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Occupational Therapy's Role in College and Career Readiness for Adolescents

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Chelsea Van Gorder; Becki Cohill OTD, OTR/L; Susan MacDermott OTD, OTR/L

Background

College and Career Readiness (CCR) is comprised of both academic and non-academic factors (Lombardi, Freeman, & Rifenbark, 2018) and is incorporated into transition planning for adolescents. OT services are a crucial component in transition planning, however, the disconnect is that less than 10% of interviewed school-based occupational therapists understand their role in transition planning (Mankey, 2011). It is critical that CCR programming is implemented across student populations inclusive of those with and without disabilities (Lombardi et al., 2018).
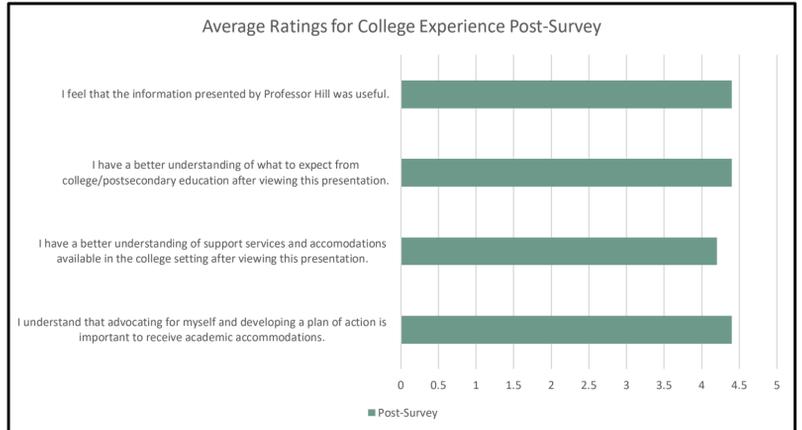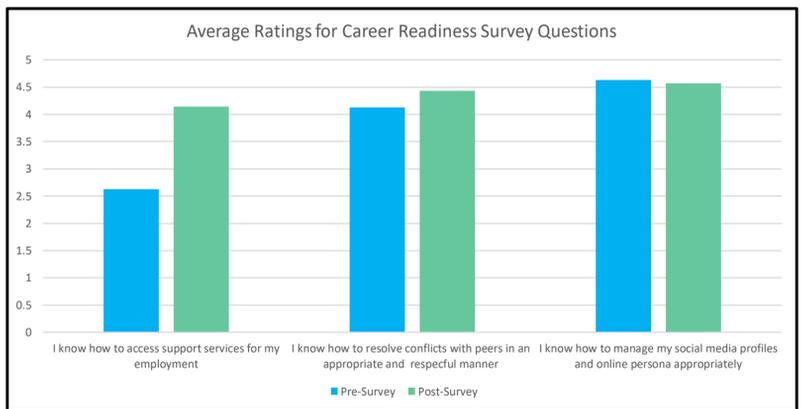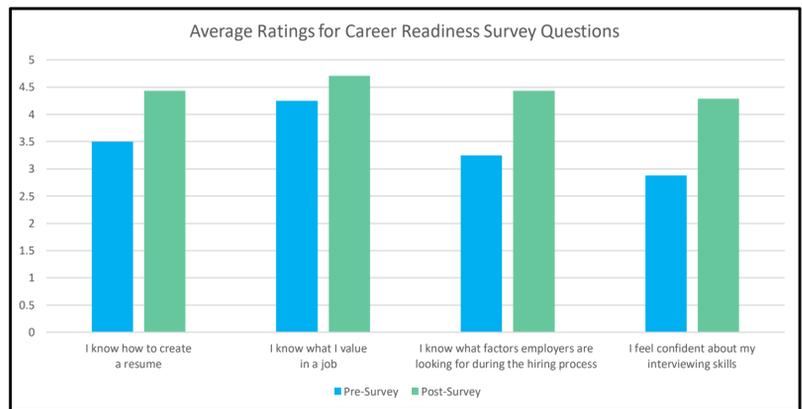
Purpose

To develop a holistic and comprehensive transition program that addresses non-academic skills and is inclusive of all adolescent students, regardless of disability, to prepare them for participation in postsecondary activities (e.g., education and employment).

