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## EDUCATING THE EDUCATOR: ARTICULATING OT'S ROLE IN SCHOOL-BASED COLLABORATION

Bryce Shaun Graves

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EDUCATING THE EDUCATOR: ARTICULATING OT'S ROLE IN SCHOOL-BASED  
COLLABORATION

by

Bryce Shaun Graves  
Occupational Therapy Doctorate, University of North Dakota, 2022  
Advisor: Dr. Lamborn

A Scholarly Project

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Occupational Therapy Doctorate

Grand Forks, North Dakota

May  
2023



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## APPROVAL

This scholarly project, submitted by Bryce Graves, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Occupational Therapy Doctorate from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

DocuSigned by:

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Dr. Breann Lamborn, Ed. D., M.P.A.

4/12/2023

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Date

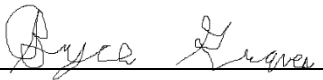
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Department: Occupational Therapy

Degree: Occupational Therapy Doctorate

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## **Abstract**

### **Background**

Many teachers in the educational field are unaware of the role of occupational therapists (OTs) and how OTs can support teachers and students (Kennedy et al., 2018; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Educators who are aware of the OT role often desire further collaboration including realistic recommendations for their classroom (Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). This presents a need for increased education about the role of occupational therapy (OT) in school-based practice and additional instruction for increased effectiveness of OT-teacher collaboration.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this scholarly project was to develop an in-service opportunity for educators through the creation of educational videos to promote the role of OT within the school system and give recommendations to teachers to enhance collaboration among teachers and OTs.

### **Methods**

A literature review needs assessment took place to identify the overall needs of the population and guided the information presented in these videos. A total of four educational videos were created to educate teachers about the OT role and scope of practice in the school-setting. The videos also gave recommendations to enhance teacher-OT collaboration based on the needs determined through the literature review. The Person Environment Occupation Model was used throughout the literature review needs assessment and in development of this product (Baptiste, 2017).

### **Results**

A total of four educational videos were created. The videos will be used as part of a continuing education program for teachers. The expected outcome of this scholarly project is that the videos

will enhance educator understanding about the OT role allowing them to collaborate with school-based OTs more effectively.

### **Conclusion**

Educators are often unaware of school-based OTs role and scope of practice (Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). The purpose of this scholarly project was to develop an in-service opportunity for educators to increase their knowledge about the role of school-based OT and effective collaboration with OTs. As a result, four education videos were created to be used as part of a continuing education program for teachers with the expectation of enhancing teacher knowledge about the OT role and teacher-OT collaboration in schools.

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Problem Statement**

Many occupational therapists are employed by schools within the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), approximately 12% of occupational therapists (OTs) in the U.S. work in elementary or secondary schools. Occupational therapists serve a variety of students in these school settings including students with developmental delays, behavioral concerns, and physical needs. OTs employed in school-based practice most often receive referrals for students with deficits in fine-motor skills, coordination, autism, and developmental diagnoses (Bissel & Cermak, 2015; Bolton & Plattner, 2020; O'Donoghue et al., 2021). Teachers who provide the referrals for the aforementioned deficits in students are in partial awareness of the occupational therapy (OT) scope of practice. However, many teachers are unaware of OT's full scope of practice and role within the education system (Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). This may help to explain why OTs often do not receive referrals relating to lunchroom activities, using buses, school navigation, life skills, or social participation (Bolton & Plattner, 2020). Partial understanding of the OT role in schools is one of many challenges that decreases the ability of teachers and OTs to work together on behalf of helping students obtain the help they need. Difficult caseloads, decreased communication opportunities, limited flexibility, differences in opinion, and teacher and OT lack of time are all additional challenges OTs and teachers face (Ball, 2018; Clough et al., 2019; Wintle et al., 2017). Due to these challenges, effective collaboration between OTs and teachers can be difficult to achieve despite

teacher's desire for increased communication and opportunity for collaboration with OTs (Truong & Hodgetts, 2017).

## **Purpose**

Due to the incomplete understanding teachers generally have about the OT scope of practice and the challenges that are present which inhibit OT-teacher collaboration, the purpose of this project was to advocate for OT by providing further explanation of the OT role in the school setting. Furthermore, this project sought to increase collaboration between OTs and teachers by describing how collaboration can best occur despite challenges to this process.

