12-11-2020

Occupational Therapist Role in Post-Secondary Education Transition Program: Emphasis on Self-Advocacy Skills

Nikki Voorhees  
*University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences*, nvoorhees@usa.edu

Becki Cohill  
*University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences*, bcohill@usa.edu

Susan MacDermott  
*University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences*, smacdermott@usa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonesfall2020

Part of the Educational Psychology Commons, Higher Education Commons, Occupational Therapy Commons, and the Special Education and Teaching Commons

Recommended Citation  
https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonesfall2020/1

This Poster/presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the OTD Capstone Symposia at SOAR @ USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, Fall 2020 by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu, erobinson@usa.edu.
Occupational Therapist Role in Post-Secondary Education Transition Program: Emphasis on Self-Advocacy Education Skills

Nikki Voorhees; OTD, Becki Cohill OTD, OTR/L; Susan MacDermott OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND
It is becoming increasingly important for individuals to obtain post-secondary education in order to gain employment (Alverson et al., 2019). However, the transition from high school to post-secondary education is difficult for students with learning differences, as they tend to have problems in the areas of social skills, communication, problem solving, and self-advocacy (Alverson et al., 2019). In post-secondary education, there are federal regulations in place for students to receive disability-related accommodations like in high school. However, unlike in high school, the students will need the self-advocacy skills to promote their own health literacy and to request those needed accommodations themselves (Hotez et al., 2018). Self-advocacy is consistently reported as being an imperative skill required for successful transition to postsecondary education and general adulthood ("Studies from," 2019). However, there is limited data on teaching self-advocacy skills directly in the curriculum, despite the obvious need (Spark, 2015).

Currently, OTs working in the school setting are increasingly reporting limited participation in transition planning. School-based OTs tend to provide interventions on foundational skills such as handwriting and organization, and limited intervention on skills to promote independence including self-determination and self-advocacy (Seruya & Ellen, 2015). These skills that assist with the development of independence have a great impact on academic functioning and should be a critical area of intervention (Seruya & Ellen, 2015).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Programming/Program Phase</th>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Implementation and Program Outcome Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schedule and Planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational and Support Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational and Support Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>过渡 to secondary education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically for secondary students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaning difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to secondary education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for high school included: self-advocacy/self-determination definition/importance, communication, asking for help, student rights, and requesting academic accommodations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for middle school included: self-advocacy/self-determination definition/importance and communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS

When would be the best time to learn about Self-advocacy?

- Middle School
- Freshman Year
- Junior Year
- Doesn't need to be taught at school

Being afraid to get in trouble

Assumed someone else would do it

Barriers to Self-Advocacy

Asking a teacher/Professor for help

Feeling ashamed of something was true

DISCUSSION

Based on the observations in the college and career readiness course, it was observed that the high school students were able to demonstrate good self-advocacy skills in the classroom. However, majorly of the high school students believed that these lessons should be taught sooner such as freshman year of high school or middle school.

Self-advocacy and self-determination are different than other transition skills needed for post-secondary education. Self-advocacy and self-determination are skills that need to be taught and built over time. Due to the extra time needed to learn these skills, it was found that self-advocacy and self-determination skills need to be addressed and taught in middle school.

OT IMPLICATION

Occupational therapists working the school setting need a more established role on the transition planning team. As they have the unique expertise to address skills such as self-advocacy and self-determination to prepare the students as they transition to post-secondary education. However, although post-secondary transition programs are typically for high school students, these skills require more time and practice for the students to be more comfortable. That is why these transition programs need to either start earlier in middle school or OT’s need to start addressing self-advocacy and self-determination in services for the middle school students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special thanks to Dr. Holly Reed and all the staff at The Winston School for all their support and assistance throughout this capstone project.