



American Occupational Therapy Association

COVID-19: Building a Role-Emerging Level II Pediatric Fieldwork on Zoom

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The COVID-19 pandemic that began in spring 2020 triggered an acute shortage of occupational therapy Level II fieldwork sites across the United States. While academic programs substituted online learning for in-person classes, finding level II fieldwork placements for graduating master's students proved more challenging. The University of Southern California's (USC) Mrs. T. H. Chan Division of occupational Science and Occupational Therapy faced this emergency in March, when Los Angeles County began its "Safer at Home" quarantine in hospitals and clinics, USC Chan had 140 students who needed fieldwork placements to be eligible for the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT®) exam.

Julie McLaughlin Gray, USC Chan's Associate Chairperson for Curriculum and Faculty circulated the Accreditation Council for occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) contingency planning guide and called for faculty proposals. One proposal envisioned partnering with the nonprofit SOLA Community Peace Center (SOLA) in the low-income Latinx and African/ Caribbean-American neighborhood of South Los Angeles. SOLA would place up to 20 Level II fieldwork students in a role-emerging practice to adapt SOLA's summer Peace Camp to an online format using an occupational reconstruction practice framework (Frank, 2017).

USC CHAN- SOLA PARTNERSHIP

SOLA Executive Director Susan Stouffer, PhD, MAOT a USC occupational science graduate, and USC Chan faculty member and SOLA Board Member Gelya Frank, PhD., co-authored the proposal. They noted that SOLA's mission to provide "peace education to young people, families, and community members, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged" (www.solacommunitypeacecenter.org) aligned well with the occupational therapy profession's and USC Chan's concern for social and occupational justice.

For 15 years, Peace camp sessions have served about 80 participants (ages 5 to 18 years) with a 4-week program teaching about peace, justice and nonviolent communication. To meet ACOTE's requirements for site supervision, USC Chan contributed part of co-author Kristy Payne's faculty load, while co-author Clarissa Saunders-Newton, USC Chan's Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, provided ongoing consultation to identify relevant entry-level competencies for the Level II fieldwork experience.

CREATING A VIRTUAL SUMMER CAMP

A 2-week training period with orientation to online service delivery (telehealth), pediatric practice, and the neighborhood context readied the Level II fieldwork students to work with SOLA's mainly Latinx staff. As former campers, their experience helped boost the relevance of the fieldwork students' professional knowledge of child development, clinical reasoning, and the use of occupation as "ends and means" (Gray, 1998) as they configured Peace Camp's activities for a live, Interactive Zoom format.

Programming started with "Mini Peace Camp" a 5-week pilot including one 3-hour session each week. Here, fieldwork students and SOLA staff combined their strengths in teams, learned to facilitate campers' trust and engagement on Zoom, and trialed activities using materials (e.g. paper, crayons) from a box of supplies each student received by no-contact drop-off upon enrollment. "Big Peace camp" followed as a 4-week program on the theme of environmental justice. Campers participated daily for a 3-hour session, 5 days a week. Activities facilitated campers' nonviolent communication and socio-emotional learning (e.g. listening, asking questions, communicating feelings, managing disagreements), while they learned about environmental justice and nonviolent collective action.

By the start of 'Big Peace Camp.' enrollment had grown to 60 campers across three groups: "Younger Kids" (5- 7 year olds), "Older Kids" (8-10 year olds), and "Youth" (11-14 year olds). Two additional groups included "Youth Interns" (15-18-year-old staff members- in-training) and the "Family Team" (parents, caregivers. and younger siblings of participants).

Designing the Fieldwork Experience

Delivering Peace camp 2020 involved such challenges as helping fieldwork students adjust their expectations about fieldwork, designing appropriate Level II fieldwork learning objectives and evaluations in real time, and implementing the occupational reconstruction practice framework in a new setting. These challenges were addressed through:

- Training and ongoing discussions of the occupational reconstruction practice framework
- Learning site-specific objectives to apply the occupational reconstruction practice framework in a pediatric wellness setting
- Learning activities to develop the fieldwork students' ability to apply relevant occupational therapy knowledge and clinical reasoning using the Framework remotely and online.

PRACTICE, THEORY, AND FRAMEWORK

Occupational reconstruction theory explains **how** individuals working as a group to improve a shared problematic situation can harness collective occupations for social change. One such situation Identified by the campers themselves is the lack of high-quality Internet in *South* Los Angeles. which affected campers' participation on Zoom. Staff and fieldwork students engaged the campers in discussions and activities about how to ameliorate this problem. The "Younger Kids" used drawings to express why their ability to use the computer is important. The "Older Kids" wrote a letter to their *U.S.* Senator advocating for equity across the Digital Divide and received a response outlining legislative initiatives. The "Youth" group created and presented an online poster campaign.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Peace Camp 2020's transformation into a solid entry-level professional Level II fieldwork experience took methodical collaboration. Site-specific learning objectives and activities were designed to match ACOTE's (2018) Standards and Interpretive Guide and the American Occupational Therapy Association's (2020) Fieldwork Performance Evaluation (see Table1).

OUTCOMES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

USC Chan's strategic plan calls for mobilizing occupational science's knowledge base with community partners to help ameliorate shared problems (Baranek et al. 2020). The COVID-19 crisis created shared problems that the new partnership helped to resolve.