The overall objective of this project was to create an in-service opportunity to promote the OT role and educate teachers on the OT scope of practice in the school setting. The in-service opportunity also provided education on ways teachers and OTs can successfully collaborate to increase intervention effectiveness for student benefit. In order to accomplish this, an educational video tool was created for teachers to fulfill the objectives previously described. The tool was created especially for teachers with little teaching experience or limited understanding of OT effectiveness in school-based practice. The aim of this project was to increase teacher's understanding of OT function and the collaboration process with the hope that student referrals to OT would increase in order for the students to receive the help they need to be successful in an educational setting.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The person-environment-occupation (PEO) model was selected to guide this project. The PEO model examines *person*, *environment*, and *occupational* aspects of a given situation or scenario (Baptiste, 2017). The interaction of these three constructs fit together to create a fourth

construct called *occupational performance*. Identification of how well the *person*, *environment*, and *occupation* aspects interact will determine the level of fit in order to better understand how successful the person will be when engaging with certain occupations in a given environment. A combination of the *person*, *environment*, and *occupation* can create a good fit or a poor fit based on how well each of these constructs transacts with one another. A combination of any number of these aspects is represented by the following transactions: *Person x Occupation* (pxo), *Person x Environment* (pxe), and *Environment x Occupation* (exo). By adapting the environment, occupation, or person the level of fit will also change thereby increasing or decreasing the occupational performance of the individual or group (Baptiste, 2017).

The *person* aspect can be broken down into a number of subcomponents. These subcomponents include the physical, cognitive, spiritual, sensory, and affective aspects of the person. The *environment* construct can also be broken down into subcomponents which include the physical, social, cultural, institutional, and virtual aspects. Lastly, the *occupation* aspect is broken down into self-care, work or productivity, leisure, and rest or sleep (Baptiste, 2017). Identifying the small details of each aspect can further increase understanding of the situation to help determine if there is a good or poor fit between the aforementioned transactions and therefore, if occupational performance will be successful.

The PEO model guided the making of the product as it was used to identify barriers that decreased the occupational performance of teachers and OTs as they collaborated together to provide services to students. The product itself was also created using the PEO model to illustrate the OT role and scope of practice to teachers. For a more in-depth look of how the OT role was presented through the PEO model in the product, see Chapter IV.

## Key Terms

- **School-based OT:** interventions relating to helping a student function at school and gain an education including participation in academic and nonacademic school activities (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020).
- **Interprofessional Collaboration:** “when 2 or more professions work together to achieve common goals and is often used as a means for solving a variety of problems and complex issues” (Green & Johnson, 2015, p. 1).
- **Service Delivery:** “Set of approaches and methods for providing services to or on behalf of clients” (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA]b, 2020, p. 83). Such approaches include direct and indirect services (AOTAb, 2020).

## Overview

Chapter II is a literature review that provides a comprehensive background of this topic based on existing literature. Chapter III includes the methodology used for creation of the videos to enhance teacher learning about OT and teacher-OT collaboration. Chapter IV explains the product. Chapter V is a summary of this project that includes implications, strengths, limitations, and recommendations for use of the product.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This project will inform educators on the role of occupational therapists within school-based practice for increased occupational therapy (OT) and teacher collaboration. The purpose of this literature review is to gather evidence about the OT role in the school system and articulate existing problems and solutions when teachers and occupational therapists (OTs) collaborate with one another. An overview of the laws, resources, and challenges are given as well as information on the knowledge and environments of students, educators and OTs to establish an overall view of school-based OT practice and education in a school setting.

#### **Person-Environment-Occupation Model**

The person-environment-occupation (PEO) model along with its constructs are described in Chapter 1. The PEO model was used throughout this literature review and during the development of the scholarly project to determine the current level of fit that exists between the various constructs in a school setting (Baptiste, 2017). The PEO model was also used to guide the product, which consists of a series of short video trainings designed to inform educators about the role of school-based OT and enhance effective collaboration between educators and OTs.

#### ***Person***

In the given situation, teachers and OTs make up the person. Special education teachers are trained and have the skills necessary to provide educational materials and instruction to students on an individualized education plan (IEP) and other students who require additional

support to be successful at school. Regular classroom teachers are also a part of the IEP team to provide input about the educational needs of the student as well as help identify supports the student will require (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). School-based occupational therapists have the expertise and training to support students by helping them engage in activities that are needed and wanted in a school environment. This includes support in play, social participation, leisure, education, activities of daily living (ADLs), and work (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020).

