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SELTEC: Service and Experiential Learning Through Engagement in the Community: A Level I Fieldwork Model: Part 2

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Abstract

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Keywords

SELTEC model, experiential learning, service learning, level I fieldwork

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**SELTEC:
Service and Experiential Learning Through Engagement in the Community:
A Level I Fieldwork Model: Part 2**

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ABSTRACT

The SELTEC model of Level I fieldwork was developed and published in 2020. The SELTEC model combines service and experiential learning to benefit student learners, the educational system, and the community. The purpose of the study was to determine students' perceptions of a SELTEC model experience compared to a traditional Level I fieldwork experience. The research team administered a 24-item survey to thirty students who participated in the study. All participants received both a traditional one-week and SELTEC level I fieldwork experience during their occupational therapy education at Arkansas State University. Seventy-nine percent (n=23) of the respondents selected the SELTEC model to meet the question criteria the majority of the time, while 20% (n=6) selected the traditional experience. The study results indicate that the SELTEC model was preferred over the traditional FW model. The results show the experiences offered in the SELTEC model prepare students for occupational therapy practice in ways not offered in a traditional FW model.

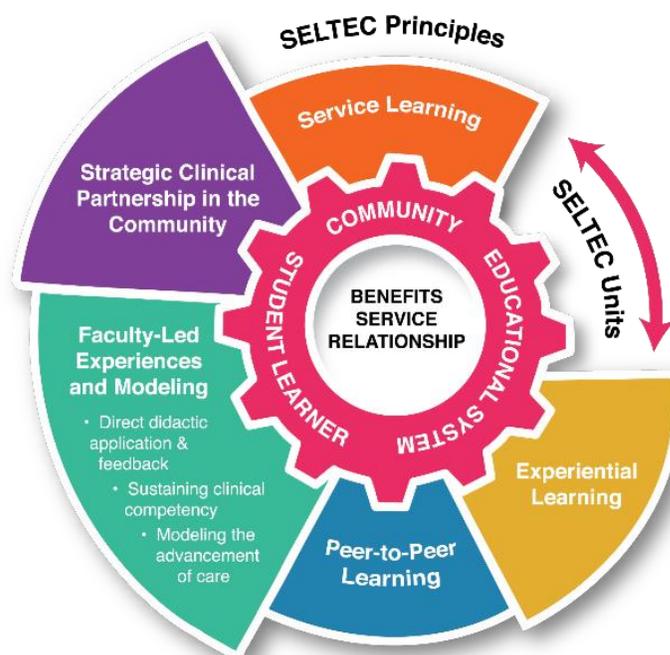
A critical component of the occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant curricula consists of fieldwork (FW) experiences. Level I FW is not a time for students to master skills and become independent. Instead, Level I FW opportunities are a time for students to enhance knowledge from didactic courses through direct observation and participation in learning environments (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education® [ACOTE®], 2018, p. 40). Each academic institution decides the manner in which FW is implemented. Many institutions follow a traditional one to two week model in which students are sent to a FW site to complete 40-80 hours in one to two weeks with a licensed practitioner. The practitioner may include an occupational therapist, occupational therapy assistant, or any relevant licensed professional. Sending a cohort to a FW site for one to two weeks often comes with challenges.

The occupational therapy literature shows the challenges associated with Level I FW experiences. Common challenges include limited FW sites due to growing national enrollment in occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs, developing FW sites that foster independent clinical thinking skills, and evolving changes to the healthcare system, including increased workload and financial restriction (Casares et al., 2003; Evenson et al., 2015; Fortune et al., 2006; Hanson, 2011; Roberts & Simon, 2012; Thomas et al., 2007). One solution to the challenges presented by traditional Level I FW experiences is implementing FWs utilizing the Service and Experiential Learning Through Engagement in the Community (SELTEC) model (Brown & Mohler, 2020).

The SELTEC model consists of three interlocking units that provide a service and receive benefits from the other units. The units include the student learner, education system, and community. The relationship of service-benefit between each of the units is crucial to the continued collaboration between the units. A visual representation of the units and the relationship between each is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1

