Developing Occupational Therapy Interventions for At-Risk Youth

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Learning Objectives:

- Describe occupation-based and cost-effective assessment and intervention strategies for at-risk youth
- Identify opportunities within participants’ own districts to provide services to at-risk youth in non-traditional educational settings
- Formulate strategies for collaboration with youth to create effective student-centered intervention
Agenda

- Introduction 9-9:05
- Review of Literature 9:05-9:15
- The Three Studies 9:15-9:30
- Negotiating Politics of Service Provision with Style 9:30-10:00
- Understanding the Occupational Identity of Adolescents 10:00-10:30
- Break 10:30-10:40
- Intervention Goals 10:40-11:00
- Occupation-Based Intervention: Guiding Principles for At-Risk Youth 11:00-11:30
- Going from Plan to Reality (Adapt! Adapt!) 11:30-11:50
- Discussion and Questions 11:50-12:00
Definition of At-Risk Youth

- Youth who do not master the basic academic, vocational, social, and behavioral skills required to function successfully in school, the workplace, and the community.
- School, family, community
- Risk factors
Negative Trajectory for At-Risk Youth

- Students identified with disability in public schools nationwide: **8.82%**

- Alternative school students identified with disabilities ???????? (we don’t know!)

- Students identified with a disability in juvenile justice settings nationwide: **45.2%**
Reasons for the Trajectory

- Disability label carries stigma

- Academic failure may lead to disruptive and delinquent behavior as well as school dropout

- Youth with disabilities who drop out are 5.9 times more likely to be arrested than students without disabilities (US Department of Education, 1999).
Reasons, cont’d.

- Cognitive, behavioral, and personality deficits predispose student to delinquency
  - Deficits result in poor communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal
  - Leads to student being more likely to be apprehended by police
Minnesota vs. Kentucky

Demographics

- **Minneapolis**
  - 9% of children live in poverty (2000)
  - 28% of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch (2003-2004)
  - 3% of students in grades 7-12 are dropouts (2002-2003)

- **Kentucky**
  - 21% of children live in poverty (2000)
  - 48% of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch (2003-2004)
  - 11% of students in grades 9-12 are dropouts (2002-2003)

Kids Count 2003 Annie E. Casey Foundation
OT and School-Based Practice

- 24.9% of occupational therapists work in school systems (2000)
- Typical caseload includes children with IEPs
- Services provided are primarily direct (individual) and/or consultative
Selected Literature Review
Passive vs. active occupations
  - Timeout vs. achievement/social

Enrichment and extracurricular activities not accessible to alternative school students

Loss of leisure occupations of delinquent youth leads to loss of capacity (physical, cognitive, social skills), self-esteem, personal and worker identity

“Doing, Being, and Boredom”

- Boredom experienced by youth more in situations of: passive leisure, overload, lack of challenge
- “Once out of the mainstream, many lose the habits, routines, and skills to engage in socially sanctioned occupations… consequently, this lack of habits and routines, in which one can maintain and develop skills, impacts one’s ability to undertake activities that one enjoys. This is interpreted as boredom.”
Why Occupational Therapy for At-Risk Youth?

- OT’s understand typical and atypical patterns of time use, school function, behavior, recreation, social skills, and preparation for adult roles
- Teens in alternative settings learn more effectively using hands-on activities
- OT uses *active doing* which enhances the occupations of the teen
The Three Studies
Developing Occupational Therapy Interventions for At-Risk Youth

- 3 year project (to date)
- Past and Current Locations:
  - Jackson County Alternative School, McKee, KY
  - Clark County Alternative School, Winchester, KY
  - Bluegrass Reception and Assessment Center, Lexington, KY (state juvenile justice facility)
  - Virginia Randolph Community High School, Glen Allen, VA
  - Variety of interview sites for staff, administrator, and expert therapist interviews
Year One: Pilot Study

Pilot study to examine the efficacy of a prototype occupational therapy intervention program to replace high risk behaviors with healthy patterns of skills, activities, and future goals for at-risk youth in an alternative school setting.
Methods: Exploratory
- Qualitative, focus on content of therapist thinking and occupational patterns of youth
- Quantitative, simple pre-post analysis from instruments

Participants:
- 2 therapists, 1 research team leader
- 22 alternative middle and high school students

Data:
- Qualitative—youth dyad video interviews, therapist audio-taped reflections based on questions, Ethnograph, analytic memos
- Quantitative-- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Occupational Therapy Profile of Adolescent Leisure, Social Skills Rating Scale
Intervention Focus for Pilot Study

- Personal identity
- Self-directedness
- Active and meaningful
- Social communication skills
Findings