### ***Environment***

The school or school system is the determined environment in this situation. Schools often employ the use of separate classrooms or therapy rooms in order to provide services to their students. These rooms are used as a resource for students who require services outside of the classroom with OTs often using such rooms to work on specific skills with students, making the rooms part of the physical environment (Bissell & Cermak, 2015). Teachers will spend time in the classroom with students and other school personnel including but not limited to paraprofessionals, special education teachers, principals, OTs, and office staff. The cultural aspect of the school can vary considerably depending on the size of the school and the number of students attending the school. According to Grand Forks Public Schools (n.d.), there are three middle schools in Grand Forks and one combined middle school and elementary school which serves students. These schools may also draw in students that live outside of town in the surrounding rural areas.

### ***Occupation***

The occupation aspect of this model consists of self-care, productivity or work, leisure, and rest or sleep (Baptiste, 2017). In this case, we are most concerned with productivity or work



as OTs provide services to students and as teachers and OTs collaborate with one another to help students achieve success at school through participation and engagement.

## **Environment x Occupation Transaction**

### ***Laws Affecting OT in School-Systems***

There are several laws that affect OT within the school system. The first and most prominent is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which states that students ages 3 to 21 years old with qualifying restrictions or difficulties should be provided with services for a free appropriate public education (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). Types of services to be provided are stated in the individualized education plan (IEP), including OT services (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2015). The IEP also identifies supports to be given to the child such as adaptations to the environment or modification of approaches to facilitate learning (AOTA, 2015). There are a total of ten categories that would qualify a student to receive services under IDEA. The categories include “intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance . . . orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities” (IDEA, 2004, section 602). These services should also be provided in the least restrictive environment for the student’s benefit (AOTA, 2015; Ball, 2018; Bissell & Cermak, 2015; Cahill & Bazyk, 2020).

Another important and relevant law that promotes education in the school system is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Part of this act requires that schools also provide services to students that do not qualify under IDEA but who have documented disabilities (AOTA, 2015; Ball, 2018; Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). The disabilities that affect physical, mental, or sensory

aspects in students mark the need for them to receive appropriate accommodations (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). OT services may also be provided if the services would be of benefit for students to achieve success in the school setting.

It is also important to note the distinction between school-based OT services and medical-based OT services. The IEP team decides if OT services for a student are necessary to meet educational expectations and if OT services will be provided as part of the IEP (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction [NDDPI], 2019). According to NDDPI (2019), medical or clinical-based OTs providing services outside of school may target educational goals in a student, however they are not a part of the IEP team. OTs providing medical based services may communicate with school-based OTs to give recommendations and information about students. However, this information must be discussed with the IEP team before OT services are provided or accommodations are made in the IEP. Coordination of services is recommended between medical-based and school-based OTs if the IEP team indicates that OT services are necessary for the student (NDDPI, 2019).

### ***School Climate and Student Learning***

The school climate does have an effect on student learning especially when considering student psychosocial health according to Aldridge and McChesney (2018). Aldridge and McChesney (2018) reviewed a total of 48 articles through a systematic review. Their findings suggested that relationships, school connectedness, school safety, and academic environment were several constructs that were associated with psychosocial wellbeing, preventative behaviors, mental health issues, and risk behaviors in adolescent students. School climate can positively or negatively affect mental health, increasing the overall ability of the student to learn

and the teacher's ability to engage students in learning. Aldridge and McChesney (2018) also found that teachers thought schools could better address mental health but did not feel qualified to do so themselves. This indicates that teachers may need increased support when addressing mental health issues with students. This is important due to the increased push in the U.S. to provide mental health services and increase mental health awareness for the benefit of children and adolescents (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020).

When discussing the importance of school climate, it is also appropriate to consider the use of universal design in a school setting. Universal design for learning is a framework in education that:

(A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged;

(B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008, section 101).

According to Kennedy et al. (2018), OTs were found to often provide universal design interventions in school settings. It was identified in the literature that OTs most often "provide options for physical action" and "provide options for recruiting interests," identified in the CAST universal design framework (Rose & Gravel, 2011, pp. 22, 28). OTs also provided universal design interventions that encompass most of the other guidelines from the CAST framework except for two, which aligned more with the speech-language pathologist scope of practice (Kennedy et al., 2018). This information identifies the importance of OTs in a school setting

when providing universal design interventions and illustrates the effect that the environment has on occupation. From these findings it is implied that OTs have the appropriate skills to evaluate and make adaptations to the school environment in order for all students to have the ability to participate in any number of occupations that take place at the school including but not limited to education, social participation, play, and ADL tasks (Kennedy et al., 2018).

