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Opportunity café: a community-based intervention to promote employability and self-care independence for transition-aged students with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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SARGENT COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Doctoral Project

OPPORTUNITY CAFÉ:

A COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE EMPLOYABILITY AND SELF-CARE INDEPENDENCE FOR TRANSITION-AGED STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

by

PAULINE WESTCOTT

B.S., Towson State University, 1994

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Occupational Therapy

2024

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Approved by

Academic Mentor _____

Kevin Berner, OTD, OTR, ATP
Lecturer in Occupational Therapy

Academic Advisor _____

Karen Jacobs, Ed.D., OT, OTR, CPE, FAOTA
Associate Dean for Digital Learning & Innovation
Clinical Professor of Occupational Therapy

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my friends and family. I want to thank all of you for the support and encouragement you gave me on this journey. I especially dedicate this to my amazing husband Mark, and my two sons, Chase, and Reese. While this project was being created, you spent countless hours without me, doing extra chores without complaint. I could not have done this without your support. I love you all so very much.

I also dedicate this to my late father, Vladimir Penc, who encouraged me to pursue my dream of continuing my education. You always saw the best in me. You left this earth without knowing I was accepted into the program and will not get to see me graduate. I am doing this to make you proud. Daddy, I hope you know that I love you and miss you terribly.

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And finally, to the high school students of the Living Center. You inspire me every day with your hope, and enthusiasm. This project was created for you. I want you to be given the opportunities to do the amazing things I know you are capable of.

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PAULINE WESTCOTT

Boston University, Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, 2024

Major Professor: Kevin Berner, OTD, OTR, ATP, Lecturer in Occupational Therapy

ABSTRACT

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that a transition plan be in place for students with disabilities by the time they turn 16. This plan aims to facilitate the child's movement from high school "to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), and continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation," (20 U.S. C. 1401 (34)). Despite these mandates, studies have shown that youth with disabilities are having poor post-school outcomes when compared to their peers (Lindsay at el., 2019; Lipscomb et al., 2018; Rowe et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009).

Occupational therapy practitioners (OTP) are well situated to collaboratively work as part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team with transition planning (Kardos & White, 2005). The OTP is distinctly qualified to assist the IEP team with developing goals, improving activities of daily living, assisting with staff and student training, and determining student occupational interests. Transition interventions are a

widely variable and unregulated area of practice for school-based OTPs.

Opportunity Café represents a solution to the problem of poor post-school outcomes for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This transition intervention applies evidenced based practices to guide education teams, students, and families through the transition planning process. It fulfills a need mandated by the IDEA for IEP teams to support the transition needs of students with IDD and provides an inclusive workplace to facilitate growth. Opportunity Café is a dynamic community-based replicable program that can impact student success. Program guidelines, methods for program dissemination, evaluation, and funding are discussed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA ..... Americans with Disability Act

ADL ..... Activities of Daily Living

AOTA ..... American Occupational Therapy Association

ASD ..... Autism Spectrum Disorder

BOOST-A ..... Better OutcOmes & Successful Transitions for Autism

BU ..... Boston University

CTE ..... Career and Technical Education

CUNY ..... City University of New York

DHF ..... Developmental Health Framework

DLS ..... Daily Living Skills

ELT ..... Experiential Learning Theory

ETP ..... Employment Training Program

EU ..... European Union

ICT ..... Interprofessional Collaboration Theory

ID ..... Intellectual Disability

IDD ..... Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

IDEA ..... Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP ..... Individualized Education Program

IRB ..... Institutional Review Board

LGTW ..... Let's Get to Work

NLTS-2 ..... National Longitudinal Transition Study-2

NYSOTA ..... New York State Occupational Therapy Association

OPWDD ..... Office for People with Developmental Disability

OT ..... Occupational Therapy

OTP ..... Occupational Therapy Practitioner

PAY Check ..... Paid Apprenticeship and college for Youth with disabilities

PEO ..... Person-Environment-Occupation

PT ..... Physical Therapy

PWD ..... People with Disabilities

QoL ..... Quality of Life

QOLQ ..... Quality of Life Questionnaire

RILS ..... Residential Immersive Life Skills

SDT ..... Self Determination Theory

SP ..... Speech Therapy

SUNY ..... State University of New York

TEAM ..... Teens making Environment and Activity Modification

UN ..... United Nations

UN DESA ..... United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

US ..... United States

VEVRAA ..... Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act

YWD ..... Youth with Disabilities

CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

The United States released its annual summary for the labor characteristics of persons with a disability in February 2023. This release examined various data and statistics of people with disabilities. The report provided the employment rate of people with disabilities to be 21.3%. While this is a 2.2% improvement from the year before, (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023a), a 21.3% employment translates to an unemployment rate for people with disabilities of 78.7%. The unemployment rate for adults in the United States of 3.9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023b). The annual summary also reported that in every age demographic, when compared to people without a disability, people with disabilities were much less likely to be employed and were more likely to be self-employed. Thirty percent of people with disabilities were employed part time, compared to 16% of people without a disability. People with disabilities make up 12% of the civilian population (Bureau of Statistics, 2023a). These statistics do not include those individuals that are living in institutions, so the actual number of people with disabilities living in the United States is likely to be higher.

The problem of the high rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is not a problem that exists only in the United States. Other countries around the world seem to have the same issue. According to the European Commission as of September 2023, the unemployment rate for European countries is 6.5% (European Commission, 2023). However, researching statistics for other countries and their disability statistics is a difficult task.

The United Nations (UN) formed a division focusing on sustainable development

for people in the world guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) issued a report on the global situation regarding people with disabilities in 2023. In that report, the UN DESA states “Data on persons with disabilities are hard to come by in almost every country. Specific data on their employment situation are even harder to find. Yet persons with disabilities face the same predicament everywhere.” (United Nations, 2023, p. 1). The UN DESA reports that in industrialized countries, the unemployment rate for those of working age with disabilities is between 50–70%, while those in developing countries is higher at 80–90%. Another interesting summary by the UN DESA is that:

> Persons with disabilities are frequently not considered potential members of the workforce. Perception, fear, myth, and prejudice continue to limit understanding and acceptance of disability in workplaces everywhere. Myths abound, including that persons with disabilities are unable to work and that accommodating a person with a disability in the workplace is expensive. Contrary to these notions, many companies have found that persons with disabilities are more than capable. (United Nations, 2023, p. 5)

Youth with disabilities may need additional support and special education services to develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities. In public schools, youth with a disability who experience difficulties accessing an educational curriculum may be eligible for school services and supports. To ensure the rights of youth with disabilities, the United Stated enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. The IDEA requires schools to provide a free and appropriate education plan,

appropriate evaluations, an individualized education program (IEP), the least restrictive environment, student and parent decision making, and appropriate safeguards (IDEA, 2004). The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the number of students in the United States receiving special education services with an IEP was 7.3 million students for the school year 2021–2022, or 15% of the entire population of public-school students (United States Department of Education, 2023b).

The IEP also helps youth with disabilities develop life skills needed for transition into adulthood. Adulthood transition consists of developing a plan for employment, community participation and residential arrangements. Planning adulthood transitions through age 21 is an especially involved process for families and school education teams. The IDEA requires schools to prepare students with disabilities for employment by providing students with a comprehensive transition plan. Transition plans must be started by age 16 and be updated annually through age 21 (IDEA, 2004). Collaboration with the student, school team, family, and community of interest are essential to ensure adequate resources financial supports, legal decisions related to guardianship, employment, and planning efforts are communicated and discussed.

To follow up on this landmark legislation, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) conducted in 2012 highlighted strengths and weaknesses in the IDEA. Despite mandated requirements by the IDEA for transition planning, students with disabilities were still leaving school underprepared for life after high school. Students with disabilities are more likely to have fewer socioeconomic advantages, to struggle academically, and are less likely to go onto secondary education and employment

(Lipscomb et al., 2018). Despite IDEA legislation and transition planning efforts, students with disabilities experience higher rates of unemployment, higher dropout rates, earn less than their typical peers, rely on families for residential needs and care (Rowe et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009) and experience more social isolation (Lindsay at el., 2019).

Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) are qualified to support the school transition team and transition-aged students engage in meaningful activities. OTPs can focus on the adolescent achieving post-school goals in employment, education, activities of daily living, and social participation (Pierce et al., 2021). OTPs can provide transition services that focus on facilitating the self-determination of students with disabilities, which is a factor that influences successful transition. This can improve the quality of life of such students and is a point of best practices (Panyo et al., 2021b). OTPs can offer a unique perspective and role throughout the adulthood transition process. However, there are variations in how the OTP role functions across schools, districts, and communities. Despite their skill set, the work of OTPs has remained limited in the practice area of transition and the community. Only ten percent of school-based OTPs understand their roles and work clearly in transition services. Students with disabilities receive occupational therapy services at a decreasing rate during the transition period of their life (Panyo et al., 2021b). Transition service interventions are an emerging area for the school-based OTPs (Kardos & White, 2005) and there needs to be more development of measurement tools. School based OTPs should work together to develop a clinical practice guideline for transition service (Panyo et al., 2021b). Research gaps remain, and

the quantity and quality of evidenced-based interventions are lacking (Bathe et al., 2018). Practice guidelines are needed for OTPs working in schools to ensure consistency across transition plans.

This project examines the problem of decreased employment, knowledge, skills, and abilities post-graduation for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and the lack of transition programming to encourage this. In Johnson City School District in Johnson City, New York, historically occupational therapists have provided services to all grade levels, but much of the caseload is from kindergarten through third grade to support the teachers with handwriting and fine motor concerns. Therapy services have a high intensity and frequency at the younger age level, with frequency decreasing as the child ages. Students receiving occupational therapy services in middle school and high school typically were for physical disabilities, on a consultative level, with limited direct services. Transition planning for the student was typically done by the special education teacher and occupational therapy was not involved.

The following chapters explore literature relevant to the described problem and analyze the solutions attempting to remedy the problem. The Person-Occupation-Environment Framework is introduced, as well as the Self-Determination Theory and Experiential Learning Theory as guidelines for developing the program. The resulting solution is a dynamic, replicable, community-based program that encourages interagency collaboration to provide training in work, life, behavioral, and social skills to transition aged-students 18–21 with IDD. The plans for the program, evaluation, funding, and dissemination are described in detail. As a society, we are failing people with disabilities.

By providing guidelines, a well-developed curriculum, and roles for OTPs, this program can assist in the transition-aged students with IDD to adulthood and be generalized into similar settings across the state and country.

“All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual.”

-Albert Einstein

CHAPTER TWO – Project Theoretical and Evidence Base

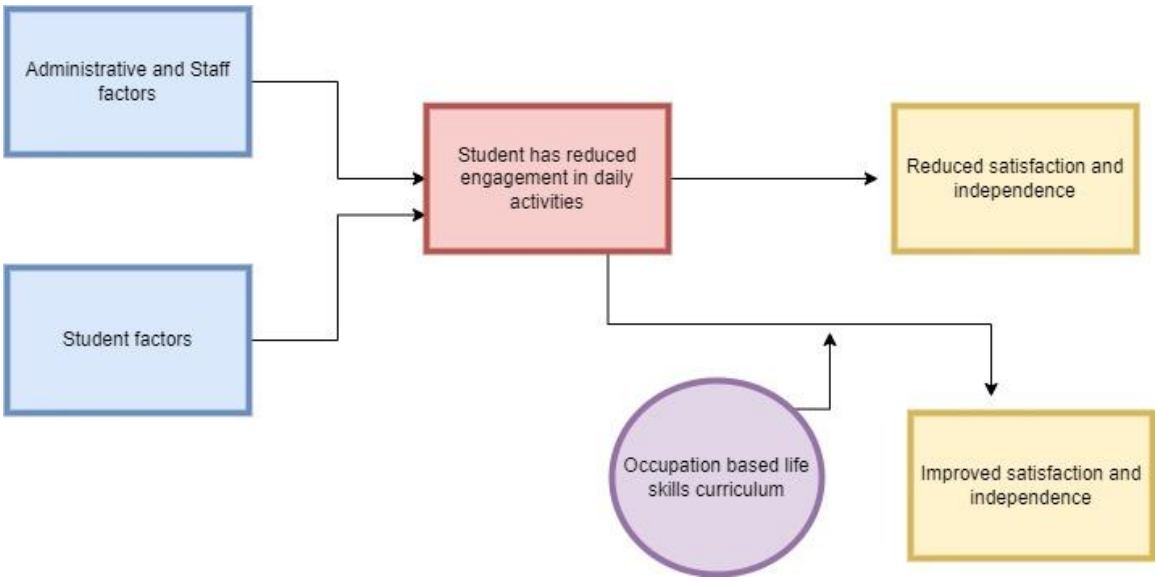
Overview of the Problem and Summary of the Explanatory Model

As students leave high school, they often wonder what their future will hold. This remains the same for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). However, once high school ends for these students, many of their therapy supports and services end as well. This transition to adulthood results in a gap of services for a very needy population. In 2021, Kirby et al. report that 48% of autistic adults experience a poor overall outcome by needing high levels of support or living placement, while 31% resulted in a fair outcome needing support and supervision. Dell'Armo and Tassé (2019) report that after leaving high school only 28.7% of students with intellectual disabilities were enrolled in postsecondary education, only 38.8% were employed, and only 36.3% were living independently for up to eight years after high school. Lipscomb et al. (2018) report in their summary of the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS-2) of 2012, that youth with disabilities are more likely to have fewer socioeconomic advantages, to struggle academically, and are less likely to go onto secondary education and employment.

The problem of poor transitions of students to adulthood is evidenced by decreased job attainment. According to the recent 2023 report by the United States (US) Bureau of Labor and Statistics, only 21% of people with disabilities were employed. Please see Figure 2.1 for a visual description of the problem.

Figure 2.1

Explanatory Model



Planning for the transition to adulthood for students with IDD needs to start while they are still in high school. The trend remains where the needs of these students are not met. These students should be learning life, job, and social skills, as well as strategies for independence to improve their quality of life. The COVID pandemic also caused considerable harm by limiting outside job placements (Klein, 2021). Figure 2.1 depicts that the problem begins with administrative and staff factors, as well as student factors. Problems with administration seem to be support, funding, COVID restrictions, and transportation. Staffing factors arise with staff turnover, decreased or inappropriate staff education, decreased motivation and support, and the lack of a transition program in place for carryover. The students have their own factors which include their motivation level, their interests and self-determination, with parental involvement as a mediating

factor.

Students with IDD face many challenges when completing daily activities which may result in reduced engagement in daily activities. This reduced engagement in daily activities may result in reduced satisfaction and independence in activities of daily living for life after high school. Students who require continued support and services may also have limited opportunities to either further their education and/or gain employment after leaving school. This leaves these students unprepared for the rest of their lives. They may require extra parental and societal support, rather than becoming contributing members of society. An intervention of an occupation-based life-skills curriculum, and a strong transition plan, should act as a moderator with the goal to improve student satisfaction, independence, and quality of life in their transition from student to adult.

Theoretical Frameworks of the Problem

Students with IDD that leave high school have more transition needs than their typical peers. In our school district as well as neighboring districts, there is a noticeable lack of programs and services to support these students as they move from being a student to being an adult. These students are graduating from school with decreased engagement in daily activities and job skills. To help remedy this problem, this author proposes to help develop and implement an occupation-based program to help train and educate these students with life, job, and communication skills to help them succeed. Since this is such a complex situation with many needs, using just one theoretical framework to understand the problem is not enough. Two frameworks will be used to explain the problem.

The first theoretical framework is occupation based, as occupation-based experience is a foundation of the proposed intervention. The Person-Environment-Occupation Model describes the interaction with the "person, environment and occupation, as inter-related circles. The overlap of the three elements represents occupational performance…it is defined as the dynamic experience of a person engaged in purposeful activities and tasks within an environment" (Law et al., 1996, pp. 14–16). This model incorporates experience as a necessary variable for the individual to have occupation. By encouraging the students to have occupations and by taking their environment and person into consideration, it will allow for enhancing their occupational performance.

The second theoretical framework that will address the problem of reduced engagement in daily activities is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT was developed in 1985 by Deci and Ryan and is a theory about human motivation and personality. This theory looks at an individual's involvement in what is happening to them, their motivation, and their ability to make choices about their life. Deci and Ryan explain SDT as needing three important factors of autonomy, competence and connectedness or relatedness to achieve "optimal motivation, effective behavior, healthy development, and psychological well-being" (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 432). Autonomy is an important aspect of this theory because the individual gains a feeling of self-control of their behavior and their goals. This feeling of self-control enables the individual to feel their actions will result in a change. Competence adds to SDT by allowing the individual to learn and master skills. If an individual feels able, they will feel more likely to succeed

at their goals. Connectedness is important to allow the individual to have a sense of belonging or attachment to others. Self-determination is also related to an individual's perception of their satisfaction and independence. This concept is related as to how engaged or not the student is with their daily activities. The more engaged a student is with daily activities the more satisfied they will become. If an individual does not have motivation and self-determination, then they are less likely to engage. Engagement is imperative for exposure to life skill activities. In conclusion, by using both the person-environment-occupation model as well as the self-determination theory, this problem of high school students with IDD decreased engagement in daily activities can be explained.

Search of the Literature

A literature review was conducted of the databases of CINAHL, ERIC and APA PsycINFO to determine if there is evidence that students with IDD who have reduced engagement or participation will have reduced satisfaction, and if administrative, staff, and student factors can contribute to reduced engagement. The resultant study designs varied including comparison studies, longitudinal study designs, path analysis, quantitative study, rapid review, meta-analysis, and two systematic reviews. Outcome measures used were not similar among most studies except for two studies that shared use of the Quality of Life Questionnaire (QOLQ), (Miller & Chan 2008; Skaletski et al., 2021), and several studies that used the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (Bal et al., 2015; Salt & Jahoda, 2020), and the Daily Living Scale (Chan et al., 2018; Kilincaslan et al., 2019). A significant number of studies had the commonality of sharing data from the NLTS-2 of 2012 (Lipscomb et al., 2018; Shogren & Plotner, 2012; Wong et

al., 2021). Populations studied were similar and included individuals with disabilities, focusing mostly on adolescents but also some studies included adults. Several studies focused only on individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Engagement

A literature review was completed to answer the question if there was a connection between engagement in activities and life satisfaction or Quality of Life. (QoL). A database search using CINAHL and APA PsycINFO resulted in several common themes. One theme is the overall transition to adulthood for individuals with ASD is difficult (Bal et al., 2015; Skaletski et al., 2021; Steinhausen et al., 2016). Using research with high strength, Steinhausen et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis focused on the population with ASD and prognosis for QoL. They studied ages 12–64 and discovered that 47.7% of individuals with ASD have a poor or very poor overall outcome for adjustment in adulthood. Skaletski et al. in their 2021 rapid review also found similar findings, that adolescents and adults with ASD have decreased QoL compared to non-autistic peers. In addition to lower quality of life, Bal et al. (2015) found that individuals with ASD show slower development of daily living skills (DLS) compared to others with non-spectrum disorder. However, having higher initial nonverbal problem-solving skills resulted in more rapid progression of DLS. Early intervention and beginning DLS training at a young age is important, especially for adolescents transitioning to adulthood (Bal et al., 2015).

A second common theme found was that participation or engagement influences life satisfaction (Badia et al., 2013; Bentzen & Malmquist, 2022; Laverdure & Beisbier,

2021; Miller & Chan, 2008). Individuals with disabilities who found constraints to participation reported decreased life satisfaction, but participating in leisure activities may enhance QoL for individuals with developmental disabilities in the community (Badia et al., 2013). Students with disabilities who reported participation and engagement difficulties, as well as negative peer interactions during physical education, reported decreased satisfaction (Bentzen & Malmquist, 2022). Having a social support system and interpersonal skills were associated with life satisfaction in adults with IDD. There is a robust relationship between life skills and perceived social support and life satisfaction (Miller & Chan, 2008). Strong evidence in the systematic review indicated that engaging in activities and occupation across environments, helped to improve participation in mobility and activities of daily living (ADLs) in children aged 5–21 with disabilities (Laverdure & Beisbier, 2021). All the studies show a correlation between engagement or participation in activities influencing satisfaction or QoL. These findings help show that reduced engagement in activities can result in reduced satisfaction.

