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ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

**ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE: PROGRAM EXPANSION &  
INDIVIDUALIZATION FOR ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME**

by

Kaylee Kennedy

OTD/S

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A Capstone Project Presented to the  
FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DOCTORATE

April 2024

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Kaylee Kennedy

ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

**CAPSTONE FINAL PAPER APPROVAL FORM**

The Capstone Final Paper is the final product that the OTD students need to complete to report his/her Capstone Project and his/her Capstone Experience.

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<b>Degree Sought</b>	Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)
<b>Department</b>	Occupational Therapy
<b>Program</b>	Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD)

We, the undersigned, recommend that the Capstone Final Paper completed by the student listed above, in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, be accepted by the Georgia State University.

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## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

### **Abstract**

GiGi's Playhouse is a national nonprofit organization that provides free resources, services, and support to individuals with Down syndrome, serving families from prenatal diagnoses through adulthood, in a community-based setting. This doctoral capstone experience (DCE) sought to further expand and improve upon current adult programming to address an existing identified area of need within a progressively increasing aging and adult population. In partnership with GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta, this capstone project included the careful selection and development of a program outline guide to expand the existing curriculum for the adult program known as "GiGi Prep." The purpose of this capstone project was to develop a purposeful program expansion with adapted resources to support participation in instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), life skills, and healthy living habits to promote independence for adults with Down syndrome. The capstone student developed a program guide outline to supplement the existing curriculum in an effort to further emphasize skills related to living independently, gaining or maintaining employment, and facilitating health, wellness, and success in the transitional stage of early adulthood.

*Keywords: Down syndrome, intellectual disability, GiGi's Playhouse, functional living skills, doctoral capstone experience*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Summary	1
Chapter 1 Literature Review	4
Chapter 2 Needs Assessment	13
Chapter 3 Capstone Experience Protocol	19
Chapter 4 Output for Program Development	25
Chapter 5 Discussion and Impact	31
Limitations	34
Sustainability	35
Conclusion	36
References	37
Appendix 1 Learning Objectives	40
Appendix 2 Supervision Plan	43
Appendix 3 GiGi Prep Application Excerpt	46
Appendix 4 Lesson Plan Guide	47

## SUMMARY

### Introduction

Down syndrome (Ds), or trisomy 21, is recognized as the most common chromosomal disorder and a leading genetic cause of intellectual disability worldwide (King et al., 2023). The global prevalence of Ds varies, with estimates indicating a birth rate of approximately 14 per 10,000 live births in the United States (King et al., 2023). As individuals with Ds are living longer due to medical advances, the aging population is growing which presents new evolving challenges in healthcare and support services (Moreira et al., 2019). The existing literature identifies a notable area of need to address healthy lifestyle habits to combat common comorbidities and related health concerns and highlights the limited available supports that focus on the development of independent living skills for adults with Down syndrome.

Though cultural mindsets have long since begun shifting the perception of individuals with disabilities in recent decades, society has only just begun to truly recognize the similarities more than the differences in the wants, desires, and ambitions of disabled and non-disabled individuals alike. As societal change gradually occurs, most notably the landmark enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1986, access to facilitative supports like early intervention services has continued to improve (US DOE, 2024). However, there is still a gap in resources for meeting the need for support during the transitional period between finishing school and entering adulthood with a desire for independence. In this transitional period, there remains an unmet need to address the ambitions and community participation of adults with Ds. To further narrow and define the scope to be addressed by this capstone project within the existing practice problem, a purpose statement was developed.

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

### *Purpose Statement*

The purpose of this capstone project was to develop a purposeful program expansion with modified resources to support participation in instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), life skills, and healthy living habits to promote independence for adults with Down syndrome.

### **Methods**

#### *Needs Assessment Methods*

To identify current areas of need within the available services and programming for adults with Down syndrome, an initial literature search and review was conducted to determine knowledge gaps and guide the topic focus of this capstone project. The literature review then informed the direction of the needs assessment discussion with the site mentor to further narrow the primary areas of need to be addressed within the DCE. Based on site input, a secondary literature search was used to support and organize the practice problem with consideration of the locally identified needs of the site and adults served.

#### *Program Expansion Guide Development*

The central focus of the capstone project was the expansion and improvement of the existing generalized curriculum to support the individualized needs of the local community and the impacted families. With reference to GiGi's Playhouse national curriculum and input from the site mentor and related staff, a variety of topics were carefully selected to add to the existing curriculum to better address participants' goals and meet evolving population needs. The skill areas addressed included health and wellness management, interpersonal communication, executive functioning, community living, and building task independence and responsibility within the home and the community.



## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

### **Outcome**

The deliverable outputs of this capstone project will include the following:

- Capstone paper and dissemination to detail the 14-week doctoral capstone experience (DCE) and capstone project process and program expansion development
- Program expansion guide outlining eight weekly lesson plans and two community outings with flexibility for future modification

This project resulted in the outlined development and organization of supplemental resource materials for the improvement and expansion of the GiGi Prep program. The compiled materials were selected to promote greater emphasis on functional independence related to IADL skills, enhance community participation, and support the transition into adulthood in a community-based setting, making this capstone focus an ideal fit within the scope of an occupational therapy-based developmental process. This will provide a meaningful impact in addressing the areas of need for improved support during the transitional period into adulthood in a free and accessible manner at GiGi's Playhouse.

## CHAPTER 1

### Literature Review

#### I. Definition of the need

As the journey toward a more inclusive society continues to progress gradually, it is as crucial as ever to reexamine the complexities of the entire lifespan of individuals with Down syndrome, aiming to enhance their autonomy and overall quality of life from a holistic perspective.

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that is clinically categorized as a developmental disability. A defining characteristic is the presence of an additional third copy of chromosome twenty-one as well as a variety of clinical deficits and defining features. With a birth rate of approximately one in every seven hundred newborns globally, combined with medical advancements enabling longer lifespans for those with historically life-threatening complications and early mortality, there is a clear need for emphasis on this group's unique wants and needs to support the growing adult and aging population (Coppus, 2013).

The purpose of this literature search and review was to examine the existing literature concerning key factors that contribute to the development and promotion of functional independence among adults with Down syndrome. This focus covers a wide range of topics including essential life skills for independent living, community participation, health, and wellness, and aims to identify unmet areas of need in current research and available supports and resources to promote a successful transition into adulthood independence.

#### II. Physical Health and Wellbeing

For adults with Down syndrome, the adoption and maintenance of healthy habits—including regular exercise, healthy eating and nutrition, and comprehensive self-care—is crucial

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

in the promotion of a holistically fulfilling life. Yet, the directed resources demonstrate significant gaps leading to suboptimal health outcomes and impeding their independence (Anshel & Smith, 2014). In addition to common comorbidities, this population is notoriously known to be at-risk for obesity and related health challenges believed related to inactivity, shorter stature, and lacking education regarding healthy lifestyle habits.

Common Physical Comorbidities in Down Syndrome: Down syndrome often brings with it a spectrum of physical comorbidities that significantly impinge on the well-being and independence of those affected. Prevalent comorbidities among this population include congenital heart defects, thyroid dysfunctions, respiratory complications, gastrointestinal issues, and musculoskeletal challenges; these conditions may severely impact daily activities and the ability to become functionally independent (Grieco et al., 2015). A prime example of this is diabetes, a comorbidity mostly associated with lifestyle habits, mainly physical inactivity and dietary habits, where the resultant medical management then poses a threat to one's ability to safely live independently.

Impact of Comorbidities on Functional Independence: The array of comorbidities associated with Down syndrome presents considerable obstacles to personal independence. Issues such as mobility restrictions, persistent pain, and general health deterioration can significantly impede engagement in everyday activities. Matthews et al. (2018) denote the criticality of preventing or managing these health issues to enhance life quality and community participation or independence. Through intentional prevention or management and treatment of these comorbidities, strides can be made towards improved autonomy and enhanced overall health (Matthews et al., 2018).

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: A key component to address in adults with Ds is the need for prevention and promotion of physical health and wellness. Grieco et al. (2015) advocate

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

for preventative strategies, including consistent physical exercise and maintaining a balanced diet, as effective means to manage comorbidities and improve overall health and wellness. Proactive measures to health may greatly reduce the burden of physical comorbidities and facilitate a greater level of wellness and functional independence (Grieco et al., 2015).

