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## Abstract

The Same Site Model of fieldwork service delivery provides the opportunity for the occupational therapy student to complete their Level I and Level II fieldwork at the same site. Due to limited research on the Same Site Model, a survey study was conducted to explore fieldwork educator and student perceptions on using the model. A 10-question survey, with 8 Likert questions and 2 open ended questions was designed by 2 Academic Fieldwork Coordinators. A total of 116 surveys were completed by occupational therapy students (N=45) and fieldwork educators (N=71) on their preference of the Same Site Model, along with their perceptions of the student's preparedness, communication skills and ability to interact with clients during their Level II fieldwork. Out of the 116 returned surveys, only 24 indicated having the opportunity to use the Same Site Model. The findings of this current study revealed a moderate positive correlation ( $r=0.407$ ) at 0.01 level of significance ( $p$

## Keywords

Occupational therapy education, fieldwork education, clinical education, occupational therapy fieldwork models, same site model

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## Implementing the Same Site Model in Occupational Therapy Fieldwork: Student and Fieldwork Educator Perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

The Same Site Model of fieldwork service delivery provides the opportunity for the occupational therapy student to complete their Level I and Level II fieldwork at the same site. Due to limited research on the Same Site Model, a survey study was conducted to explore fieldwork educator and student perceptions on using the model. A 10-question survey, with 8 Likert questions and 2 open ended questions was designed by 2 Academic Fieldwork Coordinators. A total of 116 surveys were completed by occupational therapy students (N=45) and fieldwork educators (N=71) on their preference of the Same Site Model, along with their perceptions of the student's preparedness, communication skills and ability to interact with clients during their Level II fieldwork. Out of the 116 returned surveys, only 24 indicated having the opportunity to use the Same Site Model. The findings of this current study revealed a moderate positive correlation ( $r=0.407$ ) at 0.01 level of significance ( $p<0.05$ ) suggesting that although only 20% of the sample population had experience using the Same Site Model, the majority (83%) of occupational therapy students and fieldwork educators who did participate in the Same Site Model would prefer it again in the future. In addition, although not all respondents felt the Same Site Model should be considered best practice, 50% of all the returned surveys reported that the Same Site Model should at least be considered when placing students.

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Fieldwork education has long been recognized as a critical component in the training of occupational therapy (OT) students. Although there is an extensive body of literature on both traditional and alternative placement models, there has been limited follow up research on the use of the Same Site Model originally introduced by Evenson et al. in 2002. The Same Site Model is defined as completing a Level I fieldwork in the same site as a Level II fieldwork (Evenson et al., 2002). Thus, it is the primary purpose of this

non-experimental research design to describe OT student and fieldwork educator (FWE) perspectives of using the Same Site Model to determine if this model of fieldwork design is considered best practice for educational institutions.

During the traditional fieldwork model, as defined by one master's level OT program, students complete an intensive Level I fieldwork in a 1-week format observing OT services and completing select parts of the OT process. Additionally, there are four other course specific integrated Level I experiences in order to expose students to a variety of settings, populations, and service delivery models. A debriefing session occurs after the intensive 1-week Level I fieldwork experience to determine if the site was a "good fit" and retrieve student feedback and perceptions. Students are then placed in two, 12-week Level II fieldwork experiences January and April in the following year of the program, respectively. When implementing the Same Site Model, students would have the opportunity to return to their condensed 1-week site for one of the two Level II experiences the following year.

Insight into the efficacy and benefits of the Same Site Model is imperative as there is a need for research on how to best support OT students through the fieldwork experience. Current trends in higher education reveal a decline in the mental health of college students (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2018). Previous findings by Evenson et al. (2002) suggest the Same Site Model can have a positive mental health impact by reducing OT student anxiety surrounding fieldwork. There is also a growing demand for fieldwork placements in the United States (Evenson et al., 2015), resulting in greater competition for fieldwork opportunities for OT students. If FWEs prefer the Same Site Model, it could provide a streamlined approach to fieldwork implementation by allowing academic fieldwork coordinators (AFWCs) to book two fieldwork placements at once, thereby limiting the need to reach out to an alternate site for a Level II experience.

It is our hypothesis that the students who complete the Same Site Model of fieldwork will feel more prepared and less nervous for their Level II fieldwork. We also hypothesize that FWEs who participate in the Same Site Model of fieldwork would prefer the Same Site Model (same student), as opposed to the traditional model of fieldwork (different student).

