



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A FEEDING RESOURCE FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS

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Uplift Therapy Center

- Outpatient pediatric clinic located in La Cañada Flintridge, CA
- Offers occupational, physical, speech, and feeding therapy, along with dietitian-led nutrition services
- Provides clinic-based, in-home, and telehealth sessions
- Additional programs include social skills, handwriting, and infant/toddler groups (Uplift Therapy Center, 2025)

Needs Assessment Results

1. Feeding Support for the Clinic
2. Expanding the Clinic's Video Library
3. Executive Functioning Curriculum

Literature Review

Low Confidence and Clinical Effectiveness among Clinicians

- Confidence and anxiousness in managing Pediatric Feeding Disorder varied significantly by age group, with lower confidence and higher anxiety when working with infants compared to toddlers and children (Raatz et al., 2023)
- Both experienced versus inexperienced clinicians revealed “relatively low” confidence in working with children with Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (Coelho et al., 2021)

Limited Didactic Training and Barriers

- Gaps in didactic training for occupational and speech therapy graduate-level students
 - Lack of feeding-related coursework or topics covered
 - Adult population focused
- Training is self-directed and self-funded through continuing education courses, on-the-job training, and annual competency assessments (Thompson et al., 2024)
- Barriers to training include limited clinical placements, lack of mentorship, time, distance, and cost (Raatz et al., 2023)

Feeding Training Needs

- Preferred training methods to support skill development include hands-on experience, discussion, role play, online modules, and videos
 - Requested complex topics such as infant feeding, tube-weaning, and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (Raatz et al., 2023)
- Videos improved occupational therapy (OT) students' confidence and clinical application while accommodating to diverse learning styles and self-paced learning (Grieves et al., 2019)

Learning Objectives

1. Develop a comprehensive feeding educational resource to enhance the knowledge of OT fieldwork students
2. Implement and measure the effectiveness of the feeding educational resource for OT fieldwork students
3. Increase their clinical practice skills in an outpatient pediatric setting

Project Description & Implementation

Purpose

To bridge the gaps in didactic training, a comprehensive feeding resource was distributed to OT fieldwork students in Week 9 to assess changes in confidence and clinical competence in addressing pediatric feeding challenges and support their transition into practice

BITE-SIZED: A COMPREHENSIVE FEEDING RESOURCE FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS

Handbook

- Developed in weeks one to eight with site mentor review
- Accommodates various learning styles, allowing students to learn at their own pace
- Grounded in current research, reputable literature, and various expert-driven approaches, covering key feeding topics and practical strategies

