

SERVICE LEARNING

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE LEARNING

1. SET THE STAGE

AGREE ON THREE C'S OF RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIP FROM THE START

COMMUNAL INTER-DEPENDENCE



All parties:

- o Depend on one another
- o Influence one another through their actions
- o Benefit from the partnership

} EQUALLY

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING



- o What do we have? (try to connect new projects to existing ones)
- o What do we want / need? (all partners must be clear and honest)
- o Decide TOGETHER with all partners on
 - Goals
 - Activities and responsibilities
 - How to evaluate outcomes

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES



- o Schedule regular communication
- o Agree on how:
 - Face to face
 - Telephone
 - Sms / Whatsapp / Instant messaging
 - E-mail
- o Ensure:
 - Transparency (communicate clearly and honestly)
 - Feedback (everybody is responsible to give feedback regularly)

FOSTER EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS WHERE THERE IS NO BIG BROTHER

2. HOW CAN WE FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

Show interest

Instill hope

Have fun

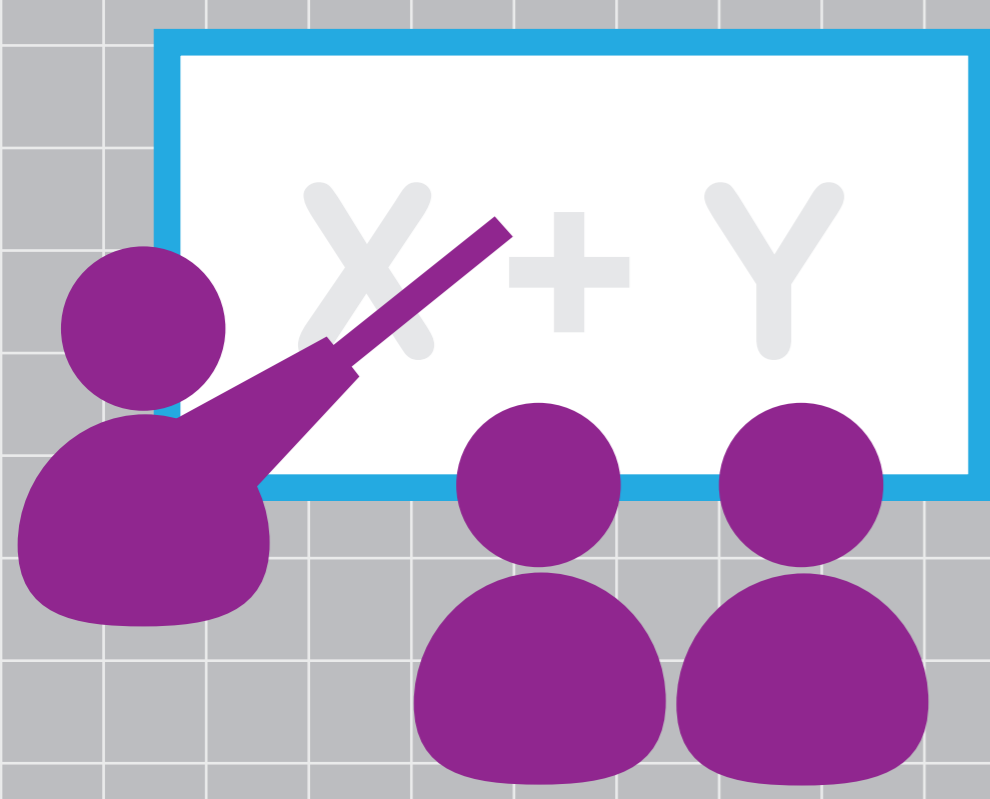
Support dreams

Make memories together

IDEA!

3. ACTIVITIES THAT WERE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

MUTUAL BENEFITS



TRAINING

Sharing knowledge
Developing skills
Learn from experience (doing together with)

INVOLVING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Get volunteers and other organisations involved in projects

DELIVERING TANGIBLE PRODUCTS

E.g. manuals, posters, games, activities

DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE

E.g. stimulation rooms, sensory gardens

4. POSITIVE OUTCOMES FROM SERVICE LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

- All parties learn from one another
- Attitudes change → ways of doing things change
- People have more confidence, hope and a sense of dignity
- People can participate in activities that they want to / need to
- People feel that they belong (students and community members → citizenship)

5. POSSIBLE PITFALLS TO AVOID

THE FIVE I'S

INTERMITTENT CONTACT

- o When contact between parties is irregular, relationships suffer and projects fail.



IMBALANCE IN POWER

- o When any one party assumes to have less or more power, communal inter-dependence



INEFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

- o Poor planning – usually leads to frustration and unsuccessful projects.
- o Trial- and error – when faced with failure upon failure all partners become discouraged.
- o Poor risk management – consider risks from the onset and manage risks pro-actively (from the start)
- o Poor hand-over / exit strategies – make sure that hand-over or exit-strategies for each project are negotiated, even if the partnership continues.



INCOMPATIBLE IDEAS AND EXPECTATIONS

- o When ideas and expectations are too different, consider partnering with someone else.



IMPAIRING SUSTAINABILITY

- o Poor follow-up – projects that are not followed-up regularly even after completion are not sustainable. Plan for follow-up!
- o High staff turn-over – when there are regular changes in staff or community members, consider ways in which products of the partnership can be carried over to following stakeholders.



6. STUDENTS AS IMPORTANT PARTNERS

STUDENTS

Positive attributes such as commitment, professionalism, good relationships and high quality service facilitates service learning.

Unpreparedness, risks to personal safety and project failure blocks student and community success in service learning.

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