

# 1, 2, 3 ... Transition with Me: A Guide for Successful Transition Planning for Children with Special Needs

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#### OVERVIEW OF CAPSTONE SITE

Smart Therapy LLC is a pediatric therapy company that offers occupational, physical, and speech therapy services in outpatient, school-based, and early intervention settings. Smart Therapy provides school-based intervention in multiple rural, low socioeconomic areas.

## LITERATURE SUMMARY

- Continuity of educational experiences show increased motivation, improved relationships with peers and adults, and higher achievement.
- Teachers and service providers should communicate in terms of the academic, social, and organizational logistics.
- Service providers must provide tips and strategies that are specific to the child and give parents opportunities to improve their educational and parenting skills

The Theory of Occupational Reconstruction was utilized in the development of the project as it includes principles that provide guidelines that facilitate the design of social transformation once a problem is identified.

### PROJECT GOALS / OBJECTIVES

- Learn strategies and tactics to address challenges and barriers that may arise during the process of transitioning a child from one classroom and/ or school to the next
- Identify needs and confidence of staff in carrying out transition process
- Communicate clearly and effectively with other providers and families
- Advocate for supports and accountability in place to ensure a smooth transition of services as a child transitions from one classroom and/ or school to the next
- Create educational tool for parents and/ or special education teachers to assist child's transition to the next grade and/ or school
- Discuss practicality of sustainability with stakeholder(s)

# PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The project developed as a result of researching the literature and assessing the needs of stakeholders was a "transition binder". It incorporates a tabular system with five sections and entails contributions from the service provider, special education teacher, and parent of the child. A timeline of events is also detailed and enclosed for the service provider and special education teacher to reference before the service provider delivers the transition binder to the receiving teacher. Information detailed includes, but is not limited to current accommodations checklist, a social supports checklist, academic strengths and needs, current work samples, an ADL checklist, and parent questionnaire that includes questions that relate to the child's motivations, behaviors, needs, and means of communication.

<u>Purpose:</u> "Assist in communicating information from one school or grade to another as a child transitions."