Administration and Staff Factors

After looking at student satisfaction and engagement as possible factors, a search of evidence using ERIC was conducted if administration and staff factors could result in reduced engagement for students with IDD. Multiple researchers conducted studies and summarized findings based on data from a longitudinal study conducted by the United States government in 2012 called the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS-2). Data was collected starting in 2000 and every two years for ten years following 13,000 students from ages 13 to 21 with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This

is a sample of students representing twelve disability classification throughout the United States. Lipscomb et al. (2018) conducted a summary report of the NLTS-2 indicating that youth with an IEP tend to struggle more academically, are also more likely to have decreased engagement, and decreased participation in extracurricular activities. Their parents are also not likely to attend transition meetings or be employed themselves. Shogren and Plotner (2012) used data from the first wave of the NLTS-2 and discovered more administrative, staff, and student and family factors that can have an effect on student engagement. They looked only at students with ASD, intellectual disabilities (ID), and "other disabilities". They discovered there was a breakdown of communication and collaboration in the transition planning team, and that outside agencies had a limited role in transition IEP meetings. They found that students with ASD or ID were less likely to take a leadership role in their IEP. In the NLTS-2, Wong et al. (2021) discovered that the amount of parent participation in transition meetings played a role in predicting employment outcomes. For higher functioning students with ASD, academic performance was the mediating variable between post school employment and parental participation, while for lower functioning students with ASD, the school-based transition program supports were the key mediators.

A literature review done in 2009 by Test, Fowler et al., and a systematic review also in 2009 by Test, Mazzotti et al. of secondary transition practices provides evidence-based predictors for categories to improve post school outcomes for students with IDD. They found that teaching life skills and purchasing skills had strong evidence to improve post school outcomes. Their review helps summarize the factors that the school

administration and staff can change or improve on to enable increased engagement of students. They found evidence that by encouraging community experiences, career awareness, parental involvement, occupational courses, work experience, self-advocacy, self-care/independent living skills, social skills, transition skills, and vocational education at school, can all influence student engagement and improve student outcomes (Test, Fowler et al., 2009: Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Wong et al. (2021) also agreed that the school transition program is a malleable factor in predicting student outcomes.

Another administrative factor and staff factor that can have an impact on student outcomes is the use of paraprofessionals and interagency collaboration. Paraprofessionals such as classroom aides and teacher's assistants, have the potential to serve an important role in promoting student engagements, and student directed practices. However, an important issue is proper training and preparation of personnel for this role (Dykstra Steinbrenner & Watson, 2015). Currently interagency collaboration during transition IEP meetings tends to have a limited role, with limited involvement of vocational-rehabilitation collaboration (Shogren & Plotner, 2012). The factors of limited involvement of administration, staff, and inter agencies have an impact on student transitions to adulthood and engagement in daily activities.

Student Factors

To establish if student factors can contribute to reduced engagement in daily activities for students with IDD, a literature review was conducted using CINAHL and APA PsycINFO. More studies surfaced utilizing data from the NLTS-2, as well as other longitudinal studies. Researchers found that more positive school outcomes were

associated with family involvement as a student factor (Bouck et al., 2021; Solberg et al., 2012; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2021). Other student factors that can contribute to engagement include the severity of the diagnosis (Dykstra Steinbrenner & Watson, 2015), communication level, daily living skills (Chan et al., 2018), gender (Badia et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2015) financial resources (Santiago et al., 2022) and parental education (Taylor et al., 2105).

The parent-teacher relationship also plays an important role in student outcomes. The quality of the relationship and communication between the school and parents is important (Bouck et al., 2021; Goldrich Eskow et al., 2018). Schools need to encourage family participation in IEP meetings, since parents tend to have decreased attendance to transition meetings (Lipscomb et al., 2018). Increased parental involvement is shown to have a role in predicting employment outcomes (Wong et al., 2021). Student involvement in goal setting in the IEP process influences motivation and confidence (Solberg et al., 2012).

Conclusion

To summarize, multiple sources were used to confirm the aforementioned research questions. Based on the findings, there is evidence that reduced engagement in activities has an impact on life satisfaction. Administrative factors and staff factors of the school can impact adulthood transition, student engagement, and life satisfaction. Research findings also reiterate the importance of good communication, staff training, and interagency collaboration in transition planning. Predictors in successful adulthood transition planning also include parental involvement and advocacy as various student

factors (e.g., diagnosis, communication level, and gender) may require comprehensive planning and organization. Improving transition practices in a way that promotes communication, increases collaboration, and integrates a life skills curriculum that meets students' developmental needs is sure to influence student satisfaction, engagement and QoL.

CHAPTER THREE – Overview of Current Approaches and Methods

Introduction

Life presents itself with many transitions as we age from infancy to adulthood. These transitions represent a time of adaptation, change, and processes that need to occur between the person and the environment (Panyo et al., 2021a). As humans we transition from diapers to toileting, crawling to walking, and care at home to care from teachers and staff while attending school. A child's school career also presents with a series of transitions and points of graduation such as preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and finally graduation from high school to adulthood.

This graduation from high school to adulthood can be one of the most challenging times for students. Uncertainties about career options, employment or living arrangements can plague adolescents as they move towards adulthood. Halpern (1992) defines the transition to adulthood as "a period of *floundering* that occurs for at least the first several years after leaving school as adolescents attempt to assume a variety of adult roles in their communities" (p. 203). This "floundering period" of transition can last for many years (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Supporting students with a transition service is important to develop academic skills, social skills, and self-care skills (Panyo et al., 2021a).

Adulthood transition can be especially challenging for students with disabilities. To help support this challenge, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires that schools prepare students for future work by providing students with

disabilities transition planning, assessment, and employment-related instruction (IDEA, 2004). However, despite this mandated support it seems to still not be enough. Students with disabilities tend to be less employed, drop out of school, earn less per hour than their typical peers, continue to live with their parents after high school (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009) and experience more social isolation (Lindsay at el., 2019). In their systematic review, Gilson et al. found that 23% of students with intellectual disability, 32% with autism, and 37% with multiple disabilities did not have paid employment eight years after leaving high school (Gilson et al., 2017).

A way to develop independent life skills and job training is for students to pursue post-secondary transition programs. These programs have the potential to increase self-determination, transition skills, and postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities (Lindsey et al., 2019). Transition services from high school to adulthood are important for all students to help ensure life-long success. For students with disabilities these services are even more vital. Participating in coordinated sets of activities with transition services increases the likelihood of employability, education, training, and skill acquisition training that promotes successful post-school outcomes (Talapatra et al., 2018).

Evidence for Improved Post-School Outcomes

Despite this Individualized Education Program (IEP) mandated support for transition, there remains a gap in services (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Funded by the United States Department of Education, Test, Mazzotti et al. conducted a systematic review in 2009 to find practices to effectively remedy this gap.

They determined 16 predictors that improved post-school outcomes for employment, education and living independently for students with disabilities. These predictors include: "career awareness, community experiences, exit exam requirements/high school diploma status, inclusion in general education, interagency collaboration, occupational courses, paid work experience, parental involvement, program of study, self-advocacy/self-determination, self-care/independent living, social skills, student support, transition program, vocational education, and work study" (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009, p. 170). In 2021, Mazzotti et al., expanded the research base with an updated systematic literature review. Their study added evidence to 14 of the 16 existing predictors and added three new predictors. These new predictors include psychological empowerment, self-realization, and technology skills and have the potential to produce favorable transition outcomes for students with disabilities. These predictors provide a basis for program development and implementation for facilitators working with students with IDD (Mazzotti et al., 2021).

Evidence for Transition for Students with Disabilities

Several researchers found evidence that interventions and programs supporting individuals with disabilities to transition to adulthood were successful (Bathje et al., 2018; Lindsey et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2021). Occupation based life skills interventions as well as a supported employment model was shown to be successful for adults with mild to moderate neurodevelopmental disorders (Bathje et al., 2018). In 2019, Lindsey et al. conducted a systematic review of post-secondary transition programs. While they reported many transition programs exist, they found these programs varied in length,

duration, sessions, and delivery methods. All programs studied in the review did show an improvement in at least one area of college enrollment, self-determination, self-confidence, social and vocational self-efficacy, autonomy, social support, career exploration, or transition skills.

In 2021, Rowe et al. also updated the 2009 research base of Test, Mazzotti et al. with a systematic review to include evidenced-based and research-based predictors on which practices are effective to teach secondary students with disabilities transition skills. Their review identified nine evidenced-based practices as well as 22 research-based practices that covered more than 45 transition-related skills. They also identified specific interventions focusing on specific skills (Rowe et al., 2021). These include the following interventions of "Check & Connect to increase student engagement and IEP participation…EnvisionIT to teach technology skills…Parent training to teach knowledge of transition services…Project SEARCH to teach vocational skills…Self-Advocacy Strategy to teach student involvement in the IEP… Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction to teach self-determination skills…Self-Directed IEP to teach self-determination skills and involvement in the IEP…Take Charge curriculum to teach self-determination skills…Video modeling to teach food preparation and home maintenance skills" (Rowe et al., 2021, pp. 33–36).

Similarly, to Lindsey et al., the interventions reviewed by Rowe et al. also varied in duration, focus, and environment. Some programs were community-based, while others were home or school-based. Many of these interventions targeted the aspect of a student's self-determination and encouraged taking charge of their own future starting

with their IEP. Self-determination is considered an important aspect of transition (Rowe et al., 2021).

Community-Based School to Work Transition Interventions

In addition to self-determination, employment skills instruction is integral to post-school employment success (Gilson et al., 2017). Several studies found that community-based school-to-work transition programs to teach employment skills were successful (Kramer et al., 2018; Molfenter et al., 2017; Wehman et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2017;). Project SEARCH is a one-year vocational training program that collaborates between large local businesses and schools with a high success rate of 78% of students achieving paid employment. Students receive instruction for job skills in a classroom setting, then internship time during their school day. Every twelve weeks the students will rotate through three different internships with support from job coaches (Wehman et al., 2013).

Another school-to-work transition program with evidence of success is Wisconsin's Let's Get to Work (LGTW). Molfenter et al. (2017) describe it as a pilot program that encompasses five years and 12 schools with the goal for each student enrolled to gain paid employment within three years. LGTW proved to be a successful intervention helping teach schools how to teach job skills and employment to their students. Employment for students with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) increased 10% between 2010–2016, with increases also noted in quality-of-life scores and extracurricular activities of these students as well.

A third school-to-work transition program is a partnership between multiple state vocational, educational, and local medical centers called PAY Check (Paid

Apprenticeship and college for Youth with disabilities). A “braided funding” approach was used along with grants to cover costs and expenses. Key components include self-determination training, paid apprenticeships, work-based high school diploma, and post-secondary education all conducted within a community-based setting shown to have positive outcomes. Strengths included positive outcomes, but limitations included the expense, staff needed, and parental contribution that was required (Wilson et al., 2017).

Project TEAM (Teens making Environment and Activity Modification) is a program that can be delivered by an occupational therapy practitioner (OTP), social worker, or special education teacher. The goal of the program is to teach specific problem-solving abilities that help students identify and solve environmental barriers. The twelve-week intervention is composed of three parts. The first component includes a group curriculum where lessons are taught on various topics weekly. The second component consists of peer mentoring by another young adult with an IDD. The final component and a community-based trip where skills are practiced. The TEAM youth had attained more self-determination, and attained more goals that were sustained at six weeks post intervention (Kramer et al., 2018).

Online and Residential Transition Interventions

In addition to the community-based transition interventions mentioned previously, online programs are available to help youth with disabilities (YWD) transition to adulthood (Hatfield et al., 2017) as well as residential programs (King et al., 2021). Developed in Australia by Hatfield et al. is a program called Better OutcOmes & Successful Transitions for Autism (BOOST-A). This intervention is geared to help

adolescents with autism in years 8–11 of school to improve self-determination and career exploration. This online program contains four modules, which the student completes at their own pace. No differences of significance were noted in self-determination between intervention and control groups. However, there were significant differences that favored the intervention group in transition specific self-determination and opportunity for self-determination at home as reported by parents, and career exploration as reported by both adolescents and parents (Hatfield et al., 2017).

Residential Immersive Life Skills (RILS) programs provide an opportunity for youth with disabilities to transition into adulthood and learn life skills while living away from home in a group setting. This program from Canada is offered over the summer months, can range from one to three weeks in duration, and is located on a college campus. A multidisciplinary team works with the students including occupational therapy (OT), physical and recreational therapy, life skill facilitators, social work, aides, and nurses. The students are provided opportunities to enhance autonomy and self-empowerment. All participants demonstrated changes in autonomy, with males having improvements in self-efficacy. A limitation of the program is the expense required to run (King et al., 2021).

Predictors and Barriers to Success of Transition Programs

Several key themes have emerged as far as transition program implementation is concerned for students with IDD. Encouraging students to take charge of their own future, starting with their IEP, is shown to have positive outcomes. It is important to have students take charge of their IEP process early (Martin & Williams-Diehm, 2013) and

include IEP interventions to increase self-determination and leisure (Test, Smith & Carter, 2014). Two self-determination interventions include BOOST-A (Hatfield et al., 2017), and Whose Future is it Anyway (Wehmeyer et al., 2011). Targeting self-determination can help students become more motivated to achieve their goals and is considered an important aspect of transition (Rowe et al., 2021). Improving a student's self-determination can lead to positive outcomes (Hatfield et al., 2017; Kramer et al., 2019; Lee & Carter, 2012; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009; Wehmeyer, et al., 2011).

In addition to encouraging self-determination, interventions that include technology training, job, and life skills acquisition are shown to have positive outcomes for students with disabilities. Educating youth with disabilities to use technology is a predictor of positive post-school outcomes and students that had poor computer skills were less likely to gain competitive integrated post-school employment (Mazzotti et al., 2021). Occupational skills and vocational education are important to improve post school outcomes of students with disabilities (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Community based transition programs are also shown to have positive effects (Gilson et al., 2017; Molfenter et al., 2017; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). Examples of community based occupational interventions such as Project SEARCH (Wehman et al., 2013), PAY Check (Wilson et al., 2017) and residential life skills programs (King et al., 2021), and Project TEAM that address self-determination and removal of environmental barriers (Kramer et al., 2019).

Positivity and collaborative relationships are other common themes shown amongst the research. Maintaining a positive climate is important for successful transition planning (Stroebel et al., 2008). Collaboration among agencies is required for successful

transition planning (Lee & Carter, 2012; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Molfenter et al., 2017; Stroebel et al., 2008; Test & Fowler, 2018; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2017), and should be started early (Sweigart & Evanovich, 2015; Test, Smith & Carter, 2014). Family and school collaborations and partnerships are shown to have a positive impact on a child's outcomes (Webb et al., 2014), especially on academic achievements, behaviors, mental health, and social-behavior competence (Smith et al., 2020). Family support is an important area for school to work transition (Lee & Carter, 2012; Smith et al., 2020) as well as all aspects of education (Test et al., 2014).

The use of a multidisciplinary team for transition planning is shown to be a component of success. Some of these team members include vocational rehabilitation transition counselors (Plotner et al., 2017), school psychologists (Stroebel et al., 2008; Talapatra et al., 2018), career and technical education (CTE) teachers (Daviso et al., 2016), transition coordinator (Stroebel et al., 2008), and related services including occupational therapy (Panyo et al., 2021b). Occupational therapy interventions can improve transition readiness for students (Bathje et al., 2018; Kardos & White, 2006; Panyo et al., 2021b; Pierce et al., 2020) and transition group programming can help facilitate smoother transitions and improve social skills (Merz et al., 2020).

Despite these predictors of success, many barriers to transition planning and implementation exist. These include a lack of standardization and research (Rosner et al., 2020), staffing expenses (Nochajski & Schweitzer, 2014), and lack of parental involvement (Panyo et al., 2021a). There is a lack of professional preparedness for transition training (Mazzotti et al., 2014; Pierce et al., 2020; Test & Fowler, 2018). A

peer support model for job skill acquisitions can be a useful tool to assist with supported employment, however it can be expensive and complicated (Kaehne & Beyer, 2013). To achieve and ensure success, transition services and programs should use evidenced based practices and predictors to ensure the greatest likelihood of success (Sweigard & Evanovich, 2015; Test & Fowler, 2018).

Guidance for Successful Transition Programs

Many researchers offer guidance for successful transition programs. Stroebel et al. (2008) recommend that successful transition planning requires a collaborative effort and involvement between the community, the business offering work sites, and the school. They suggest an external and internal transition team managing student needs and placements. This internal team can consist of related service personnel, school psychologist, teaching staff, and vocational rehabilitation. An analysis of jobs and student goals needs to be completed, as well as student learning styles, vocational preferences, and the development of the student's portfolio of skills. Stroebel et al. also stress the importance of a positive collaborative effort and climate, as well a transition coordinator position at the school being key. In addition, self-determination skills such as self-advocacy, pride and self-awareness should be taught and included in goals and objectives of the IEP. Parental involvement is vital, and efforts should be made to remove any barriers that impede participation. Once a transition program is in place, conducting a program evaluation is important (Stroebel et al., 2008).

In 2016, Paula Kohler published a taxonomy with guidelines to assist professionals with transition programming. She built upon her previous work in 1996 and

used evidenced-based and promising-practices for transition. According to Kohler, a transition program is greatly enhanced when services and supports relate to five categories including: student focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, family engagement, and program structure (Kohler et al., 2016). Please see the taxonomy for transition programming in Appendix A.

King et al. (2021) add other suggestions for transition program design. Providing experiences has a correlation to outcomes. They stress the importance of personal choice and growth, social interaction, and psychological engagement to enhance autonomy and empowerment. However, there seems to be a lack of standardization, consistency, and strong evidence base in transition services for youth with IDD (Rosner et al., 2020). More research is needed to identify programs and evidenced-based practices that schools can implement to ensure post-school success (Mazzotti et al., 2013). Test & Fowler (2018) support this statement by stating the future research needs to be of high quality or it should not be published. In addition, there is an important need for fully prepared professionals. There seems to be a lack of education in transition for teachers and related service providers in school, many getting their training on the job, or through continuing education in-services (Test & Fowler, 2018).

There are other important factors to consider for creating and implementing a transition plan for students with IDD. Starting early when the students are still young to encourage participation in their IEP. The goal is for the student to gain self-determination and to be a participant in the IEP, not an attendant. (Martin & Williams-Diehm, 2013). A collaborative parent-school-community partnership model should be employed to

encourage successful long-term outcomes (Webb et al., 2014). Family-school partnerships interventions have evidence to positively impact children's academic achievements, mental and social competencies, and behaviors (Smith et al., 2020). Prepare students for integrated employment using employment-skill instruction and vocational training (Gilson et al., 2017).

Occupational Therapy and Transition Services

Occupational therapy practitioners may not be participating in transition services to their full potential (Kardos & White, 2005). OT services are the most-commonly received support service for elementary students with IDD. However, once these students move past elementary school, their receipt of these services declines, with only 7.5% receiving OT services within the last 12 months of their school career (Goodman et al., 2020). OTPs are qualified and can help adolescents achieve post school goals in employment, education, activities of daily living (ADL), and social participation (Pierce et al., 2021). Transition group programming can help facilitate smoother transitions through their therapy interventions (Merz et al., 2020).

Transition service interventions are an emerging area for the school-based OTP. However, more evidence is needed to guide OTPs in best practice transition services, as well as examples of programs that are useful with this population (Pierce et al., 2021) Research gaps remain, and the quantity and quality of evidenced-based interventions are lacking (Bathje et al., 2018). Additional research is needed to help OTPs with transition planning and goal preparation (Kardos & White, 2006). Professional preparation of the practitioner is needed to help support these youth with disabilities for transition readiness

(Pierce et al., 2020).

