

3. Tricks and Tips for Fieldwork Education: Having 2 students at once? No way, not me!

When you get the request- “would you take 2 OT students at one time?” Is your immediate reaction- no way, that would be too much work. How can we shift this thinking from ‘too much work’ to- ‘more patients will be served’, or, ‘I as an educator will have more time to get to those projects on my desk’.

This model encourages the students to learn from one another rather than solely from the fieldwork educator. Students should share knowledge and use each other to field questions as well as to practice some skills. In this model the FW educator provides expert opinion on cases and techniques and oversees the therapy. But what about all the paperwork I would be expected to do? One solution to this situation is for the students to complete the CBE as a self assessment and when you meet with them to review their performance you add your comments. Much less work for you!

What are the strategies for success?

- Role model collaboration with other OT’s and health care professionals- the students will be more likely to see that collaboration occurs naturally and frequently so they too will model this between themselves
- Encourage students to journal and these can be shared once per week. This allows you to “see” their individual reasoning skills
- Make sure the expectations are that you are assessing each student’s individual performance
- Provide time for the students to collaborate and work together
- Establish ground rules for supervision particularly that the students will not be compared to each other
- Try to have individual meeting times scheduled throughout the placement

What are the advantages of this model:

For you:

- allows distribution of caseload
- can focus on teaching
- less time spent addressing problems/questions
- come away with more ideas from students
- time to complete other projects
- change in your routine
- you will be highly regarded on your team
- recruitment strategy ☺
- contribution to the profession ++

For the student:

- Less intense time with the educator
- Peer support for risk taking
- Have to learn better prioritization/time management skills

- Improved communication
- More opportunity for self evaluation
- Reduced fear, anxiety about placement
- Learn collaboration skills
- More practice time for techniques
- Brainstorming of ideas

For the patient:

- more one on one time
- enhanced treatments
- more education
- feel pride in that they are making a significant contribution to student education

As Zoe Raffard and Brianne Vetter report, two OT II students who just completed a 2:1 placement in Williams Lake,
“There were more opportunities to debrief and discuss after running a session or completing an assessment. We felt more comfortable talking with each other about little things, as we had more time, and then didn't have to worry about sounding silly! There were opportunities to work together to make our first tries more manageable...getting peer feedback, taking turns during assessments and filling in for each other when we were getting frustrated! The support for interpersonal things, not just therapy-related, but the issue of being a student/soon to be new grad, it was nice to feel like you had support!!”

“Overall, we much preferred the 2:1 model. I think it really enhanced our learning and our comfort in a new practice area!”

From a therapist's perspective, Karin Louis reports, “I found that [the students] worked well together to discuss clinical reasoning and develop appropriate intervention plans. This required less one on one facilitating from myself. They were proactive and took initiative in planning their day and prioritizing their caseload. Overall, it was a very positive experience for me.”

I hope some of you will consider this as a possible challenge to the way you educate students. With our increasing enrollment we are looking for ways to continue to build our capacity in BC for practice education opportunities. I would love to hear from you if you have comments or other ideas!