UNDERSTANDING HOW TO WORK WITH CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS
THROUGH THE USE OF CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION

By

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ABSTRACT

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The portfolio reflects my experience and abilities, as well as my knowledge and competency as an emerging school psychologist. In reading this project you will gain a better understanding of the varying responsibilities and roles of a professional in the field of school psychology. This project covers all 10 domains described by the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP), but it highlights the importance of working collaboratively with families, school staff, administrators, and other services providers in order to ensure the best service delivery for the students need. Furthermore, it provides suggestions and recommendations that are meant to help better service delivery, reduce some of the challenges presented in this profession, and improve the overall experience for students and their families.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the love, support, and encouragement from my lovely family, friends who are like family, professors, and mentors. I dedicate this project to my mother, Julia, and my father, Jose Angel, who instilled in me the work ethic and determination needed to follow my dreams. To my sisters; Rosi, Isabel, Mary, and Erika who supported my academic journey and have demonstrated unlimited support in my life. To my best friend, Esperanza, who is like a sister to me, for always pushing me out of my comfort zone. To my college friends who became my family, those of you who provided an endless amount of encouragement, embraced my flaws, and were my safety net whenever I would fall. To Angel, my rock, for believing in my ability to succeed and encouraging me to continue in the program. Lastly, to the professors and mentors who recognized my strengths, strengthened my weaknesses, and provided emotional and academic support in this long lasting academic and professional journey. It takes a village to raise a child, and a bigger village to create a School Psychologist, thank you All.
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SIGNIFICANCE, OBJECTIVE, AND METHODOLOGY

This portfolio project was submitted in order to demonstrate the knowledge and competency in the field of school psychology as part of the School Psychology Master’s program in Humboldt State University. The portfolio demonstrates knowledge and competency in the ten domains established by the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP). The necessary skills to be a competent, proficient, and effective school psychologist were obtained through coursework, fieldwork practicum and internship experience.

The experience obtained consisted of providing social, emotional, and academic support for students demonstrating difficulty. Services were provided at a Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 levels. The training obtained consisted of conducting multidisciplinary psychoeducational evaluations, triennial evaluations, and risk assessments. In addition, the training also consisted of implementing social, academic, and behavioral interventions. This was done through the completion of social skill groups, counseling, academically driven interventions, functional behavior assessments, and behavior intervention plans. Working with teachers, school staff, parents, and community non-public agencies developed my collaboration and consultation skills. As a developing school psychologist I was also able to apply my knowledge of atypical and typical development and behavior; and apply evidence-based practices when selecting
interventions and other tools. Furthermore, the training consisted of learning and adhering to legal procedures and ethical guidelines in the field of school psychology.

The primary focus of a School Psychologist in a school setting is to assist school age children thrive in school. The school psychologist role consists of helping improve academic achievement and support the diverse learning needs of students. This is done by conducting multidisciplinary assessments, conducting academic interventions and monitoring progress, and assisting students with behaviors challenges. In my district the Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic driven intervention services are somewhat different and we, the school psychologist, work in collaboration the intervention teacher, general education teachers, resource teachers, and other support staff. School Psychologists are also responsible for providing mental health services and promoting positive behavior. This is done through providing counseling services, making referrals to community based agencies, and by supporting and teaching skills that promote emotion regulation, self-management, problem solving skills, etc. in order to help children develop and maintain healthy relationship with peers and school staff. In my district we commonly contract with non-public agencies, have an outreach counselor in each of our schools, and may work in collaboration with agencies that provide push-in support for related services (i.e. behavioral agencies, big brother/big sister, CASA’s etc.). The school psychologists in my district primarily focused on working with students with Individualized Educational Plans.

Additionally, school psychologist are also responsible for creating and helping maintain a safe and positive school climate. This is done primarily through Tier 1
supports that help prevent bullying, violence, the identification of students who are at risks, providing crisis intervention, and by promoting fair and positive disciplinary actions. School Psychologists also help promote a strong community, school, and family partnership in order to provide wrap-around services. In my district, our role consists of helping provide and promote a positive school environment for all students, but our primary role is to make sure that the students who are part of the special education programs and those who demonstrate the need for additional services obtain access to supports in the school, community, and home setting.

My internship placement took place in an urban setting in a district of 20 schools and has approximately 17,000 students. The district serves a diverse group of students with varying developmental and cognitive abilities. The majority of the students in the district are Hispanic students for whom English is a second language. Due to agriculture and fieldwork labor a vast majority of the students we serve have parents that work in the fields. The majority of the students come from households that are lower social economic status and are presented with cultural, community, and family challenges. The assigned schools during my internship have similar demographics, but differ in the type of services that are provided within the school. Furthermore, it is important to note that some of my training took place in three other school sites.

