

# Trainers' Forum

Periodical of the Trainers of School Psychologists

## The Use of Interviews in School Psychology Admission Decisions

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### Abstract

*Trainers of school psychologists seek students who will be academically and clinically successful. In addition to standardized test scores and transcripts, programs consider qualitative variables when predicting future success. This study surveyed directors of training about factors considered when making admission decisions and the use and importance of interviews. The majority of programs included interviews as one part of an admissions process that used multiple methods and sources. Almost half of directors cited reliability and validity concerns with the use of interviews. A third collected data to evaluate the reliability and validity of the interviews they conduct. Study results may help school psychology graduate programs improve their admission practices and increase the quality of their graduates.*

### The Use of Interviews in School Psychology Admission Decisions

Because of the influence that future professionals will have on the lives of children and adults, a quality admissions process is especially important for school psychology graduate programs. Trainers of school psychologists seek students who have the potential not only for academic success but also clinical success. In their *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*, the National Association of School Psychologists (2000) requires training programs to apply “specific published criteria, both objective and qualitative,

for the assessment and admission of candidates to the program” (Standard 4.2). Further, these published criteria must include “respect for human diversity, communication skills, effective interpersonal relations, ethical responsibility, adaptability, and initiative/dependability” (Standard 4.2). Yet, evaluating applicants’ potential for success is not easy. The application selection criteria have limited reliability and validity, making the admission decision process complex and frequently stressful (Shupe & Tang, 2004).

### Admission Criteria

Standardized test scores such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and grade point average (GPA) are time honored institutions in undergraduate and graduate admission decisions. According to the College Board (2002), however, colleges and universities are increasingly considering qualitative variables – personal statements, letters of recommendation, and personal or contextual factors – when predicting the likelihood of students’ future academic success. Although qualitative variables are recognized as difficult to describe and measure, they are seen by psychology graduate faculty as adding critical information to the admissions process (Briehl & Wasieleski, 2004; Johnson & Campbell, 2004). The difficulty of assessment should not be an excuse not to attempt to consider student characteristics other than GPA and

standardized test scores (College Board, 2002). Admission decisions may seem better made when based on GPAs and test scores because of their objectivity of assignment and interpretation, however; this data only provides information about a subset of applicants’ skills, neglecting other important characteristics.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) interviewed 101 graduate faculty and staff from 31 graduate programs at 20 institutions about their admission processes and use of the GRE (Walpole, Burton, Kanyi, & Jackenthal, 2002). Although most decisions were based on review of applicants’ GPA, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and personal statements, many programs also used interviews to gain a better sense of students’ commitment to learning, motiva-

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tion, curiosity, work ethic, etc. Assessment of qualitative variables through the use of interviews may lead to concern because of the perception that interviews have poor validity and contribute little to the admissions decision making process. Yet, research on the use of particular types of interviews for personnel hiring provides support for the benefits of their appropriate use in making selection decisions.

### *Interviews and Admission Decisions*

Applicant interview questions and procedures can vary considerably in terms of structure, standardization, type of questions, and scoring criteria. Interviews are often unstructured, without a consistent set of questions or formal scoring criteria. Structured interviews use standardized questions and processes for each interviewee. Two variations of the structured interview format are behavioral interviews and situational interviews. The behavioral interview format asks interviewees to think about a personal experience with a specific situation and describe their actions in this past situation. The interviewee must describe his or her personal situation, actions, and the results of these actions. With situational interviews, interviewees are presented with a specific situation and are asked to describe what they would likely do in such a situation. Both situational and behavioral interview formats evaluate responses according to a rubric or behaviorally anchored rating scale.

Interviews as they are traditionally used – unstructured questions with no formal means of administration or scoring – have proven to have low reliability and validity (Harris, 1989). Traditional interviews are subject to multiple flaws, including: (a) consistently evaluating all respondents either too positively or too negatively; (b) allowing one or two positive aspects of an interview to overshadow and outshine other information that is learned; (c) comparing the current interviewee, either negatively or favorably, with the previous interviewee; and (d) being influenced by “first impressions” and disregarding information gained during the remainder of the interview (Berman, 1997).

