## Life-skills curriculum development for students in the afterschool program at Bridges

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### What is Bridges?

Bridges is a nonprofit organization that provides resources for the Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing communities in middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky. Services offered include advocacy and empowerment, case management, counseling, wellness, youth education, and interpreting (Bridges, 2017).

### Mission and Vision

**Mission:** To serve an empowered and united community in which the Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing equally participate and are equally valued.

**Vision:** We envision a world without barriers in which potential is unlimited and self-realization is possible.

### Needs of the Agency

- Consistent volunteers for the afterschool program
- Focused curriculum for middle and high school students in the afterschool program
- Assistance with students in the afterschool program who have multiple diagnoses

### Youth Services at Bridges

Approximately 35 students with a variety of hearing abilities are enrolled in the afterschool program that meets 3 days/week at Bridges. Students are provided with additional tutoring, socialization opportunities, and participation in physical activity. Next year’s goal for the middle and high school students is focused life-skills development during these crucial years.

### Goals of the Experiential Component

- Design curriculum for middle and high school students in afterschool program focused on transition training, social skills, and practical living skills.
- Provide resource packet for students highlighting their rights, the importance of self-advocacy, and connections to local service organizations.
- Implement best practices for teaching life skills effectively to the Deaf and hard of hearing population through interaction with Deaf community and review of available literature.
- Conduct trial run of potential lesson activities in current program to assess effectiveness and improve for final draft of curriculum.
- Advocate for the specific needs of the youth in the Bridges afterschool program in order to maintain a client-centered approach for students.
- Create resources for staff and volunteers to utilize in order to simplify planning strategies for daily lessons.

### The Role of OT

Deaf and hard of hearing students are often at risk due to a lack of social interaction and incidental life-skills education, which can lead to a decreased self-esteem and quality of life as they age (Morvalli, Ashori, Jalil-Abkenar, & Salehy, 2014). The goal of occupational therapy practice for students with disabilities is to remove barriers and promote participation in occupations, thus reaching the highest level of independence possible (WFOT, 2016). Advocacy and empowerment for the Deaf and hard of hearing through life-skills education ensures that these students have the resources to live their fullest lives without barriers.

### Outcomes

- Attendance policy created and now in place to ensure the optimal number of students can benefit from this program.
- Daily lesson plan template created and currently utilized in afterschool program.
- Client-centered curriculum developed for high school students to complete during the next academic school year.
- Resources for students included with curriculum.
- Pre/post tests created to ensure students understand concepts.

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### References