### **Student Mental Health and Student Perspectives**

Psychological distress has increased for college students which is having a negative impact on student performance (Monti et al., 2014). In fact, approximately half of college and university students reported overwhelming anxiety and about one third had difficulties with everyday functioning as a result of depression (Novotny, 2014). Moreover, studies have shown that varying degrees of stress, experienced by health science students specifically, may affect their overall functioning and performance (Kasayira et al., 2007; Shaheen & Alam, 2010). Anecdotally, the experience of OT students is no different and the transition from an academic environment to the clinical setting can prove especially stressful for students. Students can make the most of a fieldwork experience when they are guided by clear expectations, given the opportunity to organize themselves in advance, and when they are provided specific information

regarding logistics (Hanson et al., 2016). Additionally, research gathered by Spiliotopoulou (2007) identified “when students feel confident and ready, anxiety levels decrease, and they are more likely to benefit from educational opportunities” (p.387).

Likewise, Rodger et al. (2011) identified several student preferences surrounding fieldwork experiences including a familiar and/or welcoming environment, a detailed orientation to fieldwork, and clear expectations. The Level I fieldwork is an ideal precursor to a Level II experience because it offers the opportunity for these preferences and expectations to be discussed and met. While no one model can guarantee any or all these opportunities, the Same Site Model was reported to allow students to familiarize themselves with a given practice setting and facility expectations, decrease student anxiety, and allowed for overall preparation for Level II fieldwork (Evenson et al., 2002). The perceived drawbacks to the Same Site Model were decreased opportunity to observe practice settings (Evenson et al., 2002). Thus, when designing fieldwork programs using the Same Site Model, the opportunity to engage in multiple Level I experiences must be considered.

### **Academic Institution Perspectives**

There has been significant growth in the number of fieldwork placements needed in the United States within the last several years. In 2007 in the United States, there were 275 accredited OT and occupational therapy assistant (OTA) programs (Harvison, 2018). As of January 2020, there were 570 accredited programs or programs in the accreditation process (AOTA, 2020). Many existing programs have also increased their class size. Furthermore, a team of fieldwork researchers recently estimated that the number of fieldwork placements required annually is in excess of 50,000 (Roberts et al., 2015). Many innovative responses and alternative fieldwork education models have emerged to address the growing demand of fieldwork education, including a variety of supervision models (i.e. 2 student:1 FWE supervision, group model, faculty-led, etc.), role-emerging practice areas, student-led clinics, simulated experiences, project-based placements, and community-based settings (ACOTE, 2018; Hamilton et al., 2015; Overton et al., 2009); however, no one over the other has been determined superior or best practice.

The AFWC for each OT program is responsible for finding and collaborating with all the fieldwork sites, as well as matching OT students appropriately to their Level II fieldwork sites (Stutz-Tannenbaum et al., 2015). The literature suggests that a good match between student and site is correlated with higher student satisfaction and higher technical skills (Giberson et al., 2008). Thus, there is an apparent opportunity, and growing belief by education theorists, like Stefl-Mabry et al. (2010), that “students must be considered more than collaborators in their own learning experience” (p.65). Evenson et al. (2002) identified that the Same Site Model allowed OT students and FWEs to assess for themselves whether the match between student and fieldwork site was conducive to learning. After the Level I experience, if either the OT student or the FWE did not feel it was a good match, there was the ability to arrange for an alternative Level II site placement. Use of the Same Site Model transitions some of the accountability onto the student of determining a good match between a fieldwork site and the student. This shift in responsibility is in line with the growing trend that students

view their education as a personal investment (Larkin & Watchorn, 2012). Students have high expectations for a quality education and want to be viewed as consumers (Larkin & Watchorn, 2012). Relaying some of the responsibility for the Level II match on the student is empowering the student to help ensure their own success.

### **Fieldwork Educator Perspectives**

The literature by Knowles (1970) indicates that learning is facilitated and improved through positive experiences (as cited in Mulholland & Hall, 2013). An important component of creating a positive learning experience includes understanding a student's learning style to better customize the fieldwork experience to their needs (Grenier, 2015). While learning style inventories are often utilized by educators in both classroom and fieldwork settings, they do not capture the individualistic and dynamic nature of the student learning process (Grenier, 2015). In a qualitative study by Robertson et al. (2011), FWEs reported an important aspect of a fieldwork supervisor-student relationship is to discuss learning styles so that differences may be accommodated and learning opportunities maximized. A Level I experience may provide the appropriate platform for further exploring learning styles in detail. The FWE can adapt and accommodate to the student's need during the Level I, therefore facilitating effective communication strategies on the first day of Level II fieldwork.