Service Provider

Teacher

Parent

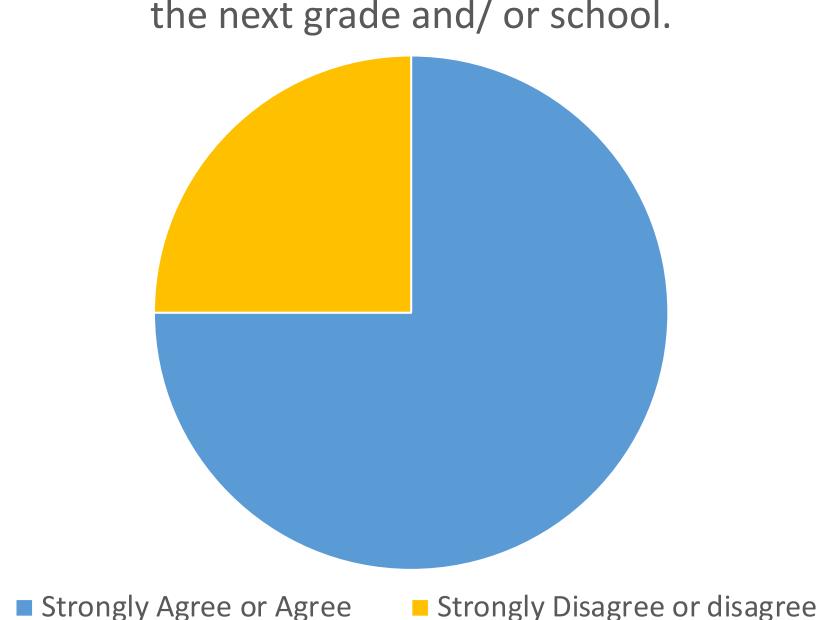
Resources

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

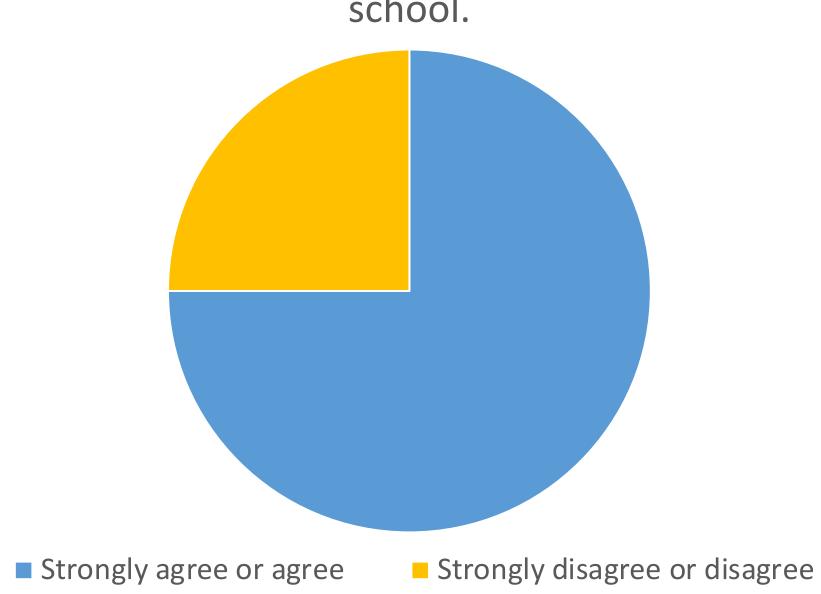
Phase I: A semi- structured interview was conducted with two service providers (OT and SLP) for a local school district. Both perceived a student transitioning from one grade and/ or school to another as difficult in terms of communication between teachers and/ or service providers.

Phase II: A survey consisting of Likert – scale and open -ended questions was distributed to eight special education teachers within the same district; in which six responded. Common themes included poor communication of learning gaps and accessibility in terms of location of the one school for intermediate and high school students.

I am concerned that one one or more of my students will have difficulty transitioning to the next grade and/ or school.



There are barriers that hinder a smooth, successful transition to the next grade or school.



"Nobody takes the time to communicate. The new teacher has to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the new student, which takes up a lot of time."

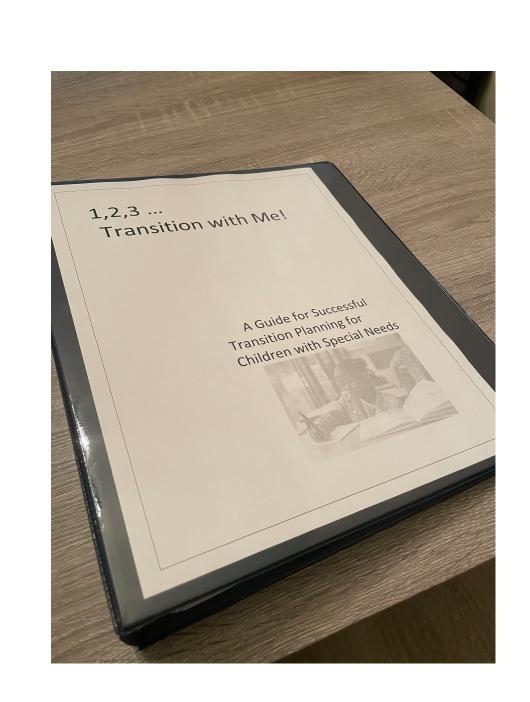
- Intermediate special education teacher

#### PLAN FOR PROJECT EVALUATION

To assess the outcome of the project developed, a pre and post survey consisting of four Likert scale questions was administered to the occupational therapist at the beginning of the capstone experience and again ,week 10 of the capstone experience, post the development and distribution of the final product.

## PROJECT SUMMARY AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Occupational therapists have a unique role in the facilitation of transitions and modifying structural systems to aid in student performance and increasing the confidence of parents and teachers when caring for a child with special education needs.
- The owner and occupational therapist of Smart Therapy perceived the transition binder as something that would be useful for future implementation in school districts serviced by Smart Therapy.
- Future implications include assessing whether other school districts have a formal system to implement in terms of transition planning, and thus may also have a need for the "transition binder".
- Limitations included a small sample size, limited geographical context, potential response bias, and implementation.



Pictured : A Guide for Successful Transition Planning for Children with Special Needs.