### ***Resources and Programs in Schools***

In schools, there are a variety of resources and programs designed to support students academically and behaviorally. One important system that is often used in schools is a multi-tiered system called the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). The MTSS is used to track the progress of students in several different ways including academically, behaviorally, or anything else the student may struggle with (Cunningham, n.d.). The MTSS is divided into three tiers. Tier 1 looks at the general population of students and serves to identify students that may be at risk or to prevent students at risk from falling behind academically from others close in age. Tier 2 identifies students who are at risk of falling behind from their peers and who require targeted interventions through small groups. Tier 3 is the most intensive of the three tiers as students in this tier require specialized and individualized attention through targeted interventions and accommodations to achieve success at school (Bissell & Cermak, 2015; Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). OTs are involved with all three tiers as they screen for at risk students, provide services to groups of students, and provide specialized and individualized interventions to students for successful interaction at school and in the classroom (Bissell & Cermak, 2015). It is also important to note that MTSS is often used to support students before they are considered for an IEP.

As noted previously, within the last few years mental health awareness and programs have become more prevalent within school systems (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). As such, mental health programs that have been found useful target depressive symptoms and anxiety in middle school students (Feiss et al., 2019). However, there was little evidence to suggest that stress management programs aimed at middle school students were effective at actually reducing stress due to limited research in this area (Feiss et al., 2019). Overall, there was some evidence in the area of mental health programs for adolescents, but more research needs to be completed to determine their effectiveness in school systems.

### **Person x Environment Transaction**

#### ***Educator Understanding of School-Based OT***

Educators generally only understand a small portion of the OT role in the school system due to what they see from observation, contact with OTs, and the benefits they see from OT services (Christner, 2015; Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Because teachers do not fully understand the OT role and full scope of practice in schools, teachers are also unsure when to refer to OT (Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Bolton and Plattner (2020) surveyed teachers to determine if they understand the OT role. The results indicated that approximately 56% of the teachers understood the OT role while 44% indicated they do not fully understand the OT role or scope of practice (Bolton & Plattner, 2020). Christner (2015) found that after a series of training modules regarding OT, teachers were more aware of OT as a means to support their students as many were under the impression that OTs only worked with those that needed help with handwriting. This example demonstrates that teachers have some knowledge of the OT scope of practice, however, their understanding is limited which ultimately will affect OT referrals and

potential services delivered to students (Bolton & Plattner, 2020; Christner, 2015; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017).

### ***Educator and OT Collaboration in the School-System***

Collaboration between teachers and OTs occurs best through communication, understanding each other's roles, being flexible with one another, and through push-in services (Anaby et al., 2019; Ball, 2018; Christner, 2015; Phoenix et al., 2021; Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Throughout the literature it was determined that communication was one of the most significant factors in teacher-OT collaboration (Anaby et al., 2019; Phoenix et al., 2021; Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Truong and Hodgetts (2017) reported that teachers desired increased communication and contact with OTs in order to better understand their roles. Communication that was said to be helpful included teachers and OTs meeting together, often with parents of the student also being included when appropriate (Anaby et al., 2019; Phoenix et al., 2021). Through contact and meeting together, both teachers and OTs were able to better understand each other's roles, leading to enhanced ability to collaborate successfully (Ball, 2018; Christner, 2015; Phoenix et al., 2021; Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017).

Throughout the literature teachers also noted the importance of push-in services (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Christner, 2015; Rens & Joosten, 2014). This is due to teachers having more awareness of what interventions the OT provides to the student. Additionally, teachers are further able to identify strategies the OT uses to assist their students when OTs are not present in the classroom (Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). By using push-in services, teachers are better able to pinpoint what OTs do and how the OTs implement strategies in the

school or classroom. Apart from fulfilling the IDEA requirement of students learning in the LRE, push-in services also enable OTs to provide teacher training to increase teacher confidence as they implement strategies within their own classroom (Anaby et al., 2019; Cahill & Bazyk, 2020). Integrated services provided in this way foster enhanced opportunities for consultation and enhance teacher-OT collaboration (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020).

For effective collaboration to occur, both OTs and teachers are required to be flexible (Phoenix et al., 2021). Flexibility can mean using a variety of ways to communicate and collaborate as problems arise and as needs present themselves throughout the school system. Rens and Joosten (2014) completed focus groups to further understand teacher perspectives on collaboration and communication with OTs. The findings of this research indicated that teachers wanted OTs to spend more time at the school. Participants in the research said that as OTs spent more time at the school, there was increased opportunity for the OTs to be in contact with teachers and explain their role. Other findings from the focus group indicated that OTs could build relationships, observe the student in their natural environment, and consider the teacher role to make more realistic recommendations (Rens & Joosten, 2014). All of these findings indicated that OTs require flexibility in order to work and communicate with teachers. OTs also require flexibility when providing services as they attempt to train teachers how to successfully implement techniques and strategies with students when the OT is not present (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017).

