Student Self Assessment of Learning

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HSP 440 Internship and Seminar

My first learning objective was to gain leadership skills through the direction of choir and teach music lessons by collaborating and rehearsing with the residents and employees at Brookdale Senior Living. This objective was focused on my participation with the residents in the main unit of assisted living. My second objective was to gain skills, knowledge, and experience in the field of Music Therapy that will accommodate the needs of the Brookdale community. This objective was centered towards the Garden House memory care unit to specifically explore music therapy and relaxing piano music that would benefit the residents.

My experience at Brookdale has helped me learn new skills in how to best work with the senior population and how to affectively incorporate music back into their life through singing, listening to piano music, and participating in music activities. In some aspects I have reached my objectives, however ten weeks is a short amount of time to explore an entirely new population and field of work. The choir rehearsals and piano performances have been successful throughout the quarter and have met my goals. My objective that is geared towards Music Therapy is still being explored, as my activities have not turned out as I had hoped. However, as the quarter comes to an end, I plan on progressing in these last two weeks to explore and challenge new activities for the holidays that will be fun for the residents.

Each learning activity directly related to the objective of effectively directing choir and incorporating fun piano and music activities. This quarter, I was successful directing the choir with warm ups, songs, and accompanying them on the piano. Every Thursday evening I would play classical and Broadway hits for the residents after they had dinner. Most weeks I was able to prepare some new songs, although some songs and programs altogether were repeated. I developed a weekly routine for practicing the piano, preparing lessons and choir warm ups, and researching music therapy activities before my time working with the residents in person on Thursdays and Fridays.

I learned a lot through this experience by working with an entirely new population and considering a profession that ties with music. Overall, it was a very rewarding experience knowing that people looked forward to coming to choir rehearsal or listening to piano music in the evening. I gained a lot of important leadership skills, planning skills, and how to improvise quickly within my music directing abilities. It was a new challenge for me to practice my leadership abilities through guiding activities and giving directions. As a Human Services professional, I learned how to create a positive service to seniors to make their lives more enjoyable through music, and also how to work with them and learn about their needs. Music and music therapy can be very beneficial and uplifting at that age, so it is important to play familiar music or relaxing music that they can identify with. I now have a better understanding of the desires of the Brookdale community and have developed connections with the residents there.

There are still many skills that I could improve upon within this internship. Skills that require experience such as working with the residents with Alzheimer’s, were challenging and I realized that I did not know specifics of how to handle situations. Throughout the quarter I did lots of research and found activities, but did not get as many opportunities to try them. I did not develop as much of a connection with the residents in the memory care unit, as most activities I tried did not go as I had planned and they were also squeezed into a tight schedule. However I discovered that playing relaxing piano music was the most beneficial in the mornings at the memory care unit.

I received lots of support from my supervisor, who was with me for choir rehearsals, gave me suggestions, and guided me in the right direction. It was beneficial having her tell me the wants and needs of Brookdale from the beginning of the quarter so that we were able to form a choir to put on a holiday concert. I also felt very welcomed in the Brookdale community by residents and staff and was able to make connections. I struggled the most with the memory care unit, as I did not receive much support to attempt activities because most often the supervisor was busy in meetings or working on other things. My time was squeezed in on Friday mornings and I felt like I was intruding on their routine. As a person who is new with this population, I was unsure about trying many activities and instead played the piano for the residents. While playing the piano is beneficial, I would have liked some support in doing a form of group music therapy given the right opportunity and materials to do the job. Due to not having any guidance or introduction into the population, I did not entirely reach my goals in exploring music therapy for seniors with Alzheimer’s.

Next quarter I will be interning with the Public Defender’s office. Although all three of my internships do not relate to one another, I appreciate getting a wide range of experience with different populations. I am really looking forward to working in the criminal justice field the next two quarters.