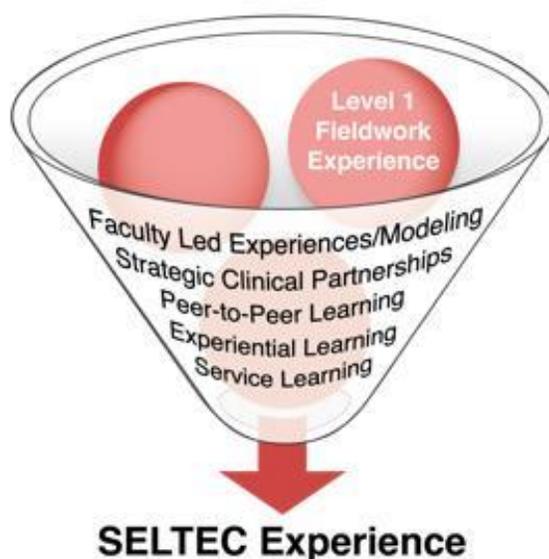
SELTEC Model Units and Principal Relationships



To support the units and ensure a balanced service-benefit relationship, the SELTEC model outlines five principles that guide the development of a SELTEC FW experience. Each principle provides a filter to determine if experiences align with the SELTEC model (Brown & Mohler, 2020). Each principle is vital to defining a SELTEC FW experience and includes service learning, experiential learning, peer-to-peer learning, faculty-led experiences/modeling, and strategic clinical partnerships. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the principles.

Figure 2

Creating a SELTEC Model Fieldwork Experience



Service and Experiential Learning

Service learning is a type of pedagogy facilitating a learning experience with civic responsibility to strengthen communities. Students provide meaningful community service while gaining instruction from educators and participating in self-reflection (Seifer & Connors, 2007). Service learning is a partnership where educators, students, and communities are co-learners and co-teachers sharing the aim to create better societies through civic engagement. The philosophical principles behind service learning are based on experiential learning, whereby education is an active process, and students learn from present experiences by reflecting on past experiences (Dewey, 1916; Giles & Eyler, 1994). The idea to teach, lead, and serve is the core of occupational therapy and aligns with many higher education institutional missions and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Commission on Education.

The SELTEC model provides students experiential opportunities to learn while immersed in real-world contexts. Students can develop skills of community engagement while affording community partners opportunities to address significant needs. Service learning creates a partnership that benefits all three SELTEC units. Educators may benefit by allowing real-world application of theoretical knowledge taught from didactic coursework and increasing student learning outcomes (Lane, 2008). Instructors guide the students' learning through hands-on experience. During the teaching-learning process, educational systems and student learners simultaneously build partnerships and networks in the community, thus strengthening the partnership between academic institutions and communities and promoting community development opportunities (Swords & Kiely, 2010).

Students who participate in service learning show professional development through improved understanding of the social issue at hand, increased personal insight, and deepened awareness of social justice (Groh et al., 2011; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Students enhance their cultural awareness and culture-centered care through exposure to clients from different backgrounds. Continued exposure allows students to see the cultural barriers clients face related to their healthcare.

Furthermore, students demonstrate improved learning and cognitive development through service learning, including writing skills and college grade point average (GPA; Madison & Turnbull, 2006; Vogelgesang & Astin 2000; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Flournoy (2007) found service learning resulted in increased student engagement. Theories surrounding teaching and instructional design also provide evidence that increased student engagement increases motivation for academic studies. Service learning has also demonstrated student development in areas of clinical skills, critical thinking, self-efficacy, and problem skills, which are core to occupational therapy (Astin et al., 2000; Knecht-Sabres, 2010; Levesque-Bristol et al., 2010; Sedlak et al., 2003; Tucker & McCarthy, 2001).

Service learning aims to address human and community needs through structured learning to meet the common good. Therefore, service learning increases awareness of societal problems and populations identified as "at-risk" (Astin et al., 2000). Research has shown that those who participate in service learning are more likely to continue to contribute to their community in the future and maintain civic responsibility (Hebert & Hauf, 2015). Communities are further strengthened by developing inter-professional networks that share a common interest to help and strengthen communities (Horowitz, 2012).

There are different types of service learning, including volunteerism, internships, community service, and field education. Field education is distinctive in that it provides learning scenarios with co-curricular service opportunities. In this case, Level I FW education aims to enhance students' understanding of occupational therapy while providing services that improve the community.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

The SELTEC model's principle of peer-to-peer learning is utilized in many ways throughout the Level I FW experience. Students may use peer-to-peer learning through the completion of related group assignments and throughout the experience. Students also collaborate on client cases and provide continuity of care from one group to the next. Students experience peer learning through the weekly debrief sessions. Students meet at the end of each weekly session to debrief about the day's events. The debrief sessions may include problem-solving about client behavior, deficits, or intervention approaches, and techniques. The debriefing may also bring awareness to ethical, cultural, political, social, and/or other contextual factors related to the FW experience.