Physical Activity and Healthy Lifestyle Interventions: Regular physical activity and healthy living habits are vital for fostering independence in adults with Ds. Engaging in routine physical exercise boosts cardiovascular health and muscular strength while also improving the capacity for community participation and overall well-being. Ijezie et al. (2023) highlight the necessity of intentional physical activity routines that account for the unique needs and capabilities of individuals with Ds. Such programs should incorporate a mix of aerobic exercises, strength training, and flexibility routines tailored to meet the distinct physical challenges of this group.

### **III. Life Skills and IADLs**

The foundational development and further progression of life skills—ranging from basic activities of daily living (ADLs) like personal hygiene to more complex IADL skills like time management—are necessary aspects of safe and successful independent living skills. Despite their critical importance, the availability of resources to build these skills remains notably inadequate. This gap outlines an area of need for programming and resources to further support and address the development of required life skills (Anshel & Smith, 2014). IADLs, which include tasks such as meal preparation, community navigation and transportation, and managing finances, are complex yet essential skills for the independence of adults with Ds. A significant gap exists in the supportive resources available for building IADL skills, which further restricts the ability to fully participate in society and lead more independent lives. These higher-level skills have the potential

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

to influence meaningful occupational engagement, job skills and employment, and the capacity to safely live independently in the community.

Self-care SkillsThe development of self-care skills is the foundational basis for progression towards functional independence. These skills, which include essential tasks such as personal hygiene, dressing, and grooming, are pivotal for individuals to maintain their health and actively participate in daily life. Grieco et al. (2015) emphasize the critical role that these skills play in enhancing independence and improving the overall quality of life. Mastery of self-care allows individuals to handle their daily activities with increased autonomy and confidence, which then enables further progression toward mastery of other necessary life skills.

Home Skills: Home skills can be described as the needed abilities to contribute to or manage household tasks and related home maintenance. This includes a variety of tasks such as cleaning, laundry, and basic home maintenance. Krell et al. (2021) detail the importance of these skills in supporting independent living for adults with Ds.

Vocational Skills: Vocational skills are the necessary framework for attaining and maintaining gainful employment, and often a key component in progressing toward the facilitation of independent living capacities. Acquiring these skills enhances the well-being and life satisfaction of individuals with Ds and further supports their ability to contribute to society, find a sense of purpose, and experience personal growth and fulfillment (Scott et al., 2014). Such job or career-related skills may include executive functioning and interpersonal communication among other components.

#### **IV. Social Functioning**

Communication Skills: Being able to connect with others promotes active and meaningful participation in the community. Research details that verbal speech and communication challenges, such as production, articulation, and expressive language deficits are not uncommon in this population (Grieco et al., 2015; Zigman, 2013). With consideration of these deficits, it is critical to recognize the various means of communication within this demographic. Individuals with Ds commonly receive speech and communication support through speech therapy, the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and other supportive technologies (Grieco et al., 2015; Zigman, 2013). Alternate considerations may include nonverbal areas of communication such as body language, facial expressions, or gesturing as well as higher-level communication such as interpersonal communication to address among adults with Ds in various life scenarios.

Social Skills and Relationships: For adults with Ds, the cultivation of social skills and nurturing of meaningful relationships are vital supporting components of community participation and independent living. Studies indicate that these individuals may struggle with social nuances, such as interpreting cues, understanding others' perspectives, and resolving social or interpersonal conflicts (Ijezie et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2014). While younger children with Ds may be more integrated, both in setting and life stage, with their neurotypical peers, adolescents, and adults with Ds may gradually see a shift toward increasingly isolating social experiences as others embark on social changes such as dating, going to college, or starting a career. Nevertheless, targeted resources may help pave the way for them to enhance their social abilities and gain enriching

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

connections with peers, family, and others in their community (Ijezie et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2014).

Community Engagement: Participation in meaningful activities within one's community is crucial for social inclusion and overall quality of life for all, but this is emphasized in individuals with Ds. Research highlights that this population often experiences barriers in accessing inclusive recreational or community activity programs, which is often further impeded by societal assumptions that underestimate their capabilities (Ijezie et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2014). It is crucial to ensure inclusive opportunities are available that allow individuals with Ds to engage in a diverse array of activities, including sports, arts, community events, and employment thus promoting their social integration, self-expression, and joy (Ijezie et al., 2023; Scott et al., 2014).

### **V. Community-Based Supports and Services**

Community-based services are indispensable in supporting the development and progression toward functional independence among adults with Down syndrome. These services include a spectrum of support networks such as educational programs, vocational training, and community integration efforts (Krell et al., 2021).

Approaching the need to promote and support independence among adults with Ds is a comprehensive process that demands a holistic approach. This includes not only addressing life skills and related IADLs, healthy habits, and career ambitions but also fostering inclusive environments that nurture their overall well-being. Community-based settings may offer a uniquely ideal means for providing support, resources, and education to help bridge the gap in the transitional period from school to adulthood. These periods can pose considerable challenges, often

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

necessitating significant adjustments and support to manage new environments and roles effectively yet minimal resources are currently available for developmental disabilities such as Ds upon entering adulthood.

With the established areas of need in existing diagnosis-specific literature, other programming research was reviewed to gain insight into the implementation and outcomes of similar intervention foci for individuals with comparable developmental or intellectual disabilities. These studies supported the use of community-based practice approaches to successfully address identified areas of need. In summary, the literature indicated a multifaceted need for programs and interventions that promote healthy habits and independent living skills among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The evidence suggests that tailored educational strategies, comprehensive lifestyle interventions, and community-based programs could all contribute to improving the health and independence of this population.

### **VI. Identified Needs and Knowledge Gaps**

In recent years, the exploration into functional independence among adults with Down syndrome has advanced considerably, highlighting numerous factors that enhance their autonomy and enrich their lives. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize the limitations of these studies to pinpoint further research opportunities and areas needing refinement.

Despite significant strides in understanding various determinants of independence, considerable knowledge gaps remain. Research has extensively covered areas such as physical health and cognitive functions; however, studies focusing on specific life skills and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), crucial for independent living, are notably scarce. The social dynamics of adults with Ds also demonstrated a lack of information and understanding. While



## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

existing research acknowledges the importance of communication skills and social relationships, the need remains for more insight and focus on enhancing social interactions and fostering genuine societal inclusion and acceptance.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

This review collectively summarized a notable lack of life skills resources and specialized materials tailored to this demographic. Basic life skills training, covering basic ADL tasks such as personal hygiene and household chores, are somewhat accounted for within current literature and available resources. However, there is a significant lack of resources aimed at addressing more advanced skills such as health literacy, executive functioning skills, or preparation for gaining employment. These skills are crucial components of funding success in independent living. IADLs, which encompass more complex tasks such as cooking, shopping, using public transportation, and maintaining a household, are essential skills for independent living.

Among the available resources found in existing literature, most were directed towards early intervention strategies that target children and childhood development, leaving a significant unmet need for resources that are specifically designed with consideration of the distinctive challenges and goals of adults with a developmental disability such as Ds. This unfulfilled area of support poses a considerable barrier to progression toward successful independent adulthood. These gaps significantly limit their social integration opportunities and overall quality of life. The lack of adequate support and resources poses additional obstacles for these adults to fully engage with their communities, form meaningful relationships, and actively contribute to society. Despite the critical nature of these skills, the literature indicates a gap in targeted resources that facilitate adult skill-building for these essential activities. Current materials tend to concentrate

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

on basic self-care, neglecting a comprehensive approach to the wider scale of skills desired or necessary for increased independence. This gap not only impedes personal growth but also unnecessarily restricts their full participation and independence in community life.