Research supports behavioral interview-

ing as a valid predictor of future job performance (Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995). A study using behavioral interviews to hire pulp mill workers determined the validity was .56 using supervisor performance ratings as the criterion (Campion, Campion & Hudson, 1994). Another study compared the use of traditional and behavioral interviews in the hiring of sales employees, using supervisor ratings and sales dollars as the criterion. The validity of the traditional interview was .08 with supervisor ratings as the criterion and .05 with sales dollars as the criterion. In contrast, the validity of the behavioral interview was .48 with supervisor ratings as the criterion and .61 with sales dollars as the criterion (Orpen, 1985).

There is also evidence supporting the contribution of behavioral interviews to graduate school admission decisions. Stolte, Scheer, and Robinson (2003), evaluated the predictive value of applicants' behavioral interviews and essays for success in a doctoral pharmacy program, with performance on a final portfolio and GPA as the criterion. The interview was weakly but significantly correlated with both criterions ( $r=.222$  with the portfolio and  $r=.291$  with GPA). When using criterion such as ratings of clinical skills or portfolios, which may reflect more of the interpersonal and communication skills measured through interview, applicant interviews predict as much or more variance than GRE scores (Piercy et al., 1995).

Although the correlations between the behavioral interview and GPA and portfolio performance found by Stolte et al. (2003) may seem low, they are actually consistent with the predictive validity of the GRE and undergraduate GPA for success in graduate school. In their meta-analysis of the predictive validity of the GRE, Kuncel, Hezlett, and Ones (2001) found validity coefficients of .23 between GRE-V and graduate GPA, .21 between GRE-Q and graduate GPA, and .31 between GRE subject tests and GPA. Using faculty ratings of student performance as the criterion, Kuncel et

al. found validity coefficients of .23 with GRE-V, .25 with GRE-Q, and .30 with the GRE subject tests. The predictive validity of undergraduate GPA was consistent with that of the GRE, with a correlation of .28 between undergraduate and graduate GPA and a correlation of .25 between undergraduate GPA and faculty rating.

Behavioral interviews that ask about past experience are preferable to traditional interviews because they reduce the impact of personal responses to a candidate, make it more difficult for a candidate to have "style" over "substance," and provide evidence of how the candidate behaved in an actual situation, allowing for interviewers to assess their context specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Also, because the behavioral interview is given much scrutiny in the business and the organizational and applied psychology literatures, research-based suggestions for improving their reliable and valid use is available, something that cannot currently be said about other widely used and valued qualitative methods of predicting graduate school success – letters of recommendation and personal goal statements (Briehl & Wasieleski, 2004).

Careful and considerate use of interviews as a component in a holistic admissions decision-making process could allow school psychology graduate programs to predict more effectively the academic and clinical success of applicants. This research sought to answer the following questions: What factors do school psychology graduate faculty consider when making admission decisions? How do school psychology graduate faculty use interviews in their admission decision making process? How much importance is placed on the use of interviews in the admission decision making process?

### **Method Procedure**

In April 2005, cover letters, surveys, and self-addressed, stamped envelopes were mailed to the directors of all NASP

and APA approved school psychology programs. Three weeks later a second cover letter, survey, and return envelope were sent to those who had not yet responded to the first mailing. Two \$25.00 gift certificates for the NASP bookstore were raffled off to those who completed and returned the survey. Surveys were sent to 151 program directors.

### **Participating Programs**

Completed surveys were returned by 74 of the 151 program directors, for a 49% return rate. Twenty-one (28.4%) of the 74 programs responding offered doctoral and nondoctoral degrees, 11 (14.9%) offered only a doctoral degree, and 42 (56.8%) offered only a nondoctoral degree. The following doctoral degrees were represented in our sample: Ph.D. ( $n=25$ ), Ed.D. ( $n = 3$ ), and Psy.D. ( $n = 3$ ). A wide range of nondoctoral degrees was represented in the sample: Ed.S. ( $n=33$ ), M.A. ( $n = 17$ ), M.S. ( $n = 16$ ), M.Ed ( $n = 9$ ), SSP ( $n = 5$ ), CAGS ( $n = 4$ ), CAS ( $n = 3$ ), M.S.Ed. ( $n = 3$ ), Psy.S. ( $n = 2$ ), and 6<sup>th</sup> year professional certificate ( $n = 1$ ).