Throughout the debrief sessions, students can gather insight from their peers and apply the knowledge learned in future FW experiences. A study by de Sam Lazaro and Riley (2019) found that students in peer-to-peer learning groups scored higher in questions involving higher-level clinical reasoning than students who received instruction from faculty lectures. The findings included the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Developing high-level clinical reasoning skills while keeping students engaged in the teaching and learning process is often achieved when peer relationships are included. Students involved in peer learning remain actively engaged and become co-constructors of the learning process (Carlson & Stenberg, 2020). When developing a SELTEC experience, strategic peer-to-peer learning experiences should be incorporated into the FW to engage the learner further and increase clinical reasoning.

Faculty-Led Experiences/Modeling

The purpose of faculty-led Level I FW is to introduce students to the FW experience, apply their knowledge to practice, and enhance understanding of the client's needs. Research shows that faculty-led FW experiences reduce clinical sites' burden and enhance active learning and client-centeredness (Provident & Colmer, 2013). Studies have shown that students who complete traditional Level II FWs have limited opportunity to practice hands-on clinical skills (Johnson et al., 2006). However, the faculty-led Level I FWs allow students to apply their didactic coursework through hands-on application weekly. In addition, students can observe the hands-on skills via the faculty-led facilitator. Observing hands-on skills, can reinforce the new skill and didactic content students learn in their courses. The SELTEC model emphasizes that the faculty who teach related coursework accompany students and serve as supervisors during the Level I FW experience. Pairing didactic instruction with clinical experiences in a real-world context provides endless clinical reasoning and application of knowledge.

Strategic Partnerships

Allowing students to apply the knowledge learned in a classroom to real-world experiences would not be possible without strategic partnerships. Strategic partnerships are essential for developing practical wisdom and fostering social relationships in the FW setting (Myrick et al., 2010; Ralph et al., 2009). Establishing successful clinical partnerships relies on collaboration between the community partner and the educational system. The strategic partnerships must align with the educational system's mission and philosophical base.

The benefits of establishing one strategic partner for a cohort of students include reducing the burden on FW sites, reducing student stress associated with traveling far distances to sites, thereby managing the financial burden, and decreasing students' sense of isolation by having peers at the same site to provide support.

Building a strategic partnership between the three units involves continuous and clear communication. Typically, the academic fieldwork coordinator (AFWC) would be responsible for setting up and managing FW sites. However, the development of a SELTEC site involves more members of the educational system, including the AFWC, related faculty who will provide faculty-led supervision, site supervisors, program administration, and even institutional administration to support faculty time and workload at the FW site. The FW site has a larger responsibility of providing space and learning opportunities for a large cohort of students rather than 1-2 students, as seen in the traditional model. The FW site must also value the benefits of hosting students and faculty with expertise in the given population. Expectations for each unit and service learning opportunities must be developed prior to implementation of the experience. The SELTEC model requires a higher level of collaboration but, in return, produces a high-quality experience for each of the model units.

The SELTEC model was implemented at Arkansas State University in a phased approach. During the initial implementation of the SELTEC model at Arkansas State University, students were exposed to a traditional Level I FW followed by a SELTEC Level I FW experience. For the purposes of the study, traditional Level I FW is defined as a one-week daily FW experience where students are supervised by a licensed professional and gain exposure to a setting and population. Following the implementation of the SELTEC model FW experience, data collection was needed to determine the students' perceptions of the SELTEC experience versus the traditional one-week experience. Support was necessary to determine if the SELTEC model experience benefited the model units more than or equivalent to the traditional Level I FW experience. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to determine students' perceptions of a SELTEC model experience that combines faculty-led, service learning, and experiential learning while engaging in strategic partnerships within the community as compared to a traditional Level I FW experience.

Methods

Design

Following approval from the institution's review board, the study utilized a descriptive study survey design to collect quantitative data and supporting quotes. The data was used to determine students' perceptions of a SELTEC Level I FW experience versus a traditional Level I FW experience. Prior to answering questions related to the FW experiences, the survey gathered basic demographic information.

Participants

Researchers used purposeful sampling to recruit two Arkansas State University occupational therapy cohorts who experienced both the traditional and SELTEC Level I FW. Cohorts included the Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) students, class of 2018, and the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) students, class of 2017. To participate in the study, participants had to be 18 years of age or older, enrolled in one of the recruited student cohorts, and completed at least one traditional Level I FW and SELTEC Level I FW. The two cohorts consisted of 58 potential recruits for the study. The survey was administered at the end of each academic program. The timing of the survey allowed students to experience all FWs prior to reflecting on the Level I experiences. The researchers chose the timing to gain overall perceptions at the culmination of the educational experience in the program.

