EXPANDING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY'S ROLE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION AND THE TRANSITION TO POSTSECONDARY ACTIVITIES

by

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Section One: Introduction and Overview of the Experiential and Capstone Projects

My inspiration for this project has been developing since I was in high school. I am the oldest child in my family, so I didn't have an immediate example to follow in navigating the complex demands of adolescence, while looking for my first job or applying to college. I was fortunate enough to have a social network with insight and two loving parents who graduated high school and attended college themselves; but I felt like times had changed since they were in school. Every time I experienced a new demand of adult life (such as taking out student loans, filing my taxes, establishing a new living situation) I would wonder, "why didn't they teach us about this in school?" I was determined to believe that my success in life wasn't supposed to be dependent on the experiences of my social connections. I would think, "what about people without social support? …Or without families who can help them?" or, "Am I missing something?" This experience, and my role as an older sister, helped me to develop a passion for mentoring others. I became active in student leadership, through clubs and volunteer service in high school and college, and I explored managerial positions within each employment opportunity. This desire to mentor others has continued to influence my career choice and professional education and ultimately led to the focus of my doctoral experiential internship (DEI) and capstone project.

I wanted to figure out how occupational therapy could help to better prepare youth—especially those without access to supportive resources—for the transition to adult life. My scholarly question started out as: "what are the key elements, or life skills, that young people need to have in order to successfully transition to living independently as an adult?" and, "what is occupational therapy's role in that transition?" In completing a review of the literature (found in section four), it was made clear that extensive work has already been done around this topic

and many elements have already been identified. No formal consensus has been made that combines all the elements into one overarching model or list, but a recent source has made what I believe to be a comprehensive framework. In my literature review, I suggested minor wording changes to make the framework more inclusive of non-traditional circumstances and I have created a simple infographic to make sharing this information more reader-friendly (Appendix A).

In response to this new information, my scholarly question changed to, "how can these identified key elements, or life skills, be more accessible to young people?" and, "how can we, as occupational therapists, provide more opportunities for youth (specifically at-risk youth) to engage in activities which promote the development of these skills or characteristics?" Through the process of an intensely immersive 12-week needs assessment, I identified a variety of teaching and learning approaches to consider, barriers for occupational therapy in providing these services, and potential steps for future institutional change. I visited more than 15 programs and interviewed over 60 people within a 200-mile radius of the Portland, OR metro area. I met with students, teachers, administrators, program managers, executive directors, lobbyists, state and federal representatives, stakeholders, occupational therapy practitioners and community members. Through this experience I gathered a variety of perspectives related to the challenges young people encounter in the transitional process toward life after high school. I also heard many perspectives related to the societal responsibility to better prepare young people, especially at-risk youth, for living independently and the varying beliefs on how this could, and should, be done.

A natural response to increasing opportunities for youth to develop essential life skills seems to occur by incorporating relevant experiences into the public school curriculum. This is a

topic I explored in detail throughout my site visits and is what led me to consider occupational therapy's role as a consultant in curriculum development and implementation. However, I ultimately found that there is no one-size-fits-all way to address these needs, especially within the current educational structure, and therefore developing a standard resource or program was an unlikely solution. Thankfully, throughout this process I was led to Big Picture Learning (BPL), a non-traditional education network which helps schools to reorganize perspectives and redefine expectations around teaching and learning. I was fortunate enough to spend time getting to know and work with the students and staff at Miller Education Center West, an alternative high school in Hillsboro, OR currently transitioning to adopt the BPL philosophy. It was in seeing the effects of this non-traditional structure, and radical cultural shift, that I was inspired to identify ways occupational therapy practitioners could help bring similar opportunities to more students.

The strengths-based, client-centered values of occupational therapy align well with the student-led learning and advisory philosophies of BPL. Advisors (teachers who stay with a cohort of students until graduation) empower students to identify their own academic goals, projects and learning plans while encouraging them to challenge themselves to develop new skills. Through this collaborative partnership, students are able to take responsibility for their own learning and can develop the skills needed to navigate ambiguous and challenging real-world scenarios (i.e. critical thinking, problem solving, time management, organization, and effective communication). Students also hold internships in the community twice a week where they have the opportunity to explore career paths and professional interests; they communicate and coordinate with their community mentors and supervisors, and they work autonomously on individual goals with the support of peers and advisors. These skills are generalizable to various

academic goals and can carry over to success in postsecondary activities. Although BPL's values and organizational mission are undeniably relevant to the needs of today's students, some schools view their lack of structure (i.e. lack of traditional teacher-led lesson plans and curriculum) as being too extreme, or the schools are too fearful when it comes to making such a dramatic structural shift.

I discovered other organizations and schools with a similar approach to BPL (including High Tech High, New Urban High School, One Stone and New Pedagogies for Deep Learning) which allowed me to extract themes to represent the growing movement toward a more flexible learning model. These schools empower students through *project-based learning*, encourage innovation through *designed-thinking*, and develop culturally sensitive *global citizens*. They all overlap in the values of student-led learning, real-world experience, internships, mentorship, social and restorative justice, competency-based grading and personalized learning with scaffolded supports. This type of educational model provides an example of how schools can better prepare youth, especially at-risk youth, for life after high school by incorporating increased opportunities to develop the essential life-skills and inner characteristics they need.

Occupational therapy practitioners have already established themselves as valuable contributors to the optimization of student education in the public-school system. Occupational therapy's scope of practice aligns well with flexible and innovative learning models which provides school-based practitioners an opportunity to establish a new role in line with the future of education. Redefining the role of occupational therapy in secondary education may further the profession of occupational therapy by showing its distinct value in preparing young people for the demands of adult life. It is in the exploration of this possibility that I identified numerous barriers for occupational therapy within the current educational structure which hinder the

profession and decrease supports available to students who need additional help. This led me to the final variation of my scholarly question which asks: "how can we expand the role of occupational therapy in secondary education and the transition to postsecondary activities to support all students, including at-risk youth and youth with disabilities?"

The process of expanding occupational therapy services in public education is extremely complex and may take years to develop. I initially found this to be discouraging, but in meeting with my state representative, local occupational therapy association lobbyist, and members of the state and district boards of education, I have come to realize there are opportunities within each step of the process for the role of occupational therapy to grow. I have outlined the process of advocating for expanded occupational therapy services in the schools (Appendix B) and developed a program proposal which can be implemented to demonstrate the positive effects of these services (Appendix C). The program I developed is meant to serve as a *demonstration project* (similar to a pilot study) and does not require any funding. It is not meant to be a permanent solution to this problem, but instead an initial step in the process of advocating for future funding and opportunities for school-based occupational therapy.

I do not want to add another program or suggestion to the existing research that has not properly considered practical methods for implementation. There are numerous frameworks, programs, and curricula or resources related to this topic, but the same barrier gets in the way of implementing them—funding. In order to create sustainable and meaningful change for students and the profession of occupational therapy, the focus must shift toward implementation, outcome measurement, and advocacy. I am happy to have learned this lesson early in my professional career and look forward seeing how the field of occupational therapy can move toward a more inclusive school-based model of practice.

Section Two: Scholarly Manuscript, A Publication for OT Practice

By: Carlie Ross, Sandra Rogers PhD, OTR/L, and Chrissy Van Osdol OTD, OTR/L

Expanding Occupational Therapy's Role in Secondary Education:
Using Student-Run Programs to Overcome Longstanding Barriers for School-Based Practitioners

The inception of Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975 (later known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA, n.d.)) created many new opportunities for the profession of occupational therapy. At the time, services for children with disabilities were not standard and thus resources and guidelines for best practice were not available. Practitioners and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) came together to establish appropriate services under varying expectations and "…determined how to address occupational dysfunction and support occupational engagement in an educational environment" (Chandler, 2013). Since then, occupational therapy practitioners have established themselves as critical members in school-based practice, facilitating appropriate individualized education plans (IEPs) and serving as advocates for students under IDEA. This role has kept school-based occupational therapy services relevant and respected within the educational arena as a *related service*—often providing critical modifications which support increased engagement and success for students and teachers in the classroom (AOTA, 2016).

When considering occupational therapy's role in secondary education, services under IDEA often focus on transition skills to prepare students with disabilities for life after high school (i.e. functioning at home, employment, higher education). These skills may include: social interaction, community integration, employment related training, community mobility, and modification/equipment recommendations to promote independence, self-advocacy and

increased quality of life (AOTA, 2008). However, in focusing solely on IEP related transition planning, the role of school-based occupational therapy has not adapted to address the growing needs of modern-day students, including those who are identified as at-risk. Following the implementation of current trends in school initiatives that focus on academic rigor and general education, at-risk students are graduating with fewer opportunities to develop life skills that will support them in their transition to adult living. The impact of these trends can be found throughout the literature related to postsecondary transitions in America and may be contributing to increased high-school dropout rates, increased incarceration, and increased unemployment rates among youth. The opportunity for maturity through self-exploration, relevant exposure, and retrospection on life's experiences has become a privilege for young people who live in supportive socioeconomic conditions (Waters, Carr, Kefalas & Holdaway, 2011). The need for supporting at-risk youth has been noted in the literature for over a decade, yet there is still a lack of effective transition programs and services in place for this population. Occupational therapy practitioners can provide preventative wellness and transition services in secondary education to address the multifaceted needs and barriers experienced by these young at-risk adults.

