

## **Occupational Therapy Department**

### **Classroom Strategies**

#### **Performance Concern: Scissor Skills**

**General Information:** Development of scissor skills requires coordination of eyes and hands, coordination of multiple fine muscles within the hand, and coordination of both hands. Students will typically develop these skills given the opportunity for repetition and practice.

#### **Instructional Recommendations:**

- Students learn scissor skills in this development sequence: random snipping → controlled snipping → cutting straight lines → cutting curved lines → cutting simple shapes
- When hand preference is established, the student should hold the paper to be cut with their non-dominant hand, and scissors should be on the dominant hand. When cutting around shapes, the scissors should start on the dominant hand's side of the paper.
- Cue the student to hold their scissors and paper with their thumbs up or with their thumbs facing the ceiling. Arms should be stabilized against the body. The student's chair may need to be pulled back away from the table so arms can be down against the body, to hold paper and scissors just above the lap.
- Some children have difficulty understanding which line to cut so outlining, highlighting, or thickening the lines to cut can be helpful.
- You can also thicken the paper to cut (i.e. tagboard, card stock, or index cards). Construction paper may be easier as it is less 'floppy' than copier paper.

#### **Additional Classroom Activities or Strategies to Support the Development of the Skill:**

- Have children use tongs or tweezers at a classroom learning center. Have a variety of items they can try to pick up and manipulate (e.g. cotton balls, small animals, small blocks, playdough, etc.).
- Use hand-held hole punches during arts and craft activities in your classroom (make sure to cue them to use them in a thumbs up position).
- For young students, you can start practicing skills that develop scissor readiness skills such as, tearing paper, using clothespins, wind up toys, etc.

**Consult your school occupational therapist for additional support and interventions including adaptive scissors.**