A majority of doctoral and nondoctoral programs reported more than 25 complete applications in a typical year (68.8% and 74.6%, respectively). There was a tendency for doctoral programs to admit fewer students than nondoctoral programs. Among doctoral programs, 81% admitted 10 or fewer students per year and among nondoctoral programs, 49% admitted 10 or fewer students per year. One-third of the nondoctoral programs admitted between 11 and 15 new students per year.

### **Survey**

A survey was created specifically for the present study. Items on the survey were developed from a review of admission requirements on school psychology graduate program websites, the NASP training guidelines, and the literature on the use interviews for personnel hiring.

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The survey consisted of a total of twelve questions about the program and the student application process. All respondents were asked to reply to the following items: (a) degree(s) offered, (b) number of applications per year, (c) number of students admitted per year, (d) application materials used for admissions decisions, and (e) helpfulness of each type of application material. If the program faculty did not use interviews in the student selection process, the director responded to a question about why interviews were not used, and the survey was complete.

If the program director indicated that applicant interviews were used in the selection process, six additional survey items and a table requiring specific information about the interview process were completed. The additional items included (a) type of information gained from application interview, (b) type of information gained *solely* from interview, (c) how much weight is given to different materials when making admissions deci-

sions, (d) whether the program had concerns about reliability of interview, (e) whether the program had concerns about the validity of interviews, and (f) whether the program faculty collected data to assess the reliability and reliability of the admissions process. In addition, each respondent for a program in which interviews were used completed a table. The table described and listed four types of interviews: unstructured, structured, situational, and behavioral. For each of the interview types, program directors indicated who conducted the interviews, how responses were evaluated, whether the interview was conducted with applicants alone or in groups, and whether the program collected information on interrater reliability.

### **Results** ***Application Materials Required for Admission.***

Program directors completed separate checklists for doctoral and nondoctoral programs to indicate the application

materials required for admission. Required materials did not differ significantly for doctoral and nondoctoral programs ( $\chi^2(9, N = 73) = 3.14, ns$ ). Materials required by over 90% of all responding programs included GRE Verbal and Quantitative scores, transcripts, recommendations, and a completed application form. The majority of both levels of program required an interview (65% and 73% for doctoral and nondoctoral programs, respectively). About half of the doctoral and nondoctoral programs required the GRE Written test and nearly half required submission of a writing sample. Relatively few programs required a GRE Subject test or specified an optional interview. Additional materials listed by respondents included a vita ( $n = 2$ ), a description of related work or professional experience ( $n = 2$ ), or an additional standardized assessment ( $n = 5$ ). Unique requirements were listed by one program that required School Psychology Praxis scores before admis-

*Table 1. Application Materials Required by Doctoral and Nondoctoral Programs*

	Doctoral (N = 32)		Nondoctoral (N = 63)	
	n	%	n	%
GRE Verbal and Quantitative	32	100	58	92
Letters of Recommendation	32	100	62	98
Application	31	97	63	100
Transcripts	31	97	63	100
Goal Statement	30	94	55	87
Interview (required)	24	75	40	63
GRE Written	19	59	28	44
Writing Sample	15	47	29	46
Interview (recommended)	5	16	6	6
GRE Subject	5	16	2	3

sion to a doctoral program, and another program that required the 16PF. One program director reported conducting a two-day admissions screening course. Required application materials are listed in Table 1.

