

Green Ergonomics

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Introduction: Growing environmental concerns have led to a demand for sustainable development practices. This can be defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”; in essence, it is environmentally and socially conscious design. The goals of sustainability and ergonomics intersect, in that they focus on designing spaces, activities, and products that positively impact both the occupant and the environment.

Occupational therapy practitioners are uniquely positioned to work in the area of green ergonomics, which can be defined as the incorporation of ergonomics into sustainable development for the purposes of improving health, well being, and productivity at both the individual and systems or organizational level. Research has demonstrated that sustainably designed buildings have a positive impact on workers’ health, productivity, and satisfaction.

One area in which OTs have a significant role is within the green school movement. Over 60 million children and adults spend a significant portion of time each day within school environments in the US alone, and that number increases drastically when considering post-secondary education settings. Fostering healthy environments and habits can positively impact occupants of school environments leading to improved learning outcomes.

Objectives At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to: Understand the relationship between occupational therapy, sustainability, and ergonomics; Identify opportunities for OT practice in green ergonomics and the sustainability movement; Address case studies related to the role of occupational therapy in sustainability and green schools.