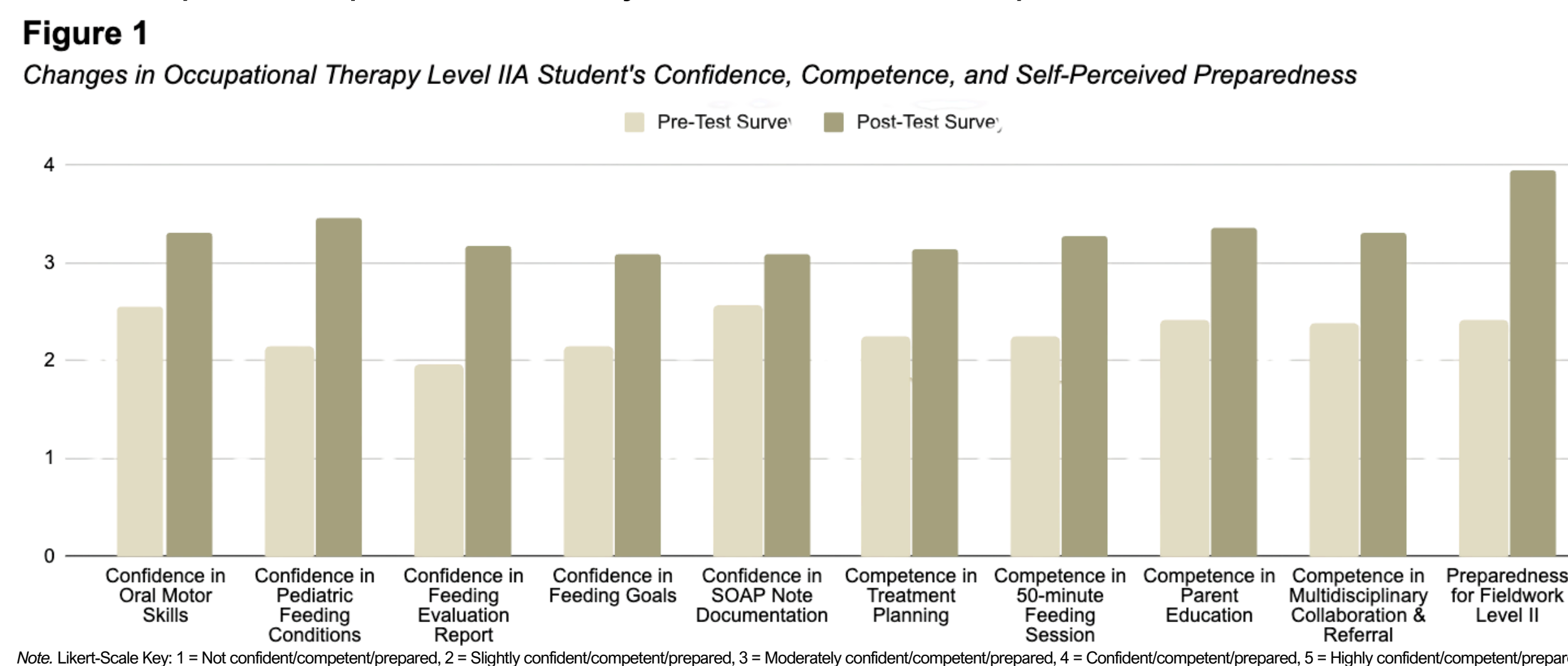
Video Library

- Complements the handbook by showcasing real-life feeding sessions
- Demonstrates clinical reasoning behind interventions, grading activities, and oral motor skills observed
- Brief, well-organized, and high-quality videos to optimize learning and comprehension (Grieves et al., 2019)

Evaluation and Project Outcomes

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Administered pre- and post-test surveys with close-ended questions to Level IIA OT students



Significant Statistical Improvements

- Confidence in oral motor skills, pediatric feeding conditions, feeding evaluation report, and feeding goals
- Competence in treatment planning, facilitating 50-minute feeding session, parent education, and multidisciplinary collaboration and referral
- Self-perceived preparedness for Level II Fieldwork

No Statistically Significant Improvements

- Confidence in Subjective, Objective, Sssessment, and Plan (SOAP) Note Documentation

QUALITATIVE DATA

Led open-ended interviews with OT students, a clinical instructor, and a focus group with Uplift staff

Themes

Clear and Practical Tool for Feeding Therapy

“Bite-Sized is beautifully outlined, as it shows step-by-step of feeding from beginning to end; such as the process from evaluation to treatment or how to run a session of where to start and what to work towards”

“I love how the resources pulled from different continuing education perspectives – a great combination”

Student Confidence Strengthened by Knowledge

“It has increased my confidence especially when talking to parents. I want to make sure I am saying the right things”

Ongoing Need for Technical Skill Improvement

“I’ve seen improvements in my student’s confidence, especially with their feeding knowledge. However, [they] continue to struggle to manage behavioral issues and has not yet had the opportunity to conduct an evaluation or communicate with multidisciplinary team”

Recommendations

“Any student going into pediatrics with feeding services provided, this handbook needs to be in their pocket”
— *Level IIA Fieldwork Student*

“Coming into it, I was so overwhelmed, but looking through the resource definitely help me ease my nerves”
— *Level IIB Fieldwork Student*

“The handbook addressed so many different areas and gave a lot of great resources from beginning to end, students will benefit from”
— *OTR/L*

Discussion and Implications

Discussion

The feeding resource demonstrated positive trends in enhancing OT students’ confidence in pediatric feeding therapy. Findings revealed its value as a clinical reference not only for students, but for new clinicians and clinical instructors. However, persistent gaps in technical skills emphasize the need for continued support

Implications

- Integrate resource into OT programs as a supplemental tool to enhance clinical training during fieldwork
- Encourage students to pursue advanced training in pediatric feeding therapy

Scholarly Deliverables

- Bite-Sized Handbook
- Bite-Sized Video Library
- Data Collection Materials



References



Acknowledgements

