



# Becoming a Fieldwork “Educator”

## *Enhancing Your Teaching Skills*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Level II fieldwork education can be one of the most influential elements of a student's preparation for practice. The 2007 American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA's) Ad Hoc Committee to Explore and Develop Resources for Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Educators stated that “fieldwork education is a primary driver in transforming our current practice into meeting the 2017 Centennial Vision” (AOTA, 2007a, p. 14). Often, fieldwork educators taking their first student have only their own Level II fieldwork experiences to guide their teaching. Few occupational therapy practitioners have formal training in education. The purpose of this article is to provide the fieldwork educator with teaching tools and strategies that can be incorporated to enhance efficiency and effectiveness as a fieldwork educator and to maximize the student's learning during the fieldwork experience. Being aware of teaching-learning styles will also aid in setting realistic expectations for the fieldwork experience. Although this continuing education article provides an overview of these topics, it should be noted that a more thorough presentation of this material is available through AOTA's Fieldwork Educators Certificate Program (AOTA, 2009a) which is being offered nationwide by regional trainers.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

After reading this article, you should be able to:

1. Identify the importance of customizing the fieldwork experience by incorporating the student's strengths, liabilities, academic preparation, and curriculum design into the experience.
2. Identify students' learning styles.
3. Identify teaching styles to facilitate student learning.
4. Recognize the value of developing student-specific learning objectives for fieldwork experiences.
5. Identify tools available through AOTA to maximize the fieldwork experience for the fieldwork educator and student.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Although not often recognized as a primary job responsibility, most occupational therapy practitioners routinely incorporate “teaching” into practice. From showing a client how to use a piece of adaptive equipment, to instructing a caregiver on how to prevent injury by using appropriate body mechanics, occupational therapy practitioners teach on a daily basis. Most practitioners were not, however, formally trained as teachers. This lack of training in education techniques can result in unnecessary problems during fieldwork. The fieldwork educator who uses proper teaching tools can effectively influence the student's experience by using strategies that facilitate learning. By understanding the student's learning style and unique characteristics, the fieldwork educator can use the teaching style that will best facilitate the student's thinking and problem solving. As the fieldwork educator becomes more cognizant of his or her role as teacher and more skilled at using appropriate teaching strategies, learning experiences can be sequenced to grade the student's progression toward entry-level practice in an efficient and effective manner.

AOTA's Self-Assessment Tool for Fieldwork Educator Competency (2009b) provides a useful structure for identifying the competencies a fieldwork educator should have. This tool organizes the skills required of fieldwork educators into five areas: professional practice, education, supervision, evaluation, and administration.

The majority of these competencies pertain to understanding the student's learning needs and designing the fieldwork experience to adapt the teaching style to guide student performance. The complete Self-Assessment Tool for Fieldwork Educator Competency listing all 14 education competencies is available on the AOTA Web site. The reader