Implications for Program Design

Programs need to be developed that are effective to meet the needs of students with IDD transitioning to adulthood. Students with IDD may require increased time and support to allow them to develop skills, as well as opportunities for exposure to occupations. Using evidence from research and successful interventions, a community-based transition program has the potential to be a starting point for program development. Having a multidisciplinary team to facilitate development will be vital, as well as student and parental involvement. Providing a program that serves as a place where students with IDD can gain occupation-based life-skills, in a community setting, would be a solution to a gap in services. Having this program also function as a business that earns revenue would overcome some of the expense barriers that seem to limit many other programs' implementation. Collaboration among many agencies in the community as well as the school districts involved would be necessary. This serves as the starting point for the development of a community-based, occupation-based life skills transition training program for students with IDD.

Conclusion

Transitioning a student with disability to adulthood can be an overwhelming process with many logistics for families, therapists, educators, and students to consider. Discussions around transition can be particularly heavy with respect to anticipation of the indefinite routine changes to follow upon student graduation. Adulthood transition in particular stimulates serious discussions of career selection, community engagement, and

post-secondary living programming that steers the trajectory of a student's life. Therefore, IEP teams have a responsibility to consider a student's needs related to job training, functional life skill development, and employment supports and needs. However, adulthood transition planning for students with disabilities remains with unmet needs. Identifying and applying evidence-based models in adulthood transition can help guide education teams, students, and families throughout the transition planning process.

In summation, there is a serious lack of evidence-based models, and education regarding adulthood transitions. Occupational therapists can play a vital role in transition planning and program implementation but are often underutilized in this area of education. By utilizing the aforementioned evidenced-based practices, particularly those discussed by the 2009 Test et al. systematic review, and Kohler's 2016 Taxonomy, can serve as a guide for IEP teams to provide a strong foundation for an ideal transition program model to ensure meaningful and successful adulthood transition (Goodman et al., 2020).

CHAPTER FOUR – Description of the Proposed Program

Basis of the Proposed Program

Practice Gap

Transition programs are important to help high school students make the shift of roles from student to adult. These programs are especially important for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). These students have been identified at a high risk for poor post-school outcomes and are also less likely to be employed, gain secondary education, live independently, or access the necessary transition related instruction to ensure post school success (Lipscomb et al., 2018; Mazzotti et al., 2021). Other poor post-school outcomes include lower levels of life satisfaction, earning lower wages, higher rates of arrest, and decreased attendance at institutions of postsecondary education (Lindsay et al., 2019; Pham, 2013). Poor post-school outcomes such as these have the potential to affect the health and wellness of students with IDD. The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 mandates that transition planning assessment services and employment-related instruction are administered to students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (IDEA, 2004). However, there seems to be a lack of consistency with transition program implementation and administration across school districts, counties, and states.

Initiative Proposal

The author's proposed initiative is a community-based transition program for students with IDD aged 18–21. This program would be housed in a university building's lobby space. The space will house a café to provide beverages and food to staff and

students of the building. “Opportunity Café” will be run by students with IDD with the support of adult staff. The intention of the program is for students with IDD to learn job, behavioral, social, and life skills to prepare them for life after high school. These transition students will be involved in all aspects of the café operation and management. This includes growing some of the food, baking, preparing, selling the food to the customers, cleaning up, ordering of supplies, laundry, and technology utilization. Opportunity Café hopes to be a place where students with IDD are accepted for who they are (belonging), provided opportunities (being) to gain skills (becoming) in a supportive work environment (doing) (Wilcock & Hocking, 2015). By having a place where they can feel important and provide a needed service, these students can earn income and skills to prevent occupational imbalance, alienation, exclusion, and deprivation.

Opportunity Café will promote health by improving the skills, knowledge, and abilities of students with IDD. In addition to learning job, behavioral, and social skills, these students will also have opportunities to make decisions for themselves, improving their autonomy and self-determination. Encouraging these students to have a role in their life will thereby encourage health so they can “be a vital, creative and productive citizen and resident who contributes to the development of flourishing communities and a thriving nation” (AOTA, 2020, p. 2). Since the problem of diminished transition services is an existing problem, this author proposes a tertiary health prevention level intervention to “prevent the progression of a condition, including poverty. Strategies include promoting equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, economic self-sufficiency, advocacy, and self-advocacy” (AOTA, 2020, p. 2). However, as program

development continues, plans can be put into place offering secondary prevention. Opportunity Café will encompass many dimensions including emotional, financial, occupational, and social domains of health.

Supporting Models and Theories

Several models, frameworks, and theories borrowed from teaching, nursing, occupational, and health promotion are being utilized in the development of this initiative. The overall framework organizational model utilized in the initiative creation will be the PRECEDE-PROCEED Model. This program development model helps ensure a program has proper planning and evaluation. By starting with what the expected outcome will be and working backwards, helps to ensure program development remains population centered (Porter, 2016). Frameworks and theories used to support initiative development include the following:

- The Person-Environment-Occupation Model (PEO) describes the interaction with the individual, the environment and occupation as interrelated circles. The overlap represents occupational performance and is a dynamic experience (Law et al., 1996). An occupation-based model is important for this initiative since the café will be a place where students will receive occupation-based experiences. This theory helps to fill in the gaps left behind by the Social Cognitive Theory.
- Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). This learning theory states that for an individual to learn, they must have experiences (Kolb, 1984). By working at

the café, these students will be exposed to many experiences and opportunities to learn new skills as well as strengthen established skills.

- Developmental Health Framework (DHF). Typically used in nursing, this framework proposes that developmental benefits arise from modifying the environment to encourage growth-enhancing experiences such as interacting with peers, exercising choice, and having a sense of personal growth (Allen & Warner, 2002). Having this framework is beneficial to encourage change, and support the transition to adulthood, while looking at how the environment affects the student.
- Interprofessional Collaboration Theory (ICT). This framework of collaboration between agencies increases the effectiveness of health services by working together to achieve a common goal (D'Amour et al., 2005). Opportunity Café is a complex endeavor involving many community and state agencies with different funding sources, so successful collaboration is vital.

Stakeholders

Because this project is a large undertaking, there will be many stakeholders. On the micro level, the stakeholders will include the students, their parents, and program support staff (teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals). At the meso level, the stakeholders will include various groups and organizations. These will include: the university where the café is housed, the school district where the students attend school, the local culinary school which will provide instruction and food items, the local hydroponic facility and agricultural school for agricultural and horticultural instruction, a local farm where the

chickens and the cows will be housed and food will be grown, the vocational rehabilitation agencies for support, the local community and the campus students as patrons, and the local chamber of commerce. At the macro level, the stakeholders will include the State of New York since the proposed initiative “Opportunity Café” will be housed in one of its buildings. If the proposed initiative becomes successful, then ideally changes can be made at the national and international level to policies and programs. A detailed breakdown of the administrative stakeholder roles and responsibilities is described in Appendix B, and operational stakeholder roles and responsibilities is described in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Table of Operational Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

Personnel	**Role**	**Description of Responsibilities**
Occupational therapist	Program leader	Facilitate the collaboration between universities, agencies, and school systems. Support students. Assist with training and program implementation and program evaluation
Physical and speech therapists	Service provider/ Consultant	Provide therapeutic support as needed, and suggestions on student positioning, physical, assistive technology, and communication needs.
Special education teacher	Teacher	Provide education to students on academic needs, life skills, and transitioning roles. Oversee paraprofessional support staff (aides, teachers assistants) that interact with students. Participate in data collection for formative evaluation
Transition students with IDD	Employees of cafe	Learn safe food handling, preparation, ordering, cleaning, growing food, caring for livestock, customer service,
Parents of students with IDD	Collaborator	Encourage employment, attendance, and carryover of skills at home.
Para-professional staff	Student support	Provide aide support to students that require assistance. Help provide a safe environment. Participate in program evaluation.
OTD students attending university	Observing/ Mentoring/ Supporting	Interacting with students as a fieldwork opportunity. Assist with data collection for evaluation.
Local community residents/ staff and students of campus	Patrons	Support the efforts of these students by purchasing food and beverage items

Initiative Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the proposed initiative is to develop a pilot transition program for students with IDD. By creating a program intervention that provides a needed service to the campus where it is housed, as well as offering a solution to a gap in services, needs are being met for students with IDD. The goals for the students would be to improve occupational and activity of daily living skills to prepare the students for adulthood. The goal for the café would be to become an operational business that creates enough revenue to cover its expenses. The goal for the program would be to become a replicable intervention that can be implemented across the state at other campuses.

Full Logic Model

The logic model provides a visual representation of the essential elements of the intervention of Opportunity Café. Represented in this model are the resources, activities, program outputs, and short-term and long-term anticipated outcomes. Use of a logic model can become useful in multiple ways. One way is that it can be presented at the stakeholder meetings to help stakeholders fully understand the program. The logic model will prove useful for program evaluation as well. Once formative and summative data has been collected through the program evaluation, the stakeholders can refer to the logic model to determine if anticipated outcomes were actualized. The logic model is fluid and changes as the program changes. Please see Appendix C for a full logic model.

Program Participants and Resources

Participants

Participants will be recruited from the local high school transition programs for

students 18–21 years of age with IDD. These students will begin training prior to their transition year by learning job skills during their freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years at high school doing on-campus job sites and activities. The job sites include the middle school coffee cart program, and the high school student store.

The middle school coffee cart program runs from 8am to 10am daily. Two student employees are delivered by bus to the elementary-middle school with a supporting paraprofessional. They brew coffee and stock the coffee cart with snacks and beverages to sell. A mail delivery program is also put into place for staff who select this option. These students are responsible to stock the cart, sell the coffee, tally the products sold, count cash, and document time in and out on a timesheet. They are returned to the high school for the remainder of their day for lunch and academics.

The high school student store is run by high school students during select periods during the school day. Coffee and beverages are available for sale, as well as bagels and instant soups. These students assist with coffee preparation, running the cash register, customer service, stocking supplies, and shop for supplies in the community. Money raised from the middle school coffee cart and high school student store help fund field trips for community learning experiences.

In addition to the middle school coffee cart and high school store experiences, training to begin the transition for Opportunity Café will also need to learn baking, cleaning, growing food and caring for animals. These trainings will consist of 8–10-week rotations in the following four areas:

1. Culinary school for baking, and safe food preparation and handling.

2. Horticulture at the indoor hydroponic facility or the local farm to grow food needed for the café.
3. Agriculture to care for chickens and cows at the local farm cooperative.
4. Laundry and cleaning at the local hotel facility to learn cleaning skills.

Once these students reach 18 years of age, they are permitted to leave the high school campus daily for job sites. Hourly wages for the students will be provided for up to ten hours per week of work through the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disability (OPWDD) program called Employment Training Program (ETP). This program provides supported employment and internship opportunities to promote job readiness (OPWDD, 2023).

Transportation of the students from their homes to the high school will be provided by the school district. Students will be picked up by the normal bus route provided by the high school and will be taken to the high school for drop off. Once all student employees are collected, they will be transported by bus again to the Opportunity Café job site along with support staff to prepare for the business of the day. Café hours of operation will be 8 am to 2:30 pm Monday to Friday following the school calendar for the first year. Once the student employees become trained, they will act as mentors for the incoming new class of transition trainees. Peer mentoring is shown to have a positive impact on learning (Kaehne & Beyer, 2013; Kramer et al., 2018).

Resources

Resources needed will include the physical space for the café location, equipment, and supplies, monetary, and community support, advertising, and teaching manuals. The

physical space of the café where it will be housed will be needed for access. Restaurant equipment will need to be purchased to allow for operations of the café. Food and beverage supplies are necessary to furnish the café with materials to enable sales. Permits and licenses will need to be applied for to allow the operation of the business. Grants will be written to obtain funds to offset costs of start-up purchases and staff salaries. Community support will ensure sustainability.

Additional resources available will include teaching and advertising materials. A brochure will be used to advertise the initiative to communities of interest. Please see the brochure provided in Appendix D. A leader's manual will be provided to train future generation leaders in the dissemination of the program as it expands to other campus sites. Please see the prepared leader's manual in Appendix E.

Interventions and Activities

The proposed intervention will be on the job training during the school day. Opportunity Café will be an operating business run by student participants with IDD. The hours of operation of the café will be 8 am to 2:30 pm daily during the campus year. The first year of operation the hours will run according to the high school calendar of September through the end of the college campus finals week. Subsequent years, the operations will begin according to the college campus calendar by utilizing previous years' trained students to work the café to accommodate the start of the fall semester.

While working on the college campus, the students will learn job skills through performance of tasks. These tasks may start out supported by staff, and as the student gains independence, this support will be phased out and withdrawn if able.

Accommodations will be provided to support students to be successful in job completion. These may include adaptations such as visual supports, video modeling, prompting and reminders, verbal supports, peer mentorship, and assistive technology. Each student will be provided with accommodations to support their needs or modifications to the environment to allow for success. An example of the sandwich making station set up for training purposes is available as Appendix F and the grading of the sandwich making ability is available as Appendix G.

Following successful business models will be important for intervention creation and sustainability. Consultation services will be sought out from the owners of successful franchises with similar mission and visions. One such successful franchise is Bitty and Beau's Coffee. This is a coffee chain franchise that started in Wilmington, North Carolina by Amy and Ben Wright. They have four children, one with autism and two with Down's Syndrome. They sought to create a place where their children could work and feel valued. They began their business with a coffee shop in 2016. Their business has grown to "Today, Bitty & Beau's Coffee has grown to 19 shops across 11 states with over 400 employees. Additionally, Bitty & Beau's Coffee has partnered with corporations to open shops in their world headquarters" (Bitty and Beau's, 2023).

Another successful business with a similar model to Opportunity Café is 3B Coffee. The 3B's stand for Being-Belonging-Becoming. This is a business that was started by an occupational therapist. From their website, "B3 is a nonprofit that provides social and vocational opportunities for people of all abilities. Using the way coffee brings people together, we aim to facilitate community between people with and without

disabilities and ultimately advance disability justice, allyship, and inclusion" (B3 Coffee, 2023a). The operate in a coffee kiosk in the Chapel Hill, North Carolina library on select days, as well as pop up services in locations by appointment. They have a YouTube channel with over 40 video tutorials for their employees to watch and learn the methods for beverage item preparation including a playlist to train new student employees (B3 Coffee, 2023b).

The Genesee Lake School is another example of a successful transition program. This Wisconsin-based employee-owned company is a school that includes a residential program, vocational services, and a respite program. In addition, the school has a transition program utilizing a successful, productive farm program that supports the school in many ways. Homegrown Farms is an on-campus farm offers onsite work-based learning and vocational training for their students. The farm is a full working farm providing produce, eggs, fish, and honey to the students, staff, and sale to the community at the farm store. The farm has aquaponics, hydroponics, a green house, and a field for growing fruits and vegetables, a fish hatchery, chickens, goats, and bees. This program is run by the school staff and students with IDD (Genesee Lake School, 2023).

Program Outputs and Outcomes

The primary goal of this program is providing a much-needed community based vocational and life skill training program for students with IDD to make them more employable and independent in their self-care skills. Program outputs will be determined during the summative evaluation process with variables including the number of students participants that complete the program, the number of students that are gainfully

employed at six months, 12 months, and 24 months post program completion, and the change in activity of daily living status of students as measured by parent report at pre- and post-evaluation surveys. Please see Appendix H for the survey to be used.

Additional program outputs will include the net income of the café, the amount of café sales, and the number of days of café operation. Using register receipts and a cost of supply versus cost of product spread sheet will help assess these outputs. Maintaining costs with supplies and avoiding waste will be important items to consider. Here the services of the business and accounting departments of the university can be put the use. The assistance of an accounting service provider for consultation on business management, staff payroll, and business tax preparation will be an important relationship to maintain.

Program outcomes will include increased knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the student employees with IDD. The program hopes to increase job and behavioral skills, and instrumental activity of daily living skills. Increasing motivation, confidence, and attitudes towards abilities will also be important outcomes. These outcomes will be measured using surveys of the parents and students pre- and post-program as well as observation notes taken by staff.

Locating the café at the university campus allows the program outcome of interaction with university students. Locating the café within the proximity of the rehabilitation science building of the university will provide access to occupational, physical, and speech therapy students as well as psychology and social work students. This location and population mix will provide an onsite fieldwork and clinical

opportunity that could prove valuable for interaction, hands on experience, and research opportunities.

Anticipated Barriers and Challenges

Developing a new vocational training program will have many barriers and challenges. Currently the transition programming run by school district staff lacks staff and job sites to allow for varying and appealing student experiences. Transportation to get students to the job sites can be an issue due to the current bus driver shortage. Increasing staff to support students at their program at the café will require approval by the school board. If budget increases are necessary, these will need to be approved by the school district community by a district wide vote.

Financing this venture will be a challenge. Monies can be raised by means of donations, fundraising, and through grants. These efforts will require time and resources spent on grant writing, fundraising efforts, and seeking out donors which can take a considerable amount of effort. Partnering with vocational rehabilitation agencies can be useful for grant writing. Using commercials, television news interviews or social media can raise awareness and encourage community support and fundraising efforts.

The attitudes of employers towards hiring our students with IDD can present as a barrier. Employers are seeking employees that will complete the required job in a timely and cost-effective manner. These student employees may need supervision and increased time, effort, and resources to devote to that supervision. Collaborative relationships will need to be created with employers. These employers educated to tax incentives that will encourage hiring of the café program graduates.

Family beliefs and attitudes about employment and future education is another barrier. Families may be resistant to employment of their child for fear of losing their benefits. Encouraging student occupations in the areas of leisure, education, and work skills and offering education to families about their benefits and the program will need to be one of the first steps taken to ensure family support.

Summary and Conclusions

For the vision of Opportunity Café to become a reality, certain actions and materials will be needed. First, a collaboration between the local school districts, universities, agencies, and the community will need to occur for communication, planning, and implementation of the program. Second, the physical space where the café will be housed will need to be negotiated upon and supplied with materials necessary to make the café operational. This will include items such as kitchen appliances, tables and chairs, coffee machines, and cash registers. Third, capital will be required to fund salaries and the purchase of supplies. Fourth, staff will need to be hired and trained to assist and support the students as they oversee program operations. Through support of the community and area institutions, Opportunity Café can become a place where students with IDD learn and grow.

CHAPTER FIVE – Program Evaluation Research Plan

Program Scenario and Identified Stakeholders

Opportunity Café is a community-based intervention program that will be an operating business housed on a college campus where high school transition students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) will provide food and beverages to the college students and staff in a café-type atmosphere. These high school transition students with IDD will be involved in all aspects of the operation of the café, including ordering, shopping for, and growing some of the food used in the café. They will be responsible for food preparation, customer service, clean up, and money management under the supervision of adult support staff. These staff will include therapists, teachers, paraprofessionals, and rehabilitation science students that are attending the college campus.

The mission of Opportunity Café is to enable students with disabilities the opportunity to learn, enhance, and integrate job, social and behavioral skills while providing a café experience to college students attending State University of New York's (SUNY) Binghamton University's and/or SUNY Broome campuses. The vision of the café is to develop a job and life skills transition training program for students with disabilities that will become a statewide model for all SUNY campuses, which in turn will empower, motivate, and enable students with disabilities to participate in skill acquisitions to optimize quality of life. This program addresses the needs and uses resources of several state operated programs including the Department of Education transition programs, vocational rehabilitation programs, New York State Office for

People with Developmental Disabilities, and the Department of Education for the State University of New York.

Since Opportunity Café is a business venture as well as a transition program, there are many stakeholders. A stakeholder is defined as any person or group who has "an interest in or involved with the operation or success of a program" (Giancola, 2021, p. 11). These stakeholders include the following:

- Special education teacher for the high school "Living Center" students
- Students of the Living Center
- Paraprofessionals of the Living Center
- SUNY Binghamton campus and/or SUNY Broome community college campus administration (Location of where Opportunity Café will be housed)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension (for farming/growing plants for use at the Café)
- Local nursery and/or hydroponic facility to grow food/start seeds
- SUNY Broome Culinary Arts Department (Which will provide student education as well as pastries/goods for sale)
- Local farm to supply cow/chickens
- New York State vocational rehabilitation services – ACCES-VR
- Physical Therapist for the school district
- Occupational Therapist for the school district
- Speech Therapist for the school district
- Sodexo Representative (the food contract agency that provides food to SUNY campuses)

- Student and staff customers of the Café
- Local area Chamber of Commerce

Vision for the Program Evaluation Research

Students with disabilities have been identified at high risk for poor post-school outcomes (Lipscomb et al., 2018). These students are also less likely to be employed, gain secondary education, live independently, or access the necessary transition related instruction to ensure post school success (Mazzotti et al., 2021). Other poor post-school outcomes include lower levels of life satisfaction, earning lower wages, higher rates of arrest (Pham, 2013), and decreased attendance at institutions of postsecondary education (Lindsay et al., 2019). In their 2021 systematic review, Mazzotti et al. determined that career and technical education (CTE), exit exam/diploma status, paid employment/work experience, and self-care/independent living skills were evidenced-based predictors of post school employment. Self-determination/advocacy, social skills, student support, transition program, work study, youth autonomy/decision making were research-based predictors of post-school employment. New promising predictors of employment are psychological empowerment, self-realization, and technology skills (Mazzotti et al., 2021). Using these findings from the systematic review, programs need to be developed that are effective to meet the needs of this growing population of students. To support youth with disabilities and their transition needs, the idea of the Opportunity Café was born.