Fieldwork educators have stated that overall student preparedness for Level II fieldwork is one of the most important influential factors towards a successful learning experience (Hanson, 2011). Likewise, lack of student preparation was the number one reason for FWE frustration (Hanson, 2011). Fieldwork educators' concerns regarding student readiness and professional behaviors for Level II fieldwork is also factored when accepting or declining a student placement (Bell et al., 2014). In addition, there is also literature to support significant stress associated with poor student performance (Hanson, 2011; Spiliotoulou, 2007). Therefore, as one FWE reported, "Level I students are easy and possibly a missed opportunity as this is where they could complete a 'skill requirement checklist' [as opposed to] a case study for the school that we don't see or provide feedback on" (Hanson, 2011, p.171). Not only would FWEs have the opportunity to adapt to student learning needs during the Level I, they would also have the ability to complete competencies to ensure clinical readiness. Any clinical competencies not achieved during the Level I would be known, and the student would have ample time to improve upon the required skills prior to beginning the Level II fieldwork. The Same Site Model allows for students to practice the site-specific competencies, while providing the FWEs the opportunity to lay the groundwork for a successful Level II experience. The initial steps, such as a building tour, understanding of the paperwork and daily schedules have already been reviewed, providing an opportunity for Level II students to "hit the ground running."

When clinicians consider Level II OT fieldwork opportunities, they not only consider the supervisor/student dynamic, but also their relationship with the OT program that prepares them (Hanson, 2011). Thus, there is a great opportunity to strengthen existing clinical affiliation relationships through repeated Level I and II opportunities while also building student competence and readiness. If the FWE does not feel the Level I

student is a good match for the site, the fieldwork site can renege on the Level II placement. This prevents the possibility of “burning a site” when a mismatch occurs between student and placement. With trust and understanding between the AFWC and the FWE, these frank and honest conversations can occur while maintaining a working relationship. Whether it be professional behaviors, emotional intelligence or clinical skills that determined the mismatch, it allows for the OT program to further address the deficit areas. When FWEs and sites are viewed as an integral part of the curriculum, there is greater continuity between classroom and clinical education (Tepper, 2018). Facilitating student readiness and high-quality educational preparation of students have been rated by FWEs as the most valued supports provided by academic institutions (Evenson et al., 2015). Thus, the Same Site Model has the potential to foster a collaborative relationship between fieldwork sites/FWEs and academic institutions through repeated discussions of student readiness (Evenson et al., 2015).

The Same Site Model is not widely used across the United States, and there is little research on the model’s efficacy. The first aim of this study was to determine if the Same Site Model better prepared students for their Level II fieldwork, compared to the traditional model. The second aim was to describe the stakeholders’ perspectives of the model and to determine if the Same Site Model should be considered best practice.

### **Methodology**

This survey study was approved by the college’s Institutional Review Board where the OT students attended a full-time program. The self-reporting survey data was collected over a 3-year period. Participants included OT master level students participating in a Level II fieldwork experience (N= 111) and OT FWEs who were currently supervising an OT student (N=222). Demographic information on the OT students and FWEs was not collected to encourage participation. All students on Level II fieldwork provide their FWEs with a packet of information on the first day of fieldwork containing important information pertinent to their Level II experience. Surveys were included within the packet of information with a cover letter explaining the study (see Appendix A). All OT students participating in Level II fieldwork were also asked to complete the anonymous survey (see Appendix B). Both students who completed the Same Site Model (N= 41) as well as students who completed the traditional model (N=70) were asked to complete the survey for a comparison. All students who completed the traditional model were asked to complete the survey during their first Level II fieldwork placement. Students who completed the Same Site Model were asked to complete the survey during their Same Site Level II fieldwork placement (which could have been their first or second Level II fieldwork experience). All FWEs hosting Level II OT students were also asked to complete the anonymous survey, for both their first and second Level II experience, regardless if they had participated in the Same Site model, again for comparison. All surveys, both for the student and the FWE contained a self-addressed stamped envelope to return to the principal investigator (PI). A consent form was not attached to the survey in order to keep the anonymity of the responder. At the top of the surveys, it stated “Completion of the anonymous survey is optional. Please complete and return via self-addressed envelope provided.” Participation in this study was optional and consent was implied by completing the study and returning it in the self-addressed

stamped envelope. The PI who received the returned surveys was not involved in the students' academic grade (pass/fail) for the online portion of the Level II fieldwork experience. Due to the postage indicating state of origin, the PI was blind to student placement to keep anonymity.