## CHAPTER 2

### Needs Assessment

#### Capstone Plan and Process

The capstone planning began with an initial meeting via phone call with the site's executive director in May 2023 to determine the potential capacity to host a doctoral capstone student and offer mentorship during their in-progress site expansion. In this meeting, discussions were centered on the anticipated increase in programming hours, from 3,000 to 9,000 hours, and the local launch of additional GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. programs with the space expansion such as GiGiFIT, a weekly structured exercise program. It was determined this capstone project is well aligned with the established adult programs at GiGi's Playhouse and fits within its organizational values to provide free meaningful, purposeful programming to individuals with Down syndrome. A secondary meeting was conducted in January 2024 prior to the start of the capstone experience to discuss focal questions directed by the identified gaps in existing literature. The purpose of this needs assessment was to further narrow potential capstone topic ideas in collaboration with the site mentor to best meet the current needs and maximize beneficence for a long-term impact.

#### Site Mentor Interview

A site-specific needs assessment was conducted through an informal interview with Howie Rosenberg, the executive director of GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta, prior to the on-site capstone experience. The informal discussion took place via telephone and was not recorded nor directly transcribed. The discussion outline and responses to this needs assessment are summarized below:

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- Are there any currently noted areas of need that you are hoping to fill with a capstone student?
  - Mr. Rosenberg was adamant that he prefers students' experiences to feel meaningful and purposeful, "not just checking a box." He stated that there are always things on their to-do list that could be helpful to get done, but he aims to help facilitate a more personal capstone project experience rather than clearing their to-do list.
  
- What programs are you currently running for the adult population at your Playhouse? Have you noticed or received input on any particular areas that would be beneficial to expand upon?
  - Mr. Rosenberg discussed how the spring 2024 capstone semester timing will be perfect, with their building expansion slated to be completed in fall 2023. Once completed and open, the Playhouse is expanding its programmatic offerings and tripling from 3,000 to 9,000 hours. Their hope is not only to increase programs and availability, but also to do "more purposeful type programs" which provides an excellent opportunity for an OT-related project.
  - Adult participants in their group programs ranged from ages 19 to 35, with varying skill levels, employment status, and living situations.
  - While specific program offerings were not yet discussed, Mr. Rosenberg referred me to review the GiGi's Playhouse website, both Atlanta and national sites, to glance at offerings. From this personal review, a variety of programs are offered based on scheduling, resources, and availability which fluctuates based on volunteers and may be location dependent. As a national organization, GiGi's

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

Playhouse has program structures for individuals ages 18+ including social groups, adult fitness, adult kitchen, transitions, and career training (GiGi Prep, GiGi U, and GiGi Professional). As of fall 2023, the Atlanta Playhouse calendar lists “EPIC Achievers” for adult offerings. Additional social groups for adults occur less frequently, such as monthly, or are organized externally including Supper Club, Georgia Tech’s (GT) Down to Dance, and GT Best Buddies.

- As of spring 2024, EPIC Achievers enrollment was divided into two subsequent group programs: GiGi Prep and Achievers. This change was intended to facilitate a more intentional group size and allow for greater focus on the goals of the individuals participating in the group.
- What does participation and recruitment for programming look like at GiGi’s Playhouse?
  - The adult programs are enrollment-based and require families to submit an application for consideration and acceptance by semester. Applications are reviewed by staff who select accepted participants and determine which group they are accepted to enroll in. GiGi’s staff stated an emphasis on the application section regarding goals of both the individual and their family. GiGi Prep is geared towards participants/families whose goals include attaining or maintaining employment and transitional skills to progress toward independent living, more reflective of instrumental activities of daily living (IADL tasks). The Achievers group is geared towards participants/families whose goals include furthering independence in the home, communication skills, and social skills, more reflective of basic activities of daily living (ADL tasks).

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

### Identified Needs

Based on the literature review and needs assessment completed during the planning phase, the identified needs were narrowed down to expansion and improvement of the current programming with increased emphasis on real-world skill application in the indicated areas. This included modification and organization of the national adult curriculum from GiGi Inc., the development of small group focus topics to support functional independence and transitional outcomes, and program expansion to incorporate higher-level skills and IADLs.

### Goals

Prior to the start of the capstone experience, several goals and objectives were developed to guide the capstone project development. The goals and objectives are outlined below. Detailed learning objectives, which can be found in Appendix 1, were used to track student progression throughout the DCE, serving as the student's personal assessment.

- **Project Goal 1:** Over the course of the 14-week DCE, the student will develop a “life skills” curriculum expansion for adults with Down syndrome to promote healthy living, safety, and independence in IADLs.
  - Objective 1A: Student will meet with GiGi's Playhouse team members to determine and prioritize skill areas of need for adult participants.
  - Objective 1B: Student will determine a sustainability plan by collaborating with programming director, creating lesson plan guide, and educating personnel to direct future volunteers.
- **Project Goal 2:** The student will facilitate planning of life skills content topic expansion for adults by the end of week 5.

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- Objective 2A: Student will observe current programming structure during weeks 1-2 to appropriately and feasibly design a curriculum expansion outline for successful participation.
- Objective 2B: Student will modify or create adapted materials to increase accessibility for successful completion of IADLs.
- **Project Goal 3:** The student will attend programs at GiGi's Playhouse in order to provide hands-on assistance and recommendations from an OT lens to promote functional benefit over 14 weeks.
  - Objective 3A: Student will attend at least one program per week to observe and assist with different age groups, and gain an understanding of current program implementation, and program operations within 4 weeks.
  - Objective 3B: Student will offer occupational therapy-based suggestions to volunteers and staff to enhance functional applications of existing programming within 10 weeks.

Minor changes were made to the student's initial goals upon the start of the DCE on-site. Of note, objective 2C was removed due to pre-existing program and operations structure. The adult programs were offered on a semester-long enrollment calendar, with the spring 2024 participants already reviewed and selected by staff. No recruitment or recruiting development was completed by the student for this capstone project.

The overarching aim of this capstone was to support the attainability of independence among adults with Ds and promote occupational performance and success. The theoretical frameworks that were incorporated throughout to guide the development of this capstone project included the occupational adaptation model (OAM), person-environment-occupation-

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

performance model (PEOP), and the developmental frame of reference. These foundational bases were appropriate as they support a focus on successful occupational participation and performance from an individualizable and adaptable perspective. The developmental component is important to consider as well, with the understanding that intellectual disability and delay is a primary feature of Ds, thus requiring a modified approach for adult programming to provide a “just-right” design and maximize the benefits of participation.

- Occupational Adaptation Model: By adapting resources and tools used in IADL tasks, certain occupations (i.e., meal prep and cooking skills) may become more independently accessible thus improving one’s ability for occupational participation in skills related to independent living.
- PEOP: This model connects to the notion that the individual and their personal factors, the environment, and participation in occupations are all components of successful performance. In order to thoroughly address the identified needs, all components should be recognized and taken into consideration in programming for building independent living skills.
- Developmental: Down syndrome is a developmental disability. Because intellectual disability is a primary characteristic of Ds, it is relevant to consider developmental progression and stages when creating programming for adults in order to align successful performance with the opportunity for meaningful and enjoyable participation. Keeping participants motivated and engaged appropriately, with a “just right” fit, is a key component of a beneficial design.



## CHAPTER 3

### Capstone Experience Protocol

#### Capstone Experience

The DCE and project included components of program development, administration, and advocacy. Being a national nonprofit site, advocacy components were integrated throughout many aspects of this capstone experience. This included supporting adult participants to act as their own self-advocates as well as advocacy work on a larger scale. In partnership with the Georgia Council of Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), the capstone student assisted staff in the planning, organization, and attending an advocacy day event at the Georgia capitol to address the topic of legislation to discontinue waivers allowing subminimum wage for employees with disabilities. With GCDD and the GiGi Prep group, we visited the capitol and spoke with legislators to advocate for their support in advancing the related bills in the current session.

Additionally, the student assisted with administration aspects of nonprofit community-based operations throughout the DCE by providing an occupational therapy-based perspective about programmatic offerings, and scheduling to optimally target and serve infant and toddler ages. Therapeutic scheduling input was incorporated in the upcoming semester planning calendar to promote increased community reach and aims to improve consistency of attendance for monthly weekend therapeutic programs. Open dialogue input was also provided regarding organization, strategies to support or improve sensory needs at the Playhouse, and facilitating volunteer engagement with participants during programming hours.