The first school is an elementary school that has approximately 800 students. The students served are Hispanic students whose parents work in the agriculture industry. About 98 percent of students are Hispanic or Latino followed by Filipino (0.9 %), Caucasians (0.60%), and African American (0.30 %). Approximately 88% of the students
are English Learners, 98% come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and qualify for free or reduced meals, and about 4% have disabilities. Class sizes range from 25 to 30 students, and specialized academic instruction classes are capped at 28. Some of the students we work with are tri-lingual and they have been exposed to Mixteco or Triqui (dialects from different regions of Oaxaca, Mexico), Spanish, and English. The special education services provided on site include specialized academic instruction in the Resource Specialist Program, and speech and language therapy provided by the Speech and Language Pathologist. There are two reading intervention teachers and an outreach consultant. The school also has dance and music programs, a computer lab, and afterschool learning programs.

The second school I was assigned to in my internship has approximately 1000 students. About 90 percent of students are Hispanic or Latino followed by Caucasians (3.9%), Filipino (1.9%), Asian (1.4%), and African American (1.4%). Approximately 69% of the students are English Learners, 89% come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and qualify for free or reduced meals, and about 3% have disabilities. Class sizes range from 28 to 36 students, specialized academic instruction classes are capped at 28 and special education classes are capped at 15. The special education programs available at this school consists of the following: specialized academic instruction in the Resource Specialist Program, and speech and language therapy provided by two Speech and Language Pathologist, and two special education teachers who provide specific academic instruction for students in k-1st and 2-3rd grade. There is one reading
intervention teacher and an outreach counselor. This school also has a music class, a dance class, a computer lab, and afterschool programs.

Due to the population we serve the district has community liaisons who help with non-English speaking parents, district translators, district interpreters, and a family and community advocate who helps family with exceptionalities gain access to services. Furthermore, the district has very involved and supportive administrators. Based on the needs of the students and the services available it was determined that building strong relationships, and working in consultation and collaboration would be an essential skill as a developing school psychologist.

The portfolio products have an underlying focus on consultation and collaboration as this seemed to be an important role in my district and an essential skill to possess as an emerging school psychologist (McGivern, Subramanian, & Auster, 2008; Cole & Siegel, 2003). Consulting, collaborating, and communicating clearly is an essential component of service delivery (Thomas & Grimes, 2008). The problem-solving consultation model for service delivery guided the consultation approach taken in working with the teacher, school staff, administrators, and other service providers. This model delineates stages that typically occur during consultation: 1) Establishing relationships; 2) Problem Identification; 3) Problem Analysis; 4) Plan Implementation; and 5) Plan Evaluation (Kratochwill, T.R. 2008). The consultation and collaboration relationships were established in the interactions that took place in meetings held with the Student Study Teams, Individualized Educational Plan teams, and during classroom interactions. During this meetings and interactions the problem was identified and analyzed, we worked
collaboratively to come up with solutions, would designate different team members to implement or help with specific duties, and would re-meet or check-in to determine if the intervention seemed to be a good fit for the student/s.

The portfolio consists of 4 products that, in combination, demonstrate my ability as a competent school psychologist. The products submitted in an online portfolio were completed at different levels in my training. Furthermore, the products will not be described in detail as there is information that could lead to the identification of the child.

The first product submitted is a multidisciplinary psychoeducation evaluation that was completed for a diverse student. This product was completed for a new student in our district. He came from Mexico and spoke predominantly Spanish and had knowledge of basic English words (e.g., restroom, house, no). This was a challenging case as there was limited information available at the time of the assessment. The student attended school in Mexico on an inconsistent basis, had serious behavior issues, and received special education services. However, the aforementioned was not known when the assessment plan was signed. Upon arriving to our district he was placed in a general education class, where developmental and cognitive delays were noticed. The assessment was conducted by working in collaboration and in consultation with teachers, parents, district school staff, and school staff in Mexico. Records review, formal and informal interviews, and observations were conducted. Valid and fair assessments were selected and administered in his spoken language. The IEP team decided that a change of placement was appropriate for this student. He was then placed in a special education class where he is now learning and accessing his education.
An academic intervention was implemented for the same student described above. It was submitted as a separate product. The intervention focused on reading fluency and comprehension, high frequency words, English language development, learning emergency phrases, and letter names and sounds. The intervention provided was unconventional and did not follow a specific curriculum as the needs of this student were unique, and not common in our district. The intervention started in the reading intervention class where the reading intervention teacher, her aide, and I conducted the intervention. Due to inappropriate behavior displayed, the student was exited from the intervention group and the intervention and support was provided within the regular classroom environment. The Inside B by National Geographic/Hampton-Brown curriculum was used in the intervention class, and the California Treasures by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill curriculum was used in the special day class. It is important to note that based on consultation with school staff it was determined that piecing together a program for this student would work best for him. Based on data collected it was determined that the intervention was effective in increasing reading fluency and comprehension, sight words, and improved his ability to produce more functional communication in the classroom.