After indicating which application materials were required, program directors completed 11 items rating the helpfulness of the materials used by the program to make admissions decisions. Helpfulness was rated on a scale of 1 (*not helpful*) to 4 (*very helpful*). Interview, transcripts, goal statements, GRE Verbal and Quantitative scores, and letters of recommendation were generally considered *helpful* to *very helpful*, with interview receiving the highest helpfulness rating. GRE Writing, application, English language proficiency, and GRE Subject materials were generally considered *somewhat helpful* to *helpful*. Mean helpfulness ratings are presented in Table 2.

*Use of Interviews in the Admission Decision-Making Process*

Fifty-eight program directors provided information about the use of interviews. Sixteen of the 74 total programs did not use interviews in their admissions process and did not complete this section. The remainder of the results include only the 58 programs that use interviews.

Respondents completed checklists to indicate which types of information they gained through interviewing applicants and which types of information could be gained *only* from interview. Program directors also completed a table to report specific information about the types of interviews used and the procedures for conducting those interviews. Finally, respondents completed questions concerning the reliability and validity of interviewing for admissions decisions.

*Information gained from interviews.*

A majority of the 58 program directors

indicated that interviews provided information about communication skills, interpersonal skills, personal presentation, social skills, the applicant’s experience with school psychology, and his or her knowledge of the field. About half of the respondents indicated that they gained knowledge about an applicant’s respect for others, respect for human diversity, and critical thinking skills. A majority of program directors indicated that communication skills, interpersonal skills, personal presentation, social skills, and respect for others could be assessed *only* through interview. Specific information about knowledge gained from interviews is found in Table 3.

*Types of interviews.* Forty-five (77.6%) of the directors whose programs interview applicants reported conducting unstructured interviews, 39 (67.2%) conducted structured interviews, 15

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*Table 2. Helpfulness of Required Application Materials*

	n	Mean Helpfulness Rating	SD
Application	73	2.86	.933
Letters of Recommendation	72	3.10	.772
Transcripts	71	3.65	.537
GRE Verbal	68	3.22	.688
GRE Quantitative	67	3.16	.751
Goal Statement	65	3.45	.751
Interview (required)	56	3.71	.594
GRE Written	40	2.93	.888
Writing Sample	38	3.37	.786
English Language Proficiency	28	2.93	.900
GRE Subject	11	2.18	.982

(29.5%) conducted situational interviews, and 11 (19%) conducted behavioral interviews. Fifty percent of the directors of programs that conducted interviews reported conducting more than one type of interview and eight program directors (13.8%) reported that they conducted all four types. Separate chi square analyses were conducted to investigate any differences among interview types in persons interviewing, type of scoring, individual or group interviews, and evaluation of interrater reliability. Cells were collapsed for persons interviewing to reflect interviewing by faculty only or by faculty and students to correct for too many cells with an expected frequency of less than 5. Chi square values for persons interviewing, individual or group interviews, and evaluation of interrater reliability were not significant ( $\chi^2(6, N = 109) = 5.51, ns.$ ,  $\chi^2(6, N = 107) = 6.84, ns.$ , and  $\chi^2(3, N = 100) = 0.60, ns.$ , respectively). Cells were also collapsed

for method of scoring to reflect holistic and nonholistic methods (analytic or rubric). A significant chi square value was obtained ( $\chi^2(3, N = 104) = 8.58, p < .04$ ), indicating that scoring method differed for different interview types. Therefore, the remainder of the analyses concerning how interviews are conducted were combined across interview types except for the method of scoring.

**Who conducts interviews?** The majority of interviews were conducted by two or more faculty (53.2%) or faculty and students (32.1%). Fewer interviews were conducted by one faculty member (11.0%) or students alone (3.7%). Students alone conducted interviews in only four programs, and all of these interviews were unstructured.

**Are interviews conducted with individuals or groups of applicants?** The majority of interviews were conducted with individual applicants (60.7%). However, several programs reported con-

ducting interviews with a group of applicants (19.6%) or with both individuals and groups (19.6%).

**How are interview responses evaluated?** Across all interview types, most interviews were evaluated holistically (56.7%), although many programs also reported using a rating scale or rubric (37.5%). Relatively few programs reported evaluating interviews analytically (5.8%). Unstructured interviews were more likely than behavioral interviews to be evaluated holistically and were less likely to be evaluated using other methods (analytic scoring or behaviorally anchored rubrics/rating scale). Seventy percent of the behavioral interviews but only 28% of the unstructured interviews utilized an analytic or behaviorally anchored scoring system.

