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Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes: It Is More Than Intervention

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Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes: It Is More Than Intervention

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A doctoral project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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Abstract

The National Longitudinal Transition Study–2 (NLTS–2) reports that 19% of students with disabilities will enter postsecondary education programs. However, The United States Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2015) reported that 16.8% of individuals with disabilities obtain a bachelor’s degree compared to 34.6% of individuals without a disability (BLS, 2015). Though students with disabilities aspire to continue their education, they are not as successful as their peers without disabilities. They are at risk for health disparities, lower earning potential, and stability in their community (Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2020a). Occupational therapy is beginning to play a role in supporting students to achieve the skills needed for positive postsecondary education outcomes. However, the interventions do not discuss their effectiveness using an evidence-based practice approach. The research found that four overarching themes impact positive postsecondary education outcomes: self-determination, disability identity, relationships, and accessibility.

This doctoral project aims to bring awareness to themes impacting intervention, provide interventions by pairing these themes with the American Occupational Therapy Associations (AOTA) Occupational Practice Framework–4th edition, and advocate for our place in supporting transition planning to postsecondary education. The three knowledge translation (KT) projects served to address this purpose. The first KT project served to educate on this topic using a systematic evidence-based practice approach for practitioners and students on this topic. This project was a continuing education webinar sponsored by the Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA). The second KT project focused on one of the themes: disability identity and its importance when using a strength-based approach. This project was an article for the Children and Youth Special Interest Section Quarterly Connections. The third KT project served to provide practitioners knowledge and opportunities to identify interventions within the four

themes. It also served to provide the foundation for practitioners to successfully advocate for occupational therapy's role in positive postsecondary education outcomes.

These projects support occupational therapy's potential to impact positive postsecondary education outcomes. However, students with disabilities who are slated to attend postsecondary education are not the primary focus of transition planning, which puts them at risk for health disparities and lower socioeconomic opportunities. Also, accessibility needs to be broadened in its definition to address occupational therapy's ability to provide occupational justice to all students. Future research should include the application of these themes outside of an urban school setting and the effectiveness of building a specialized transition team focusing on students with high incidence disabilities.

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Chapter 1—Background, Review of Evidence, and Occupational Therapy’s Role in Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes

My initial exposure to occupational therapy is a personal one. I received occupational therapy as a young child because of noticeable sensorimotor skill deficits. Though occupational therapy did help, I still had challenges in school. My teachers thought I was not working to my full potential because of my poor handwriting. I had to redo assignments to the point of frustration. Fortunately, I had the self-determination to persevere through these situations and parents that advocated for me to use alternative methods for written communication. I could show my capabilities to my teachers. As a result, was on an accelerated pre-collegiate track in high school. Had I not received occupational therapy as a child or had parents that were strong advocates, I would have had significant challenges in my life.

My interest in postsecondary education is also a personal one. I had two friends in college who received a learning disability diagnosis in the spring semester of their freshman year of college. One of my friends used our university’s disability services office (DSO); however, she had difficulty negotiating the process to receive and use reasonable accommodations and modifications for her classes. The other friend felt shame when he received a learning disability diagnosis. As a result, he did not use the university’s DSO. Instead, he relied on his peers to help him in his studies. They both graduated college; however, they had difficulty finding employment after their graduation. My one friend could not find a district that was willing to hire her as a teacher because of her grades and her inability to communicate her experiences. She never worked in education and had to make an unintentional change in her career path. They could have had a different college experience if they had solid resources.

I have been an occupational therapist for 20 years, with 18.5 years working in school systems. Most of my school-based practice has been in large urban school districts. The

population I have consistently worked with has been underrepresented populations, particularly of lower socioeconomic status and persons of color. School is important to their families; however, because of external factors (employment, housing and food insecurities, illness, etc.), school is not a priority. In addition to these external factors, I have students who have significant challenges picturing their lives once they graduate from high school. Many of my students have the potential to attend and complete a postsecondary education program. However, they heavily depend on their teachers and parents to direct their postsecondary aspirations. As a result, they do not realize they have the agency to communicate their aspirations and set goals reflective of their personal goals for postsecondary education.

Based on these personal experiences, I became interested in occupational therapy practitioners' role in postsecondary education. I specifically wanted to focus on students with high incidence disabilities. Students with high incidence disabilities are students that typically participate in general education with identified supports (e.g., reading, writing, self-regulation, etc.) or are in an inclusive education program (University of Kansas, 2022). Common high incidence disabilities are autism, learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral needs, communication disorders, and mild intellectual impairment. (University of Kansas, 2022). I proceeded to take a deep dive in this interest area.

I reached out to other occupational therapists using CommunOT, a national discussion board developed by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), the United States' professional organization for occupational therapy practitioners. At first, I wanted to focus on the mental aspect of supporting students with disabilities currently in a postsecondary education program. I exchanged messages and had a Zoom meeting with an occupational therapist that worked at a community college. Then, I was curious about occupational therapy's understanding of education law and policy in educating and empowering students and families of

their rights to accommodations and modifications under federal civil rights laws. I began an exchange with Barbara Kornblau, a past president of AOTA, a lawyer, and a Robert Wood Johnson policy fellow. She brought to light that our understanding of civil rights laws can change our focus.

However, these important topics did not fully address the overarching picture of what would result in a positive postsecondary education outcome. As a result, my decided focus became the effectiveness of strategies and interventions delivered in a secondary education environment (high school) and the successful translation of them to a positive postsecondary education outcome. I began this new focus by researching the current resources available to address this topic. I started this research by locating resources from AOTA and the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), an international organization supporting occupational therapists. The WFOT's had a specific position paper titled "Occupational Therapy Services in School-based Practice in Children and Youth" (WFOT, 2016). The WFOT stated that occupational therapists could "provide the necessary collaborative support to enable occupation and reduce or remove barriers to participation of all students and in particular students with specific education needs" (p 2., conclusion). This position paper also includes postsecondary education.

The AOTA resources specifically focusing on postsecondary education were a fact sheet and a PowerPoint presentation. The AOTA fact sheet, "Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education Settings: How Occupational Therapy Can Help," expressed that occupational therapy practitioners can provide successful intervention in both the academic and non-academic realms (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2016). The AOTA PowerPoint, "The Role of Occupational Therapy in Transition Planning," found that students with disabilities were not meeting their postsecondary outcomes (AOTA, 2020a). The

PowerPoint noted occupational therapy practitioners' role in addressing non-academic needs; however, it did not discuss the research supporting if evidence-based interventions and strategies resulted in positive postsecondary education outcomes.

I have many students who are more than capable of attending and graduating from a college or university program. However, many of my students do not realize that this path is an option. My students do not have a solid understanding of why they receive services and the process of providing reasonable accommodations and modifications. Though engaged in their student's schooling, their families do not have a solid understanding of the skills needed and the resources available to support their student who considers this path. The background information stated in the above paragraph, plus my professional and personal experiences, solidified the need that occupational therapy practitioners would be an asset to a student transitioning to postsecondary education. However, for occupational therapy to be involved in students transitioning to a traditional college or university program, we must show that our interventions are effective and essential for positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Review of evidence

Statistical Information

The United States Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2015) reported that one out of five individuals with a disability have less than a high school education. As a comparison, only one out of ten individuals with less than a high school education does not have a disability. Only 16.8% of individuals with disabilities obtain a bachelor's degree compared to 34.6% of individuals without a disability (BLS, 2015).

The Institution for Education Statistics (IES) conducted the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2), which is a survey focusing on postsecondary outcomes. This survey specifically focuses on the experiences of students with disabilities after they graduate

from high school. It studies students in five waves ranging from just graduating high school to eight years after graduation (Newman et al., 2011). It specifically looks at the postsecondary experience: postsecondary education, employment, independence, and social obligations. The NLTS-2 reported that though 60% of students with disabilities enroll in a postsecondary education program (2-year, 4-year, or vocational training), 19% of these individuals enroll in a traditional 4-year program. Within the 19% of individuals with disabilities attending a traditional postsecondary education program, only 34% complete their studies (Newman et al., 2011). This finding is significantly different from individuals in the general population, where 40% enroll in a four-year program, with 51% of the general population completing their studies (Newman et al., 2011).

These statistics show that students with disabilities aspire to continue their studies; however, they have difficulties achieving their desired outcome of completing their postsecondary education programs. Therefore, students with disabilities are at significant risk of having limited options in securing a livelihood that achieves stability and successful participation in their community occupations. To aid in decreasing this social disparity, it is essential for students with disabilities to actively participate in a federally mandated process called transition planning.

Transition Planning and Student Process

Transition planning is defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as coordinated sets of activities for students with disabilities in a high school setting (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services [OSERS], 2020). IDEA mandates that transition planning must begin when a student is at least 16 years old (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2011; OSERS 2020). The process first starts at age 14 when IDEA stipulates that a

student must receive an invitation to attend their IEP meetings. However, it is expected that a student be a full participant by the time they are 16 years old (OSERS, 2020). At the IEP meeting, the IEP team and the student begin the transition planning process and development of a transition plan (OSERS, 2020).

A transition plan is a collaborative document consisting of students, teachers, related services providers, and parents'/guardians' input. It is result-oriented, focusing on developing and implementing annual goals focused on the student's aspirations and goals for life after high school. These are known as postsecondary goals (OSEP, 2011; OSERS, 2020). The individuals who carry out the transition plan are educators, related service providers, and community representatives (vocational rehabilitation counselors, etc.) (OSERS, 2020). It focuses on employment, education (postsecondary or continuing adult education), independent living, and community participation after exiting or graduating from a high school program (OSEP, 2011). Goals are developed based on the student's aspirations and interests after graduating from high school. These goals must be measurable using data-driven approaches, and interventions must be rooted in evidence-based practice (OSERS, 2020).

Once a student leaves high school for a postsecondary education program (via graduation or when they exited at 21 years-old) (OSERS, 2020) they are expected to apply and generalize the skill set addressed in the postsecondary goals independently. An IEP is no longer a law-abiding document mandating a postsecondary institution to provide services (specialized instruction or related services) and accommodations or modifications to their educational curriculum (OSEP, 2011). Also, the student receives full educational rights instead of their parents (United States Department of Education [DOE], 2020) once they turn 18 or leave a high school program. These rights include disclosing a disability to a college or university. A college

or university cannot request identifiable information, and the students' families cannot disclose a student's disability. The focus becomes not on the entitlement of supports but accessibility to them. If a student does not disclose or have the resources to document a disability, then accommodations and modifications are not accessible (United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2020; OCR, 2011).

Themes From the Evidence Review

Finding themes for this doctoral project started revolved around an evidence-based practice question: What current evidence support effective interventions and strategies for positive postsecondary education outcomes? This question structured the search for evidence (databases, review of articles in my possession on this topic, extracting references from systematic reviews) and the selection of the articles. Then, themes were extracted based on the critical appraisal of four articles and a matrix summary of six additional articles. The identified themes from this process are self-determination, disability identity, relationships, and accessibility.

Self-Determination

The definition of self-determination is “a combination of attitudes and abilities that lead people to set goals for themselves and to take the initiative to reach these goals” (National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, 2022). Self-determination is considered an internal process. The student finds their independent ability to achieve their goals and aspirations. A student with strong self-determination skills realizes that they have the agency to create change and obtain their desired outcome.

Several studies found that students with disabilities who understand and believe in their autonomy can have positive postsecondary education outcomes. A systematic review by Mazzotti et al. (2013) found moderate evidence supporting autonomy/decision making, and self-

driven goal setting can predict postsecondary education outcomes. A conclusion from Kutscher & Tuckwiller's (2020) mixed-methods study found that students who believed in their potential and effectively used their autonomy were more likely to participate in postsecondary education. Also, strong self-determination skills lead to strong self-advocacy skills. Woods et al. (2010) found that students who have strong knowledge of the transition planning process resulted in IEPs that accurately reflect their aspirations and personal goals after graduating from high school. As a result, the result of transition planning becomes reflective of the student than the perceived aspirations set by the school staff and parents.

Though this area has extensive research in educational literature, there are inconsistencies, particularly with self-determination training programs. Woods et al. (2010) found that students had increased self-determination skills participating in a self-determination training program. However, Hatfield et al. (2017) found that their program, the Boost—A™, students did not increase their self-determination abilities. A conclusion drawn from these inconsistencies is that more research is needed, particularly conducting rigorous studies exploring whether teachers and related services should make self-determination a primary focus.

Disability Identity

Disability identity is the process where an individual acknowledges the presence of a disability (acute or chronic) and its impact on an individual's view of their personhood (Forber-Pratt et al., 2017). An individual developing their disability identity will incorporate the impact their disability has in all facets of their life (Forber-Pratt et al., 2017). From there, they take this connection to their identity and apply it in all their roles. Students with a strong disability identity and connection to the disability community (specific to their disability or a general community) are apt to have strong self-determination skills. As a result, these students are more apt to find success in their postsecondary education programs (Kutcher & Tuckwiller, 2020).

Though there is not a plethora of specific research in disability identity, it is a consistent thread in the available research. A student with a strong disability identity understands its impact on postsecondary education performance. Zhang et al. (2019) found evidence that students who understood their disability and were given leadership opportunities in the disability community had increased attendance rate in postsecondary education compared to the national average.

The first theme of self-determination can be rooted in disability identity. A student with a greater understanding of their disability and its impact may understand the challenges transitioning to postsecondary education. As a result, they strengthen their soft skills needed for positive postsecondary education outcomes (DuPaul et al., 2017; Kutscher & Tuckwiller 2020; McConnell et al., 2012).

Connection to a community also plays a role in disability identity. A systematic review and a mixed-methods study found overall evidence that students with disabilities are most successful when they have a social network to encourage academic and non-academic success in postsecondary education (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; McConnell et al., 2012). This social network can encourage shared experiences of negotiating challenges and successes. Because of the increased support, they may be more successful in obtaining a positive outcome.

Overall, the evidence shows moderate findings related to the importance of disability identity. So far, most of the evidence is from the population of all persons with a disability. It is less evident if adolescents with disabilities entering traditional postsecondary education programming can understand their disability and their impact on postsecondary education outcomes.

Relationships

A significant theme in the research was relationships can impact success in postsecondary education. There are three fundamental relationships for students with disabilities:

family, teachers, and peers. Two systematic reviews, a mixed-method study, and a quasi-randomized control study found that parents' expectations and attitudes regarding postsecondary education, particularly students with disabilities, could impact whether they attend and complete a program (Hatfield et al., 2017; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012). Three studies found that students whose parents encourage postsecondary education, despite their students' disabilities, are more apt to attend a college or university (Hatfield et al., 2017; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Mazzotti et al., 2013). In addition to parent involvement and expectations, teachers strongly influence disabilities. A systematic review and two secondary analyses found that teachers who provided students with disabilities access to a curriculum similar to their typically developing peers better prepared them for postsecondary education (academic and non-academic) experiences (DuPaul et al., 2017; McConnell et al., 2012; Rojewski et al., 2015).

The research also finds that peer relationships are directly proportional to student success. Students who have difficulty building and establishing relationships with their peers are at risk for negative behaviors, such as substance abuse, social isolation, and school disengagement (DuPaul et al., 2017). Three studies, two systematic reviews and a secondary analysis, concluded that students with strong social skills, including accepting peer assistance or modeling, and social network supports (a friend or a friend group) are predictors of positive postsecondary education outcomes (Joshi & Bouck, 2017; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012).

Accessibility

Accessibility is one of the consistent themes supported by evidence. One aspect of accessibility is accessing resources and supports. Students who receive support both in and outside of school can predict postsecondary education outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Rojewski et al., 2015). One systematic review and two secondary analyses found that with

increased access to inclusive opportunities (classes with their typically developing peers), students with disabilities were more apt to apply and attend colleges or universities (Joshi & Bouck, 2017; Rojewski et al., 2015). A secondary data analysis supported these findings (McConnell et al., 2015). However, McConnell et al. (2015) found that inclusion did not sufficiently address non-academic skills such as relationship building or self-determination.

This theme also addressed the concept of social justice. Students that had opportunities to access more resources such as outside tutoring or outpatient therapies (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020), or access to supplemental programs (Chiang & Jacobs, 2010) had better postsecondary education outcomes. A secondary analysis study found that students in underrepresented populations have less access to inclusive opportunities (Rojewski et al., 2015). As a result, they are more likely not to pursue postsecondary education. Though research identifies this area as an essential consideration, the research has a limited body of evidence.

Occupational Therapy's Role in Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education is more than academic abilities to obtain a degree. A postsecondary education student in general needs to have a strong sense of self (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020) plus establish and maintain positive relationships (DuPaul et al., 2017). They also need access to resources supporting a positive postsecondary education outcome (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Rojewski et al., 2015). The review of the evidence section in this chapter finds that students with disabilities, particularly those that enter traditional postsecondary education, can have increased difficulties in establishing the essential skills needed to participate and complete a postsecondary education program.

Occupational therapy practitioners can support students with disabilities in postsecondary education. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework—4th Edition (Practice Framework) outlines occupational therapy's scope of practice. The occupations that align with the identified

themes in the above section are education and social participation (AOTA, 2020b). The environmental factors that drive the occupations are the population (students), accessing materials needed for positive outcomes, such as outside resources or accommodations, and modifications. The outcomes include occupational performance participation, quality of life, self-advocacy and advocacy, and occupational justice (AOTA, 2020b).

Occupational therapy is exploring the potential role in postsecondary education; however, the focus is more on specific intervention (e.g., strengthening metacognition). To have positive postsecondary education outcomes, the focus must start with the big picture, including incorporating the four themes. The outlined themes give occupational therapy practitioners ways to develop robust interventions that address the sensorimotor components and provide a holistic approach to a significant change in a student's life.

Significance

Admission to a postsecondary education program is complex. Students need to negotiate filling out the application plus obtaining and submitting required documents, such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, and take the standardized college admissions assessments (SAT, ACT). Once accepted, a student may need to negotiate ways to find funding (e.g., outside scholarship, student loans). They need to register for courses and buy the required materials. First-generation college students may have to negotiate this process independently or rely solely on their school counselors (formally known as guidance counselors). Students from underrepresented populations must negotiate a system that seems foreign and created for others in the majority population. Students from a low socioeconomic situation may not have the monetary means to apply to a college or university, or they may have to finance their education through student loans, work-study programs, and gaining part-time employment. These obstacles are also applicable to students with disabilities.

Many skills are needed to succeed in this setting, such as maintaining a required grade point average [GPA], time management skills to keep to deadlines, or establishing a peer community. To receive accommodations and modifications to support these skills, the student must disclose to the college or university that they have a disability (DOE, 2020) because they are not entitled to receive specialized instruction and related services once they graduate high school (OSERS, 2020). The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) reported that only 24% of students with learning disabilities would disclose the presence of one to their postsecondary institution (NCLD, 2020). Out of students not disclosing their disability status, 43% reported that it would have been beneficial to access entitled supports protected under federal law and policy (Newman et al., 2011). Additionally, they need to seek outside evaluations (e.g., neuropsychological, education psychological, etc.) to document their official diagnosis and the reasonable accommodations and modifications needed. Universities cannot provide these accommodations and modifications without the required official paperwork.

A postsecondary institution wants students to graduate successfully. A student with higher education is more likely to be employed and earn a higher salary than a student who is unsuccessful in achieving a degree. Plus, postsecondary institutions provide opportunities to develop non-curricular skills, such as leadership and networking. For students with disabilities, these opportunities will produce positive outcomes that impact their social determinants of health. Also, if the postsecondary institution has a reputation for supporting students with disabilities, the institution may attract more students and even more faculty.

Though transition planning is not a new area for school-based occupational therapy, occupational therapy's involvement in the transition planning process is not used to its full potential. Pierce et al. (2021) noted that students graduating from a secondary education program must have a transition plan that considers their goals and aspirations. These goals and aspirations

are rooted in successful execution in daily occupations. Barbara Kornblau (2021) noted that we understand task analysis to design and provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to succeed in a college or university program. However, because of a lack of understanding of occupational therapy's roles in school-based intervention, occupational therapists are underutilized (Pierce et al., 2021). Most students with disabilities who receive occupational therapy are usually discharged when they develop functional performance skills to access, participate, and progress in their educational curriculum. Though transition plans use the principles of occupations, the development of these plans are usually by other school professionals. Though knowledgeable, these professionals may have difficulty helping students develop transition plans meeting both student aspirations and the translation of these aspirations to goals and strategies needed for independence and success in a college or university setting.

Occupational therapy's involvement in postsecondary education is an emerging area of practice. The Practice Framework (AOTA, 2020) justifies that this area is within our scope of practice. However, because of occupational therapy's limited involvement in transition planning, particularly for students attending college or university programs, there is minimal evidence rooted in data-driven measures that can definitively claim that occupational therapy's involvement can set up a student for success in college or university.

Innovation

The framework supporting these knowledge translation projects is Healthy People 2030, a 10-year initiative developed by the Department of Health and Human Services. An objective of Healthy People 2030 is to address the social determinants of health (Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2020a). The social determinants of health "are the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks" (HHS, 2020a, para 1). It has five

domains addressing the health and wellness disparities. This project focuses on the education access and quality domain.