The 10-item survey questionnaire contained both open and closed ended questions to gather information regarding the Level II fieldwork experience (see Appendices A and B). The survey was intentionally limited to 10 questions to encourage participation amongst both the students and FWEs. The questionnaire content was developed by two OTs who worked in the academic fieldwork office. The questions targeted perceptions of competence and readiness for the fieldwork experience based on the expansive literature review conducted. The questions developed were thought to be the most pertinent to student success on fieldwork. The questionnaire contained two yes/no questions and six Likert response questions. The Likert scale questions consisted of a 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) response range. Examples of Likert questions included: "I felt that my Level II fieldwork was a "good fit" for me" and "I felt nervous after the first week of my Level II fieldwork experience." The two open ended questions addressed preparedness for Level II fieldwork and perceptions of the Same Site Model of fieldwork. The answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed, coded and entered into the IBM Statistical Software for the Social Sciences (SPSS) with the other eight questions for analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze all of the data.

### Results

A total of 116 surveys were completed and returned for a 34.8% response rate. The survey was completed by 71 FWEs and by 45 master's level OT students. From the total number of respondents, 14 FWEs and 10 OT students were able to experience the Same Site Model of fieldwork. The data was analyzed using inferential statistics looking for correlations between use of the Same Site Model and the students' success, feelings of nervousness, student perceptions of whether the placement was a "good fit", and their reported preparedness to make clinical decisions (see Table 1). There were no significant findings in these areas.

Statistical analysis was conducted using a bivariate Pearson correlation analysis to investigate the impact of whether students and fieldwork educators that experienced the Same Site Model would prefer to use it again in the future (see Table 2). The correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ( $r=0.407$ ) at 0.01 level of significance ( $p<0.05$ ). This finding suggests that both students and FWEs that used the Same Site Model would prefer to use it again in the future. Weak correlations were found when analyzing implementation of the Same Site Model for fieldwork with overall perceptions of success on fieldwork ( $r= 0.214$ ) and perceptions that more OT education programs should adopt the Same Site Model ( $r= 0.261$ ).



**Table 1**

*Responses for Fieldwork Survey of Same Site Model (SSM) for Occupational Therapy Students*

	Fieldwork Educator				OT/s			
	SSM		Traditional		SSM		Traditional	
	n = 14		n = 56		n = 10		n = 35	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
The Level I was a "good fit"	1.25	.463	1.74	.798	1.40	1.265	1.67	.736
Student appeared nervous after 1 <sup>st</sup> week	3.63	.518	3.02	1.047	3.10	1.197	2.47	1.212
Student prepared to make clinical decisions	2.00	.535	2.13	.911	1.90	.994	2.18	.869
Student prepared to interact with clients	1.63	.744	1.74	.587	1.30	.483	1.82	.834
Student demonstrated good communication skills	1.63	1.060	1.88	.771	1.30	.483	1.79	.845
Student had a successful FW experience	1.43	.514	1.54	.719	1.50	.972	1.69	.631

*Note* – Likert scale implemented for survey items scored as 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree.

Significant findings using cross tabulation revealed that only two out of 24 respondents (8.33%) that experienced the Same Site Model felt that it should not be adopted as best practice. Additionally, out of all 116 surveys returned, 58 respondents (50%) felt that the Same Site Model should be considered when placing students. Additionally, 40 respondents (34.5%) said the model should not be considered best practice, with the most common explanation being that students should be exposed to a variety of experiences.

**Table 2***Correlational Analysis of Survey Responses and Use of Same Site Model*

	<i>r</i> -value <sup>a</sup>	<i>p</i> -value
Prefer to participate in the Same Site model with future fieldwork	.409	0.01**
Is the Same Site model best practice?	.261	0.01**
Successfulness of Level II fieldwork	.214	0.05*
Presence of knowledge gap in OT student for fieldwork	.134	0.151
OT student nervousness during the first week of Level II fieldwork	-.130	0.163
OT student preparedness for making clinical decisions	.024	0.801

*Note.* (n = 24). Pearson bivariate correlation analysis conducted using SPSS software Version 26.

