Fieldwork Supervision Strategies

1. **ACOTE Requirements**: The ACOTE (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education) Standards state that fieldwork education is a crucial part of professional preparation and is best integrated as a component of the curriculum design. The Standards require a student be “supervised by a currently licensed or otherwise regulated occupational therapist who has a minimum of 1 year full-time (or its equivalent) of practice experience subsequent to initial certification and who is adequately prepared to serve as a fieldwork educator”.

2. **CSU OT Department Requirements**: The Colorado State University Occupational Therapy Department policy requires Level II fieldwork with an on-site OTR who provides 50% or more of the supervision. This occupational therapist must be currently licensed or credentialed as an OTR and have practiced for at least one year since completing the initial certification. Sometimes 2-3 fieldwork educators share supervision of students. We do not recommend more than 3 supervisors to ensure consistency of expectations and building positive mentorship relationships.

3. **Planning for student learning experiences**:
   a. Fieldwork is often perceived by students as the most important part of becoming a professional. Be planful and intentional as you develop student learning activities.
   b. Planning for students to do fieldwork starts before they arrive at the workplace and continues throughout the learning experience (Cooper et al., 2010). Let your colleagues know the student is coming and invite them to participate in the student’s learning experience by notifying you of potential opportunities and activities.
   c. Students may have mixed emotions about fieldwork, excitement for learning as well as anxiety about the unknowns. Creating structured learning expectations can ease the student’s anxiety by providing predictability.
   d. Plan an orientation to the fieldwork environment and learning opportunities that sets the stage for the fieldwork to unfold. Suggested orientation activities includes:
      1) Set a climate for learning by building a trusting collaborative supervisory relationship. Acknowledge the student’s background and strengths, share your own background and supervisory style with warmth, respect and purposeful interactions. Be a sounding board for the student’s new ideas and making sense of experiences.
      2) Explain the fieldwork site mission, philosophy, values and culture, be explicit.
      3) Review site specific objectives, and collaboratively develop student learning objectives to set a framework for entry-level practice expectations.
      4) Provide an overview of client safety and precautions.
      5) Introduce the student to staff, therapists and key people in the environment.
      6) Create an opportunity to explore learning resources: equipment, policy & procedure manuals, facility library, etc.
      7) Provide an overview on documentation procedures the first week, with opportunities to practice using good examples.

4. **Thinking aloud strategy for teaching**:
   a. Role model your thought process for solving clinical decision-making by saying it out loud.
   b. Share your work process and how you undertake being an occupational therapist. Reflect on how your perspectives have changed over time and what has influenced you.
   c. Describe the conceptual and practical framework underpinning your practice. Be open to the student developing their own professional identity and practice models using an evidence-based approach.
   d. Share how you work through practice dilemmas and ethical problems, students learn from the struggles.
e. Outline your problem-solving process, role model your thinking and doing to provide a complete picture for the student.

5. **Learning contexts for the student:**
   a. Consider the strengths of your human and non-human practice environment. Who are people who have a passion about their professional expertise who can share that with the student? What are unique interventions and learning opportunities the student can learn from? Seek out these resources to ensure the student has exposure.
   b. Scaffold expectations of students and your supervision so students gradually assume greater responsibility and you step slowly back as the student gains competence.
   c. Seek opportunities for students to have “hands-on” learning to apply and interact equally with thinking and performing aspects of learning.
   d. Invite the student to contribute to your site and client services by developing a value-added project which is important to you and the student’s learning experience.
   e. Be flexible with your teaching approaches to reflect the student’s learning styles, culture, and interests.

6. **Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) strategy** (p.137, Cooper et al., 2010):
   a. Student anxiety can overshadow their learning experience at the expense of tuning into their interactions with others, thus missing important cues informing how to respond therapeutically.
   b. Norman Kagan (1977) developed the IPR approach to stimulate student memory of the interaction and reflect more deeply upon the situation and learn from it.
   c. IPR learning occurs in a private trusting setting.
   d. Use an audio or video tape to record and review the interactions in more depth. Written reflections could also support the deeper understanding of what transpired.
   e. The fieldwork educator uses open-ended questions to trigger student recall of a difficult interaction or dilemma. For example:
      1) What thoughts were going through your mind at the time?
      2) What would you have liked to have said?
      3) What could you have done differently?
      4) How do you want to move forward from here?
   f. Focus on discovery rather than telling the student how it should be done.
