

Kaisa Syväoja PhD, OTD, OTR/L

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The College of St. Scholastica
Department of Occupational Therapy
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LICENSES

NBCOT certified Occupational Therapist # 386349	2017- present
Licensed and Registered Occupational Therapist, <i>State of Minnesota</i> # 105410	2017- present
BLS/CPR, certified	2014- present

EDUCATION

Capella University, Minneapolis, Minnesota PhD in Educational Psychology	2025
Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska Doctorate of Occupational Therapy Capstone: Significance of Proprioception on Function in Individuals with Hypermobility	2017
Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota Bachelor of Science Major: Psychology	2013
Study Abroad: Tampere University, Tampere, Finland	2011-2012

Certificates

Professional Development Certificate in Trauma Informed Care <i>Indiana University School of Public Health</i>	May 2022
Certificate in Healthcare Innovation	March 2022

Thunderbird School of Global Management, Arizona State University

CONSULTATION SERVICES

Owner and Founder

2026-present

EduSilta LLC, Duluth, Minnesota

Consultative services for educational and non-profit organizations for strategic planning, program evaluation, curriculum review and revision, grant review and support, and innovative solutions to meet organizational needs.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Interim Department Chair, Occupational Therapy

Sep-Dec 2025

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota

Served as interim Department Chair during full-time Chair as on sabbatical. Managed budget, personnel, hiring, accreditation requirements, and oversight of Department operations.

MS Occupational Therapy Program Director

2024-present

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota

Manage and support the Master's Occupational Therapy program. Ensure the program is compliant with accreditation requirements, complete strategic planning, and program evaluation. Maintain appropriate budgets and reporting, manage student and faculty needs, and oversee operations.

Associate Professor

2025-present

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota

Course coordinator for advanced professional reasoning and practice courses. Faculty mentor for Evidence-Based Occupational Therapy courses, and faculty mentor for campus Level I fieldwork experiences.

Assistant Professor

2020- 2025

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota

Course coordinator/ faculty for Optimizing Occupational Performance courses, Occupational Performance courses, and Assessment courses. Advisor for student research group for Evidence-Based Occupational Therapy courses. Clinical educator and faculty mentor for campus Level I Fieldwork experiences at the maurices Community Clinic at The College of St.

Scholastica (CSS). Provide teaching assistance for other courses throughout the curriculum. Advised students across the program.

- Pediatric Occupational Therapy Mental Health Fellowship 2024- present
 - *fellowship coordinator*
 - Accredited through American Occupational Therapy Association
- Interprofessional Education coordinator, Occupational Therapy 2022- 2024
 - Coordinate/ teach interprofessional experiences including:
 - Simulated client interprofessional experiences
 - Partnership with University of MN 1Health Better Together and Community Teacher
- maurices Community Clinic coordinator, Occupational Therapy 2022- 2024
 - Pro-bono community clinic with interprofessional partnership with physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy
 - Student worker management
- Academic Fieldwork Specialist, Level I Fieldwork 2022-2024

Adjunct Instructor 2019-2020

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota

Taught within the Interprofessional Education threads in the curriculum. Duties included both classroom teaching and experiential learning opportunities with interprofessional student groups. Clinical educator for campus Level I Fieldwork experience at the Benedictine Living Community affiliated with The College of St. Scholastica. Clinical educator for virtual fieldwork experiences.

Guest Lecturer July 2019

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota

Taught content related to neurological structures and disorders as part of the course curriculum.

CLINICAL EMPLOYMENT

Health Dimensions Rehabilitation, Cambridge, Minnesota 2019-2020

- Bemidji Regional Interdistrict Council (BRIC): School and Early Childhood Occupational Therapist serving diverse, rural families and populations. Collaboration with an interprofessional team within the educational setting. Direct OTA supervision.