Survey Instrument

The AFWC from the occupational therapy program at Arkansas State University developed a 24-item survey instrument to collect data on students' perceptions of the SELTEC and traditional Level I FW models. Colleagues within the department reviewed the survey for content validity. Colleagues provided feedback, and the research team revised the survey. The first four questions on the survey allowed participants to provide consent and determined inclusion/exclusion criteria. The following five questions gathered demographic data on class, age, ethnicity/race, and gender. The remaining 15 survey questions focused on students' perceptions of the SELTEC model units of the student learner, educational system, and community partners. Each survey question provided the same three response options. Response options consisted of a) the SELTEC model is the best model for meeting the criteria, b) the traditional (week-long experience) FW model is the best model to meet the criteria, c) both the SELTEC and traditional model meet the criteria. After selecting an answer, students were prompted to explain each response to gain additional insight into the response selected. Student responses were anonymous and stored in a password-locked account via SurveyMonkey. The account was accessible to only the research team.

Data Analysis

Data collected included descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Due to the limited narrative provided by students, there was not enough data to analyze it qualitatively. Instead, supporting comments were added to provided additional insight into students' perceptions. Through discussion and reflection on the meaning of comments, the research team identified key supporting comments for the SELTEC and traditional FW experiences. The researchers used the supporting comments to reinforce quantitative frequencies.

Results

The research team distributed 58 surveys via email, and 30 participants responded (27 OTD students and three OTA students). Twenty-nine of the 30 participants answered all fifteen questions related to the student's perceptions of traditional one-week and SELTEC FW experiences. One OTD student submitted the survey with blank answers, and the survey was excluded from data analysis. The researchers analyzed 29 fully completed surveys. Demographic data collected indicated that the study population consisted of twenty-three females and six males. One participant identified as Asian, non-Hispanic. Twenty-six participants identified as white, non-Hispanic, and two participants chose to abstain. Fifteen participants were between 21-25, 10 participants were between 26-30, three were between 31-35, and one was over 35.

Seventy-nine percent (n=23) of the respondents selected the SELTEC model the majority of the time, while 20% (n=6) selected the traditional one-week experience. Participants also collectively selected the SELTEC model over the traditional one-week model to meet the criteria in fourteen out of the fifteen questions, showing the students preferred the SELTEC experience.

The criteria regarding faculty immersion in practice settings, reducing the need for multiple FW placements, and management of sites and student requirements received 80% or more responsiveness rate from student participants regarding the SELTEC experience. In contrast, the highest responsiveness rate for the traditional model FW experience was 40% and related to the criteria topic of exposure to inter-professional relationships and exposure to the interprofessional team. Table 1 depicts each criteria topic, percentage of student responses for the traditional one-week experience, SELTEC experience, and both quantitative and supportive statements related to the SELTEC model unit.

Table 1				
<i>Survey Percentages of Responses and Supporting Quotes Organized by Units</i>				
Question Topic	% responses SELTEC	% responses TRADITIONAL	% responses BOTH	% responses an answer was not provided
Student Learner SELTEC Model Unit				
Provides hands-on experiences consistently and regularly.	50% (n=15)	23.33% (n=7)	23.33% (n=7)	0
<p>Supporting Quote: <i>"The SELTEC provides a better picture of the therapeutic process because it allows us to see a bigger picture of how the client(s) progress through the therapy process, and the traditional model only gives you a snapshot [one-week] of where the client(s) is. Sometimes not much changes in a week, but if you see them throughout the semester, you can see change."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"The SELTEC Model, in my opinion, was too hard to juggle with school work. I felt like I could not give my all. I like the idea of the traditional FW for the benefit of routine and habit like you would utilize in a workplace."</i></p>				
Allows for immediate processing and application of learned material into real-world experiences and contexts.	65.5% (n=19)	13.8% (n=4)	20.7% (n=6)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"The traditional FW model is a compact one-week FW experience of immediate processing and application of learned material from coursework with clients. The SELTEC model allows students to implement the processing and application of learned material with the pace of the coursework. The occupational therapy student learns set therapy skills in the course setting then implements the same knowledge on a weekly basis instead of a compact 1-week experience."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"I think both models allow for the application of information learned in coursework, though I prefer the traditional model because I believe a student can go more in-depth with treatment or evaluation. If they carry out a treatment session and are satisfied with it, they can modify or completely change that session for the same client on Wednesday. With the SELTEC model, it is possible they may not see the same client from week to week."</i></p>				

