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Dear teacher,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your willingness to be brave for our children every day. We value your continual sacrifice and valour for our children. It is thanks to you that we can remain hopeful for a better future for the generations to come.

As you might know by now, children don't always function at the same level as their peers. So I have compiled a simple red flag list to direct you in pin pointing those learners that might need a bit more support than others to function as optimally as they possibly can within their school and home environments. These are not developmental or academic checklists but merely items which could serve as a cause for concern for an Occupational Therapist.

I want to emphasise that this is merely a guideline. As a teacher you know your learners best and therefore it's always better to rely on your own instinct. If a child does not show any of the red flags listed, however, you feel in your gut that the child needs additional assistance please refer anyway. If I, as an Occupational Therapist, cannot assist accordingly, I can at least assist in referring the child to the correct professional.

It's an absolute honour to work alongside you as we build a better future for the generations to come.

# RED FLAGS

## BIRTH TO 2 YEARS

- Not looking at caregiver's face or making eye contact
- Unable to keep head upright against gravity, roll over or sit-up at the age-appropriate time
- Not crawling and going directly from sitting to pulling up / walking
- Crawling in an abnormal pattern (deviating from traditional crawling or army crawling patterns)
  - Strong hand preference with exclusion of the other hand
- Not reaching across midline (not reaching across the centre of the body)
- Not feeding self (either not finger feeding or not attempting to use spoon / fork)
  - Not isolating index finger by 1 year (to either point or grab)
- Not displaying "showing/sharing" behaviours, which include the act of looking at a caregiver with an, "isn't that neat?" look on the child's face, even if no words are used
- Struggling with external and internal soothing techniques (i.e. overly fussy)
- Easily overstimulated by surroundings leading to unusually extreme and prolonged tantrums



# RED FLAGS

## 3 - 5 YEARS

- Not engaging in pretend / fantasy play
- Still uses gross grasp (whole-hand grasp) / any abnormal pencil grip
- Always stationary (i.e. does not move around much, slow to respond, lethargic)
  - Never stationary (Unable to sit still)
- Consistently screaming or talking very loudly
- Struggles to communicate using words, rather opts for pointing or gestures
  - Not engaging in play with peers (loner child)
- Consistently screaming, complaining or showing behavioural fallouts during periods of change in the classroom (i.e. moving from one activity to the next.
  - Throwing tantrums significantly more than peers
  - Struggles to separate from adults (i.e. caregiver / teacher)
- Appearing overly sensitive to grooming tasks (long nails, unclean face & hair, usually prefers wearing similar clothes)
- Avoids certain textures, movements, play apparatus or loud noises
  - Monotonous in play. Not willing to try different types of play or activity



# RED FLAGS

## 6 - 9 YEARS



- Falling behind peers academically
- Difficulty following the teacher's directions
  - Unable to tie shoes
  - Unable to cut food with a knife/fork
  - Hyperactivity
- Being labeled a "bad kid" (There are NO BAD KIDS, OT can help determine why the child may be displaying bad behaviours)
- Having difficulty engaging with peers on the playground and/or in extracurricular activities
  - Not having friends
  - Immature handwriting skills
- Poor organisational skills – forgets to turn in homework assignments, desk is messy, papers are messy, etc.
- Comes across as lazy (slouches, rests head in hands while writing or reading, wraps legs around the chair)
- Does not have a dominant side (i.e. switches hands when writing)
  - Letter reversals or struggling to read and / or write
- Avoids busy environments / loud noises (i.e. frequently covers ears)