- Qualitative data most useful
- Insights on therapist thinking and OBP
- Insights on youth occupational patterns and identity
- Of quantitative data, only the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale seemed useful
- Realized need for program development methods
Study Two: Program Development, 2002-2003

- **Purpose:** Develop occupational therapy services for at-risk youth in non-traditional educational settings that are
  - Occupation-based,
  - Student-centered,
  - Unique to occupational therapy,
  - Cost-effective,
  - Easily replicated by school-based occupational therapists across the United States

- **Setting:** Two alternative schools
Study Two (continued)

- **Action Research Methods:**
  - Qualitative analysis
  - Data considered by research team every three weeks for program revisions

- **Participants:**
  - 4 Therapists, 1 research team leader
  - 32 Middle school alternative students
  - 35 High school alternative students

- **Data:**
  - Video interviews with student dyads and panels
  - Therapist audio-taped reflections
  - Analytic memos
Study Two: Findings

- Defining the Palette
- Discovering the underlying areas
- Assessments and goal settings
Year Three: Action Research & Disseminate Findings

- Refine innovative occupational therapy program
- Include additional site in research
- “Disseminate national model of occupation-based, student-centered group services well fit to the needs and placements of adolescents in alternative and nontraditional educational settings.”
Methodology: Year Three

- Written reflections every two weeks by therapists providing intervention
- One-time audio recordings of interviews with school staff, administrators, state agency staff, and OTs nationally known for their expertise in working with at-risk youth
  - Receive feedback on the intent of the developing program and the content of the draft program guide
- Involvement of Virginia Commonwealth University
  - Phone conferences
Year 3 Findings

- Findings – refinement and dissemination
- Understanding student centered goal setting and assessment
- Providing programming in different settings (other than alternative schools)
- Clarified palette
Negotiating Politics: Service Provision with Style
Nontraditional Educational Settings

- Alternative schools
- Day treatment programs
- Schools for expectant and new mothers
- Residential facilities
- Juvenile corrections facilities
- Juvenile detention facilities
- Extended care psychiatric facilities

http://djj.state.ky.us
OT Service Provision for At-Risk Youth

**PROS**
- Group intervention (more bang for the $)
- Effective for the population
- Interrupts the negative cycle leading to incarceration
- Supports transition to successful adult occupations (NCLB)
- Potential for positive PR for the district

**CONS**
- Current caseload
- Unfamiliarity and discomfort with population
- Need for administrative support
- Lack of developed program guidance
Art of Negotiating

- Getting In, Getting Started
  - Start small (1 hour/week)
  - National concern on school violence, youth offenses
  - Dropout rate and school funding
- Contract with the School and Offering the Palette
  - Tie to State Curriculum Standards
- Inclusive Approaches to Service (includes students with and without IEPs)
- Group Intervention (Cost effective)
Financial Support

- A primary concern for administrators as well as practitioners.

Creative Funding
  - Group work - more bodies, but less time
  - Fieldwork
  - Grants
  - Community Partnerships
  - Community Supports/Resources
Funding Sources

- [http://www.fundsnetservices.com/gov01.htm](http://www.fundsnetservices.com/gov01.htm)
- [http://www.hhs.gov/fbci/topics/youth.html](http://www.hhs.gov/fbci/topics/youth.html)
- Juvenile Mentoring Program
  [http://www.afterschool.gov/cgi-bin/htgmview.pl?pid=64](http://www.afterschool.gov/cgi-bin/htgmview.pl?pid=64)
Grants for At-Risk Youth

- Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant Program
- Drug-Free Communities Support Program
- Alien Unaccompanied Minors Shelter Care Program
- Youth Opportunity Grants (YOG)
- Child Support Special Improvement Projects
- Basic Center Program
- Street Runaway and Homeless Youth Outreach
- Transitional Living Program for Homeless Youth (TLP)
- Head Start / Early Head Start
- Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Program
- Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) Discretionary Grants
- Youthbuild
- Safe and Drug Free Schools — Mentoring Programs
- Migrant Education — Even Start
- Migrant Education High School Equivalency Program

- Migrant Education College Assistance Program
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program
- Parental Assistance Centers
- Community Technology Centers
- Supplemental Educational Services
- Part D: Gang-Free Schools and Communities: Community-Based Gang Intervention
- Reduction and Prevention of Children’s Exposure to Violence
- Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program
- Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program

FORMULA GRANT PROGRAMS
- WIA Youth Programs
- Community-Based Family Resource and Support Program (CBFRS)
- Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- Family Violence/Grants for Battered Women’s Shelters
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Even Start Family Literacy Program
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
- Juvenile Mentoring Formula Grant Program
Understanding the Occupational Identity of Adolescents
“Youth Speak: OT and Me” Video
Student Centered Assessments

- Occupation Collage
- Pie of Life
- Coat of Arms
- Life Maps
- Spend a Buck
- Goals Checklist
Causes of Alternative School Placement

- Truancy
- Fighting
- Drugs
- Poor grades
- Weapon possession
- Felonies
- Behavior
- Depression
- Self placement for alternative learning
Identity Development

- Limited personal insight
- Leisure interests
  - Rural
  - Gender-based
  - Risky
- Work experiences
  - Paid and unpaid
- Relationships
  - Peer groups
  - Relationships with adults
  - Self-esteem issues
  - Boyfriends/Girlfriends
Identity Development, Cont.