**Do programs check interrater reliability, and are reliability and validity issues a concern for programs?** About half of the directors of programs that con-

Table 3. Knowledge Gained From Interviews

	Programs Reporting Knowledge Gained		Programs Reporting Knowledge Gained	
	from Interview		Only from Interview	
	n	%	n	%
Communication Skills	58	100.0	48	82.5
Interpersonal Skills	56	96.6	53	91.4
Personal Presentation	53	91.4	49	84.5
Social Skills	49	84.5	46	79.3
Experience with School Psychology	45	77.6	NA*	NA*
Knowledge of Field of School Psychology	39	67.2	NA*	NA*
Respect for Others	33	56.9	31	53.4
Respect for Human Diversity	29	50	23	39.7
Critical Thinking Skills	25	43.1	12	20.7

\* Not included in the checklist for “Knowledge Gained Only from Interview.”

ducted interviews reported concerns about reliability and validity (50% and 47%, respectively). Sixty-six percent of the programs indicated that they collect interrater reliability data when asked in the context of specific interview types. However, on a separate item asking whether the program collected data to evaluate the reliability of interviews, only 27 (36%) of the 58 programs responded in the affirmative. Thirty-four percent of the programs indicated that they collected validity data.

### *Importance Placed on the Use of Interviews*

Program directors rated the weight given types of admissions information used in their program from 1 (*no weight*) to 4 (*heavily weighted*). The types of information considered and ratings are listed in Table 4. All types of information were rated between 3 (*some weight*) and 4 (*heavily weighted*) on the scale. Interviews were rated most highly, followed closely by undergraduate GPA. The least emphasis was placed on English language proficiency and GRE Writing.

### **Discussion**

Trainers of future psychologists have long recognized the importance of evaluating the moral character of graduate students and future practitioners. At the Boulder Conference in 1949, participants “called for consideration of the personality types and traits of students best suited for training, as well as for more intentional selection of students” (Johnson & Campbell, 2004, p. 49). Yet, determining how best to evaluate applicants’ characteristics in these non-academic domains remains a challenge. Although graduate programs typically use applicant interviews, letters of recommendations, and/or goal statements to assess qualitative variables such as interpersonal skills or ethical responsibility, concerns about their reliability and validity often adds to the stress of making admission decisions (Shupe & Tang, 2004). The purpose of this study was to identify factors school psychology faculty consider important when making admission decisions and to describe the role of interviews in the decision making process.

The majority of school psychology programs in this study use interviews with applicants as part of their decision making process, relying heavily on the results. According to program directors, important information about an applicant’s communication skills, interpersonal skills, personal presentation, social skills, and respect for others can *only* be gained through an interview. The majority of programs use structured interview in the decision-making process, but fewer than half use an interview that includes analytic or behaviorally-anchored scoring criteria.

Use of any significant predictor that explains unique variance increases the probability of making correct decisions (Kuncel et al., 2001). Just as school psychologists use a variety of technically sound tools and multiple sources of information to increase the validity of decisions about student needs, training programs must utilize multiple sources and types of information to increase validity of admissions decisions. All of

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*Table 4. Weight Given Types of Information When Making Admissions Decisions*

Type of Information	n	Mean	(SD)
Interview	57	3.68	(.459)
Undergraduate GPA	56	3.59	(.532)
Goal Statement	51	3.37	(.578)
GRE Verbal	52	3.38	(.595)
Graduate GPA	49	3.24	(.693)
Writing Sample	34	3.29	(.629)
GRE Quantitative	54	3.24	(.699)
Letter of Recommendation	58	3.22	(.622)
English Language Proficiency	26	3.08	(.628)
GRE Writing	34	3.06	(.600)

the programs participating in this survey observe this principle, using multiple methods of data collection and sources of information.