While advocacy and administration are inherent components of a nonprofit organization site, the primary capstone project focus was program development. For this project, program

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

development will refer to the expansion and individualization of current curriculum resources to address the goals of the local program and its target participants based on literature-identified areas of need and staff insight. In support of creating a beneficial program lesson plan guide, the capstone experience also included the student participating as an active volunteer-trained program lead in the program with staff support and assistance.

### **Site Description**

GiGi's Playhouse is a national nonprofit organization founded by a parent of a child with Down syndrome to establish the first and only Down Syndrome Achievement Centers network. GiGi's currently has 59 physical locations, as well as a variety of virtual programs, to provide free educational and therapeutic services across the United States and Mexico (GiGi's Playhouse, 2024). Listed below are the organizational values as stated on their website:

*“Mission: To change the way the world views Down syndrome and to send a global message of acceptance for all.”*

*“Vision: To see a world where individuals with Down syndrome are accepted and embraced in their families, schools, and communities.”*

*“Niche: We change lives through the consistent delivery of free educational, therapeutic-based, and career development programs for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community, through a replicable playhouse model.”*

The GiGi's Playhouse in Atlanta, Georgia currently has approximately 350 families who access their programming, with available resources ranging from prenatal support through career skills in adulthood. This location partners with Georgia State University to provide semester-based enrollment services for speech therapy, community-based practice occupational therapy

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

students on an alternating semester basis, volunteer-based tutoring pairings for literacy and mathematics, weekly GiGiFIT exercise programs, kitchen skills, monthly OT/PT/SLP therapy days for infant and toddlers, and more. Nationally and locally, GiGi's Playhouse's overall operation is dependent upon volunteers, with the Atlanta branch operating with only three full-time staff positions: executive director, operations manager, and program coordinator.

For the purpose of this capstone project, the primary programmatic focus was on the adult group titled "GiGi Prep." GiGi Prep is an application-based, semester-long enrollment program that meets once per week for ten sessions. The curriculum is intended for adults who have finished high school and are in the transitional stage toward adulthood with goals related to living independently and gaining employment. The program has an emphasis on building skills such as communication skills, social skills, meal preparation, health and wellness, and other similar IADL skills.

### **Participants**

The GiGi Prep program enrollment consists of ten adults and adheres to GiGi Inc. requirements to be over the age of eighteen years old and have completed high school to participate in this transition program. Among the group, factors to consider include a variety of reading and literacy skills, employment status or goals, and independent living definitions. Many participants had previously attended GiGi's Playhouse programming from the prior semester or for several years. GiGi Prep is intended for adults with goals to maintain or acquire employment, with several participants who hold part-time jobs within the local community.

Due to the existing programmatic offerings and national structure, recruitment and enrollment were established before the start of this capstone experience. All participants had

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

been previously selected based on applications reviewed by staff. A sample excerpt of the program application can be found in appendix 3. Note that the student was not involved in the development of this application or review for participant selection.

### **Proposed Program Outline**

Through the needs assessment information and the continual open-dialogue collaboration with staff during the DCE, content topics and IADL-based skill areas were carefully selected to expand upon the existing curriculum. The following are the GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. goals set as the national standard for adult programming. These overarching goals were considered throughout the capstone project process to ensure the best fit within the site's programs:

- *Increase self-confidence:* The GiGi U learning program is an environment where each lesson promotes communication skills, self-advocacy, and personal accountability through goal-oriented activities. These activities help to significantly improve meaningful family, friend, and community interactions as well as further promoting independence.
- *Increase personal wellness:* Through physical fitness, nutrition, and safety awareness training, GiGi U students gain a stronger sense of the importance of remaining active and making choices that promote and sustain a lifelong healthy lifestyle.
- *Increase career skill knowledge:* GiGi U instructs students on appropriate and proactive workplace behaviors and skills by applying best practices in areas of customer service, team building, and money management. Students participate in community projects to apply their skills by volunteering to better prepare for work opportunities.
- *Increase quality of life:* GiGi U provides a hands-on, multi-sensory learning environment to help students live a well-rounded, healthy, confident, and fully enriching life.

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

Depending less on those around them and by promoting their voice, students improve their presence inside and outside of the GiGi's community.

As the primary component of this capstone project, the student carefully selected topics and materials related to independent living skills, community skills, and non-specific job skills including interpersonal communication, task attention, social emotional learning and self-regulation, stress management. At the request of the site mentor, small group topics were incorporated into the program expansion guide lesson plan outlines. The rationale of implementing a small group time block was to better address the broad range of participants' independence and career goals given the enrollment size of the group and varied initial skill levels. The outline guide is designed to provide a flexible and modifiable structure for ease and adaptability of future implementation by staff or other related volunteers. These lesson outlines may be utilized in any order, provide leeway for the addition or exclusion of specific topics, and enable the program leader to present the outlined topics in a variety of preferred learning styles. Further details of lesson plan content foci are outlined in chapter four under the program description.

For the duration of the DCE, the occupational therapy student completed the following to support the design and organization of program expansion:

- Completed GiGi Inc., e-training to serve as a certified program lead for standardized components of GiGi Prep
- Co-planned and co-led the GiGi Prep program in collaboration with staff
- Led GiGiFIT component of GiGi Prep

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- Planned and organized materials for cooking and kitchen skills component, including recipe plans and communicating with staff for purchase of needed ingredients and kitchen tools
- Modified and carefully selected topics to expand upon the national curriculum to improve the “just-right” challenge to better represent the participants
- Outlined a 10-week program guide including two potential community outings
- Distributed program expansion materials to staff to support ease and sustainability of utilization and lesson plan guide carryover

**CHAPTER 4**

**Output for Program Development**

The primary outcome of this capstone project was the ten-week program outline guide created for future implementation with adult programming at GiGi's Playhouse. This outline includes eight classroom-based or on-site plans and two community outings to support community living skills and promote Down syndrome visibility within the local community. All materials were compiled and distributed to GiGi's Atlanta staff to be stored both as a hard copy resource binder on-site and digitally in the local "G drive" where all related electronic documents are stored with restricted access. A weekly outline example lesson plan is included below. The comprehensive program outline guide can be found in Appendix 4.

**GIGI PREP WEEK 8**

<b>GOALS</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o I will be an active participant in my own health.</li> </ul>		
	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>MATERIALS NEEDED</b>
<p><b>HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS</b> 10:00-11:15</p>	<p>Communication Icebreaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Having an open mind, understanding different perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Visual supports for open mindedness, images zoomed in then reveal of big picture</li> <li>o Types of doctors handout</li> <li>o Symptoms visuals handout to discuss</li> </ul>
	<p>Community Life Skills: Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Different types of doctors or specialists you may see, where you would address different symptoms or health problems</li> </ul>	

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Pediatrician vs adult body functions, the "why" of needing to see certain doctors, general body functions and roles they play in staying healthy</li> </ul>	
<p><b>FITNESS</b> 11:15-12:15</p>	<p>GiGiFIT Week 8</p> <p>Healthy Habits from the previous week, update goals for the upcoming week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Mats</li> <li>o Pilates balls</li> <li>o Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 7-9</li> </ul>
<p><b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> 12:15-1:00</p>	<p>Chicken Carbonara &amp; Salad Bar</p> <p>(GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, and cutting boards)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Chicken breast</li> <li>o Turkey bacon</li> <li>o Egg (yolk)</li> <li>o Thickened cream</li> <li>o Garlic</li> <li>o Onion</li> <li>o Fresh grated cheese/cheese block</li> <li>o Pasta</li> <li>o Romaine lettuce</li> <li>o Caesar salad dressing</li> </ul>
<p><b>TIME TO EAT</b> 1:00-1:30</p>	<p>Writing thank you note messages for donor event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Thank you cards</li> <li>o Pens</li> </ul>

### Program Description

For this group program, areas of focus included communication, healthy habits, job skills, and improving independence in daily living. The basic daily structure of the group sessions included a focus topic lesson (i.e., communication skills), a one-hour physical fitness routine



## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

following guidelines from GiGi Inc.'s national GiGiFIT curriculum, cooking and kitchen skills, and the addition of small group activities. Small group focus areas included job skills, social-emotional skills, and reading and literacy. Topics included within the comprehensive outline guide can be broken down by domain as follows:

### Communication

- Getting to know the group; setting group expectations
- How to make an introduction; introducing yourself, handshakes and other greetings, eye contact, and body language; practice among the group, model demonstrations, video examples to assess good/bad examples
- Having an open mind, understanding and respecting different perspectives
- Reading and literacy tutoring in small group

### Social-Emotional

- Group discussion: understanding and respecting people's personal space; what is personal space, paying attention to/reading body language
- Dealing with stress, stress management strategies
- Self-efficacy
- Emotional regulation and anxiety, coping skills alphabet and checklist

### Job Skills

- Goals workshop, how to make realistic SMART goals, develop personal goals
- Conflict resolution discussion, case study practice examples (home, job settings)
- Executive functioning skills, emotional regulation at work, self-control, initiation

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- Attention activities to address transitions in the workplace (alternating and divided attention tasks, worksheets)
- Following directions, multistep or multi-component directions
- Behavioral components regarding workplace expectations, checklist, and/or visual schedule supports for improved willingness to receive instruction

### Advocacy

- Self-advocacy, what it means to be an advocate
- Advocacy Day with Georgia Council of Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)
  - Preparation: explanation and discussion of set topics (Ending Subminimum Wage, Advancing Employment First), what it means to be employed, why we work, supports participants have in their employment; how to dress to make a good impression; practice and modeling of formal introductions, practice brief introduction, and statement for political advocacy
  - At the capitol building: meeting and speaking with legislators, advocating for themselves and others like them; informing policymakers of their impact and model those who voted for them and whom they are representing
- Celebrating World Down Syndrome Day (3/21), making awareness campaign video as a group, “rock your socks”

### Health and Wellness

- GiGiFIT weekly exercise routine
- Cooking skills to improve healthy eating habits, support healthy eating in context of independent living skills

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- How to read/understand a nutrition label, looking for important lines on food labels and what they mean; how/why healthy choices matter, impact on our body and overall health; what makes something a “healthy” choice or not; healthy choice example comparisons
- Introduction to health literacy and participation in one’s own healthcare: different types of doctors or specialists you may see, when or why you may go to certain types of doctors, understanding basic domain differences in healthcare, i.e.,
  - Pediatrician vs adult doctors, understanding of body differences as we grow, idea that different doctors are experts in different body functions; going to a dentist for a toothache; going to a heart specialist if you have had a heart surgery
  - Different types of doctors’ offices: going to a hospital is for emergencies and what is considered an emergency; concept of annual wellness visits/physical and not always being sick when we may go to the doctor

### Community Skills

- Kitchen safety, cooking/meal preparation, following a recipe
- Places in the community; where you could go for different needs, types of stores
- Going to a restaurant, restaurant etiquette, ordering from a menu; how to use your phone to calculate a tip; role playing selecting a menu item, and ordering
- Community outings: promoting community visibility and participation
  - Going out to lunch at a restaurant
  - Attending, and supporting local inclusive community theater performances by cast of adults with disabilities including several GiGi Prep group participants

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- Navigating within the community at the beltline, following directions, community safety signs and awareness

The developed program guide is intended to provide a flexible program outline that expands upon the existing GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. curriculum and is based on the current adult programming structure. Formation and organization of the deliverable outcomes of this project were designed to be implemented over the course of a semester-long enrollment group that meets once per week for three and a half to four hours. Group size should remain limited, as the recent restructuring from one larger adult group program into two smaller subgroups was noted to enable staff to better emphasize topics relevant to participants' personal and career goals.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Impact

#### Discussion

The purpose of this project was to expand upon and improve adult programming and curriculum to better address and emphasize adult life skills, healthy lifestyle habits, and participation in IADLs to promote increased independence of adults with Ds in their daily life and within their communities. Over the course of the 14-week DCE, the student achieved this goal and organized a program expansion outline guide to improve upon current curriculum resources and further target life skills and identified components of community participation, foundational job skills, and IADL skills related to independent living demands. The formation of this guide occurred throughout the on-site engagement with experiential integration of current programs and nonprofit operations. This supported the resulting output by providing authentic interactions and rapport-building with representative individuals of the intended population demographic. This facilitated a more realistic method of formatting, with trial and error of various topics and approaches to optimally frame the outline guide for future program implementation.

A key contribution to the culminating project and DCE was the experiential learning that the site provided to the capstone student. With the GiGi Prep adult group, the student attended community outings which not only highlighted the importance of active community visibility and participation but reiterated the real-world application of the skill areas being outlined within the guide development. Among these community skills outings was a visit to the state capitol to advocate for disability rights legislation “at the ropes” with GiGi’s adults implementing advocacy

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

skills. Another community outing was to attend a local inclusive community production that has provided inclusive recreational community participation for adults with disabilities including several GiGi's adults. Other experiences provided insight into inclusive employment settings for adults with Ds in the community. These experiential components provided an improved understanding and appreciation of both the true potential of adults with Down syndrome and the impact that an inclusive, supportive community may have. This further emphasized the need for curriculum expansion and a supportive framework to provide such opportunities for meaningful and inclusive community participation for all current and future GiGi's adult participants.

The implications of this project on occupational therapy practice is the emphasized role that OT scope is uniquely informed to fill within the identified skill areas and population needs. Occupational therapy is well-aligned with the practice problems, defined as the lack of resources related to supporting functional independence, engagement in meaningful and purposeful occupations, and utilizing a "just-right" challenge approach to promote successful skill progression of IADLs and relevant complex tasks of community living. The practice implications outline how occupational therapy may be able to contribute to these gaps when addressed through a community-based practice approach. By utilizing community-based settings as an accessible point of contact, OT providers may have the opportunity to target or support the facilitation of continued skill development for individuals who are beyond the medical standard pediatric age range (0-22 years) targeted by developmental disability services. This remains a key area to facilitate continued progression towards higher-level skills that may enable increased occupational engagement, community participation, and functional independent living skills.

### **Impact**

The outcomes of this capstone project and DCE further support the role of occupational therapy knowledge and expertise in community-based practice as an ideal discipline to facilitate meeting the identified needs with long-term impacts. While this project focus was on the development of a program guide to expand organizational education materials, thus providing an immediate impact on the site, there is a remaining opportunity for continual potential and impact with implementation by future OT capstone students to incorporate or continue this project focus. The resulting deliverables were left with the site, both a hard copy resource and digital, and may be utilized as a reference for other OT students in different capacities to streamline program development and promote consistency.

With GiGi's Playhouse being a nonprofit organization, and therefore all services and participation being at no cost to participating families, the immediate impact is direct for both the site and any intended participants regardless of the individual leading the implementation when referencing the program guide. The weekly lesson plan outline provides a structure that targets a particular skill area in each group session, providing beneficial impact with a real-world applicable carryover of most topics. The accessibility of this program as a resource to build upon independent living skills, job skills, and community skills allows a flexible pace for the group and the individual participants, enhancing the impact by providing a structure that supports individualization in order to meet the unique goals of the group and its participants.

Perhaps the greatest impact is that of the immediate and lasting impact upon the student from this capstone experience. GiGi's Playhouse's organizational values emphasize the desire to "change the way that the world views Down syndrome." As a future healthcare provider who will work directly with a population of developmental disabilities including Ds, this capstone has

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

altered my understanding and perception of not only the diagnosis itself but of the lived experiences through the lifespan of the child with Ds who will grow up to become a successful adult with hopes and ambitions for their own future.

### **Limitations**

Due to the existing structure of GiGi's enrollment-based programming, the group and participants were set prior to the start of the DCE removing the ability to recruit individuals or direct the composition of group participants in any manner. The size and skill variability of the group posed a limitation in proposed lesson planning to account for reading level and overall comprehension of IADL and other complex topics. Another limitation is the fluctuation in group composition, as materials were developed with consideration to the generalized goals and skills of the current participants which may or may not reflect future group participants. However, program lesson plan outlines provide a flexible structure to modify or adapt to remain beneficial for use with a broad range of participants with Down syndrome.