Problems that prevent collaboration in the school system include a large list. Most evidence related to a lack of communication of roles and time (Phoenix et al., 2021; Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017; Wintle et al., 2017). Other noted issues that were a

barrier to OT and teacher collaboration included a large workload, difficult relationships with teachers, differing views, and inappropriate OT recommendations given to teachers (Phoenix et al., 2021; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017; Wintle et al., 2017). It is important to note that while it is beneficial to communicate during collaboration, there is also an opposite effect on collaboration when communication is lacking (Anaby et al., 2019; Phoenix et al., 2021; Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017; Wintle et al., 2017).

### ***Student Challenges at School***

Middle school students face a variety of challenges including those that involve mental health. In a systematic review Aldridge and McChesney (2018) discovered that factors from the school climate related to and influenced the mental health of students in both positive and negative aspects. Relationships, school safety, school connectedness, and the academic environment were all factors that affected student mental health including psychosocial well-being, preventative behaviors, mental health issues, and risk behaviors (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Feiss et al. (2019) also conducted a systematic review looking at school-based programs for stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms due to the prevalence of these symptoms in adolescents. Findings indicated that programs for depressive symptoms and anxiety reduced those symptoms in adolescents. However, Feiss et al. (2019) indicated that programs for stress did not lower stress. This suggests that students are subjected to a variety of mental health stresses and challenges in their lives including at school.

Alley (2019) suggested that adolescent students may face difficulty with engagement in school or learning. Disengagement at school could be due to difficulties with how materials are presented or lack of a supportive environment at school that facilitates learning (Alley, 2019).



Adolescent students also face a variety of challenges at this stage in their lives ultimately affecting their learning and overall engagement in school. Examples of these challenges include transitioning to middle school, fostering relationships with family or peers, and developmental changes (Alley, 2019).

### ***Student Characteristics and OT Referrals***

OTs may work with a wide variety of students with many disabilities. The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) determined that a third of students served under IDEA were qualified under a “specific learning disability.” The categories of “autism” and “other health impairment” combined for 27% of the total population served under IDEA nationally (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Bolton and Plattner (2020) reported that they received most referrals for fine motor skills, handwriting deficits, and sensory processing issues. According to O’Donoghue et al. (2021), autism and developmental coordination disorder were what OTs saw most often in school-based practice while Bissel and Cermak (2015) reported referrals for autism, mental health diagnoses, coordination, and developmental diagnoses. This tells us that most referrals were sensory-based or motor-based in nature.

### **Person x Occupation Transaction**

#### ***Interventions and Best Practices***

Many intervention approaches are useful for OTs when working in the school system. One theory in particular was addressed by Alley (2019), who suggested that the stage-environment fit should be used. The stage-environment fit assesses the student’s maturity level and matches it with the environmental supports the student has in order to facilitate student motivation and engagement (Alley, 2019). This particularly resembled the use of the PEO model,

which also can be used effectively to assess student environment fit to successfully increase the student's occupational performance in tasks associated with school functions (Baptiste, 2017).

Other approaches that were found to be useful included ecological interventions, family involvement with team members, pull-out services, and group-based services (Anaby et al., 2019; Benson et al., 2015). Benson et al. (2015) specifically looked at parent perceptions as their children received OT services in school. Overall, parents were satisfied when OT was involved with the IEP process and communicated with parents about interventions to use at home. The parents in this study, however, suggested that OTs focus more on social participation skills as they perceived this area could have been addressed more during therapy (Benson et al., 2015).

According to AOTA (2015), sensory integration and sensory processing techniques are both used in school-based practice due to sensory referrals received in schools (Bolton & Plattner, 2020). Preventative and health promotion approaches can also be used in schools to teach psychosocial skills and promote good mental health, which include programs to reduce depressive symptoms and anxiety (Ball, 2018; Feiss et al., 2019). This is especially true due to the rise of mental health concerns and increased mental health programming in school-systems across the country (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Feiss et al., 2019).

