

Meet Tina Pilapil, an Occupational Therapist

Based in Auckland, Tina joined the Ministry of Education in 2019



Tina's story

Tina found out about this occupation as a teenager as she was exploring professions that worked with children with Special Needs. She used to work at a private specialist clinic back in the Philippines where she was the Senior Occupational Therapist. Currently, she is enjoying her work in the Ministry of Education collaborating with a broader range of specialists.

Tina's day-to-day

A typical day for Tina involves supporting children and young adults (5 to 21 years old) who are under the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme, Language and Learning Initiative and collaborating with schools and other specialists to support these children's development especially on school tasks impacted by their gross and fine motor difficulties and sensory needs.

Her work in the Ministry is collaborative, as well as working with the child or the young person, she also works with other people who make up their team. This may include learning assistants, teachers, Special Education Needs Coordinators, Outreach Teachers, SLTs, Physiotherapists, Psychologists and parents.

Reflecting cultural values in her work

Tina always tries her best to be respectful towards her children's culture and recognise that their diagnosis does not define them. She focuses on their strengths and interests and supports their development so that they can be and feel included in the community. This approach is mirrored by other specialists she works with, as she finds that *"everyone tries their best to be sensitive and inclusive to all children"*.

Rewards and challenges of the role

Working as an Occupational Therapist is a satisfying and fulfilling role for Tina. *"I am passionate about children and there is always a purpose in my profession. It is rewarding when you see children engaging and participating along with their peers in their local school environment"*. She loves working at the Ministry as the framework is flexible, and never a one size fits all concept as the goal is always to work on the child's independence.

Occupational Therapist – Role Information

Role responsibility:

- observe, assess and work closely with children and young people with special education needs
- work closely with parents and caregivers, teachers and schools, and other specialists to help children and young people participate at school
- identify, set up and provide advice about the support, equipment and technology a child or young person may need.
- support children and young people to develop the skills to manage themselves in their daily lives.

Qualifications needed:

- a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science (Occupational Therapy) or its equivalent
- to be registered with the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand.

An Occupational Therapist must have skills and knowledge in:

- schools and the NZ Curriculum/ Te Marautanga o Aotearoa
- human and child development
- managing assistive equipment and technology in a variety of settings
- managing special education needs in a variety of settings
- community and family support services
- effective communication, teaching, research and planning.

Career development

Becoming an Occupational Therapist with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

You will:

- be supported and supervised by experienced professional colleagues
- be kept up to date with the latest evidence
- take part in ongoing training
- have opportunities to share and extend your knowledge and skills
- learn about and specialise in Assistive Technology for children and young people.

There might also be opportunities to take part in projects or working groups and in time, you might be considered for leadership roles.

Further information about occupational therapists

Learning support careers and professional development

For more information about the role of a special education adviser and working in learning support, visit our [learning support careers page](#)

Learning support scholarships and study awards

If you're interested in a career in learning support, you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out [more here](#)