The short-term program evaluation findings of Opportunity Café will determine the extent of learning of job and life skills of the transition student employees. In addition

to the student changes, the program evaluation can provide a measure of effectiveness of the program, for students to gain employment and increase quality of life. By using standardized assessments pre-intervention as well as post-intervention, change can be measured in the dependent variables of student skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Data from stakeholders during the program to evaluate program performance can help to ensure future generations of café participants will be successful and to change the program as needed to improve results and eliminate waste.

The long-term vision would be to utilize the research findings to improve the effectiveness of transition services for students with IDD. The evidence learned from the research can help facilitate similar programs in every SUNY campus, or in other locations where transition programs are lacking, or ineffective. Gaining insight into effective practices and strategies for transition, while providing a community need in the food service industry, is an enterprise that could be replicated in other locations or industries. If the food service program was successful, the program could be expanded into other service industries that have a need for employees including health care, education, manufacturing, and service. The following Figure 5.1 provides an example of how Opportunity Café could be an intervention choice for an adolescent going into the transition program.

Figure 5.1

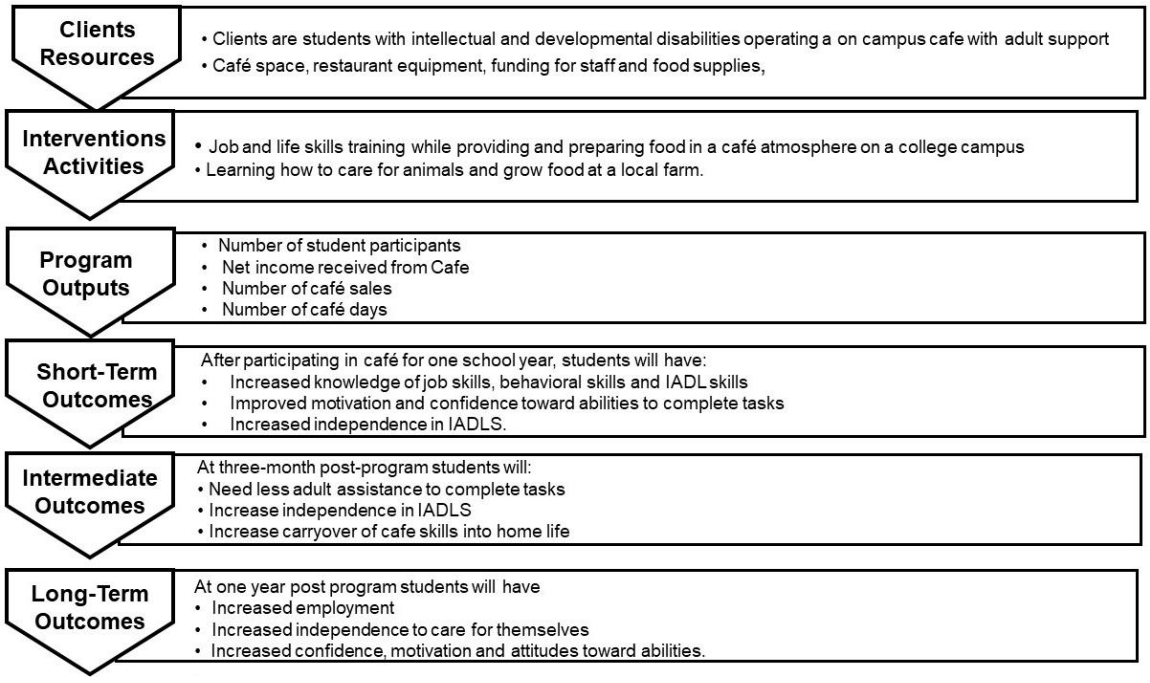
Case Scenario for Opportunity Cafe

Lucy is an 18-year-old student who is about to graduate from high school. She was born with a genetic disorder that affected her heart, bone structure, and has a resultant learning disability. She attended the "Living Center" program for her years at school where she learned life skills as well as academic skills. She is verbal and ambulatory and can perform math, money skills, writing, typing, basic computer, and can produce her cursive signature. She expressed a desire to work with children or adults in a helping capacity after graduating high school. Lucy was given the option of attending the community-based transition program Opportunity Cafe. Lucy was able to experience the 10-week rotations of agriculture/horticulture, laundry and cleaning, food service, and food preparation rotations. Lucy was supported by adults during these rotations, learned new life skills, and improved the skills she already had. She found that she enjoyed the food service area where she was able to use her computer skills to help order the weekly supplies needed. After completing her time working at Opportunity Café, Lucy was able to gain part-time employment at a local coffee shop chain near her home. The short-term outcome was an increase in Lucy's skills, and knowledge. The long-term outcome was an increase in Lucy's employment status.

Simplified Logic Model of the Program and Evaluation Plan to Share with Stakeholders

The following logic model provides a visual representation of the essential elements of the intervention of Opportunity Café. Represented in this model are the resources, activities, program outputs, and short-term and long-term anticipated outcomes. Use of a logic model can become useful in multiple ways. One way is that it can be presented at the stakeholder meetings to help stakeholders fully understand the program. The logic model will prove useful for program evaluation as well. Once formative and summative data has been collected through the program evaluation, the stakeholders can refer to the logic model to determine if anticipated outcomes were actualized. The logic model is fluid and changes as the program changes.

Figure 5.2
Simplified Logic Model



Engagement of Stakeholders in the Program and Evaluation Research

Opportunity Café is a transition program for students with IDD to provide job training, life skills and behavioral skills. Since it is both a program as well as a business model, there are many stakeholders involved. Various stakeholders will be involved in different phases of the program, beginning with program development, program implementation, planning for program evaluation, implementing the evaluation, evaluating the program evaluation, data analysis, reporting results, and making decisions based on evaluation results. All the stakeholders have different motivations for participating in the program and these motivations will affect the amount of their engagement and function within the evaluation process.

Many of the same key stakeholders will be involved at multiple aspects of the program, including the implementation of the program, planning the program evaluation, participating in the program evaluation, and making decisions based on the evaluation analysis. Some of these key stakeholders will include: the administration, special education staff, paraprofessionals, and therapists at the high school; the students with IDD and their parents; the university where the café would be located and provide student observers and fieldwork students; the other universities that will provide education, materials, and supplies; the food suppliers; and the local area Chamber of Commerce.

There will be a core group of these key stakeholders that will be involved and collaborate in the multiple phases of this complex program evaluation process. These stakeholders will be required to initiate the program and ensure its carryover. This team will likely consist of the program developer, school administrator, special education

teacher, university administration, health science student fieldwork coordinator, and representatives from the other university departments assisting with the café's operations. The school administrator's support is needed to act as a liaison with the school board to get the program approved. The high school's staff and students will be used to help run the café, so board approval and use of these school resources is a must. The university administration support is needed to act as a liaison with the university, to allow the lobby space to be used for the café location, to help with occupational therapy doctoral (OTD) student collaboration for research, and to help with planning and organizing student fieldwork experiences in the café. This administrator will also be needed as an endorser of the program to get Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval along with the school administration. There will be two other secondary education institutions that can be used to help make the program run. The first is the agriculture college to help with teaching the students about growing food and raising animals. The second is the culinary school to help educate the students with IDD in food preparation, safe food handling, and to help supply treats and pastries for sale in the café.

The transition students with IDD will be the employees of the café. They will be recruited from the high school transition program. If there are not enough participants available from our home district, the opportunity will be extended to neighboring districts to add their students to the café's roster of employees. The student employees of the café will be involved in contributing to the formative data through interviews and observations by OTD students.

The program developer and OTD students will be directly involved in data

collection, review, coding of data, and analysis of data. Once the core group of stakeholders has determined and approved the data collection tools, the OTD students will conduct the data collection under the guidance of the program developer. The table shown as Appendix I includes potential stakeholders, their involvement, roles, and specific areas of interest.

Eliciting Stakeholder Involvement and Ensuring that Evaluation Results will be Used

With Opportunity Café being a venture that has many moving parts, there will be many stakeholders involved in different aspects of the project and program evaluation. The key development and evaluation team will consist of the program developer, facilities involved in running the project (university where café will be housed, food service agency contracted with the university, and the agriculture and culinary school), high school administration, vocational rehabilitation specialist, and the special education teacher. This group will have program planning and evaluation meetings to attend. Staff responsible for ensuring program operations, such as teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists, support staff, and bus drivers will also have meetings to discuss program development, but their participation will not be to the extent of the key stakeholder team. A group consisting of student participants and their parents will be another stakeholder group which will have a meeting to discuss the program to answer questions. For the program evaluation analysis phase, this group of stakeholders will include the program developer, statistician, and three student researchers attending SUNY Binghamton's Doctor of Occupational Therapy program on the campus where the café will be located.

This group will be responsible for creating the surveys, conducting the interviews and observations, and implementing, analyzing, and interpreting the data in the evaluation process. These meetings will be held in-person for training purposes but follow up meetings can be a blend of in-person and virtual meetings to discuss and report on results.

Once program planning begins for Opportunity Café, program evaluation planning will also need to occur to achieve program sustainability. At the onset of program development, each stakeholder or stakeholder group will be approached with an in-person meeting by the program developer. Here is where the business proposal for Opportunity Café will be shared along with the simplified logic model. The evidenced-based research and program theories will be shared using a slide presentation and handouts provided. Questions can be answered, and obstacles discussed and brainstormed.

Once collaboration is agreed upon by the key program stakeholders for program development, and funding is secured, then discussions will need to begin for evaluation methods to ensure outcomes are met according to the logic model. Preferably, meetings will take place in-person. Face-to-face meetings allow stakeholders to establish rapport, network, and to read facial and verbal cues that virtual meetings make difficult. However, if time constraints or health concerns are an issue, these meetings can occur virtually. A downfall of virtual meetings is that group collaborations and conversations are difficult only allowing one person to speak at a time. However due to the volume of people, virtual meetings may be a more efficient use of time and resources. Multiple meetings will be needed to discuss and plan the formative evaluation process.

Whether in-person or virtual, these formative evaluation meetings will occur once a month for one hour and will begin with a review of the logic model of the Opportunity Café presented as a handout. The key stakeholder team will consist of policymakers, administration, funders, and staff who want evaluation findings for decision making. This informal focus group that will gather formative feedback and information to evaluate how the program is working and how it can be improved. The focus group will be separated into groups homogeneously to allow for free speech. Discussions will be chaired by a neutral facilitator to reduce bias, but conversations will be encouraged by all participants to ensure all stakeholders perspectives, beliefs, and values are honored. Stakeholders will have different interests in the program, and it will be important to make sure stakeholder interests are considered and respected. Ensuring consensus may require reminders of the logic model and projected outcomes, as well as a democratic methodology when deciding on ideas. Ideas will be documented on a shared virtual platform amongst all group members, such as a Google Jam board, so later review is available.

Program Evaluation Research Questions by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder interest should dictate which research questions are asked. The table shown as Appendix J presents summative and formative questions for each stakeholder group that should be answered through the research findings.

Research Design

Formative Design

Formative program evaluation will occur using a mixed methods approach due to the multiple groups of stakeholders involved with the program. Depending on the group,

either singly or a combination of interviews, surveys, and field observations will occur. At the end of each academic year, the transition students will complete an interview, while their parents and support staff will complete a survey. Customers of the café will be able to provide feedback while the café is in operation through a suggestion platform. This feedback will help understand program relevance, productivity, and opportunities for improvement.

Summative Design

The summative evaluation research design used to evaluate the program of Opportunity Café will be a quasi-experimental design. Since all applicants for Opportunity Café may not be accommodated as participants in its first trial, these waitlist applicants can be placed in the next round offered. This waitlist group "would serve as the comparison group for the training program, as well as provide a baseline for future evaluations when they begin the training course" (Giancola, 2021, p. 167). Pre-testing of students' abilities using standardized assessments will occur, as well as a post-test to measure change for summative evaluation. Parent surveys will be distributed pre-program and at the end of the program to measure change. See Appendix H for the parent survey to be used.

Methods

The pilot run of Opportunity Café will include transition students recruited through our home school district. If enough participants are not available, the neighboring school districts will be offered the opportunity to join. Should there be too many applicants, those that are unable to join the program will be put on a waiting list. These

waitlist students will act as the comparison group for comparison study and will be administered the same assessments at the pre- and post-program timepoints as the program participants.

Equipment needed to conduct the data collection will include two laptops with access to the internet, cloud storage, Google, Zoom, Qualtrics, and NVivo. For accounting purposes, and to calculate income and expenses, access to Quicken and QuickBooks will be needed. A smart phone compatible with the laptop with audio recording capabilities will be needed to assist with voice recordings of interviews. This phone will assist with team communication as well as to serve as backup for laptop data.

Confidentiality

Prior to obtaining data, the program will seek approval from the school district's and university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Confidentiality will be maintained by using a coding system instead of participant names. Paper files will be kept in a secure locked location, and digital files will be kept confidential using a password encrypted laptop. Parental signatures will be needed on an informed consent form in order for each participant to continue in the program. The consent form will describe the program, its purpose, the potential risks, and benefits, how confidentiality will be maintained, that participation in the study is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. Student participants will also sign an assent form describing the program and notifying them of their voluntary participation in the study which can be withdrawn at any time.

Formative Data Collection

Varying settings and modes of extracting data will be employed. Student

participants will be surveyed at the end of the school year while in the program using interviews to ensure comprehension. If the student is not able to complete the interview due to communication or comprehension difficulties, a parent/caregiver/guardian or teacher of the student will be given a modified interview on what their perceptions of the student participant's satisfaction and participation are. These student participants will be interviewed by a neutral party, likely an OTD student of the rehabilitative science building to reduce bias. These interviews will include fixed response questions as well as open ended questions. Interviews will be recorded using a voice to text feature of Google Documents, as well as a digital recording device to ensure accuracy.

Field observation will be another method of collecting formative evaluation data. The student participants will be observed by OTD students to assess their abilities and skills. These field observations will occur once per quarter. A checklist will be used to ensure fidelity and OTD student observers will have training sessions by the program developer prior to implementation. Having the same student conduct each quarter's observation for the same participants will also help ensure rigor of data collection.

Staff members working with the students will also be given a survey at the end of each quarter of the school year. This survey will be a digital questionnaire with a combination of open-ended and fixed-response questions which they can answer online, anonymously, through Qualtrics. Student and staff customers of the café will be given a suggestion box option with cards where they can handwrite feedback or scan a QR code at the bottom of their receipt to submit an online survey response in exchange for a discount food coupon. Administrative and financial stakeholders will be asked program

opinions monthly to assess their perceptions of the program and determine areas for improvement. These sessions will occur at the monthly board meetings held to govern program resources and strategize for changes. The neutral facilitator will ask open ended questions and record responses with a voice to text device, or with a voice typing feature of a Google Document. If meetings are held virtually, the interviews will be recorded using the record feature of Zoom. Survey and interview responses will be used to determine how well Opportunity Café is meeting its stated goals.

Methods for Formative Data Management and Analysis

Audio recording of interviews and transcripts will be downloaded, inputted, analyzed for themes, and coded using NVivo software. Qualtrics will analyze the survey qualitative data. Expertise from a statistician will be utilized to analyze data to prepare a report which will be presented to all major stakeholders.

Once all qualitative information is compiled, the data will be categorized by stakeholder type (student employees: code=0, customers: code=1, parents: code=2, staff: code=3, and agencies involved: code=4) and common themes will be extracted from the content for analysis using the coding system of NVivo. Student survey information will not include the student's name on it, only the code that signifies "student" to ensure confidentiality. The information will be compiled and analyzed with the assistance of graduate students of the rehabilitation sciences building where the café will be housed. OTD students will be trained by the program developer on use of NVivo, interview skills, and field observations.

There will be two OTD graduate student coders who will code all the open-ended

survey questions and interview responses independent of each other to ensure rigor of results. A third OTD graduate student will be available to help mediate any discrepancies in codes. To ensure NVivo accuracy, the program developer and OTD students will also manually read through the collected qualitative data. The information will be kept in a password protected file on the laptop. Paper survey copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the school main office. Once common themes are gathered and analyzed, the research team can meet and discuss findings. Processes can be changed and improved for future generations to ensure outcomes are being achieved.

Summative Data Collection

Independent Variable. The independent variable is in the form of the life skills transition education program. This program will run during the high school calendar, September through June. It will take place Monday to Friday during normal school hours. Transportation will be provided to students via the school bus transportation system or by parent drop off if desired to the needed location of either the café, farm, nursery, or school setting. The participants will become café employees and they will be supported by adult staff consisting of teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, and vocational rehabilitation specialists.

Dependent Variable. The dependent variables will be the student participant's abilities, knowledge, and attitudes. These variables will be assessed using standardized assessments and parent surveys both given at the start of the program and at completion to measure change. The standardized assessments will be administered by the occupational therapist to each student participant and may include the Canadian

Occupational Performance Measure (Law et al., 1990), Katz ADL (Katz et al., 1963), Lawton's IADL Scale (Lawton & Brody, 1969), and the ARC Self-Determination Assessment (Wehmeyer, 1995).

Parents of the student employees will also be surveyed twice per school year, at the start and end of the program. They will be given either a paper survey to complete or an online secure survey. The fixed-answer Likert-style survey will measure change and any at-home impact. It will also help determine if carryover of skills learned transitioned to the home environment.

Methods for Summative Data Management and Analysis

The summative quantitative data collation process will be a process spearheaded by the program developer and assisted by the OTD student researchers. Qualtrics will be used to analyze online quantitative surveys of parent data. The parents will be given access through an electronic device with a secure internet connection or may submit a paper version of the survey which will be entered into Qualtrics by an OTD research student. Standardized assessments of the student participants will be scored by the occupational therapist. These scores, and the student data of age, gender, and diagnosis, will be entered by an OTD research student into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The difference in standardized assessments from the pre-to the post-program will be analyzed for degree of change. Using the data analysis feature of Excel, the descriptive statistics of mean, percentage, and standard deviation can be derived for the student participants.

Further success of the program will be measured by quantitative data which will be tracked monthly or yearly depending on the data set. The number of participants,

graduates, and students who move on to employment will be tracked yearly and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the program developer. The café's revenue and expenses will also be tracked by an Excel spreadsheet and tallied on a monthly basis, as well as on an annual basis. Assist from accounting software Quicken and QuickBooks will be used for this data analysis.

A statistician will assist with inferential data analysis. To measure the differences within the group for the quasi-experimental design, a T-test and ANOVA will be used. Using the control group that is waitlisted as a comparison group, a T-test of two independent samples and a between groups ANOVA will be calculated to establish significance between groups. Once the pilot run of the program is completed, and follow up data collected, further data analysis can consist of repeated measures ANOVA. All data will be maintained with the same confidentiality measures used for formative data.

Disseminating the Findings of Program Evaluation Research

Once the pilot run of the program has occurred and program evaluation findings have been reviewed, the next step in the process is to plan for presentation and dissemination of these results. Due to the multiple stakeholder groups involved, there will be multiple audiences and multiple methods for the reporting of the findings. For the major administrative and financial stakeholders, a formal report will be used that will include a research brief with infographics that can be used as an executive summary in the formal report. This formal report will be presented in-person to these stakeholders in an oral presentation manner using a digital slideshow medium with hard copies of the report presented to each stakeholder. The hard copy of the report will also include a QR

code allowing for digital access to the report.