<sup>a</sup> *r*-value = correlation coefficient

\**p* < .05, two tailed significance. \*\**p* < .01, two tailed significance

**Responses**

The open-ended question, “Do you feel OT academic programs should incorporate the Same Site Fieldwork Model as a best practice standard for increased student success on fieldwork? Why or why not?” provided valuable information regarding the students’ and FWEs’ perceptions of students’ performance and specific insights regarding the use of the Same Site Model. Although a quantitative study, the two open ended responses on the survey were analyzed and two main themes emerged (see Table 3). The first was that the respondents who opposed the Same Site Model wanted a greater variety of experiences for students. The second theme that emerged from the open-ended question, “Do you feel OT academic programs should incorporate the Same Site Fieldwork Model as a best practice standard for increased student success on fieldwork? Why or why not?” was that the Same Site Model should be a consideration for all students, and students should be assigned a fieldwork site based on the individual needs of each student.

**Table 3***Analysis of Open-Ended Response Survey Questions (FWE n = 71, OT/s n = 44)*

Theme	Participants	Example Quote	Frequency, n(%)
Theme 1: The respondents who opposed the Same Site Model wanted a greater variety of experiences for students	FWEs	“No. Students should be placed in different sites in order to get a wider range of experiences.”	26 (36.6%)
	OT/s	“No, I think being able to be placed in a different site allows a student to have the opportunity to be exposed to different facility sites and professional staff.”	13 (29.5%)
Theme 2: The Same Site Model should be a consideration for all students, and students should be assigned a fieldwork site based on the individual needs of each student	FWEs	“Yes! We’ve been mandating this for years and its allowed students to come as a Level II with less anxiety and better prepared to begin! It takes less time to orient to the facility and there’s already a foundation on which to build.”	18 (25.4%)
	OT/s	“Yes, I felt that the same site model alleviated a great deal of stress that comes with starting a Level II placement. It was really nice already being familiar with the staff and the facility.”	19 (43.2%)

*Note:* FWEs = Fieldwork Educators, OT/s = Occupational therapy student, n= number of surveys, percentages are in parentheses.

After completing the Level II fieldwork, students who participated in the Same Site Model were asked to share their experiences. Reflection statements from the Same Site Model experience supported previous findings that the Same Site Model has a positive impact on student mental health (see Table 4). Students reported they felt less nervous when beginning their Level II placement, having already completed their Level I at the same site.

**Table 4***Student Feedback on How the Same Site Model Improved Mental Health*

Example quotes
<p>“This fieldwork experience was an easy transition for I had already met the owner when I did my fieldwork one at the facility and I have also done some hours shadowing prior to being accepted to [OT program]. Since I was familiar with the staff and the facility, I was not extremely nervous.”</p>
<p>“I think I am adjusting so well because I had my Level I placement here.”</p>
<p>“Heading into my first day of my Level II Pediatrics Fieldwork experience I felt prepared and excited to begin the final step in my journey of becoming an occupational therapist. Having already been to the [removed to keep anonymity] during my Level I experience, I was not nervous and knew exactly what to expect.”</p>
<p>“Prior to starting on my first day I was feeling slightly nervous. However, having had the opportunity to visit the same facility in March for my level I seriously alleviated some of the stress and anxiety that I may have had prior to starting which I am grateful for. It provided me with the opportunity to already know where things were located, and a general idea of how things run there.”</p>
<p>“Gave me a sense of confidence that allowed me to jump right in basically my first week.”</p>
<p>“I was not feeling as nervous or anxious prior to beginning this FW experience compared to my previous one because I had completed my FW I week placement at this site. I already had a basic understanding of the roles and responsibilities of OT in the facility, the layout of the building, the staff, and even some of the patients were familiar in my first week.”</p>

**Discussion**

Overall, students completing the Same Site Model of fieldwork rated higher by both the student and FWE on the survey questions (e.g., preparedness and communication), than students completing the traditional model (see Table 1). Although these findings were not statistically significant, it is clinically significant that students completing the Same Site Model were found to be slightly more prepared and less nervous, according to their mean scores. The most important finding is that after experiencing both the Same Site Model and the traditional model of fieldwork, students and FWEs preferred the Same Site Model over the traditional model ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The Same Site Model has many benefits to the student, FWE, site and academic institution. The most prevailing benefit of the Same Site Model appears to be the positive mental health implications for OT students. Educating students on the availability of implementing the Same Site Model, especially for those who experience anxiety, allows students the opportunity to advocate for themselves and to adequately prepare for their Level II fieldwork.