Individuals with disabilities tend to have increased difficulties accessing and participating in their educational curriculum. They are at risk for not completing secondary education or attending a postsecondary education program (Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2020b). This decreased access to education can significantly impact an individual with a disability to hold employment at or above the standard cost of living. The decreased access to education also limits access to jobs with sound benefits, such as health insurance or sick days. As a result, individuals with disabilities are more apt to be at risk for acute and chronic health conditions (HHS, 2020b). By providing students with disabilities effective interventions rooted in evidence-based practice, the circumstances of poor social determinants of health can be mitigated (Rojewski et al., 2015). Occupational therapy practitioners can assist in preparing students for postsecondary education success as interventionists and collaborators, particularly with school-based professionals such as general education teachers, school counselors, and school psychologists. As a result, the potential to further close the gap regarding the inequities in a population's social determinants of health has increased potential for success.

Occupational therapists can use the knowledge and skills needed for everyday living to be a preventative service for students transitioning to a traditional postsecondary education institution. With a clear understanding of the unique needs of students attending these programs, we can provide intervention and education to students and families. We can fulfill a role in effective collaboration with staff in both secondary and postsecondary education settings, in building the foundation for positive outcomes for students with disabilities in college or university.

Aims for Knowledge Translation

The first knowledge translation project disseminated knowledge that is rooted in evidence-based practice. This knowledge dissemination was part of a continuing education webinar sponsored by the Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA). The presentation focused on the identified dilemma, the steps to develop an evidence-based practice question using the PICO method, themes extracted from structured searches, and recommendations based upon the themes.

The second knowledge transition project was writing an article for the Children and Youth Special Interest Section Quarterly Practice Connection (CYSIS Quarterly). The focus of this article was disability identity, particularly the construct, its relationship to transition planning and postsecondary education, and occupational therapy's role in assisting students to foster a positive identity using strength-based practice.

The aim of the third knowledge translation project focused on raising awareness about occupational therapy's potential in transitioning students with disabilities, particularly high incidence disabilities, to a postsecondary education institution. I submitted a proposal for a 60-minute short course for the Maine Occupational Therapy Association's (MeOTA) fall conference on April 29, 2022. The short course's focus is expanding on the first knowledge translation project and tailoring it to meet MeOTA's conference theme: "Contextual Diversity—New Frontiers in OT Practice" (Maine Occupational Therapy Association [MeOTA], 2022).

Summary

In conclusion, transition planning, particularly for postsecondary education, is complex. It is more than interventions and carryover of designated accommodations and modifications. It must consider themes that are both social and societal in a student with disabilities' everyday interactions. In the following three chapters of this portfolio, I will discuss my knowledge

translation projects focusing on the aims outlined in this chapter. Through my knowledge translation projects and my extensive research in this area, I will discuss the themes that impact the outcomes of transitioning to a postsecondary education institution. I will also present that occupational therapy is invaluable for students to have positive outcomes in a postsecondary education setting.

Chapter 2: Transition Planning and Occupational Therapy: Can We Support Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes?

As more students with individualized education plans (IEPs) have increased opportunities to enter postsecondary education, transition planning must focus on interventions and accommodations to support students once they leave high school. However, there is a minimal amount of evidence supporting interventions that have positive postsecondary education outcomes. For students with disabilities, particularly high-incidence disabilities (autism, learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral needs, communication disorders, sensory and physical disorders impacting educational access, and mild cognitive impairments) (University of Kansas, 2022), understanding what makes them successful in a postsecondary education institution can set a foundation for successful intervention and reasonable accommodations.

Project Aim

The project aim of this knowledge translation project was to disseminate information rooted in evidence-based practice addressing the effectiveness of interventions for students with disabilities to have a positive postsecondary education outcome. I was a presenter in a continuing education webinar via Zoom for MOTA's continuing education series to disseminate my findings. This presentation addressed four identified themes found in the literature that impact positive postsecondary education outcomes. It tied together the four themes to the Practice Framework and the recommendations on how occupational therapy can influence these outcomes.

Project Description

Under the guidance of Dr. Kathleen Matuska, the advisor for the Evidence Based Project course (OTCH 8440) at St. Catherine University, I developed a PowerPoint presentation

focusing on the evidence in the literature that focused on the search process for evidence, themes identified in the evidence, recommendations for interventions and strategies, and occupational therapy's role in the process. As a collaborative effort between St. Catherine University and MOTA, I was a co-presenter in a 60-minute synchronous webinar with a member of my cohort also presenting their knowledge translation project. My presentation was 25 minutes long, with a five-minute question and answer (Q&A) session addressing my area of interest.

Project Approach

I developed a PowerPoint that summarized my evidence-based practice portfolio. It focused on four major themes in this practice area, specific recommendations to address identified areas of need in these themes, and occupational therapy's role in supporting the recommendations using the Practice Framework. A copy of this presentation is in Appendix A.1.

I initially presented my findings in OTCH 8440 to my cohort using VoiceThread, an asynchronous online presentation platform. They provided feedback for my presentation, which I revised based on their input. This feedback is in Appendix A.3.

After I revised my presentation, I submitted a proposal to MOTA, located in Appendix A.2. Once MOTA approved the presentation, they scheduled the continuing education webinar for February 2, 2022, in the evening. I presented remotely using Zoom, a videoconferencing platform.

Audience and Venue

The intended audience were occupational therapy practitioners that primarily practice in school systems. There were six attendees for this presentation. The venue was virtual over Zoom. My video was turned off, at the recommendation of the moderator, for a seamless narrative. My camera was turned on during the Q&A session at the recommendation of the moderator. The

Q&A session used the Zoom chat function for the audience to ask questions or receive clarifications on the themes and the evidence-based approach discussed in the presentation.

Presentation Learning Objectives

The three learning objectives were:

- 1.) Describe research supporting the skills needed for positive postsecondary education outcomes for high school students transitioning into postsecondary education.
- 2.) Critique levels of evidence for four identified themes in positive postsecondary education.
- 3.) Examine recommendations for school-based OTP's role in supporting the transition process to post-secondary education in the four identified themes.

Evidence of Approach

My presentation underwent a peer-reviewed process to ensure that it addressed the needs of the targeted audience. As seen in Appendix A.2., my proposal was one page in length consisting of the objectives of my presentation, my professional biography, and three scholarly references from my presentation. MOTA accepted my presentation proposal in January 2022. The presentation aligned with the Children and Youth practice outlined by AOTA.

Evaluation of Presentation

The attendees received a Google Survey via email from MOTA. It consisted of demographic information (name [optional], email, type of occupational therapy practitioner, MOTA membership), four yes/no questions, one multiple choice question, and two optional short answer questions. The Google Survey was optional, but strongly recommended for constructive feedback. Only one person completed the survey due to MOTA sending it out to attendees the day after the presentation. The individual that completed the survey stated that the presentation was engaging and provided new knowledge that is applicable to current practice

trends. A copy of the Google Survey and responses are in Appendix A.4. Because only one person filled out the Google Survey, I incorporated in this section highlighted feedback my cohort provided when I presented in OTCH 8440 (Appendix A.3.).

Chapter 3: Disability Identity: A Strength-Based Approach Can Impact Postsecondary Education Outcomes

Students with disabilities need to recognize and address their disability and its impact in a postsecondary education setting. It can set a foundation for positive outcomes in their education. There is evidence that students with disabilities are most successful when they have a social network to encourage academic and non-academic success in postsecondary education (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; McConnell et al., 2012). Being aware of the impact the disability has on post-high school life can produce positive outcomes in postsecondary education. Three studies found that students who have a greater understanding of the challenges they may face in college and develop persistence can have positive outcomes (DuPaul et al., 2017; Kutscher & Tuckwiller 2020; McConnell et al., 2012).

Project Aim

The second knowledge transition project was writing an article for a peer-reviewed publication specifically targeting occupational therapy practitioners. This article discussed the construct of disability identity, its relationship to transition planning, and occupational therapy's role in supporting students transitioning to college or university programs. The article used information from my evidence-based practice portfolio research, developed in St Catherine University's course OTCH 8440. This article aimed to use a national platform to reach occupational therapy practitioners to bring their attention to a theme that can help design intervention strategies that can contribute to positive postsecondary education outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities.

Project Description

To disseminate my knowledge of disability identity and its impact on college or university success, I wrote an article for the Children and Youth Special Interest Section CYSIS

Quarterly. The CYSIS Quarterly is a supplement to OT Practice, which is AOTA's clinical and professional practice magazine. I initially wanted to write an article for OT Practice; however, I chose the CYSIS Quarterly because it serves as a middle ground between research and clinical practice. These articles encourage interventions and strategies immediately applicable to an occupational therapy practitioner's practice (AOTA, 2022). Appendix B.4. contains a copy of the article to be submitted for publication.

Project Approach

I contacted the editor of the CYSIS Quarterly about writing an article for the CYSIS Quarterly. To give context to my idea, I attached my PowerPoint presentation I used for the knowledge translation project outlined in Chapter 2. The editor emailed me with the four themes of the CYSIS Quarterly: strengths-based practice, community health, post public health emergency, and quality. This communication is in Appendix B.1. I approached the knowledge translation project by reviewing my findings on disability identity. To expand upon this theme, I added further information, including disability identity development, its importance in accessing reasonable accommodations and modifications, and its potential to increase attendance and complete a college or university program. I researched different occupational therapy periodicals to publish this article and found the CYSIS Quarterly to be the best medium for this project based on its mission statement and accessibility to AOTA members.

Audience and Venue

The intended audience is occupational therapy practitioners who are clinicians in school systems. The targeted audience in this practice area is occupational therapy practitioners working in secondary education. In addition to school-systems occupational therapy practitioners, this audience is relevant to occupational therapy practitioners working in disability services offices

on college or university campuses. The venue is a national platform for occupational therapy practitioners to be abreast of current trends, including traditional and non-traditional settings.

Article Learning Objectives

The three learning objectives for the article are:

- 1.) Define and describe the concept of disability identity development.
- 2.) The role disability identity has in positive postsecondary education outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities.
- 3.) Ways to incorporate disability identity into school-based practice using a strength-based approach to address positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Evidence of Approach

I discussed this topic with my doctoral project advisor, Dr. John Fleming, explaining my vision for this article and its unique contribution to occupational therapy. Dr. Fleming guided me to read different articles in occupational therapy periodicals to provide a framework on the types of articles accepted for publication. I contacted the editor of the CYSIS Quarterly about writing an article. The editor emailed me back with a link to the guidelines and the themes for each publication. I reviewed the author guidelines for the CYSIS Quarterly and structured the article following their content guidelines and accepted length. Once I wrote my initial manuscript, I sent it to my advisor, Dr. Fleming, and my mentor, Dr. Aaron Jennings. A copy of this correspondence is in Appendix B.2. and B.3. I will submit the article via email to the editor of the CYSIS Quarterly on May 18, 2022, with my email serving as a cover letter for publication consideration.

Evaluation of Manuscript

My first evaluation process was sending the article draft to my advisor and my mentor. The second evaluation is the CYSIS Quarterly editor's peer-reviewed procedures that consider

the contribution to occupational therapy's growth, the quality of knowledge dissemination, and if it met the basic guidelines. The manuscript will be revised and submitted based on the editor's feedback. Should this article be accepted, any further revisions will include two occupational therapists from my professional network. One occupational therapist works in postsecondary education and has an article in press for publication. The second occupational therapist is a past president of AOTA specializing in disability policy and has an extensive publication history.

Chapter 4: Finding the Way: How Can Occupational Therapy Support Postsecondary Education Outcomes

Students who complete their postsecondary education programming are more likely to gain stable employment with competitive compensation. As a result, they are more apt to have fewer health needs and live in a community that promotes a healthy lifestyle. Also, postsecondary education institutions provide opportunities to develop soft skills needed for successful participation in their community (networking, leadership opportunities). These positive outcomes translate to students with high-incidence disabilities receiving the support necessary for positive outcomes. It benefits students and the postsecondary institution. A postsecondary institution that gains a reputation for successfully supporting students of all ability levels may attract students, faculty, and outside funding. Occupational therapy practitioners can be an asset to a postsecondary education institution because of the profession's understanding of the skillset and the environment for positive outcomes.

Project Aim

The third aim of the third knowledge translation project was to raise awareness and advocate the importance of occupational therapy practitioners being a valid resource in successfully transitioning students with high incidence disabilities to a postsecondary education institution. I created a short-course presentation and submitted a proposal for the MeOTA state conference to fulfill this aim. I chose MeOTA's conference because the theme is "Contextual Diversity: New Frontiers in Occupational Therapy Practice" (MeOTA, 2022).

Project Description

I created a short course to disseminate my knowledge of occupational therapy as an asset to a postsecondary education institution. This course, titled "Finding the Way: How Can

Occupational Therapy Support Postsecondary Education Outcomes, is 60 minutes long and will be given in-person. I based it on my evidence-based practice project portfolio developed in OTCH 8440, under the guidance of Dr. Kathleen Matuska at St. Catherine University. Though I live in Massachusetts, MeOTA's theme fits my practice area. The theme fulfills my intention to raise awareness and advocate the importance of occupational therapy practitioners being an asset working in a college or university disability services office.

Project Approach

I approached this knowledge translation project by reviewing my evidence-based practice project portfolio. Using my MOTA PowerPoint as a foundation, I developed an outline of a proposal for MeOTA to address the potential of finding a new niche of practice. From the outline, I wrote a formal proposal. It consisted of an abstract, objectives, a short biography, and scholarly references. I submitted this proposal on April 29, 2022, via Google Docs. A copy is in Appendix C.1. and C.2. Currently, this proposal is undergoing a blind peer review. I also created a PowerPoint presentation consisting of the four themes and their specific alignment with the Practice Framework. Should my proposal be accepted, I will present this short-course in-person in Freeport, Maine, on October 22, 2022.

Audience and Venue

The intended audience is both occupational therapy practitioners and occupational therapy students. The targeted audience is practitioners practicing in school systems who want to expand their role or students who are interested in exploring non-traditional practice settings. The venue is a live presentation at a state conference in Freeport, Maine, which is two and a half hours outside of Boston, Massachusetts. Though most of the attendees will be practitioners and students working or going to school in Maine, it is also serving opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners in New England. According to Statistical Analysis (n.d.), a data mining site,

the second largest industry in New England is education. This field encompasses early childhood to postsecondary education. Therefore, this presentation contributes to the body of knowledge for a region with an increased number of school-based practitioners.

Short Course Objectives

The three learning objectives for the article are:

- 1.) Gain knowledge of four themes in the research impacting positive postsecondary outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities.
- 2.) Understand occupational therapy's potential impact within the four themes.
- 3.) Identify strategies to apply to interventions to support students with high incidence disabilities transitioning to postsecondary education using the Practice Framework as a guide.

Evidence of Approach

I emailed a rough draft of my proposal to Dr. Fleming with the link describing the requirements of the short course. I revised my proposal and then sent it back to Dr. Fleming with the suggested revisions. After completing these revisions, I developed a PowerPoint presentation for Dr. Fleming to provide feedback, with suggested edits for wording and presentation structure. Once I received the information, I submitted my proposal using MeOTA's Google Doc form. Upon acceptance, I will present at MeOTA. A copy of the MeOTA's submission form and my draft proposal are in Appendix C.1. and C.2. The PowerPoint presentation is in Appendix C.3.

Evaluation of Short Course

The first evaluation process incorporated feedback and revisions for my proposal and presentation provided my faculty advisor. The evaluation process is the blind peer review of my proposal by MeOTA members. Upon acceptance, the third evaluation process will be a brief

survey containing five questions using a Likert scale and two short answer questions for specific feedback. A copy of the draft survey is in Appendix C.4.

Chapter 5–Evaluation Outcomes and Analysis

Evaluation Outcomes

The Knowledge Translation Plan Appraisal Tool[®] (KTPAT[®]) is a guideline to evaluate the knowledge translation projects in this learning portfolio (Sick Kids Learning Institute, 2018). The outcome analysis for each knowledge translation project focuses on comprehensiveness, their alignment to the learning objectives, and the feasibility of the projects. This analysis also includes the strengths and weaknesses in each area.

Knowledge Translation Project 1: Transition Planning and Occupational Therapy: Can We Support Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes?

Knowledge users. For Knowledge Translation Project 1 (KT1), the knowledge users were occupational therapy practitioners, educators, and students attending a live continuing education webinar sponsored by MOTA. The main audience within the above knowledge users were occupational therapy practitioners specifically working in school systems.

Main messages. The main messages of this knowledge translation project were the following:

- 1.) Transition planning to postsecondary education is a complex process that encompasses more than developing interventions and strategies.
- 2.) Transition planning for positive postsecondary education outcomes must consider themes of disability identity, self-determination, relationships, and accessibility of support for positive outcomes.
- 3.) School-based occupational therapy practitioners can play a positive role in supporting students with disabilities achieving positive postsecondary education outcomes, driven by the Practice Framework (AOTA, 2020).

Knowledge Translation Goals. The goals of this knowledge translation project were the following:

- 1.) Describe research regarding the non-academic skills important for postsecondary education success.
- 2.) Critique levels of evidence for the implementation of non-academic skills to support students transitioning to postsecondary education.
- 3.) Examine recommendations for OT practice related to secondary transition planning and positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Knowledge Translation Strategies. This continuing education webinar focused on students with disabilities, specifically those transitioning from high school to two or four-year postsecondary programs. It outlined the dilemma of this topic, the themes that impact postsecondary education outcomes, and the role that occupational therapy can play in this type of transition planning. The presentation provided the audience with the research and synthesis of information regarding this topic and its relatability to occupational therapy's scope of practice. It gave strategies for structuring interventions or consultations using the Practice Framework.

Knowledge Translation Evaluation. I used two means to evaluate this project. I presented this project to my cohort as an assignment for the OTCH 8440 course using VoiceThread. Cohort members were invited to provide feedback via voice or text (see Appendix A.3).

I provided to the attendees an optional Google Survey for feedback. It consisted of demographic information, rating of the presentation in knowledge, organization, and engagement, and two short answer questions for application to practice and other feedback. There were six attendees with one attendee filling out the survey (see Appendix A.4.).

Knowledge Translation Project 2: Disability Identity: A Strength-Based Approach Can Impact Postsecondary Education Outcomes

Knowledge users. The knowledge users for Knowledge Translation Project 2 (KT2) are occupational therapy practitioners working in school systems, occupational therapy students interested in school systems, and occupational therapy practitioners looking to expand into non-traditional practice settings (postsecondary education campuses).

Main messages. The main messages of the SIS article were:

- 1.) Students that have a strong disability identity prior to attending a postsecondary education program are more apt to have a positive college experience.
- 2.) Occupational therapy can best address disability identity because of our profession's foundation in holistic therapeutic processes.
- 3.) Occupational therapy practitioners in school systems can provide intervention (direct, indirect, or collaborative) to foster positive disability identity using strength-based methods.

Knowledge translation goals. The goals for this knowledge translation project were the following:

- 1.) Introduce the concepts of disability identity to occupational therapy practitioners.
- 2.) Establish occupational therapy's role in school-systems practice in supporting students develop and cultivate their disability identity to successfully transition to a traditional postsecondary education program.

3.) Provide interventions (direct, indirect, or collaborative) using a strength-based approach for establishing and strengthening a student's disability identity using the Practice Framework as a guide.

Knowledge translation strategies. To write an article for the CYSIS Quarterly, I reviewed the themes I studied in the Evidence-Based Practice Project course in the Fall 2021 semester. Disability identity was identified as a topic of interest for occupational therapy practitioners practicing in school systems. I took a deep dive into this topic by searching for articles using the following databases: ERIC, PsycInfo, and Education Database. The literature for this article was selected based on its relevance to the topic. I emailed the CYSIS Quarterly editor to inquire about this topic. The editor responded and informed me of the quarterly newsletter themes: strength-based practice, quality, community-based practice, and post-public health emergency. The editor also provided guidelines for writing an article for the CYSIS Quarterly (see Appendix B.1.). I read other SIS articles to gather information about the structure of the article and ideas for developing a case study. My faculty advisor and my mentor received invitations through Google Docs to make suggestions and edits on the working document (see Appendix B.2 and B.3.). The article is scheduled to be submitted to the editor on May 18, 2022, after the oral defense of this doctoral portfolio.

Knowledge translation evaluation. This knowledge translation project's evaluation is an editorial review by the CYSIS editor and the review committee. The editor and the committee will review this article to see if it would be a good fit for the proposed themes. The initial email from the CYSIS editor noted that the editors have flexibility with the article's content and its relationship to the established quarterly themes. The editor will receive a manuscript for this article after feedback from my primary reviewers on May 18, 2022. Edits will be made based

upon their guidance, with additional members of my professional network providing their input, if this article is accepted for publication.

Knowledge Translation Project 3: Finding the Way: How Can Occupational Therapy Support Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes

Knowledge users. The knowledge users for Knowledge Translation Project 3 (KT3) are occupational therapy practitioners and students interested in or working with students transitioning to traditional postsecondary education settings and students who are interested in this topic. Also, this knowledge translation project users can be occupational therapy practitioners interested in or working in postsecondary education. Most attendees will be students and occupational therapy practitioners practicing in Maine; however, attendees will be present from the New England region.

Main messages. The main message for KT3 is that occupational therapy, whether it is transition planning or working with students in postsecondary education, is more than developing, teaching, and implementing interventions. To provide students with high incidence learning disabilities the opportunities for positive postsecondary education outcomes, occupational therapy practitioners must have a solid understanding of the issues impacting negative outcomes. With this understanding, practitioners can structure intervention strategies that allow students transitioning to or in postsecondary education to have the foundation for success.

Knowledge translation goals. The knowledge translation goals for this project are:

- 1.) Occupational therapy practitioners to understand the impact of four identified themes for positive postsecondary education outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities.

