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Technical Assistance Bulletin

MarylandPublicSchools.org



Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services | TAB #21-01

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Date: January 27, 2021

Interprofessional Collaboration: Related and Support Services

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES), in alignment with the strategic plan, *Moving Maryland Forward: Sharpen the Focus for 2020*, supports the work of related and support services through a series of steering committees.

These State steering committees have developed unique and innovative programs that promote collaborative and interprofessional practices. Three collaborative models are illustrated below to highlight state-of-the-art strategies within Maryland that support the learning of students and the State’s mission to *Narrow the Gap* for students with disabilities. Interprofessional Practices represent an interdisciplinary team working together to provide an integrated system of support.

Current Collaborative Efforts

Instructional Coaching Tools and Techniques for Virtual and In-Person Collaboration

Interprofessional collaboration service providers:

- Speech-Language Pathology
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy

Outcome:

- Develop capacity in related service providers to use interprofessional practices to facilitate inclusive and collaborative services.
- Develop an understanding of coaching tools for both virtual and in-person collaboration

Brief Description:

The Maryland State Steering Committee for Speech Language Pathology (MSSC-SLP), in an effort to provide a continuum of support services to children and youth PreK-21, used root cause analysis that identified the lack of interprofessional collaboration, coaching skills, and knowledge of adult learning as

barriers to effective collaboration. As a result of research into possible solutions, the interprofessional practices (IPP) model was identified. This model, recognized throughout healthcare and educational settings, facilitates inclusive and collaborative services that engage parents, caregivers, and educational staff in natural, routines-based, and effective settings. Interprofessional collaboration provides real-time opportunities for two or more professions to learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve outcomes for the children, youth, and families.

Through the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services grant opportunities, the MSSC-SLP committee planned and implemented a series of webinars for local teams with a focus on adult learning, coaching, and interprofessional practices. As the training began to focus on interprofessional collaboration, the committee opened a dialogue with the Occupational and Physical Therapy Steering Committee (OT/PT). Recognizing the tremendous value of this work to develop a collective understanding of coaching across the State with related service providers, the MSSC-SLP is continuing to receive training in partnership with the OT/PT Steering Committee leads and has expanded this effort in 2021 to include multiple collaborative discussions around the practice of coaching.

Developing the capacity to engage in effective interprofessional practice aligns with State and national priorities. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the SLP certifying body, has identified the need to increase SLPs' knowledge of effective practices to promote interprofessional collaboration in their *Envisioned Future: 2025* framework. Coaching directly aligns with interprofessional practice (IPP) and when implemented effectively, would allow for the emergence of IPP in the schools. As a result of the current collaboration, the MSSC-SLP and OT/PT steering committees have targeted coaching and interprofessional practice skills in Maryland's SLPs, OTs, and PTs.

Coaching is a high priority skill that will allow for expertise to move from face-to-face in a therapy room, to the classroom, as well as virtually, for the benefit of students with identified disabilities. Additionally, development of coaching skills allows service providers to engage in effective interprofessional practice that maximizes time, staff, and fiscal resources. When support can be provided in the more natural environment, direct services can be limited to a smaller subset of students who require the expertise of the related service provider. The COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in disruptions to in-school instruction. Virtual platforms for general education and special education, including related services have become primary modes of instruction. The use of the coaching and interprofessional practices model has provided an avenue for service delivery for both virtual and in-person support. The service providers who participated in the training have expressed a deeper understanding and ability to implement instructional coaching tools and techniques for virtual and in-person collaboration.

Fit4Work - Fitness for Vocational Tasks for Youth with Disabilities

Interprofessional collaboration service providers:

- Adapted Physical Education
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech/Language Therapy
- Secondary Transition

Outcome:

- To ensure coordination, without duplication, of service provider efforts to improve post-school, work and recreation and leisure outcomes for students with disabilities.

Brief description:

The Adapted Physical Education Steering Committee (APE) used their MSDE grant funds to contract with Connie Johnson, PT, DScPT, PCS, Author of *Fit4Work: Fitness for Vocational Tasks for Youth with Disabilities*, to present on the Fit4Work model at the Fall 2020 steering committee meeting. A copy of Johnson's textbook was provided to each local school system in Maryland. Knowing positive post school outcomes are important in transition planning, the committee invited the lead for the Secondary Transition Steering Committee (ST) to attend the presentation.

Many students, particularly students with disabilities, exit school to find they are unable to meet the physical demands of work. They lack the strength, core stability, and stamina to successfully complete the tasks required in many workplaces. In addition, adults with disabilities need to be able to actively enjoy leisure pursuits and engage with family, friends, and community members.