Depending on the specific state regulations and district needs, school-based occupational therapy practitioners may already find themselves limited in the services they provide due to workload/caseload constraints. For these practitioners, the thought of expanding their role in the school setting to accommodate additional students might seem impossible. Coupled with the lack of funding for new programs/positions many school-based occupational therapists find it challenging to do more than just provide a minimum of services. However, according to the US Supreme Court, in a recent ruling on inadequate IDEA services, IEP goals and other supports for students need to be "appropriately ambitious" (Kamenetz & Turner, 2017). With increased

resources pointing to best practice, school-based therapists can start to find their voice and articulate the value of their role within the interdisciplinary team (AOTA, 2017a). AOTA's Vision 2025 challenges us to be leaders in changing "policies, environments and complex systems" (AOTA, 2017b). We can continue to respond to this societal need by redefining the role of occupational therapy in secondary education to *address occupational dysfunction and support occupational engagement* just as we did in the 1970's.

In her 2017 presidential address, AOTA president Amy Lamb explained, "innovation is less about generating brand-new ideas and more about knocking down barriers to make those ideas a reality" (p. 6). Exploring the possibilities for expanded services under current law can help to illuminate underutilized services within the scope and established role of school-based occupational therapy practitioners. In order to better serve students, some school districts have: budgeted school resources to provide 504 plan services, implemented response to intervention (RTI) programs, hired mental health specialists and/or behavior support specialists, and expanded alternative education options. Through the reallocation of current funding sources, occupational therapy practitioners can assist teachers and staff in any of these endeavors while implementing services that support all students.

Occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students may offer a mutually beneficial partnership to local high schools while laying the foundation for further change for school-based occupational therapy practitioners. For example, Pacific University, School of Occupational Therapy has established a partnership with a local alternative high school. Students from the occupational therapy program provide supervised services to high school students who have been identified as needing additional supports and one-on-one guidance in postsecondary transition preparation and planning. Specific services vary greatly depending on

the needs, strengths, and goals of each high school student but have included: organizational, self-regulation, and stress management strategies to increase executive functioning; career exploration, problem-solving, resume development and mock interviews to develop job readiness skills; as well as opportunities for self-discovery, healthy leisure exploration, and community mobility to increase social interaction skills and self-authorship (see Table 1 for more specific goals).

Targeted Areas of Occupational Performance	**Specific Goals**
Social participation	To develop awareness of self and others, empathy, effective and appropriate communication strategies.
Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)	To increase "attention to and independence in self-care" (AOTA, 2012).
Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)	To increase independence in community mobility, financial management, home and health maintenance, and postsecondary activities (i.e. budgeting, career and college preparation and planning, attainment of new housing).
Leisure/Play	To develop healthy coping strategies, resilience, social connectedness and social interaction skills.
Education	To support increased executive functioning (i.e. organization, time management), engagement in classroom and extracurricular activities, and increase skills to optimize academic performance.
Work	To increase problem solving, sense of autonomy, judgement and reasoning skills, adaptability, "persistence and dependability" (AOTA, 2012), initiation, and leadership skills.
Rest & Sleep	To provide education to support general physical and mental health and interventions which support health promoting daily routines.

Table 1: Modified from American Occupational Therapy Association (2012) *Promoting Strengths in Children and Youth: Occupational Therapy's Role in Mental Health Promotion, Prevention, & Intervention with Children & Youth* to reflect goals of the high school partnership program.

This experiential opportunity is integrated into a course within the occupational therapy program and provides professional students with the opportunity to gain school-based evaluation and assessment experience, work one-on-one (or in groups) with adolescent high school students and practice documenting daily treatment notes. A template of this program has been developed in hopes that other occupational therapy schools will adopt this model. The effects of this type of program have the potential to impact small- and large-scale communities by helping young people to develop the skills they need to contribute as healthy and productive members of society.

The occupational therapy student-run program is unique in that it's benefits are widespread and profoundly reciprocal. For example, implementing a high school partnership program allows professional occupational therapy programs to better prepare occupational therapy students for school-based practice; while simultaneously filling a gap in postsecondary transition services available to secondary education teachers, staff, parents and students, especially at-risk youth. Occupational therapy students collaborate with high school students and staff to identify appropriate goals, develop treatment plans, and implement relevant interventions. Through this process, high school students receive personalized mentorship and increased opportunities to develop life skills which may improve the likelihood of a successful postsecondary transition. When asked, students reported connecting with their occupational therapy student, finding the services helpful, and wanting to continue with more sessions.

Although implementing this type of program is a promising start, it is not the ultimate solution. Depending on the number of occupational therapy programs in each state, the impact can be limited based on pure availability and geographical location of these student services. Many at-risk-youth need consistent and reliable mentor figures to build long-lasting relationships

with in order to truly move forward toward personal and postsecondary goals (CK. Shea, personal communication, July 12, 2018). The everchanging nature of occupational therapy student services may not be consistent enough for some youth. However, it may be enough for individual schools, and school districts, to see a valuable effect on the wellness and engagement of students. This program may then demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed services which school-based practitioners can use as a foundation to advocate for additional funding from the state, county, or related federal budgets and grants. This *braiding of services* can increase preventative wellness options which support students without impacting the K-12 budget. Another path to investigate is in partnering with other health and wellness service providers within the school (i.e. nurses) to identify ways student health services can be funded by private insurance companies, or state programs for students without private insurance. This may then lift the financial burden off school districts and allow them to hire more supportive staff members to improve staff to student ratios and the availability of supportive wellness services.

Although physical health and wellness is only part of the services addressed by occupational therapy in the school setting, it may prove as a worthwhile avenue for expanded services so that school-based occupational therapy practitioners can focus more on life and transition skills to complement overall student wellbeing. Providing schools with expanded occupational therapy services may not only strengthen occupational therapy's collaborative role within the schools but may also support all youth in the transition to life after high school. Just as preventative health measures can decrease medical expenses and federal healthcare spending, preventative mental health and life-skill programs can decrease federal spending which supports incarcerated youth and those out of work utilizing services through related initiatives and programs. Together, school-based practitioners and professional occupational therapy schools

can be leaders in creating innovative institutional change. Together we can break down the barriers currently limiting the impact of occupational therapy services on all students—unlocking the potential for a stronger future. In the wise words of Walt Disney, “our greatest natural resource is in the minds of our children;” and it is through meaningful engagement in educational activities that children learn to utilize these resources.

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Section Three: Experiential Project

In fulfillment of my experiential project objectives, I created a variety of materials to respond to the needs identified in my needs assessment. First, I created an infographic which represents the essential life skills and inner characteristics young people need in order to make a healthy and successful transition toward adult life (Appendix A). I wanted this document to be evidence-based, yet easy to read and share with students, educators, organizations, and institutions. Secondly, I created a logic model to outline "Next Steps for Expanding Occupational Therapy's Role in Secondary Education" (Appendix B). I created this document to consolidate information gleaned from policy makers and stakeholders and to provide a simple process for practitioners, or future students, to follow in creating impactful institutional change. One step of the process includes demonstrating the effect of proposed services. This can be done in many ways, but one common method is through implementing a demonstration project, or pilot study. A small-scale trial program can allow practitioners to measure outcomes which support their argument and make the advocating process more effective. As a resource, I have created a program proposal for practitioners to use in implementing a demonstration project or pilot study and gathering data (Appendix C).

Although my scholarly question morphed many times throughout my DEI, I believe I have created a cohesive set of deliverables which convey the rich information I uncovered on this journey. However, I know there is more to be done and I hope to continue to meet with stakeholders, community partners, and experts in the related fields who can continue to inspire this work and open my eyes to new perspectives.

Section Four: Literature Review

Supporting Youth in the Transition from Adolescents to Adulthood: A Review of the Literature

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The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize the existing information found in the literature regarding barriers, supports, societal markers, and key elements associated with the transition from adolescents to adulthood. For this literature review the term *key elements* represents the various components which support a healthy transition to adult living for youth with or without disabilities (i.e. social support, physical health, engagement in productive roles). Each key element represents a theme identified in the literature and, when considered as a group, can be used to form a general framework for developing programs and materials to support youth in the transition to adult life. With a greater understanding of the key elements, educational and clinical professionals, including occupational therapy practitioners, may be more prepared to meet the needs of at-risk youth and youth with disabilities as they make the same transition. However, it should be noted that this literature review aims to contribute to a more universal understanding of the transition to adult living for adolescents and will not consider influences from all potential risk-factors or specific disabilities. Therefore, throughout the literature review the term *at-risk youth* should be considered in a broad sense and will encompass all youth without access to, or understanding of, any of the identified key elements.

