

Incorporating Occupational Therapy into a Transitional Program's Curriculum

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Project Description & Site


The purpose of this capstone project is to incorporate occupational therapy knowledge into the curriculum of Project SEARCH, an international transitional program originating in the Cincinnati, Ohio area assisting working-age individuals with disabilities transition from school to work. My project was three-fold consisting of the following: 1. Analyzed data on the VocFit Assessment and reported on the resulting emerging skills; 2. Cross walked the most common emerging skills with Project SEARCH's current curriculum objectives and created lesson plans, along with COVID-19 specific lesson plans; and 3. Assisted local Project Search teams implement the VocFit Assessment. Accompanying these main components of my project, I was given numerous opportunities including facilitating meetings and working as a team leader in the Project SEARCH International Work Group. I also was fortunate enough to experience and assist with multiple webinars regarding the Vocational Fit Assessment. These experiences enhanced my learning because I gained knowledge regarding the assessment and I was also assisting the presenter who co-created the assessment.

Project Completion and Outcomes

- ❖ Developed advanced knowledge on how to effectively administer and analyze data from the Vocational Fit Assessment and map a portion of Project SEARCH's curriculum lesson plans to the frequent "weaker" Vocational Fit Assessment areas to best target the intern's needs in the training room. Based recommendations for curricular changes on analyzed assessment data.
- ❖ Demonstrated the ability to incorporate OT focused skills into Project SEARCH's curriculum in order to assist Project SEARCH interns obtain work.
- ❖ Assisted in advocating for the Vocational Fit Assessment to become integrated into more Project SEARCH sites in order to better serve the transitioning individuals.

Mission & Vision Statements

- ❖ **Project Mission Statement:** To provide occupational therapy skillsets to the transitional program's curriculum through collaboration with the team and analysis of data to benefit the participating individuals transitioning from school to work.
- ❖ **Project Vision Statement:** To equip the transition planning team with evidence and resources on occupational therapy services to successfully transition individuals with disabilities out of school and into the workforce.



RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES FOR TEENS/YOUNG ADULTS

- 1 AUDIBLE**
<https://stories.audible.com/start-listen>
 - All kid stories are free to stream on your desktop, laptop, phone or tablet
 - Free 30-day trial membership
- 2 SWORKIT**
<https://sworkit.com/>
 - Create custom workout routines, subscribe to long-term plans and browse individual workouts
 - All kid workouts are completely free
 - Strength, agility, flexibility, warming up, cooling down and moving
- 3 YOGA FOR BEGINNERS APP**
<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/yoga-for-beginners-mind-body/id1382141225>
 - 16 free yoga routines including bedtime yoga, beginner yoga, energy booster, fat burner, inner peace, yoga for abs
 - Classes range from 7-14 minutes

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Deliverables

- ❖ Created multiple lesson plans regarding virtual professional appearance and COVID-19 (i.e., PPE, mental health, cleaning/disinfecting, handwashing/coughing/sneezing, and social distancing) while incorporating occupational therapy vocational skills, modifications/adaptations, independent living skills, social participation skills for Project SEARCH
- ❖ Certificate of successful completion of a CEU on Foundations of Evidence-Based Strategies – Transition Age
- ❖ PowerPoint outline regarding the benefits of implementing the Vocational Fit Assessment



Literature Review | Needs Assessment

Literature Review:

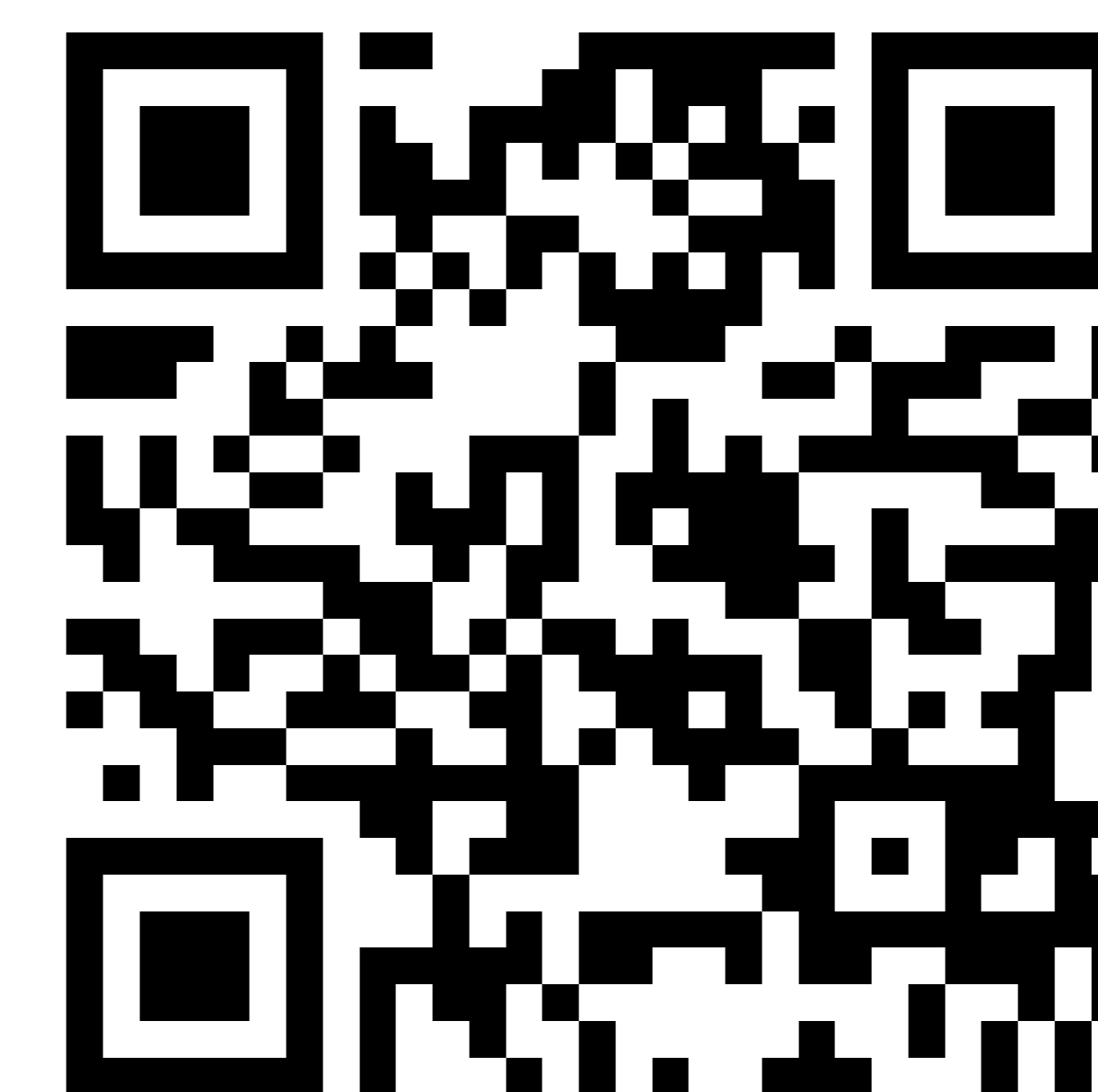
Current research states that occupational therapists' (OT's) roles and values complement the transition process and uphold a commitment to collaborate with the key members of the interdisciplinary team (Michaels & Orentlicher, 2004). Adding OT to Project SEARCH would increase the number of transition-age individuals impacted. The goal is to design and potentially implement occupational therapy skills to facilitate the participants' transition process better and holistically while advocating for occupational therapy's role in this setting. This goal would aim to focus on occupations including dressing appropriately for certain jobs and interviews, driving and community mobility, financial management responsibilities accompanying working and being independent, safety and emergency maintenance specific to certain jobs, employment interests and pursuits, employment seeking and attainment, job performance, and social participation skills. Four occupational therapy curriculum components on vocational skills, adaptations/modifications, independent living skills, and social participation skills will be completed along with a student volunteer element. To gain an in-depth understanding of VocFit, an assessment of student abilities & internship demands utilized at Project SEARCH, continuing education unit(s) will be completed. Michaels, C. A., & Orentlicher, M. L. (2004). The role of occupational therapy in providing person-centered transition services: Implications for school-based practice. *Occupational Therapy International*, 11(4), 209–228.

Needs Assessment:

OT strategies to help individuals find and maintain jobs include the following: assessing and adapting the environment; task analysis; skill-building; functional living skills training; instruction on physical skills; sensory/sensory-motor adaption; changing their schedule and helping with their perspectives. OTs deliver these strategies via modeling, direct instruction, encouragement, and by supplying resources (Cleary, 2014). Project SEARCH identified gaps in their organization that they need filled and feel an OT skillset would bring value to these tasks. Project SEARCH needs data from the Vocational Fit Assessment (VFA) analyzed to create corresponding curriculum lesson plan outlines to assist the Project SEARCH instructors. The VFA is a valid and reliable assessment that compares a worker's abilities and job demands to match individuals with jobs. According to experts, the VFA identifies the pros, cons, strengths, and weaknesses of each possible job match. The VFA also detects appropriate areas for intervention, also known as emerging skills (Persch, Gugiu, Onate, & Cleary, 2015). Project SEARCH recognizes how beneficial the VFA is to the organization and wants more sites and instructors to utilize it. OT will be a great asset to Project SEARCH by fulfilling these gaps found in their organization.

Future Implications for OT

- ❖ OTs should continue advocating for their role on transition teams.
- ❖ OTs should continue initiating and participating in curriculum planning for transition programs.
- ❖ Specifically for this project, OTD students should continue my work by assisting Project SEARCH with VocFit Assessment data analysis and cross walking it with Project SEARCH's curriculum.



KEY REFERENCES

*Full reference list and image reference list available upon request