MASTERING THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND BEYOND: PRACTICING THE TEN DOMAINS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY IN A LARGE DIVERSE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT WHILE WORKING WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQ YOUTH

By

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ABSTRACT

MASTERING THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND BEYOND: PRACTICING THE TEN DOMAINS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY IN A LARGE DIVERSE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT WHILE WORKING WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQ YOUTH

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This portfolio demonstrates my knowledge, competency, and skill in the ten domains of school psychology, as proposed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2010a) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC, 2001). I practiced the roles of a school psychologist during one school year working as a School Psychologist Intern in a large diverse school district located in an urban setting. My duties and responsibilities consisted of consulting and collaborating with school faculty, parents, students, and outside organizations with a focus on helping students attain access to an education. I conducted cognitive, academic, socio-emotional, and behavior assessments; utilized data and research to make decisions and recommendations; assisted with the development and implementation of interventions; and provided individual counseling services. Throughout my internship experience, I had a goal to go beyond the role of a School Psychologist Intern within a school setting. I got involved with advocacy efforts for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth by collaborating with representatives from NASP and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). My portfolio products document my
successful work as both a School Psychologist Intern and advocate. Conclusions address the need for School Psychologists to expand their roles in districts that limit their responsibilities. Recommendations include providing comprehensive services during practice and focusing advocacy efforts on at-risk youth within and outside the school setting.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family and friends for all their love, encouragement, and support throughout this long educational journey. Without each and every one of them, I could not have accomplished such rigorous and demanding academic milestones over the course of eight years. I would also like to thank the wonderful faculty at Humboldt State University. Many of them have been protective factors in my life. They believed in me and gave me the opportunity to take part in the School Psychology Program. Their decision has changed the course of my future and I will forever be grateful. Lastly, I would like to thank my beautiful wife for being the most helpful and supportive individual in my life. Together we shall learn from this experience, continue to grow, and enjoy the next chapter in our story book fairytale.
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SIGNIFICANCE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The role of a School Psychologist encompasses numerous responsibilities and areas of competency and skill. School Psychologists are knowledgeable in psychology, education systems, and federal and state laws that pertain to education. They conduct evaluations, review and collect data, recommend and implement academic, social-emotional, and behavioral interventions with children who are struggling in the general education setting. They consult and collaborate with other professionals to provide comprehensive services to children and families. School Psychologists are leaders and members of teams who help make informed decisions. They have an overarching goal which is to advocate for the educational and fundamental rights of children and adolescents. They do this by considering recommendations for best practice and adhering to ethical principles for their profession.

In order to carry out such roles and duties, School Psychologists must first complete a graduate degree program that provides an extensive array of courses and training that focus on the profession of School Psychology. The School Psychology Program at Humboldt State University has combined the recommendations of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2010a) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC, 2001) to center the program’s instruction and training on demonstrating competency, knowledge, and skill in ten domains. These ten domains cover a wide-range of roles that School Psychologists can carry out in their careers. The ten domains were developed with the consideration of research and
evidence-based practices, and the competency, knowledge, and skill defined within the ten domains are considered best practice for the profession of School Psychology.

Simply put, the ten domains cover the importance of data-based decision making during the evaluation of cognitive and academic skills, or when conducting assessments and making recommendations for interventions. Providing consultation to and collaborating with teachers, families, administrators, school professionals (i.e., Speech & Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Behavior Specialists), and community agencies are other areas that are included in the domains. So too are providing mental health services, accessing research-based practices, and utilizing technological devices to educate others to make informed decisions. The domains also include having knowledge in the foundations of psychology and education, while considering educational law and professional ethical principles.

