a professional who combines educational and therapeutic approaches for evaluation, remediation, case management, and communication/advocacy on behalf of children, adolescents, and adults with learning disabilities or learning problems.

2. Qualifications and Training Backgrounds of Educational Therapists

Educational therapists generally begin their professional careers in one or more of the areas listed below:

- Regular Education
- Speech and Language
- Special Education
- Advocacy
- Child Development
- Psychological Counseling
- Marriage and Family Counseling

Regardless of previous background, all qualified members of the Association of Educational Therapists (AET) have met rigorous professional requirements in the academic areas of elementary and/or secondary education, child development, educational assessment, learning theory, learning disabilities, and principles of educational therapy. All members have a B.A. degree and currently are required to hold a Masters Degree or equivalent in post-BA course work. They have completed at least 1,500 supervised direct service hours, and are required to complete 40 clock hours of Continuing Education every two years.

To become Certified Educational Therapists, members must meet the following additional requirements: Masters Degree (required); one year membership in AET at the Professional level; 1,000 hours of professional practice; formal written Case Study evaluated and passed by the AET Certification Committee. AET is currently developing Board Certification procedures which will include the above requirements in addition to a formal assessment of professional expertise.

3. Domains of Educational Therapy

- Private Practice
- Public and Private Schools
- Learning Centers
- Clinics
- Hospitals
- Public Agencies

- Businesses and Workplaces
- Community Colleges, Universities, Vocational Schools

4. Age Ranges Served

- Pre-school Children
- School Age Children
- Adolescents
- Adults

5. Client Issues Addressed by Educational Therapists

- Learning Disabilities, a generic term which includes (but is not limited to): Dyslexia, Non-Verbal Learning Disorder, Reading and Writing Difficulties, Math Disabilities
- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Other less common conditions, such as: Asperger's Syndrome, Fragile X, Tourette Syndrome, etc.
- Language Processing Problems
- Visual Processing Problems
- Poor Motivation
- Low Academic Self-esteem
- Poor Organizational and Study Skills
- School and Test Anxiety
- Poor Social Skills
- School Placement and Retention

6. Core Principles of the Practice of Educational Therapy

- Deal directly with the social and emotional aspects that impact learning
- Foster trust, honesty, and mutual respect with client and family
- Respect issues of confidentiality, e.g., release of information, delicate issues of teenagers, etc.
- Understand principles of case management and collaborate to set goals (See #10)
- Become a positive role model
- Create a supportive learning environment where it is safe to take risks and learn from mistakes
- Foster open communication regarding grades, problems at school or work
- Help parents know what is "normal," to provide a realistic frame of reference for appropriate expectations
- Educate parents as to educational therapy goals and the techniques employed to attain them
- Embrace humor as a catalyst for learning; inject humor into the learning process
- Validate client efforts and accomplishments through specific, informative feedback
- Provide expanded input to the ongoing diagnostic process from continuous observation over time and in natural contexts
- Understand and abide by the AET Code of Ethics in all dealings with clients

7. Educational Therapist Skill Areas and Treatment Goals

Assessment:

- Recognizing the presenting problems as the manifestation of the underlying learning issues

- Identifying current problems as well as anticipating problems that may emerge over time as contexts and demands change
- Synthesizing information from other specialists, teachers, parents, caregivers, and the client
- Performing formal and informal assessment leading to differential diagnosis
- Identifying and prioritizing primary versus secondary issues
- Interpreting self administered assessment data and data from other sources
- Understanding the language of Allied Professionals to effectively communicate with client and all involved parties
- Consulting and collaborating with other specialists to identify other needed services
- Analyzing data to design a treatment plan
- Evaluating progress
- Adapting the treatment plan as needed

Client Strengths:

- Developing client awareness of own strengths
- Promoting client's strategic use of strengths to foster independent and effective learning
- Demystifying client needs and limitations
- Facilitating the application of skills in a variety of settings
- Developing client self-advocacy skills

Case Management:

