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

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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 grow 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).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this capstone project is to develop an occupational therapy-based transition program from high school to post-secondary education implemented directly in the curriculum. The program will focus on social, self-advocacy, and self-determination skills to help the students transition from high school to post-secondary education as smoothly as possible.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Tasks	Weeks															
	Preplanning Program Phase								Implementation and Program Outcome Phase							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Create survey for staff and student																
Create Lesson Plans																
Distribute surveys to students and staff																
Classroom Observation																
Develop Activities																
Role Playing																
Modeling																
Education with Lesson Plans for high school students																
Education with Lesson plans for middle school students																
Group guided learned discussion																

Education for high school included: self advocacy/self-determination definition/importance, communication, asking for help, student rights, and requesting academic accommodations
Education for middle school included: self advocacy/self-determination definition/importance and communication

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, majority 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 IMPLCATION

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.

RESULTS

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

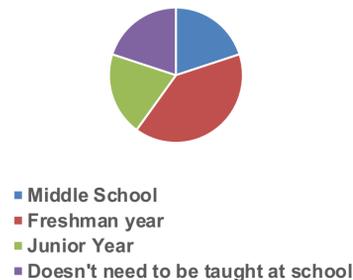
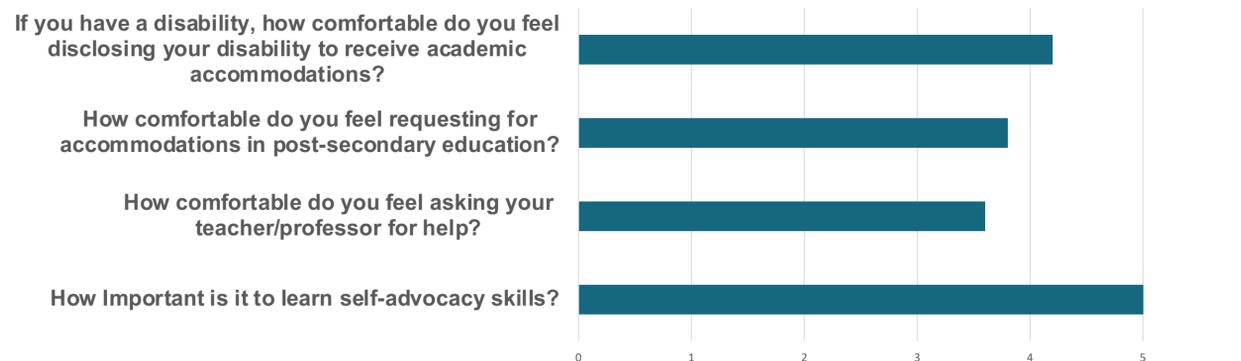


Figure below: Results from debriefing session with middle school students on barrier to self-advocacy



High School Seniors Average Self-Advocacy Post- Results



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Please Scan for References