### ***OT Challenges During Service Delivery and Collaboration***

School-based OTs have a different focus than other professionals in the school system. Part of the OTs concern is the health of the student as opposed to other professionals in the school who mainly focus on the education of the student (O'Donoghue et al., 2021). OTs often use pull-out services because they see themselves as unique professionals in schools and are able to better apply their knowledge to individualize their interventions and target specific skills with

the student (Clough, 2019). They also have little time, less flexibility with their schedule, and have increased frustration when delivering consultative or push-in services according to Clough (2019). The challenge then lies in OTs using pull-out services to satisfy their working demands on lack of time, scheduling, and frustrations when teachers would prefer OTs to spend more time in the classroom as discussed previously (Rens & Joosten, 2014).

OTs may experience several other challenges that must be managed as part of their job in the school-setting including the case load, lack of communication and collaboration, lack of experience in one's own profession, and perspectives different from teachers and parents (Ball, 2018; Benson et al., 2015; Wintle et al., 2017). The barriers and tensions found in the literature can lead to OT burnout and long working hours for OTs. These barriers and tensions reduce collaboration with parents and teachers, especially those who lack involvement with their students. Wintle et al. (2017) suggested providing further training and in-service opportunities for both teachers and OTs to better understand one another's role in order to decrease tensions felt between OTs and teachers.

### ***Collaboration for Increased Success***

OTs are able to help educators through their analysis of the person-environment fit and adaptation of the environment (Alley, 2019; Baptiste, 2017). Helping teachers analyze the person-environment fit ultimately benefits the students as adaptations provide students with a better atmosphere in which to focus and be successful in the occupation of education. OTs can also provide teachers with education regarding teaching strategies to implement to further engage students in learning. This includes providing structure for their students, student engagement in group learning or group work, having students teach each other material they learn, and

integrating technology into learning (Alley, 2019). Educators are eager and willing to implement interventions if proper communication, training, and support is provided (Anaby et al., 2019; Rens & Joosten, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Upon review of the literature, it was indicated that teachers are not fully aware of the roles and scope of practice of OTs in the school system. The lack of knowledge inhibits OTs from receiving referrals from teachers that could effectively support both students and teachers to accomplish their own roles more easily and effectively in schools. Furthermore, there are several challenges during the collaboration process that require further effort for effective teamwork and successful integration of interventions in the classroom and school. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to educate teachers on the distinct value of OT within school-based practice and identify methods of enhancing collaboration of OTs and teachers to increase student and teacher success in education.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

This chapter describes and identifies the process that took place to develop a literature review needs assessment regarding the OT role and collaboration in school-based practice, use of theory to guide the process, and how the product was developed. The author first took interest in school-based practice from personal involvement and family members having worked in school settings previously. The author also took note of the lack of understanding that people in general seem to have when it comes to OT. The focus from these interests was to advocate for school-based OT and enhance teacher-OT collaboration through teacher education as indicated from the literature review. It was also found that there was a general incomplete understanding of OT school-based practice and the OT role among those who collaborate with OT in this setting (Truong et al., 2017), also validating the need for increased teacher education in this area.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The PEO model was utilized through use of the pxe, pxo, and exo transactions to guide the initial process of the project (Baptiste, 2017). The PEO model uses these transactions to determine how the person, environment, and occupation interact together and influence the occupational performance of an individual or group (Baptiste, 2017). An initial occupational profile was first completed based on the author's understanding about the person, environment, and occupational aspects of the associated parties. Questions regarding school-based OT and collaboration were then created about each transaction based on what was not known by the author. A literature review then took place with the intent of answering each question in order to develop a more complete understanding of school-based OT collaboration with teachers. The

transactions in this model were also used to identify the barriers inhibiting occupational performance in order to inform the product to make it more relevant and beneficial. Furthermore, the product itself was created by organizing and presenting the information through the lens of the PEO model.

### **Timeline**

The idea for this project occurred in the fifth semester of the University of North Dakota occupational therapy doctoral program. The following semester, a literature review needs assessment was completed containing pertinent literature regarding the project topic. During the seventh semester, the literature review was written. The product was designed and created in the eighth semester. The product was designed with the intention of being implemented in a school district as part of a continuing education program.

### **Procedures**

Upon initiation of this process, the author began searching for literature related to OT's role in this school-based practice and OT collaboration efforts in this setting. Textbooks and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) website were used to search for this information. Databases, including CINAHL and Google Scholar, were also utilized to complete the search. Search terms employed in these databases included "(Occupational Therapy) AND (collaboration) AND (educators OR teachers)", "(Occupational Therapy) AND (educators OR teachers) AND (role OR perceptions OR perspectives)", "(Occupational Therapy) AND (school-based practice) AND (teachers OR educators) AND (perceptions)", "(adolescent) AND (school OR middle school) AND (Occupational Therapy OR School-based)", and "(interventions) AND

(middle school OR school) AND (teachers OR educators) AND (Occupational Therapy).”