Overall limitations on the project topic include the inherent complexity of Down syndrome as a genetic condition that presents uniquely across populations. This presents particular challenges in research methodologies and the interpretation of results within the existing literature. The diversity within the population makes it difficult to apply broad generalizations across the entire demographic or to a given local group without further assessment. Similarly, the variability in cognitive capacities and other comorbid conditions among subjects adds layers of complexity to understanding best practices to meet the needs of the population range.



## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

Another considerable limitation to note with this adult population is the anticipated shift and longitudinal impact following the initiation of accessible developmental childhood services as a right for any child born with an automatic eligibility diagnosis of Down syndrome in the United States. As the initial population who received early intervention services after birth are now beginning to transition into early adulthood, the long-term impacts and population needs of these adults remain to be seen. It may demonstrate a different area of demand in comparison to that of current adults who were born before the implementation IDEA related services where early childhood services were not the standard of care. It is hopeful that future studies will provide insight into the new population norms for areas of need to facilitate up-to-date, evidence-based practices for supporting these new adults as they transition into adulthood.

### **Sustainability**

This DCE project was created in a format that ensures it is sustainable for utilization at GiGi's Playhouse by staff to guide future volunteers in leading programming. The curriculum expansion includes physical lesson plans outlining particular topics and daily schedules for continued and future use in the GiGi Prep or other adult programming as staff sees appropriate. A digital and hard copy of the materials has been provided to the site in the form of a resource binder for ease of storage and access in future semesters. The GiGi Prep group is typically planned and led by the full-time programming staff member who was directly involved throughout the planning and development of this resource guide. This collaboration and provision of an adjustable lesson plan outline the support sustainability for continued utilization and referencing of the capstone project.

Additionally, staff or future students will have the flexibility with the materials to modify, change, or adapt weekly content as needed to best suit each unique group which

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

supports the sustainability of implementation at GiGi's Playhouse. No professional or other education or training is required to utilize the program expansion guide. While the materials were specifically focused on an adult population of individuals with Ds, some components may be generalizable to different ages, particularly adolescents at GiGi's Playhouse who are approaching their own transitional stage of life.

### **Conclusion**

This capstone project intended to gain further understanding of the unique population needs of individuals with Ds and how existing programs at GiGi's Playhouse can be expanded to better address the identified gaps. The focal areas of skill development were related to independent living and community participation for adults with Ds, with additional experiential components within the entirety of the nonprofit workplace setting. The insights gained from the planning process, site experiences, and compilation of the resultant program expansion guide further emphasized the importance of the need for increased resources and education to support successful outcomes for these adults. Prior to this student capstone project, GiGi's Playhouse staff planned group sessions by referencing the national GiGi's program curriculum resources that were designed in a broad conceptualization and often over- or under-estimated skill levels, without consideration of local participants' personal independence or career goals. This project focused on the development of a program expansion and individualization of the existing curriculum resources and provided implications for future staff, volunteer, or student implementation to better meet the needs of the adults participating in future semester programs. Furthermore, the project's implication on occupational therapy practice is indicative of the role that OT's scope naturally addresses as a profession designed to promote and support client-centered development towards one's meaning of independence in daily life and their community.

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APPENDIX 1

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives (LTGs)	Short-term objectives (STGs)	Learning activities	Outcome/Deliverables	Timeline for completion
<p><b>LTG 1:</b></p> <p>Over the course of the 14-week DCE, the student will develop a “life skills” curriculum expansion for adults with Down syndrome to promote healthy living, safety, and independence in IADLs.</p>	<p><b>STG 1A:</b></p> <p>The student will meet with GiGi’s Playhouse team members to determine and prioritize skill areas of need for adult participants.</p> <p><b>STG 1B:</b></p> <p>The student will determine a sustainability plan by collaborating with the programming director, creating a lesson plan guide, and educating personnel to direct future volunteers.</p>	<p>Learning Activity 1:</p> <p>Creating an accessible recipe/cookbook to address literacy as a barrier to meal preparation as an independent IADL task.</p> <p><i>NOTE: Learning activity 1 was altered by the student due to site utilization of a pre-existing online resource preferred by staff and others which provided a visual recipe database sorted by skill level (“Accessible Chef”).</i></p> <p>Learning Activity 2:</p> <p>Develop a resource guide for future students, volunteers, or family members to promote implementation or use of curriculum and/or materials</p>	<p>Adapted resource materials to leave with the Playhouse for continual use, with a physical copy on-site and a supplement virtual version for additional distribution or replacement as needed</p>	<p>The student will complete the learning objectives and provide the deliverable resource guide by week 14, with development and staff collaboration ongoing throughout the DCE. A sustainability plan will be implemented during week 14 to promote long-term utilization by staff and future volunteers.</p>

ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

<p><b>LTG 2:</b></p> <p>The student will facilitate the planning of life skills content topic expansion for adults through GiGi Prep by the end of week 5.</p>	<p><b>STG 2A:</b></p> <p>The student will observe the current programming structure during weeks 1-2 to appropriately and feasibly design a curriculum expansion outline for successful participation.</p> <p><b>Objective 2B:</b></p> <p>The student will modify or create adapted materials to increase accessibility for the successful completion of IADLs.</p>	<p>Learning Activity 1:</p> <p>Organize a weekly lesson plan outline to prepare and organize week-by-week content expansion</p>	<p>Week-to-week lesson plan outlines and guide for program expansion within GiGi Prep</p>	<p>The student will create and modify lesson plan formatting and topics as observed during week-to-week operations, with final deliverable weekly lesson plan guide and supplemental content provided to site during week 14.</p>
<p><b>LTG 3:</b></p> <p>The student will attend programs at GiGi's Playhouse in order to provide hands-on assistance and recommendations from an OT lens to promote functional benefit over 14 weeks.</p>	<p><b>STG 3A:</b></p> <p>The student will attend at least one program per week to observe and assist with different age groups, and gain an understanding of current program implementation, and program</p>	<p>Learning Activity 1:</p> <p>Observe day-to-day operations, program scheduling, and hands-off observation to better familiarize with established expectations, procedures, and build rapport among volunteers and GiGi's families.</p>	<p>Occupational therapy-based suggestions provided in written format to staff and/or volunteers that may enhance existing programming</p>	<p>The student will provide OT practice perspective input to staff and related volunteers as applicable throughout the DCE, with discussed input to be provided in written format upon completion of capstone experience on-site.</p>

ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

	<p>operations within 4 weeks.</p> <p><b>STG 3B:</b></p> <p>The student will offer occupational therapy-based suggestions to volunteers and staff to enhance functional applications of existing programming within 10 weeks.</p>	<p>Learning Activity 2:</p> <p>Attend and participate in current programs for each age group range to gain hands-on experience with program operations, the Playhouse families, and apply an OT practice perspective based on hands-on interactions.</p>		
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APPENDIX 2

Supervision Plan

Doctoral Capstone Experience Responsibilities & Supervision Plan			
Student Responsibilities		Mentor Responsibilities	
Topic	Description	Topic	Description
<b>Roles/ Responsibilities</b>	<p><b>Student will demonstrate at a minimum (not limited to the following):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to self-directed learning and fulfillment of all DCE and OT 8400 expectations</li> <li>• Adherence and tracking to the requirements for attendance and required 560 hours.</li> <li>• Consistent communication with site mentor and other appropriate entities/people</li> <li>• Demonstration of professional roles and responsibilities for both the site and school guidelines</li> <li>• Work together with site mentor to complete and amend as needed: goals, objectives, evaluation and supervision plan throughout DCE.</li> <li>• Self-reflection on progress and feedback throughout DCE.</li> </ul>	<b>Roles/ Responsibilities</b>	<p><b>Site Mentor will demonstrate at a minimum (not limited to the following):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with student, capstone coordinator, faculty mentor</li> <li>• Sign MOU</li> <li>• Provision of resources including orientation to site and relevant operations and policies of the non-profit organization</li> <li>• Will serve as a professional role model for the student.</li> <li>• Provide project and experience feedback to the student throughout capstone experience.</li> <li>• Evaluate student performance at midterm (7 weeks) and Final (end of DCE, 14 weeks)</li> </ul>
<b>Scheduled Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student will schedule weekly meetings with site mentor and related staff. Weekly in-person meetings will be used to ensure open and accurate communication, updates and discuss project development and track progress.</li> </ul>	<b>Scheduled Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site mentor will meet with student once a week to discuss planning, ensure site policies are continually met, and maintain updated communication throughout the DCE.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication Methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student will maintain open communication with site mentor, and related staff, in person on-site and via email as necessary. Student will schedule weekly meetings to promote good communication and minimize misunderstanding or miscommunications. Student will communicate with site mentor by text or phone call as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<b>Communication Methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site mentor will communicate with student by text, phone call, email, virtual meetings, or in person. Site mentor will attend weekly meetings with student to ensure adequate and open communication and minimize risk of misinformation or errors.</li> </ul>