- School
  - Unsuccessful, negative views
  - Stigma
- Future plans
  - Future identities of teens in our study
- Disability
  - LD, EBD apparent
  - IEPs
  - Bullying
Intervention Goals
Balancing Collaboration and Control

- Liberation
  - Restrictive settings leads to boredom
  - Giving self direction, interaction
  - Giving choices
  - Engaging
  - Collaborative and continuous goal-setting
  - Reflection and forward planning
Balancing Collaboration and Control, Cont.

- **Structure**
  - Adult in charge
  - Clear rules
  - Control over materials
  - Building routines
  - “Choices within structure”
Liberating Structures: The Best Therapy is in the Middle

- Challenging but successful
- Maximizing self-direction
- Therapist takes risks
- Chaotic-- but never boring!
School Educational Standards

- Minnesota Department of Education
  - [http://education.state.mn.us](http://education.state.mn.us)

- Social Studies: The student will understand the rights and responsibilities of a human being and a citizen

- Kentucky Department of Education
  - [http://kde.state.ky.us](http://kde.state.ky.us)

- Practical Living-H-4.3.2.: Work habits/ethics (e.g., cooperation, respect, time management, individual/team responsibilities, dependability) can impact the success of a group.
Occupation-Based Intervention
Guiding Principles for At-Risk Youth
Appeal to Teens

- Client centered practice is a natural fit – give the teen a choice
- Because the teen is making his/her own decisions, the “buy in” is easier
- This is their choice – not yours
Purposefulness and Freedom

- Purposefulness
  - Competence
  - Having a “Product”
  - Counteract boredom

- Freedom
  - Giving choices
  - Letting go
Occupational Palette

- Prevocational Skills
- Independent Living
- Healthy Leisure
- Underlying areas
  - Competence
  - Identity
  - Social communication
Healthy Leisure – Outdoor Choices

- Mini-Olympics
- “New Games” cooperative activities
- Tower and fort building
- Basketball, football toss, Frisbee
- Relays
Healthy Leisure – Indoor Choices

- Ceramic tile mosaic coasters
- Paper marbling
- Sand art
- Clay modeling
- Valentine’s day pillows
- Picture frames
- Beading

- Candle design
- Marble magnets
- Painting yo-yos, leather bracelets
- String art Christmas ornament
- Bird nesting box construction
- Doghouse construction
Practical Living

- Parenting skills (formula, changing diapers)
- Car maintenance activities (engine work, fluid changes, identification of parts)
- Tire maintenance skills
- Internet skills
- Cooking:
  - No bake brownies
  - Smoothies
  - Omeletes
  - Stir-fries
  - Pizza
  - Taco salad “in a bag”
  - “Dirt pudding”
  - Chex mix
Vocational/Prevocational

- Self Directed Search
- Résumés
- Job applications
- Discuss interview dress/behavior
- Internet job, college searches
- Role playing
  - Interviews
  - On-the-job dilemmas
- Candy-gram assembly line, holiday card assembly line
- Combine some of these activities w/ Jenga, Jeopardy to make more active and fun
Going from Plan to Reality (Adapt! Adapt!)
Going from Plan to Reality

- Conceiving intervention activity
  - Appealing, interesting
  - Importance of a product
- Gathering Materials
  - Pre-planning sessions
- Present/initiate activity
  - Critical to activity’s success
  - Social, spatial, temporal structure
Going from Plan to Reality, Cont

- Manage/adapt therapeutic occupations as they occur
  - Coach, demonstrate, assist, upgrade/downgrade, change context

- Changing the conceptualization of the activity as it occurs
  - Can change rules, steps, expected products

- Reflection on session
Using Context

- Most attention to structuring social context
  - Adjusting group size and make-up
  - Setting and enforcing behavior expectations
  - Fitting into school structure
  - Collaborative, student-centered
  - Therapist level of participation
Some use of spatial context

- Choosing spaces, going outside
- Sharing tools and materials
- SI intervention for attention
Using Context, Cont.

- Least flexibility in temporal context
  - Dropping or postponing planned activities
  - Having activities ready for those who finish
  - Ongoing activity “themes”
Discussion and Questions