Similarly, the terms *successful transition* and *adulthood* should be considered in a general sense as a variety of defining parameters can be found in the literature and are influenced by different societal and cultural expectations (Scales et al., 2016). For this literature review the phrase *successful transition* implies that the individual has achieved a skill, or set of skills, which enables them to independently engage in the roles and routines demanded by each key element; the phrase *transition to adulthood* represents individuals between 16 and 35 years old and encompasses *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2000), *young adulthood*, *early adulthood, adult living/adult life* and the related markers. Although a formal consensus of what constitutes a

successful transition from adolescents to adulthood has not been identified in the literature, evidence supporting different frameworks and programs suggest that various approaches, or *paths*, which incorporate key elements may lead youth to achieve the same ultimate goal of transitioning to a healthy, happy and productive adult life.

Markers of Adulthood

Common societal milestones which signify adulthood include: owning a home, marriage, parenting children, completing school, working full-time/having a career or pursuing higher education, and being physically and financially independent from parents or guardians (Settersten & Ray, 2010; Liu & Nguyen, 2011; Serido, Shim & Tang 2013; Johnson, Gans, Kerr & LaValle, 2010; Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2009; Lippman, Atienza, Rivers & Keith, 2008; Swartz, Kim, Uno Mortimer & O'Brien, 2011; Ellis, Marsh & Craven, 2009; Bucx & van Wel, 2008). Theories can also provide markers for adulthood. In the literature, various lifespan development theories have been referenced, including: life course theory (as cited in Swartz et al., 2011), the motivational theory of the lifespan development (as cited in Haase, Heckhausen & Silbereisen, 2012), and Super's life span theory of career development (as cited in Dietrich & Salmela-Aro, 2016). Additional theories have been identified in the literature as useful tools for understanding markers in the transition from adolescents to adulthood; these include: the model of phase adequate work engagement (as cited in Dietrich & Salmela-Aro, 2016), Piaget's cognitive development theory (as cited in Serido et al., 2013), Bandura's social cognitive theory (as cited in Serido et al., 2013), intergenerational solidarity theory (as cited in Swartz et al., 2011), contingency theory (as cited in Swartz et al., 2011), and the status attainment tradition (as cited in Swartz et al., 2011). These theories may help explain, and contribute to, societal and

cultural expectations of what constitutes a *successful* transition from adolescents to adulthood by providing a timeline, or process, and defining parameters for each marker.

Key Elements

Most of the key elements have been identified by Peter Scales and colleagues (2016) in their conceptual and measurement framework for the *dimensions of successful young adult development.* Instead of using the term key elements, Scales and colleagues refer to the contributing developmental components as dimensions. The dimensions, or key elements—for consistency, identified in the literature by Scales and colleagues include: physical health, psychological and emotional well-being, life skills, ethical behavior, healthy family and social relationships, educational attainment, constructive educational and vocational engagement, and civic engagement (p. 157).

For this literature review, the key elements represent the themes in the literature beyond the work of Scales and colleagues (2016) but use their dimensions as a guide with minor wording adjustments to represent the non-traditional fulfillment and application of each key element. For this review the proposed key elements include: physical and mental health, psychosocial and emotional well-being, healthy and supportive family and/or social relationships, development of life skills through engagement in productive roles, educational engagement and completion, productive vocational involvement and attainment, ethical character development, and civic exploration and contribution (Scales et al., 2016; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Liu & Nguyen, 2011; Serido et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2010; Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2009; Lippman et al., 2008; Swartz et al., 2011; Ellis et al., 2009; Bucx & van Wel, 2008). Each key element represents a theme identified in the literature related to the transition from adolescents to adulthood and can be broken down to further understand influencing components and demands. This breakdown

can be helpful in understanding the roles, routines, and dynamic relationships which contribute to healthy independent functioning within each key element. However, it should be noted that it may not be possible to create an all-inclusive, universally appropriate list of elements, or skills, needed for each adolescent's transition because it can inevitably be influenced by an unpredictable combination of unique internal and external factors.

For example, within 'development of life skills through engagement in productive roles' there are various life skills and productive roles to consider. This key element may include, but is not limited to: *financial capability* through managing money or paying bills (Serido et al., 2013); time management and interpersonal skills through part-time employment (Mortimer, 2010); coping skills, resilience, and adaptability through career exploration (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig & Platt, 2010); home and health management through living independently in college (Cass, 2011); and problem solving and decision making skills through navigating unfamiliar situations or demanding environments (Scales et al., 2016). It has therefore been suggested in the literature that identifying the specific life skill may be less important than identifying the inner characteristics, or personal qualities, needed for adolescents to possess in order to navigate complex situations and environments. These qualities include: taking responsibility, making independent decisions, managing multiple life roles, being flexible, and valuing autonomy (Scales et al., 2016; Inguglia et al., 2014; Comey, Smith & Tatian, 2009).

Barriers in the Transition

Just as there are markers for adulthood, there are markers for at-risk youth which can help to identify barriers for all youth in the transition to adulthood. Common markers identified in the literature for at-risk youth include: growing up in foster care, being incarcerated, lack of—or incomplete—formal education, history of neglect or abuse, history of violence and/or gang

involvement, illegal substance use and abuse, lower socioeconomic status, having a single parent, being part of a racial minority group, engaging in risky sexual behavior, and unplanned teen pregnancy (Furstenberg, 2010; Schneider, 2009; Hadley, Mbwana & Hair, 2010; Comey et al., 2009; Scales et al., 2016). The literature regarding these markers provides insight into potential barriers for youth. In a broad sense, barriers can be considered anything which prevents youth from accessing or satisfying the demands of each key element. Barriers identified in the literature include: poor physical and/or mental health, behavioral, cognitive and social challenges, stigma and/or discrimination associated with any applicable at-risk marker(s), lack of familial and/or social support, limited positive employment opportunities, limited access to community resources and/or supports, negative educational experiences, and limited access to—or involvement in—extracurricular activities or healthy outlets for leisure exploration (Furstenberg, 2010; Schneider, 2009; Comey et al., 2009; Scales et al., 2016).

These at-risk markers and barriers for youth decrease the likelihood of a successful adult transition by delaying the development of necessary skills and personal qualities which meet the demands for each key element (i.e. adaptability, inter- and intra-personal skills) (Schneider, 2009; Hadley et al., 2010; Comey et al., 2009; Scales et al., 2016). However, when considering these risk-factors for youth, it may not be enough to compare the adolescent's skills and qualities to those demanded by each key element; the elements are complex and interconnected, as is life. Scales and colleagues (2016) provide a diagram to represent the dynamic relationships between their identified key elements and explain how the elements can interact and contribute to adult development (Appendix A). With this in mind, it is important to consider each youth in their unique context and to understand their goals and motivation and how that impacts their development of adult skills (Haas et al., 2012).

Role of Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy practitioners use professional models, such as the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model (Appendix B), to provide a skilled assessment of the demands placed on an individual by the things they need or want to do on a daily basis (occupations) and their environmental context (Law, 1996). They value a strengths-based approach, which utilizes the unique skills and supports the individual already possesses in order to create opportunities to overcome barriers and increase participation. Occupational therapy practitioners are trained to provide modifications, or adaptations, which help optimize the individual's engagement and performance in what is meaningful or important to them (AOTA, 2014). Additionally, occupational therapy practitioners provide skilled assessment and interventions for instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). IADLs include activities which support daily life, such as: community mobility, meal preparation, financial, home, and health management (AOTA, 2014). The development of practical skills in these areas may contribute to, and promote, a successful transition toward independence in adulthood. For example, occupational therapy practitioners can assess the various factors which impact an individual's ability to engage in a task or occupation such as taking the bus to an interview, completing work related tasks, or fulfilling the role of a student.

Occupational therapy practitioners also help students to "develop self-advocacy and self-determination skills in order to plan for their future and transition to college, career/employment, and community living" (AOTA, 2016). Traditional educational models need to focus on groups of students and may not provide the same flexibility for considering each individual in their unique context. A model depicting the demands and relationships between key elements can encompass a wide range of approaches and may provide increased opportunities for clinical

professionals, including occupational therapy practitioners, to partner with educational institutions to support youth in the transition to adulthood. With their unique training, occupational therapy practitioners can provide valuable insights and modifications which promote success for all youth as they develop skills and personal qualities for adult living.