It is also incumbent on school psychology faculty to evaluate the reliability and validity of their admissions materials and methods. This is a daunting task, considering the number of information sources used in most programs; the limited number of students admitted each year; and the restricted range in academic and clinical outcomes. Still, over a third of the respondents in this study collect reliability and validity data for their admissions process. For measures such as the GRE, test publishers and considerable research provide information that helps to support their use, although this does not absolve programs from collecting data specific to their selection process. Far less evidence is available to support the use of interviews, personal statements, writing samples, and letters of recommendation. This is a concern, because interviews are widely used and frequently given the most weight in the decision-making process. Although evidence is accumulating for the validity of structured interviews, particularly situational and behavioral methods, validity issues should be of particular concern for the 19 programs in this study that use *only* unstructured interview, as there appears to be little empirical support for the predictive value of this method (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997).

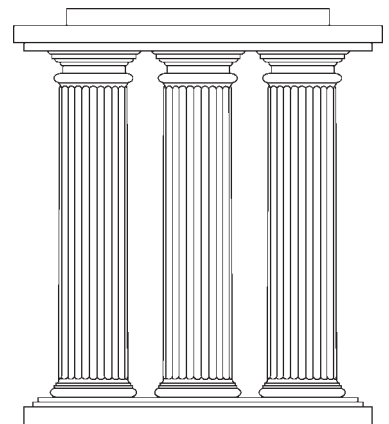
### Conclusions

Trainers of school psychologists have an obligation to prospective students and to consumers of school psychological services to select applicants with a high probability of academic and clinical success. Many of the programs in this study include validated interview methods as one source of information in an admissions process using multiple methods and multiple sources of data collection. Nearly half of the program directors are cognizant of reliability and validity issues related to the use of interview, and a third collect reliability and validity evidence. Despite these promising find-

ings, many school psychology programs could benefit from giving additional consideration to the predictive value of all admissions criteria used in the selection process.

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# Streamlining Psychoeducational Reports

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of using tables and bullets in psychoeducational reports on teacher comprehension and satisfaction ( $N = 87$ ). Four different report formats were employed and ANOVA was used to test for significant differences between comprehension and satisfaction among the four formats. Results indicated a main effect for bullets on comprehension but no effect for bullets on satisfaction. There was no effect for tables on either comprehension or satisfaction.

## Streamlining Psychoeducational Reports

Most school psychologists, by the nature of their job demands, generate numerous psychoeducational reports every year documenting their findings, impressions, and recommendations. Sattler (2001) explained that the goal of report writing “. . . is to use clear and precise language to write a well-integrated and logical report that will be meaningful to the

reader and relevant to the child and his or her problems.” (p. 729). Further, Fagan and Wise (2000) implored psychologists to “. . . find the most effective ways to synthesize all of the data. . .” in order to write helpful reports (p. 127). Similarly, Ownby (1987) noted that reports should be written to address the needs of the referral source in a method that can be understood. From an ethical standpoint, NASP ethical principles (IV.D.1.a and IV.D.3; NASP, 2001) implore school psychologists to adequately interpret information and to prepare reports that will be helpful for the recipient. These principles further suggest that checklist reports that only indicate scores with no recommendations are seldom useful. Despite the best efforts of school psychologists to write relevant and meaningful reports, consumers have been critical of written reports because of problems with omitting supporting data, using poor expressions (e.g., jargon), and differentiating test data from other data, among others (Sattler, 2001). A review of the

literature related to report comprehension and satisfaction revealed that most studies involved clinical psychology reports and their recipients, such as social workers and psychiatrists. Moreover, these studies were largely outdated and produced inconsistent and variable results depending upon the profession of the consumer (Cuadra & Albaugh, 1956; Isett & Roszowski, 1979; Moore, Boblitt, & Wildman, 1968; Tallent & Reiss, 1959a, 1959b, 1959c).