- 2.) Occupational therapy practitioners to understand the influence the profession can have in supporting positive postsecondary education outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities transitioning to a traditional postsecondary education setting.
- 3.) Identifying strategies and interventions (direct, indirect, or collaborative) to address the four themes using the Practice Framework as a driving force.

Knowledge translation strategies. The knowledge translation strategy will be a 60-minute short course. This presentation will have a brief synopsis of the evidence-based practice project, which provided the foundation for this presentation. The presentation will dive deeper into the four themes and their relationship to occupational therapy. The short course will also align with the universal designs of learning (UDL) in content (visual and auditory) and in instruction (individual, small group/dyads, and large group). The audience will apply and generalize the concepts by discussing a student currently on their caseload. Should this proposal be accepted, this course will be an in-person, one-day conference held in Freeport, Maine, on October 22, 2022. It will be Maine's first in-person state conference since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Knowledge translation evaluation. This project has three evaluation processes. The first evaluation method was deciding on the type of knowledge translation strategy. Initially, this proposal was for a poster presentation. My faculty advisor and peers' input found that a short course better aligned with the main messages and learning objectives. The active learning strategies best fit the whole knowledge translation process because they allow information dissemination and encourage knowledge sharing between fellow practitioners. My faculty advisor reviewed my short course proposal and presentation (see Appendix B.2. and B.3.), with the submission of the proposal completed April 29, 2022.

The following two evaluation methods relate specifically to the conference. This project is in the first stage, which is a blind peer review. Two MeOTA members will review the proposal to determine if the proposal aligns with the conference theme and if there is interest in this topic. Should this proposal be accepted, the attendees will use a survey to provide feedback for the presentation which is scheduled for October 22, 2022. The survey will have five questions using a rating scale to address the quality of the presentation. It will also have two short answer questions; one question will specifically address relevance to practice. The second question allows the attendees to provide more opportunities for constructive input.

Evaluation Analysis

Comprehensiveness

A strength of these knowledge translation projects is disseminating information to practitioners involved in their professional organizations (state and national). These practitioners may represent their organization and, through their participation, can further disseminate the information of these knowledge translation projects to their colleagues through in-services or in a journal club.

Another strength of these projects is that they contribute to a new area of practice. Occupational therapy literature and AOTA are beginning to explore supporting students with high incidence disabilities transitioning to or participating in traditional postsecondary education programs. These projects will help practitioners structure intervention and their intended outcomes by considering the themes that impact this area. By “finding the why,” intervention is rooted in evidence-based principles.

Though occupational therapy literature has information on these themes, most of the published research is in education or psychology scholarly journals. It required me to take themes from interprofessional research to communicate learned knowledge that is clear to

occupational therapy practitioners. It also required me to effectively communicate why they are meaningful to advanced practice and how they are essential to successful outcomes. As a result, the identification of knowledge translation goals and the development of knowledge translation projects took longer than my expected timeline.

Another weakness of these knowledge translation projects is the specificity and generalization of the knowledge users. My primary experience as a school-based practitioner is in large urban school districts. Content in terms of recommendations and application of knowledge may be difficult for practitioners that work in rural or suburban schools. These school districts' needs may significantly differ from the needs of an urban school district.

These translation projects focus on an emerging practice. As a result, the audience is individuals who have a vested interest in the project, practitioners in school practice working with students transitioning to or are in postsecondary education programming. These knowledge translation projects may not communicate the benefits of introducing the four themes to all students (early childhood to postsecondary education).

Alignment

Knowledge Translation Projects. KT1 was a comprehensive summary of work completed in the Evidence-Based Practice Project course. The first product was a scholarly paper, which laid the foundation for the continuing education presentation. The presentation provided information using accessible language for practitioners' clinical practice. The format of this presentation (live presentation with a moderator, plus opportunities to comment or ask questions via chat) allowed for a focused and robust discussion. A weakness of this project was the size of the audience. There were six people in attendance, and only one person filled out the Google Survey. As a result, though it appears in the discussion the project aligned with its

dissemination, increased feedback may have positive changes to better align the goals and objectives of this project.

KT2 has the potential to align with the goals and outcomes of knowledge translation of disability identity in school-systems occupational therapy. The strategies outlined in Chapter Two guided the process of writing an article. The CYSIS Quarterly editor quarterly provided guidance in the process and the themes. By reading current and prior CYSIS Quarterly articles, I gained a better understanding of the structure of an article. My faculty advisor provided feedback to fully explain out strength-based interventions and apply concepts to a comprehensive case study than brief descriptions across three case studies. The article is slated for submission on May 18, 2022, upon the conclusion of the oral defense of this portfolio. Should the article be accepted, I will contact two individuals in my network for their opinions and suggested changes to ensure that the article effectively communicates the learning outcomes.

KT3 aligns well with the conference theme and the stated learning outcomes for a short course. By developing a short course addressing this topic, the attendees will have opportunities to take a deep dive into the topics and discuss clinical application as a cohort, which is one of the principles of knowledge translation. Should the proposal be accepted, the attendees of this short course will use a written medium to provide feedback relevant to their clinical practice as outlined in the learning objectives. This feedback will allow further revisions to the presentation to better communicate the desired learning outcomes, particularly for a requested department in-service for the 2022-2023 school year.

Overall, Strengths and Weaknesses. The overall strength with this doctoral project is that each knowledge translation project aligns itself to the innovation and significance sections outlined in the first chapter. These knowledge translation projects both justify their importance to

occupational therapy practice and present potential opportunities for occupational therapy in non-traditional settings or changing the mindset regarding the scope of school systems practice.

Another strength is that each knowledge translation project builds upon each other. KT1 sets the foundation for KT2 and KT3. KT2 takes a deeper dive into disability identity and translates the knowledge into clinical practice by addressing the SIS theme of strength-based practice. KT3 takes a deeper dive into application of the themes to clinical practice using the Practice Framework as guidance. It also uses the foundations of the universal design for learning (UDL) to share knowledge with between attendees and myself. Therefore, the level of each project aligns with the mission of knowledge translation.

An alignment weakness is the outcome indicators. My advisor, mentor, and peers provided constructive feedback for these projects, allowing for me to make the necessary revisions. However, the feedback from the targeted users was limited or were from individuals who I have established a close working and scholarly relationship. Implicit bias could play a role in the determining if these projects aligned with the intended messages and goals. This possibility of implicit bias may have impacted KT1. At the present time, KT2 and KT3 are in the process of going through a review either by an editorial team (KT2) or a blind peer review (KT3), which reduces the potential for implicit bias. However, the outcomes of KT2 and KT3 of this publication are not known.

Feasibility

The feasibility of these projects is fair to good. The MOTA continuing education webinar was completed in a reasonable timeframe. It was developed in the Evidence-Based Practice course and allowed time to revise it for clarity and further expansion on the identified themes. The costs were minimal in both resources (Wi-Fi and a computer) and time (25-minute presentation with a five-minute question and answer session). Because this presentation was a

live online continuing education session, it was not limited to location. As a result, more practitioners, students, and community members could attend.

The CYSIS Quarterly article has good feasibility regarding provided resources. The literature contributing to the article were found through open access articles and St. Catherine University's online library. St. Catherine University also provided access to articles via an interlibrary loan. These articles became available two to three days after the request. The monetary cost is minimal; the two cost-based resources are a word processing device with internet capabilities and access to Wi-Fi. This article has fair feasibility in terms of time. Because this article focused on introducing a new concept to clinical practice, it took a longer amount of time than expected to research, translate the research to make it meaningful to occupational therapy practitioners, and structure the article according to the CYSIS Quarterly guidelines. As a result, I will use my two readers to guide the editing process if this article is accepted for publication and edits are needed.

The course for MeOTA's state conference has excellent feasibility. MeOTA's conference theme is "Contextual Diversity: New Frontiers of OT Practice" (MeOTA, 2022). Postsecondary education is an emerging practice area in occupational therapy. The 60-minute course will expand upon the concepts outlined in the MOTA presentation, taking a deeper dive into the four themes, including their relationship to the Practice Framework for interventions. The proposal outlining this 60-minute short course was developed in the Doctoral Project Proposal course, with a proposed presentation completed in the Doctoral Project course. Feedback provided by my faculty advisor provided insight to create a course that encompasses learning experiences for all types of learners; however, could be presented within the set timeframe. I also received feedback about the aesthetics of my presentation, such as the number of words on the PowerPoint slide and background of the slides, which helps with engagement.

Should this proposal be accepted for MeOTA's state conference, the resources needed will be a computer and access to Wi-Fi. Costs will include travel expenses from Massachusetts (my home state) to Maine and the conference fee. However, the conference is one day, and I live two hours away from the conference site. The conference fee is reimbursable by my school district's related service department. Therefore, though there are expenses, this knowledge translation project is feasible to disseminate information aligned with the theme of the conference.

Chapter 6–Reflection and Recommendations

Reflection: Vision and Mission Statements

AOTA 2025 Vision and Mission

AOTA’s 2025 mission statement is “to advance occupational therapy practice, education and research through standard setting and advocacy, on behalf of its members, the profession, and the public” (AOTA, n.d.). The 2025 vision is to be an inclusive profession that brings health, well-being, and quality of life to its full potential for populations, communities, and individuals using effective solutions that facilitate participation in daily living (AOTA, n.d.). The vision contains the following pillars: effective, collaborative, accessible, and equity, inclusion, and diversity.

Effective. AOTA’s position is that occupational therapy is an evidence-based profession with effective and cost-effective interventions (AOTA, n.d.). This project has good alignment with this position. The focus on students with disabilities, particularly high incidence disabilities, having positive outcomes in postsecondary education is an emerging area of practice. This area of practice has emerging themes that can set a foundation to provide successful outcomes for students transitioning to or currently attending a traditional postsecondary education program. This doctoral project is also cost-effective because it uses minimal resources to educate practitioners and students in discussing and structuring strategies for the targeted population.

Collaborative. AOTA’s position is succeeding in working with clients and within systems to produce effective outcomes (AOTA, n.d.). A major theme in this doctoral project is collaboration. Occupational therapy practitioners must collaborate with students to develop goals and effective interventions focusing on the four themes of this project (self-determination, disability identity, building and sustaining relationships, accessibility to reasonable accommodations, and modifications). Occupational therapy practitioners working in school

systems must collaborate with the student's interdisciplinary team. A common statement expressed when I discussed this practice area was that the school counselors were responsible for supporting students with high incidence disabilities who want to attend a college or university. This doctoral project has opened the doors to becoming a collaborative professional with school staff who may not have knowledge of the transition process and providing the best advice for students to select their college or university based on their needs.

Accessible. This project is accessible to the targeted population because it recognizes the cultural identity of students with high incidence disabilities. A theme in this project and focus for a knowledge translation project is disability identity. The role the disability community plays is significant in positive postsecondary education outcomes. It fosters perceptions of what it means to have a high incidence disability and knowing the vernacular for advocacy for transition plans to accurately document the students' goals and aspirations. Also, the disability community can foster support for students receiving the resources needed for them to have positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Equity, inclusion, and diversity. This doctoral project focuses on individuals from underrepresented populations, particularly students with high incidence disabilities. It supports the concept that education, particularly postsecondary education, is an equalizer for opportunities both individually and as members of a larger community. While most transition planning to a postsecondary life focuses on activities such as independent employment or use of job coaching, students with high incidence disabilities tend to be overlooked. This project brings to the forefront of occupational therapy's role in supporting this population and helping to close the gap in health disparities, particularly students with high incidence disabilities in underrepresented populations.

St. Catherine University Henrietta Schmoll School of Health

This doctoral project aligns with the mission of St. Catherine University Henrietta Schmoll School of Health (St. Catherine University, n.d.). The knowledge translation projects are rooted in client-centered care (St. Catherine University, n.d.), but with a new perspective. Using this new perspective, occupational therapy practitioners will have the skill set to structure intervention plans and transition planning. Also, this doctoral project opens doors to active collaboration with school professionals outside of the IEP team.

This doctoral project uses the Healthy People 2030 framework to anchor the three knowledge translation projects. A large part of Healthy People 2030 is the social determinants of health. One of the goals set by Healthy People 2030 is to close the gap in health and socioeconomic disparities (HHS, 2020a). A significant focus of this project is dedicated to finding the “why,” particularly why students with high incidence disabilities have negative outcomes in postsecondary education.

Furthermore, this doctoral project aligns with the concept of interdisciplinary initiatives (St. Catherine University, n.d.). One of the themes in this doctoral project is relationships in the student’s life: parents, school staff, and peers. This theme applies to occupational therapy practitioners’ relationships with the individuals involved in the student’s educational access and participation. An example is a relationship between the practitioner and a school counselor. The occupational therapy practitioner can be an informal consultant by supporting a school counselor and a student with a high incidence disability in class choice and the process of disclosing a disability to a college or university. This relationship can also foster disability identity, another theme of this doctoral project.

St. Catherine University Occupational Therapy Department

The occupational therapy program focuses on serving the overarching community with integrity for all people, structuring a lifelong commitment (professionally and personally) to social justice, and disseminating learned knowledge to the greater community (St. Catherine University, 2022). Though St. Catherine University's Occupational Therapy Department is rooted in the Catholic tradition, the mission and vision are applicable to all students, no matter what race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, disability, sexual and gender orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Disability is an equalizer. It does not discriminate by race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. However, the opportunities for students with high incidence disabilities, particularly students from underrepresented populations, differ significantly in access. A main theme for this doctoral project is accessibility, whether outside academic support, the educational programming, educational consultants or attorneys working with families, or access to the technology needed to lead to positive outcomes in postsecondary education. This doctoral project brings to light these disparities and brings to the forefront how we, as occupational therapy practitioners, can bring about change with the principles of social justice.

The second knowledge translation project focuses explicitly on disability identity. Students with high incidence disabilities tend to have more positive outcomes in postsecondary education when they have a strong understanding of their disability and its role in accessing higher education. As occupational therapy practitioners, we facilitate not only specific intervention strategies, but also facilitate a student's perceptions of disability and how these perceptions impact holistic occupational well-being.

This doctoral project successfully incorporates the tradition developed by the founders of St. Catherine University's occupational therapy program. It is rooted in social justice, occupational well-being, and the importance of human dignity (St. Catherine University, 2022). This doctoral project has the potential for clinicians working in school systems to look at their practice through a critical lens and potentially change the way occupational therapy services are perceived in an educational environment.

Needs for Future Knowledge Translation as Advance Practice

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) define knowledge translation as “a dynamic and iterative process that includes synthesis, dissemination, exchange and ethically-sound application of knowledge to improve the health of Canadians, provide more effective health services and products and strengthen the health care system” (CIHR, 2016, Knowledge Translation–Definition). Its focus is to bring forth effective outcomes in practice using interventions rooted in evidence-based practice. It requires critically appraising current knowledge, distributing knowledge across a large population (known as dissemination), mutual learning between researchers and practitioners, and its application into clinical practice (CIHR, 2016). Knowledge translation, in its truest form, is not passive learning, but an active collaboration between researchers and practicing occupational therapy practitioners (Corcoran, 2006)

Evidence-based practice, though valued and used by practitioners, has barriers. To be abreast of the current knowledge, a practitioner must devote time to seeking out new information, critically appraising the information, application to practice, and monitoring the outcomes (Jukett, 2022). It requires time for practitioners to actively seek out the information (journal articles, continuing education courses) and the daily job requirements of an occupational therapy practitioner (Jukett, 2022). Plus, it requires both access to information (e.g., databases,

the cost-effectiveness of desired articles) and confidence in synthesizing quantitative and qualitative research (Jukett, 2022; Metzler & Metz, 2010). Using knowledge translation helps bridge the gap between a researcher and a practitioner.

As I matriculated through the post-professional OTD program, I began the journey of a student learning about the scholarly process to a practitioner who successfully took the acquired knowledge and actively translated the information to both occupational therapy practitioners and students. The first knowledge translation project both addressed my area of interest and the step-by-step evolution of rooting recommendations in evidence-based practice. The second knowledge translation project, writing an article for a professional publication, specifically took a theme that I found using an evidence-based practice approach and its application to practice by using a case example. The third knowledge translation project is developing a short course where I will share information with fellow professionals using a presentation rooted in UDL.

As stated in the first chapter of this portfolio, transition planning is not a new concept in school systems practice; however, occupational therapy in postsecondary education is an emerging field. Also, the literature on this topic is more prevalent in education and psychology research. Through this process, I found opportunities to provide knowledge for effective practice and encourage practitioners to “find the why” instead of focusing on a smaller picture. This contribution to occupational therapy has the potential to establish our value in non-traditional settings. It also gives a foundation to collaborate with outside professionals to support them in their practice and provide comprehensive care to students with disabilities, particularly those with high incidence disabilities.

Reflection: Professional Development

When I started the post-professional doctorate program, I had a practice area but no true focus. I knew that occupational therapy could make a significant difference in supporting

students who want to attend or attending a traditional postsecondary educational program. However, I was overwhelmed by all the avenues I could take in producing three knowledge translation projects that were innovative and doable within a specific timeframe. I floated between diving deeper into a traditional practice in a new setting or developing increased competencies in a focus area that is not fully addressed in occupational therapy education (disability policy and law in postsecondary education). Through multiple meetings with faculty before developing these projects, they encouraged me to use enthusiasm for lifelong learning. As a result, my mantra became “find the why.”

These projects are rooted in finding the why, particularly with what can cause negative outcomes in postsecondary education and how we, occupational therapy practitioners, can use our knowledge to change this current situation. This mantra also made a positive impact on my current practice. I am incorporating the research used for the knowledge translation projects to drive the types of service delivery for my caseload. I am actively seeking research to educate clinicians outside of occupational therapy on the clinical reasoning behind an intervention and why it is appropriate or inappropriate. It has strengthened my communication across both interprofessional and intraprofessional interactions.

The impact of the post-professional program has been significant since starting this program. Boston Public Schools' related service department began an occupational therapy journal club to promote evidence-based practice. The professional development coordinator noticed my openness to share knowledge with the journal club. As a result, I will be one of the co-facilitators for the 2022-2023 school year. The professional development coordinator also requested for me to present my final presentation as part of our professional development series for the 2022-2023 school year. In addition to presenting for our department, Barbara Kornblau, one of my new connections and a past president of AOTA, is interested in co-authoring an article

discussing the advantages of having occupational therapy practitioners serve in a college or university disability services office. The competencies I developed in this program better qualify me to apply to the Shriver Center's Advance Leadership and Fellowship through the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopment and Related Disabilities (LEND) program, which can further strengthen my goal of teaching in an occupational therapy program at a university.

Recommendations

Summary of Needs for Future Translation Projects

The research on positive outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities is present; however, it is limited in occupational therapy research, particularly transition planning. I had two recent experiences that brought to light a further need for researching this theme. I attended my department's all-day professional development day. One of the breakout sessions focused specifically on transition planning, which was facilitated by one of the members of the transition department. I asked a question regarding the transition department's support for students transitioning to colleges or universities. They told me that that responsibility fell on the school counselors because the transition planning program specifically focuses on students of higher needs. I was both taken aback and dismayed that a member of a transition planning department feels that the greater priority lies with students not wanting to pursue a traditional postsecondary education program.

I also attended the Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy's (MAOT) Pediatric Practice and Transition Planning Special Interest Group quarterly meeting. The topic for this meeting was transition planning. I asked a similar question to the facilitator. While I received a more comprehensive response, the overall philosophy was still the same as the first situation. I was further puzzled that a group specifically focusing on transition planning had a similar response to a school district's transition department. These situations further solidified

that this area is both an area of need and an area where occupational therapy can grow as a profession.

As stated in the review of evidence section in Chapter 1, access to education decreases health disparities; however, students with disabilities are less likely than their non-disabled peers to receive an advanced degree. However, this population is overlooked in providing support for positive postsecondary education outcomes. It typically falls to school professionals who may have a small knowledge foundation to guide the support needed for students with high incidence disabilities to positively affect their postsecondary education program.

Another topic that came up in the research is accessibility to resources. The WFOT's position paper on school-based practice notes that occupational therapy can support all levels of education, including postsecondary education (WFOT, 2016). The Practice Framework specifically addresses social justice in accessing occupations needed for daily living (AOTA, 2020). Though occupational therapy addresses resources within schools, such as access to assistive technology and environmental adaptations, access to resources also includes inclusive opportunities to access the curriculum available to non-disabled peers, parent education to advocate for their student's access to available resources, and even opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

Proposed Future Knowledge Translation Project: Developing A Transition Department Specialized Program

Knowledge users. The main knowledge users are transition specialists, school counselors, and occupational therapists at a school.

Main messages. The main messages are the following:

- 1.) Transition planning resources must be inclusive to all students with disabilities, including those interested in or planning to transition to a traditional postsecondary education setting.
- 2.) A specific team dedicated to supporting students with high incidence disabilities transitioning to postsecondary education would help support positive social determinants of health as outlined by Healthy People 2030.
- 3.) Occupational therapy practitioners have an invaluable role in providing transition planning using a strength-based perspective to connect students with school and community resources.

Knowledge Translation Goals. The knowledge translation goals are the following:

- 1.) To educate school professionals on the importance of providing the necessary support rooted in establishing positive relationships and the accessibility to resources for students with high incidence disabilities.
- 2.) To encourage occupational therapy practitioners in school-system practice to expand their role in supporting students with high incidence disabilities planning on attending traditional postsecondary education outcomes.