Summary of Findings

The similarities found in the literature suggest that a general consensus could be made for what markers, barriers, supports and key elements contribute to a healthy transition from adolescents to adulthood. Further development of models and/or visual diagrams may be helpful in sharing and articulating the general consensus as well as the dynamic relationships between key elements. By establishing a consensus of the key elements, and creating an easy-to-understand diagram, educational and clinical professionals, including occupational therapy practitioners, may be better equipped to meet the needs of adolescents, including at-risk youth and youth with disabilities, as they transition to adulthood. This information can contribute to program and material development to prepare and support youth throughout their early lifespan development by creating increased awareness and opportunities for youth to gain experiences and skills associated with success in the key elements.

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Appendix A

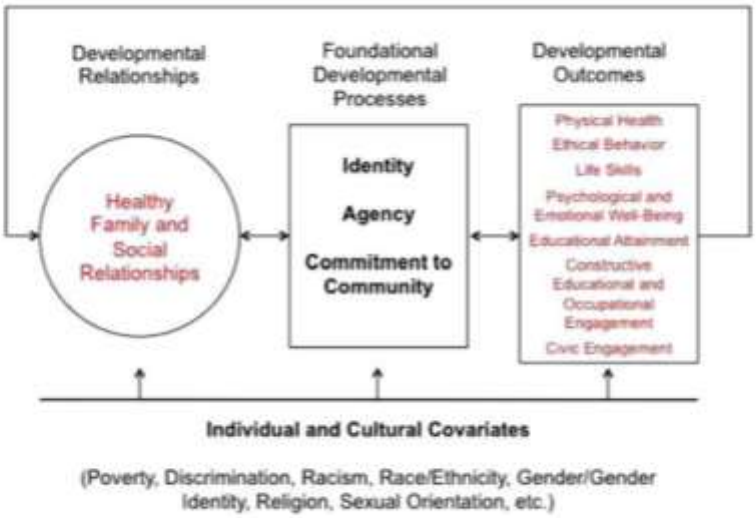

Figure 1. Links among the dimensions of successful young adulthood.

Image from:

Scales, P. C., Benson, P.L., Oesterle, S., Hill, K.G., Hawkins, J.D., & Pashak, T.J. (2016). The dimensions of successful young adult development: A conceptual and measurement framework. *Applied Developmental Science 20*(3) p. 157. Doi: 10.1080/10888691.2015.1082429

Appendix B

The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model

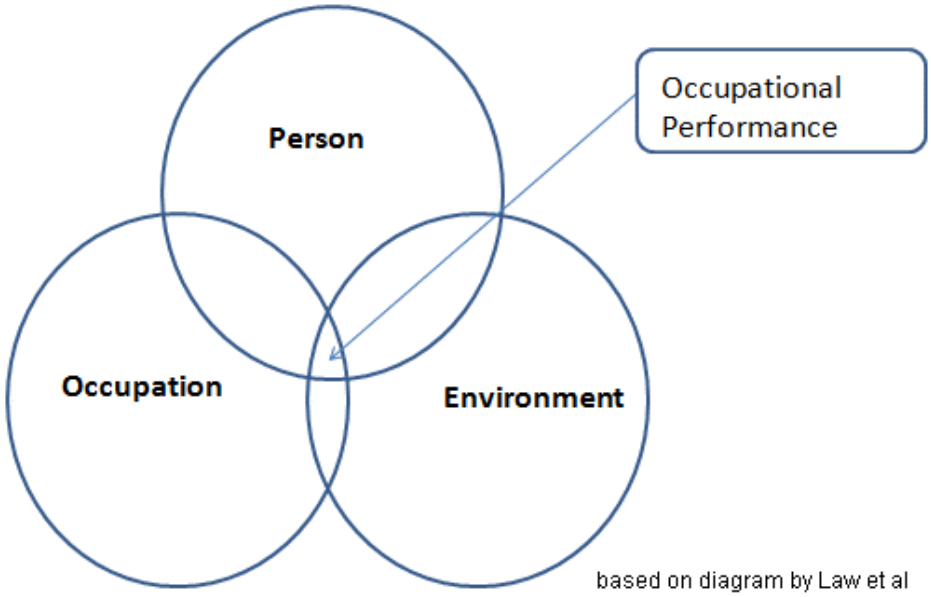

Image from:
https://vula.uct.ac.za/access/content/group/9c29ba04-b1ee-49b9-8c85-9a468b556ce2/Framework_2/lecture3.htm

Section Five: Scholarly Process and Reflection

In completing this project, my systematic scholarly process resulted in a thorough needs assessment, and the development of materials to address identified barriers and gaps in school-based occupational therapy services. My primary methods for collecting information included: informal interviews with community partners, stakeholders and professionals in each field; a thorough review of the literature; a review of primary and secondary sources related to my topic, and observations gathered through site visitations. My project encompassed elements of program development and advocacy through scholarship of integration, while exploring how school-based occupational therapy can expand.

I encountered many limitations, but the most impactful would be that the DEI/capstone dates are not conducive for time-consuming work in school-based practice. When I started my DEI/capstone project, there was one month of public high school remaining prior to summer break. This required me to front-load many of my site visits and informal interviews before I had a solid foundation of my needs assessment findings and overall direction. It was also challenging to rely on timely responses with regard to establishing site visits and meetings with professionals due to my limited time-frame. I am still waiting to hear back from approximately one third of the people whom contacted, and I believe that my findings would have been even stronger had I been able to speak with those individuals. The nature of my project also made visiting traditional high schools more difficult. Their class structure is not as flexible (compared to alternative programs) and doesn't offer many opportunities for naturally occurring interactions or informal interviews.

A variety of conceptual models were used to frame this DEI/capstone project, including inspiration from: preventative and public health models, business models, education models,

political models and professional theories from the field of occupational therapy. Navigating between the different perspectives was difficult, as there were areas of conflict within each suggested approach, but they ultimately provided a comprehensive foundation for this work and contributed to my knowledge on the topic. For example, the High School Partnership program (Appendix C) was developed using the educational Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework as well as the occupational therapy Occupational Adaptation professional model of practice. This joint approach is appropriate for school-based occupational therapy services as it is helpful to unify professionals under one common language when discussing goals and objectives (Brandenburger-Shasby, 2005).

The overarching DEI/capstone project was influenced most heavily by occupational justice, Trauma Informed Care (TIC), World Health Organization: Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and the concept that investing in preventative services (and proactive spending) can increase societal health and wellbeing while decreasing unhealthy, or undesired, consequences (including reactive spending). The last concept is hard to isolate in the literature as a broad public health model; it is usually found coupled with a specific cause, referring to a specific disease or population. However, the belief that this proactive approach would support stronger student services in the school system was unanimous among stakeholders.

Occupational justice fits nicely with this concept as it advocates for "the right of every individual to be able to meet [their] basic needs and to have equal opportunities and life chances to reach toward her or his potential" (Wilcock & Townsend, 2009, p. 193). This belief is central to my identity within the profession of occupational therapy as well as the driving force behind this DEI/capstone project. School-based practitioners can help students to discover and reach

their potential through facilitating meaningful engagement in the things they need or want to do on a daily basis (occupations). The skills that youth need to develop for success in adult life are embedded within the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF), but are not limited to Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs). It is important to consider the proactive work that occupational therapy practitioners can do to support mental health, strengthen the development of students' inner characteristics (i.e. resilience, self-authorship), and assist in the development of healthy habits, values and beliefs. In this sense, this project aligns with AOTA's centennial vision as it is "globally connected" and aims to respond to "society's occupational needs" (AOTA, 2007). It also responds to AOTA's Vision 2025 by encouraging school-based practitioners to break down barriers and be leaders of complex institutional change (AOTA, 2017).

Personal Reflection

My personal process in completing this DEI/capstone project provided a rich learning experience. From an outside perspective, it may not have been the most efficient process, but I would not change anything. I could have cut out weeks of work that did not end up directly relating to my project; however, my final product would have been weaker because it would be lacking the valuable information I learned and indirectly incorporated into my resources. Overall, this project has helped to expand my knowledge related to education in America, occupational therapy's role in schools, and the political process which governs both.

Recommendations for future students can be found in my logic model outlining "Next Steps for Expanding Occupational Therapy's Role in Secondary Education" (Appendix B); but as mentioned in my limitations above, it can be difficult to complete an experiential or capstone project in the schools due to schedule conflicts. If a more consistent student role could be

established at one school, Miller Education Center West/Hillsboro Big Picture for example, then it may be easier for students to have a meaningful impact. That being said, I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and those I encountered on this journey. I feel lucky to have had this experience and cannot wait to grow with the profession of occupational therapy.

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Appendix A: Key Elements Infographic

Appendix B: Logic Model

Next Steps for Expanding Occupational Therapy's Role in Secondary Education

Situation: maladapted young adults disengaged from healthy and meaningful roles in society, limited opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners in secondary education, limited services for struggling students (including youth with disabilities or those identified as at-risk).