A social skills group for students who displayed attention difficulty, inappropriate vocalizations, emotional regulation struggles, and inappropriate social interactions was started due to a need presented in a general education classroom. This group is the focus of my third product. The group focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and teaching skills that support the students’ learning and social interactions with peers and
adults. The Second Step curriculum was selected because the program helps to prevent problem behaviors, peer rejection, impulsivity, and low academic achievement; and promotes positive school climate and can act as a preventative buffer by promoting SEL (http://www.cfchildren.org/second-step/social-emotional-learning.aspx). Furthermore, the mindfulness lessons were selected because mindfulness has been effective in improving attention, emotion regulation, and impulse control (Elder et al.; Frank Jennings, & Greenberg, 2013). Based on teacher report, the intervention appeared to be effective as the teacher reported that the students who participated in the intervention presented with less severe and disruptive behaviors in the classroom. The students have demonstrated the use of the skills taught. The students raise their hands before talking, sit still, look at the person talking, remain silent while others speak, and are able to express themselves appropriately with adults and their peers.

The last product submitted is a behavior intervention plan that was conducted for a student displaying moderate to serious behaviors that impeded his learning. The student was part of a special education classroom. His behaviors started as mild passive non-compliance, requests to access items that were not available, and some inappropriate vocalizations. After a short period the behaviors consisted of work refusal, refusal to use safe behavior in and outside of the classroom, use inappropriate words, acting aggressively towards peers and staff members, and elopement from the classroom and attempts to leave school. Data suggests that the Behavior Intervention Plan was effective in reducing task refusal, task avoidance, whining/crying, and disruptive behaviors. However, aggressive behaviors increased in severity and the student began to elope. On
some occasions he tried to escape the classroom. Despite the new behaviors expressed, this BIP led to the identification of more serious concerns that were addressed through a multidisciplinary psychoeducational assessment and a functional behavior assessment that resulted in change of placement and having a behavioral support aide.

The products described above are presented in greater detailed in a confidential portfolio that is available to authorized personnel on an as-needed basis. The products submitted are sanitized in order to protect the privacy and maintain the confidentiality of the student, their family, school staff, and district. The products will be available to my graduate committee members.
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
4. Data-based Decision Making and Accountability I
   Assessment/Intervention/Evaluation of Cognitive and Academic Skills
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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<tr>
<th>Portfolio Product Title</th>
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<td>1. Multidisciplinary Psychoeducational Initial Evaluation for a Culturally Diverse Student</td>
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<td>2. Behavior Intervention Plan</td>
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<td>3. English Language Development Reading Intervention</td>
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<td>4. Social Skills Group Intervention</td>
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project submitted is a representation of the skills learned as a school psychology intern and it demonstrates my knowledge as an emerging school psychologist. The work submitted shows my competency in the 10 domains established by the National Association of School Psychologist (NASP). The portfolio products have an underlying theme of consultation and collaboration as this is an essential skill in my district and in the school psychology profession. My experience consisted of evaluations and interventions that were largely based on improving students’ social and emotional development, behavioral functioning, and assisting their academic progress.

In working with a diverse group of students in the school setting I identified the need to work in collaboration with many professionals in order to provide wrap-around services. Furthermore, working with a predominantly Hispanic population, the majority of the students and their families being English language learners, highlighted the need for having bilingual school psychologist in schools. More importantly, it highlighted the importance of working in collaboration with the families, school staff, administrators, and community agencies and truly incorporating our non-English speaking parents to be an active member of the team. This experience also denoted the importance of having cultural sensitivity, and conducting oneself in a courteous and professional manner when working with families that come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I highly recommend that present and future school psychologist consider building strong relationships with other service providers in order to help ensure that there are
quality services being delivered to our students and their families. I also recommend for others to be an active team member during meetings as we are the experts in our field and our input can truthfully help guide and ensure academic success of the students we serve. Furthermore, I would like to see other school psychologists be culturally sensitive in their practice, to advocate for the educational and human rights of the child, and to advocate for parents and encourage active participation in the meetings. Lastly, I recommend others to work in collaboration with students and their parents in order to provide children and their families a positive school experience where they feel embraced and supported.
REFERENCES


