LEARNING OBJECTIVES – PUTTING COMPETENCIES INTO ACTION
Kyle Hoffman and Kelley Gruber

We often say that the OCWTP is a “competency-based training system,” meaning that Ohio’s training system developed, and uses, a “Universe of Competencies” to identify training needs and shape learning interventions. The Universe of Competencies is a compilation of knowledge and skill statements reflecting what child welfare staff and caregivers need to know to be able to perform their jobs.

But it is learning objectives – not competency statements – that describe: A) the content to be trained, and B) the delivery methods to be used. Although learning objectives stem from competencies, learning objectives are concise, action oriented, learner-focused statements of what a learner should be able to do after attending an OCWTP learning intervention. Learning objectives turn competency statements into the concrete actions and behaviors that reflect best practice work activities.

Using Learning Objectives to Create a Learning Intervention

Let’s look at an example of how this cycle works:

Using ITNA data, an RTC identifies the following competencies for a workshop on sibling relationships:

- 949-01-002 Knows the benefits of placing siblings together. Knows the role of caregivers or adoptive parents to keep siblings in contact with one another when they cannot be kept together
- 949-01-004 Knows how to maintain sibling relationships in a culturally and developmentally suitable way

Together, you and the RTC director develop an overarching goal for the workshop – to help caregivers facilitate visits between a child and his siblings. The goal is specific to the caregiver audience.

As an expert in sibling relationships, and with consideration of the identified competencies, you identify what caregivers must know, and be able to do or provide, to facilitate visits between siblings. For example, you may determine that:

- Caregivers need to know about, and be able to provide, an environment best suited for visits
- Caregivers need to know about, and be able to provide, visits of sufficient frequency and length to meet the case plan goals
- Caregivers need to know the importance of, and how to prepare a child for a visit, and how to support a child after a visit
Now you are ready to develop specific learning objectives, based on your overarching goal and the specific outcomes you have identified as important. To start, you should use what OCWTP master trainer Renee Resnik calls “performance language.” She recommends the following formula:

\[
\text{action goal + subject + qualifier}
\]

Using Ms. Resnik’s formula, a learning objective may be:

\[
\text{Participants will be able to select an appropriate setting for sibling visits that encourage interaction among the siblings.}
\]

- **Action goal** – select
- **Subject** – sibling visits
- **Qualifier** – a setting that encourages interaction

Compare this learning objective with the following learning objective that doesn’t use the suggested formula:

\[
\text{Participants will know the importance of choosing the right setting for the visit.}
\]

Both speak to the importance of location selection, but only the first example tells us what we want the learner to do with the information and how we will be able to tell they know the information. Note the change in focus from the trainer (what you train) to the learner (what they are to do). The learner can take more responsibility for learning when the expectations are clear.

You can see how your training strategies might change when you shift to a performance based learning objective. A clear, concise, action oriented, learner-focused learning objective - **participants will be able to select locations for sibling visits that encourage interaction among the siblings** - guides both the content to be trained and the method to deliver that content.

Once you create the learning objectives, review their quality using the SMART acronym:

1. **Is the objective specific** about what you want the learners to achieve?
2. **Can the attainment of the learning objective be measured**?
3. **Are the learning objectives achievable** given the selected learning delivery method (i.e. workshop, GAP, coaching)?
4. **Can the learner realistically** achieve the objectives given their prior knowledge and skills?
5. **Is the learning activity an appropriate length of time** for the learner to achieve the set objectives?

**Using Learning Objectives to Evaluate Effectiveness**

Because the trainer identifies, and states through the learning objectives, what learners will be able to do upon completion of the training, the learning objectives themselves are the measures used to determine the effectiveness of the training. The OCWTP uses the learning objectives in two ways after the training:

1. To measure the learner’s perception of their learning related to individual learning objectives
2. To assess transfer of learning through observation of behaviors, review of work products, or other ways the learner demonstrates mastery of the learning objectives

Many factors affect transfer of learning, including an agency’s organizational infrastructure. Learning objectives make it clear to the learner, and their agency, what they should be able to do after an OCWTP training, if the proper supports for best practice are in place.

In the example above on caregiver training, after the training:

1. Participants would be asked to assess themselves on being able to select locations for sibling visits which encourage interaction
2. Transfer of learning would be assessed to determine if the caregiver was selecting locations for sibling visits which encourage interaction among the siblings

For evaluation purposes, learning objectives should avoid verbs that are difficult to measure objectively, and eliminate words likely to be interpreted differently by different people. Below are some verbs and phrases often used in OCWTP learning objectives that are vague, open to interpretation, and difficult to assess:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognize</th>
<th>Comprehend</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Collaborate with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Appreciate</td>
<td>Be aware of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Realize</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Familiarize</td>
<td>Learn</td>
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Continued on Page 3
The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) will present a 2011 Activist Award to IHS Adoption and Foster Care Program Manager, Betsy Keefer-Smalley, and OCWTP trainer and consultant, Jayne Schooler, at the 37th Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado in August. The NACAC Activist Awards honor special individuals, groups, and organizations who have contributed their service to promote adoption and improve child welfare.