Inputs (What we invest)	**Outputs (What we do and who we do it to)**		**Outcomes – Impact (The incremental events/changes that occur as a result of the outputs)**		
	Activities	*Participation*	*Short*	*Medium*	*Long*
Time - researching specific needs in our community - volunteering to facilitate a pilot study or demonstration project - advocating with state and local representatives Energy - likely doing this in addition to working a regular job full time - balancing our own personal needs and the needs of our families, etc. Patience and persistence - as these services will take time to come into effect	Survey local school districts (and school boards) to determine what services they already have in place to address this need, also asking to rate their level of interest in the proposed services/program on a measurement scale (i.e. Likert) Establish demonstration project or pilot study to measure outcomes of proposed services/programs Identify applicable grants, scholarships, or other funding possibilities for sustainable new position or program Identify similar roles within the school or community which occupational therapy practitioners may qualify	Occupational therapy, or occupational therapy assistant, professional students Consumers (high school students, staff, administrators, school board members) School-based occupational therapy practitioners currently working in the field Agencies and community organizations that provide similar services (i.e. Big Picture Learning and other alternative education networks) Stakeholders; policy makers; local, state, and federal representatives Grant programs or non-profit agencies	Survey reveals existing supports and interest from local school districts and board members Establish partnerships with local high schools for occupational therapy student-led programs (such as the High School Partnership program) or opportunities for fieldwork placements/ doctoral experiential internships Institutional Review Board (IRB) research is conducted to measure specific outcomes and collect data which demonstrate effects of the newly implemented services/program	Educational handouts/ material created with data for dissemination amongst stakeholders, policy makers, representatives, and school district board members to advocate for permanently expanded occupational therapy services (i.e. in form of new role or program) Submit application for and receive grants/ scholarships or additional funding to supplement school district budget offering Apply for similar positions within school district and negotiate qualifications and appropriate services under job duties	Expanded opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners to work with youth in secondary education Expanded opportunities for youth (specifically youth needing additional assistance) to access appropriate supports which foster needed skill development and individual success

Assumptions
School district funding is limited, need for proposed services is high and recognized by all participant types, participants will have a limited understanding of occupational therapy and the professional fit with proposed services

External Factors
Recent positions created by Measure 98 in Oregon may appear to overlap with proposed services (i.e. creation of student support and wellness counselor position as well as graduation coaches). Differences will need to be articulated.

Full PDF version can be viewed by clicking here.

Appendix C: High School Partnership Program

High School Partnership Program

A proposed program for occupational therapy community partnership

A proposal for the development and implementation of the
High School Partnership (HSP) Program

Presented To:
Big Picture Learning
Sandra Rogers, PhD, OTR/L
Chrissy Van Osdol, OTD, OTR/L

Prepared By:
Carlie Ross, OTS

Executive Summary

The following paper outlines and summarizes a program proposal for the High School Partnership (HSP) program developed by occupational therapy student, Carlie Ross. The program has been developed for professional occupational therapy schools to use in creating partnerships with local high schools through the implementation of postsecondary transition services. These services aim to assist all students in developing the skills and inner characteristics needed for success in adult life, but specifically students who have been identified as being at-risk or in need of additional assistance.

From the start of American public education in 1635, the national ideal has been that education is the country's "great equalizer" (Rhode, Cooke & Himanshu-Ojha, 2012). However, this concept is in constant tension with the dynamic relationships that exist in today's schools. Teachers and administrators work to find balance between the demands of policy makers, parents, students, and governing bodies which attempt to dictate the educational markers and content covered in the classroom. Idealistic decisions are often made without consideration of students' diverse learning needs or the supports in place to meet them. This can create a chaotic system in which struggling students are overlooked and slip through the cracks.

The result of this approach is reflected in the number of programs and services which aim to address the need of young people *after* they have already dropped out of school, become involved in the corrections system, or are unemployed. The HSP program has been developed as a first step in breaking this cycle; it has been developed in line with preventative and public health philosophies which aim to decrease reactive spending and increase proactive spending. The HSP program promotes the reallocation of funds, which can better support young people as they transition to life after high school by demonstrating the effects of supportive school-based occupational therapy services.

The need for these types of services has been widely recognized by federal and state departments of education in response to continued budget cuts which impact services in public schools. A recent report from the United States Department of Education explained the immediate need to reprioritize national spending to invest more in education and supports for young people. Previous senior advisor to President Obama, Valerie Jarret, reports that these services "…could improve skills, opportunities and career outcomes for at-risk children and youth…" (2016). In compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are required to submit a state plan which outlines their efforts to support students in public education to increase graduation rates and a successful transition to employment or higher education. The HSP program can assist schools in fulfilling their state plan by increasing the engagement and academic outcomes of high school students as well as the likelihood of a successful postsecondary transition, especially for at-risk youth.

Table of Contents and Table of Appendices

Introduction

The High School Partnership (HSP) program is designed to be used as a template for accredited occupational therapy schools to use in creating partnerships with local high schools while implementing a postsecondary transition program for students needing additional supports. The program will be run by supervised professional occupational therapy students. These students will work with high school adolescents and young people in the community who have been identified as needing additional assistance with postsecondary transition planning by teachers, staff, parents, or self-report. Students do not need to have a diagnosed disability, or meet specific eligibility criteria, to receive services through this program. Specific services will vary depending on the needs, strengths, and goals of each client but will be related to the development of skills necessary to transition toward independent life after high school.

The HSP program is unique in that it's benefits can be widespread and profoundly reciprocal. For example, implementing a high school partnership program allows professional occupational therapy programs to better prepare occupational therapy students for school-based practice while simultaneously filling a gap in postsecondary transition services available to secondary education teachers, staff, parents and students, especially at-risk youth. In this program, occupational therapy students collaborate with high school students and staff to identify appropriate goals, develop treatment plans, and implement relevant interventions. Through this process, high school students receive increased assessment and monitoring of academic needs, personalized mentorship and increased opportunities to develop life skills which may improve the likelihood of a successful postsecondary transition.

School-based occupational therapy programs are currently limited by reduced federal and state education budgets and the prioritization, or allocation, of school district spending. As a

result, occupational therapy resources are commonly shared within a district—funded using the federally mandated special education budget as a *related service* under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). However, students with disabilities in secondary education seem to receive less services when compared to primary education (Mankey, 2011); and there are even fewer (if any) school-based occupational therapy services available to students who do not qualify for services under IDEA (Shea & Giles, 2012). This program offers a first step in implementing and advocating for a long-term solution to this multifaceted issue.

Strategic Fit

The proposed High School Partnership (HSP) program supports high schools in providing a comprehensive, *free and appropriate education* for all students in compliance with laws such as Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The HSP program aims to enhance student and staff collaboration, access to innovative postsecondary transition resources, and overall school culture while providing needed services to support the success and engagement of all students. High school students do not need to meet specific eligibility criteria to qualify for occupational therapy services in this program. The program expands opportunities for school staff to identify and address the diverse learning needs of individuals who demonstrate disengagement, poor educational outcomes, and related challenges.

The HSP program also supports professional occupational therapy programs in better preparing future practitioners for school-based practice and working with the at-risk youth population. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' most recent survey (2016), approximately 10% of occupational therapy practitioners work in the school setting which is the third most common practice area following hospitals and rehabilitation facilities. Yet many

professional programs still graduate students who feel unprepared to work in this setting (Chandler, 2013; Mankey, 2011). Fieldwork placements and similar opportunities can be more difficult to secure in the school setting due to the complex system regulations and logistical barriers. The HSP program may bridge this gap for occupational therapy programs by addressing a critical need within high schools and creating a mutually beneficial partnership as a foundation for future involvement.

Situational Analysis

Research Methods

Information was gathered from primary and secondary sources using a variety of search methods. Site visits and meetings with community partners and stakeholders were completed to gather qualitative information using informal interviews and observation. A thorough review of the literature was completed to synthesize findings from existing research on the topic and extract themes for further consideration. A SWOT analysis was used to compile primary research findings while identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of this proposed program at the community and societal level (see Appendix A of this section). Personal experience of the author and contributors was also considered.

Trends and Environmental Issues

There are many trends and environmental issues which affect this proposed program because the services are multidirectional and aim to address layered issues within a complex educational system. A comprehensive review of the literature surrounding the transition from adolescents to adulthood provides background information related to the markers of adulthood, barriers and supports for youth, and a framework for considering the essential skills needed for a successful postsecondary transition. The trends and environmental issues mentioned here build

on this information and relate specifically to the implementation of the HSP program. A societal outlook will be provided, as this is meant to serve as a template for other professional programs, followed by an outline of relevant state considerations.