In the United States, college counseling services have increased 30-40% with anxiety and depression being the most common areas of concern for students (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2018). Known factors that may increase mental distress include worrying about money, moving, new peer groups, workload, and other insecurities (Clarke et al., 2018). These factors are all probable components of leaving the academic institution to start full time employment at Level II fieldwork. Students are moving, sometimes across the country, saying goodbye to their friends, leaving part time jobs that helped to support them through the academic program, to take an unpaid, full time job they have never done before. The “complex lives that many graduate students lead can create or exacerbate problems in relationships; stress levels and coping behaviors; career and educational plans; and, in some cases, preexisting emotional conditions, such as stress and anxiety” (Benshoff et al., 2015, p.86). Due to the substantial increase in college students who have reported mental health conditions over the past decade, higher education institutions should be addressing positive mental health promotion and wellbeing (Thorley, 2017). Offering the Same Site Model of fieldwork is a systematic example of a trauma informed practice, by treating every student as having potential anxiety regarding fieldwork. The results of this study further support the original findings by Evenson et al. (2002) that the Same Site Model decreases nervousness and feelings of anxiety. Offering the Same Site Model is a way to promote positive mental health for all students. As stated by Larkin and Watchorn (2012), “with our clinical approaches, one size does not fit all and we believe that we have long since passed the stage where students can be allocated to placements without reference to their personal circumstances, in the same way as we take into account the needs of participating agencies” (p. 3).

The Same Site Model also offers an opportunity for students to preview their sites. The Level I fieldwork provides an opportunity for the student and site to determine if the placement is a good fit for all stakeholders prior to the three-month commitment of the Level II fieldwork placement, sharing the responsibility of finding just the right fit with the AFWC. Previous research findings suggest that individual attributes of the FWE and the OT student can have a negative impact on student learning outcomes on Level II fieldwork (Grenier, 2015). These findings suggest that the fit of the FWEs to the OT student can have a direct impact on success of the Level II fieldwork experience. Pre-determining if the site is a good match during the Level I experience, can therefore increase the odds of student success during the Level II placement.

In a time when academic institutions and sites are looking to decrease the amount of administrative work required for student placements, the Same Site Model can be a time-saver. When AFWCs contact sites to make placements, one call could potentially make two placements, both a Level I and a Level II experience. The role of the AFWC is already one that has high turn-over and a large workload, with most AFWC’s reporting they were unable to get their jobs done in a 40-hour work week (Stutz-Tanenbaum et al., 2015). The Same Site Model also provides an opportunity to build community

relationships which are vital for sustainability and continuity. A solid relationship between an academic institution and a local site can facilitate interprofessional education opportunities, guest lecturing opportunities, continuing education opportunities for the site and the ability to do “favors.” Every AFWC can attest to the importance of having a few local sites that will take a student in the case of an “emergency”, such as when a site cancels a placement at the last minute. Local sites can also participate on the institution’s advisory board, be a local advocate for the program, and contribute to the richness of the curriculum. These relationships and opportunities foster a better clinically prepared student.

Of the returned surveys, 34% (n=39/116) of respondents did not favor the Same Site Model stating concerns that students need a variety of placements. The concern that the Same Site Model does not provide exposure to varying sites is easily rectified by ensuring that students have a variety of Level I experiences in different settings. The benefits to the students, FWEs and academic institutions far outweigh the concern that the students are experiencing one less practice setting. Additionally, the only Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) requirements addressing Level I fieldwork practice setting is that one of the placements (either Level I or II) must be in behavioral health, or address practice in psychological or social factors impacting occupation (ACOTE, 2018). “The goal of Level I fieldwork is to introduce students to fieldwork, apply knowledge to practice, and develop understanding of the needs of the client” (ACOTE, 2018, p. 41).