Choice Therapy, Bemidji, Minnesota 2017-2019

- Occupational Therapist- outpatient, home-based, SNF, chronic pain, visual integration, hypermobility
- Chronic pain program development: collaborative multidisciplinary program with community healthcare professionals (OT, PT, dietetics, physicians)
- Student Fieldwork Supervisor/ Clinical Instructor
- Direct OTA supervision

ADVANCE CERTIFICATIONS/ MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Certifications

Safe Zone (LGBTQIA2S+ support), <i>certified</i>	May 2023
Mental Health First Aid, <i>certified</i>	Fall 2022
Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) certification #USSYVKA7057586-01	Jan. 19, 2021
Path to Leadership AOTA Digital Badge, <i>Level 1 and Level 2</i>	2020
Upper Extremity Lymphedema Certified, <i>Klose Training</i>	2018
Postural Restoration Institute Certifications: <i>Postural Restoration Institute, Lincoln, Nebraska</i>	
● Postural Respiration: An Approach to Treatment of Patterned Thoraco-Abdominal Pathomechanics	2013
● Cervical Revolution	2015
● Myokinematics	2017
● Pelvic Restoration	2017

Mentorship Programs

Eue Fellows Program, <i>The College of St. Scholastica</i>	2022-23
● Fellows program focused on EDI initiatives within higher education	
First Year Faculty mentorship program, <i>The College of St. Scholastica</i>	
● Mentee	2020-21
● Mentor	2022-23
Academic Educator Special Interest Section (AESIS) New Educator Mentoring Program (NEMP), <i>American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)</i>	2020-21
American Interprofessional Health Collaborative (AIHC) Mentorship Program	
● Mentor	2022-23
● Mentee	2021-22

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Interprofessional Conferences Attendance

NEXUS Summit, virtual (<i>presenter</i>)	2025
TUFH Ubuntu 2024, Cape Town, South Africa (<i>presenter</i>)	2024

NEXUS Summit, virtual (*presenter*) 2023
NEXUS Summit, Minneapolis, MN (*presenter*) 2022

Continuing Education Related to Mental Health

Federal Health Privacy Laws: Basics for School Professionals Session 1 & 2 May 2023
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Every Moment Counts: Webinars 1-5 OT Mental Health in Schools April 2023

GRANT SUPPORT

Co-Project Director, US Department of Education: Mental Health 2022- 2025
Service Professional (MHSP) Demonstration Grant Program

- #S184X220072
- Occupational therapy students practice in high-need Local Education Agencies to provide mental health support to children and youth, and supportive services within the school-setting. Responsibilities include: program development, site coordination, direct and indirect student support, community development (including interprofessional engagement with education professionals), implementation of grant objectives, and evaluation of a \$3.9 million US Department of Education grant.
- Development of interprofessional continuing education courses for occupational therapists and teachers within K-12 setting

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Faculty Assembly 2024- present

- *chair* (2025-present)
- *vice-chair* (2024-2025)

The College of St. Scholastica Presidential Search Committee 2025- present
The College of St. Scholastica Accreditation Review and Compliance Committee 2025- present
The College of St. Scholastica Strategic Planning Committee, *member* 2024- 2025
Graduate Curriculum Committee, *chair* 2023-2024
Admissions Committee Occupational Therapy Department 2021- present

- *chair* (2022-2024)
- *co-chair* (2021-22)

Search Advocate 2021- present

- Trained through Oregon State University on EDI within hiring

Student Organization Faculty Advisor 2020-2024

- Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) 2020-2022
- CSS Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD) Student Group 2020- 2024

PUBLISHED WORK/ RESEARCH/ CONFERENCES

Published Work

Saad, A.H., Zarn, M., Rukat, C.E., & **Syvaoja, K.** (2025). Cultivating interprofessional wisdom: An evaluation of the American Interprofessional Health Collaborative mentoring program. *Journal of Interprofessional Education & Practice*, 41(100788).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xjep.2025.100788>

Lackie, K., Khalili, H., Gilbert, J., Bookey-Bassett, S., Cutler, S., Dixon, K., Fricke, M., Greene, C., Harvan, R., Jessen, J., Langlois, S., Macdonald, L., Maxwell, B., McCarten, C., Najjar, G., Park, V., Saad, A., **Syvaoja, K.**, Schneider, C. (2024). The Transformative Power of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Social Justice in Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice - Discussion Paper, Joint E-Book Publication by InterprofessionalResearch.Global, Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative & American Interprofessional Health Collaborative, ISBN: 978-1-7366963-4-7. Published by:

<https://interprofessionalresearch.global/>

Kearney, P., Mcdaniel, B.B., & **Syvaoja, K.** (2023). Aging well: Health promotion and health management. In H.L. Lohman, Shaffer, A.L. , & Watford, P.J. (Eds), *Occupational therapy with older adults: Strategies for the COTA* (5th ed. pp. 51-65). Elsevier.