Societal Level Impact

The overarching trend and environmental issue to consider for this proposal is the effect of maladapted young adults on society; a trend which can be reflected in high school dropout rates, incarceration rates, and unemployment rates in the United States. According to a report published by the U.S Department of Education in 2016, "state and local spending on prisons and jails has increased at triple the rate of funding for public education" in the last three decades (1979-1980 to 2012-2013). This equates to a 107 percent spending increase, from $258- to $534-billion, for education compared to a 324 percent spending increase, from $17- to $71-billion, for correction services. This source reports an even starker contrast at the postsecondary level with a rise in state and local spending on corrections of 89 percent with no increase in spending for higher education. The 2016 U.S. Department of Education report continues by outlining the connection between decreased supports in education and increased incarceration rates and expresses the immediate need to reprioritize federal, state, and local spending to invest more in education and preventative efforts for young people. Valerie Jarret, previous senior advisor to President Obama said "we can no longer afford this failure to invest in opportunity, only to lock up people once they've dropped out of school and turned to crime. These misguided priorities make us less safe and betray our values, and it is time we came together as a country to invest in our people and their capacity to contribute to society" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

An emerging response to this issue highlights the need to reorganize public education to better support young people as they transition to life after high school. This is particularly

important when considering the lack of available resources for at-risk youth and youth with disabilities who may need more intensive supports. Two main themes within this emerging trend include: 1) the need to make school more academically rigorous with a focus on college and career readiness, and 2) the need to make school more personalized and engaging with a focus on real-world relevance and hands-on experience. Although both themes promote important initiatives, a continued decrease in state and federal K-12 education funding appears to be a major barrier in the implementation of related programs which could support student success in these areas. Innovative alternative education organizations, including Big Picture Learning, are gaining popularity by helping schools transition toward a more personalized, relevant, and engaging model of education. This type of education model allows students freedom to explore their interests, collaborate with teachers and community mentors, and gain hands-on, real-world, experience in community internships. These opportunities can support the development of college and career readiness skills along with the skills identified as being essential for a healthy transition to adult life. Adopting philosophies similar to that of Big Picture Learning may help schools to better support young people in achieving personal, professional, and academic goals while increasing attendance, meaningful educational engagement, and high school graduation rates.

However, even after adopting this more flexible model, a need to identify school-based supports for high school students who are struggling to engage in class, or meet academic goals, still exists. For students under the age of 21 in foster care, or with qualifying disabilities, there are federal and state transition programs available to support the development of postsecondary life-skills (i.e. money management, work readiness and attainment, community integration and skills to support independent living). For students who do not qualify for these services, school-

based supports can be limited or non-existent. Schools can provide *Response to Intervention* (RTI), a 504 plan, or related programs but these services must come out of the school or district budget and are therefore determined by specific state and county funding sources. For schools without access to those resources, encouraging at-risk students to rely on their school counselors and teachers for their mental health and learning needs may not be enough. Increasing supportive student services may require schools to hire additional personnel to run programs or meet one-on-one with students needing additional assistance. Some schools hire a career counselor, mental health specialist, behavior support specialist, or wellness specialist; but in some cases, these positions replace a different role, and therefore do not actually provide additional resources to support the needs of students. This need for additional, or expanded, student support services in secondary education provides an opportunity for the HSP program to demonstrate occupational therapy's unique fit and contribution to the success of at-risk youth in postsecondary transitions.

Community Level Impact

The 2017-2019 Oregon Youth Authority budget totals $405.5 million, which reflects a steady increase over the last 14 years despite a continued decrease in incarcerated youth over the same time span. This budget roughly equates to one million dollars per incarcerated youth and includes funding for facility expenses, services, and community/transition programs to reduce recidivism. However, these funds may be better spent providing preventative mental health and transition services prior to offence and incarceration. If only 10 at-risk youth were to be adequately supported and redirected in secondary education that could allow for the potential savings and reallocation of $10 million. These funds could then support additional programs and positions within secondary education to support at-risk youth in developing the skills needed for adapting to the demands of adult life.

According to the Oregon Youth Authority January 2018 report, there are currently 1,330 youth in the Oregon state corrections system; almost 99 percent of which are within the age range of secondary education enrollment. Considering the connection between education and incarceration, the most recent dropout report from the Oregon Department of Education was reviewed. This report shows a total of 6,962 students (or 3.9 percent) who dropped out of high school in the 2016-2017 school year but does *not* include students who are enrolled in a juvenile detention facility. The education demographics for incarcerated youth have been more difficult to find, which may be due to the privacy laws surrounding the release of minor education records.

The Oregon Department of Education's 2016-2017 *Oregon statewide report card* presents data to assist in identifying educational challenges and opportunities for future improvement. When considering statewide graduation rates, a total of 76.7 percent of four-year Oregon high school students graduated in the 2016-2017 school year, including those who graduated with a modified diploma. This total is below the current national average graduation rate of 84 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2017b). In compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Oregon has developed a State Plan which outlines how the state Department of Education is committed to "prioritizing and advancing equity; ensuring students have access to a well-rounded education; strengthening district systems; [and] fostering ongoing engagement" (2017). In achieving these goals, students may need to be provided with alternative opportunities to participate and succeed in their educational experience.

In Oregon, alternative education programs are designed to better support students' educational needs, interests, and academic success in alignment with state and school district standards (ORS 336.615). However, according to the 2016-2017 statewide report card,

alternative services are only accessed by a small portion of students (2.4 percent, or 13,808 students). The statewide report card also states that alternative services have decreased due to "reductions in district resources" (Oregon Department of Education, 2017). This reduction in spending on alternative services, which often serve the most at-risk population, may not be supportive of the Oregon State Plan or reflective of efforts to provide more equitable educational opportunities. Occupational therapy practitioners, programs, and students can start to fill this void by implementing low- to no-cost programs, such as the HSP program, in alternative schools as a way to demonstrate the unique value and impact of occupational therapy services on the academic engagement of at-risk students. Occupational therapy practitioners can then use measures of this impact to advocate for increased funding through the state or county to expand transition services in school-based practice on a broader scale.

Note: This section reflects the type of relevant information which may be helpful in advocating for the need of a High School Partnership program. Practitioners and professional occupational therapy programs in different states can use this section as a guide when identifying the respective state or district statistics.

Why Occupational Therapy?

Occupational Therapy's Unique Fit in Secondary Education

In secondary education, occupational therapy practitioners help students to "develop self-advocacy and self-determination skills in order to plan for their future and transition to college, career/employment, and community living" (AOTA, 2016). They value a strengths-based approach which utilizes the unique skills and supports an individual already possesses to create opportunities to overcome barriers and increase performance and/or engagement in daily life.

Occupational therapy practitioners can provide skilled assessment and interventions for instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) which include: community mobility, meal preparation, financial, home, and health management (AOTA, 2014). The development of practical skills in these areas may contribute to, and promote, a successful transition toward independence in adulthood. For example, occupational therapy practitioners can assess the various factors which impact an individual's ability to engage in a task or occupation such as taking the bus to an interview, managing their mental health challenges, or fulfilling the role of a student. See Table 1 for examples of goals and targeted performance areas.

Targeted Areas of Occupational Performance	**Specific Goals**
Social participation	To develop awareness of self and others, empathy, effective and appropriate communication strategies.
Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)	To increase "attention to and independence in self-care" (AOTA, 2012).
Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)	To increase independence in community mobility, financial management, home and health maintenance, and postsecondary activities (i.e. budgeting, career and college preparation and planning, attainment of new housing).
Leisure/Play	To develop healthy coping strategies, resilience, social connectedness and social interaction skills.
Education	To support increased executive functioning (i.e. organization, time management), engagement in classroom and extracurricular activities, and increase skills to optimize academic performance.
Work	To increase problem solving, sense of autonomy, judgement and reasoning skills, adaptability, "persistence and dependability" (AOTA, 2012), initiation, and leadership skills.
Rest & Sleep	To provide education to support general physical and mental health and interventions which support health promoting daily routines.

Table 1: Modified from American Occupational Therapy Association (2012) *Promoting Strengths in Children and Youth: Occupational Therapy's Role in Mental Health Promotion,*

Prevention, & Intervention with Children & Youth to reflect goals of the high school partnership program.

However, school-based occupational therapy practitioners are limited in who they can work with based on the legal pressures of district funding sources. Since occupational therapy practitioners are currently hired using special education budgets, they are required to prioritize working with students who qualify as having a disability or needing services under IDEA, or the Rehabilitation act (section 504). Due to the high demand of these services and the low volume of school-based practitioners, occupational therapists may struggle to see all students with disabilities, let alone a student who is struggling but not yet evaluated or determined to qualify for services. If an occupational therapy practitioner was hired using alternative funding, they would be able to work with students who may have mental health challenges, unidentified disabilities, or who are at-risk of not graduating or staying in school. Additionally, this role would allow occupational therapy practitioners to provide short term interventions for students demonstrating learning challenges as a way to better address the underlying barriers; an approach similar to RTI. This preventative approach to student support services may better prepare young people for life after high school by allowing them to more fully engage in meaningful educational opportunities. The need for these services could support a new role for occupational therapy in the school system. These services would simultaneously provide students and staff with additional resources for those who may not qualify for services under IDEA yet still need further evaluation and intervention.