Program Outcomes

Average Ratings for Career Readiness Survey Questions

Average Ratings for Career Readiness Survey Questions

Average Ratings for College Experience Post-Survey

- Students rated their knowledge on CCR topics through surveys and reflection charts
- Students agreed more with the knowledge statements after receiving the CCR lessons
- Adolescents are more inclined to inaccurately rate their abilities regarding non-academic activities (Job & Klassen, 2012), may indicate why students initially reported high ratings, resulting in a minor decrease (1.3% for social media management) on the post-survey
- Students expressed overwhelming support for the inclusion of targeted experiences

Program Development

Tasks	November				December				January				February				March				April	
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16	Week 17	Week 18				

Independent Living (Emphasis on college and career settings)
- Observation of current transition programming
- Literature Review
- Develop *Independent Living Skills* curriculum
- Organize lessons and materials for universal access
- Facilitate Unit 5: *Independent Living Skills*
- Collaborate with on-site OTA for Stress Management lesson
- Develop *College and Career Readiness* Class Post-Survey
- Administer *College and Career Readiness* Class Post-Survey

College and Career Readiness Class Introduction
- Update *College and Career Readiness* Class Scope and Sequence
- Facilitate Unit 1: *Who Am I?*

Career Readiness
- Develop *Career Readiness* Pre-Survey
- Literature Review
- Contact community employers for participation in Mock Interviews
- Develop *Career Readiness* curriculum
- Facilitate Unit 2: *Career Readiness*
- Administer *Career Readiness* Pre-Survey
- Develop simulated customer service work experience
- Contact local businesses for career field trip
- Collaborate with Counseling for Conflict Resolution lesson
- Implement mock interview (targeted experience)
- Administer interview process (targeted experience) reflection
- Develop *Career Readiness* Post-Survey
- Support students during simulated customer service work experience
- Administer *Career Readiness* Post-Survey
- Organize lessons and materials for universal access
- Career Fieldtrip (targeted experience)

College Readiness
- Contact local colleges for student visit
- Literature Review
- Develop *College Readiness* Pre-Survey
- Develop *College Readiness* curriculum
- Facilitate Unit 3: *College Readiness*
- Administer College Readiness Pre-Survey
- College visit, tour, and engagement activity (targeted experience)
- *College Expereince* presentation by college professor (targeted experience)
- Conduct reflection on *College Experience* (targeted experience)
- Develop *College Readiness* Post-Survey
- College representative presentation (targeted experience)
- College tour #2 (targeted experience)

Workability Partnerships and Placements
- Provide support to students employed through Workability I program
- Collaborate with local businesses to create Workability I partnerships
- Meet with eligible students for Workability I placement
- Create and organize Workability I Partnership spreadsheet

COVID-19 Mitigation Measures Commenced

Legend:
- Independent Living Skills
- CCRC Introduction Unit
- Career Readiness Virtual Delivery
- College Readiness Virtual Delivery
- Workability I Virtual Delivery
- Event cancelled/postponed due to COVID-19 mitigation measures

Discussion

The Person, Environment, and Occupation model and other principles of OT (e.g., activity analysis) were utilized to design the college and career units resulting in an all-inclusive program for transitioning adolescents. Occupation-based lessons engaged students as they walked step by step through the typical processes required of postsecondary occupations (e.g., applying for a job, the interview process, applying to college), which helped students create realistic expectations and better prepare them for when they begin their postsecondary pursuits. OTs' unique skill set makes them a valuable resource and member of the transition team during comprehensive CCR program development and implementation. The expansion of OT services to include extensive transition focused interventions is beneficial not only for eligible students who receive OT services, but also for the neurotypical adolescent student population.

References

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