Those stakeholders that do not have an administrative or financial interest in the program, for example the staff, the parents, and other support agencies, will also be included in the dissemination of results. An informal presentation manner will be utilized, and these stakeholders will receive a quick report available quarterly which they can access via a link or QR code provided to them via email. At the conclusion of the year run of the program, the research brief will be presented to summarize and share research findings. The brief will be shared to parents via email link, traditional mail, or in-person during student educational planning meetings. The brief will be presented to staff at staff meeting times, or virtually via Google Meet. The other agencies involved can receive the information virtually via a Google Meet or Zoom meeting.

Further dissemination of program evaluation findings of Opportunity Café can be presented to other occupational therapists. A poster presentation on a statewide or national level can add information to the professional base of knowledge. This poster will contain a summary of the program, infographics, and a QR code to allow readers to scan and access the research brief. A research article in a professional journal geared towards occupational therapists is another method to share program knowledge and data.

CHAPTER SIX – Dissemination Plan

Summary

Opportunity Café is the proposed intervention program to provide employment and vocational training to transition-aged high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This population tends to have poor outcomes post-graduation (Lindsey et al., 2019; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). This program aims to improve the skills of these students leaving high school to obtain and maintain employment. The café will be an operational business located at a local college campus. The student employees of the café will learn job, social, self-care, life, money, and behavioral skills while serving food and beverages to community members, students and staff attending the campus. These transition-aged students with IDD will be supported by special education staff and paraprofessionals and will assist with all aspects of the café's operations including cleaning, cooking, cultivating food, caring for animals that produce eggs and milk, ordering supplies, money management, and customer service.

Dissemination Goals

In efforts to disseminate key messages regarding the impact of Opportunity Café, this author and program developer will be guided by several short- and long-term goals. The first long term goal would be to change the federal policies in place in the United States regarding businesses and the hiring of people with disabilities (PWD). Employers need to have more incentive and support to create and maintain jobs for PWD. This population would benefit from the United States' adoption of policies like those of the European Union (EU). The EU has a policy where employers are incentivized to employ

PWD by using three measures. These measures include either a quota system, purchasing goods produced by an operation that employs greater than 50% PWD, or paying a tax equal to one and a half the wage of each PWD they fail to employ. Since the latter two options are costly or not appealing, the quota option is chosen. This requires employers of more than 25 employees to have 5% of their employees be PWD. Employers are also required to create opportunities to employ PWD, and to notify the employment office when vacancies occur that a PWD could fulfill the duties for (Sinecka, 2009). This legislation helps guarantee positions be available or created for people with disabilities and the employers make choices to create positions, maintain staff, buy products produced from sheltered workshops or pay higher taxes. The government of the United States has many policies geared toward preventing discrimination including Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), funding for vocational rehabilitation with the Rehabilitation Act, and the hiring of disabled veterans with the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) (United States Department of Labor, 2023). However, no laws seem to be in place to encourage job creation and employment on a nationwide level. If the government of the United States could also impose a similar policy as the EU's Employment Act of 2004, this would help alleviate the high unemployment rate that currently exists for people with disabilities and improve the financial independence and quality of life for PWD.

Another long-term goal would include changing the practices of how New York State public schools and secondary school institutions of higher education work together to achieve a unified goal of helping students with IDD. These students need more job

training, opportunities, and time to learn skills to make them employable. Opportunity Café is a way to encourage this collaboration and become a model and standard way of practice for a transition program across other districts and counties across New York State.

In addition to the long-term goals, this program also has several short-term goals. One goal is to implement the new program of Opportunity Café in our local community. Our area has a desperate need for a transition program for our high school students with IDD. Project SEARCH is a program that was in our area but has recently dissolved. An additional short-term goal is to make Opportunity Café a replicable program on all campuses of the State University of New York system (SUNY), the City University of New York (CUNY), and all community colleges in New York State. Any institution of higher learning that receives state funding should be a potential site for the Opportunity Café transition program. New policies would need to be put into place statewide to allow this collaboration to occur with appropriated funding. An additional short-term goal would be to ensure and maintain funding for Opportunity Café to remain operational through grant writing, fundraising efforts, and through the collection of revenue from food and beverage sales. A final short-term goal would be to maintain the collaborative relationship between districts, institutes of higher learning, and the area occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) working in transition.

Target Audiences

To achieve the dissemination goals listed previously, several audiences will be targeted. The primary target audience for dissemination of Opportunity Café will be the

community of interest involved directly with the operations and administration of the café. This will include administrators of both the school district and the university, the school district teachers and paraprofessionals working with the transition students with IDD, policy makers in the local community, and parents and transition students with IDD. The administrators of both the public school and the university will be able to assist with decision making, asset allocation, resource availability, timing of integration, staffing and transportation needs. The teachers and paraprofessionals will be able to assist with the realities of the day to day needs of the students and program feasibility. The parents and transition students with IDD will be important to include for awareness, inclusion, and support. The program information and findings can also be shared with administrators of the SUNY, CUNY, and community college campuses across New York State. The governor of the state of New York has appointed a board of trustees to govern the SUNY program. These individuals meet to decide on policies for the campuses, including admissions policies, and appointing of campus presidents (The State University of New York, 2023).

The secondary audience for dissemination will include OTPs in school systems and within the community working with transition-aged youth. These therapists may be from neighboring school districts and communities. These groups can offer support with program adoption, execution, and facilitation. Making this population aware of the program and its potential will be important for replication.

Key Messages

The key messages for the administrators, teaching, and support staff, and those involved in policy change would include information and statistics regarding employment and post-school outcomes for students with IDD. There is a dire need for programming that incorporates students with IDD into the work environment. This community of interest will also be made aware of their ability to have an impact and change these statistics. The transition from a student to adult results in a gap of services for this very needy population. The problem of poor transitions of students to adulthood is evidenced by decreased job attainment. According to the recent 2023 report by the U. S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, only 21% of people with disabilities were employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023a). In 2021, Kirby et al. report that 48% of autistic adults experience a poor overall outcome by needing high levels of support or living placement, while 31% resulted in a fair outcome needing support and supervision. Dell'Armo and Tassé (2019) report that after leaving high school only 28.7% of students with intellectual disabilities were enrolled in postsecondary education, only 38.8% were employed, and only 36.3% were living independently for up to eight years after high school. Lipscomb et al. (2018) report in their summary of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 of 2012, that youth with disabilities are more likely to have fewer socioeconomic advantages, to struggle academically, and are less likely to pursue secondary education and employment.

Parents and transition students of the program will be made aware of several key messages. They will be educated about the program and its proposed outcome. Statistics

for student employment and post-school outcomes will be shared similarly to the administrator and staff community of interest. Additionally, increased parental involvement is shown to have a role in predicting employment outcomes (Wong et al., 2021). Occupation based life skills interventions, as well as a supported employment model, are shown to be successful for adults with mild to moderate neurodevelopmental disorders (Bathje et al., 2018). Student involvement in goal setting in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process influences motivation and confidence (Solberg et al., 2012). Student and parent expectations, responsibilities, hours of operation and proposed skills learned will be shared. Formative and summative data collection procedures will be explained.

The secondary audience of OTPs would also be made aware of key messages. One message would be that OTPs may not be participating in transition services to their full potential (Kardos & White, 2005). Occupational therapy (OT) services are the most-commonly received support service for elementary students with IDD. However, once these students move past elementary school, their receipt of these services declines, with only 7.5% receiving OT services within the last 12 months of their school career (Goodman et al., 2020). OTPs are qualified and can help adolescents achieve post school goals in employment, education, activities of daily living (ADL), and social participation (Pierce et al., 2021). Transition group programming can help facilitate smoother transitions through their therapy interventions (Merz et al., 2020). Transition service interventions are an emerging area for the school-based OTP. However, more evidence is needed to guide OTPs in best practice transition services, as well as examples of

programs that are useful with this population (Pierce et al., 2021).

Sources and Messengers

For the primary audience of the administrators, staff to support students, parents and students with IDD, a key messenger will be Paula Grassi. She is the Director of Student Services of Johnson City Central School District and has been a mentor and a strong supporter of this program and its goals since its onset. She is respected among the school district, the board of education, and the committees and departments she leads. Mrs. Grassi is a strong advocate for the program and can influence other department heads within our school district as well as colleagues in neighboring districts at varying levels of administration.

An additional key messenger for administrators and staff would be Amy and Ben Wright. This couple from North Carolina founded the company called Bitty and Beau's. This coffee shop business has become a replicable franchise that employs people with disabilities (PWD). Their business model has been praised by national news media, and the success is evidenced by the growing number of locations nationwide. Their influence and consultation will be a powerful message of support for the business model.

The secondary audience of OTPs would be the source messenger of both the state and national level occupational therapy associations. The New York State Occupational Therapy Association (NYSOTA) and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) are organizations that are both well respected. Presentations and article submissions shared through these communities of interest can disseminate to a large audience. Additionally, the AOTA has a transition community of practice housed under

the special interest section of Developmental Disabilities (AOTA, 2023).

Dissemination Activities, Tools, Techniques, Timing, and Responsibilities

Primary Audience

For the primary audience, this program would be disseminated by the program developer through a digital slideshow presentation, in-person meetings, written information, and electronic media. To begin, a letter requesting support for the program will be sent to the board of education of the school district by the program developer. Please see the proposed letter in Appendix K. Following this letter, an in-person meeting will occur during one of the Board of Education meetings. The PowerPoint presentation will be shared, along with a fact sheet allowing committee members to have written materials for review later. Requests for additional staff for the program will require prior approval and budget allowances for hiring to occur.

Simultaneously, the program developer will need to garnish the support of the café location on the college campus. A request for a meeting will be sent to the campus administrators. These meetings will occur in-person with the program developer. At this meeting, the same PowerPoint presentation and printed materials used with the school board will be shared with the campus administrators. Questions can be reviewed and answered. Their support for location and resources is important for program onset.

Local support will need to be obtained, in addition to the school and campus administration. Sharing information with area representatives of the Assembly, Senate, House of Representatives, and the Chamber of Commerce would be beneficial for community support and the ability to make changes to policy. These meetings will occur

in-person at each community of interest's respective office with the program developer. These meetings will include the same PowerPoint presentation and written materials also used with the school district and campus administrators. The use of the media to share information regarding the program is another method of dissemination. News outlets, such as the local news, and articles written for the newspaper, can bring awareness to the program. Using social media, such as Facebook groups, and Instagram can further promote the program.

Parents and students will be educated on the dissemination plans in a separate meeting run by the program developer using the same delivery methods of digital slideshow presentations and written materials used with the other primary audience members. There will be a parent meeting offered at the school both during open house times and an additional time on an evening for increased opportunity for attendance. This meeting will be recorded and available for online viewing for those unable to attend either meeting. The families will have the PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet presented and shared with them. Additionally, consent forms will be administered, and information about summative and formative evaluation procedures and protocols will be shared. Details about the evaluations proposed to be administered will be provided and any questions will be answered. Parents will be notified that participation in the study will be optional and not be mandatory for program acceptance.

Secondary Audience

For the secondary audience of OTPs outside of the school district, dissemination will occur through written information, in-person contact, and through electronic media.

This process can begin on a local level with communication through the consortium of school-based OTPs of Broome County. This group regularly communicates through email, holds monthly virtual meetings, and quarterly in-person meetings. Information regarding the program can be shared through any of the above meeting opportunities.

On a state level, dissemination to the OTPs of New York State will occur through a poster presentation at the NYSOTA annual conference to add information to the professional base of knowledge. This poster will contain a summary of the program, infographics, and a QR code to allow readers to scan and access the research brief. An article sharing initial pilot program findings can be disseminated through a non-peer reviewed journal, such as *OT Practice Magazine.* Using the CommunOT feature of the AOTA website can be an asset to reach the OT community of interest.

Disseminating the Findings of Program Evaluation Research

Once the pilot run of the program has occurred and program evaluation findings have been reviewed, the next step in the process is to plan for presentation and dissemination of these results. Due to the multiple communities of interest and stakeholders involved, there will be multiple audiences and multiple methods for the reporting of the findings. For the major administrative and financial stakeholders, a formal report will be used that will include a research brief with infographics that can be used as an executive summary in the formal report. This formal report will be presented in-person to these stakeholders in an oral presentation manner using a digital slideshow medium with hard copies of the report presented to each stakeholder. The hard copy of the report will also include a QR code allowing for digital access to the report.

Those communities of interest that do not have an administrative or financial interest in the program, for example the staff, the parents, and other support agencies, will also be included in the dissemination of results. An informal presentation manner will be used, and these communities of interest will receive a quick report available quarterly which they can access via a link or QR code provided to them via email. At the conclusion of the year run of the program, the research brief will be presented to summarize and share research findings. The brief will be shared to parents via email link, traditional mail, or in-person during student educational planning meetings. The brief will be presented to staff at staff meeting times, or virtually via Google Meet. The other agencies involved can receive the information virtually via a Google Meet or Zoom meeting.

Further dissemination of program evaluation findings of Opportunity Café can be presented to other OTPs. The poster presentation at the NYSOTA conference can add information to the professional base of knowledge. If the program and poster presentations on a local and statewide level are successful, sharing information with OTPs at a national level at the annual conference of the AOTA would reach a wider audience for dissemination. Presenting research findings in a professional journal geared towards OTPs is another method to share program knowledge and data. Additional articles can be published in peer-reviewed research journals outlining the program, as well as revealing the results of the research data obtained from the formative and summative data collection. Podcasts relating to occupational therapy are another means to promote the program and source of dissemination.

Budget

Dissemination efforts will require additional contract time for the program developer occupational therapist (OT), materials and supplies. The workload time for the OT will include preparation time for the written and digital materials, meeting times for the collaborators, and travel time and expenses. Please see Table 6.1 below for a summary of the dissemination costs.

Table 6.1

Costs of Dissemination Activities Not Otherwise Included in the Program Budget

Cost	**Year One**
Primary Audience Dissemination Costs	
Occupational therapist time for 15 hours at $52 an hour =	$780.00
Office supplies-tape, staples, pens =	$44.09
Box of presentation folders =	$15.39
Box of manilla envelopes 9" x 12" =	$26.99
Box of copy paper =	$51.99
Epson Eco tank color printer =	$279.99
Secondary Audience Dissemination Costs	
Occupational therapist time for 15 hours at $52 an hour =	$780.00
Fuel–12 gallons of gas at $3.89 per gallon =	$46.68
Tolls for New York State Thruway = $6.31x2 =	$12.62
Registration for NYSOTA conference =	$540.00
NYSOTA membership =	$130.00
Hotel stay 2 nights at $211 per night with taxes and fees =	$592.75
Poster Printing Costs = Command Strips = Booklet printing 250 @$1.84 per unit Total including tax and shipping =	$49.99 $7.50 $460.00 $558.59
Total Dissemination Costs	**$3,859.09**

Evaluation

To determine the effectiveness of dissemination efforts, data will be collected on measurable and observable changes. For the primary audience, these changes will include: measurement of the annual budget of the program (decrease [-], same [=], increase [+]), the number of student participants (-/=/+), the percentage of students that gain employment on program graduation, and the number of parent attendants. For the secondary audience, these changes will include: the number of consultative requests by other organizations or therapists, and the number of operating Opportunity Café sites outside the pilot program. Please see Appendix L for the summary of the dissemination activities for Opportunity Café.

Conclusion

The sustainability of the program of Opportunity Café is dependent on using a multi-modal approach to dissemination. Using the strategies and guidelines outlined in the summary table above, Opportunity Café can become a program that reaches success in our district as well as neighboring districts, propelling occupational therapy forward to better the lives of the students we serve.

CHAPTER SEVEN – Funding Plan

Program Overview

Opportunity Café is the proposed intervention program to provide employment and vocational training to transition-aged high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This population tends to have poor outcomes post-graduation (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009). This program aims to improve the skills of these students leaving high school to obtain and maintain employment. The café will be an operational business located at a local college campus. The student employees of the café will learn job, social, self-care, life, money, and behavioral skills while serving food and beverages to community members, students and staff attending the campus. These transition-aged students with IDD will be supported by special education staff and paraprofessionals and will assist with all aspects of the café's operations including cleaning, cooking, growing food, caring for animals that produce eggs and milk, ordering supplies, and customer service.

Available Local Resources

Our community is fortunate to have many resources available to ensure the success of Opportunity Café. Two college campuses are available within Broome County. The first school is the State University of New York (SUNY) Binghamton campus, also known as Binghamton University**,** and the other is a community college known as SUNY Broome. Either of these institutions can provide the location for Opportunity Café based on space available, leasable space, and location to consumers or customers. Their lobby areas are suitable for café set up to provide faculty and campus

student traffic with a steady stream of customers.

As the café begins development, expertise from local volunteers and service organizations can be utilized for construction, planning, and set up. For example, high school students requiring service or volunteer hours, such as the National Honor Society and/or Key Club can be utilized to help move furniture, stock shelves, and act as student mentors for the student employees with IDD. The services projects of the Boys Scouts of America or an Eagle Scout project can be utilized for specialty building projects suggested by the occupational therapist to allow accessibility for students with disabilities (i.e., building planters and growing boxes for the students to be able to access from a wheelchair or standing). Local community service organizations such as Kiwanis and Rotarians may be able to assist with the café set up through volunteer service hours and funding.

This community is fortunate to have students attending these two local college campuses as a resource. At Binghamton University, there will be a pool of undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of occupational, physical, and speech therapies, psychology, social work, and nursing. At the SUNY Broome campus, there will be students of health science, nursing, physical therapy assistant and dental hygiene. All these students can be an asset through fieldwork opportunities and classroom projects to assist with mentoring, student employee training, program development, evaluation, and support, as well as maintain the physical, mental, and oral health of the student employees with IDD.

In addition to the potential café space, Binghamton University offers other

resources available to support the café. The Small Business Development Center offers no cost advice to new and existing businesses. Some of the services offered consist of business plan development, accounting, financial sourcing, marketing, business expanding, relocation, agribusiness, and business closing (Binghamton University, 2023). These services will be invaluable to program development, financial projections, and funding procurement.

Needed Resources: Budget

Initially to begin the café's operation, there will be some capital investment needed. This scenario is dependent on the facility where the café will be housed and if a lobby café has been set up previously or not. If a café setup is already in place, the major expense will be the payroll and salaries of staff needed to support the students with management of the café, food and beverage supplies, and transportation to the café job site. However, if the lobby space is unfurnished with a café set up, expenses will include salaries with additional equipment items including seating areas, kitchen supplies and equipment, office supplies, uniforms, as well as agriculture and horticultural needs to help grow some of the food products. In the case of needing to purchase equipment to furnish the café, costs can be decreased or minimized by purchasing used equipment at restaurant auctions, or by accepting donations from the community. In the event equipment needs to be purchased new, anticipated amounts are provided in the equipment section of Appendix M. Please see Appendix M for an outline of expenses anticipated to bring Opportunity Café operational.

While this project has an ambitious first year budget of over $650,000, we understand acquiring grant funding and donations of this magnitude will be challenging. A modified first-year program could be adopted in several ways. One modification could be to partner with a local café already in existence, thus alleviating the need to purchase restaurant equipment, but still allowing the transition-aged students the experience of customer service, food preparation, cleaning, laundry, and money management. Another modification option could be to expand on the existing school store program, by taking that program off school property and into the community with a coffee kiosk location, perhaps in a fitness center or public library lobby. Another moderate investment option would be obtaining a food truck or partnering with an existing food truck that is in operation. Whatever scenario is utilized as a modification, data would also be collected to determine program success.

Potential Funding Sources

Opportunity Café will be an operational business that will earn revenue from the sale of food and beverage products. The money earned from food sales will offset the expenses associated with payroll, equipment, and supplies. There will be significant startup costs to furnish the café with needed materials to function as a food service entity. The café will likely operate at a loss for the first year or two until the routine is established and waste areas have been discovered. Sources of funding to begin the café's operations can be secured through grants, donations, and fundraising. Please Appendix N for a summary of potential funding sources.

