

OTA Curriculum Design

The majority of the student population at Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus is considered “non-traditional.” According to the National Center for Education Statistics, a non-traditional student is defined as having delayed enrollment in post-secondary education, as being financially independent from their parents and/or having children themselves. (National Center for Education Statistics). As stated in the Philosophy of the Program, the OTA program was designed to interrelate so that each class incorporates the Knowles Adult Learning Theory Whole-Part-Whole Learning Model. Adult learners, according to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998) respond best to having foundational material presented (whole), then experiential learning (part) followed by the opportunity to link the foundational and experiential (the second whole). Adult learners also need to have educational experiences linked to real-life job or career experiences (Knowles, 1996). This is why the OTA program will have off-site lab experiences to help the adult learner participate in the hands-on experience he needs.

Students will begin their preparation for the OTA program through a series of general education classes chosen specifically to give the student a strong background in the concepts and language of the medical professional. The prerequisites precede the application for entry into the OTA program. The OTA course sequence is loosely based on a developmental model (pediatrics preceding adult physical dysfunction preceding geriatrics). Throughout the prerequisites and the OTA curriculum, milestones in human development and the “normal” ranges in which those milestones are reached will be addressed.

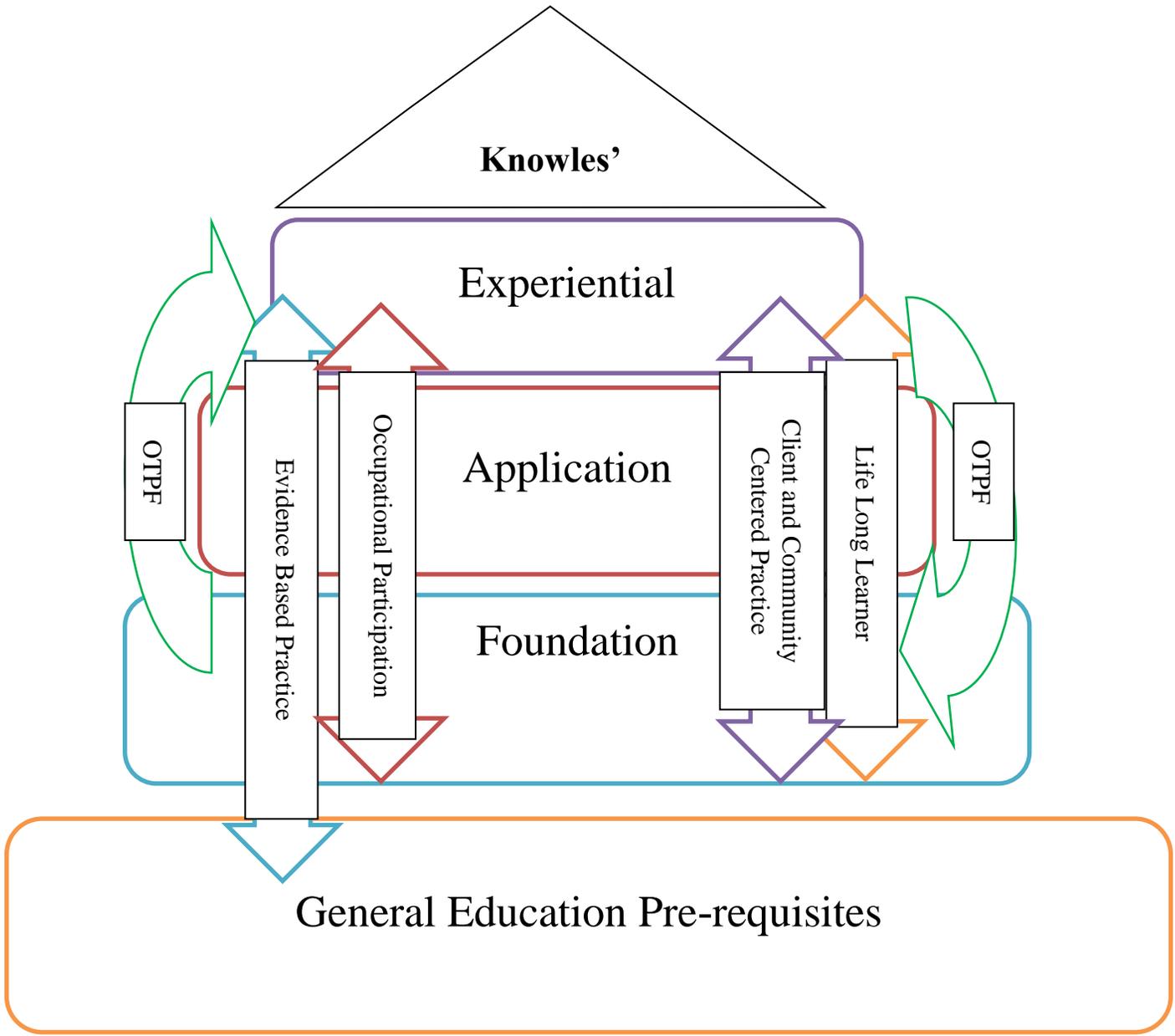
In following Knowles Whole-Part-Whole Learning Model (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998), lecture-style classes in areas of OT will be integrated with application and experience. The WPW Adult Learning Theory holds that learners are first exposed to a “whole” in foundational lectures. Learning objectives are placed within a theoretical framework during this stage. During the “Part” segments, the instruction focuses on active learning during which the students take an active role in laboratory style classes both on campus and off. For example, a student will be introduced to sensory integration theory before learning the application of sensory based treatments in a lab setting. The second “whole” is when the students have the opportunity to apply and practice the skills as they relate to theory in a variety of classroom based assessment situations and in Fieldwork settings. There will be opportunities for off-site lab experiences **each semester** as well as two Level I fieldwork experiences prior to two 8 week Level II Fieldwork experiences.