Knowledge Translation Strategies. This knowledge translation project is a large project that should be done in three phases: education, design, and implementation. Because of the gaps in knowledge or the limited scope of practice, the most pertinent strategy is the education piece of this project. The first phase will focus specifically on educating the knowledge users on the importance of having a specific team focusing on transition planning for students with high incidence disabilities. This phase will begin with a small presentation to stakeholders in a single school. The education phase will be a facilitated discussion with an initial synopsis of the statistics for students with high incidence disabilities and positive outcomes and the importance

of a transition team focusing on students with high incidence disabilities. The positive outcomes will specifically focus on disability identity and its impact for a student's self-efficacy skills and the social participation that is crucial for college success. After this synopsis, the facilitator will lead an open conversation loosely based on a focus group for formative program development. It will focus on addressing barriers impacting the involvement of transition services and potential supports for students transitioning to traditional postsecondary education programming. Once the data is collected, the participants will meet to outline a short pilot program specifically focused on high school juniors who have expressed an interest in their transition planning in attending a traditional postsecondary education program. The results of that meeting will set the foundation for the implementation phase.

Knowledge Translation Evaluation. The evaluation for the focused phase of this larger project will be filling out a Google Survey to measure the effectiveness of the acquired knowledge. It will consist of five questions using a Likert scale. It will also consist of an open-ended question for ideas to bring to the next meeting to design the program.

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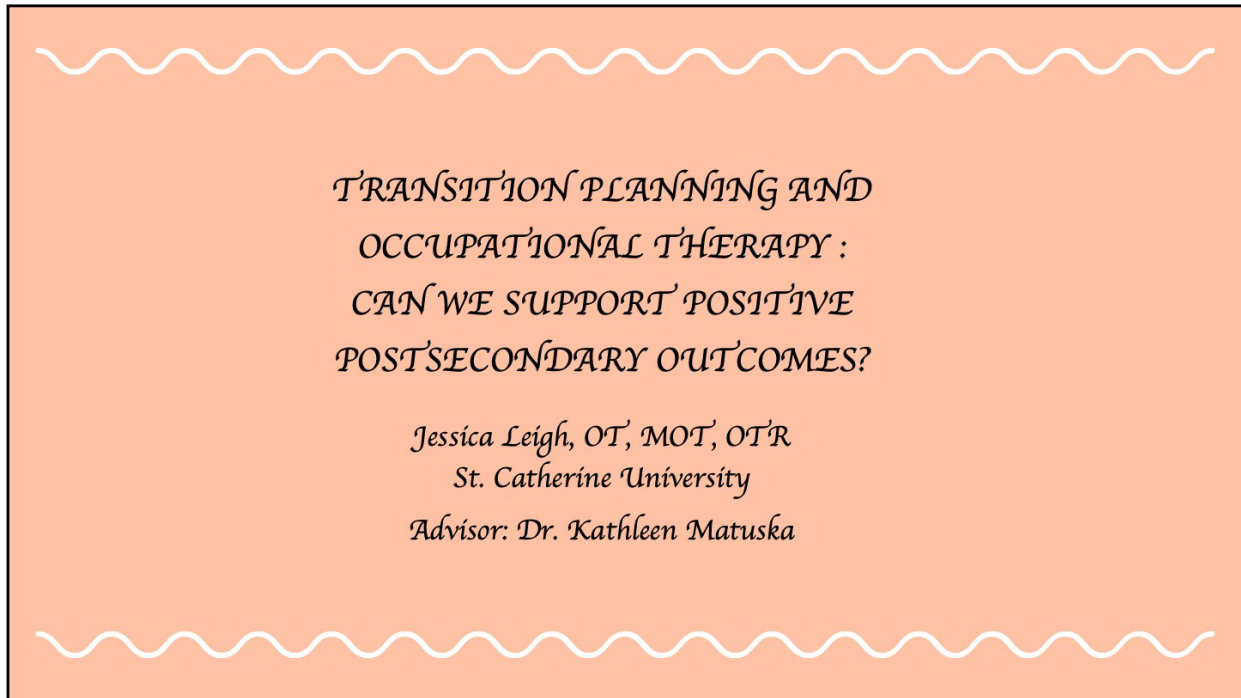
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Appendix A

Appendix A.1.: MOTA Presentation



Hi, I am Jessica McGuire. I am an occupational therapist for Boston Public Schools, and I am a post-professional OTD student at St. Catherine University. My presentation is on finding the evidence to support interventions for positive postsecondary education outcomes.

The Dilemma



- Transition planning is a complex process involving intervention to address a student with a disabilities
- Interventions, accommodations, and modifications are not an entitlement in college/university
- Can the interventions and strategies positively impact postsecondary outcomes?
- Does the evidence support occupational therapy's role in this process?

(OSEP, 2011; OSERS, 2020)

My dilemma specifically focuses on students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education setting, usually a college or university. Transition planning is a complex process involving intervention to address a student with disabilities. Interventions, accommodations, and modifications are not an entitlement in college/university. So, can the interventions and strategies positively impact postsecondary outcomes and does the evidence support occupational therapy's role in this process?

<u><i>AOTA Resources</i></u>	<u><i>Other Resources</i></u>
<p><u>Site search</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transition ○ School-based practice • Items found: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transition PowerPoint ○ School FAQ sheets <p><u>Review of personal AJOT resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational Therapy Practice Framework--4th ed. 	<p>Keywords: Transition, school practice, education law, 504 plans</p> <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Federation of Occupational Therapist (WFOT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Position Papers • Government websites • State Dept. of Education • Non-profit organizations

I gathered resources from AOTA by doing a site search. I also searched articles from

the American Journal of Occupational therapy that were in my possession. As you can see on the first slide, I listed the key terms and the items I found. My AJOT search produced the OTPF-4. Other resources I used were the World Federation of Occupational Therapists and I found their position papers. I also used Massachusetts State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and nonprofit organizations specifically students graduating from high school to a postsecondary education setting

The image shows a teal-colored rectangular box with a dashed white border. Inside the box, the text is organized into two columns. The left column is headed by the underlined text 'PICO:' and contains a bulleted list of four items. The right column is headed by the underlined text 'EBP Question:' and contains a single paragraph of text. A vertical white line separates the two columns.

PICO:

- Population: High school students with disabilities
- Intervention: Strategies or accommodations and implementation from a transition plan
- Comparison: Not applicable
- Outcome: Positive postsecondary education experience

EBP Question:

Is there enough evidence to support interventions and strategies for high school students with disabilities to establish a foundation for college success?

For my PICO, the population I identified were high school students with disabilities. The intervention were strategies or accommodations and implementation from a transition plan. A comparison was not applicable to this evidence-based practice question. The outcome was positive postsecondary education experiences. From the results of my PICO, I formulated the following evidence-based practice question: Is there enough evidence to support interventions and strategies for high school students with disabilities to establish a foundation for college success?

Search for evidence: Level I

- Databases Used:
 - ERIC
 - Education Database (ProQuest)
 - Professional Development Collection (ProQuest)
- Best keywords: meta-analysis, systematic review, high school students, secondary school students, treatment outcomes, evidence-based practice, transitional programs
- Limiters: Academic journals, publish dates 2010-2021, peer-reviewed articles
- Results: 10 relevant articles

To address my evidence-based practice question, I did a Level 1 search. The databases I used were ERIC, Education Database, a part of ProQuest, and Professional Development Collection, also a part of ProQuest. These databases specifically focus on education. I took the keywords from my PICO and my limiters were academic journals, published between 2010-2021, and peer-reviewed articles. From this database search, I found 10 relevant articles.

Search for evidence: Level II

- Databases
 - ERIC
 - APA PsychInfo
 - PubMed
- Alternative search: review of articles in possession
- Keywords: interventions, high school students, transition students, high-incidence disabilities, learning disabilities, academic achievement, college-bound, adolescents, teenagers, treatment outcomes, GPA, college, university, postsecondary education, higher education
- Results: 10 relevant articles identified

After I identified and critically appraised two articles from my Level 1 search, I took what I learned and applied to a Level 2 search for evidence. I used ERIC as one of my databases and two new databases: PsychInfo and PubMed. I did an alternative search which was reviewing peer reviewed articles I had in my position on this topic. My key terms were based on my PICO, but I added more terms as I did more searches. As a result, I identified 10 relevant articles.

Mazzotti et al., 2013

- APA Reference: Mazzotti, V.L., Rowe D.A., Sinclair, J., Poppen, M., Woods, W.E., & Shearer, M.L. (2016). Predictors of post-school success: A systematic review of the NLTS2 secondary analysis. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals* 39(4) 196-215 DOI: 10.1177/2165143415588047
- Purpose: "(a) systematically review the literature to identify NLTS2 secondary analyses articles published since 2009 that met the quality indicators for correlational research (Test et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2005), (b) further extend the findings of Test et al. by identifying additional evidence to support the existing in-school predictors of post-school success , (c) identify any new in-school predictors of post-school success for youth with disabilities" (p. 197)
- Research design: Systematic Review
- Conclusion: The authors found that their systemic review supported the predictors identified in 2009. They found four new predictors of postsecondary life and added new evidence to the original predictors from 2009.

I appraised four articles, two from my Level 1 search and two from my Level 2 search. This article is Level 1 article because it is a systematic review. Its purpose was to further the findings of a systematic review already published and to identify any new predictors. The conclusion was the authors found their systemic review supported the predictors identified in the 2009 systematic review. They added new evidence to the original predictors and found four new predictors for postsecondary life outcomes.

Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020

- APA reference: Kutscher, E.L. & Tuckwiller, E.D. (2020). A mixed-methods study of k-12 influences on college participation for students with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals* 43(2) pp 101-114
- Purpose: "The purpose of this study was to investigate the K–12 experiences individuals with disabilities perceived as influencing their participation in postsecondary education" (p. 102)
- Research Design: Mixed-Method
- Conclusion: The authors found that K-12 schools are the primary means to access a college education for students with disabilities. They found that schools are responsible for providing the opportunities to provide students with disabilities access to meaningful postsecondary education. They found that quality of relationships, disability identity, and social justice plays a significant role in obtaining positive postsecondary education outcomes.

I found this study in my Level 2 search. It is a Level III strength article because of the research design. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences with kindergarten to 12th grade with disabilities perceived as influencing their participation in postsecondary education. The authors found that K-12 schools are the primary means to access a college education for students with disabilities. They found that schools are responsible for providing the opportunities to provide students with disabilities access to meaningful postsecondary education. The authors discussed that quality of relationships, disability identity, and social justice plays a significant role in obtaining positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Joshi & Bouck, 2017

- APA reference: Joshi, G.S. & Bouck, E.C. (2017). Examining postsecondary education predictors and participation for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 50(1) 3-13
- Purpose: "The specific research questions included the following: (a) What postsecondary education-related transition services do students with learning disabilities participate in while in high school? (b) What are the immediate and long-term postsecondary education outcomes (aggregated and disaggregated by type of postsecondary institution) for students with learning disabilities? (c) To what degree do participation rates relative to type of postsecondary education differ for students with learning disabilities? and (d) To what extent is the receipt of postsecondary education-related transition services predictive of postsecondary education outcomes for students with learning disabilities?" (pp. 4-5)
- Research Design: Secondary Data Analysis
- Conclusion: The authors found that students that had access to core content in general education have a positive relationship to postsecondary education. They are more likely to attend a postsecondary education program. Students were also most likely to attend a two-year postsecondary education program than a four-year program or a vocational training program.

I found this article in my level 2 search. It is a secondary data analysis, which puts it at Level III strength. The authors wanted to look at postsecondary education transition related services. They wanted to look at the immediate and long-term postsecondary education outcomes for students with learning disabilities, the participation rates relative to the type of postsecondary education. So, either a two-year or four-year institution. The extent of the receipt of postsecondary education transition related services predicts postsecondary education outcomes for students with learning disabilities. The authors concluded that students who have access to core content in a general education curriculum, an inclusive environment, had a positive relationship to postsecondary education. They are more likely to attend a postsecondary education program. They are also more likely to attend a two-year program than a four-year program or a vocational training program.

Hatfield et al., 2017

- APA reference: Hatfield, M., Falkmer, M., Falkmer, T., & Ciccarelli, M. (2017). Effectiveness of the BOOST-A™ online transition planning program for adolescents on the autism spectrum: A quasi-randomized controlled trial. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 11(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-017-0191-2>
- Purpose: “The primary aim of the trial was to determine the effectiveness of the BOOST-A™ in improving self-determination among adolescents on the autism spectrum. The secondary aim was to determine the program’s impact on quality of life; access to environmental supports; career planning and exploration; and domain-specific self-determination among adolescents on the autism spectrum” (p. 3).
- Research Design: Quasi-randomized control trial
- Conclusion: The authors found that the BOOST-A™ program did not impact overall self-determination skills. However, it did find that it improved career awareness (entering the workforce or postsecondary education). It also found that parents, particularly their expectations, drove self-determination abilities.

This study was also found in my Level 2 search. Like the prior two articles, it meets the criteria for Level III strength because of the sampling. The authors wanted to find the effectiveness of their program, the BOOST-A in determining self-determination amongst students on the autism spectrum. They wanted to determine the impact on the quality of life, access to the environmental supports, career planning and exploration (this also includes postsecondary education), and domain specific self- determination among adolescents on the autism spectrum. Their conclusion was this specific program did not impact overall self-determination skills. However, it found that it improved career awareness (so entering the work force or postsecondary education). It also found that their parents, particularly their expectations, drove self- determination abilities.

Literature Matrix Summary

- Lower level research design (Level III)
- Provided moderate evidence in self-advocacy or advocacy, accessibility, and peer relationships
- Findings
 - More opportunities for inclusion has a positive impact accessing postsecondary education (DuPaul et al., 2017; Rojewski et al., 2015)
 - Positive impact accessing training programs (Zhang et al., 2019; Woods et al., 2010)
 - More needs to be done with teaching non-academic skills (Chou et al., 2017; McConnell et al., 2015)
 - At risk for maladaptive non-academic behaviors, such as school disengagement, substance abuse, or social isolation (DuPaul et al., 2013)

Six out of the 10 articles I found in my Level 2 search are part of this literature matrix summary. They are lower-level research design; however, they found moderate evidence in self-advocacy or advocacy skills, accessibility and peer relationships. The findings I found in this summary are more opportunities for inclusion has a positive impact accessing postsecondary education, positive impact entering postsecondary education having access to training programs, more needs to be done to teach non-academic skills, and students with disabilities in postsecondary education are at risk for maladaptive behaviors such as school disengagement, substance abuse, or social isolation.

Three Categories

- **Internal**
Theme 1: Self-determination
Theme 2: Disability Identity
- **Social**
Theme 3: Relationships
- **Societal**
Theme 4: Accessibility

I identified four themes. They are sorted into three categories: internal, social, and societal. The internal is the student with the two themes being self-determination and disability identity. The social category is the interactions the student has in school and out in the community. The theme is relationships, particularly relationships with family, school staff, and peers. The third category is the societal. The societal is the environmental structures in place, physical, political, community, and organizations. The theme in this category is accessibility.

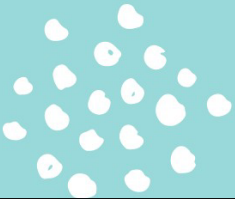
Theme 1: Self-Determination

- Autonomy/decision-making and goal setting can predict postsecondary outcomes (Mazzotti et al., 2013)
- Students that have the tools and recognize that they are the drivers of their success have transition and postsecondary outcomes reflective of their goals (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Woods et al., 2010)
- Inconsistencies in the research are present (Hatfield et al., 2018 Woods et al., 2010)
- Research designs are less rigorous as measured by the levels of evidence pyramid.

Takeaway: Though there are inconsistencies and less robust research design, the evidence is promising

Two points came up in this theme: autonomy/decision-making and goal setting can predict postsecondary education outcomes. This information is from the systematic review I shared earlier in this presentation. The second one was based on two studies. They found that the students who have the tools and recognize that they are drivers of their own success have transition and postsecondary education outcomes reflective of their goals. It should be noted I found inconsistencies in the research, particularly noted with interventions and specific programs. The research in this theme is less rigorous, minus the systematic review. The takeaway is though there are inconsistencies and less robust research designs, the evidence is promising.

Theme 2: Disability Identity



- Recognition and integration promote positive postsecondary outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; McConnell et al., 2012)
- Understanding of challenges can develop non-academic behaviors for positive outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller 2020; DuPaul et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)
- Leadership opportunities in the disability communities can increase postsecondary education attendance (Zhang et al, 2019)
- Limitations: body of research, broad focus

Takeaway: Moderate evidence for this theme; however further research is needed.

A consistent theme I found in the articles that I reviewed was disability identity. I identified three points. The recognition and integration of a disability identity promotes positive postsecondary education outcomes. A student's understanding of their challenges related to their disability can promote both academic and non-academic needs for positive outcomes, like reaching out to peers for assistance, setting up an environment conducive for success, or organization. The third one is students who are provided opportunities for leadership in the disability communities can increase postsecondary education attendance. The limitations I found was the body of research is limited and the broad focus of "disability". The takeaway is there is moderate evidence for this theme, but more research is needed.

Theme 3: Relationships

- Parent involvement and expectations can drive postsecondary education outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Hatfield et al., 2018; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)

- Teachers with strong relationships can provide the "just right" challenge needed to prepare students with disabilities for a collegiate curriculum (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Rojewski et al., 2015; DuPaul et al., 2013, McConnell et al., 2012)

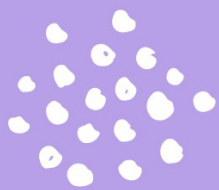
- Solid peer relationships can decrease risks of maladaptive behaviors and increase scholarly engagement (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Watkins et al., 2017; DuPaul et al., 2013; Mazzottiet al, 2013)

Takeaway: Moderate evidence for relationships being a significant predictor.

The third theme is relationships. For the purpose of this presentation, it will be focused on three types: family, school staff, and peers. The three points I found are: parent involvement and expectations can drive postsecondary education outcomes. This comes from four studies with two of the studies being systematic reviews. The second one is teachers with strong relationships with students with disabilities can provide a "just right challenge" needed to prepare students for a college curriculum. This comes from four studies, with one being a systematic review. The last point is solid peer relationships can decrease risks of maladaptive behaviors and increase scholarly engagement. This comes from four studies with one being a systematic review.

The takeaway is there is moderate evidence for relationships to be a significant predictor of positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Theme 4: Accessibility



- Access to more opportunities for inclusion correlates with postsecondary education attendance (Rojewski et al., 2015; Joshi & Bouck, 2017; Mazzotti et al., 2013)
- Access to in-school and out of school resources and supports predict postsecondary education outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; McConnell et al., 2015; Rojewski et al., 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)
- Students from underrepresented populations are less likely to have access to inclusive education or access to resources to support learning in the least restrictive environment (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Rojewski et al., 2015)

Takeaway: There is moderate evidence supporting inclusive environments and social justice in postsecondary education outcomes.

The fourth theme is accessibility. For the purpose of this presentation, it includes inclusion, access to resources, and social justice. Four studies found that the amount of time students with disabilities are in inclusive environments increases the likelihood they will attend postsecondary education. Access to in-school (peer tutoring, IEP adaptations, selecting courses) or out of school resources (private tutoring, outpatient therapy, educational advocates). Also, students from underrepresented populations are less likely to participate in inclusive education or access to resources to support learning in the least restrictive environment. Based upon the studies and consistencies throughout the reviewed articles the takeaway is that there is moderate evidence supporting inclusive environments and social justice in postsecondary education outcomes.

Recommendations

- Incorporation of disability identity into interventions
- Weekly course on non-academic skills for one quarter
- Partnerships with two-year or four-year postsecondary institutions to provide information on accommodations or modifications
- Formal peer tutoring program
- Transition planning programs

Based on evidence I have five recommendations. The first one is incorporation of disability identity into interventions. This can be done in classes and in both individual and small group interventions. The second recommendation based on the evidence is a weekly course on non-academic skills for one quarter. This can take the place of a study hall or advisory period. It should include both students with and without disabilities because inclusive environments produce better postsecondary education outcomes. My third recommendation is a partnership between two-year and four-year postsecondary education institutions to provide the information needed for accommodations or modifications. The fourth recommendation is that a formal peer tutoring program may be beneficial. My fifth recommendation is formal transition planning programs, particularly focusing on self-advocacy.

Occupational Therapy

- Based upon the evidence and recommendations rooted in the evidence, occupational therapy can play a positive role in the transition planning process
- OTPF—4 drives our scope of practice for the four themes:
 - Occupations: education (formal and informal), social participation (community, peer, family)
 - Environmental factors: population (students), products (accessing educational materials), support and relationships, attitudes
 - Outcomes: occupational performance, participation, quality of life, participation, self-advocacy/advocacy, occupational justice

(AOTA, 2020)

Based upon the evidence and my recommendations I find that occupational therapy can play a positive role in the transition planning process. The Practice Framework drives our scope of practice for the four themes: occupations are education (formal and informal) and social participation (including community, peers, and family). The environmental factors that can be addressed by occupational therapy are the population (being students), products (the access to educational materials), support and relationships (peers, school staff, and families), plus attitudes and beliefs (incorporates disability identity). We can also address the outcomes of occupational performance, participation, quality of life, advocacy/self-advocacy, and occupational justice.

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Here are the references I used in this presentation.

