Exploration of Resources for Transitioning High School Students & Environmental Analysis of the Classroom: What Factors Affect Performance at Benton Hall Academy, a School for Children Who Learn Differently

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Mission of Benton Hall Academy
“Benton Hall Academy offers a curriculum designed to challenge each student to his or her highest intellectual and creative abilities. The school’s program strives to prepare each student academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally, through individualized instruction, to work to his or her potential and to make a successful transition into the workplace, or into a higher learning experience. The highest priority is given to the development of sensitive, autonomous human beings who relate well with others, know how to learn, and how to make wise choices.”

Identified Needs of Site
1. A comprehensive guidebook of local resources for transitioning high school students with specific contacts for each site
2. Analysis of the classroom to enhance student performance
3. Provision of milestones and sensory behaviors handout for parents to raise awareness of occupational therapy

Goals of Project
1. Develop parent/student guidebook for workforce contacts
2. Develop sensory and milestone information by age
3. Enhance knowledge of sensory functions and their impact performance in classroom

Literature Review
- Young adults with disabilities are at a higher risk of being financially dependent on their families or government programs (Plotner, Shogren, Shaw, Stinnett & Seo, 2017)
- Environmental Analysis:
  - Environmental factors include those that we cannot control (physical, social or attitudinal factors) and can either be facilitators or barriers to participation, which is defined as “involvement in a life situation” (CDC, n.d.)

Development of Project
- Initial Survey:
  Results: 8 responses
  87.5% report feeling unprepared for transition
  - Each teacher was interviewed for specific classroom needs based on identified sensory deficits within the class room

Outcomes of Project
1. Guidebook
   a. Graduation Options
   b. Desired pathways (vocational, military, college)
   c. Local support group resources
   d. 100% (n=1)* report they feel more prepared for the transition period
2. Developed an Individualized Plan for Employment to set goals for graduation
   a. Provided example goals for future use
3. Classroom information sheets for:
   a. Environmental adaptations
   b. Sensory behaviors and activities to address
   c. 100% of teachers (n=3) reported it was helpful

Further Implications
It would be beneficial for future occupational therapy students to complete the following projects:
- The development of a Life Skills Curriculum
- Continued development of Individualized Plan for Employment and collaboration with Vocational Rehab for apprenticeship opportunities
- Development of sensory units for each grade level

Special Thanks
I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Tamara Lemmonds and Dr. Debra Gibbs for their guidance through this project. Additional thanks to the faculty and staff of Benton Hall, I learned so much from each and every one of you.

References

*Current at time of poster publication