When considering the professional ethical principles set forth by NASP (2010b), School Psychologists have an ethical responsibility to advocate for students who are experiencing difficulty in schools. Reasons for their difficulties may vary, but when advocacy is needed, the contributing factors tend to be outside the student’s power or control. For example, students with mental or behavioral diagnoses may need additional support than they can get from general education. School Psychologists are important team members who come together with others to create supportive plans and interventions for at-risk students. By doing so, they foster a supportive school environment and help them to access the general education curriculum.
An at-risk group of students who experience ongoing discrimination and harassment in school are students who identify as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or are questioning their sexual identity (LGBTQ). The National School Climate Survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, andStraight Education Network (GLSEN) surveyed 7,898 students from across the United States aged 13 to 21 years old. Findings indicate that almost three quarters of LGBT students were verbally harassed and one fifth of the sample population were physically assaulted at school in the past year for their sexual orientation or gender expression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). In addition, more than one half of the students surveyed reported experiencing discriminatory policies or practices at their school. School Psychologists have an ethical responsibility to advocate for this population of students. According to NASP’s Principles for Professional Ethics (2010b), “School psychologists work to correct school practices that are unjustly discriminatory or that deny students… their legal rights. They take steps to foster a school climate that is safe, accepting, and respectful of all persons” (Standard I.3.3).

This portfolio documents my knowledge, competency, and skill in carrying out the roles of a School Psychologist as defined in the ten domains of school psychology, with an emphasis on supporting and advocating for at-risk youth in schools. My advocacy work encompasses evaluations and interventions that were conducted in the school setting as a School Psychologist Intern, as well as advocacy work that I carried out after school hours. All of this work has been completed during my internship school year.
I completed my internship in a large school district located in an urban community outside California. The school district has more than eighty schools and serves a diverse population of students. There are more than fifty School Psychologists in the district, who are assigned one to two schools. They consult and collaborate with several General Education and Special Education Teachers, Principals, Speech/Language Pathologists, Social Workers, School Counselors, Learning Support Coordinators, and other school faculty members. Every employee has specific responsibilities that they are in charge of at each school. School Psychologists in this district are not accountable for all the roles defined by the ten domains. Their work week is divided between two schools and they are expected to work only with students in or are being considered for special education. Other school professionals have job duties that require them to complete some of the tasks defined in the ten domains (e.g., Social Workers provide mental health services, and Learning Support Coordinators are in charge of providing Tier 1 and 2 social-emotional and behavioral interventions). As an intern I was given the flexibility to create an experience that allowed me the opportunity to practice the roles in each of the ten domains throughout the school year.

During the first semester of my internship, I was supervised by two doctoral level School Psychologists and worked at four different schools throughout the city. Each school serves preschool through eighth grade students with various cultural and social-economic backgrounds. One school had a special education preschool, two had self-contained special education classrooms that provided additional support to students with Autism, Emotional Disabilities, and Intellectual Disabilities, and the fourth school had
access to an abundant amount of resources because it serves wealthy families and their children. I learned a great deal from each school, while also learning how to implement the ten domains within a school district that had state laws and district policies that I was initially unfamiliar with.

During the second semester of my internship, the steep learning curve decreased while my competency and skill as a School Psychologist Intern increased. I was given the opportunity to practice the various roles of a School Psychologist at a Title-1 elementary school that serves preschool to fifth grade students. It also has primary and intermediate cross categorical self-contained special education classrooms that serve students with low incidence disabilities or who are functioning intellectually and academically significantly lower than their peers. The school also serves a diverse population of students and families who experience negative risk factors associated with poverty, cultural disadvantages, and from being in the foster care system. While practicing at this school, I had the opportunity to work with a number of complex case studies of students who required specialized attention in order for them to function in the school setting. They had dissimilar backgrounds and needs, all of which I had limited prior exposure or experience. This required me to review research and consult with other colleagues to best serve these students. Three of the four products in my portfolio involve cases that were completed at this school.

The first product is the work I completed with fraternal triplet male siblings who were born preterm. They all had a history of speech delays, and were academically achieving far below grade level despite the implementation of Tier 2 reading and math
interventions. Speech and cognitive delays are common among twins, triplets, and other multiples (Sutcliffe & Derom, 2006). Although the siblings had developmental delays, evaluation results indicate that each demonstrated different patterns of strengths and weaknesses, and required individualized education plans (IEPs) that varied from one another. My involvement in these three case studies consisted of conducting comprehensive psycho-educational evaluations, and working with their multidisciplinary team members to determine eligibility and develop IEPs that accommodated their individualized need for support. This experience allowed me to demonstrate my competence in the Psychological Foundations, Data-Based Decision Making & Accountability, and Research & Technology domains.