With their unique training, occupational therapy practitioners can provide valuable insights, opportunities, and modifications which promote success for all youth as they develop skills and personal characteristics essential for adult living. A pillar of the profession, which can set school-based occupational therapy services apart from other supports, is that "although much

of what is done to support student accomplishment in the school is done without the student, much of what occupational therapy practitioners do is done with the student, working from a strengths-based perspective" (Chandler, 2013, p. 12). This perspective can empower students to make decisions which support their personal and academic goals while providing youth with the scaffolding they need to gain confidence and increased self-awareness—a key support most at-risk youth do not have access to (Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer & O'Brien, 2011).

Occupational Therapy and the High School Partnership Program

Pacific University, School of Occupational Therapy, has developed a partnership with a local alternative school to provide school-based services for at-risk youth which inspired the HSP program. This alternative school happens to be in the process of transitioning to adopt the Big Picture Learning philosophy, which appears to be an educational structure complementary of this type of program. Over the past few years, services have remained highly valued by the staff who report a significant need of support for this student population. Similarly, the students report finding the services helpful in achieving their academic goals and in preparation for life after high school. Occupational therapy services have provided organizational, self-regulation, and stress management strategies to increase executive functioning; career exploration, problem-solving, resume development and mock interviews to develop job readiness skills; as well as opportunities for self-discovery, healthy leisure exploration, and community mobility to increase social interaction skills and self-authorship.

However, the true role of the HSP program is to provide a foundation for sustainable policy change and increased supportive student services, including occupational therapy wellness and transition programs. As a first step in creating a new student support position, the HSP program provides remedial services for secondary education students and staff who may

otherwise not have access to other resources while demonstrating a valuable effect on the wellness and engagement of students. This effect can then be measured by occupational therapy students and used to help occupational therapy practitioners advocate for funding from relevant sources. For best results, these sources should come from outside the K-12 education budget (i.e. state or county wellness, mental health, transition or similar initiatives, grants, or scholarships).

Although occupational therapy services are not currently structured this way, Vision 2025 challenges the profession to be leaders in changing "policies, environments and complex systems" (AOTA, 2017). AOTA president Amy Lamb's 2017 presidential speech explains, "innovation is less about generating brand-new ideas and more about knocking down barriers to make those ideas a reality." Providing schools with expanded occupational therapy services may not only strengthen occupational therapy's collaborative role within the schools but may also support all youth in the transition to life after high school. Just as preventative health measures can decrease medical expenses and healthcare spending, preventative mental health and life-skill programs can decrease federal spending which support incarcerated youth and those out of work utilizing services through funding initiatives (i.e. Pell Grant Program, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, and Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act [WIOA]). Together, school-based practitioners and professional occupational therapy programs can be leaders in creating innovative institutional change.

Guiding Theoretical Models

The following theoretical models were used to guide the development of the High School Partnership program proposal:

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Although there are many variations of this popular proactive educational framework, a general overview was used in developing the HSP program. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) approach promotes the universal screening and continued monitoring of all students' needs to allow increased targeted support for students who are struggling (Rosen, 2018). Response to intervention (RTI) and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) are elements of this model and contribute to decreased specialist referrals, decreased special education referrals, and increased student success (Rawe, 2018). The integrated elements of this model function within a multi-tier system of intervention to maximize the impact and efficiency of provided services. Tier 1 utilizes a universal approach by considering "the whole class." Services in this tier aim to affect all students and allow for the identification of those needing further assistance. Tier 2 provides "small group interventions" where students who have been identified as needing more specialized assistance are able to access more intensive supports. Tier 3 is "intensive, individualized support" and reflects a smaller number of students who need the most intensive level of support compared to students thriving in Tier 1. The goal of all three tiers is to optimize each student's ability to engage in meaningful educational activities which support progress toward academic goals in the least restrictive environment.

This approach helps to outline the proposed HSP program referral process as well as the model of delivery for services which provide the just right challenge for high school students. Students who are struggling in the classroom, or have otherwise been identified as needing additional school-based supports, can be referred to the HSP program for assessment and graded intervention. In this program, services can fall within a range from less intense to more intense depending on the student's needs and the identified barriers.

Occupational Adaptation

Occupational Adaptation (OA) describes the internal process of adaptation an individual experiences in response to overcoming personal, environmental, or contextual barriers. This approach explains how the various demands which arise through interactions between the *person* and the *occupational environment* impact the individual's response to a challenging situation and his/her desire to optimize the outcome (*desire for mastery*) (Schkade & Schultz, 1992). This model is influenced by developmental and learning theories, which encompass the belief that a person has the ability to grow, adapt, and acquire new skills. A person may experience dysfunction when the demands of their daily life exceed their ability to adapt efficiently or respond appropriately to internal and external expectations.

Occupational Adaptation is a good fit for the HSP program because it focuses on addressing the person's internal process required for resilience and mature growth toward independence. This process may include adjusting to a new role, learning new skills and strategies to overcome barriers (including deficits or dysfunction), and learning appropriate responses to challenges which increase engagement in meaningful roles (occupational activities). The HSP program aims to equip students with postsecondary transition skills which may carry over to other areas of their life and future transitions while developing the skills they need to increase function and overall wellbeing. The OA perspective guides practitioners in considering how they can facilitate adaptiveness, and resilience, within each person's unique personal, environmental, and contextual situation to increase their overall functioning and engagement in meaningful roles. Occupational therapy is fundamentally client-centered, but OA can help to further customize each individual treatment session by reminding practitioners that the outcomes lie in the individual's internal process.

In addition to these primary models, trauma informed care, harm reduction principles, restorative justice in schools, and universal design for learning all contributed to the development of the HSP program. Trauma informed care and harm reduction principles are similar in that both approaches foster a safe, supportive, judgment- and blame-free interaction between the "client" and "professional" (Trauma Informed Oregon, 2018; "Harm Reduction," 2008). These approaches can be very effective, especially for those who have experienced prior trauma or abuse (i.e. at-risk youth), because they aim to inflict no additional stress or harm on the individual and to empower them to overcome barriers in their own way/time. From this perspective, practitioners can utilize strategies such as motivational interviewing to help youth come to their own conclusions and offer supportive resources as appropriate. Restorative justice in schools is similar in that it is student-led and aims to foster an inclusive, safe, and bully-free environment. This approach values empowering students to be mindful in the way they communicate with others and to resolve conflict independently through peer-mediated groups and similar school programs (Davis, 2015). Finally, universal design for learning provides a research-based framework for developing educational materials and programs that are accessible to all students and support equitable opportunities for meaningful engagement in school-based activities (AOTA, 2015).

Program Plan

Population Served

Adolescents and young adults who are either enrolled or attempting to enroll in secondary education (including alternative programs and high school equivalency programs) will be considered the target population for the HSP program. More specifically, the target population will include students who have been identified as needing additional services and/or support by a

teacher, staff, parent, or self-report. This can include students identified as at-risk, students with disabilities, students with unidentified disabilities, or general executive dysfunction and occupational performance deficits. However, it is important to note that the transition to postsecondary activities can begin before the enrollment in secondary education programs depending on environmental, cultural, and personal circumstances. Therefore, these services can impact individuals of all ages and could have the ability to follow students through the transition to postsecondary activities—helping to bridge the gap in services experienced by most youth who "age-out" or become ineligible for state and federal assistance (especially youth with disabilities or in foster care).

These services aim to be inclusive of all students by first using a Tier 1, universal design for learning approach, to create an inclusive school culture supportive of students of all needs and abilities through teacher and staff training and consulting. To accommodate students who may need more intensive supports, small group and one-on-one sessions (Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions) will be available through the HSP program. This program is unique, however, because all students will be given the opportunity to benefit and join these smaller group offerings (in the form of work-shops, class activities, or community-outings). By eliminating programs and services that are exclusive in nature, the school can truly provide students with the least restrictive environment rich in opportunities for growth and participation. With the proper supports and school culture, students can be empowered to collaborate with practitioners and teachers to create goals, develop healthy mentor relationships, and work toward skills which better support engagement in meaningful educational activities.

Within the current structure of the school system, if a student needs a high level of additional assistance but does not qualify for an IEP, the needs of this student can fall on the

teacher and staff. In this sense, teachers and staff will also benefit from these services as they aim to support their curriculum implementation in the classroom. The HSP program will help by providing additional resources and opportunities for the student to receive attention one-on-one or small group support. Like the services already provided by occupational therapy practitioners in the school system, occupational therapy students would work with the teacher, student, and parents to identify small changes that could support big differences in performance and/or behavior.

Evaluation

The following tools may assist occupational therapy students in evaluating the needs of youth who have been identified as needing more intensive supports (one-on-one or small group).