Allows the student to move through the occupational therapy process and framework.	55.2% (n=16)	20.7% (n=6)	24.1% (n=7)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>“I believe the SELTEC model strengthened my knowledge of the occupational therapy process and framework and better prepared me for graduation. I believe knowledge is gained through more practice with real-life experiences. I was implementing my knowledge of the occupational therapy process and framework on a weekly basis with real-life experiences from the SELTEC model. The traditional FW model only prepared me with ‘fake scenarios’ from case studies until the one-week real-life experiences.”</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>“By having the students at a site from 8-5, they are able to see evaluations, treatments, consultations, etc. They can get the whole picture because they are there all day. With the SELTEC model, students may come 8-12 every Monday, which may be a time set aside for only treatments or only evaluations. In my experience, on the day I was at my site there was a staff meeting each week for an hour of the time I was there. Therefore, I lost several hours over the course of the semester where I could have been learning, simply because of timing. With a traditional model the student can still attend one staff meeting for the week and see the executive side of things, and be able to engage in the occupational therapy process for the rest of the week.”</i></p>				
Allows the student the opportunity to interact with multiple clients for an extended amount of time.	58.6% (n=17)	20.7% (n=6)	20.7% (n=6)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>“My SELTEC experiences allowed me to build relationships with clients over time and gradually get to know them and what their interests were so that I could create occupation-based and client-centered interventions. The one-week traditional model does not allow enough time to get to know the clients you are assigned to.”</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>“As previously stated, for continuity of care I believe the traditional model is best as it allows a student the opportunity to see a case from day to day, whereas this client may be discharged after one treatment session if they are only seeing them once a week.”</i></p>				
Allows students the ability to increase their comfort level in interacting with clients as well as practicing professionalism.	60.1% (n=18)	27.6% (n=8)	10.3% (n=3)	0

<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"The SELTEC model allows for extended practice in communicating with other professionals and with clients. It is not just temporary practice for one-week, and then the experience is over. You get to continue using the skills and learn how to interact in different situations in the SELTEC model."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"In my experience, I felt much more comfortable at my site where the traditional model was used. By day 3, I was comfortable interacting with clients, my supervisor, and other staff members. With the SELTEC model, I felt nervous each week, and it seemed I did not have enough time to build a relationship with my supervisor or the clients because I kept seeing new clients each week. It was like starting over again."</i></p>				
Exposes students to interprofessional relationships and collaboration within the interprofessional teams.	34.5% (n=10)	41.4% (n=12)	24.1% (n=7)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"During my traditional FW rotations, I was allowed more access to build personal relationships and to collaborate with others on the therapy team."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"With the traditional FW, you gain knowledge on collaborative relationship because you are at the clinical site all day and get to see the process."</i></p>				
Allows for professionalism deficits to be addressed early in the process so that students are prepared for future FW experiences.	51.7% (n=15)	20.7% (n=6)	24.1% (n=7)	3.4% (n=1)
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"This model allows for immediate feedback and discussion about problems going on during FW or areas of weakness in the student's performance. You get to come back to campus each day, so you have the opportunity to get support from the professors. If you are gone for one-week, it is more difficult to be in touch with professors and work on those areas."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"The traditional FW model has more of a one on one interaction thus providing increased opportunities for CI's to address professionalism."</i></p>				

Allows students to receive feedback from a FW educator who understands the level of knowledge that the student has obtained in classes.	72.4% (n=21)	13.8% (n=4)	13.8 % (n=4)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>“The weekly feedback and debriefing that took place using the SELTEC model was extremely beneficial, so I could make improvements weekly. With the traditional model, I did not get feedback until the one-week was over, and that was not from a FW educator. The feedback was from my CI, and she was fairly new to the field of occupational therapy.”</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>“I received direct feedback during my time of traditional observation, which helped prepare me for the Level II and III experiences.”</i></p>				
Provides high-quality FW education for students.	55.2% (n=16)	20.7 (n=6)	24.1 (n=7)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>“I feel my SELTEC experiences were more time-consuming but provided me with greater opportunities to establish therapist/client relationships, practice therapeutic use of self, and learn how the occupational therapy process works over time.”</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>“I felt like the traditional FW model contributed more to my education than the SELTEC model did. I got a true picture of what the clinic looked like for that setting day to day.”</i></p>				
Faculty-Led SELTEC Model Unit				
Allows faculty to be continually immersed in a practice setting that includes their area of expertise.	86.2% (n=25)	3.4% (n=1)	10.3% (n=3)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>“I learned so much during my time at the SELTEC FW, with a [faculty] FW educator who had experience and expertise in working with older adults. Each week, she [faculty facilitator] would go around to residents and the facility, and I would get to see her work hands-on with some of the residents. The continually and weekly immersion into this setting with a [faculty] FW educator was a great asset to my education.”</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>“In traditional settings, it has appeared as if they do not welcome new opportunities, such as research or change in ways to provide services.”</i></p>				