Conclusion

Opportunity Café is an innovative intervention that has the potential to encourage the independence and employment of adolescents with IDD. The funding needs are high for start-up equipment costs. However, costs can be offset by securing grants, donations of equipment, supplies, and fundraising through community support. Opportunity Café can become an operating business with revenue from food and beverage sales offsetting the expenses incurred. For the first several years, the café may operate at a loss. However, with control of waste and streamlining processes, Opportunity Café can become a replicable program across the State of New York and the SUNY system as an intervention that can self-sustain itself and produce revenue as well as employable young adults with IDD.

CHAPTER EIGHT – Conclusion

Our society is failing people with disabilities. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities in the United States is almost 20 times higher than the unemployment rate of adults without disabilities. Supporting youth with disabilities begins when they enter public schools. The Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 supports the education and transition to adulthood of youth with disabilities. This transition plan is to facilitate "the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), and continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation," (20 U.S. C. 1401 (34)). Despite these mandates, studies have shown that youth with disabilities are having poor post-school outcomes when compared to their peers (Lindsay at el., 2019; Lipscomb et al., 2018; Rowe et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009).

Occupational therapy practitioners (OTP) are well situated to collaboratively work as part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team with transition planning (Kardos & White, 2005). The OTP is distinctly qualified to assist the IEP team with developing goals, improving activities of daily living, assisting with staff and student training, and determining student occupational interests.

Opportunity Café is an intervention that was developed from the theories of Person-Environment-Occupation Model, Self-Determination Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory and from evidenced-based practices. Once implemented, the café will provide a solution to the problem of the lack of transition training programs to support

transition-aged youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) as they prepare for life after high school. These students will learn valuable skills to increase their likelihood of obtaining employment and living more independently after leaving high school.

Factors Needed for Success

There are several important factors needed for Opportunity Café to have an impact on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of students with IDD. The first factor depends on collaboration for the cafe to be successful. Interagency collaboration between the college campus, local high schools, local farm cooperative, and culinary school is necessary to ensure location, student employees, food production, and student training sites. Interdisciplinary collaboration between the special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and rehabilitation science disciplines is important to ensure an inclusive, comprehensive, and supportive experience for the student. Family-school collaboration amongst the students, parents, and supporting adults and peer mentors is important to ensure communication, commitment, and student self-determination is enabled and valued.

The second factor for success is location. The college campus location is important for the success of Opportunity Café. The proximity of the student employees to the campus and the steady stream of customers of the students and staff attending campus ensures the café can be staffed and operational. The available resources of the health science students attending the campus can be utilized towards research, volunteer, mentoring, and fieldwork opportunities. The third factor for success is the environment.

Fostering an inclusive environment where the students are supported by diverse professional and administrative staff will encourage student independence and success.

Plans for Replication

Once the pilot run of Opportunity Café has been completed, and formative and summative evaluation results interpreted and presented, future plans include replication of the program. Opportunity Café is a program that can be replicated across the state and the country. A community-based food truck option could be implemented, as well as additional café locations at the SUNY campuses across New York State. Following establishment in New York, the café momentum can be carried to other states in the union.

In summary, Opportunity Café proposes to offer a solution to the lack of standardized transition-training interventions for high school students with IDD. The café satisfies a need for opportunity training as well as providing a community resource for food and beverages. The program requires collaboration and fostering an environment of support. By working together as a society, and as a unified community of interest, we can provide opportunities and occupations so that students with IDD can improve their health and quality of life.

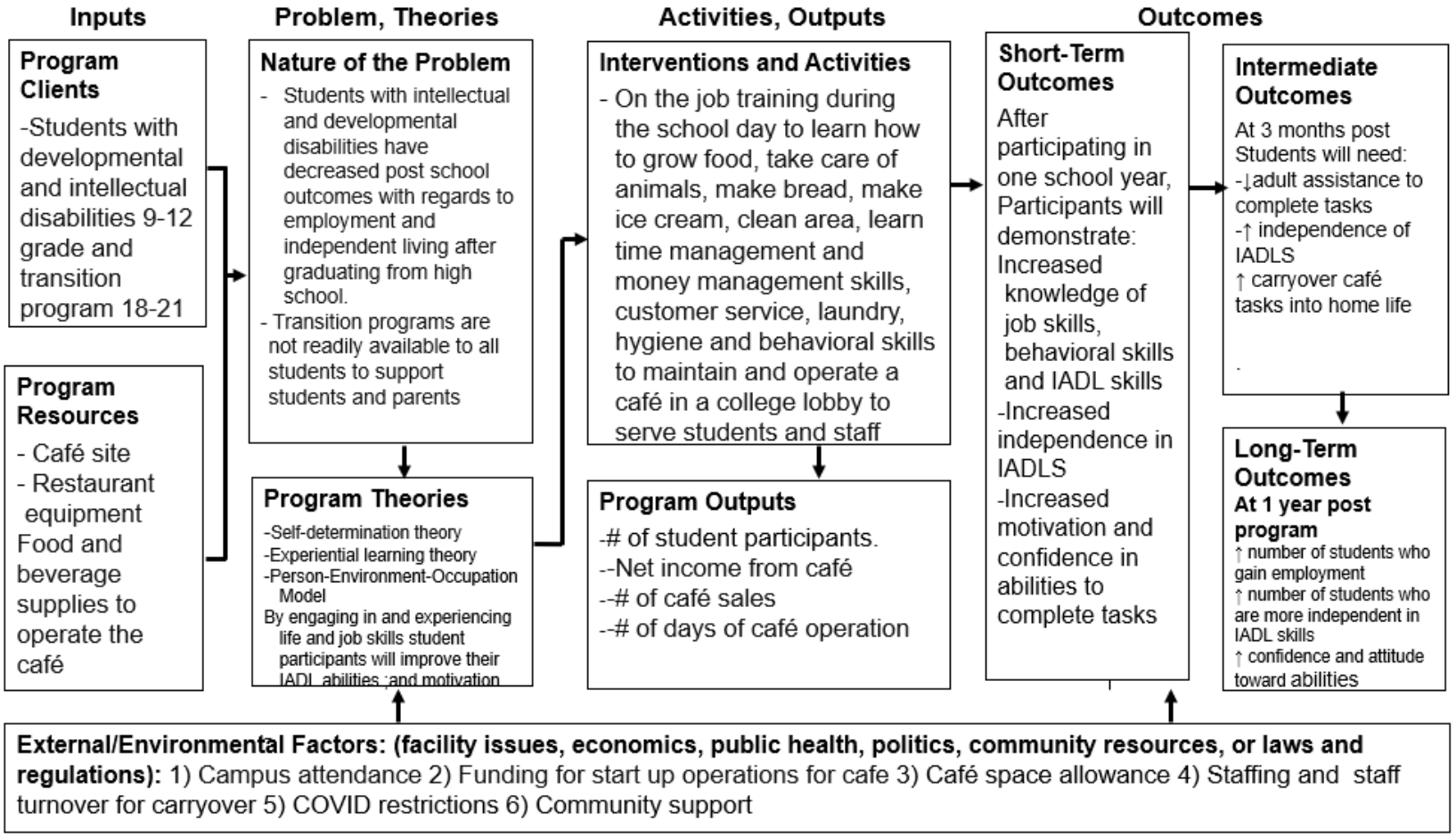
APPENDIX A – Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0

Image reproduced with permission by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) (Kohler et al., 2016).

APPENDIX B – Table of Administrative Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

Personnel	**Role**	**Description of Responsibilities**
School district and administrators	Collaborator	Assist in collaborative efforts between schools, universities, and agencies. Assist with staff maintenance and training. Support transportation of students to café job sites.
Vocational rehabilitation agency	Collaborator	Provide staff and training to students in areas of job skills. Help collaborate to find employment opportunities after program completion.
Administrator at university/ Academic program directors/ Clinical education staff	Collaborator	Provide guidance and liaison between school, therapist, and university. Help collaborate to secure café space and supplies needed. Assist in grant writing. Participate in program evaluation and implementation. Assist with providing OTD, PTD and SLP students for observation, evaluation, and fieldwork and clinical student education opportunities at the café.
Administrator at culinary school	Collaborator	Provide training for students in food handling safety and preparation. Supply baked goods for sale.
Administrator at agriculture school	Collaborator	Provide training for students in agriculture and horticulture skills. If space available, allow for farming of chickens and cows, growth of fruits and vegetables for sale at the café.
Food service company representative	Collaborator/ Training of students	Support café with food supply purchases. Assist with training of student employees to sanitation standards and procedures.
Local Chamber of Commerce	Collaborator	Support cafe by encouraging community acceptance and fraternization. Encourage media promotion of initiative.
State of New York	Collaborator	Allow for policy changes and procedures to financially support the café business.
New York State Education Department	Collaborator	Partnership to encourage replication among other schools and campuses across the state.

APPENDIX C – Full Logic Model



APPENDIX D – Brochure

Opportunity Café

Creating Hope, Occupations and Opportunities While Serving Customers. Changing Lives One Coffee at a Time.

About the Initiative

As students leave high school they often wonder what will their future hold. This remains the same for students with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (IDD). However, once high school ends for these students, many of their therapy supports and services end as well. This transition to adulthood results in a gap of services for a very needy population. In 2021, Kirby et al. report that 48% of autistic adults experience a poor overall outcome by needing high levels of support or living placement, while 31% resulted in a fair outcome needing support and supervision. Dell'Armo and Tasse (2019) report that after leaving high school only 28.7% of students with intellectual disabilities were enrolled in postsecondary education, only 38.8% were employed, and only 36.3% were living independently for up to eight years after high school. Lipscomb et al. (2018) report in their summary of the National Longitudinal Transition Study of 2012, that youth with disabilities are more likely to have fewer socioeconomic advantages, to struggle academically, and are less likely to go onto secondary education and employment.

Planning for the transition to adulthood for students with IDD needs to start while they are still in high school. The trend remains where the needs of these students are not met. These students should be learning life, job, and social skills, as well as strategies for independence to improve their quality of life. The COVID pandemic also caused considerable harm by limiting outside job placements (Klein, 2021). The proposed initiative would serve to provide a solution to the health problem and practice gap of poor occupational engagement of students with IDD.

Opportunity Café is a community-based intervention program that will be an operating business housed in the lobby of a local college campus. High school transition students with IDD will provide food and beverages to the college students and staff in a café-type atmosphere. These high school transition students with IDD will increase their exposure to various occupations and gain job, life, behavioral, and social skills by being involved in all aspects of the operation of the café. These responsibilities may including ordering, shopping for and growing some of the food used in the café. They will be responsible for food preparation, customer service, clean up, and money management all while under the supervision of adult support staff. These staff will include therapists, teachers, paraprofessionals, and rehabilitation science students that are attending the college campus.

Prepared by Pauline Westcott, OTR/L Contact information – ppw@bu.edu

Please scan the above QR code for references.

APPENDIX E – Leaders Manual

Opportunity Cafe Program Manual

Creating Hope, Occupations and Opportunities While Serving Customers.

Changing Lives One Coffee at a Time.

CHANGING LIVES

Est 2023

OPPORTUNITY CAFE

ONE COFFEE AT A TIME

All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual.

-Albert Einstein

Manual created by Pauline Westcott, OTR/L

Opportunity Cafe Program Manual

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to provide program initiators involved in the dissemination of Opportunity Cafe an outline to guide the program with a protocol to follow to ensure collaborative involvement and sustainability for future generations of participants.

Opportunity Cafe is a health initiative with the intent of creating a safe, structured environment for high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to learn vocational, social, behavioral, and life skills. This will be a working business housed in the ground floor space of a local university building. The space will house a cafe to provide beverages and food to staff and students of the building as well as members of the community. "Opportunity Cafe" will be staffed by students with IDD with the support of adult staff and will operate during the campus year. The intention of the program is for students with IDD to learn job, behavioral, social, and life skills in order to prepare them for life after high school. These transition students will be involved in all aspects of the cafe operation and management. These aspects will include growing some of the food, baking, preparing, selling the food to the customers, cleaning up, ordering of supplies, laundry, and some light technology use. By being supported in their transition to adulthood, these students can gain the employability and life skills to increase independence and occupational opportunities.

Who this Program Will Benefit

Transition programs are important to help high school students make the shift from student to adult. These programs are especially important for students with IDD. These students have been identified at a high risk for poor post-school outcomes (Lipscomb et al., 2018). These students are also less likely to be employed, gain secondary education, live independently or access the necessary transition related instruction to ensure post school success (Mazzotti et al., 2021). Other poor post-school outcomes include lower levels of life satisfaction, earning lower wages, higher rates of arrest (Pham, 2013), and decreased attendance at institutions of postsecondary education (Lindsay et al., 2019). These poor post

school outcomes have the potential to affect the health and wellness of students with IDD. The Individuals with Disability Education Act of 2004 mandates that transition planning assessment services and employment-related instruction are administered to students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Individual with Disability Education Act, 2004). However, there seems to be a lack of consistency with transition program implementation and administration across school districts, counties, and states.

Why this Program is Important

Students with IDD often leave high school and have limited opportunities to access occupations of employment, leisure, health and wellness. According to a February 2023 news release from the United States Department of Labor, those with disabilities were less likely to be employed, twice as likely to be employed part-time, and had twice the unemployment when compared with those without a disability. The unemployment rates of the 16-19 year old age group with a disability waa 19.6% while those without the disability was 10.4%. The 20-24 year old age group with a disability has an unemployment rate of 14.5%, while those without a disability is 6.7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

Additional statistics provided by the United States Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy show disparities regarding youth with disabilities. The 2022 Youth Labor Force participation rate shows that youth aged 16-19 had a 28.9% participation rate, while those without had a 37.2% rate. In the 20-24 year age group, the participation rate for those with a disability was 50%, while those without was 72.1% (U. S Department of Labor, 2023)

Having significant unemployment rates for young adults with disabilities can have long lasting effects on not only the youth's future but also the entire community that surrounds these youth. Government assistance programs are available to help provide for the basic needs of those with disabilities. These benefits are under the Social Security program and amounts can vary were $1350 per month in 2022, and $2260 per month if the individual was blind (Moser, 2023). Long term, this support can be a financial burden to the surrounding community. Also, not having employment or occupation can have an effect on the motivation, self-esteem, health and wellness of youth with disabilities. Caregivers responsible for these

youth will also have a decreased financial and emotional burden caring for these individuals if their employment rate was increased.

Intended Outcomes

The overall goal of the proposed initiative is to develop a transition program for students with IDD. By creating a program intervention that provides a needed service to the campus where it is housed, as well as offering a solution to a gap in services, needs are being met for students with IDD. The goals for the students would be to improve occupational and activity of daily living skills to prepare the students for adulthood. The goal for the cafe would be to become an operational business that creates enough revenue to cover its expenses. The goal for the program would be to become a replicable intervention that can be implemented across the state at other campuses.

Program Objectives

The primary goal of this program is to provide training to students with IDD to make them more employable and independent in their self-care skills.

1. Following one year of the launch of the program, 50% of potential transition students with IDD will attend the Opportunity Café program.
2. Following one year of the launch of the program, 75% of the students will demonstrate increased ability of job and activity of daily living skills as demonstrated by parent report by a survey.
3. Following three years of the launch of the program, the revenue generated from the cafe's sales will sustain 75% of the program operations.

Theories to Support the Initiative

- Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a health promotion theory that explains a reciprocal relationship between personal factors, environments, and behavior. SCT emphasizes eight total constructs (knowledge, outcome expectations, outcome expectancies, situational perception, environment, self-efficacy, and self-efficacy in overcoming impediments, goal setting or self control, and emotional coping) to explain human behavior (Sharma, 2022). The constructs of knowledge, environment, setting goals, and self efficacy stood out with importance to the possible initiative. Opportunity Cafe is designed to create a safe environment to encourage occupational

knowledge, role modeling, setting personal and vocational goals, and improving self-efficacy.

- The Person-Environment-Occupation Model (PEO) describes the interaction with the individual, the environment and occupation as interrelated circles. The overlap represents occupational performance and is a dynamic experience (Law et al., 1996). An occupation based model is important for this initiative, since the cafe will be a place where students will receive occupation-based experiences.
- Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). This learning theory states that in order for an individual to learn, they must have experiences (Kolb, 1984). By working at the cafe, these students will be exposed to many experiences and opportunities to learn new skills as well as strengthen established skills.
- Developmental Health Framework (DHF). This framework proposes that developmental benefits arise from modifying the environment to encourage growth-enhancing experiences such as interacting with peers, exercising choice, and having a sense of personal growth (Allen & Warner, 2002). Having this framework is beneficial to encourage change, and support the transition to adulthood, while looking at how the environment affects the student.
- Interprofessional Collaboration Theory (ICT). This framework of collaboration between agencies increases the effectiveness of health services by working together to achieve a common goal (D'Amour et al., 2005). Opportunity Cafe is a complex endeavor involving many community and state agencies with different funding sources, so successful collaboration is vital.

Opportunity Cafe Mission and Vision Statements

Our mission: To enable our students with disabilities the opportunity to learn, enhance, and integrate job, social and behavioral skills while providing a café experience to college students attending Binghamton University's campus.

Our vision: To develop a job and life skills transition training program for students with disabilities, that will become a statewide model for State University of New York Campuses, that will empower, motivate, and enable students with disabilities to participate in skill acquisitions to optimize quality of life.

Format of Opportunity Cafe

Role of Personnel and Stakeholders

Personnel	Role	Description of Responsibilities
Occupational Therapist	Program Leader	Facilitate the collaboration between universities, agencies, and school systems. Support students. Assist with training and program implementation and program evaluation
Physical and Speech Therapists	Service provider/ Consultant	Provide therapeutic support as needed, and suggestions on student positioning, physical, assistive technology, and communication needs.
Special Education Teacher	Teacher	Provide education to students on academic needs, life skills, and transitioning roles. Oversee paraprofessional support staff (aides, teachers assistants) that interact with students. Participate in data collection for formative evaluation
Transition students with IDD	Employees of cafe	Learn safe food handling, preparation, ordering, cleaning, growing food, caring for livestock, customer service,
Parents of students with IDD	Collaborator	Encourage employment, attendance, and carryover of skills at home.
Para-Professional staff	Student support	Provide aide support to students that require assistance. Help provide a safe environment. Participate in program evaluation.
Administrator at School District	Collaborator	Assist in collaborative efforts between schools, universities, and agencies. Assist with staff maintenance and training. Support transportation of students to cafe job sites.
Vocational Rehabilitation Agency	Collaborator	Provide staff and training to students in areas of job skills. Help collaborate to find employment opportunities after program completion.
Administrator at university	Collaborator	Provide guidance and liaison between school, therapist and university. Help collaborate to secure cafe space and supplies needed. Assist in grant writing. Participate in program evaluation and implementation. Assist with providing OTD students for observation, evaluation and fieldwork opportunities at the cafe.

Administrator at culinary school	Collaborator	Provide training for students in food handling safety and preparation. Supply baked goods for sale.
Administrator at agriculture school	Collaborator	Provide training for students in agriculture and horticulture skills. If space available, allow for farming of chickens and cows, growth of fruits and vegetables for sale at the cafe.
OTD students attending university	Observing/ Mentoring/ Supporting	Interacting with students as a fieldwork opportunity. Assist with data collection for evaluation.
Food Service Company Representative	Collaborator/ Training of students	Support cafe with food supply purchases. Assist with training of student employees to sanitation standards and procedures.
Local Chamber of Commerce	Collaborator	Support cafe by encouraging community acceptance and fraternization. Encourage media promotion of initiative.
Local Community Residents/ Staff and Students of Campus	Patrons	Support the efforts of these students by purchasing food and beverage items
State of New York	Collaborator	Allow for policy changes and procedures to financially support the cafe business.