The second product includes some of the elaborate work I completed in the area of behavior interventions. During the transition to my new placement, I recognized a need for staff training and support with the development and implementation of Tier 1 and 2 behavior interventions for students in the general education setting with or without IEPs. I provided a one hour professional development training presentation to credentialed staff members and the principal. After my presentation I was approached by several teachers to provide additional support for students having behavioral difficulties in preschool, kindergarten, second, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. This portfolio product includes my presentation and documents my work with a fourth grade male student who was demonstrating significant behavioral difficulties in the general education setting. In order to best serve this student, while providing support to his teacher and peers, I conducted a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and worked with his
multidisciplinary team to develop and implement a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

After approximately nine weeks of implementation, I scheduled a follow-up meeting, reviewed the data with his team members, modified the BIP, and made recommendations that adhered to the district’s policy and process for students who require additional adult support to address their behavior challenges. My work on this case has allowed me to document my competency and skill in the domains of Educational Foundations, Consultation & Collaboration, and Data-Based Decision Making & Accountability.

My third product is documentation of my work with a fourth grade male student who experienced severe early childhood trauma and struggled with the regulation of his emotions. He had a history of physical and aggressive behaviors, and an inability to establish relationships with adults or peers. He experienced a large number of changes in living placements and school enrollment since the age of four. It was reported that his behavior changed significantly after his last change in living. He did not talk much, smile, provided minimal verbal responses, and did not initiate interactions with others. He had the diagnoses of Reactive Attachment Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and received special education services under the Emotional Disability category.

My work with this student was by far the most involved on my caseload during my internship experience. At first, I was responsible for completing his three year re-evaluation. This then led to an FBA and the development and implementation of a BIP. During the evaluation process and implementation of the BIP, I was able to establish rapport and build a relationship with the student. A team decision was made for me to be
responsible for providing him the individual school-based counseling services written on his IEP. Since my involvement in this case, I have also participated in his Child Family Team meetings and worked with his case manager, group home staff, surrogate parents, and Psychiatrist to help support him both inside and outside the school setting. Although I have documented my demonstration of competency, skill, and ability in the Data-Based Decision Making & Accountability, Mental Health, and Family, School & Community Collaboration domains, my involved work has covered more areas of competency defined in other domains as well.

My internship experience provided me with opportunities to learn, practice, and grow as a School Psychologist Intern. During the school year, I had an ongoing goal to go above and beyond my expected role as a School Psychologist Intern. I challenged myself to network and collaborate with outside organizations to advocate for at-risk youth on a local, state, and national level. I was able to connect and work with representatives from local and national organizations to educate school staff and NASP members on providing supportive practices to LGBTQ youth. The fourth product in my portfolio is documentation of the accomplishment of my goal and samples of the advocacy work I completed throughout my internship school year.

When I relocated to a new city at the beginning of the school year, I learned about a local chapter of GLSEN. I was invited to attend their monthly board member meeting, and quickly found myself getting involved with their scheduled activities. Throughout the school year, I attended every board meeting and volunteered to be a part of committee groups that organized local events for educators and Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs
in the area. Sample products in my portfolio include two presentations that I helped to organize and conduct. The presentations provided attendees with information regarding risk-factors, resources, and recommendations of supportive practices for supporting LGB and Transgender students using recent GLSEN research results (Kosciw et al., 2014). Attendees consisted of teachers, guidance and career counselors, a school nurse, health assistant, and principals. This community work helped to meet part of my goal.