Allows faculty to stay up to date on funding structure and regulation changes as well as current practice trends.	48.3% (n=14)	13.8% (n=4)	34.5% (n=10)	3.4% (n=1)
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"The structure of this model not only allows but facilitates faculty to stay up to date on changes and practice trends so they can provide accurate insight and information to students while in these practice settings."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"I feel this could apply to both FWs since we had a debrief about our traditional experiences and the SELTEC experience. We were able to report back to the faculty what we had experienced."</i></p>				
Allows faculty and students to advocate for the profession of occupational therapy and demonstrate the distinct value of the profession to stakeholders and organizations.	65.5% (n=19)	10.3% (n=3)	20.7% (n=6)	3.4% (n=1)
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"I think I was more comfortable advocating and providing insight into the value of occupational therapy during my FW that used the SELTEC model. As a new student, I did not feel comfortable doing this when I had a one-week rotation because I did not know my place in the setting. However, after rapport and trust are built, I think students and faculty are more opt to do this [advocate]."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"I was able to advocate during both types of FW. I feel just being in the community allows us the opportunity to advocate other staff members or other clients that may not understand what our profession does. I was able to utilize my elevator speech during both FWs."</i></p>				
Allows faculty access to many live client cases each semester that can be analyzed and assessed.	79.3% (n=23)	10.3% (n=3)	10.3% (n=3)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"Client cases and health status are constantly evolving, and new clients are continuously added to caseloads that present new and unique learning opportunities [during the SELTEC FW]. Whereas traditional FW only allows students to see whatever clients happen to be on the caseload and show up for treatment that week."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"Both models provide students and faculty with client cases."</i></p>				

Reduces the need for multiple FW placements and management of sites and student requirements.	86.2% (n=25)	6.9% (n=2)	6.9% (n=2)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"[Needing multiple sites and managing sites] seems like a challenging aspect of the FW coordinating. This [SELTEC experience] alleviates that and allows the student to stay near the school. It also supports the student because they have other classmates with them, so if they have a question, they can go to that student."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"One contract is easier to get than 30, but I'm not sure if there are as many places willing to take multiple students at once."</i></p>				
Community SELTEC Model Unit				
Allows students the opportunity to provide a service to their assigned facility to meet the common good of the facility.	58.6% (n=17)	17.2% (n=5)	24.1% (n=7)	0
<p>Supporting SELTEC Quote: <i>"I believe us, as a class, being there [at the SLETEC FW Site] gave the facility a more positive vibe. With the traditional model, I was just sitting in the background with little interaction to provide."</i></p> <p>Supporting Traditional Quote: <i>"In both settings, there are opportunities to provide a service to the facility. It may look different in different models, but the opportunity is still there."</i></p>				

Discussion

The quantitative data and supporting statements collected in the study demonstrate that the SELTEC model was preferred over the traditional one-week model in 23/24 topic areas. The results support using the SELTEC model to enhance the Level I FW experience for the student learner, educational system, and community partners. Student comments provide further evidence of the perceived value of FW experiences that utilize the SELTEC model. The discussion further explains the study results' impact on the three SELTEC model units: student learners, educational system, and the community.

Student Learners

Frequency data and supporting statements showed students preferred the SELTEC model over the traditional one-week FW experience. Fieldwork experiences are critical for developing competence in clinical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning (Haynes, 2011). During the SELTEC experience, students reported receiving more hands-on experience consistently and regularly. Students further reported immediate processing and application of learned material into real-world experiences while on the SELTEC Level I FW. The findings are consistent with Hodgetts et al. (2007) who found that students' perceptions of academic preparation do not adequately prepare students for employer expectations. Instead, FW experiences that provided hands-on skill-building were most influential in students' perceptions of feeling prepared for the workforce. A study conducted by Koeing et al. (2003) found that students are most commonly not provided opportunities to develop clinical practice skills with real clients during Level I FW experiences. With the SELTEC model, students are provided the opportunity to provide hands-on skills and integrate learned knowledge from the curriculum on a weekly basis throughout an entire semester. Using principles from the SELTEC model, students may complete a lecture on early childhood development in a pediatrics course. That same week, students would attend a SELTEC FW experience at a developmental day treatment facility. At the facility, students would observe and assess, in real-time, developmental milestones in children with various contextual factors. As students assess and observe the developmental milestones, they are forced to practice developmentally appropriate communication and rapport building with the pediatric population. The soft skills are then built into the student's professional repertoire.