Government statistics were also sought out from the U.S. Department of Education website.

Articles and literature relevant to the search criteria were included in a literature review matrix. Once the matrix was completed, the literature review was written with the relevant literature and topics included from the matrix. The literature review was then submitted for feedback from the author’s advisor upon which edits were made by the author. The author was given permission to observe OTs, teachers, and students in which information regarding OT collaboration with other professionals in a middle school setting was also observed. During this process, the author also had the opportunity to ask middle school teachers questions at a particular middle school regarding teachers’ perceptions and thoughts about school-based OT. Upon completion of the needs assessment, the author began planning out scripted videos including topics and information that were beneficial for teachers to know regarding the OT role and scope of practice in the middle school setting. The scripts were then proofread by the author’s advisor before they were filmed and edited.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the course of this project, several principles in specific were considered and utilized from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Code of Ethics including but not limited to beneficence and fidelity (AOTAA, 2020). Beneficence was considered throughout the course of the scholarly project by the intent of the project itself. Enhancement of collaboration efforts in this setting increased the wellbeing of teachers and students due to the aid they receive in school. Fidelity was considered in writing, creating and communicating with teachers. The project was meant to be used as an educational tool to help and provide further

information to teachers. This required that teachers be treated with respect, equity, and fairness in their representation as communication occurred with them throughout the design and creation of this scholarly project.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Product**

The product was derived from information gathered from a literature review needs assessment regarding school-based OT and collaboration with teachers and other professionals. The product was developed using the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model to guide its elements (Baptiste, 2017). The product consists of four educational videos that explain the occupational therapy role in school-based practice and give recommendations to enhance OT-teacher collaboration. Outlines for each video include information and topics gathered from the literature review. Handouts accompanying each video were also created to allow teachers to easily follow along with each video in an organized way.

Each video presents information about the OT role and collaboration using different aspects of the PEO model. The first three videos focus on the person, environment, and occupation aspects of the PEO model present in school-based OT practice while also incorporating the OT role in association with those aspects (Baptiste, 2017). The fourth video focuses on teacher-OT collaboration. Video 1 introduces OT, provides information about the occupations of students, explains OT interventions regarding modification of occupation, and identifies important laws, and explains OT involvement in plans in place at school (IEPs, 504s, MTSS). Video 2 explains the OT process, describes interventions regarding the student (person), clarifies OT service delivery to elementary school versus secondary school students, and discusses skill development in students attributing to occupational success. For types of skills discussed, refer to Table 1. Video 3 includes a discussion on the environment and its influence on students and occupations, and interventions targeting the environment while also providing an

example of the OT process. Video 4 identifies existing barriers in OT-teacher collaboration and gives recommendations to combat barriers and enhance collaboration between OTs and teachers and other professionals working in schools. The following table provides a visual breakdown of the educational videos by the PEO aspect presented and topics.

**Table 1**

*Topics presented in Educational Videos*

<b>Breakdown of Videos by Topic</b>		
	<b>PEO Aspect/Overall Topic</b>	<b>Topic Presented</b>
<b>Video 1</b>	Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to OT</li> <li>• Occupation</li> <li>• Modification of occupation</li> <li>• OT's consultative role in secondary school</li> <li>• Laws/plans regarding student services</li> </ul>
<b>Video 2</b>	Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OT process</li> <li>• Person/student and their abilities</li> <li>• OT role in elementary school vs. secondary school</li> <li>• Skill development with students</li> <li>• Types of skills OTs help students develop               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Life Skills</li> <li>○ Mental Health/Coping Skills</li> <li>○ Social Skills</li> <li>○ Sensory Regulation</li> <li>○ Processing Skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Video 3</b>	Environment, Occupational Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environment</li><li>• Adaptation to environment</li><li>• Universal design for learning</li><li>• Student, environment, occupation</li></ul>
<b>Video 4</b>	OT-Teacher Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barriers to collaboration</li><li>• Communication</li><li>• Recommendations for OT/teachers</li></ul>

For access to the educational videos, video outlines, and handouts please contact the author of this scholarly project through email at [brycegraves12@outlook.com](mailto:brycegraves12@outlook.com).