OCWTP trainer and foster caregiver Patricia McCollum will be recognized at The Cincinnati Herald’s 12th Annual Nefertiti Award Banquet, June 4, 2011. This award exemplifies the wisdom and inner beauty of women like the ancient African Queen Nefertiti.

Debbie Huff, NEORTC Training Coordinator, was selected to speak at the joint Cleveland State-University of Akron Masters Level Social Work Graduation Ceremony in May. Debbie’s speech was entitled, “Hope is the Anticipation of Something Good.” Debbie has been a part-time Instructor for the University of Akron for 21 years.

Also in May, The Ohio State University College of Social Work hosted a Field Instruction Appreciation Breakfast recognizing CORTC Training Coordinator Alison Rodgers, who was granted the 2011 Agency Education Coordinator of the Year Award.

Sr. Madeleine Rybicki was selected from a lottery to attend the Beatification of Pope John Paul II in Rome May 1st. Sr. Madeleine was honored to be chosen especially since she and Pope John Paul II share a common Polish background. She called it an “experience of a lifetime,” and one she will cherish forever.

OCWTP trainer CeCe Norwood has been named Interim Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence, which is Ohio’s federally recognized Alliance with the responsibility to oversee all sexual violence services providers and provide direct assistance to sexual violence survivors.

A caseworker from Summit County Children Services recently attended Lee Hawks’ Identification of Meth Labs training. The following week she was able to use her new knowledge to identify a meth lab operating out of a home and safely remove the children (the home later blew up).

Learning Objectives continued from Page 2

If a trainer must use one of these vague verbs or phrases, make sure the learning objective states exactly how “awareness” or “recognition,” for example, will be demonstrated on the job.

Learning objectives are key for evaluating effectiveness of OCWTP training. The more precise the language, the more consistent the measure; and, the more consistent the measure, the more confident the OCWTP can be in assessing transfer of learning.

The importance of learning objectives cannot be understated. They are the basis of both good design and good evaluation, and a vital link to best practice in child welfare.

For additional information, attend the TOT on Curriculum Development and visit these sites:

- Characteristics and components of good learning objectives
  http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/objectives.htm

- Summary of Bloom’s Taxonomy and suggested verbs to use for learning objectives
  http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html

- Part of the I-Tech Training Toolkit, focuses on designing learning objectives
  http://www.go2itech.org/HTML/TT06/toolkit/design/outcomes.html
Maximizing Impact and Planning for the Future
Lisa Dickson, Communications Chair, Foster Care Alumni of America, Ohio chapter

During the 2011 OCWTP Trainer event several of us expressed an interest in networking with one another in order to share creative “transfer of learning” ideas. I appreciated the camaraderie and felt part of a joint effort to make a difference in child welfare practice.

As trainers, we dedicate our lives to becoming experts on certain topics, staying up-to-date regarding evidence-based practice, and finding creative ways to share that knowledge in an impactful way with our workshop participants.

We realize we cannot be everywhere, all the time. So, we train concepts and practical skills, then help participants translate what we train into best practice. We inspire participants to share what they’ve learned in our workshops with others, in an effort to improve outcomes for children and families.

We are visionaries. We want the work we do to carry on long after we retire. We think about who will step up and take our place. Some of us have even taken an active role in preparing the next generation of trainers.

Seasoned trainers have an opportunity to invest a portion of their time in mentoring and guiding Ohio’s trainers of the future. Michael Sanders took on this responsibility when he introduced me to the OCWTP. Without his encouragement, I would never have become a trainer.

Today, as a former foster youth and OCWTP trainer, I have no desire to be a lone voice. I encourage others who have experienced foster care firsthand to get involved and share their practical knowledge and insights. One program I recommend to them is the OCWTP’s Alumni Engagement Initiative, an effort under the leadership of Charlotte Osterman.

Another way I am able to help prepare future trainers is to participate in pilots like the one conducted by The Village Network Columbus this spring. With succession planning and transfer of learning in mind, former foster youth hosted a series of independent living trainings for foster parents and foster care youth.

The project had three goals:
1. To engage youth in active, hands-on learning, using “transfer of learning” activities
   Hands-on activities for foster parents and youth included several ideas that were inspired by Dr. Denise Goodman’s workshop during the 2011 Trainer Event, “Step It Up: Creating Activities That Engage and Involve.”

