

Mentor Visit Assessment #4

Mentor: Dr. Kayla Covert

Profession: Vestibular Physical Therapist

Location: At Home (Virtual)

Date: February 18, 2022

Time: 12:00 P.M.

Assessment:

Going into my mentor visit with Dr. Covert, I hoped to discuss my research on functional independence and speech delays of autistic children. Together with Dr. Covert, we broke down the articles I had researched prior to our meeting, and extracted the importance the articles will have in my final product project itself.

Before meeting with Dr. Covert, I learned through the Autism Speaks website that there are specific programs for fostering a pathway for autistic children to build their ability to become independent. These programs support the development of skills that positively impact the lives of individuals with disabilities who seek greater independence and social success. They also provide targeted skill building to enhance social skills and assist participants in building strong and lasting personal relationships. This is done primarily through Social Growth, Social Focus such as participant-planned social opportunity, and Social College which is discussion-based classes focusing on specific skill development. This program was so useful for me to learn about because it is a realistic opportunity for parents to enhance their child's likelihood to become independent. As this is a huge concern of most parents of autistic children, I think that this is something I should further look into. Moreover I also researched speech delays in autistic children. I learned that a misconception that many parents of children with autism have, is that if their child isn't

speaking by age 4 or 5, he or she isn't likely to ever do so. However research has found that nearly half of these children went on to become fluent speakers. This misconception was something I was unaware of, so it's good that I was enlightened through this article that there is very much a good chance that non-verbal children will eventually become verbal. I also learned that a good predictor of whether or not a severely language-delayed child with autism would eventually develop speech is if they have a higher IQ and lower social impairment. I realized that by targeting these areas in early intervention it will help to promote a child's language.

After analyzing the articles together, Dr. Covert and I decided that I have a good layer of research that answers my previously built frequently asked questions list. However I still need to continue a few more weeks worth of research to have enough evidence to supply my final product's body of literature. Dr. Covert also assured me that when the time comes she will help me synthesize all of my research into a coherent body of work that is easy to understand for parents of children with autism. So far I have come a long way in my final product project, but I still have some ways to go. Next week, I will start shadowing my mother, a developmental and behavioral pediatrician, to gain real world exposure into what her autistic patients are actually like. I think by shadowing her I will really be able to gather what answers parents are seeking, and figure out the best way to create meaning for my project.