Acknowledgments

- Thank you Dr. Matuska for your guidance and patience
- Class of 2022 PPOTD Cohort: Thank you for your virtual shoulders
- Boston Public Schools Related Services Administration: Thank you for always being in my corner
- My family for instilling a lifelong love of learning
- My significant other for the sacrifices made for me to pursue this dream.

These are some of the people I want to acknowledge who have made it possible for me to pursue this journey of receiving my OTD. Thank you, Dr. Matuska for your guidance and patience. Thank you to the Class of 2022 post-professional OTD cohort: Thank you for your virtual shoulders. Thank you to the Boston Public Schools Related Services administration for always being in my corner. Thank you to my family for instilling a lifelong love of learning. Thank you to my significant other for the sacrifices made for me to pursue this dream.

Appendix A.2.: MOTA Proposal

Function First
MINNESOTA OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

MOTA Virtual Presentation Application

MOTA Course Application

Event Name/Course Title:

Presentation #1: Evidence-based Considerations for Entry-Level Baccalaureate Healthcare Degrees

Presentation #2: Occupational Therapy and Transition Planning: How Can We Provide Support for Positive Post-Secondary Education Outcomes?

Date of Event: Wednesday, Feb 2, 2022

Start Time: 6:00pm **End Time:** 7:00 pm

Category: Presentation – Webinar (virtual but presenters are live)

Timed Agenda:

6:00-6:25 Presentation - EBP for baccalaureate level of education for healthcare

6:25-6:30 questions

6:30-6:55 Presentation – EBP for transitioning teenagers with disabilities to post-secondary education

6:55-7:00 Questions

7:00- Course evaluation

Event Description:

- Presenters will share the evidence found for the topics above, including the search strategy, level 1 and level 2 evidence, a summary of themes, and recommendations.
- Each will be a 25 minute PowerPoint presentation
- References:
Presentation #1

Presentation #2:

Kutscher, E.L., & Tuckwiller, E.D. (2020). A mixed methods study of K–12 influences on college participation for students with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals* 43(2) 101-114 doi: 10.1177/2165143420905104

Mazzotti, V.L., Rowe D.A., Sinclair, J., Poppen, M., Woods, W.E., & Shearer, M.L. (2016). Predictors of post-school success: A systematic review of the NLTS2 secondary analysis. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals* 39(4) 196-215 DOI: 10.1177/2165143415588047

Joshi, G.S. & Bouck, E.C. (2017). Examining postsecondary education predictors and participation for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 50(1) 3-13

Speaker Credentials and Biographies:

Presentation #1: Deb McKernan-Ace, OTA Program Director, Rutgers University, Piscataway, New Jersey

Deb McKernan-Ace has practiced occupational therapy for more than 30 years, with a primary focus on school-based therapy and child/adolescent behavioral health. She has been involved in occupational therapy assistant education for 30 years, having worked within 3 different higher education institutions. Currently, she is program director for the Occupational Therapy Assistant program at Rutgers University in Piscataway, New Jersey.

Presentation #2: Jessica McGuire, MOT, OTR, Boston Public Schools, Boston, Massachusetts

Jessica McGuire has practiced occupational therapy for 20 years, with 17 years specifically focusing on school systems in urban settings. Currently, she works for Boston Public Schools where she provides occupational therapy services at an educational campus (pre-kindergarten to 8th grade) and a middle school/high school program (6-12th grade). She particularly has focused on students developing their active collaboration in their educational experience by working on goal development, self-advocacy for an IEP meeting, and career and leisure exploration. By the students increasing their ownership in the therapeutic process, they understand occupational therapy and how this service can be a benefit to them throughout their primary and secondary education.

Learning Objectives:

Evidence-based Considerations for Entry-Level Baccalaureate Healthcare Degrees

Participants will:

- Gain a better understanding of baccalaureate education as entry-level for allied health professions
- Critique levels of evidence for current baccalaureate degree levels for healthcare professions
- Examine recommendations for OT practice related to benefits to an entry-level baccalaureate degree for the OTA.

Occupational Therapy and Transition Planning: How Can We Provide Support for Positive Post-Secondary Education Outcomes?

Participants will:

- Describe research supporting the skills needed for positive postsecondary education outcomes for high school students transitioning into postsecondary education.
- Critique levels of evidence for four identified themes in positive postsecondary education
- Examine recommendations for OT practice related to the transition process to postsecondary education in the four identified themes

Target Audience: All

Level of Content: Advanced

AOTA Practice: Presentation #1: Education
Presentation #2: Children and Youth

CEUs presentation – 1 hr

MOTA Members only? No

Primary Speaker #1 Contact information

- Name: Deb McKernan-Ace
- Phone: 608-332-8140
- Email: damckernanace480@st.kate.edu and dam440@shp.rutgers.edu

Primary Speaker #2 Contact information

- Name: Jessica McGuire
- Phone: 412-303-9590
- Email: jlmcguire526@stkate.edu or jmcguire2@bostonpublicschools.org

Would you like to use any additional technology tools on the day you present? These can be set up to use the beginning of the presentation, during the presentation, or at the end.

- Will you be using a Powerpoint or other presentation tool?
X Yes, I will be using Powerpoint. Please email your presentation to motafunctionfirst@gmail.com at least 24 hours prior to your presentation.
 - No _____

Appendix A.3: Classmates Feedback

Because I only received one response from my Google Survey, I included select feedback from my peers when I presented in our Evidence-Based Practice Project Class. The VoiceThread can be located on the following site:

<https://voicethread.com/myvoice/thread/19093130/121558189/113411176>

Joshi & Bouck, 2017

- APA reference: Joshi, G.S. & Bouck, E.C. (2017). Examining postsecondary education predictors and participation for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 50(1) 3-13
- Purpose: "The specific research questions included the following: (a) What postsecondary education-related transition services do students with learning disabilities participate in while in high school? (b) What are the immediate and long-term postsecondary education outcomes (aggregated and disaggregated by type of postsecondary institution) for students with learning disabilities? (c) To what degree do participation rates relative to type of postsecondary education differ for students with learning disabilities? and (d) To what extent is the receipt of postsecondary education-related transition services predictive of postsecondary education outcomes for students with learning disabilities?" (pp. 4-5)
- Research Design: Secondary Data Analysis
- Conclusion: The authors found that students that had access to core content in general education have a positive relationship to postsecondary education. They are more likely to attend a postsecondary education program. Students were also most likely to attend a two-year postsecondary education program than a four-year program or a vocational training program.

Deb McKernan-Ace

I'm curious what specific relationships they were mentioning? Special education teachers, general education teachers, friendships, OR relationships formed in the new college environment as part of the transition?

Hatfield et al., 2017

- APA reference: Hatfield, M., Falkmer, M., Falkmer, T., & Ciccarelli, M. (2017). Effectiveness of the BOOST-A™ online transition planning program for adolescents on the autism spectrum: A quasi-randomized controlled trial. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 11(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-017-0191-2>
- Purpose: "The primary aim of the trial was to determine the effectiveness of the BOOST-A™ in improving self-determination among adolescents on the autism spectrum. The secondary aim was to determine the program's impact on quality of life; access to environmental supports; career planning and exploration; and domain-specific self-determination among adolescents on the autism spectrum" (p. 3).
- Research Design: Quasi-randomized control trial
- Conclusion: The authors found that the BOOST-A™ program did not impact overall self-determination skills. However, it did find that it improved career awareness (entering the workforce or postsecondary education). It also found that parents, particularly their expectations, drove self-determination abilities.

Emily Peterson:

This sounds interesting but I am not familiar with the program. Maybe give a brief blurb about it for those not familiar.

Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020

- APA reference: Kutscher, E.L. & Tuckwiller, E.D. (2020). A mixed-methods study of k-12 influences on college participation for students with disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals* 43(2) pp 101-114
- Purpose: "The purpose of this study was to investigate the K-12 experiences individuals with disabilities perceived as influencing their participation in postsecondary education" (p. 102)
- Research Design: Mixed-Method
- Conclusion: The authors found that K-12 schools are the primary means to access a college education for students with disabilities. They found that schools are responsible for providing the opportunities to provide students with disabilities access to meaningful postsecondary education. They found that quality of relationships, disability identity, and social justice plays a significant role in obtaining positive postsecondary education outcomes.


Paula Stommes

This article presents evidence that places a heavy responsibility on the school to get students prepared for postsecondary education. Do you feel that our schools are doing enough to prepare students?

Appendix A.4: Google Survey and Response

Webinar Feedback

Questions Responses 1 Settings



Presentation: Occupational Therapy and Postsecondary Education

Please take your time and fill out this survey for the Continuing Education Webinar on February 1, 2022

Name *
Short answer text

Email *
Short answer text

Your discipline

- Occupational Therapist
- Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Occupational Therapy Student
- Other...

Are you a member of MOTA? *

- Yes
- No

Did the presenter meet the objectives of the presentation? *

- Met the objectives
- Somewhat met the objectives
- Did not meet the objectives
- Other...

Did the presenter clearly described the process of developing themes and recommendations using evidence-based practice? *

- Yes
- No

Did the presenter present the material in a clear and organized manner? *

- Yes

No

Did the presenter provide clear and thoughtful answers in the Q & A session? *

Yes

No

If applicable, how would you use the information in your practice? *

Short answer text

What feedback would you like to provide to the presenter?

Long answer text

Questions Responses **1** Settings

1 response

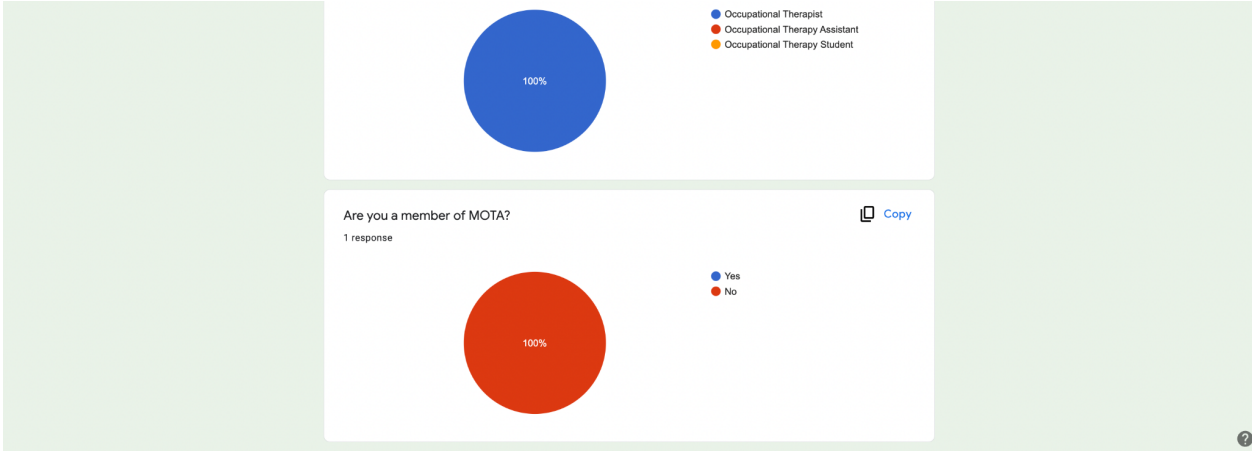
Accepting responses

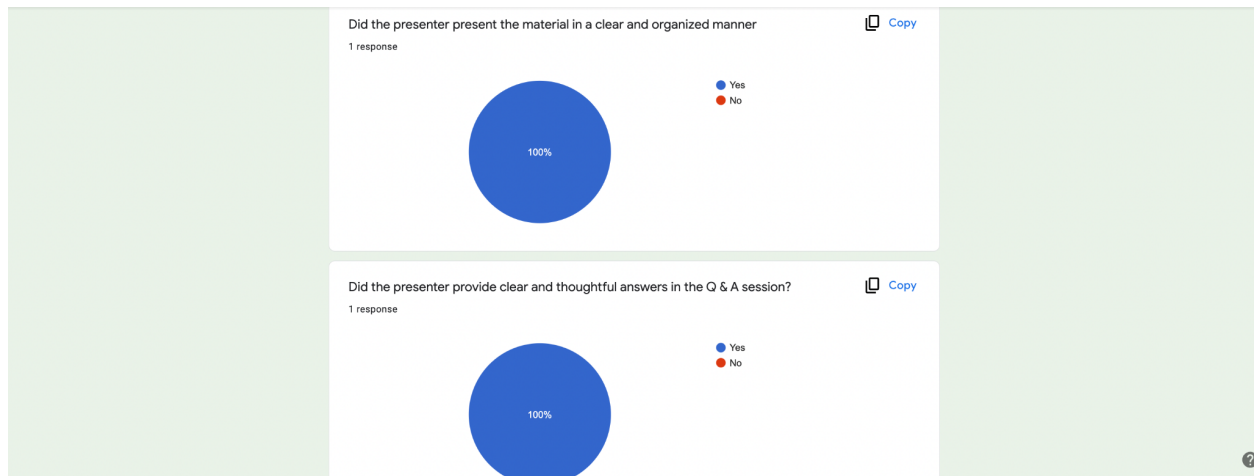
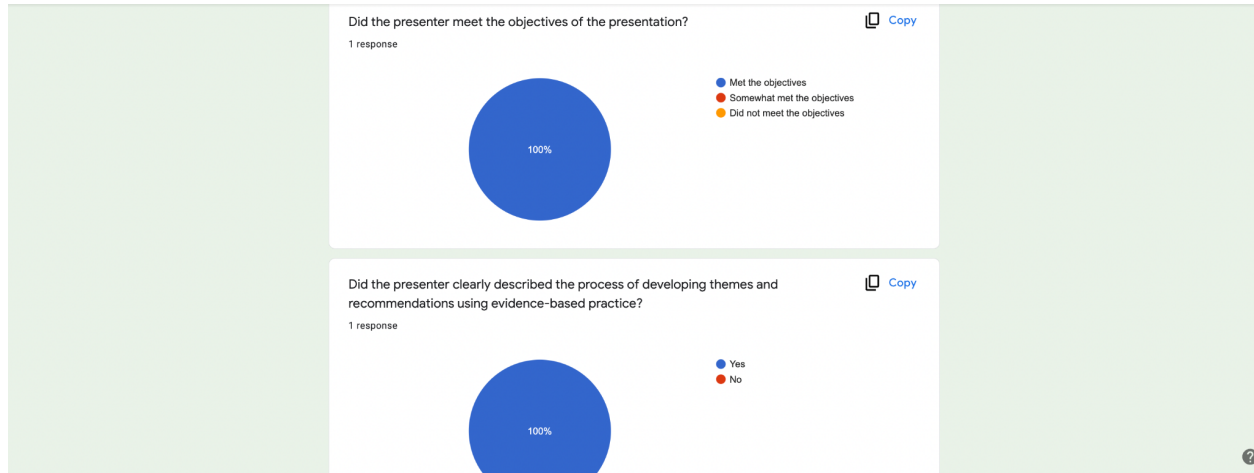
Summary Question Individual

Name
1 response
Emily Petersen

Email
1 response
empetersen743@stkate.edu

Your discipline
1 response
Copy





If applicable, how would you use the information in your practice?
1 response

I thought this was a really important topic and practice dilemma that was presented. Although I am not a school based OT, I found that the research about relational care and the benefits on the individual also can translate to mental health interventions.

What feedback would you like to provide to the presenter?
1 response

Excellent presentation! I am excited to learn more from you as you continue in your professional journey

Appendix B

Appendix B.1.: Email from CYSIS Editor

4/26/22, 7:51 AM

St. Catherine University Mail - SIS Article Proposal



Jessica McGuire <jlmcguire526@stkate.edu>

SIS Article Proposal

Dr. Jeryl Benson <benson@duq.edu>
To: Jessica McGuire <jlmcguire526@stkate.edu>

Tue, Mar 15, 2022 at 12:52 PM

Hi Jessica,

Thanks for reaching out with your ideas for the Quarterly publication. The SIS Quarterly is a practice based publication. It is not a home for original research. Original research studies should be submitted for consideration to AJOT.

If you are interested in writing an article that is practice focused outlining an intervention program or approach and using a case study to highlight application, then I would love to read it to determine fit for the Quarterly.

The Quarterly is structured around theme areas. Upcoming themes are Strengths based Practice; Quality; Post-Public Health Emergency, and Community Health. The editors have some flexibility in topic areas.

If you are interested in moving forward please review the [Author's Guide - SIS Quarterly Practice Connections | AOTA](#)

Jeryl D. Benson, EdD, OTR/L

Associate Professor

(she/her)

Department of Occupational Therapy

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412-396-1611 (o)

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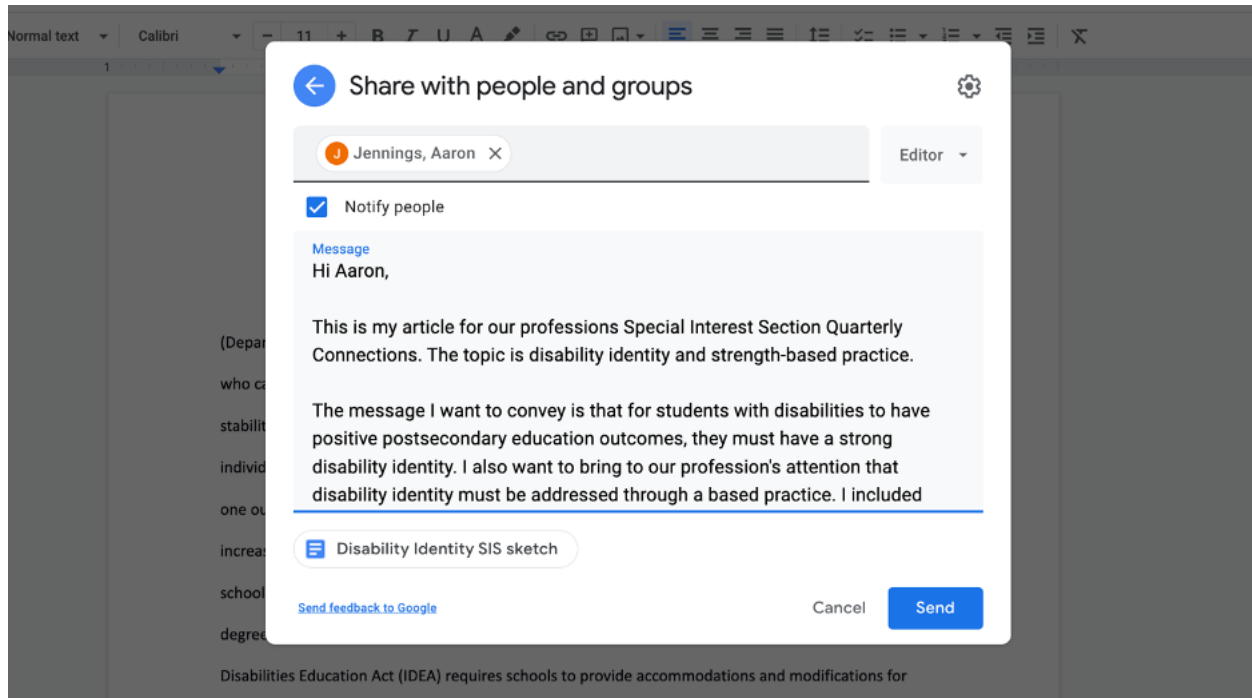
benson@duq.edu

-

Students can schedule a meeting with me here: <https://calendly.com/benson-duq>

Personal meeting link: <https://duq.zoom.us/my/jerylbenson>

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=8b3d70f94d&view=pt&search=all&permmsgid=msg-f%3A1727385496116114738&dsqt=1&siml=msg-f%3A172738549611...> 1/2

Appendix B.2.: Invitation to edit Google Doc to Dr. Aaron T. Jennings with copy of text

Full message:

Hi Aaron,

This is my article for our professions Special Interest Section Quarterly Connections. The topic is disability identity and strength-based practice.

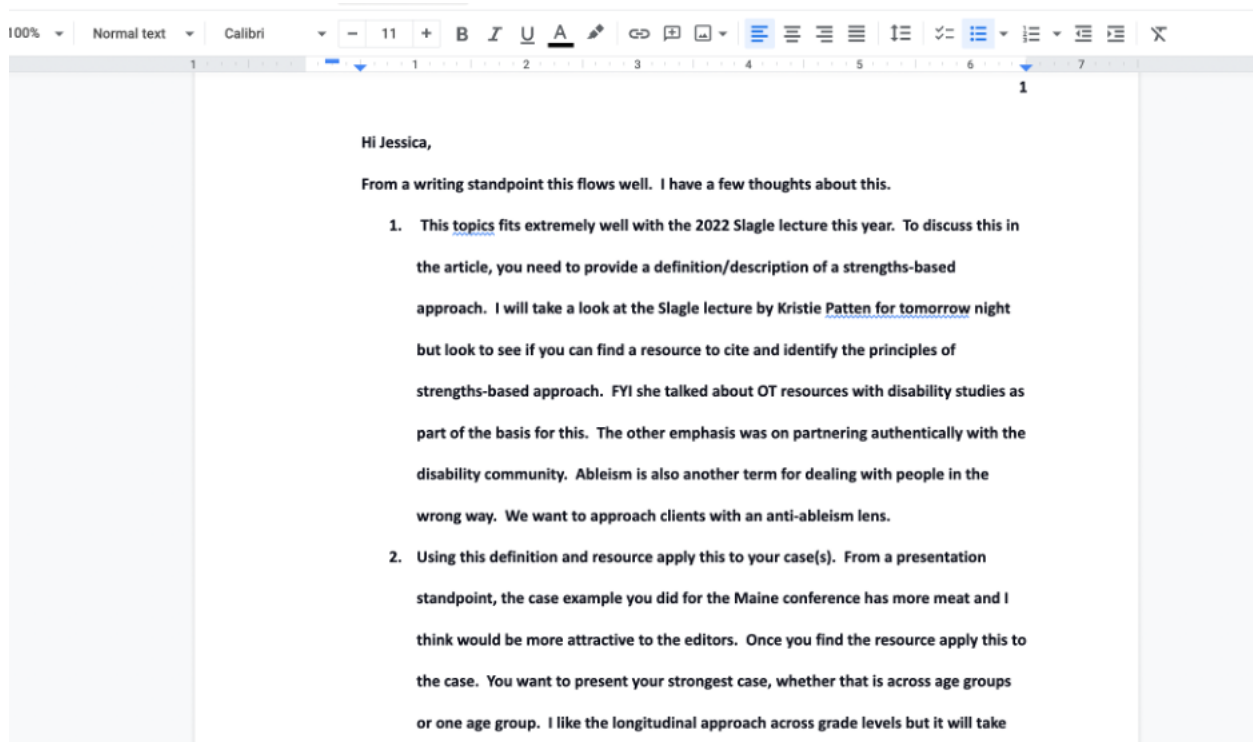
The message I want to convey is that for students with disabilities to have positive postsecondary education outcomes, they must have a strong disability identity. I also want to bring to our profession's attention that disability identity must be addressed through a based practice. I included case examples of ways to incorporate disability identity in intervention across the K-12th grade experience.