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email will be used for any formal communication as needed.</li> <li>Student will resolve possible disputes using both scheduled in-person meetings and written email communication to site mentor, and faculty coordinator as appropriate.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolving possible disputes: attend student scheduled meetings, respond to email communication with student and/or capstone coordinator</li> </ul>
<b>Specific Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete site needs assessment interview prior to start of DCE</li> <li>Observation and assist with a variety of program areas and age groups throughout DCE</li> <li>Meet with and work with other staff, utilize varied areas of knowledge/expertise establish working relationship and communication among team of directors</li> <li>Develop a program expansion outline guide based on information gathered from literature review and site staff input</li> <li>Assist in planning and organization of community outings for participants in adult group programs</li> <li>Assist in administration tasks related to recent site expansion, increased program offerings/hours, planning and facilitation of grand reopening event</li> <li>Development and dissemination of project materials and resources</li> </ul>	<b>Specific Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orient student to current policies, procedures, and site operations</li> <li>Assist student in facilitating meetings or other communication with related staff, team members, and volunteers</li> </ul>
<b>Project Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Weeks 1-5: Orienting, Observation of site operations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Onboarding; orientation to site</li> <li>Complete required employee training modules</li> <li>Meet with all staff stakeholders</li> <li>Edit and finalize capstone project, student responsibilities and timeline, establish virtual platform access to streamline planning and idea development processes via shared drive folders</li> <li>Observe and hands-off participation with different programs for insight into non-profit operational structure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Project Timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site mentor will review deliverables with student to ensure accuracy and fit within site needs and national organization's standards/rules</li> </ul>

## ADULT LIFE SKILLS AT GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE

- **Weeks 5-12: Program Expansion Guide Development, Co-Lead Weekly Group**
  - Assist with program readiness and material preparation as facilitated by program director on staff
  - Continued mentorship from site, increasing hands-on engagement as volunteer with all age groups
  - Organization and development of lesson plan guide and materials to promote sustainable implementation for future use with adult participants
- **Weeks 12-14: Finalization and Disbursement of Expansion Materials, Debriefing**
  - Distribution of hard copy program expansion guide binder to site, upload supplemental digital copy to shared drive
  - Review resources and materials with site mentor and relevant staff to support understanding and carryover; implement steps for sustainable future utilization
  - Debrief with site mentor
  - Dissemination of DCE and project; capstone paper submission, formal presentation

**APPENDIX 3**

**GiGi Prep Program Application Excerpt**

**Applicant Questionnaire**

- What do you want to learn from the GiGi's Career Development Programs? Circle all that apply.

Increase Healthy Lifestyle-physical activity

Increase Educational Skills (Math & Literacy)

Increase Healthy Lifestyle-nutrition

Increase Community Engagement

Increase Communication Skills

Increase Job/Volunteer Skill Knowledge

Increase Social Skills

- What do you feel or what have you heard others say are your strengths?

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- What are the areas in your life that you think you need to improve? Circle all that apply.

Physical activity

Peer to Peer interaction

Nutrition

Math skills

Communicating with others

Reading skills

Eye contact

Social interaction

- Have you participated in any physical activity or sports in the past 2-3 years? If so, please list.

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- Tell us about your hobbies, special interests, job/volunteering, sports/fitness, etc.

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- How much support did you require in filling out this questionnaire?

None

Someone read the questions to me, and I wrote the answers

Someone read the questions to me and wrote the answers for me

**APPENDIX 4**

**Lesson Plan Guide**

**GIGI PREP WEEK 1**

<b>GOALS</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will set one fitness, communication, and personal wellness goal for the semester.</li> </ul>		
	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>MATERIALS NEEDED</b>
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> 10:00-11:00	"This or That" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give two options and the participant chooses their favorite (with visual supports)</li> </ul> All About Me sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual supports for "this or that"</li> <li>All About Me printed</li> <li>Pencils</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> 11:00-12:00	GiGiFIT Progress Tracker (Baseline)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Printed progress trackers</li> <li>Timer</li> <li>Tape</li> <li>Fitness dots</li> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> 12:00-12:30	Taco Soup  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ground turkey</li> <li>Canned tomatoes</li> <li>Canned corn</li> <li>Kidney and p</li> <li>Pinto beans</li> <li>Ranch mix</li> <li>Taco seasoning</li> <li>Rotel tomatoes and chilis</li> <li>Sour cream</li> <li>Cheese</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL EMOTIONAL</b> 12:30-1:00	Goals Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce tracking journal</li> <li>Introduce what a goal is and model with my own journal</li> <li>Work in small groups to develop their own goals</li> </ul> Discuss group expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking journals</li> <li>Expectations visuals</li> <li>Markers</li> <li>Pencils</li> </ul>
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> 1:00-1:30	Explain Healthy Habits weekly goal sheets to complete as homework for next week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weekly Healthy Habits goal sheet tracker, included in GiGi Prep Journal</li> </ul>

## GIGI PREP WEEK 2

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will introduce myself or greet (using verbal/nonverbal/gesturing) 2 new people this week.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> <b>10:00-11:00</b>	How to make an introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing yourself</li> <li>Handshakes and other greetings</li> <li>Eye contact and body language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual supports for introductions, INC PowerPoint</li> <li>Video examples</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> <b>11:00-12:00</b>	GiGiFIT Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 1-3</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> <b>12:00-12:30</b>	Black Bean Quesadillas  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gluten free tortillas</li> <li>Jar of salsa</li> <li>Kale leaves</li> <li>Mozzarella cheese</li> <li>Red onions</li> <li>Red peppers</li> <li>Extra virgin olive oil</li> <li>Canned black beans</li> <li>Cumin</li> <li>Ground coriander</li> <li>Salt and pepper</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL EMOTIONAL</b> <b>12:30-1:00</b>	Introductions continued- Demo, role playing and practice Group discussion on examples, what makes it a "good" or "bad" introduction	
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> <b>1:00-1:30</b>	Review previous Healthy Habits homework sheet	

## GIGI PREP WEEK 3

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will use strategies to resolve disagreements with others at home and at work.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> 10:00-11:00	Conflict resolution and navigating disagreements (examples for personal and job settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict resolution handouts</li> <li>Case study examples printed</li> <li>Pencils</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> 11:00-12:00	GiGiFIT Week 3  Healthy Habits from previous week, update goals for upcoming week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 1-3</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> 12:00-12:30	Egg Roll in a Bowl  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cabbage</li> <li>Ground turkey</li> <li>Sweet onion, chopped</li> <li>Sesame oil</li> <li>Rice vinegar</li> <li>Minced garlic</li> <li>Ground ginger</li> <li>Soy sauce</li> <li>Carrots, grated</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL EMOTIONAL</b> 12:30-1:00	Discussion: Understanding and respecting personal space	
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> 1:00-1:30		

## GIGI PREP WEEK 4

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will advocate for myself and others like me.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> 10:00-11:00	Self-advocacy Advocacy day preparation with GCDD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal introductions</li> <li>How to dress to make a good impression</li> <li>Discussing capitol day topics: Advancing Employment First and Ending Subminimum Wage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>INC self-advocacy PowerPoint</li> <li>Printouts of topic summaries to discuss, practice brief intro with advocacy statements</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> 11:00-12:00	GiGiFIT Week 4  Healthy Habits from previous week, update goals for upcoming week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 4-6</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> 12:00-12:30	BBQ Chicken Sandwiches and Coleslaw  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hamburger buns</li> <li>Chicken breasts</li> <li>Ketchup</li> <li>Brown sugar</li> <li>Worcestershire sauce</li> <li>Smoked paprika</li> <li>Apple cider vinegar</li> <li>Garlic powder</li> <li>Dijon mustard</li> <li>Mayo</li> <li>Sugar</li> <li>Salt and pepper</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL EMOTIONAL</b> 12:30-1:00	Writing out brief personal statements for advocacy day, to be printed on notecard and staff bring to capitol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper</li> <li>Pencils</li> <li>Notecards for final product</li> </ul>
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> 1:00-1:30		