This model can also prove to be particularly useful in facilitating increased quality of student preparation for Level II fieldwork. Focusing on the perspectives of FWEs revealed that there is a demand for high quality student preparedness to foster success in Level II fieldwork (Evenson et al., 2015). By allowing the OT student to preview a potential Level II fieldwork site by participating in a Level I fieldwork placement in the same program, it provides an opportunity for the student to gather first-hand experience on the demands of the fieldwork site, thus increasing preparedness for Level II fieldwork. In addition, student preparedness can directly impact student stress and anxiety pertaining to fieldwork. In conclusion, the findings of this study support previous research by Evenson et al. (2002) and the authors recommend the Same Site Model be a consideration for all OT students completing fieldwork.

### **Limitations**

This study had a small sample size of only 116 subjects and the students were all from one academic institution. The survey used did not have reliability and validating testing completed prior to the study. The surveys completed also did not have an equal representation of students and FWEs who had experience with the Same Site Model. Only 20% of the respondents had participated in the Same Site Model. Additional limitations include that all three researchers involved in this study are or have been AFWCs and thus, there may be a reporting bias.

This research did not survey AFWC's perspectives on the Same Site Model, which would have provided valuable insight. In addition to the AFWC's perspectives, future research on the nationwide use of Same Site Model is recommended. Comparing students' fieldwork performance evaluations from the traditional model and the Same Site Model from Level II fieldwork may also provide efficacy data on the Same Site Model. Lastly, research on the OT students' mental health throughout the Level II fieldwork experience is recommended.

Assessing the mental health of all OT students, in assistant level, master level programs and doctoral level programs, would provide greater insight into the current needs of these future therapists. Additionally, modeling academic programs and fieldwork experiences with prevention strategies and promotion of positive mental health as a guiding principle, will improve not only the student experience, but will model a trauma informed care approach on a systematic level.

### Conclusion

Students and FWEs who participated in the Same Site Model of fieldwork at this institution preferred it over traditional models. The Same Site Model should be a consideration for all academic programs when placing students on fieldwork. Using a trauma informed care approach to placing students will also keep the Same Site Model as a top consideration due to the positive impact it has shown on students' mental health.

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**Appendix A**  
**Clinical Instructor Fieldwork Survey**

**\*\*Completion of the anonymous survey is optional. Please complete and return via self addressed envelope provided. \*\***

1. Did you have the same student for completion of their Level I fieldwork and Level II fieldwork with you in the same location and program?
  - (1) Yes
  - (2) No
  
2. In the future, would you prefer to have the same student for a Level I and Level II fieldwork experience?
  - (1) Yes
  - (2) No
  
3. My student's Level II fieldwork experience was a "good fit" for them:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
  
4. My student appeared nervous after the first week of their Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree

5. My student was prepared to make clinical decisions for their Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
6. My student was prepared to interact with clients during their Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
7. My student demonstrated good communication skills during Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
8. My student had a successful Level II fieldwork experience:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
9. Did you feel that there was a portion of the student's educational knowledge that could have been stronger in preparing him/her for their fieldwork experience?
10. Do you feel OT academic programs should incorporate the Same Site Fieldwork Model as a best practice standard for increased student success on fieldwork? Why or why not?

## **Appendix B**

### **Student Fieldwork Experience Survey**

**\*\*Completion of the anonymous survey is optional. Please complete and return via self-addressed envelope provided. \*\***

1. I completed my Level I fieldwork and my Level II fieldwork at the same location and in the same program

(1) Yes

(2) No

2. If you were to complete your Level II fieldwork again, would you have been interested in performing your Level I fieldwork and your Level II fieldwork in same location and program?

(1) Yes

(2) No

3. I felt that my Level II fieldwork was a "good fit" for me:

(1) Strongly agree

(2) Agree

(3) Neither agree nor disagree

(4) Disagree

(5) Strongly disagree

4. I felt nervous after the first week of my Level II Fieldwork experience:

(1) Strongly agree

(2) Agree

(3) Neither agree nor disagree

(4) Disagree

(5) Strongly disagree

5. I felt prepared to make clinical decisions during my Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
6. I felt prepared to interact with clients during my Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
7. I demonstrated good communication skills during my Level II fieldwork:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
8. I had a successful Level II fieldwork experience:
  - (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) Agree
  - (3) Neither agree nor disagree
  - (4) Disagree
  - (5) Strongly disagree
9. Do you feel that there was a portion of your educational experience that could have been stronger in preparing you for your fieldwork experience?
10. Do you feel OT academic programs should incorporate the Same Site Fieldwork Model as a best practice standard for increased student success on fieldwork? Why or why not?