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary**

The purpose of this product was to provide educators with an opportunity to understand the role of OT more fully within the school system and understand how teacher-OT collaboration could be enhanced. The educational videos were created to inform stakeholders how OTs provide their services, what OTs focus on with students in school, and give recommendations to combat barriers that occur during collaboration efforts. Many teachers employed in the professional field of education were unaware of the OT role and scope of practice (Kennedy et al., 2018; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Educators who were aware of the OT role often desired for further collaboration which included realistic recommendations in their classrooms and with students (Rens & Joosten, 2014; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). This indicated a need for increased education about the role of OT in school-based practice. Barriers discovered during the literature review that decrease collaboration also indicated a need for occupational therapists and teachers to collaborate more effectively with each other. The barriers found in the literature included case load challenges, lack of communication and collaboration, lack of experience in one's own profession, and differing perspectives regarding student inclusion (Ball, 2018; Benson et al., 2015; Wintle et al., 2017). Based on these findings, the goal of this project was to create an in-service opportunity to inform teachers and other professionals working in schools about the OT role and effective collaboration efforts.

The Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model was used to guide this scholarly project and product. The transactions of the PEO model were used during the literature review needs assessment to identify the level of fit between OTs and teacher during collaboration. The

*person, environment, and occupation* aspects of the PEO model were used during the creation of the product to organize and present information about the OT role to teachers and other professionals in the school setting. The product is comprised of four educational videos with each video shedding light on the OT role, scope of practice, and collaboration recommendations between OTs and teachers based on findings from the needs assessment.

### **Implications**

This product is expected to educate teachers and other professionals in the school setting to better understand school-based OTs and their role in providing services to students. The knowledge that teachers gain from the educational videos will help them to better utilize and involve OTs with their students. This will allow students to better receive the services that will help them to be successful as they participate in educational tasks and school activities.

Additionally, teachers will also be more successful as OT services will help to reduce the strain on teachers in the classroom as they utilize recommendations on students. Furthermore, the educational video regarding teacher-OT collaboration will help both parties to better enhance collaborative relationships as recommendations are followed in order for teachers and OTs to work together with minimal frustration and increased opportunity to help students succeed.

### **Recommendations and Strengths**

It is recommended that the educational videos created in this project be implemented into a school-district's continuing education program to further increase the opportunity for teachers and other school personnel to learn about the role of school-based OT. The educational videos were prepared based on the needs of a specific middle school, however it is possible for the videos to be used throughout the school district and in other districts to advocate for OT and as

part of continuing education. Revision of the videos to meet the specific needs of the school or school district might prove more beneficial if the videos are used in other locations. Such revisions might include further development of application activities or different recommendations to enhance collaboration depending on the needs of the school or school district. It is also recommended that the handouts for teachers are used in conjunction with the videos to increase clarity of information as it is presented. Further research to identify the effectiveness of this strategy or product to enhance collaboration among teachers and OTs would also be beneficial.

The product was designed in video format due to the fact that teachers and OTs often have little extra time to spare in their day (Clough, 2019; Wintle, 2017). Because the product is presented as multiple short videos, teachers and other school professionals have the opportunity to view the information at times that are more convenient for them and review concepts in the video multiple times for increased comprehension. Delivery of the information to teachers through web-based services has shown to positively affect teacher awareness of school-based OT services (Christner, 2015). Because these videos are delivered in a similar fashion, the assumption is that a similar positive effect will take place. The videos themselves are also available to be posted for continuing education purposes at the school they were created for and therefore teachers and other school professionals can watch the videos and obtain continuing education credit through the school district's program.

### **Limitations**

The product of this scholarly project is limited in several ways. The educational videos offer set information and do not allow those with further inquiries to ask questions. The videos

cannot take the place of direct contact with an OT who can answer further questions and give additional information. Furthermore, the educational videos do not offer much engagement with the speaker or with OTs. It is possible that some school personnel may watch the video, but only due to school requirements to participate. If this occurs, the effectiveness of the educational videos in enhancing collaboration and providing information about school-based OT will be greatly reduced. Limited research is also available on the use of this strategy to present the information. Therefore, the effectiveness of the videos is unknown and further research is required.

### **Conclusion**

Through use of the PEO model, an in-service opportunity was developed through the creation of four educational videos with the purpose of enhancing teacher-OT collaboration and providing information about the role and practice of school-based OTs. Implementation of these videos is expected to enhance collaboration effectiveness between OTs and teachers while also allowing students in need of OT services to receive increased referrals and engagement with OTs. It is recommended that the educational videos be used through a continuing education program to allow teachers incentives for participation while also providing relevant information to them. By learning about the OT role and scope of practice, teachers and other school professionals will collaborate more effectively thus reducing the strain teachers encounter with students who could be helped through OT services.

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