## GIGI PREP WEEK 5

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will make 3 healthy snack choice swaps this week.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>COMMUNICATION &amp; WELLNESS</b> <b>10:00-11:00</b>	The "Name Game" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue practicing introductions, eye contact, clear communication</li> </ul> Understanding a nutrition label <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic definition and discussion of nutrients in food, numbers/lines to look for</li> <li>What makes something "healthy"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilates ball for icebreaker game</li> <li>Enlarged nutrition labels handouts</li> <li>Video examples for the "why" of making healthy food choices</li> <li>Healthy choice comparisons video</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> <b>11:00-12:00</b>	GiGiFIT Week 5  Healthy Habits from previous week, update goals for upcoming week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 4-6</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> <b>12:00-12:30</b>	Brunch  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turkey bacon</li> <li>Eggs</li> <li>Yogurt, granola for parfait bar</li> <li>Fresh fruit</li> <li>Shredded cheese</li> </ul>
<b>SMALL GROUPS</b> <b>12:30-1:00</b>	Job Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attention tasks, alternating and divided attention</li> <li>Multi-part directions</li> <li>Following directions- visual schedule</li> </ul> Social Emotional Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress and self-coping strategies</li> </ul> Reading and Literacy, Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wh- questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attention worksheets</li> <li>Color by number multistep worksheet</li> <li>Coping skills alphabet handout</li> <li>"What works for you?" coping strategies checklist</li> <li>Paper to make visual schedule checklist</li> <li>Pencils</li> </ul>
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> <b>1:00-1:30</b>		

## GIGI PREP WEEK 6

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will select and order a meal from a menu.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>COMMUNITY SKILLS</b> <b>10:00-11:00</b>	"This or That"- Which costs more  Community Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where could you go? Places within the community</li> <li>Going to a restaurant- restaurant etiquette, ordering from a menu</li> <li>Using your phone to calculate a tip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual supports for This or That costs</li> <li>Community places handout</li> <li>Restaurant packet visuals</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> <b>11:00-12:00</b>	GiGiFIT Week 6  Healthy Habits from previous week, update goals for upcoming week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 4-6</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> <b>12:00-12:30</b>	Broccoli Cheddar Soup and Potato Bar  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broccoli</li> <li>Heavy cream</li> <li>Chicken broth</li> <li>Carrots</li> <li>Butter</li> <li>Garlic, Onion powder</li> <li>Sharp cheddar cheese</li> <li>Russet potatoes</li> <li>Sour cream</li> <li>Bacon</li> <li>Olive oil, salt, and pepper</li> </ul>
<b>SMALL GROUPS</b> <b>12:30-1:00</b>	Job Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitions, attention</li> <li>Use of schedule checklist</li> </ul> Social Emotional Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress Management</li> </ul> Reading and Literacy, Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simulated job tasks</li> <li>Attention worksheet</li> <li>Pencils</li> <li>Coping strategies for stress handout</li> <li>Visual schedule (supplies to make checklist day of, +/- simple images outline of group plan)</li> </ul>
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> <b>1:00-1:30</b>		

## GIGI PREP WEEK 7

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will be a Down syndrome advocate within my community.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT &amp; ADVOCACY</b> 10:00-11:00	Celebrating World Down Syndrome Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making advocacy video for WSDS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socks for WSDS campaign</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> 11:00-12:00	GiGiFIT Week 7  Healthy Habits from previous week, update goals for upcoming week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 7-9</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> 12:00-12:30	Pita Pizzas  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pita flatbreads</li> <li>Pizza sauce</li> <li>Mozzarella cheese</li> <li>Garlic powder</li> <li>Toppings (pepperoni, bell pepper, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b> 12:30-1:00	Finish WSDS advocacy video <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What Down syndrome means to you</li> </ul>	
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> 1:00-1:30		

## GIGI PREP WEEK 8

GOALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I will be an active participant in my own health.</li> </ul>		
	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS</b> <b>10:00-11:15</b>	Communication Icebreaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having an open mind, understanding different perspectives</li> </ul> Community Life Skills: Healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different types of doctors or specialists you may see, where you would address different symptoms or health problems</li> <li>Pediatrician vs adult body functions, the "why" of needing to see certain doctors, general body functions and roles they play in staying healthy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual supports for open mindedness, images zoomed in then reveal of big picture</li> <li>Types of doctors handout</li> <li>Symptoms visuals handout to discuss</li> </ul>
<b>FITNESS</b> <b>11:15-12:15</b>	GiGiFIT Week 8  Healthy Habits from previous week, update goals for upcoming week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mats</li> <li>Pilates balls</li> <li>Printed handouts for GiGiFIT Weeks 7-9</li> </ul>
<b>COOKING &amp; KITCHEN SKILLS</b> <b>12:15-1:00</b>	Chicken Carbonara & Salad Bar  (GiGi's staff to bring recurring kitchen tools: safety knives, cutting boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chicken breast</li> <li>Turkey bacon</li> <li>Egg (yolk)</li> <li>Thickened cream</li> <li>Garlic</li> <li>Onion</li> <li>Fresh grated cheese/cheese block</li> <li>Pasta</li> <li>Romaine lettuce</li> <li>Caesar salad dressing</li> </ul>
<b>TIME TO EAT</b> <b>1:00-1:30</b>	Writing thank you note messages for donor event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you cards</li> <li>Pens</li> </ul>

## GIGI PREP COMMUNITY OUTING 1

PURPOSE		
This group outing will promote community visibility of adults with Down syndrome and support local organizations that offer inclusive community involvement and participation for adults with disabilities.		
	LOCATION	PLAN
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: HABIMA THEATRE</b>	Drop off at Habima Theatre @ MJCC: 5342 Tilly Mill Rd, Atlanta, GA 30338  Pick up Chupito's Dunwoody: 1412 Dunwoody Village Pkwy, Atlanta, GA 30338	Theater etiquette: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Arriving on time</li> <li>○ Keeping your phone or tablet put away or off</li> <li>○ Not talking during the performance</li> <li>○ Finding designated seat and staying seated until intermissions, not wandering</li> <li>○ Clapping for performers, when appropriate</li> <li>○ Supporting our group members and friends for their hard work!</li> </ul>
<b>LUNCH: OUT TO EAT</b>	Chupito's	Restaurant etiquette: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Using a menu to select your meal</li> <li>○ Ordering your own drink, meal with a server</li> </ul>

## GIGI PREP COMMUNITY OUTING 2

PURPOSE		
This group outing will promote community skills/IADL independence to navigate within the local urban community in a physically active setting.		
	LOCATION	PLAN
<b>ATLANTA BELTLINE: NAVIGATING IN THE COMMUNITY</b>	Drop off at New Realm Brewery: 550 Somerset Terrace NE #101, Atlanta, GA 30306  Pick up at Ponce City Market (NORTH AVE side): 675 North Avenue NE, Atlanta, GA 30344 (NOTE: Weather alternative plan to be at PCM)	Community navigation and following directions: Scavenger Hunt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Begin at New Realm on the beltline → Walk the beltline to Historic Fourth Ward Park → Continue on the beltline to Ponce City Market → End at Ponce City Market</li> </ul> Find and take a photo with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A crosswalk</li> <li>○ Something you can hear</li> <li>○ Something you can smell</li> <li>○ A piece of art (painted wall, statue, sculpture, etc.)</li> <li>○ Something with wheels (scooter, bike, etc.)</li> <li>○ Somewhere you could get food</li> </ul>
<b>LUNCH: OUT TO EAT</b>	Ponce City Market	Central Food Hall: selecting and ordering from a menu