Initiative Content and Approach

Step #	Initiative Content/Component	Theoretical Grounding	Evidence Base
1	Community/Agency Collaboration- Between the school system, universities, agencies and community	ICT- Collaborate	Stroebel et al., (2008) recommend that successful transition planning requires a collaborative effort between the community, business offering work sites, and school involvement.
2	Environment- Establishing the location of the cafe is important. By having the initiative happen in	SCT- Environment construct	Prepare students for integrated employment using employment-skill instruction

	the lobby of a rehabilitation science building, it allows the campus students (nursing, physical, occupational, and speech therapy) the opportunity to have fieldwork experiences on campus, and the students to have a safe environment to learn skills free of judgment.	PEO-Environment construct	and vocational training (Gilson et al., 2017).
3	Establish the Transition Program-Working with the staff and administrators at the local high school to begin the process of transitioning students for vocational skills.	DHF-Modifying environment to encourage change SCT-Knowledge construct	Programs supporting individuals with disabilities to transition to adulthood were successful (Bathje et al., 2018; Lindsey et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2021).
4	Providing choices to the student	SCT- Self efficacy, and setting goals constructs PEO- Person construct	Personal choice and growth, social interaction, and psychological engagement are important to enhance autonomy and empowerment (King et al., 2021).
5	Role modeling-Having peer mentors, staff mentors, and rehabilitation science student mentors is a chance for students with IDD to learn.	DHF- Interacting with peers	A peer support model for job skill acquisitions can be a useful tool to assist with supported employment (Kaehe & Beyer, 2013).
6	Experiences in the form of learning	ELT-Experiences PEO-Occupations	Providing experiences has a correlation to positive post-school outcomes (King et al., 2021)

Administrative Assessment

Critical Resource	For Opportunity Cafe
Time Frame	The program will run during the college campus year, from 7 am to 2 pm. Expansion of hours is possible with student, staff, and transportation arrangements.

Physical Space	Lobby space in the college campus building large enough to support a service counter, kitchen equipment, and tables/chairs for dining. Plumbing and electrical set up for kitchen service.
Personnel	Staff will need to be hired and trained in safe food handling and to assist and support the student employees with IDD as they oversee program operations.
Materials	Kitchen appliances, tables and chairs, coffee machines, cash registers, display counter, refrigeration units, and sink.
Facilitators	A collaboration between the local school districts, universities, agencies, and the community will need to occur for communication, planning, and implementation of the program.
Budget	Salary for support staff. Equipment purchases for restaurant equipment needed. Grant through United States Department of Education for The Pathways to Partnerships Innovative Model Demonstration Project. Donations of equipment and materials through donors and community partners.
Transportation	Bus/van transportation for student employees and staff to/from the cafe location.

Evaluation Plan

Formative Evaluation

Varying settings and modes of extracting data will be employed. Student participants will be surveyed at the end of the school year while in the program using interviews to ensure comprehension. If the student is not able to complete the interview due to communication or comprehension difficulties, a parent/caregiver/guardian or teacher of the student will be given a modified interview on what their perceptions of the student participant's satisfaction and participation are. These student participants will be interviewed by a neutral party, likely an OTD student of the rehabilitative science building to reduce bias. These interviews will include fixed response questions as well as open ended questions. Interviews will be recorded using a voice to text feature of Google Documents, as well as a digital recording device to ensure accuracy.

Field observation will be another method of collecting formative evaluation data. The student participants will be observed by OTD students to assess their abilities and skills. These field observations will occur once per quarter. A checklist will be used to ensure fidelity and OTD student observers will have training sessions by the

program developer prior to implementation. Having the same student conduct each quarter's observation for the same participants will also help ensure rigor of data collection.

Staff members working with the students will also be given a survey at the end of each quarter of the school year. This survey will be a digital questionnaire with a combination of open-ended and fixed-response questions which they can answer online, anonymously, through Qualtrics. Student and staff customers of the Cafe will be given a suggestion box option with cards where they can handwrite feedback, or scan a QR code at the bottom of their receipt to submit an online survey response in exchange for a discount food coupon. Administrative and financial stakeholders will be asked program opinions monthly to assess their perceptions of the program and determine areas for improvement. These sessions will occur at the monthly board meetings held to govern program resources and strategize for changes. The neutral facilitator will ask open ended questions and record responses with a voice to text device, or with a voice typing feature of a google document. If meetings are held virtually, the interviews will be recorded using the record feature of Zoom. Survey and interview responses will be used to determine how well Opportunity Cafe is meeting its stated goals.

Summative Evaluation

Independent Variable: The independent variable is in the form of the life skills transition education program. This program will run during the high school calendar, September through June. It will take place Monday to Friday during normal school hours. Transportation will be provided to students via the school bus transportation system or by parent drop off if desired to the needed location of either the Cafe, farm, nursery, or school setting. The participants will become cafe employees and they will be supported by adult staff consisting of teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, and vocational rehabilitation specialists.

Dependent Variable: The dependent variables will be the student participant's abilities, knowledge, and attitudes. These variables will be assessed through the use of standardized assessments and parent surveys both given at the start of the program and at completion to measure change. The standardized assessments will be administered by the occupational therapist to each student participant and may

include the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure, Katz ADL, Lawson's IADL scale, and the ARC self-determination assessment.
Parents of the student employees will also be surveyed twice per school year, at the start and end of the program. They will be given either a paper survey to complete or an online secure survey. The fixed-answer Likert-style survey will measure change and any at-home impact. It will also help determine if carryover of skills learned transitioned to the home environment.

Critical Review of Opportunity Cafe

Strengths

- Potential to change the lives of many students by providing an environment that will encourage the safe learning of skills.
- Innovative collaboration between varying community and state agencies to remediate a gap in services and occupational injustice.
- SCT is a robust theory that can be easily applied (Sharma, 2022).

Weaknesses

- Social Cognitive Theory has many constructs that may be difficult to put all into practice (Sharma, 2022).
- Lack of standardization of transition programs and lack of staff preparedness.

Potential Barriers to Implementation

- Dependent on collaborative relationships for location and support.
- Costs can be prohibitive.
- Staff retention and recruitment can be difficult.
- Parents may not be supportive of employment for fear of losing child benefits.

Summary Conclusion

The manual acts as a guide for the practitioner to implement the transitional program Opportunity Cafe. Included are:

- Description of health and occupational injustice, and population.
- Intended outcomes and objectives.
- Theoretical, framework, and initiative descriptions.
- Administrative assessment, and evaluation plan.
- Critical review including strengths and limitations.

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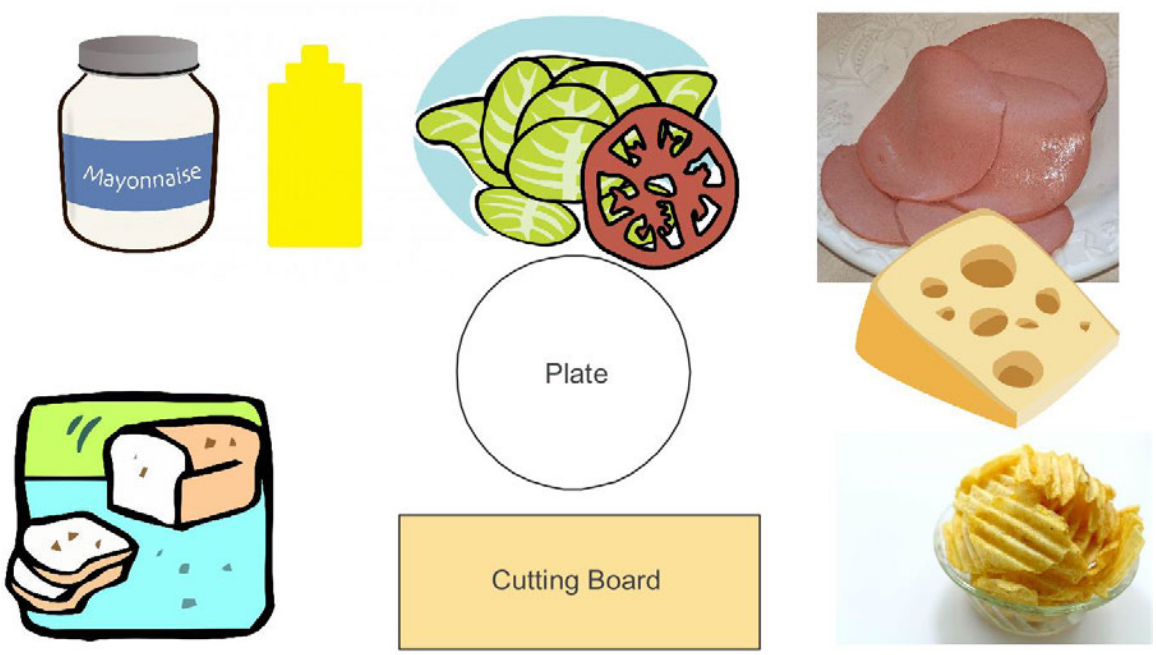
APPENDIX F – Sandwich Making Station Set-up



APPENDIX G – Sandwich Presentation Rubric

Sandwich Presentation Rubric

Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Poor
The sandwich presented has eye appeal and the color is appetizing. The plate is neat and clean. The sandwich was presented creatively and has the potential for a business product. Appropriate use of garnish.	The sandwich presented reflects the interpretation of a traditionally made sandwich. The plate was neat, and the sandwich is sellable. The color is moderately appetizing. Use of garnish.	The sandwich slightly reflects the interpretation of a traditionally made sandwich. The plate is messy. The sandwich lacked color and sale ability. The sandwich is slightly appetizing. No use of garnish.	The sandwich presented did not reflect the interpretation of a traditionally made sandwich. The plate was messy. The sandwich looked unappetizing and is not sellable.

APPENDIX H – Parent Survey

Please rate your child's current level in the following areas with a check in the box:

	No Help	Uses a device To assist	Super-Vision or Verbal Prompt-ing	Needs 25% of help from others	Needs 50% of help from others	Needs 75% of help from others	Needs 100% of help from others
Bathe themself							
Dress themself							
Feed themself							
Brush/Floss teeth							
Toilet themself							
Prepare a sandwich							
Put away 3 grocery items							
Buy 3 food items from store							
Vacuum a carpet							
Wipe down a table							
Clean a sink and toilet							
Make a phone call							
Express themself							

What changes in knowledge did you notice in your child while they participated in the program? _____

_____

What skills are easier for your child now? _____

_____

What changes in behavior did you notice in your child while they participated in the program? _____

_____

What changes in attitudes did you notice in your child while they participated in the program? _____

_____

What changes in physical abilities did you notice in your child while they participated in the program? _____

_____

What did you like most about the program? _____

_____

What did you like least about the program? _____

_____

Please provide any additional information, input, or comments that you would like to share with program development staff.

APPENDIX I – Stakeholder Matrix Table

Stakeholder or Stakeholder Group	Type of Involvement:	Possible Role(s)	Specific Interests
Program Developer	Planning, Implementing, Reflecting	Overseeing and coordinating logistics coordinating efforts among stakeholders to bring program to fruition and maintain success	Successful implementation, usable data
School administration	Planning, Implementing, Reflecting	Coordinating logistics, overseeing staff and participants, providing feedback	Successful implementation, design rigor and robust outcomes
Staff involved in Program delivery (teachers, therapist, paraprofessionals, vocational rehabilitation specialist)	Planning, Implementing, Reflecting	Overseeing participants, providing student support, providing feedback	Successful implementation, usable data
Student participants and their parents	Feedback, Implementing	Participating in program activities, providing feedback	Satisfaction, experience
Facility involved in providing cafe location, customers, fieldwork students, and data collectors/analysts	Planning, Implementing, Reflecting	Providing location for program activities, providing fieldwork students to support program operation, coordinating logistics, consultation on methodology, analysis, providing feedback	Successful implementation, usable data, design rigor and robust outcomes
Statistician	Implementing	Assisting with data collection methods, data analysis, interpreting results	Design rigor

Stakeholder or Stakeholder Group	Type of Involvement:	Possible Role(s)	Specific Interests
Facilities involved in supplementing education to participants (agriculture school, culinary school, farm, nursery)	Implementing, Reflecting	Providing feedback, administering program activities	Successful implementation
Funding agency	Reflecting	Consultation on possible dissemination	Usable outcomes, profit/loss statements
Food service agency	Implementing, Reflecting	Providing feedback, providing support staff/supplies for program business operation	Successful implementation
AOTA	Reflecting	Consultation on possible dissemination	Research quality stands up to scrutiny and can be used to inform policy making.
Local chapter of Chamber of Commerce	Reflecting	Providing feedback	Successful implementation

APPENDIX J – Stakeholder Program Evaluation Research Questions

Stakeholder or Stakeholder Group	Types of Program Evaluation Research Questions
The researcher/ evaluator	**Summative** • How many graduates did the program of the Opportunity Café produce? • How many of these graduates go on to gain employment after completing the program? • What number of students attended the program? **Formative** • Was the program structure and delivery sufficient for the participating students to make changes in their abilities? • Was the staff preparation and facilities sufficient to achieve desired outcomes?
Persons actively involved in program delivery	**Summative** • Did participants gain knowledge consistent with program goals? • Did participants gain skills consistent with program goals? • Did participants gain attitudes consistent with program goals? • Did participants demonstrate desired performance consistent with program goals? **Formative** • Were the participants able to implement skills taught throughout the program? • Is the structure of the program conducive to meet the program's goals? • Was training sufficient for staff to support students successfully? • For which students did the Opportunity Café program work best? • What areas need to be improved upon to encourage more successful students? • Were the staffing and transportation sufficient to operate the program? • Was the program duration adequate, or should it be longer or shorter? • Was the quality of the food product produced meet the needs of the consumers?

Stakeholder or Stakeholder Group	Types of Program Evaluation Research Questions
	• Did the delivery methods of the food service meet the needs of the consumers?
Facility, educational institution, organization administration	**Summative** • How many fieldwork placements for occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy did Opportunity Café produce? • Will the research data show that the intervention led to the desired change in dependent variables of interest? • Is the delivery of the program more costly than other means of delivery? **Formative** • Were any problems or issues reported? • Did recipients of the intervention and family members report a favorable experience while attending the program?
Funding agencies, advocacy agencies, AOTA, policymakers	**Summative** • What is the cost/expense ratio for the café's operating expenses? • Will the research data demonstrate the importance of the role of transition programs to improving employment outcomes for students with IDD? • How many meals/beverages were served over the program period? **Formative** • Did the mission and vision of the program align with the institution's goals?
Program participants and their parents	**Summative** • Will program participants display an increase in their abilities for self-care and life skills that carryover into their home life? • Were the participants and their families satisfied with the program?

APPENDIX K – Letter to the Board of Education

Good evening members of the Johnson City Central School District Board of Education. My name is Pauline Westcott, and I am an occupational therapist working as a contractual therapist for this school district. I have worked here for 7 years on a part time basis. I am also a member of the Johnson City School District family as we have lived in Johnson City School District for 18 years. Our family has played an active role in scholastics and athletics and both of my boys have graduated from Johnson City High School, one in 2020 and one in 2023.

My role as an occupational therapist requires that I provide occupational therapy services, which I will call OT from now on, to those students that are in need of support to allow them to become the best student they can be. These students generally have an Individualized Education Plan and I support students ranging from kindergarten through twelfth grade, as well as the transition program for 18–21-year-olds. The support I provide includes a variety of ways to maximize their occupations and activities of daily living, including strengthening and coordination to improve handwriting and computer skills, organization and socialization skills, strategies for the student and their teacher and support staff to modify the environment and provide sensory accommodations, among others. Most students receive services while they are young and in the early grades and go on to being discharged from direct OT services. However, there are certain students that will receive OT services their entire school career. These students typically have intellectual and developmental disabilities, or physical disabilities. Many of these students are not in regent diploma earning programs but are students with an IEP and are part of this school's living center environment with less of an academic focus and more of a life skill focus.

I recently returned to school to further my education with the goal of pursuing my Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree. I am currently enrolled in Boston University's Post Professional Doctorate of OT program. As a part of this program, I am required to identify a problem, and develop a solution to this problem and write about it in my dissertation. The problem I have identified is the difficulty of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities obtaining employment once they leave high school. This seems to be a nationwide problem. In 2022, only 21% of people with disabilities were employed according to the 2023 report by the U. S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 requires that schools prepare students for future work by providing students with disabilities transition planning, assessment, and employment-related instruction (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). However, despite this mandated support it seems to still not be enough. Students with disabilities tend to be less employed, drop out of school, earn less per hour than their typical peers, continue to live with their parents after high school (Test et al., 2009) and experience more social isolation (Lindsay at el., 2019). In their systematic

review, Gilson et al. found that 23% of students with intellectual disability, 32% with autism, and 37% with multiple disabilities did not have paid employment eight years after leaving high school (Gilson et al., 2017).

We need to work together as a society to change this statistic, and as an institution of the state of New York and public education, we have a responsibility to do what we can to improve the employment of our students and adolescents. We need to provide our students with intellectual and developmental disabilities as many opportunities for employment as possible.

Currently our living center students receive job skills training in our school building in the middle and high schools by running a coffee cart program and the school store. After graduation, the students are given the choice to stay on at school in the transition program until they are 21 years old. They have the opportunity to leave the high school building for off-site job training opportunities. Some students go to the Binghamton University campus to work in the food service department, while others do jobs on school grounds, such as assisting with the coffee cart and school store. This program is currently run by one special education teacher, with the assistance of a teaching assistant and a paraprofessional. Organizing these job sites, as well as providing academic instruction to the classroom, can be a challenging task.

Another option for students to gain employment skills is Project SEARCH, developed in 1996 at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. This program is a one-year training program, collaborating with an area hospital, and acts as a means of training adolescents the skills to obtain employment (Dalton, 2018). Lourdes Hospital was the local organizational affiliate that supported the Project SEARCH in our area. This program was found to be no longer sustainable and closed this spring. Losing this program is detrimental to our current and future transition students, as Johnson City High School had one applicant for Project SEARCH for next year. This opportunity has gone away leaving this student with the potential to become a statistic.

Once students with intellectual and developmental disabilities leave high school for adulthood, they face a lack of support and the term “falling off the cliff” is coined. While these students are still enrolled in the school system, they have many supports from administration, teachers, therapists, and other staff. Once they leave the school, they are handed over to community-based support, and the intensity and structure of the support changes and the student and their family can feel unprepared for life after high school. We can do something to change that.

My doctoral program proposes a solution to the lack of employment training opportunities for our students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I would like to take Johnson City High School’s store and expand it to a larger scale. This would require a collaboration between our school district, and the local university. Called “Opportunity Cafe”, my proposed program is a community-based intervention program

that will be an operating business housed on the local college campus of either SUNY Broome or Binghamton University's campus. Our high school transition students with intellectual and developmental disabilities will provide food and beverages to the college students and staff in a café-type atmosphere. The students will be involved in all aspects of the operation of the café, including ordering, shopping for, and growing some of the food used in the café. They will be responsible for food preparation, customer service, clean up, and money management under the supervision of adult support staff. These staff will include therapists, teachers, paraprofessionals, and rehabilitation science students that are attending the college campus. The café will generate revenue to help support the functioning of the café to purchase supplies and support staff salaries. To prepare the students for their jobs at the café, they will be trained during their high school day to learn baking, cleaning, growing food and caring for animals. These trainings will consist of 8–10-week rotations in the varying areas including:

1. Culinary school for baking, and safe food preparation and handling.
2. Horticulture at the indoor hydroponic facility to grow food needed for the café, or at the local farm.
3. Agriculture to care for chickens and cows at the local farm cooperative.
4. Laundry and cleaning at the local hotel facility to learn cleaning skills.

I am asking for the Johnson City High School Board of Education to:

- Consider and support this proposed program for its students.
- Participate in grant writing for funds to implement the proposed program.
- Become a stakeholder in formative program evaluation by participating in meetings, surveys, and program development.
- Allow for the hiring of additional staff-specifically a transition coordinator position and two paraprofessionals to support students as they learn skills needed for the program.
- Allow school buses and bus drivers to be used for transporting students to their training sites.

This time of transition is a vital time in an adolescent's life and we need to support these students more, rather than take services away. I ask for your support to allow this venture with our local college campus to develop an innovative program and a solution to a nationwide program. Please help my vision for a transition program for our students with intellectual and developmental disabilities become a reality. I thank the Board for its time. I am available to answer questions, and you may contact me at [redacted]. Thank you.