1. **Occupational Profile**- The occupational profile guides practitioners in gaining an understanding of the client's background and perspective (AOTA, 2014). In a general sense, the postsecondary transition process can be explained as a period of adjusting to new routines, habits, and roles (Myers, 2008, p 212). This tool helps practitioners to gather specific information related the client's roles, rituals, routines, habits, barriers, and strengths.
2. **Relative Mastery Measurement Scale** (RMMS)- This tool is used by clinicians to guide clients through the self-evaluation process.
3. **Adult Adolescent Sensory Profile-Self-Questionnaire**- This tool can be used to help practitioners evaluate a client's unique sensory processing patterns and preferences. This information can highlight maladaptive responses to stimuli which the practitioner can address by providing client education and strategies to reduce unproductive exposure.

4. Once specific goals have been identified, additional steps may be helpful in determining specific strengths, interest areas, and skills. Including, but not limited to:
    a. Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment
    b. Person Centered Planning resources
    c. Adverse Childhood Experiences Studies (ACES) and Resiliency Questionnaire
    d. Vocational Interest Inventory (i.e. O*NET Interest Profiler, "My Next Move" career interest profiler)

Intervention

Interventions will vary depending on the student's unique strengths, barriers, and goals determined in the evaluation process. However, interventions will retain a central focus on postsecondary transitions and aim to promote the development of skills and personal characteristics outlined in the literature as supporting a healthy transition to adult roles and independent life after high school. These skills align with the occupational therapy scope of practice as outlined in the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (AOTA, 2014) and therefore interventions may address:

- Education
    - The development of skills or strategies which support the individual's engagement in their role as a student
- Work
    - Employment interests and pursuits
    - Employment seeking and acquisition
    - Job performance
    - Volunteer exploration
    - Volunteer participation
- Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)
    - Communication management
    - Driving and community mobility
    - Financial management
    - Health management and maintenance

    - Home establishment and management
    - Meal preparation and cleanup
    - Religious and spiritual activities and expression
    - Safety
    - Shopping
- Activities of daily living (ADLs)
    - Personal device care
    - Personal hygiene and grooming
    - Sexual activity
- Rest and sleep
    - Identifying healthy routines to promote overall physical and mental health
- Play/Leisure
    - Healthy exploration and participation
- Social participation, in context of:
    - Community
    - Family
    - Peer, friend

Outcomes

The HSP program is designed to provide an initial step in the process toward establishing a new school-based occupational therapy position. Therefore, measuring outcomes will be crucial in demonstrating an effect of these services on the target population. A research study through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will need to be initiated in order to officially record and interpret data. The high school principle, and potentially school district board members, will have to send a letter of consent to be submitted with the IRB application. The supervising/faculty occupational therapy practitioner will need to agree to be the primary researcher and will oversee all data collection. In compliance with IRB regulations, students and their parents will also have to provide consent to be a research participant.

Participant Recruitment

Outcomes will not be measured until students have already been referred to the program and will not influence participant recruitment for the HSP program. Students needing additional supports will be identified and referred to the HSP program by teachers, parents, staff, or self-

report. A written announcement will be given to all students by a school counselor or staff member explaining the opportunity to participate in a research study with information on who to contact if they are interested. Students will not be specifically asked to participate by anyone directly affiliated with the HSP program, unless they express interest and want to know more.

Outcome Measurement and Monitoring System

Because specific performance outcomes will vary depending on each student's unique goals, a survey may capture the most valid measure of the HSP program effect. The survey should use the Likert scale, or a similar measure, to allow easy comparison of perspectives at the beginning and end of the program. A questionnaire, such as the Relative Mastery Measurement Scale, may also be used to track individual change; completed at the beginning and end of each student's HSP program treatment plan.

Financial Analysis

Budget & Funding

The lack of available funds within educational budgets is what has led to the development of the HSP program. Proposed services are provided by supervised occupational therapy students who volunteer their services while gaining professional school-based experience. Supervising occupational therapists can double as faculty, or adjunct faculty members, of the professional occupational therapy school and therefore, are not additionally compensated for their time. However, specific arrangements can vary widely depending on the institutional resources and contract negotiations.

Summary

The HSP program offers occupational therapy programs a unique opportunity to establish meaningful community partnerships and facilitate experiential learning through integrated occupational therapy coursework. Through the implementation of the HSP program, young adults will be exposed to increased opportunities for self-discovery and self-development in line with goals which support a healthy transition to life after high school. Communities will benefit from the graduation of better adapted young adults who may be more employable and less likely to engage in risky behavior. Occupational therapy programs will benefit by graduating more well-rounded entry level practitioners who are better prepared to work with the at-risk youth population or implement school-based services. Implementing the HSP program allows professional programs and students to demonstrate the effectiveness of occupational therapy services in this setting as a foundation for advocacy to increase inclusive student support services in secondary education.

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Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**
- There is a high need for services which support at-risk youth and this need is widely recognized at the state and federal level - The HSP program directly relates to educational initiatives which support compliance with the law - Services are student-led. Students have choice in what they want to work on and how they want to meet their goals - No set of eligibility criteria or pressures from funding sources which dictate who can access the services - Occupational therapy students and high school students can connect through sharing the role of being a student - Occupational therapy students gain school-based experience working with youth developing treatment plans, implementing interventions and documenting progress toward goals	- There are approximately 40 occupational therapy students available within one saturated geographical location, this can limit availability and consistency of services - Hard to grow the program because availability of occupational therapy students will not likely be able to change to meet increasing demands (however this is not really the ultimate goal of the program anyway) - Hard to establish rapport and carry-over of services as occupational therapy students move on/new students participate in the program
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
- To educate school staff, administrators, teachers, students, and board members on the value of occupational therapy in this setting/with this population - Build relationships with schools and staff who can support advocacy efforts to expand services in future - Collect data to demonstrate effect and value of services - This partnership could create opportunities for occupational therapy students to establish fieldwork or DEI/Capstone projects within the school	- Measure 98 in Oregon has created new school-based positions with a similar role, some may feel that these services are redundant and unnecessary - Long-term/sustainable funding for this type of service is limited and unpredictable

Appendix D: Additional Documents

Needs Survey Developed for Miller Education Center West

Per request of counseling services to gain a better understanding of students' needs at beginning of school year.

Needs Survey

Do you have access to food and clean drinking water every day?
Do you have a safe, comfortable place to sleep at night?
Do you have a place to call home? Do you feel safe there?
Do you feel safe in the community?
Do you worry about having enough money, losing your home or access to food?
Do you have any concerns about your physical or mental health?
Do you have somewhere to go if you're worried about your health? Or someone you can ask for help?
Do you have friends or family members you can go to when you're feeling sad or lonely?
Do you ever feel hopeless or depressed?
Do you ever feel judged by those around you or experience prejudice?
Do you ever feel differently when interacting with specific groups of people?
Do you have friends or family members that love you for who you are and support you?
Do you feel confident and comfortable in your own skin in social settings?
Do you ever feel anxious or overwhelmed?
Do you feel that you have the respect of those around you?
Do you have recent achievements you are proud of?
Do you enjoy being creative?
Do you feel that you can bounce back after being disappointed or experiencing hardship?
Do you feel confident in your ability to solve problems?
Do you feel that you're able to accept facts and determine your own opinions based on what you know and learn?
What do you enjoy doing?
What are your interests?

Call for Papers and Presentations

Abstract

Young people are leaving secondary and post-secondary education feeling underqualified and unprepared for the transition to adult life. A traditional "one-size fits all" approach to education may be failing to meet the demands of today's adolescents, especially when considering at-risk youth and students with disabilities. **Methods**: A comprehensive review of the literature was completed to gain a deeper understanding of existing programs and services available to young

people during this transition as well as the markers of a successful transition. Site visits and interviews were conducted to gather student and professional perspectives. **Findings**: It was found that, many traditional school structures and services do not provide youth with adequate support and training to make the transition to independent adult life. A more universal approach to learning which emphasizes the importance of using a personalized, strengths-based approach while facilitating meaningful engagement in occupation-based learning may be more successful in preparing young people for life after high school. Occupational therapy practitioners may be able to provide a unique solution to this problem by providing expanded transition services for all students under current laws, such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), with existing funding sources to increase educational engagement and promote a successful transition to postsecondary activities.

Author Bio

Carlie Ross, OTS is a new occupational therapy practitioner. She graduated from Pacific University with her entry-level doctorate degree in August of 2018 after completing her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Washington State University in 2014. Carlie's OTD Capstone focused on expanding the role of occupational therapy in secondary education and the transition to postsecondary activities by exploring underutilized services for school-based occupational therapists as a foundation for policy change. Carlie believes she learned most of her adult life-skills through navigating higher education and employment but understands that all youth do not have access to the same opportunities. She believes occupational therapy can play a unique role in helping all youth to achieve success in meaningful roles which prepare them for adult life.