My faculty advisor is currently reviewing this draft. I want to also include your revisions and present them to him.

Please let me know your thoughts. You have always given me good insight!

Have a great day,

Jessica

Appendix B.3.: Feedback from Dr. Fleming–Initial Draft

100% Normal text Calibri 11 B I U A

1

Hi Jessica,

From a writing standpoint this flows well. I have a few thoughts about this.

1. This topics fits extremely well with the 2022 Slagle lecture this year. To discuss this in the article, you need to provide a definition/description of a strengths-based approach. I will take a look at the Slagle lecture by Kristie Patten for tomorrow night but look to see if you can find a resource to cite and identify the principles of strengths-based approach. FYI she talked about OT resources with disability studies as part of the basis for this. The other emphasis was on partnering authentically with the disability community. Ableism is also another term for dealing with people in the wrong way. We want to approach clients with an anti-ableism lens.
2. Using this definition and resource apply this to your case(s). From a presentation standpoint, the case example you did for the Maine conference has more meat and I think would be more attractive to the editors. Once you find the resource apply this to the case. You want to present your strongest case, whether that is across age groups or one age group. I like the longitudinal approach across grade levels but it will take

Appendix B.4.: Draft CYSIS Article**Disability Identity: A Strength-Based Approach Can Impact Postsecondary Education****Outcomes**

According to Healthy People 2030, a social determinant of health is education access and quality (Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2020). An individual with access to education and who can complete an educational program is more likely to have better physical health, economic stability, and emotional health. This access to education, notably higher education, is decreased with individuals with disabilities. The Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2015) reports that one out of 10 individuals with a disability have less than a college education. However, this finding is increased in individuals with disabilities. One out of five individuals with disabilities have less than a high school education. In higher education, only 16.8% of individuals with disabilities have a bachelor's degree compared to 34.6% of individuals without a disability (BLS, 2015). Though the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools to provide accommodations and modifications for students to access a free and appropriate education (FAPE) (United States Department of Education [DOE], 2004), these interventions and strategies are not carrying over to positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Students with disabilities attend traditional postsecondary education programs at higher rates; however, their success in completing these programs is less than their non-disabled peers (Lightner et al., 2021). Colleges and universities have resources for students with disabilities; however, a student must self-disclose a disability (DOE, 2020). The entitlements provided by IDEA no longer apply in a college or university setting (United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2011). Though some students with disabilities cite stigma as a

reason for not disclosing the presence of a disability, another reason is the lack of understanding of their disability. A mixed-methods study and a qualitative exploratory study found that students diagnosed with an educational disability do not feel they have an actual disability (Forber-Pratt et al., 2021; Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020). A possible reason for this disconnection is a decreased disability identity.

What is Disability Identity?

Disability identity is the sense of self and feelings of having a disability. It also includes feeling a connection or solidarity with the disability community (Forber-Pratt, 2021; Muller, 2021). There is no specific model describing disability identity development because it is unique to the individual (Muller, 2021; Sniatecki et al., 2019; Forber-Pratt et al., 2017). An individual with a strong disability identity understands their disability, understands the individual and social impact in daily living, and successfully incorporates it into their self-concept (Forber-Pratt et al., 2021; Lightner et al., 2021; Muller, 2021; Sniatecki et al., 2019).

A consistent theme in the literature is that disability identity is from an ableist perspective (Sniatecki et al., 2019; Kendall, 2016). It focuses more on the negative aspects of participation in a non-disabled viewpoint than the positive aspects of having a disability (Mueller, 2021; Forber-Pratt et al., 2021). An example of this mindset is cochlear implants. Cochlear implants can be perceived by hearing individuals as a solution to deafness or profound hearing loss (Cooper, 2019). Members of the Deaf community can look at cochlear implants as an intervention that takes from Deaf culture, including language and cohesiveness of community (Cooper, 2019). They look at deafness as not an impairment but a quality that positively influences their daily living (Cooper, 2019). The view that society causes the barriers for individuals with disabilities instead of the disability itself is part of the social model of disability

(Forber-Pratt et al., 2021; Sniatecki et al., 2019; McCormack & Collins, 2010). Disability is a positive quality that brings new perspectives to the daily living experience (Sniatecki et al., 2019; Forber-Pratt, 2017).

Disability Identity in Education

Disability identity development provides the foundation for postsecondary education success. A mixed-methods study and a quasi-randomized control found a positive correlation between self-determination and disability identity in college students (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020). Another mixed-methods study found that students who understood their disability sought out their college's disability services during the first semester of their freshman year (Lightner et al., 2021). Furthermore, a qualitative study focusing on disability identity in adolescents found that students that established connections in the disability community and provided opportunities to connect with their peers with disabilities established deep and authentic relationships (Forber-Pratt et al., 2021). In addition to establishing connections with the disability community, students that have opportunities to recruit their leadership skills, whether in advocacy or education, are more likely to attend and have positive experiences in postsecondary education (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Zhang et al., 2019).

Though there is moderate evidence that disability identity plays an essential role in academic and community success, the opportunities to develop a strong disability identity are not consistently available. Mueller (2021) found that students with disabilities do not have consistent opportunities or are even discouraged from connecting with other students with disabilities. Forber-Pratt et al. (2021) that there is a lack of preparation in school professionals' to fully support students with disabilities to understand disability identity. This area for growth can

significantly impact the outcome of students with disabilities aspiring to attend and be successful in a postsecondary education program.

Transition Planning

Typically, transition planning begins at 14 years old, or approximately eighth grade. A legal mandate is that a student receiving specialized instruction and related services be invited to their IEP meeting. At 16 years old, students begin to actively plan their postsecondary education life by discussing their goals and aspirations and actively developing goals and objectives addressing this area (United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services [OSERS], 2020). If a student does not have a clear understanding of their disability, its impact on their education, and to use their strengths to produce a positive change, then they may not seek out the assistance needed to be successful in postsecondary education (Lightner et al., 2021; Woods et al., 2010).

Disability Identity: Strength-Based Approach and School Practice

As noted in the above sections, a strong and positive disability identity is essential to successful school outcomes. However, the ableist perspective of disability is not conducive to fostering a positive disability identity (Forber-Pratt, 2021; Mueller, 2021). A strength-based approach is aligned with positive disability identity development. Intervention is not a passive experience, but the client is an active collaborator (National Institute of Corrections [NIC], n.d.; McCormack & Collins, 2010). Interventions are rooted in a growth mindset: capabilities are not predetermined but can change by empowerment (Morin, n.d.; Garwood & Ampuja, 2019). Individuals are encouraged to use their agency to change their outcomes by using self-identified strengths and using these skills to address any areas for growth (Garwood & Ampuja, 2019; McCormack & Collins, 2010). A strength-based approach also focuses on removing barriers,

physically and socially, from the environment instead of requiring the individual with a disability to conform to the environment (NIC, n.d.; McCormack & Collins, 2010). Below is a case example of a strength-based approach using principles of positive disability identity.

Case Example

Erin is a high school student. She participates in an occupational therapy group with two other students, focusing on executive functioning skills. The students expressed they each want to go to and graduate from college but are not sure what they need to do to be successful. The occupational therapist facilitates a discussion by asking about what was a time they felt a sense of success. Erin stated she felt successful when she helped her parents convert a small room into a family office. When the occupational therapy practitioner asked what went well in this experience, Erin stated that she used an app on her tablet which allowed her to visualize different layouts of the room when she uploaded a photograph of the space. A group member also stated that he found apps helpful and asked Erin if she had ever tried a particular app that he found helpful for him to focus. Erin replied that she had tried an app for focus, but it did not work. However, she wanted to try again because she saw how helpful it had been for him. Another group member said that she became overwhelmed by all the different apps, and she did not know where to start finding one that would work for her. The session focused on the three students researching for apps to help with focus and each of them selecting two new apps to try out with the occupational therapist facilitating using executive functioning skills for research. The occupational therapy practitioner asked how they could use these apps in their classes. Erin said she could talk to her teachers, saying it is a technology accommodation. At the next occupational therapy session, the students will discuss their successes or misses using their decided app.

This case example shows a strength-based approach to treatment. The session started with the students talking about their successes. The intervention (increasing time management) revolved around an approach (app use) that had been successful in other areas of their lives. The outcome (effectiveness of app) is from a perspective of not what could go wrong but what can be changed if the app does not work for them. The occupational therapy practitioner shifted intervention from being passive to being an interactive experience.

This case example also shows that using a strength-based approach sets a foundation for positive disability identity development. Erin is receiving intervention in a group of peers with similar needs, which connects her with a disability community. She has a solid understanding of what she needs to have access to remove her barriers to learning (knowing her IEP accommodations). Because of these experiences, her perception of her learning can shift away from an ableist viewpoint. As a result, she is on a pathway to a positive postsecondary education outcome, which is her long-term goal.

Conclusion

Disability identity is an essential skill needed for success in postsecondary education. As a client-centered profession, occupational therapy has the potential to make a significant impact in supporting disability identity development. The cornerstone of our profession is to maximize the potential of meaningful occupations to encourage a meaningful and purposeful life (AOTA, 2022). Interventions and outcomes are rooted in the that the client is the driving force of their life story and their perceptions of health and wellness (McCormack & Collins, 2010). In school practice, particularly with transition planning, occupational therapy practitioners have a unique role in guiding students in building their disability identity. By using a strength-based approach, a student has the power to write their narrative and develop their connections to both academic

and non-academic endeavors. As a result, we can contribute to students with disabilities having a positive postsecondary education experience.

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Appendix C

Appendix C.1.: Maine Occupational Therapy Association (MeOTA) Submission Form:

4/24/22, 8:57 PM

2022 MeOTA Fall Conference - Call for Papers

2022 MeOTA Fall Conference - Call for Papers

MeOTA Annual Fall Conference 2022 – in person!
"Contextual Diversity: New Frontiers of OT Practice"

Saturday October 22nd, 2022
Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport Maine

The Annual Conference of the Maine Occupational Therapy Association (MeOTA) is a time for practitioners, students, educators, and scientists to share their work - work that will further the profession of occupational therapy as it seeks to contribute its knowledge to improve the lives of those who can benefit from occupational therapy services.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSIONS

- Proposals may be submitted ONLINE any time through May 15th, 2022
- Please make sure you are accurate with all spelling and credentials.
- Incomplete proposals will not be accepted

SESSION FORMATS

Within each format, proposals may be either general in nature or research based.

- Short Course: 60 minutes - that advance practice, education, or program development
- Poster: live or via 5' pre-recorded; Displayed on a wall, no larger than 4-ft x 5-ft. Posters will be on display during the day with a designated time period where presenters are asked to be with their poster - advance the body of knowledge underlying the practice of occupational therapy.
- Roundtable Facilitator: 45-60 minutes - advance practice, education, or program development

PROPOSAL SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals are reviewed online by your colleagues in a blind peer review that will begin in May and conclude within 14 days. A minimum of 2 blind reviews is given to each proposal.

Presentations will be accepted in the areas of occupational therapy practice, education, or program development. The learning objectives should be clearly stated and should relate to improved understanding or application of knowledge relevant to practice and education. The synopsis of the content should indicate how the learning objectives will be fulfilled.

Criteria for Presentation or Poster:

- Topic is timely, professionally relevant, and advances the practice and education of the field of occupational therapy or specifically addresses the professional development of the participant.
- Topic demonstrates evidence-based practice or is relevant to promoting the use of evidence in current practice.



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe_ojA5DmoPKB_eCr5L9YUXNZ_6Rb0itC3A35T-1sHEUzCvkQ/viewform

1/5

Appendix C.2.: MeOTA Draft Short Course Proposal

Primary Speaker: Jessica McGuire, OT, MOT, OTR

Biography:

Jessica McGuire has practiced occupational therapy for 21 years, with 18 years specifically focusing on school-systems in urban settings. Currently, she works for Boston Public Schools where she provides occupational therapy services at an educational campus (pre-kindergarten to 8th grade) and a middle school/high school program (6-12th grade). Her interest is students with high incidence disabilities transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education. Jessica consistently strives for active collaboration with school staff outside of the multidisciplinary team to educate and promote occupational therapy as a resource for student success. She also finds that postsecondary education preparation is best addressed throughout a student's entire school career to empower their own agency to succeed in school. By the students increasing their ownership in the therapeutic process, they understand occupational therapy and how this service can be a benefit to them throughout their primary and secondary education.

Proposed Title: Finding the Way: How Can Occupational Therapy Support Postsecondary Education Outcomes.

Learning objectives

At the end of this short course, attendees will:

- 1.) Gain knowledge of four themes in the research impacting positive postsecondary outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities.
- 2.) Understand occupational therapy's potential impact within the four themes

- 3.) Identify strategies to apply to interventions to support students with high incidence disabilities transitioning to postsecondary education using the Practice Framework as a guide.

Proposal Synopsis:

Students that have access to and graduate from a postsecondary education program have fewer health disparities (Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2020). They are more likely to gain and sustain stable employment. Their job opportunities can allow for career advancement, including compensation (salary and benefits) (HHS, 2020; Department of Labor Bureau of Statistics [BLS], 2015). However, though students with disabilities, particularly high incidence disabilities, are capable of success in postsecondary education, they are less likely to complete their education than their non-disabled peers (BLS, 2015).

A literature review found four themes are drivers for positive postsecondary education outcomes: self-determination, disability identity, relationships (home and school community), and accessibility. Students with disabilities who have increased opportunities for inclusion in their secondary general education curriculum are more likely to understand collegiate expectations and have further success in participating and graduating from their program (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Joshi & Bouk, 2017). These opportunities, plus a student that understands their agency for success in postsecondary education, have transition plans reflective of their goals. They are more likely to accomplish their postsecondary education aspirations (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Mazzotti et al., 2013). In addition to self-determination and accessibility, a student who has a strong disability identity better understands their needs and the skills needed to be successful, including seeking out and being a member of a disability community (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Joshi & Bouck, 2017). They are less likely to engage

in maladaptive behaviors impacting positive postsecondary education outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Joshi & Bouck, 2017). Also, students who have continuity of their reasonable accommodations and modifications, plus access to outside support addressing academic and non-academic needs, are more prepared for the challenges of negotiating both academic and non-academic expectations (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020).

The purpose of this presentation is to explore the pivotal role school-based occupational therapy practitioners can have with supporting students with high incidence disabilities entering a traditional postsecondary setting. Using a scoping review as a guide, participants will identify ways to act as an informal consult to transition teams, learn to incorporate themes to interventions to build a foundation for students before the transitional age, and support interventions using the Practice Framework as a foundation. The objectives will be met through a formal presentation, small group discussions, and a question-and-answer session.

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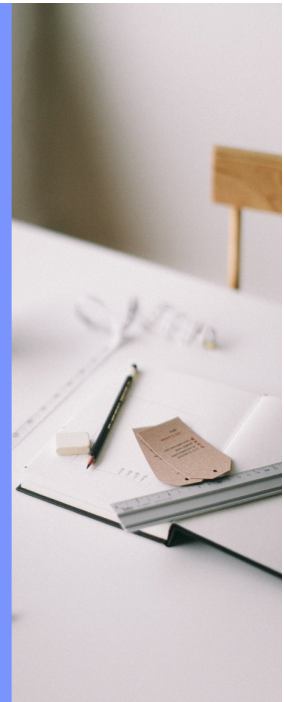
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Appendix C.3.: MeOTA Presentation with Narration

Finding the Way: How Can Occupational Therapy Support Postsecondary Education Outcomes

Jessica Leigh McGuire, OT, OTR
Boston Public Schools October
22, 2022



Get to know your peers (3-5 minutes)



- **Where are you from?**
- **Current place of employment?**
- **What do you want to take away from the presentation?**
- **If you could share a meal with Eleanor Clark Slagle, what is one question you would ask her?**

Objectives

Attendees will:

Gain knowledge of four themes impacting positive postsecondary education outcomes for students with high incidence disabilities

Understand occupational therapy's impact within the four themes

Identify strategies to apply to interventions to support students transitioning to postsecondary education.

Key Terms (context of the presentation):

- **High Incidence Disabilities**
- **Postsecondary education**
- **PICO**

Finding The Why



The Dilemma

Entrance vs Matriculation

Receiving supports in postsecondary education

Evidence-based data-driven interventions

Transition Planning: High Incidence Disabilities

(Lightner et al., 2021; Joshi & Bourk, 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2013, OSERS, 2020.)

PICO and EBP Question

Population: students with high incidence disabilities

Intervention: strategies/accommodations in transition plans

Comparison: N/A

Outcome: positive postsecondary education experience

Is there enough evidence to support interventions and strategies for high school students with disabilities to establish a foundation for college success?

Categories and Themes

Category 1: Internal

- Self-Determination
- Disability Identity

Category 2: Social

- Relationships

Category 3: Societal

- Accessibility

Self-Determination



Definition

"a combination of attitudes and abilities that lead people to set goals for themselves and to take the initiative to reach these goals"
(National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, 2022)

Why is it important?

Understanding of own agency: active learner
Autonomy and decision making can be a predictor
Self-advocacy skills

(Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Mazzotti et al., 2013; Woods et al., 2010)

Disability Identity



Definition

The sense of self in relation to an individual's disability and connection or solidarity with the disability community.



Why is it important?

- Driver of self-determination
- Connections bring success
- Leadership

(Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Sniatecki et al, 2019;, Zhang et al., 2019; DuPaul et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)

Relationships

What are the main relationships?

- Peers
- Teachers/School Staff
- Family



Why is it important?

- Parent expectations of postsecondary education can influence outcomes
- The "just right" fit for curriculum and support
- Positive engagement in both academic and non-academic endeavors.

(Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; DuPaul et al., 2017; Hatfield et al., 2017; Rojewski et al., 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)

What is it?

- Access to accommodations
- Inclusive opportunities
- Social justice

Why is it important?

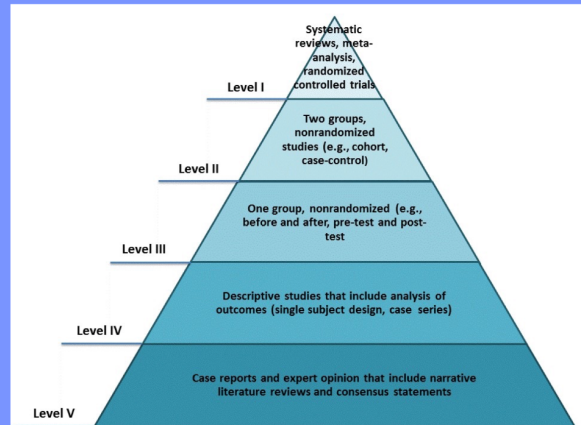
- Carryover to educational activities
- Postsecondary education programming

Accessibility

(Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Joshi & Bouck, 2017; McConnell et al., 2015; Rojewski et al., 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)

Themes and research: Studies

- Evidence pyramid: studies not as robust (Level III studies)
- Not as prevalent in occupational therapy literature
- Further research is needed to "find the why"



Rutgers University, 2022

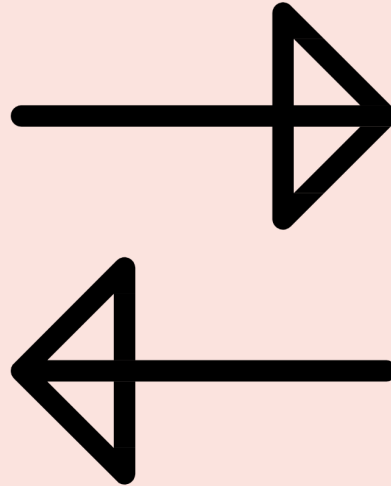
Small Group Discussion: 5-10 minutes

In groups of 3-4 discuss using the questions as a guide:

- 1.) Is there a theme that stands out to you? Why?
- 2.) Do you feel that you can support the themes discussed in your setting? Why or why not?
- 3.) Have you unknowingly worked on one of these themes with your students / clients?



