



UNIVERSITY OF
ST. AUGUSTINE

FOR HEALTH SCIENCES

University of St Augustine for Health Sciences
SOAR @ USA

Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, Summer
2020

OTD Capstone Symposia

Summer 8-14-2020

Occupational Therapy's Role in Addressing Sensory Deficits in Children with Behavioral Health Challenges Through Teacher Training

Devon A. Ayres

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, d.ayres@usa.edu

Becki Cohill

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

Susan MacDermott

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, skmacdermott@gmail.com

Mark Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonessummer2020>



Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), [Occupational Therapy Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ayres, D. A., Cohill, B., MacDermott, S., & Wilson, M. (2020, August 14). Occupational Therapy's Role in Addressing Sensory Deficits in Children with Behavioral Health Challenges Through Teacher Training. Poster presented at the Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, University of St Augustine for Health Sciences. Retrieved from <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonessummer2020/7>

This Conference Proceeding 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, Summer 2020 by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu, erobinson@usa.edu.

Occupational Therapy's Role in Addressing Sensory Deficits in Children with Behavioral Health Challenges Through Teacher Training

Devon A. Ayres, OTDS; Becki Cohill, OTD, OTR/L; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L; Mark Wilson, MOT, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

Sensory processing difficulties are often observed and have been well-documented in children who have behavioral health challenges (Bodison, & Parham, 2018; Champagne, Koomar, & Olson, 2010). Mental health diagnoses often result in behavioral challenges that interfere with taking part in school activities. Addressing the child's sensory processing needs may decrease behaviors that disrupt occupational participation in this population leading to improved learning and better information retention (Velting, Setzer, & Albano, 2004). In children with behavioral health challenges, sensory processing interventions are often used to assist children in participating in the occupation of school. At this time, teachers who work with children with behavioral challenges are not required to receive education in addressing sensory deficits in the classroom (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2019).

PURPOSE

To explore expanding the role of occupational therapy at schools to include training teachers in the sensory needs of students with behavioral health challenges. An initial needs assessment will be performed followed by developing programming for teachers and support staff.

METHODS

Design - Mixed-methods

Recruitment - Teachers and staff at the San Diego Center for Children Academy

Site Survey – 33 questions on sensory motivated behaviors, open ended questions on understanding of sensory processing/prior training (14 teachers)

Site Needs Assessment – teacher interviews and classroom observations (10 teachers)

Population – Teachers instructed students K-12th grade with behavioral health challenges

RESULTS

Original research question: What knowledge do teachers have of what sensory processing behaviors interfere with classroom participation? What is the current understanding of sensory processing of teachers who education children with behavioral health challenges?

Original Research Component Teacher Survey

Quantitative - 33 questions pertaining to behaviors associated with sensory processing deficits. Teachers were largely concerned about and noted behaviors that occurred due to auditory or visual stimuli causing classroom wide disruptive behaviors.

Qualitative - people may process sensory stimuli differently from others (29%), the environment plays a role in sensory processing (21%), and that sensations may influence behavior (45%). 36% reported no training or could not recall participating in any training. 28% related that they had received informal or on the job training. A large proportion of the respondents, 28%, stated that they received college level or higher courses that contained information on sensory processing. Occupational therapy professionals and students were a source of knowledge in sensory processing (29%).

Programming Development Needs Assessment

Teacher Interviews – informal interviews to ascertain behaviors teachers are observing and their understanding of sensory processing. 50% of teachers demonstrated some understanding of sensory processing

Classroom Observations - first hand observations to determine if sensory related behaviors demonstrated matched teacher report. Observing teacher interactions with students and how sensory behaviors were currently addressed.

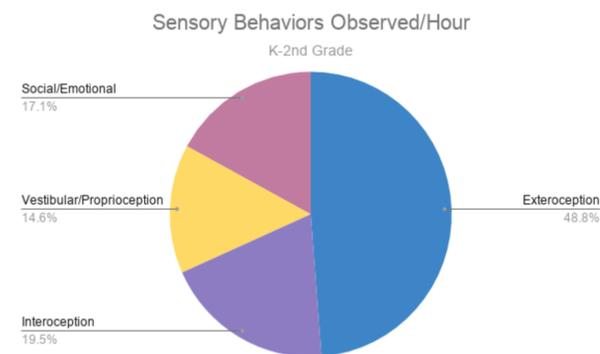
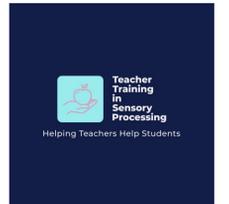


Fig 1.1 Sample Observed Behaviors

OUTCOME

Teacher and Staff Training



CONCLUSION

The findings from this project confirm the need for occupational therapy to play a role in providing programming to teachers who serve children with behavioral health needs. The project demonstrated teachers would benefit from additional understating of sensory processing and its role in influencing the behaviors exhibited by their students. By providing this training, teachers will be better equipped to meet the needs of their students. This will allow for an increase in the occupational performance of both groups: teachers in the occupation of teaching and students in the occupation of school.

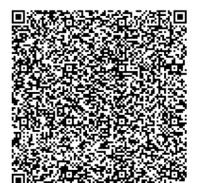
ENVISIONED NEXT STEPS

Survey – follow up survey at the end of the 2020-2021 school year to determine if training resulted in changes in classroom behaviors

Website changes – altering the website by doctoral candidate to meet changes in teacher and student need until Fieldwork 2B students return to site

Expanding to other sites – introducing survey, needs assessment, and teacher training to other schools that serve children with behavioral health challenges

References can be obtained by scanning the QR code to the right.



Theme from Interview	Teacher Statement
Auditory and visual stimuli leading to behaviors disruptive to learning	“Random noises and noise in the home and house things are the number one thing I see students get distracted by followed by stuff they can see.”
Increased stress and workload	“I can see that my students have sensory related needs but I don’t know what to do. I don’t have the time to learn more right now to help them.”
Concern about progression of learning and safety	“I can barely get them to sign in. If they come to class and somewhat participate, [I] consider that a win.”