A critical component of the Level I FW experience is the debrief. The debrief is a time for students to discuss their experiences, ask questions, and expand on students' actions and thought processes in a classroom setting (Mackenzie, 2002). In the traditional one-week model facilitated by the study institution, students debriefed as a cohort after the Level I FW experience. Using the SELTEC model, students debrief each week on-site and immediately following the rotation time. Setting time aside for point-of-contact debriefs is critical to help students understand the learning process and content application (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). It is important that the facilitator of the debrief session understands the content area and the level of knowledge the student learner has obtained. By utilizing the related didactic course instructor as the faculty supervisor and debrief facilitator, a clear connection between student knowledge and the FW experience can be made. Therefore, the SELTEC model debrief allows for timely and clear communication between the student and debrief facilitator, which enhances the application of didactic information into real-world settings.

The Level I FW experience is also a time to allow students opportunities to develop professional behaviors (Koenig et al., 2003). Using the SELTEC model, students reported increased opportunities to address professionalism deficits early in the process. By addressing professionalism concerns early, students reported feeling prepared for future FW experiences. Level I FW experiences are an opportunity for students to observe and mimic professional behaviors within a practice setting

(Mulholland & Derald, 2007; Scheerer, 2003). The Level I FW experience should provide opportunities that allow for the evaluation and development of professional behaviors to support developing practitioners (Koenig et al., 2003). During a typical SELTEC model FW experience at Arkansas State University, students received weekly grading and feedback on ten professional behaviors. The same behaviors were assessed in didactic courses and on Level II FW. Assessing the professional behaviors during the SELTEC experience allowed students to receive weekly feedback in the FW setting that could be applied to current and future educational experiences.

Educational System

Data from the study shows the educational system also benefits from a SELTEC model FW experience. One challenge associated with Level I FW placements is locating and securing sites to host students. Using the SELTEC model, the educational program can eliminate the burden by placing all students at one facility. In doing so, the need for multiple FW placements and management of sites and student requirements by the institution's AFWC is reduced. By reducing the need for Level I FW placements, the AFWCs can utilize additional FW sites for Level II FW placements. Placing all students in a cohort at a single facility, the AFWC and the educational program can provide consistency in the quality of the FW experience for all students.

A second benefit to the educational system is that the faculty are afforded opportunities to access live clients that can be utilized to teach and assess clinical competency in skills related to didactic content. For example, a SELTEC model adult rehab FW experience may allow the faculty supervisor to assess a student's wheelchair transfer skills with a live client instead of simulating the experience in a lab-based skills assessment. Providing students opportunities to practice hands-on skills is necessary to build confidence and prepare students for Level II FW. While it is not required that students have opportunities to practice hands-on skills during a Level I FW, research shows the ability to apply skills benefits the student. One study found that students who were provided opportunities to practice hands-on skills with real clients felt better prepared for implementing occupational-based therapy and beginning Level II FW (Koenig et al., 2003). The lack of hands-on application during Level I FW experiences could potentially be the reason so many FW educators perceive Level II FW students as underprepared (Koenig et al., 2003). By having a faculty-led FW experience, the educational system can combine the FW experience with didactic instruction and reduce the need to identify additional live clients outside of the FW setting.

In a traditional one-week FW experience, the successful application of knowledge is dependent on having a FW educator familiar with the FW process and program curriculum. While assessing and preparing FW educators on clinical instruction is one of the primary roles of the AFWC, ACOTE is not prescriptive in how the assessment or preparation takes place or what is included. Mulholland and Derald (2007) found some FW educators were unsure about the purpose and expectations of FW placement, thus affecting the student's experiential learning process and application of clinical skills. Using the SELTEC model, a faculty member fulfills the role of the FW educator and therefore removes any uncertainty and confusion about Level I FW expectations. It also

reduces the burden on the AFWC in finding quality Level I FW sites and educators that foster knowledge and skill application. By alleviating the need to prepare and assess multiple Level I FW educators, AFWCs can focus their time and attention on preparing FW educators for Level II experiences.