2. To encourage caregivers to bring independent living skills to life in their homes
   Discussions with foster parents focused on how learning objectives might translate into daily practice. Foster parents identified naturally occurring opportunities, such as dinner time, grocery shopping, and refueling at a gas station, to discuss independent living skills.

3. To partner new foster care alumni trainers with experienced trainers
   Many foster care alumni co-facilitated these workshops and gained valuable experience as trainers. They were able to build skills that will allow them to independently conduct workshops in the future.

I encourage each of you to give some thought to the future of the OCWTP trainer pool and how you can help sustain the quality of training caseworkers and caregivers have come to expect for 25 years. Your efforts will make a difference. And you might find, as I did, that by interacting with the trainers of the future, you just might learn something new.
CORTC

CORTC is coordinating and managing workshops to fulfill county initiatives. In March, Pickaway County hosted the Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit. Participants included Pickaway County community partners including mental health professionals, juvenile court staff, and school professionals, who expressed appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate with child welfare staff.

In April, Dr. Sheri Hill from Seattle, Washington presented “Through the Eyes of the Infant: Meeting the Needs of Young Children in Child Welfare.” to over 300 people.

CORTC is working to coordinate substance abuse related training with Madison County’s new Drug Taskforce. The training will be open to various community partners.

In May, CORTC hosted the spring director/liaison meeting. Sandra Holt and Joan Van Hull from ODJFS presented updates on CFSR, and Greg Kapcar from PCSAO presented budget and legislative updates.

CORTC recognizes the administrators who stepped into Executive Director roles in their communities in 2011:

Marion County Children Services Board announced Jacqueline Ringer as Executive Director in January; Linda Zellner was named the Crawford County Children Services Interim Director in March; Anne O’Leary was named the Franklin County Children Services Interim Director in April; and, Madison CDJFS Director, Chip Spinning, was elected as the new president of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio in May.

WORTC

WORTC staff training coordinator, Michelle Bruce, and her husband Robert, are expecting their third child in November.

NEORTC

Over 148 foster parents from nine counties received nearly 1,500 hours of training credit at the Fourth Annual Foster Parent Conference held in May.

NEORTC thanks Ashtabula, Columbiana, Geauga, Medina, Stark, Summit and Wayne counties for their donations to the foster parent gift baskets and other raffle prizes. The foster parents were also appreciative of all the county information. The highlight of the conference was the “Teen Panel: Aspects of Positive Foster Care Placement” hosted by Lisa Dickson and the Summit county youth and alumni group “The Leaders of Tomorrow.” From a foster parent:

“This was the most helpful, mind blowing, thought provoking class I have attended in 5 years of fostering. These kids are a treasure chest of information...what a concept to ask the foster kids what they feel, think, and need. Put this in more frequently and pay them for training us.”

SWORTC

In March, SWORTC bid farewell to Angela Layman after 12 years of faithful service to the OCWTP. Angela had been doing work in private adoption for quite some time and decided to make that a full-time role. For all of you who knew Angela, you know she worked at the speed of light and her efficiency will be missed.

ECORTC

ECORTC staff recently honored outgoing host agency Director N. Kelly Lynch at their Annual Supervisory Conference and again in May, when the ECORTC training room was dedicated to Ms. Lynch, First Director of ECORTC. A prominently displayed plaque is mounted on the outside wall in recognition of the 26 years of contribution Ms. Lynch has provided to training and development of many thousands of people who have gained knowledge throughout the East Central Ohio RTC.

ECORTC Director Brian Wear has been working with public children services agencies (PCSA) and ODJFS staff during the Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE) Stage 8 process to plan training interventions to help resolve practice issues identified in CPOE 8 reviews. CPOE Stage 8 is the ODJFS Technical Assistance methodology for assessing how well PCSAs are meeting Federal guidelines for child welfare practice.

ECORTC would like to thank all trainers who travel to smaller, distant counties to ensure their staff receive quality training.
In the OCWTP’s competency-based training system, the competencies are divided into four general levels. Each level in the sequence reflects different desired outcomes and requires different teaching strategies and methodologies. These levels of learning can be reflected in your learning objectives through verb selection.

**Level I: Awareness**

Teaching strategies and methodologies establish a conceptual framework by raising awareness of the issues and problems being considered and clarifying their relevance to the profession and to learners’ jobs.

Verbs for learning objectives include: defines, describes, identifies, knows, labels, lists, matches, names, outlines, recalls, recognizes, reproduces, selects, and states.