Peyton, C.G., Huang, Y., **Syvaoja, K.**, & Lohman, H. (2019). Aging well: Health promotion and disease prevention. In H.L. Lohman, S. Byers-Connon & R.L. Padilla (Eds), *Occupational therapy with elders: Strategies for the COTA* (4th ed, pp. 51-58). Elsevier.

Peer Reviewed Poster Presentations

Syvaoja, K., & Hunter, J. (2023, Oct. 26-27) *Increasing mental health service providers through Multi-tiered supports* [Poster Presentation]. 2023 National PBIS Leadership Forum, Chicago, Illinois

Syvaoja, K. (2022, April 1) *Critically Appraised Paper: The Effectiveness of a Multidisciplinary Intervention Strategy for the Treatment of Symptomatic Joint Hypermobility in Childhood: A Randomised, Single Centre Parallel Group Trial (The Bendy Study)* [Poster Presentation]. American Occupational Therapy Association Inspire Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas

Oja, K., Anderson, M., Hackett, E., Tippin, K., & Jewell, V. (2016). Use of the occupation centered intervention assessment to build confidence and ability to design occupation-centered interventions [Poster Presentation]. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 70, 7011505149. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2016.70S1-PO4125>

Poster Presentations

Oja, K., Anderson, M., Hackett, E., Tippin, K., & Jewell, V. (2016, July 26-28). *Use of the occupation centered intervention assessment to build confidence and ability to design occupation-centered interventions* [Poster Presentation]. International Occupation-Centered Symposium, Fort Collins, Colorado

Oja, K., Anderson, M., Hackett, E., Tippin, K., & Jewell, V. (2016, March 18-19). *Use of the occupation centered intervention assessment to build confidence and ability to design*

occupation-centered interventions [Poster Presentation]. Nebraska Occupational Therapy Association Conference, Omaha, Nebraska

Peer Reviewed Presentations

Dickinson, Karen & **Syväoja, K.** (2025, Sept. 16-17 and Sept. 25-26). Burnout Is a Team Issue - A National Pilot of Stress Education for Interprofessional Mentors and Mentees. [Lightning Talk]. Nexus Summit, National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education

Saad, A.H., Zarn, M., Rukat, C.E., & **Syväoja, K.** (2025, Sept. 16-17 and Sept. 25-26). Cultivating interprofessional wisdom: An evaluation of the American Interprofessional Health Collaborative mentoring program. [Lightning Talk]. Nexus Summit, National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education

Hunter, J. & **Syväoja, K.** (2025, April 3-5). Building capacity: Sustainable multitiered school-based mental health services through Level II OT fieldwork. AOTA INSPIRE 2024, Philadelphia, PA

Syväoja, K., Hunter, J., Erickson, K., Campbell, M., Maxwell, J., & Saffer, A. (2024, November 8-9). Maximizing federal grants in occupational therapy education: Project development to implementation. AOTA Education Summit, Charlotte, NC.

Lackie, K., Khalili, H., Gilbert, J., Harvan, R., Langlois, S., Macdonald, L., **Syvaaja, K.** The transformative power of inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and social justice in interprofessional education and collaborative practice. TUFH Ubuntu 2024 (2024, September 10-13)

Syväoja, K., & Hunter, J. (2024, March 21-23) Occupational therapy's distinct value in mental health grant funded initiatives. AOTA INSPIRE 2024. Orlando, FL

Syväoja, K., & Hunter, J. (2024, March 21-23) Mental health promotion in the school setting: Occupational Therapy's distinct value. AOTA INSPIRE 2024. Orlando, FL

Kennedy, T., Baugh, G., Cortez-Cooper, M., Evans, J., Fowler, T., Kascak, K., Langdale, L., Robinson, M., Saad, A., Gura, R., Swenty, C., **Syvaaja, K.** (2023, September 27). *Working together for impact: The role of leadership in developing and sustaining IPE through workplace well-being* [Lightning Talk]. Nexus Summit, National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education.