The use of faculty-led FW experiences allows opportunities for the faculty member to demonstrate theory and practice and continue to stay up to date on funding structure and regulation changes as well as current practice trends. Through immersion in the FW facility, faculty may be better able to determine how funding, policy, and regulation changes are affecting practice. For example, in a psychosocial SELTEC FW experience, a faculty member is leading a FW experience at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. Through weekly engagement in the facility, the faculty member identifies and discusses with students and stakeholders the barriers of policy, funding, and regulations that limit individuals from receiving occupational therapy services in the setting. The faculty member is modeling advocacy skills to the students, gaining information related to occupational therapy barriers in mental health practice, and using the information to create didactic content and assignments. The didactic content and assignments are relevant to current practice, applicable to all students due to the single SELTEC placement and create an active learning environment through relative discussion. Furthermore, the faculty are afforded opportunities to be continually immersed in a practice setting that includes their area of expertise and model appropriate practice theories and interventions with students.

Community

The primary standard required for Level I FWs is that "personnel who supervise Level I fieldwork are informed of the curriculum and fieldwork program design and affirm their ability to support the fieldwork experience" (ACOTE, 2018). As a result, any qualified professional can supervise a Level I FW as long as the experience enriches didactic coursework through observations and participation. While it is not required to have a student with an occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant for Level I FW, many students prefer to be with a licensed professional who specializes in occupational therapy (Heine & Bennett, 2003). Finding enough sites and FW educators to take students for one-week is not a new problem. In fact, limited site availability started during the 1990s with changes in health care policies, service delivery, and reimbursement (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2008). One response to limited FW sites was to expand student opportunities from facility-based environments to emerging practice settings (Cohn & Crist, 1995; Crist, 1991). Academic programs are now starting to partner with municipal agencies to create community-based FW experiences that promote opportunities for clinical skill application while providing a service to the community (Koenig et al., 2003).

Many community-based Level I FW experiences are established by identifying community needs and the role and scope of occupational therapy services. Most community-based FW sites are with underserved populations who would not otherwise have occupational therapy services (Koenig et al., 2003). Using the SELTEC model, faculty and students advocate for occupational therapy and demonstrate the distinct

value of the profession to the specific Level I FW site. Having community-based practice settings serve as Level I FW sites allows students to provide a service to their assigned facility to meet the common good of the facility. For example, students at a pediatric site provide a service to the facility by providing non-paid teaching assistance in the classroom setting, creating facility blog posts relative to childhood development and function, assessing quality measures within the facility, and developing improvement plans. Engaging in the community through service-based learning creates and sustains a bridge between the educational system and the community. Community members gain more connectivity with the educational system and learn the value of student involvement.

The results of the study indicate that the SELTEC model was preferred over the traditional one-week FW model overall. The results support the use of the SELTEC model to enhance Level I FW experiences for the student learner, educational system, and community partners more than traditional experiences. The students who participated in the SELTEC model gained intangible skills not achievable in the traditional FW experience, including quality hands-on experiences with an evolving caseload, continuous peer and faculty support, and enhanced insight into skill development. As more FW programs open and more students need FW placements, implementing a new FW model may be essential to ensure occupational therapy programs meet accreditation standards and student learners receive a valuable, high-quality FW experience.

Limitations

Although findings from the study are promising, caution should be used when generalizing responses due to the small sample size. The sample size does not represent a diverse population. Additionally, only two cohorts were used for data collection due to the full implementation of the SELTEC model following previous cohorts. Therefore, comparison between traditional and SELTEC model experiences could not occur. Only three former occupational therapy assistant students responded to the survey request. Responses do not offer descriptive explanations. Therefore, understanding the reason students selected their responses is limited. Furthermore, the sample size was not randomized and consisted of two predetermined occupational therapy cohorts.

Future Research

Future research should examine student outcomes of the SELTEC FW model related to academic standards set forth by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). Ensuring SELTEC experiences align with ACOTE standards is vital for meeting successful FW experiences. Further research will strengthen the model's integrity and support the need for a new Level I FW model.

Conclusion

As the educational curriculum continues to push towards innovative teaching and learning approaches, and the quality and consistency of educational experiences is measured, the need for evidence-based and data-driven decision-making is more necessary than ever before. The innovative Level I FW SELTEC model provides the flexibility for replication in various educational programs while simultaneously utilizing a formal structure and guidelines to create consistent quality experiences. Data collected from the study supports the SELTEC model.

As the learning styles of student cohorts become more complex, educators must look for solutions and create multimodal learning activities to target a variety of learning styles and abilities. The SELTEC model's principles of service learning, experiential learning, peer-to-peer interaction, faculty-led experiences, and strategic partnerships ensure that all SELTEC FW experiences will meet the needs of diverse student learners. In addition, by collaborating with community partners to meet the site's needs, the educational system can bridge the gap between education and practice.

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