This is supported by Connie Johnson, who suggests a model of work capacity evaluation for youth with disabilities. She includes test tools, forms, and innovative evaluation approaches. In addition to providing foundational concepts of how to perform the assessments, the book offers ideas to implement programming to support students and to measure outcomes. Johnson further identifies three levels of fitness and suggests types of activities and examples of activities based on a student's current level of fitness.

Through the steering committees, this work has been shared at the State level to build awareness of this critical need. The natural collaboration between APE, OT/PT, and SLP provides a strong foundation for this work. The addition of ST closes the loop on positive post-school outcomes at large for students with disabilities.

Many members on the Adapted Physical Education Steering Committee are familiar with the Fit4Work model and are beginning to have conversations with their local related service providers. Currently, Prince George's County Public Schools has adopted the Fit4Work model for its students, ages 18-21. The February issue of the Secondary Transition information sheet, *Transition Talks*, will focus on fitness for work and feature Prince's George's County's Fit4Work program. Baltimore County Public Schools has adopted the essence of the program and modified the curriculum to create a program called Move to Work. The collaboration between the related services in many districts supports the implementation of the Fit4Work model.

Supporting Students Preparing for Post-Secondary Transition

Interprofessional collaboration service providers:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Adapted Physical Education
- Speech/Language Pathology

Outcome:

- This project focuses on the creation of a collaborative resource document focused on the roles of each type of service provider in supporting students preparing for Post-Secondary Transition.
- The intended outcome is twofold: 1) to educate those providers about post-secondary transition; and 2) to increase overall provider involvement with this particular population of students.

Brief Description:

This project brings together four critical related services: Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT), Adapted Physical Education (APE), and Speech/Language Pathology (SLP) to develop a comprehensive and collaborative resource document with the focus on supporting students preparing for post-secondary transition. The purpose of the document is to develop a resource supporting the collaborative and interprofessional practices related to post-secondary transition for students with disabilities.

Though the project is currently in the beginning stages, the potential State and local impact is significant, with the ultimate desired outcome being the holistic engagement of students preparing for post-secondary transition engaged with a variety of service providers.

Presently the steering committees are working collaboratively on a draft document that defines the specific roles of each type of service provision in the integral support of students preparing for post-secondary transition.

The purpose of sharing this information is to inform local leadership and service providers of exemplary ways in which the related and support services personnel have developed and demonstrated an interprofessional and collaborative model of a more effective and efficient service delivery system for children and youth with disabilities. Although the interprofessional and collaboration showcased is at the State level, this process is replicable at the local level, providing opportunities for professional growth and ultimately improved student performance and outcomes. The ideas presented are meant to spark thinking about cross-discipline interprofessional work.

Reported Benefits of Collaborative Related Services Models

- Provides for a developed, intentional shared mission and vision
- Builds staff capacity through shared professional learning opportunities
- Creates a cohesive team of professionals
- Demonstrates interprofessional service delivery through collaborative opportunities for delivering professional development
- Delivery of co-planned, co-implemented, and co-evaluated specially designed instruction
- Evidence of more efficient time management for scheduling and student support

- Systemic changes in the understanding of, and support for, interprofessional collaborative evidence-based processes

Questions to consider to develop collaborative efforts within the local school system or public agency:

Infrastructure

- Does the administration understand and support interpersonal and collaborative planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective research and / or evidence-based interventions?
- What does the organizational structure of related and support service leadership levels look like in the jurisdiction?
- Do the various disciplines have opportunities to share, learn from and, with each other?

Personnel Capacity Building

- Does the jurisdiction plan/provide professional learning opportunities that are cross-discipline to build interprofessional and collaborative capacity within the related and support services staff?
- Does the jurisdiction offer opportunities for related and support staff to learn with and from each other?

Service Provision

- Is school administration aware of and in support of interprofessional and collaborative intervention?
- What support is offered at the school level for disciplines to engage in interprofessional and collaborative work with general and special educators?
- Is planning taken into consideration when scheduling to allow for effective interprofessional and collaborative intervention?

References

Fit4Work

<https://fit4workpt.wixsite.com/fit4workpt/post/2018/12/29/fit4work-getting-ready-for-2019>

Kerins, M. (2018, December 22). *Promoting Interprofessional Practices in Schools*. American Speech-Language and Hearing Association. <https://doi.org/10.1044/leader.SCM.23122018.32>

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT)

<http://transitionta.org/>

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