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APPENDIX L – Summary of Dissemination Activities

Audience	Primary audience consists of: ● Administrators of both the school district and the university ● The school district teachers and paraprofessionals working with the transition students with IDD ● Policy makers in the local community ● Parents and transition students with IDD.	Secondary audience consists of: ● Other school-based OTPs working with transition students ● Community-based OTPs working with transition aged students
Key Messages	● People with disabilities have a low employment rate and post school outcomes ● Increased parental involvement is a positive predictor ● Student involvement in goal setting is a positive predictor	● OTPs may not be participating to full potential in transitions ● OTPs are qualified to help achieve post-school goals ● Transition group programming is limited
Sources/ Messengers	● Director of Student Services ● The Wright Family	● NYSOTA ● AOTA
Dissemination Activities	● Digital slideshow presentation ● Written materials of fact sheets/booklets ● In-person meetings ● Social media, and local news	● Written information of fact sheets/booklets ● In-person meetings ● Electronic media ● Poster presentation ● Journal articles
Budget	$1198.45	$2067.89
Evaluation	● Budget (-/=/+) ● Student participants (-/=/+) ● Students that gain employment (%) ● Parent attendants (#)	● Consultative requests (#) ● Opportunity Cafe locations (#)

APPENDIX M – Proposed Program Budget for Opportunity Café

<table>
<tr><th>Cost</th><th>Year 1</th><th>Year 2</th></tr>
<tr><td>Personnel (Salary and Benefits)</td><td>Special education teacher –Salary $59,967.
Two paraprofessionals– Salary–$26,111 each totaling $52,222.
Occupational Therapist consultant $52 per hour for 10 hours per week=$520 x 40 weeks=$20,800.
Bus driver–provided by the school district–no assumed costs</td><td>Cost of living increase 2.5%
$61,466.17
$53,527.55
$21,320.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>Consultant fees</td><td>Statistician fixed rate for formative and summative evaluation $400

Consultant fees for small business startup– no fees

Legal fees to set up a non-profit corporation=$1500.00

Accounting and Payroll fees=$3000.00</td><td>Same

Same

None

Same</td></tr>
<tr><td>Instruction</td><td>Staff trainings and meeting times will be factored into the workday and will be included in personnel costs</td><td>Same</td></tr>
<tr><td>Equipment</td><td colspan="2"><table>
<tr><th>Item</th><th>Year One Cost</th><th>#</th><th>Total Cost</th><th>Year Two Cost</th></tr>
<tr><td>Vulcan 50LB Electric Floor Fryer</td><td>$9889.00</td><td>1</td><td>$9889.00</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>Spaceman 24 liter Soft serve ice cream machine</td><td>$14708.41</td><td>1</td><td>$14708.41</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>Waring Ice cream maker</td><td>$715.00</td><td>3</td><td>$2145.00</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>Everest upright refrigerator</td><td>$5286.00</td><td>1</td><td>$5286.00</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Cost	Year 1				Year 2
	Blodgett electric convection oven	$7200.00	2	$14400.00	None
	Bloomfield 3 warmer coffee brewer	$1003.73	1	$1003.73	None
	Bunn coffee decanter with orange handle	$31.99	3	$127.96	Same for anticipated breakage
	Jet Cleen dishwasher	$5099.99	1	$5099.99	None
	Baker's Pride gas charbroiler	$8635.55	1	$8635.55	None
	Waring 2-speed bar blender	$99.00	2	$198.00	None
	Duke cold pan unit with carving board and open base	$980.26	4	$3921.16	None
	John Boos stainless steel worktable	$318.99	3	$956.97	None
	Waring countertop 3 speed drink mixer	$725.00	1	$725.00	None
	Winco hot water dispenser	$73.12	1	$73.12	None
	Metro 3-shelf utility cart	$282.15	2	$564.30	None
	Manitowoc ice storage bin	$1277.00	1	$1277.00	None

Cost	Year 1				Year 2
	Franke Superautomatic coffee machine	$11675.20	1	$11675.20	None
	Samsung washer	$1456.00	1	$1456.00	None
	Samsung dryer	$1456.00	1	$1456.00	None
	Golf cart	$10000.00	1	$10000.00	None
	Square Register kit with 25 rolls of receipt paper	$1278.00	1	$1278.00	$80.00 for 25 rolls of receipt paper
	Avion Solid back side chair set of 4	$185.00	4	$803.48	None
	Moral dining table	$264.99	4	$1059.96	None
Supplies	Printed work aprons with pockets 50@$6.39=$319.50 Paper products/food and beverage supplies for Cafe operations estimated $10,000 per week x4 weeks x10 months =$400,000				None Same
Communi-cation (telephone/ postage)	iPhone 14 telephone with plan $25.00 per month x10 months =$250.00 iPad 10 with cellular data for mobile ordering $16 per month for 36 months=$576.00				Same Same
Materials preparation	Menu Brochures– 250 bifold brochures, 9” x 8” =$139.99 Banner sign –one 4’x 6’ vinyl sign with grommets=$84.14				Same None
Travel	Bus driver 2 hours per day at $20/hour per hour, for 180 days=$7200.00				Same with 2.5% cost of

Cost	Year 1	Year 2
	Use of bus–in kind donation from the school district	living increase= $7380 None
Rental of facility	Facility lobby fees of the local university campus will be used. No associated costs.	Same
Evaluation	Program developers with the assistance of staff and OTD students will conduct the evaluation process. No associated costs	Same
Costs of Dissemination not covered above.	$3,859.09	Same
Other Expenses	$10000.00	Same
Total Expenses	**$657,057.14**	**$558,586.77**

APPENDIX N – Potential Funding Sources for Opportunity Café

Type of Funding	Source	Requirements and Examples
Grant	New York State Education Department: Enhancing Supports and Services for Students with Disabilities for Postsecondary Success (SWDPS) https://www.nysed.gov/postsecondary-services/enhancing-supports-and-services-students-disabilities-postsecondary-success#:~:text=What%20is%20it%3F-,Enhancing%20Supports%20and%20Services%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities%20for%20Postsecondary	To supplement existing supports and accommodations of students with disabilities to expand such supports and services provided at SUNY, community colleges and other degree-granting institutions of higher education. This grant was established in 2021. No information of previous grantees listed. (New York State Education Department, 2023a)
Grant	U. S. Department of Education-Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) https://www2.ed.gov/programs/tpsid/index.html	This provides grants to institutions of higher learning to support students with intellectual disabilities in areas of higher education focusing on socialization, independent living skills, self-advocacy skills, and integrated work and career experiences to lead to gainful employment. Previous grant recipients include Saint Joseph's University who was granted $492,839 in 2020 for their transition program for Autistic youth. Texas A & M University was granted $382,804 in 2020 for the development of a model comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities (ID). (U.S. Department of Education, 2023)

Type of Funding	Source	Requirements and Examples
Grant	New York State Education Department P-12 https://www.p12.nysed.gov/fmis/grants/	New York State schools can apply for these grants based on need. Examples of funding are for Title I schools where $100,000 is provided to the school to support allowable activities associated with the continuation of the school's High School Redesign. (New York State Education Department, 2023b).
Grant	The United States' Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has applications for grants for two funds. 1. Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) 2. The Pathways to Partnerships Innovative Model Demonstration Project https://sites.ed.gov/idea/department-of-education-announces-its-largest-ever-vocational-rehabilitation-discretionary-grant-opportunity/	This opportunity was announced in April 2023. The plan is for awards totaling $224 million for between 22 and 32 projects. Due to the newness of this program, previous grantees are not available. The purpose of the program is to support "innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment as defined in the section 7 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for youth and other individuals with disabilities" (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). This program focuses on creating transition approaches for children and youth with disabilities that are systematic and replicable. The goal is to strengthen collaboration between local school districts, state agencies, and Centers for Independent Living that are federally funded. This collaboration will strengthen student's access to college, the workforce, and opportunities to live independently.

Type of Funding	Source	Requirements and Examples
		(United States Department of Education, 2023).
Grant	The Johnson Scholarship Foundation https://jsf.bz/our-work/people-with-disabilities/	This foundation provides grants to organizations that educate, mentor, or otherwise support students with disabilities. It funds scholarships for students with disabilities at each campus of the State University System of Florida as well as schools throughout the United States and Canada that specifically focus on those populations. The foundation also supports programs that focus on employment for people with disabilities. In 2022 $3,727,845 was awarded to programs serving people with disabilities. Grants ranged from $730,000 to $500. An example of a grantee is the organization Bridges from School to Work with a $250,000 grant to support students with disabilities. (Johnson Scholarship Foundation, 2023).
Grant	American Occupational Therapy Foundation Intervention Research Grant	The AOTF awards grants with the mission "to advance the science of occupational therapy to support people's full participation in meaningful life activities." (AOTF, 2023, para. 1) These grants aim to lay the groundwork for larger scale research projects. Past recipients include: Annemarie Connor PhD, OTR/L in 2019 for building collaborations with a university OT program, and community resources for her program Peer-mediated Vocational Social Skills Program for Young Adults with Autism. Lauren Little, PhD, OTR/L in 2018 for Bridging a Service Gap in Autism: A Hybrid Coaching Intervention to train practitioners in best practices in telehealth. Evan Edward Dean, PhD, OTR/L, in 2017 for

Type of Funding	Source	Requirements and Examples
	https://www.aotf.org/Grants/Intervention-Research-Grant	his program Supporting Employment through Self-Determination for Young Adults with ASD: A Feasibility Study. (American Occupational Therapy Foundation, 2023)
Grant	W. K. Kellogg Foundation https://www.wkkf.org/who-we-are/#whoweare-2	Purpose of grants are for providing "funds for the promotion of the welfare, comfort, health, education, feeding, clothing, sheltering and safeguarding of children and youth, directly or indirectly, without regard to sex, race, creed or nationality" (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2023, para. 1). In 2022–23, 6 grants totaling $650,00 were given to grantees in New York State. (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2023)
Grant	Dudley Allen Sargent Research Fund: Doctoral Student Competition https://www.bu.edu/sargent/research/	This program allows doctoral students to pursue research and training opportunities. Up to a $5000 award. (Boston University, 2023).
Grant	Bank of America https://about.bankofamerica.com/en/making-an-impact/grant-funding-for-nonprofits-sponsorship-programs	This company offers "grants for innovative, longer-term solutions that build economic self-sufficiency" (Bank of America, 2023, para,2) with the goal of creating more vibrant communities, advancing economic mobility including youth workforce employment and development, and removing barriers to employment. Examples of previous projects not provided. (Bank of America, 2023)
Fund-raising	GoFundMe https://www.gofundme.com/start/charity-fundraising	Crowdfunding using this online resource to reach many in the community. Social media can be used to reach many individuals. (GoFundMe, 2023).
Revenue	Food Sales	Sales of food and beverages will offset expenses.

APPENDIX O – Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Introduction

The transition to adulthood can be especially challenging for students with disabilities. To help support this challenge, the United States enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. The IDEA requires schools to prepare students for future work by providing students with disabilities transition planning, assessment, and employment-related instruction (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). However, despite this mandated support, it is still not be enough. Students with disabilities tend to be less employed, drop out of school, earn less per hour than their typical peers, continue to live with their parents after high school (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009) and experience more social isolation (Lindsay at el., 2019). In their systematic review, Gilson et al. found that 23% of students with intellectual disability, 32% with autism, and 37% with multiple disabilities did not have paid employment eight years after leaving high school (Gilson et al., 2017). Further confirming this is the 2023 report by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics stating that only 21% of people with disabilities are employed (Bureau of Labor, 2023).

Transition services from high school to adulthood are important for all students to help ensure life-long success. For students with disabilities these services are even more vital. Participating in coordinated sets of activities with transition services increases the likelihood of employability, education, training, and skill acquisition training that promotes successful post-school outcomes (Talapatra et al., 2018). Several studies found

interventions and programs supporting individuals with disabilities in their transition to adulthood were successful (Bathje et al., 2018; Lindsey et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2021). Occupation based life skills interventions as well as a supported employment model were shown to be successful for adults with mild to moderate neurodevelopmental disorders (Bathje et al., 2018).

As children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) progress through school, they often receive therapy support and services to encourage independence and employment. Occupational therapy (OT) services are the most received support service for elementary students with IDD, but this support seems to decline as the child ages. Only 7.5% of students receive these OT services the last 12 months of their school career (Goodman et al., 2020). The needs of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) do not stop once they leave high school, however most of their academic support and therapies do. Occupational therapy practitioners are not participating in transition services to their full potential (Kardos & White, 2005) resulting in a gap of services for a very needy population.

Program Overview

To address this problem, the proposed vision is part program proposal, and part business venture. This program is called *Opportunity Café– Creating Achievements in Foundational Experiences* for students with disabilities. The café will be an operating business housed on a college campus where transition-aged students with IDD will be the employees providing food and beverages to the college students in a café-type atmosphere. These students with IDD will be involved in all aspects of the café's

operation, including ordering, shopping for, and growing some of the food used in the café. They will be responsible for food preparation, customer service, clean up, and money management under the supervision of adult support staff. By providing an opportunity for these students to learn valuable skills in a supportive environment, these students will gain the skills needed to become productive, employable adults and maximize their potential.

Our Mission

The "Opportunity Café" was created to enable our students with disabilities the opportunity to learn, enhance, and integrate job, social and behavioral skills while providing a café experience to college students and staff attending a local university campus.

Our Vision

The vision of the café is to deliver a job and life skills transition training program for students with disabilities, that will become a statewide model for State University of New York (SUNY) campuses, that will empower, motivate, and enable students with disabilities to participate in skill acquisitions to optimize quality of life.

Location and Operation

The café will be located on a State New York University (SUNY) campus. This campus proximity allows contact with nursing students and the rehabilitative science curriculum students of physical therapy, occupational therapy (OT), and speech therapy. These allied health students are a valuable resource to support research, program operations, and support through fieldwork opportunities. Additionally, collaboration with

community partners including a farm and a plant nursery will also be established. To ensure that Opportunity Café is successful, the occupational therapist developer will manage the project along with a talented team of diverse professional and administrative support staff, in collaboration with the high school special education teachers and district staff. Support staff are key to help supervise the student employees to encourage or model behavior.

Creating a café experience that is open for breakfast and lunch provides many opportunities for the development transition skills. Growing certain food items, such as fruits, vegetables, and herbs, raising chickens for eggs, and caring for a cow for milk and cream, will allow the café to have a seed-to-table focus on food. Making food from scratch such as gelato, baking homemade bread and other baked goods, as well as coffee, breakfast, and lunch items, will enable the students with IDD to gain skills in agriculture, animal care, horticulture, food service, customer care, money management, cleaning, laundry, personal care, and time management. If the on-campus café proves successful, expansion to a food truck or satellite location open to the public may be options.

Theoretical Base for the Program

One guiding theory to support Opportunity Café is the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). This learning theory states that for an individual to learn, they must have experiences (Kolb, 1984). By working at the café, these students will be exposed to many experiences and opportunities to learn new skills as well as strengthen established skills. A guiding framework to support the program is the Interprofessional Collaboration Theory (ICT). This framework of collaboration between agencies increases the

effectiveness of health services by working together to achieve a common goal (D'Amour et al., 2005). Opportunity Café is a complex endeavor involving many community and state agencies with different funding sources, so successful collaboration is vital.

Key Findings

Opportunity Café has several goals. One goal is for the café to sustain itself financially through sales of food and beverage. Another goal is to create successful student transitions to adulthood. The key performance indicators of the café will be the number of successful graduates of the program which will be measured annually, and the food and beverage sales which will be measured monthly.

Collaboration between educational agencies will be vital for the café to succeed. The collaboration between the SUNY university and college system, and the New York State public education system can be accomplished through the formation of a non-profit corporation governed by a board of directors composed of all the major administrative and operational stakeholders. Startup funding to make the café operational can be secured through fundraising, donations, grants, and capital contributions by New York State. Startup costs are estimated to be $657,057.14. Costs can be offset by securing grants, donations of equipment and supplies, and fundraising through community support. The sale of food and beverages to customers has the potential to produce income to offset a portion of these costs.

Recommendations

Programs that help students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)

successfully transition to adulthood have the power to change the high unemployment statistics of people with disabilities. Programs, such as Opportunity Café, need to be developed and encouraged to support students with IDD as they transition from adolescent student to adulthood to encourage self-care independence and skills, and employment. Monitoring of Opportunity Café's operations and effectiveness through constant evaluations are vital to ensure goals are being achieved, outcomes are met, and the program is producing the desired results. Developing collaborative relationships with local businesses and employers will create a foundation of employment opportunities available for the student as they complete the program.

Conclusion

Transitioning a student with IDD to adulthood can be an overwhelming process with many logistics for families, therapists, educators, and students to consider. Discussions around transition can be particularly heavy with respect to anticipation of the indefinite routine changes to follow upon student graduation. Adulthood transition in particular stimulates serious discussions of career selection, community engagement, and post-secondary living programming that steers the trajectory of a student's life. Therefore, Individualized Education Program teams have a responsibility under IDEA to consider a student's needs related to job training, functional life skill development, and employment supports and needs. However, adulthood transition planning for students with disabilities remains with unmet needs. Identifying and applying evidence-based models in adulthood transition can help guide education teams, students, and families throughout the transition planning process. Opportunity Café is a dynamic community-

based replicable program that uses evidenced-based practices to provide a learning model that will contribute to student success.

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APPENDIX P – Fact Sheet

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

OPPORTUNITY CAFÉ: A Community Based Intervention to Promote Employability and Self-Care Independence for Transition-Aged Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Pauline Westcott, OTR/L
OTD Candidate

The transition to adulthood can be especially challenging for students with disabilities. To help support this challenge, the United States enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. The IDEA requires schools to prepare students for future work by providing students with disabilities transition planning, assessment, and employment-related instruction with a transition plan in place by the time the student turns 16 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

The Problem: Despite this mandated support, students with disabilities tend to be less employed, drop out of school, earn less per hour than their typical peers, continue to live with their parents after high school (Test, Mazzotti et al., 2009), experience more social isolation (Lindsay at el., 2019), have fewer socioeconomic advantages, struggle academically, and are less likely to go onto secondary education and employment (Lipscomb et al., 2018).

Using Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), and Person-Environment-Occupational Model (Law et al., 1996) as guiding frameworks, a solution was developed.

The Solution: ***Opportunity Café-Creating Achievements in Foundational Experiences.*** Opportunity Café is a community-based intervention program that will be an operating business housed in the lobby of a local college campus. High school transition-aged students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) will provide food and beverages to the college students and staff in a café-type atmosphere. The primary goal of this program is to provide training to students with IDD to make them more employable and independent in their self-care skills.

Interagency Collaboration

United effort between New York State public schools, the State University of New York (SUNY) system, farm, and plant nursery.

+

Café Location

Operating business located in the lobby of a local SUNY college campus. Proximity to health science students is advantageous.

+

Environment

A supportive environment with diverse professional and administrative staff trained to encourage student independence and success.

=

Improving Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

Students with IDD will focus on work, social, life, and behavioral skills to increase independence in daily living skills.

Figure 1 Image supplied by Microsoft PowerPoint 365

Program Details: These high school transition students with IDD will increase their exposure to various occupations by being involved in all aspects of the operation of the café such as ordering, shopping for and growing some of the food used in the café. They will be responsible for food preparation, customer service, clean up, and money management all while under the supervision of adult support staff. The staff will include therapists, teachers, paraprofessionals, and rehabilitation science students that are attending the college campus.

Funding: Opportunity Cafe will be an operational business that will earn revenue from the sale of food and beverage products. The money earned from food sales will offset the expenses associated with payroll, equipment, and supplies. Significant startup costs of approximately $650,000.00 are needed to furnish the café with supplies and materials to function as a food service entity. However, costs can be offset by securing grants, donations of equipment, supplies, and fundraising through community support.

Occupational Therapy and Transition Services: Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) are distinctly qualified to assist individuals to maximize their potential. Transition service interventions are an emerging area for the school-based OTPs (Kardos & White, 2005). OTPs can help adolescents achieve post-school goals in employment, education, activities of daily living (ADL), and social participation (Pierce et al., 2021). Research gaps remain, and the quantity and quality of evidenced-based interventions are lacking (Bathje et al., 2018). Opportunity Café offers a replicable solution to the problem of poor post-school outcomes of students with IDD.

"All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual."

-Albert Einstein

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