

# The Fieldwork Educator Role

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**H**istorically, research articles with a focus on fieldwork education have investigated the impact of student, supervisor, and site variables on student learning. Student-centered fieldwork research typically focuses on student performance and student attributes, and might include

topics such as tools for evaluating student performance, predicting success in fieldwork students, strategies for promoting student success, and the impact of fieldwork on the development of professional attributes. Supervision-centered fieldwork research addresses the role of the fieldwork educator and methods for performing supervisory and educational functions. Examples of research in these areas could include topics such as managing challenging situations, student perceptions of supervisory experiences, and various supervisory models or styles. Site-centered fieldwork research tends to examine the contextual factors impacting fieldwork, and issues that facilitate or hinder implementation of student fieldwork programs. Topics related to fieldwork in emerging practice settings, comparisons of fieldwork settings, descriptions of unique models of fieldwork, and the costs and benefits of clinical education fit into this category. In addition, research on over-arching fieldwork issues explores the issues, purposes, and processes of fieldwork, and the practice area-fieldwork relationships.

From these studies, resources have been developed to assist students and fieldwork educators in their respective roles. There is a strong need for ongoing research in the area of fieldwork education to advance best practice ideals. Beginning with a focus on the fieldwork educator role, we will

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## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF OUTSTANDING SUPERVISION

Occupational therapy students value a fieldwork educator who creates a positive learning environment, guides student learning through graduated student assignments and effective feedback and serves as a positive role model for practice. Mulholland, Derdall, and Roy examined a total of 103 student nominations for clinical teaching awards for the Alberta Association of Registered Occupational Therapists (AAROT) in Alberta, Canada, for themes related to exceptional performance as a placement (fieldwork) educator.<sup>1</sup> Nominees were working in both rural and urban settings, such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and community placements, predominantly in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Results supported the importance of creating a positive and welcoming learning environment and facilitating learning through appropriate pacing and specific feedback. Exceptional educators served as role models for students through demonstration of positive

personal attributes and evidence of knowledge, skill, and dedication to their work. The practice placement experience offered by exceptional fieldwork educators had a significant, long-lasting impact on student development in the areas of confidence, interest in a particular clinical area, and appreciation of the profession.

## VALUED SUPERVISORY PRACTICES OF FIELDWORK EDUCATORS

The value of supportive supervisory functions was underscored in a recent qualitative study of experienced fieldwork educators.<sup>2</sup> Three fieldwork educators, each with an average of 6 years of experience and who had supervised 5 to 10 students in mental health and adult rehabilitation settings, were interviewed on three separate occasions regarding prior and current supervisory experiences and reflective insights. Participants indicated that prior negative experiences as students had influenced them to provide supportive learning environments for their students. Prior experiences of diminished support included "once a week status reports" and "peer supervision without direction from an experienced clinician," whereas participants characterized a supportive environment as "ongoing exchanges where questions are welcomed and structure is adjusted to meet individual learning needs"

## Call for Fieldwork Research Articles!

Researchers interested in submitting fieldwork research in press or published within the last 5 years for consideration for this column should contact Debra Hanson, PhD, OTR/L, at [dhanson@medicine.nodak.edu](mailto:dhanson@medicine.nodak.edu) for further information and deadlines.

(p. 164).<sup>2</sup> Attention to the situated context, student self-directedness, pace, and structure of the experience, as well as opportunities for regular feedback and reflection were identified as supportive for student learning. Data supported constructivist and situated learning theories of adult learning. ■

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## CONTINUING COMPETENCE

### Doctoral Education

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and application timelines with the program director, faculty member(s) with whom you might want to work, current students enrolled in the program, and financial aid directors at each institution. It is helpful to (a) ask how students have been funded in the past 2 to 3 years to gauge the funding climate at that institution, (b) identify eligibility requirements, and (c) obtain information about the process and timeline for each application. Funding options can include (a) direct support through research or teaching assistantships, university fellowships, predoctoral training grants, or dissertation awards; and (b) indirect funds to hire research assistants or secure fellowships that provide funds for supplemental training.

### CONCLUSION

As you consider ways to expand your knowledge base, enhance your professional skills, and advance the profession toward its Centennial Vision and beyond, keep the idea of earning a doctoral degree in the foreground. It is one way to work towards linking education, research, and practice. For more information go to <http://www.aota.org/>. ■

### References

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## IN THE CLINIC

### Hearing Impairments

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The guidelines provided in this article may provide practitioners with a starting point for establishing effective therapeutic relationships with clients who are deaf, Deaf, or HOH. ■

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