The curriculum of the OTA program at Arkansas Tech-Ozark strives to “promote integration of philosophical and theoretical knowledge, values, beliefs, ethics, and technical skills for broad application to practice in order to improve human participation and quality of life for those individuals with and without impairments and limitations.” (AOTA, 2007).

EXAMPLE:

Application of Whole-Part-Whole Learning Theory for Human Conditions I, II, III and Modalities for Human Conditions I, II, III

| Whole | Part | Learning |
|--------------|-------------|---|
| ● | | Theories of Occupational Therapy Specific to a given population |
| | ● | Assessing Client's Skills |
| | ● | Planning Treatment for Client Centered Goals |
| | ● | Modifying and Adapting Activities and Environments for OT treatment |
| ● | | Off-site Experiences with given population |



Knowles'

Experiential

Application

Foundation

Evidence Based Practice

Occupational Participation

**Client and Community
Centered Practice**

Life Long Learner

OTPF

OTPF

General Education Pre-requisites

Arkansas Tech-Ozark has a strong commitment to produce the highest quality OTA. Because of this, common educational and experiential threads will be woven throughout the course sequence and will include:

- Life-long Learning
 - Advancing technology
 - Identifying emerging practice trends
- Evidence Based Practice
 - Melding theoretical knowledge with practical skills
 - Ability to access literature and current publications for current practice trends
 - Lab experiences
 - Fieldwork experiences
 - Understanding of human dynamics
 - Ability to assist in purposeful activity
- Client and Community Centered Practice
 - Geographic trends
 - Respect for diversity
 - Cultural awareness
 - Therapeutic use of self
 - Serving community needs
- Occupational performance throughout the lifespan
 - Pediatrics
 - Adult
 - Geriatrics
 - Psychosocial factors affecting wellness
 - Productive aging and wellness

Throughout the program, the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (AOTA 2008) will form the foundation upon which application and experiential learning take place.

Teaching modalities will include kinesthetic, auditory and visual learning on campus as well as off campus. Students will be provided opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of knowledge in a variety of ways: through individual assessment of knowledge, group projects, literature review, practical evaluation of clinical skills, multimedia presentations as well as community based leadership and education activities.

The OTA program at Arkansas Tech-Ozark is committed to staying up-to-date on the issues that impact the future of Occupational Therapy. Student assignments will include use of the AOTA website and publications as well as the AROTA website and updates. Student membership in AOTA will be required and membership in AROTA will be encouraged as a key to being informed and current.

Arkansas Tech-Ozark is a school committed to meeting the most current needs of a diverse community. Because of this, the OTA program will continuously strive to provide the most up-to-date practice trends relevant to the geographic area. The advisory board of the OTA program will help in overseeing the program, and will provide feedback from Fieldwork sites on current

modalities and techniques being used. Arkansas Tech-Ozark will be a future-oriented educational program by addressing current and emerging areas of practice. For example, students will learn about home modifications, productive aging and wellness, assistive technology, driving rehabilitation. These are topics that will be regularly updated as new practice trends emerge.

The integration of lab experiences and fieldwork experiences into the curriculum is a link to the basic philosophy of occupational therapy and of the OTA program at Arkansas Tech-Ozark. Because learning is an active process, the OTA student will be expected to link theoretical knowledge to practice as an OTA. The common threads identified above will become even more relevant to the learner as he moves from the classroom to the clinical setting. Therefore, the fieldwork educators and sites will be partners with the OTA program. They will have access to the student's curriculum design and course descriptions. The fieldwork educators will be welcomed as guest lecturers and encouraged to participate in the advisory board. Through this level of partnership, the OTA program will meet the needs of the community and the OT community will participate in the education of the student.

References:

- AOTA (2007). Philosophy of Occupational Therapy Education. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 57, 640.
- AOTA (2008). Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process (2nd edition). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 62, 625-683.
- Knowles, M. (1996). Adult Learning. In Robert L. Craig (Ed.), The ASTD Training and Development Handbook (p.253-264). NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Knowles, M., Holton, E & Swanson, R. (1998). The Adult Learner. (5th Edition). Houston: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- National Center for Education Statistics. *Nontraditional Undergraduates/Definitions and Data*. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/web/97578e.asp>