Finding The Way



Professional Organizations

- **WFOT:**
 - Scope of school practice starts as young as early childhood to postsecondary education (WFOT, 2014)
 - Occupational Justice (WFOT, 2014)

- **AOTA:**
 - Professional background allows for occupational therapy to be a support service for positive postsecondary education outcomes (AOTA, 2014)

Practice Framework: Can we justify involvement in the four themes?

Occupations

- Education (formal/informal)
- Social Participation
- Advocacy

Environmental Factors

- Individual or population
- Accessing products/materials
- Support and relationships
- Beliefs and attitudes

Outcomes

- Occupational performance
- Quality of life
- Advocacy
- Social/occupational justice

AOTA, 2020

Occupational Therapy's Impact

Student: 16-year-old junior in high school who wants to go to college. The student has dysgraphia and mild autism. The student's dream is to become an engineer. The student is in a partial inclusion education program with pull-out supports for writing and push-in supports for pragmatics

Strengths: hard-working, consistently uses provided accommodations, self-advocacy, command of technology

Areas for growth: time management, goal setting, organization, connections with peers, exploring extracurriculars

Self-determination

Occupations

- **Formal education**-- goal setting to complete a part in a group assignment
- **Formal education**-- self-advocacy to ask for accommodations to complete assignments
- **Social participation**-- identifying group project tasks to be an effective group member

Environmental Factors

- **Attitude**- self-awareness to know strengths and areas for support
- **Attitude**-- perseverance to follow through on the assigned tasks
- **Supports**--Online shared platform (imputing information into a shared Google Doc), dedicated notebook to research, planner

Outcomes

- Positive group contribution
- Following through on an assignment and turning it in on-time.

Disability Identity

Occupations

- **Formal education**-- Knowing why they receive the services using the terminology on their IEP.
- **Social participation**-- participating in a small group intervention to research colleges
- **Self-advocacy**-- expressing goals and aspirations using the IEP terminology and incorporating a strength-based perspective

Environmental Factors

- **Attitude**-- has a solid knowledge of disability in their education
- **Belief**-- Disability is seen as a strength.
- **Supports and relationships**-- encouraging access to the disability community.

Outcomes

- Making solid connections with peers with disabilities in both academic and non-academics.
- Finding a college program with a strong history of supporting students with disabilities.
- Effectively communicate the Transition plan reflective of goals and aspirations

Relationships

Occupations

- **Formal education**—establishing relationship with school staff to decide on high school courses for postsecondary aspirations
- **Social participation**—collaboration of student, parent, and school staff to discuss college expectations
- **Social participation**—connecting with a peer to plan a tutoring session for elementary school students with disabilities.

Environmental Factors

- **Attitudes**—shared belief of student's abilities
- **Attitudes**—teachers and school staff understanding of "just right" for the student"
- **Support and relationships**—parent supporting student researching college/university programs

Outcomes

- Balance between accommodations and a just right challenge
- Finding a college/university campus that fits the aspirations and accommodations for student success
- Working as a team to support elementary students with disabilities as tutors.

Accessibility

Occupations

- **Formal education**—core curriculum in an inclusive environment
- **Informal education**—using accommodations and modifications on student's IEP
- **Advocacy**—students and families present goals and aspirations for educational programming with the LRE

Environmental Factors

- **Materials and accommodations**—suggested accommodations and modifications are relevant to student's needs
- **Supports and relationships**—opportunities for educational resources outside of school
- **Occupational justice**—accessing inclusive opportunities
- **Occupational justice**—access to all materials across all facets of student's daily life

Outcomes

- Student in the correct least restrictive environment.
- Accommodations and modifications on student's IEP are individually tailored to meet needs, goals, and aspirations
- All accommodations and modifications needed for school success can be located for school both in school and at home.

Can we justify OT ?

YES

Finding the "how"



**So... we found the why, we found
the way.**

Now it is time to tie it together...

Jamboard: How can we intervene? (10 minutes)

Access the QR code



OR

[https://jamboard.google.com/d/
1Tn4_Y16uXfFe-
KM6nIWojBFaRgf1_HyXI8x9tHt5y
rk/edit?usp=sharing](https://jamboard.google.com/d/1Tn4_Y16uXfFe-KM6nIWojBFaRgf1_HyXI8x9tHt5y_rk/edit?usp=sharing)

Think, Pair, Share: (10 minutes)

Grab a partner. Discuss a student on your caseload:

- What one (or combination) of the four themes describes this student?
- Where has this theme most impacted the student?
- What can you do to better support your student knowing what you know?

What's stopping OT?

Perception of school-based OT

Perception of transition planning for high incidence disabilities

Evidence-Based Practice

How we can change

- All students on an IEP are high needs
- Formal intervention vs collaboration
- Show what OT *can do* for the school community
- Research cohorts in school districts

Takeaways

- Supporting students transitioning to postsecondary education is more than intervention and strategies.
- Occupational therapy can positively influence our interactions with students with disabilities heading to postsecondary education: on and off our caseload.
- The Practice Framework justifies our importance to supporting students with disabilities entering postsecondary education.
- In order to have change, we need to be the change!

Food For Thought:

Knowing what you know now, what are two things you can do now to support positive postsecondary education outcomes?



Acknowledgements

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- Dr. John Fleming (Faculty advisor)
- Dr. Kathleen Matuska (St. Catherine University)
- Dr. Virginia Green (Doctoral committee member)
- Dr. Aaron T. Jennings (Scholarly mentor and doctoral committee member)

Thesis Defense

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Questions?



Slide NarrationSlide 1

I am Jessica McGuire, and I am an occupational therapist for Boston Public Schools. I have spent most of my practice in school-systems, particularly large urban school settings. My interest is in postsecondary education, particularly supporting students graduating from high school who were successful with IEPs. This area was also a personal one because of two friends who were diagnosed with a learning disability their freshman year in college.

Slide 2

Conferences are about both taking in information and collaborative learning. We cannot be active collaborators without knowing each other! Go to someone you do not know and introduce yourself. Use these questions to break the ice. I would love for you to share your answer to the fourth question!

Slide 3

These are the objectives for this presentation. They are divided into three parts: finding the “why”, finding the “way”, and finding the “how.”

Slide 4

In this presentation I will be using some terms that may be unfamiliar to you or will use in a different context:

Students with high incidence disabilities are students that are typically in full inclusion or partial inclusion programs. The common diagnoses in this category are specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, emotional/behavioral support, communication disorders, and mild cognitive impairment. These students typically will attend postsecondary education.

Postsecondary education for this presentation refers to traditional 2-year or 4-year institutions

PICO is a framework for evidence-based practice. It is used to write comprehensive evidence-based practice questions to locate relevant materials and evidence.

Slide 5

My personal philosophy is “Find the why”. When I say find the way, I want you to look beyond intervention. I want you to look beyond an article. I want you to roll up your sleeves and look at questions and concerns on a deeper level. The best analogy for “find the why” is do you plug up a hole when there is a leak or do you look for the source of the leak and intervene there.

Slide 6

The dilemma. Students with high incidence disabilities who enter postsecondary education have increased, but their success in 2-year and 4-year programs are not up to par with their peers. They are more at risk for drop-out, leave of absences, underperforming academics, and disengagement.

Slide 7

I wanted to give some background regarding the four themes and their application. One of my doctoral knowledge translation projects required me to develop an evidence-based practice question to address the dilemma I stated in the last slide. I had a rough idea as to what I wanted to focus the research on; however, I did not know where to begin to organize my thoughts. The PICO framework was the structure to put together the pieces needed for a robust evidence-based practice question.

Population or the P:

Intervention (the I):

C: My evidence-based practice question did not have a comparison group and sometimes for some questions it is okay to make your PICO a “PIO”

Outcome (the O):

Based upon the PICO framework, I developed the question on the right side of the slide.

Slide 8

To come to these themes, I had to search, locate, and critically appraise articles. I also had to extract themes from the articles that best fit my PICO parameters. If you are interested in knowing the whole process that led me to these themes, I will be happy to discuss it with you after the presentation. I have some great references that may interest you!

My four themes fall into three categories: internal, social, and societal. The internal is the student. The two themes that fall under this category are self-determination and disability identity. The second theme is the social. For the purpose of this presentation, the social theme is relationships, particularly relationships in three areas: peers, teachers and school staff, and families.

The last category is societal. This category is all encompassing and can include: the student’s everyday environment, the political systems and social constructs of the student’s general environment, and even their physical access. Also, a common thread in this theme is social justice.

Slide 9

I used the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, a non-profit organization specifically focused on transition planning. It is the best one that can be related back to OT. Self-determination is the most familiar theme because it is intervention driven. The literature I reviewed on this topic discussed its importance and what interventions can be used.

Students with solid self-determination skills understand their agency. They are self-aware of their strengths and needs, which allows them to be active participants in their educational curriculum. It also allows for them to take ownership of the therapeutic process.

The studies that I used in this presentation consistently stated that self-determination, particularly autonomy and decision-making skills can be a positive predictor of postsecondary education outcomes. It is a recognition that to do well in college or university, a student's autonomy must match the demands of the environment. This includes both academics and endeavors.

Slide 10

Disability identity was consistent with all the literature I reviewed for this presentation. Individuals who have a stronger connection to or a more positive view to disability have stronger self-determination skills, particularly perseverance. Research also shows that having a strong connection to the disability community, whether it is a mentor or as large as an organization, have better success in all aspects of daily living, including a positive postsecondary education experience.

Leadership plays a role in this theme. Students who were provided opportunities to educate individuals, serve as role models or mentors, or even participate in leadership initiatives specifically for students with disabilities had higher attendance rates for postsecondary education. Those who continued to connect their personal attributes of what it means to have a disability and leadership reported more of a positive postsecondary education experience.

Slide 11

The top three relationships discussed throughout my literature review were peers, teachers/school staff, and family. Peers drive engagement in both academic and non-academic

endeavors. Two studies noted that students with disabilities are more at risk for social isolation and school disengagement without establishing connections with peers. This parlays not only into decreased academic performance, but also, negative social interactions, such as substance abuse. Also, there is moderate research that students with disabilities who have peer models or reach out to peers for assistance also have increased scholarly engagement.

There is moderate research that parent's expectations towards postsecondary education in general and how it relates to their student's disability is a significant influence in positive postsecondary education outcomes. A personal example is my sister. My sister has a receptive language delay. Though she did struggle academically, my parents were adamant that she will attend college. She ended up graduating magna cum laude with a degree in English. Using her as an example again, she says that a "game changer" was a teacher who understood the concept of her needs but did not lower their expectations for her to access a rigorous academic curriculum.

Slide 12

As OT practitioners, what do we think when we see the term "accessibility"? We may think access using assistive technology or modifying the environment, which is definitively noted in the research. However, in education research, accessibility also means accessing inclusive environments. For those of us in school practice the two acronyms that are discussed are FAPE (free and appropriate public education) and LRE (least restrictive environment). There is moderate evidence that students with disabilities who receive most of their earned credits in general education or participating in inclusion programming are more likely to attend and engage in postsecondary education.

We all know that social justice is important. Now, there is research that is backing up the importance of social justice and accessibility. Students from underrepresented populations have

less opportunities to participate in inclusive programming or accessing resources both in and outside of school. I really saw, as many as you have, during remote learning. Some of my students did better in remote learning because they had access to accommodations outside of school. We take computers for granted; however, a good portion of my current caseload do not have a computer in the home or little access to one. Because they had access to critical support in the home setting, they could carry over their skill set. There is moderate evidence that students who do not have the correct programming aligned with the expectations of a collegiate curriculum have difficulty with the demands of postsecondary education. There is moderate to strong evidence that students from underrepresented populations who have disabilities have less access to earning their credits in an inclusive environment. When they begin a postsecondary education program, they are not prepared to meet the demands because of the access they were given in their K-12 experiences.

Slide 13

Though I am not showing the full process of answering an evidence-based practice question in this presentation, I wanted to bring your attention to the present research regarding the four themes.

My references are from educational research. The study designs are limited in Level I strength. Minus a couple of studies used in this presentation, most of them meet the criteria for Level III, which are more qualitative in nature. Two mixed-method studies I used met the criteria for Level III because of the quantitative study design piece. The ones that used data were from secondary analyses from large longitudinal studies. Level III evidence is valuable; however, more robust studies need to be completed.

I found articles in occupational therapy literature regarding transition planning and postsecondary education. However, these studies discussed more interventions and program development. The literature is limited in finding the why for positive postsecondary education outcomes. To support our profession, we need to be active collaborators in finding the why.

This leads into the third bullet point which is further research is needed on all four themes. The evidence shows promising results regarding postsecondary education outcomes; however, the themes do not have the breadth of desired research. These themes also tend to not be cohesive; the experience is unique to the individual. However, the promising evidence shows that research will give data-driven supported recommendations.

So, when you read articles, I want you to keep these ideas in the back of your mind. It will help with making evidence-based practice less daunting!

Slide 14

This is the end of part one. I would like for you get into groups of 3-4 people that you do not know. Discuss part one using the three questions as a guideline.

Slide 15

Part one was finding the “why”. Part two is finding the way. We have new knowledge, and you are (hopefully) shifting your mind from what was found in research and how to start applying it in practice. Before we can get to developing interventions, we need to see how occupational therapy fits into the picture. To go back to the analogy, I said in the first part, you know what is causing the leak, now what materials do you need to fix the leak.

Slide 16

There are two organizations that promote OT practice. The first one is AOTA. The second one is the World Federation for Occupational Therapist, WFOT. Both organizations have

positions on school-based practice. The WFOT position paper on school-based occupational therapy practice notes that “education” goes from early childhood to postsecondary education. It further discusses that the access to education is a human right and any barriers impacting access to education are against occupational justice.

The AOTA fact sheet regarding OT and postsecondary education finds that because of our professional knowledge in task analysis and holistic philosophy, occupational therapy services can be a support to positive postsecondary education outcomes. Think about a student that you had in the past. Did they express an interest in college? Did something hold them up? What did you do to support them?

Slide 17

As we know, the Practice Framework is our guiding document for what we do as practitioners. We can apply the whole Practice Framework to the postsecondary education experience. However, based upon the four themes, I feel that these points best highlight our justification in positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Both formal and informal education is the most apparent occupation impacting positive outcomes. Though social participation is important in school in general, it becomes more pertinent in postsecondary education programming. College is the time where you learning to become critical thinkers and forming positive peer interactions and friendships. As I stated in the relationship slide, students with disabilities who have solid peer connections are less likely to engage in maladaptive social behaviors. Advocacy becomes more essential to the postsecondary education experience. Because the entitlements of IEDA no longer apply after graduating high school, students must advocate for their reasonable accommodations and modifications. They

must also know the process of receiving these accommodations or where to go if they have not provided them.

These environmental factors of an individual or population, accessing products/materials, supports and relationships, and beliefs and attitudes are self-explanatory. However, knowing what you know about the four themes, I encourage you to look at these environmental factors from a new perspective.

The outcomes listed are also self-explanatory; however, I encourage you to look at these points with the four themes in mind.

These are the themes that I highlighted. Do you agree or disagree? What other points do you think needs to be added in these three categories?

Slide 18

The best way to learn about our impact in transitioning students to postsecondary education is to look at an example. This is a student with two high incidence disabilities whose goal is to go to college. I listed their strengths and areas for growth. The next four slides present our impact in the themes of self-determination, disability identity, relationships, and accessibility.

Slide 19

The Practice Framework, and occupational therapy in general supports self-determination. Using the case example, I identified formal education and social participation and the performance skills needed to address the needs. These are the environmental factors that can influence the occupation and occupation performance. These are the two outcomes.

Slide 20

Self-determination and disability identity are intertwined. To be aware of strengths and areas for growth, a student needs to have an understanding not only of their disability but what it means to them to have a disability. This section is weighted more in social participation because students that make connections with individuals in a disability community tend to have more positive outcomes in postsecondary education. In fact, one of the studies used in this presentation mentioned that a student with a learning disability used their peers with the same disability to research colleges and to find ones that could support their needs.

A key environmental factor is that the student sees disability as a strength. Special education, though with well intentions approaches disability from a deficit-based perspective. Another study that I used in this presentation is that a factor that plays a role in the reluctance to disclose a disability is the deficit-based perspective. In terms of supports and relationships, three studies used in this presentation actively discuss access to the disability community. Group intervention can play a role in establishing foundation skills needed to access the disability community outside of school hours.

The outcomes listed are the end results of synthesizing our task analysis of occupations and environmental factors impacting disability identity.

Slide 21

As I stated in the prior slides, relationships are moderate indicators for positive postsecondary education outcomes. Formal education switches from the content to the connection. We know the importance of teacher connections; however, other school staff may play a larger role in the student's success. This opportunity is an excellent way for occupational therapy practitioners to be both facilitators and collaborators for all stakeholders to set up the supports for positive postsecondary education outcomes.

The environmental factors play a significant role in relationships for a student with disabilities. Like disability identity, relationships are driven by attitudes and supports and relationships. These environmental factors also require self-advocacy for both the student and the parent for transition planning that accurately reflects the students present levels of performance as it relates to their goals and aspirations. Family dynamics, including parents' belief of a college education, and believing in their student's abilities.

There is moderate evidence that students learn best by peer modeling and interactions. Also, there is moderate evidence that students in postsecondary education who have disabilities are more apt to forge connections with their peers for assistance. Also, positive peer models decreased negative behaviors (school disengagement and social isolation).

Slide 22

As we now know, accessibility is to resources, whether a specific accommodation to inclusive opportunities. It requires both students and families to be knowledgeable about their rights. As practitioners, it requires us to be mindful of the types of accommodations we recommend. Can they be used across all settings to do classwork? Are they from a checklist or are they truly individualized? Are we preparing students for their IEPs for them to present their goals? Accessibility is occupational justice. It levels the playing field for students to succeed. If they do not have access to opportunities, or limit their essential interactions, these can impact postsecondary education outcomes.

The outcomes are what drive the positive postsecondary education outcomes.

Slide 23

So, the short answer is that by using the practice framework and applying them to the four themes, we can create positive postsecondary education outcomes!

Slide 24

When we think of “how”, our minds immediately go to interventions and strategies. However, I challenge you to reframe the how. The how is more than intervention with the students. It also includes what is stopping us as providers to in playing a crucial role to support students transitioning to postsecondary education.

Slide 25

So, the “why and “way” have been answered. It’s time to tie it together and address the “how”. The how, I feel is best addressed by interactive learning. So, you can use the QR code, or the link sent out to you to the Jamboard. I want you to type in your ideas. I challenge you to use a strength-based perspective for interventions.

Slide 26

Use the QR code or the link to access the group Jamboard. Type in your suggested interventions and strategies. Don’t be shy!

Slide 27

Grab a partner and discuss a student on your caseload. Use these three questions to guide your discussion.

Slide 28

As you can see, we have some great ideas. However, we are at risk of becoming “stuck”

How many times have you had to give the “What is OT in the school setting” in-service? Also, I challenge you to think about your own perceptions of OT in the school. How many times have you gotten a referral for a high school student, and you are saying to yourself “why?”. I know that has happened to me; however, I had the opportunity to evaluate a 10th grade student who had a somatic presentation of psychological stress. Though he did not qualify for services, I

helped him in his journey to find accommodations and modifications to put on his 504 plan. This evaluation gave the student access to a resource (me) and helped with developing a 504 that accurately met his needs. I challenge you to look at those evaluations not as frustrations, but opportunities.

The second statement came from a couple of experiences I had in my career. I was in a training for transition planning, and I asked a question about the role a transition planning department plays in supporting students with high incidence disabilities planning to attend postsecondary education. I was told that the department focuses more on “higher needs” students, students either entering the workforce or independent living programs. Students with disabilities who are heading to postsecondary education are recommended to use their school counselors or other teachers. I was participating in an OT cohort, and I discussed my interest and posed the same question. Though I did get a more comprehensive response, the focus was on “higher needs students”. Executive functioning needs do not go away because you enter college. Knowing the transition process is not less important because you are planning on attending college. Again, we do not have to put students on caseload; however, we should keep in mind this statement.

When I first became interested in this topic, I began investigating the role OT preparing students for positive postsecondary education outcomes. Though there were a few studies that looked at big picture needs; the majority of the literature either focused on intervention-driven techniques or program development and outcomes. There were minimal articles that really focused on “finding the why” or the breakdown between students with disabilities entering, but not having a positive postsecondary education outcome. Though I did not go into depth about my application of PICO to form an evidence-based practice question, I was taken aback by the small

amount of literature. However, I was inspired because this practice area is an area where we can make an impact in the social determinants of health.

Slide 29

As I mentioned earlier in the presentation, the focus in transition planning is less on students who plan to attend a traditional postsecondary education program. What we need to remember is that all students with diagnosed disabilities are high needs. They need supports to help them not only attend college but to finish their education.

We do not have to do formal intervention. We can be active collaborators with all stakeholders, in particular stakeholders that are not initially on our radar, like school counselors.

A small rock makes a ripple in the water, whether it is a puddle or the ocean. Give your in-services, but back it up with action. Show your school community what we can do.

Remember, we are more than computers and fidgets!

We have an OT journal club in my school district. We meet four times per year to work on critically appraising an article and translating it to practice. We are also looking to starting an evidence-based practice cohort. These opportunities provide us with both finding the why and developing programming that is effective and data driven.

Slide 30

These are the key points I want to drive home in this presentation. Supporting students transitioning to postsecondary education is more than interventions and strategies.

We can be a positive influence in our interactions with students both on and off our caseload

The Practice Framework justifies our involvement.

In order to have change, we need to be the change.