**Level II: Knowledge and Understanding**

Learning, remembering, and accurately repeating factual or descriptive information is the first step. Teaching strategies and methodologies at this level also involve using knowledge effectively to guide behavior or to solve problems, and fitting elements of knowledge into an integrated conceptual system.

Verbs for learning objectives include: comprehends, converts, defends, distinguishes, estimates, explains, extends, generalizes, gives an example, infers, interprets, paraphrases, predicts, rewrites, summarizes, and translates.

**Level III: Application to the Job**

Teaching strategies and methodologies define and describe, often in considerable detail, how the new learning should be implemented within the day-to-day job tasks.

Verbs for learning objectives include: applies, changes, computes, constructs, demonstrates, discovers, manipulates, modifies, operates, predicts, prepares, produces, relates, shows, solves, uses.

**Level I: Skill Development**

Teaching strategies and methodologies develop and refine the learner’s capacity to perform specific behaviors to complete job tasks or activities. Skill development occurs on-the-job through coaching, practice, and technical support.

Verbs for learning objectives include: care for, conduct, construct, design, implement, inspect, interview, manage, measure, organize, perform, prepare, process, program, regulate, secure, select, simplify, troubleshoot, and verify.
The OCWTP is in an era of change, providing us with opportunities for continued growth and development as a system and as trainers.

Technology, economics, and new research on adult learning are creating an environment of change.

Advancements in technology have made it easier to develop distance learning workshops trainees can access via their computers and phone lines. Economic struggles have forced public children services agencies to decrease expenses incurred when staff members attend training. Research on adult learning has helped us create new and more effective training methods. These factors have prompted the training system to find creative ways of meeting staff and caregivers’ training needs.

Blended workshops, learning labs, coaching, and GAP sessions are part of this growth.

The OCWTP now offers multiple ways to help staff and caregivers develop knowledge and skills. Blended workshops involve a combination of face-to-face learning and online learning opportunities. Learning labs provide an environment where learners can practice new skills. Coaching activities pair an approved OCWTP coach with a staff member or foster caregiver to assist in on-the-job development of specific skills. Guided Application and Practice (GAP) sessions provide opportunities for staff and caregivers to share their knowledge and experiences with each other through discussions facilitated by a content expert. Each of these training activities has a role to play in the development of high quality, effective work with children and their families.

In order for all of us to have a common understanding of the OCWTP’s training delivery methods, we have created a Continuum of Learning Methods. Please take time to read the document and to think about any skills you would like to develop as you continue to seek opportunities for growth.

Contact an RTC or IHS if you want more information about these learning methods or are interested in developing new training skills.

**TWO ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF NOTE**

**E-Track For Trainers**
In August, the OCWTP will launch E-Track to trainers (known as “facilitators” in E-Track). This phase of the launch will allow trainers to view their calendar of scheduled OCWTP training, see who is registered for their upcoming training sessions, manage their “black-out” dates when they are unavailable to train, and review their contact information. In the future, trainers will also be able to use E-Track to assess their individual training needs, view their individual development plans, and search and register for trainer development workshops.

**Required Field Experience**
If you are not currently practicing in the field of child welfare, and train non-standardized workshops for the OCWTP (workshops you created) you will need to complete a child welfare field experience and document it on a field activity form. For additional information contact Lois Tyler at loijean@aol.com.
SWORTC NOW HOSTED BY BUTLER COUNTY

After 25 years of being hosted by the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, effective July 1, 2011, the SWORTC will be moving under leadership of the Butler County Children's Services (BCCS). The SWORTC staff is thankful to Hamilton County for so many years of support for the training program; however, we look forward to the new era under the umbrella of Butler County. Jeff Centers, Executive Director at BCCS, has worked diligently with his staff to ensure a smooth transition for the SWORTC. The training center will remain at 420 Wards Corner Road in Loveland. The same counties will be served with no interruption of training or services. In addition, since the Ohio Human Services Training System falls under the responsibility of SWORTC, the coordinator of that program, Lynn Simpson, will also be joining the ranks of BCCS.

SWORTC staff phone numbers and email addresses will be changing. We will let you know as soon as we can.

Thank you for your encouragement throughout this process.

BRIDGELINE CALL SERIES FOR TRAINERS

The OCWTP continues to offer opportunities for trainers to share experiences and ideas over lunch via our toll free Bridgeline. On August 2, 2011 and repeated on August 11, 2011 from 12:15 to 12:45 pm, the Bridgeline discussion will focus on how to facilitate Guided Application and Practice (GAP) sessions. Look for additional information in the next trainer listserv.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS

Fiscal Year 2012 Training of Trainer (TOT) dates are being finalized. Dates will be released in the next trainer listserv.