**Alumnus:** Christine T. Myers, PhD, OTR/L

**Graduation Year:** August 2007

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**Dissertation Title:** Investigating the Role of Therapy Providers in Early Childhood Transitions

**Background:** The first days of preschool and kindergarten represent important transitions for many young children and their families. While typically-developing children take part in these conventional moves to new environments with minimal difficulty, the transitions of young children with disabilities may be particularly significant and stressful for children and families. Thoughtful planning by early childhood personnel, in collaboration with families, may decrease stress and support the child’s successful integration into the new environment. Although therapy providers are members of early childhood teams that offer transition support, there has been limited investigation regarding their role in the transition process. The studies presented in my dissertation explore the role of therapy providers working with young children with special needs transitioning from early intervention to preschool and preschool to kindergarten.

**Purpose:** The purpose of study 1 was to investigate the role of independently contracted OTs, PTs, and SLPs in the transition process for young children moving from early intervention services to preschool programs in Kentucky. Studies 2 and 3 were national studies of OTs and PTs working in early childhood transitions. The objectives were to describe the current role of occupational therapists and physical therapists (respectively) in the transition of young children with special needs from early intervention to preschool and preschool to kindergarten. Study 4 used exploratory factor analysis with hierarchical linear regression to understand the factors that predict therapists’ participation in transition planning.

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Key Findings:

- Therapists working in early intervention reported less involvement in early childhood transitions than those working in preschools, possibly due to the itinerant nature of early intervention service delivery.
- Lack of time for communication and collaboration, as well as not feeling supported by other team members were identified as barriers to participation in transition activities for both early intervention and preschool providers.
- Relationships with early intervention personnel, as well as employer and preschool program supports and therapist knowledge about transitions, were positively associated with occupational therapists’ involvement in early childhood transitions.

Big Picture:
Successful transitions rely on a team approach that consists of communication between providers and collaboration to support family and child needs. Participation of therapy providers may be enhanced when team members who organize the transition process make efforts to support involvement and when therapists identify ways to overcome barriers, such as lack of time and decreased communication.

Dissertation Related Publications:


What Happened Next? “After graduation I continued on as a faculty member in Eastern Kentucky University’s (EKU) Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. I was able to mentor with many wonderful educators in occupational therapy, continue my line of research in early childhood transitions, and assist in developing the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) Program. I served as the coordinator for the OTD Program for three years and as co-Project Director of a federally-funded training grant with EKU and UK from 2008-2015. In the summer of 2015 I moved to my other alma mater, the University of Florida. My current position is a post-doctoral fellowship funded through the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. focused on continuing competence and knowledge translation in occupational therapy and rehabilitation.”