- Understanding the client's learning issues in relation to client context: in the home, school, community and culture
- Observing client at home, school site or workplace to gather contextual data
- Promoting partnership and collaboration amongst all relevant parties
- Determining the need for other specialists if appropriate
- Helping to locate and refer to the most appropriate specialists
- Serving as an informed resource regarding controversial therapies
- Developing parents' advocacy skills

8. Specific Treatment Areas: Academic Aspects of Learning

- Stimulation of intellectual curiosity, to the greatest extent possible for client
- Reading/writing problems, including expressive and receptive language, phonological processing issues
- Comprehension of texts across a range of academic subjects
- Recognition of main ideas and salient features in reading materials
- Synthesis of information from multiple sources
- Development of strategies for task analysis to be applied in a wide range of problem solving and learning situations; problem analysis and problem solving

A Model of Educational Therapy: The Psychoeducational Therapeutic Process



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- Math problems: concepts, computation, reasoning, problem solving, application
- Metacognitive approaches; self monitoring; self evaluation of outcomes
- Strategies that foster concentration and sustained attention
- Active learning
- Organizational skills
- Short term and long term memory; retention and recall of information
- Development of alternative learning/studying approaches
- Recognition of reading, writing, and math as activities having positive personal outcomes and value

9. Specific Treatment Areas: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

- Understanding the interrelationship between learning and social/emotional functioning, and helping to bring about positive change
- Developing competence through academic remediation that promotes improved self esteem
- Providing a safe environment to express feelings and anxieties related to learning processes and school concerns

- Providing therapeutic listening for the reasons behind behaviors that interfere with learning
- Employing strategies to address avoidance and resistance; dealing realistically with self-esteem issues
- Encouraging flexible problem solving
- Knowing when to refer to Allied Professionals

10. Case Management in Educational Therapy

- Help interpret client information and serve as liaison for family and school or workplace
- Help to understand and define issues clearly, resolve differences, and mediate or reconcile all points of view, with the client, the family, teachers, and others pivotal in the client's life (the Ombudsman function)
- Help all parties involved to understand strengths, deficits, temperament, and learning style of client to ensure consistency of approach
- Provide evaluation and advisement regarding procedures that may be recommended and actions that may be taken by Allied Professionals and other involved parties, keeping in mind the best interests of the client
- Use tact and diplomacy to best serve clients
- Negotiate modification of programs where appropriate, including resolving homework issues

11. The Role of the Association of Educational Therapists

- AET is the nationally recognized professional organization for educational therapists, with membership throughout the United States, and in Canada, Australia, and the Republic of Singapore
- AET membership includes Allied Professionals from a variety of related professions: medical, psychological, speech and language, occupational and physical therapy, optometry, etc. AET promotes contact with and professional links to these Allied Professional members.
- AET Board of Directors is comprised of practicing educational therapists who serve on a volunteer basis to guide the organization and set organizational policy.
- AET sets the standards and defines the practice of Educational Therapy for the profession.
- AET invests in the future of the organization and the practice of Educational Therapy through involvement in issues of professional interest and importance.
- AET disseminates information about Educational Therapy and the organization through our Web Site, Public Relations Committee, and other means of communication.
- AET encourages the highest level of professional excellence, by providing access to the most current expertise in our professional area through conferences, workshops, and contact with our most experienced members.
- AET provides opportunities for professional growth within the organization through the certification process. AET maintains ongoing review of membership standards to support high levels of competency within the organization and the profession.
- AET strengthens the profession now and invests in its future growth through certificate programs to train new Educational Therapists.
- The AET office responds to inquiries from members, prospective members, and the general public, maintains an extensive membership database, and makes ongoing improvements in AET brochures and printed materials.
- AET coordinates, supports, and publicizes study groups.
- AET publishes or provides member-specific materials, including *The Educational Therapist* (the Professional Journal), reprints of articles, Code of Ethics, tapes of relevant presentations, etc.
- AET publishes an annual Directory of Members, which is used by AET members as well as public and private agencies for referrals. Both the Directory of Members and the AET Web Site provide the names of all currently Certified Educational Therapists (CET).
- The AET Web Site can be reached at www.aetonline.org.
- AET provides a flow of information to members regarding membership issues and operations, current legislation, current books and research, etc.
- AET engages in community outreach and community service.

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