- Finding sufficient fieldwork sites for USC Chan's graduating master's students
- Ensuring continuity for SOLA's summer Peace Camp as a pediatric wellness program
- Providing support for families and children undergoing social-emotional stresses of quarantine, school closures, and disrupted occupations and routines.

As one mother said:

Thank you for the love and care the staff members give to the kids ... and giving them a safe platform to share their feelings. (My 5-year-old son) found Peace camp to be the highlight of his day and looked forward to all that the camp had in store for him.

Not least, the fieldwork students benefited, as one reflected: "I was not sure what an emerging practice area would be like ... Thank you for helping me expand my clinical reasoning skills and to grow my understanding of what OT is and can be!"

REFERENCES

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Table 1. Site Specific Learning Objectives and Learning Activities for Peace Camp 2020

Learning Objectives	Learning Activities
I. Fundamentals of Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Maintain family and child privacy and confidentiality on an online platform. B. Maintain cyber security with use of online platform. C. Facilitate and monitor participants' physical and emotional safety throughout sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Provide orientation on safety and security related to technology. B. Provide in-service trainings on using HIPPA-protected Zoom, Zoom fatigue, and parental consent. C. Hold in-service training regarding protecting and working with minors. D. Supervise student-led sessions provided by fieldwork educator and SOLA director.
II. Basic Tenets of Occupational Therapy Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Demonstrate clinical reasoning. B. Articulate clearly and confidently the beliefs and values of occupational therapy to SOLA parents and caregivers. C. Articulate clearly and confidently the beliefs and values of occupational therapy to SOLA staff. D. Communicate clearly the appropriate role for occupational therapy within an emerging practice area. E. Translate occupational therapy values and beliefs into communications and practice with families, SOLA staff, and fieldwork educators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Hold in-service trainings on occupational therapy pediatric intervention in a wellness framework. B. Create programs to address identified needs such as "Ask an OT", a parent group to respond to COVID-related challenges. C. Provide orientation on diverse community culture and belief systems. D. Provide diversity training. E. Supervise implementation of the practice principles. F. Collaborate with SOLA staff members on program development and camp activities.
III. Evaluation and Screening	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identify the groups needs related to quality of shared narrative understanding, creative expression, mind-body engagement, and collective occupation (collaborative occupational engagement) within the occupational reconstruction framework. B. Identify the individual child's needs related to the above within the occupational reconstruction framework. C. Recognize and respond to cues to adjust activities for optimal online engagement. D. Screen for occupational performance components that facilitate (or limit) occupational engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Give clinical in-service trainings regarding occupational reconstruction. B. Supervise practice during participation in Mini Peace Camp and Big Peace Camp. C. Review daily reports by/for fieldwork supervisors, which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clinical observation forms (screening of development skills and capacities.) 2. Fieldwork student self-evaluation forms. 3. Fieldwork student peer and supervision evaluation discussion.

Learning Objectives	Learning Activities
IV. Interventions	
<i>At the levels of individual, group, and community</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Create interventions using a client-centered approach that focuses on strengths. B. Facilitate creative, joyful, and empowering experiences in social-emotional learning (SEL), peacebuilding, and community justice through occupational engagement. C. Address physical and psychological skills as they relate to competence with occupational engagement. D. Attend to individual, group, and community needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Design and facilitate pediatric group sessions online. B. Implement SOLA's SEL and peace with justice curricula into occupation-based sessions and activities. C. Engage in guided reflection using a heuristic focus on the integration of the different levels of intervention. D. Shift attention fluidly between the different the levels of intervention; modify activities according to observations: reflect and create activities that integrate inquiry and understanding these levels.
V. Management of Occupational Therapy Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Create model for online service delivery. B. Demonstrate understanding and effective integration of occupational reconstruction with other practice frameworks through collaboration with campers and families as evidenced by design of assessments, interventions, and outcomes. C. Demonstrate procedural reasoning with scheduling, activity design and material procurement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Translate Peace Camp to virtual platform. B. Collaborate with SOLA staff partners, participants, and families using occupational reconstruction theory and other practice frameworks to build on and enrich the occupational therapy process (assessments, interventions, and outcomes). C. Oversee program process, manage teams, create developmentally appropriate curricula and novel programming, develop media, create and manage information/resource database and oversee supply distribution.
VI. Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Adapt effective communication across different ages of campers, families, team members, and supervisors. B. Demonstrate professionalism in oral, written, and media communications. C. Navigate conflict resolution, problem-solving, and collaboration through effective communication D. Demonstrate competence in the SEL and social justice curriculum during professional interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Move fluidly between facilitating pediatric group sessions, addressing families, and collaborating with team members and supervisors. B. Create reports and resources for families on camper progress, wellness education, and community access information. C. Engage with team and staff in consensus and peaceful collaboration. D. Use modeling and didactic teaching by supervisors
VII. Professional Behaviors	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Demonstrate professional behavior in the content of working with minors on a virtual platform.B. Implement and seek out feedback.C. Model professionalism (e.g. timeliness, communication, self-presentation).D. Demonstrate technical proficiency (e.g., adapting activities in response to technical challenges, monitoring video/audio quality, supporting campers in use of technology).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Train in SOLA's ethical and protective protocols for working with minors.B. Participate in scheduled meetings and drop-in sessions with supervisors via Zoom.C. Give in-service trainings in providing pediatric intervention within an online platform.D. Provide hands-on problem solving technical issues in real time through immersive experience in Mini Peace Camps.
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