Kennedy, T., Ascione, F., Bhattacharya, S., Bondurant, A., Cortez-Cooper, M., Fowler, T., Gura, R., **Syvaaja, K.**, Swenty, C., & Zarn, M. (2022, August 21-23). *Mentoring in the Nexus: Learning Together What Matters Most to Advance and Sustain IPE* [Lightning Talk]. Nexus Summit, National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education, Minneapolis, MN

Syvaaja, K. (2022, August 21-23) *Community as the classroom: Using a patient-centered care coordination platform to address social determinants of health in a student-led clinic* [Lightning

Talk] Nexus Summit, National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education, Minneapolis, MN

Invited Guest Presentations

Syvaoja, K. (2026, Feb. 9-10) Co-regulation: How our calm creates theirs. Superior School District Paraprofessional and Teacher Training

Syvaoja, K. (2025). Supporting neurodivergent students. Superior School District Paraprofessional Training

Syvaoja, K. (2023, Nov. 11) Joint protection and symptom management. 2023 TRIA Hand Therapy Conference

Presentations

Syvaoja, K. (2018, May). *Ehlers-Danlos syndrome and chronic pain* [Conference session]. Northwest District Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association Meeting, Bemidji, MN

Carr, K., Mireau, C, & **Syvaoja, K.** (2017, November 10) *Addressing chronic pain across occupational therapy settings* [Conference session]. Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association 2017 Annual Conference, St. Paul, MN

Syvaoja, K. (2017). *Ehlers-Danlos syndrome and chronic pain* [Informational session]. Sanford Health Lunch and Learn Sessions, Bemidji, MN

Oja, K. (2013). *Memory reminiscence and social interaction in the elderly* [Conference Session]. Student Scholarship and Creative Achievement Conference: Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota

Oja, K. (2013) *The influence of personality traits on subjective health ratings in the elderly: A review* [Conference session]. Student Scholarship and Creative Achievement Conference: Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota

Oja, K. (2013) *Memory reminiscence and social interaction in the elderly* [Conference session]. Minnesota Undergraduate Psychology Conference (MUPC), Mankato, Minnesota

Oja, K. (2013) *The influence of personality traits on subjective health ratings in the elderly: A review* [Conference session]. Minnesota Undergraduate Psychology Conference (MUPC), Mankato, Minnesota

VOLUNTEER WORK/ACTIVITIES

Peer Review Work

Ehlers-Danlos Society 2020-present

- Peer reviewer for critical data elements, Centers for Excellence and Specialty status centers

American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) 2024-2025

• Peer reviewer for AOTF grants	
National Center for International Practice and Education	2024-present
• Peer reviewer for NEXUS Summit 2024-2026 conferences	
National Academies of Practice (NAP)	2025-present
• Peer reviewer for 2026 NAP National Conference	
Peer Corp Higher Learning Commission (<i>HLC reviewer</i>)	2025-present
Journal of Interprofessional Education & Practice, <i>reviewer</i>	2026-present

Professional Organizations and Societies

National Academies of Practice, <i>Professional Member</i>	2025-present
American Interprofessional Health Collaborative	
• <i>member</i>	2021- present
• Mentoring Collaborative Hub, <i>co-facilitator</i>	2023-present
• Mentoring Program, <i>co-chair</i>	2023-present
National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education	2024-present
• NEXUS Summit 2024 Advisory Committee	
Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD), <i>member</i>	2020- present
Ehlers-Danlos Society and International Consortium	
• <i>Patient Expert</i>	2018-present
Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA), <i>member</i>	2015-present
• <i>Chronic Pain SIG Co-Chair</i>	2016-2020
• <i>Northwest District Chair</i>	2017-2023
American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), <i>member</i>	2014-present
World Federation of Occupational Therapy, <i>member</i>	2015-2019
Nebraska Occupational Therapy Association (NOTA), <i>member</i>	2015-2016

Community Involvement

Community Meal, First Lutheran Church, volunteer	2025-present
Snowflake Nordic Ski Center, <i>KidSki instructor</i>	2024- present
CHUM, Duluth, MN, <i>volunteer</i>	2023-present
Duluth NAACP, <i>member</i>	2022-present
Concordia Language Villages, <i>volunteer</i>	2019-2023
Salolampi Foundation	2013-2021
• <i>President</i>	2019- 2021
• <i>Board member</i>	2013-2019