The two other work samples in this product include my efforts with organizing events at universities which aimed to bridge the educational gap among LGBTQ youth while connecting them with like-minded peers and supportive adults in their community. During my second year in practicum, I collaborated with college students, local and university organizations, and GSA groups to organize an event at Humboldt State University. This school year, I worked with a representative of NASP to write an article about my practicum project so that I could publish it in the professional group’s newsletter, NASP Communiqué. During the same time, I was collaborating with GLSEN board members, and employees from the local university to organize a similar event. Each of the events had similar goals to introduce GSA students to the college community, resources, supportive adults, and like-minded peers, yet each were unalike because they accommodated the needs and differences of the attendees. Both can be considered as successful events based on the results from surveys completed before and after each event. My advocacy work has allowed me to demonstrate my skill and ability in the Psychological and Legal, Ethical, & Professional Foundations, and Human Diversity in Development & Learning domains.
My knowledge, competency, and skills have been a work in progress. At this point in my educational career and training, I have demonstrated the ability to perform the tasks and roles of a School Psychologist Intern and I am ready to start my career. I have also accomplished my goal with advocating for at-risk youth beyond what is expected of me outside the school setting. I look forward to continuing to learn and grow as a School Psychologist, and share my knowledge with educators and other professionals on how to provide supportive services to students in need.
Table 1: Domains of Knowledge and Competence in School Psychology Documented in Each Portfolio Product

1. Psychological Foundations
2. Educational Foundations
3. Legal, Ethical and Professional Foundations
5. Data-based Decision Making and Accountability II – Assessment & Intervention for Socialization, Emotional, Behavioral, and Life Skills
6. Consultation and Collaboration
7. Mental Health
8. Human Diversity in Development and Learning
9. Family, School and Community Collaboration
10. Research and Technology

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<td>3. Case Study – Comprehensive Re-evaluation, FBA/BIP, and Individual Counseling</td>
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of a School Psychologist is complex and should not be limited to testing and placement of students in special education. Children and adolescents are vastly different and require individualized care, some of which can require more involvement. There are many students that are facing a number of risk-factors and need someone to advocate for their educational and fundamental rights. School Psychologists have an underlined role and an ethical obligation to advocate for children, which make them perfect candidates to be advocates for youth who are having difficulty or are experiencing risk factors. In order to do this, School Psychologists must take a comprehensive approach during practice to best serve these individuals.

Unfortunately, School Psychologists’ roles and responsibilities are limited in some districts and schools. In such cases, the School Psychologist must not only advocate for children but also for their profession. In order for them to do this, they must first ensure that they are competent and skilled in the ten domains of the Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services (NASP, 2010a). Next, they must advocate to provide comprehensive services during their daily practice. Doing so may require School Psychologists to cover more than one domain to best serve students with multifaceted needs. These steps may all seem like a large mission that is impossible to carry out. But from personal experience, I know it is possible.

During my internship experience, I went above and beyond my expected role as a School Psychologist Intern. I successfully covered the ten domains throughout the school
year during practice. I took an active approach with tailoring my workload to provide comprehensive care to the students I worked with in schools. I also pushed the boundaries of my role as an advocate for children. I collaborated with outside organizations to advocate for the rights of LGBTQ youth. My endeavors included getting involved with the local chapter of GLSEN and educating school staff on the best practices of providing supportive services to LGBT youth in schools. In addition, I collaborated with university representatives to organize and conduct an outreach event for GSA members that promoted higher education and connected them with supportive adults and peers. Over the course of the year I learned how to become an advocate for children both inside and outside the school setting.

In my experience, I learned that advocacy can take many forms. It involves collaborating with others, working as a leader or team member, sharing knowledge with others, and standing up for the rights of vulnerable children who need help from adults. I recommend that other School Psychologist interns, students, or professionals go above and beyond their expected role(s). School Psychologists should take an active approach when defining their roles within the profession of School Psychology, and choose to incorporate the comprehensive model into practice, while also considering the ethical responsibilities of the profession. School Psychologists can advocate for children and not limit their efforts to the schools setting. Take advocacy work out into your community and across the country, if possible. There are far too many children living unfair lives that need our help. They need School Psychologists to be their advocates.
REFERENCES