Slide 31

Here is some food for thought. You don't have to share it out loud.

Slide 32

This presentation is a knowledge translation project I designed in my post-professional OTD program at St. Catherine University. I want to thank the following individuals: Dr. John Fleming, my primary faculty advisor, Dr. Kathleen Matuska, retired faculty member at St. Catherine University, Dr. Virginia Green, my faculty reader, and Dr. Aaron Jennings, my scholarly mentor.

Slide 33-34

Here are the references I used in this presentation

Slide 35

This is my contact information

Slide 36

I thank you for your time!

Appendix C.4: MeOTA Presentation Survey

Feedback for “Finding the Way”

Your feedback is voluntary; however, it is greatly appreciated.

Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

1.) The presenter met the objectives of the presentation

1 2 3 4 5

2.) The presenter expanded my knowledge on this topic:

1 2 3 4 5

3.) The presenter had a command of the knowledge on the topic:

1 2 3 4 5

4.) The information was presented in a clear and organized approach:

1 2 3 4 5

5.) Did the presenter answer questions in a thoughtful manner?

1 2 3 4 5

If applicable, how will you use this information to guide your practice?

Please share any further feedback you have for the presenter:

Appendix D.1. Final Doctoral Presentation

Positive Postsecondary Education Outcomes: It Is More Than Intervention

Jessica Leigh McGuire, OT, MOT, OTR
St. Catherine University

Faculty Advisor: Dr. John Fleming, Ed.D., OTR/L
Committee: Dr. Virginia Green, OTD, OTR/L, Dr.
Aaron T. Jennings, Ed.L.D., MSW

May 20, 2022

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Key Terms

- General Education
- High Incidence Disabilities (University of Kansas, 2022)
- Free and appropriate public education (FAPE)
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Transition Planning
- FERPA (U.S. Department of Education [DOE])
- OCR: Office of Civil Rights (U.S. DOE)
- OSERS: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

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Background Information

- Reason for focus: Personal experience
- Evolution of the project:
 - Traditional intervention (mental health)
 - Law and Policy
- End result: focusing on “the what and why”
 - What is the evidence to support interventions and strategies for students with disabilities transitioning to secondary education that result in positive outcomes?

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Need For Knowledge Translation

- Success rate of students with disabilities graduating or finishing a postsecondary education program.
- The evidence behind the intervention
- Education impacts the social determinants of health
- Possible overlooking of students with high incidence disabilities.

(Newman et al, 2011; HHS, 2020a; HHS, 2020b)

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Review of Evidence

- Basic Statistics
 - Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - National Center for Learning Disabilities
 - NLTS-2
- Entitlement vs Accessibility
 - IEP coverage
 - Disclosure

(BLS, 2015; NCLD, 2020; Newman et al., 2011; DOE, 2020; OCR, 2020; OSERS, 2020)

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Review of Evidence: Themes

- Themes fall into three categories
 - Internal (self-determination, disability identity)
 - Social (interpersonal relationships)
 - Societal (accessibility to resources and opportunities)

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Review of Evidence: Themes

- Themes fall into three categories
 - Internal (self-determination, disability identity)
 - Social (interpersonal relationships)
 - Societal (accessibility to resources and opportunities)

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Review of Evidence: Disability Identity

- Acknowledgement of a disability and its impact on the individual, and connection to or solidarity with the disability community (Forber-Pratt et al, 2017)
- Opportunities for leadership can increase postsecondary education attendance (Zhang et al., 2019)
- Understanding of transition planning process can increase likelihood of students seeking out support services (Lightner et al., 2021)
- Understanding of challenges can support development of non-academic behaviors (Kutscher & Tuckwiller 2020; DuPaul et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)

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Review of Evidence: Relationships

- Parent involvement can drive postsecondary education outcomes (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Hatfield et al., 2018; Mazzortti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)
- Connections with teachers can drive the curriculum needed for positive postsecondary education experiences (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Rojewski et al., 2015; DuPaul et al., 2013, McConnell et al., 2012)
- Peer relationships can shape positive behaviors needed for postsecondary education participation (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Watkins et al., 2017; DuPaul et al., 2013; Mazzottiet al, 2013)

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Review of Evidence: Accessibility

- Inclusive opportunities correlates with postsecondary education (Rojewski et al., 2015; Joshi & Bouck, 2017; Mazzotti et al., 2013)
- Access to both in-school and out of school resources are predictors (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; McConnell et al., 2015; Rojewski et al., 2015; Mazzotti et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2012)
- Underrepresented races and ethnicities or lower SES have decreased access to opportunities supporting postsecondary education (Kutscher & Tuckwiller, 2020; Rojewski et al., 2015)

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Knowledge Translation (KT) Aims

- KT1: Continuing Education Webinar (Minnesota OT Association [MOTA])
- Disseminate information of effective interventions or recommendations using an evidence-based practice method.
- KT2: Children and Youth Special Interest Quarterly Connections Article
- Raise awareness of disability identity and use of a strength-based approach
- KT3: Short Course for the Maine Occupational Therapy Association (MeOTA) Fall Conference
- Raise awareness and advocate for OT's support in transitioning students to achieve positive postsecondary education outcomes

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Summary KT1: MOTA Continuing Education Webinar

- Users/Audience:
 - a. OT practitioners and students
- Venue:
 - a. Live 60-minute webinar via Zoom (30 minute presentation)
- Strategy:
 - a. Developed PP presentation using OTCH 8440 EBP portfolio
 - b. Presented to classmates for feedback and revisions
 - c. Submitted proposal to MOTA
 - d. Presentation (6 attendees in total)

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Summary KT2: Children and Youth Special Interest Section (CYSIS) Article

Users/Audience

- OT practitioners and students

Venue:

- Professional publication
- Approach to KT2:
 - a. Contact CYSIS Editor
 - b. Review literature on disability identity and review prior articles
 - c. Article submitted to readers for feedback
 - d. Submission of the article to the CYSIS editor and committee (May 18, 2022)

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Summary KT3: MeOTA Conference Short Course

Users/Targeted Audience:

- OT practitioners working in schools or postsecondary education (Maine and NE Region)

Conference Theme

- Contextual Diversity: New Frontiers in OT Practice

Venue

- Live state conference (first since COVID-19)
- Steps
 - a. Review conference theme
 - b. Wrote a proposal for the course
 - c. Developed presentation; "Finding The Way"
 - d. Submitted proposal April 29, 2022 (will be notified mid-June)

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Evaluation Outcomes: KT1

Evaluation Strategies

- Feedback from OTCH 8440 faculty advisor
- Feedback from cohort
- Google Survey to participants

Evaluation Strengths:

- Comprehensive focus
- Good alignment regarding aims
- Feasible in cost and time

Weakness:

- One response from survey
- Possible implicit bias

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Evaluation Outcomes: KT2

Evaluation Strategies

- Feedback and revision from faculty advisor
- Feedback and revision from CYSIS editor (upon acceptance)
- Feedback from three outside OTs and mentor (upon acceptance)

Evaluation Strengths:

- Comprehensiveness: focuses on a new area of interest, use of KT1 as a foundation
- Alignment: New concept applied to the publication's theme
- Feasibility: cost effective

Weaknesses:

- Comprehensiveness: potential for application but targeted to a niche audience
- Alignment: Currently in review- unknown at this time
- Feasibility: Timeliness

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Evaluation Outcomes: KT3

Evaluation Methods

- Advisor review and feedback
- Double blind review (currently)
- Google Survey (upon acceptance)

Strengths:

- Comprehensiveness: Builds upon KT1 to exchange in true knowledge translation
- Alignment: Relevant to conference theme
- Feasibility: Cost-effective, timeliness

Weakness

- Comprehensiveness: applicability to all school ages, urban experience
- Alignment: under review and unknown at this time-will know acceptance mid-June 2022

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Implications for Practice and Recommendations

- Intervention is only a part of positive outcomes.
- OT has potential to make a positive impact.
- Service delivery needs to be more than structuring of treatment sessions.
- Introduction of the four themes needs to start once eligibility is determined.
- Collaboration with school staff not always a part of the special education team.
- Recommendations to access the curriculum should also address feasibility.

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Personal Reflection

- Use of coursework
- Always find the why and apply it
- Work opportunities
- Scholarly endeavors
- Fuel your fire

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Questions and Answers

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Slide NarrationSlide 1

Good afternoon. My name is Jessica McGuire, and I am based in Boston, Massachusetts. I am entering my 21st year as an occupational therapist. My specialty is pediatrics with a focus in school systems, particularly large urban school districts. Currently I work for Boston Public Schools. I also have worked for DC Public Schools and Baltimore City Public Schools. I am excited to share with you my doctoral project, which is occupational therapy and positive outcomes in postsecondary education. I was advised by Dr. John Fleming who is a faculty member at St. Catherine University. My doctoral committee included Dr. Virginia Green, another faculty member at St. Catherine University and Dr. Aaron Jennings the Diversity, Inclusion, and Excellence Officer for Chelsea Public Schools in Chelsea, MA.

Slide 2:

These terms are the key terms I will use throughout the presentation. Some of these terms may be familiar to some of you in the audience. However, for those of you not in school-based practice it may sound like alphabet soup.

General Education: This programming is typically for students who do not need interventions or modifications to access their educational curriculum. It is formally called “regular education”

High Incidence Disabilities: A classification of disabilities that typically include LD, ASD, Communication, Emotional/Behavioral, Mild intellectual impairment, physical/sensory (accessing opportunities). Typically, a student with a high incidence disability is in the general educational setting and receiving in-school supports.

IEP: federally mandated document ensuring students with disabilities have access to an education which includes supports such as specialized instruction and related services (OT, PT, Speech)

Transition planning: process in K-12 settings where the IEP team discuss and develop data-driven goals supporting a student with a disability goals and aspirations once they graduate from high school. It starts at 14 with federally mandated involvement beginning at 16 years old.

The last three acronyms revolve around a policy (FERPA) and two offices that oversee special education services.

FERPA: FERPA is the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. Think of it as HIPAA for education. A family has the right to access their student's records, who has the right to access their student's records, and what they want to disclose about the student's records. Once a student turns 18 or enters a postsecondary education program, all these rights are transferred to the student

OCR is a division that supports students with federally mandated documents. It also supports students with disabilities who are in postsecondary education.

OSERS: is a division of the DOE that focuses on students in K-12 receiving special education. They also protect students and their families during transition planning.

Slide 3

I became an OT because of personal experience. I am an OT kid. I received OT from preschool to the end of kindergarten, I had the ability to show my skill set; however, I still had difficulties, even long after I finished services. This was glaring when I was in university. In addition to my personal experience, I had two friends in college with learning disabilities. In fact, they were diagnosed with learning disabilities their freshman year of college. One of my friends ended up changing her career course. She received her degree in education; however, because of her poor grades and her hesitancy to disclose her learning disability diagnosis, no school district considered her as a candidate. My other friend, someone that finished in the top five of his class, fared better, but still felt shame over his learning disability.

This project went through several incarnations. Initially, I wanted to focus on interventions, particularly mental health. Then it pivoted to another interest of mine which is law and policy. However, under the guidance of Dr. Kathleen Matuska, our faculty advisor for our EBP Project course, this project evolved to the current research on the effectiveness of interventions to achieve positive postsecondary education outcomes. It became from the how to finding the what and why. What is the evidence and why or why not is it working?

Slide 4:

Students with disabilities are entering college at higher rates; however, they are not graduating at the same rate as their peers. The NLTS–2 reports that 19% of students with disabilities enter a postsecondary education program; however, only 34% of the 19% are successful in their completion. This is in comparison to 40% of students without disabilities entering and 52% of the 40% completing their studies.

Much of the focus in the literature, particularly OT literature is focused on the “how”. This stems from the types of interventions to even educating college personnel about supporting students with specific diagnoses. However, the literature that focus on the why is minimal, though emerging.

My doctoral project used Healthy People 2030 as a framework for my doctoral projects. Healthy People 2030 is an initiative put out by the Dept of Health and Human Services. One of the focuses is the social determinants of health. A specific social determinant of health is education access and equality. Students who can access education and receive quality education are less likely to experience negative societal impacts, such as food insecurity, housing insecurity, low pay jobs, jobs without benefits, etc.)

There is also a possible overlooking of students with high incidence disabilities. According to the NLTS–2 the biggest enrollment of students with high incidence disabilities are

students with learning disabilities or communication disorder. However, the focus has been more on students who are planning to enter the workforce or heading towards an independent living program. If decreased education impacts social determinants of health, then we should also focus our attention to students with high incidence disabilities.

Slide 5

While I am passionate about this topic, passion and advocacy need to be backed up with hard data. I wanted to give some statistics to help you put into perspective why the needs for KT are present.

The Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics states that in 2015 1/5 students with a disability have less than a high school education (compared to 1/10 students w/o a disability). A little over 16% of students with disabilities have a bachelor's degree compared to a little over 34% of students without disabilities. As I stated in the last slide the rate of students entering postsecondary education vs graduating from a program is significantly less than students without disabilities.

All students are entitled to a free and public education (FAPE). Students who qualify for an educational disability receive individualized education plans (IEP) to meet this criterion. The focus of an IEP is to remediate and provide accommodations and modifications for students to access their curriculum. Once a student graduates or is excited from a high school setting, these entitlements no longer apply. For students entering college or university, they are responsible for disclosing their status because all rights transfer to them when they are 18.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities states that only 24% of students with LD will disclose that they have a disability to their college/university. The NLTS-2 also found that the majority of students with high incidence disabilities do not consider themselves to have a

disability or do not disclose the presence of one. As a result, they cannot receive the reasonable accommodations and modifications entitled to them under law.

Slide 6

From my evidence-based research consisting of retrieving articles from databases, references from other articles and searching articles in my own position, I identified four themes. These four themes fall into three categories: the internal (the student), social (interpersonal relationships), and societal (accessibility).

Slide 7

I found this definition to be the best definition for self-determination. The biggest takeaway is that a student with self-determination recognizes that they have agency to make changes. This can include decision making about the steps they need to take to achieve their goals, participation in IEP meetings, and even driving the purpose of their intervention. It is the most researched out of the four themes; however, the studies tend to be less robust or there are noted inconsistencies with program effectiveness, intervention, etc.

Slide 8

A theme I found in the literature that surprised me was disability identity. Disability identity is Acknowledgement of a disability and its impact on the individual, and connection to or solidarity with the disability community. A student with a strong disability identity recognizes that their disabilities may cause challenges and be more apt to disclose the presence of a disability and can receive the help they need.

The disability community plays a huge role in fostering disability identity. One secondary analysis study found that students that have opportunities for leadership within the disability community are more likely to attend a postsecondary education program. Another article found that students who have opportunities to discuss their disability as a means of education also feel

more connected to that part of their identity. As you can see, this theme can play a huge role in interventions in terms of content and service delivery.

Slide 9

Though it seems to be common sense that relationships impact student outcomes, there is moderate evidence to suggest that this conclusion is correct. The three relationships that impact students the most are parents, teachers/school staff, and peers.

Parent expectations and attitudes towards postsecondary education can drive outcomes. In fact, parents' expectations can drive a student with disabilities' self-determination roles, which can impact positive outcomes in postsecondary education.

Connections with teachers and school staff can drive the curriculum for a student with a disability. If the curriculum meets a "just right" challenge, meaning the coursework prepares a student for college/university and that the proper reasonable accommodations and modifications are in place, then a student with a disability can have a better experience.

Peer relationships is also a key in positive postsecondary education experiences. Students who have established peer relationships are less likely to engage in negative behaviors, such as substance abuse, or school disengagement due to social isolation. Students are more apt to go to their peers for assistance before going to talk to faculty or other personnel. Also, a student that makes a connection with the disability community, whether it be on or off-campus, also is inclined to have a more positive postsecondary education experience.

Slide 10

As we know, education is not siloed into individual or community. It is societal. One theme I found in this research is accessibility. Normally, when someone mentions accessibility, they may think of the physical environment (e.g., ADA regulations) or the provision of physical resources, such as a scribe for testing or speech to text for long assignments. However,

accessibility is more than just the physical. Outside resources play a role in postsecondary education outcomes. These resources can include tutors, outpatient therapies, access to educational consultants or attorneys to name a few.

Another aspect of accessibility is inclusion. The increased amount of time a student with a disability is in an inclusive setting or is provided inclusive opportunities with their peers has a positive effect on attending a traditional postsecondary education program.

This theme is, I feel, the most noticeable one that is rooted in social justice principles. The research notes that students from underrepresented populations, particularly race and ethnicities, or from a lower or low SES have decreased opportunities. Though the most prominent one is accessing outside resources, opportunities for inclusion are also a significant factor. Rojewski et al. wrote in their article that students that are from underrepresented races and ethnicities who do have educational disabilities are more likely to earn their credits outside the general education setting. This also aligns with students from lower or low SES. As I discussed earlier in the presentation, education is part of the social determinants of health. If students cannot access or receive quality education, then the health disparities will continue.

Slide 11

My aims were the following (slide is read)

Slide 12

The first knowledge translation project was a continuing education webinar hosted by the Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association.

(slide is read)

Slide 13

The second knowledge translation project was an article written for the Children and Youth Special Interest Quarterly Connection. This is a national publication published by the

American Occupational Therapy Association. It was submitted this month to the editor. This article focused on disability identity and strength-based practice (slide is read)

Slide 14

The third knowledge translation project was developing a proposal and a short course for the Maine Occupational Therapy Association fall state conference. This proposal was submitted at the end of April, and I will find out the results in mid-June (slide is read).

Slide 15

Evaluation strategies (section is read)

This project had a comprehensive focus. It outlined the process of using an evidence-based practice approach, in terms of a literature search, synthesizing of the information to develop four themes, recommendations based on the research, and justification of occupational therapy's involvement. This project also met the aims of the knowledge translation project and had good feasibility in terms of cost and time

The outcomes are fair because of the lack of response from my presentation. I only received one response back from my survey. Therefore, the feedback I received prior to this project were from individuals who I had a scholarly relationship or my fellow cohort. There is a risk of implicit bias.

Slide 16

Evaluation strategies: (section is read)

This project used the foundation of the first knowledge translation project to further explore an identified theme, which was disability identity. It is a theme that is relatively new to research. The article also included a case example, which shows the practical application of the theme to intervention. The article was structured around the theme of strength-based practice, which also aligns with disability identity. It was feasible in terms of cost-effectiveness

This article is targeted to a niche audience, which could impact the comprehensiveness of this project. Also, this article is under review, which means that the alignment is not known at this time. In terms of feasibility, I did not realize how long it would take to write an article, including the outside research needed, and the ability to communicate this theme to practical application.

Slide 17

Evaluation strategies (section is read)

Strengths (section is read)

This presentation can be applicable to all ages, but people may not attend due to the intended focus. I also developed this presentation from my primary experience, which is urban school settings. I do not know the alignment at this time because my proposal is currently under review. I will know in mid-June if it is accepted.

Slide 18

Slide is read

Slide 19

I could do a presentation on this experience itself. However, I narrowed it down to five points:

Though this project was heavily rooted in the Advance Practice, Advance EBP, and EBP Project courses, its foundation is using all the coursework in this program. I used it in my KT projects whether it was the Educational Methods course focusing on UDL to rooting this project in the Healthy People 2030 framework I learned about in Social Determinants of Health. Though my focus pivoted a few times during this program, I used every piece of information I learned in those pivots and produced three KT projects that I am proud to stand behind.

Always find the why and apply it. Find the why in what you do. Question why you approach certain situations, whether it is intervention, collaboration, or even research. Question

why certain situations happen. Apply what you know. My postsecondary education experiences have been in Catholic universities. The consistent philosophy, whether it is the Holy Ghost Fathers, or the Sisters of Carondelet is your knowledge is only as good as your application. It is meant to be shared.

Because of this experience, I have new work opportunities. I was asked to be a journal club facilitator and even present on this project for BPS. Another colleague and I are talking about starting a monthly EBP cohort.

You are capable of scholarly endeavors. Write an article for OT practice or your SIS practice area. Reach out to your professional community to assist with research. This experience gave me the confidence to apply for (in a couple of years) a LEND fellowship in advance leadership and practice.

Fuel your fire. This project brought a new interest, which is disability identity. It is something that I am becoming passionate about. It also brings another interest which is social justice and inequity to resources, particularly with the Black, Indigenous, or Persons of Color (BIPOC) population.

Slide 20

First thank you to my advisor, Dr. Fleming. Your candor and your humor made this doctoral project a less daunting experience. Thank you, Dr. Green and Dr. Jennings, for being a part of this journey. Your guidance and collaboration have set me on a new path of learning.

Thank you to Dr. Matuska, who was the course advisor for the foundation of this project. There were many times where I wanted to go down the rabbit hole of possibilities, you were the one that centered me.

Thank you to my cohort: Claire, Jennifer, Elizabeth, Deb, Emily, Paula, and Amy. It is so nice to see your faces in person! I started this journey with OTs, I leave it with new colleagues, and most importantly, friends.

Thank you to Aixa Borrero-Sanchez, Carrie-Ann Tarzia, LauraLee Johnson, and Aubrey Rubin. I am so blessed to have administration that encourages excellence and supports us to achieve it.

To my parents and sister, who are here today. You always encouraged me to aim high, no matter the obstacles. You cultivated an environment of lifelong learning that I take with me always.

To my partner of 9 years who is also here today: You are the definition of selflessness and generosity. I could not have done this without you.

Slide 21

Thank you for listening. Are there any questions?

Slides 22-24

These are the references I used for this presentation