Research involving teachers (Wiese, Bush, Newman, Benes, & Witt, 1986) found that the use of jargon in reports decreased teacher understanding of the report but not satisfaction or perception of the educational relevance of the report. These contradictory findings were hypothesized to be due to teacher reluctance to read the reports, the teacher's ability to read the reports despite the level of jargon (due

*“Streamlining...” continued on page 10*

## President's Message

Robyn Hess, University of Northern Colorado

It's that time of year again. From hot, humid days to cool breezy nights...swimming practice to soccer practice...sunning at the beach to delivering lectures at each of our esteemed universities...laying out the cards for bridge to laying out the object assembly pieces of the WISC-IV...developing empirically based interventions for yours and/or the neighbors' children when they consult you for “free” advice to teaching about developing empirically based interventions to our school psychology students. Yes, Autumn and the school year is here. By now we have probably, maybe not successfully, transitioned into another school year. But I believe we all look forward to a successful year while at the same time constantly thinking about how we can make things better. Such is the life of an academician.

As I enter my 19th year in academia, I find myself pondering just how much school psychology, the discipline, has advanced. It is truly the best of times but also a time when we are beholden to so many entities that influ-

ence our training...NASP, APA, IDEA 2004, No Child Left Behind, State requirements, University Rules, etc. Just mention completing the self study for NASP approval and you will hear an audible groan from a trainer! But seriously, as trainers we are faced with what sometimes seems a daunting task of training students to develop a myriad of skills to address the diverse problems that are present in our schools today. I continually marvel at how well we all do it.

TSP is committed to addressing the many concerns and issues that most trainers have in common. Consistent with the TSP mission, the board is working hard to provide professional growth opportunities to school psychology faculty that fosters high quality training in programs. We are listening to your issues and concerns and diligently trying to address them through our annual TSP meeting at NASP, through The Forum and on our website. Education is under enormous pressure to help all children succeed, which is as it should be. I believe that has always been our

goal in school psychology. As a discipline, we have a great deal to contribute in helping students succeed academically and behaviorally.

I look forward to the annual convention in NYC in 2007. The Board is already hard at work planning for what we believe will be an exciting TSP meeting. Consistent with the theme of the conference we will have an agenda that is “Responsive”. I hope all of you will put the conference on your agenda and plan to participate in a stimulating couple of days. So let's move forward with a new year, new students, and new challenges. I wish all my fellow trainers the best of luck and a successful exciting and productive year.

*Quote for the day:*

*“Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants.”*

*Author: John W. Gardner*

to specialized training), or the general quality of the reports themselves. None of these hypotheses were explored further. Anecdotally, school psychology interns and practitioners have reported teacher's reluctance to read lengthy reports, preferring instead to simply read the report summary. No research was found that specifically examined the use of tables or bullets (which reduces length and jargon) in psychological report writing. Since some of the criticisms of psychological reports included the lack of supporting data (e.g., tables) and the use of jargon, further study of these issues with teachers via use of alternative report formats is warranted. From a general standpoint, further study of teacher comprehension of and satisfaction with psychoeducational reports is needed since report writing continues to be a significant part of the job for school psychologists. School psychologists devote about half their time to psychoeducational assessment (see Fagan & Wise, 2000), yet they are trained for, are sought for, and desire broader roles (e.g., prevention, intervention, consultation). Similarly, given relatively recent changes in the federal law in how LD should be diagnosed in the schools (IDEIA, 2004; Federal Register, 2006), school psychologists will likely take a pivotal role in response-to-intervention (RTI) design, implementation, and monitoring. However, as part of a tiered service delivery system, a comprehensive evaluation will remain the gateway to receiving specially designed instruction—the time needed to pursue a leadership role in RTI as well as in consultation and counseling, will in all likelihood need to come from the report writing role. Thus, the challenge of balancing efficiency with comprehensiveness and utility will remain. The purpose of the current research study was to expand previous research into teacher comprehension of and satisfaction with psychoeducational reports generated by school psychologists. Specifically, this study investigated the influence of using tables and bullets in psychoeducational reports upon teacher comprehension and satisfaction.

## Method

### Participants

Participants included 78 certified teachers returning to school to work on advanced degrees and 9 senior level student teachers. Level of experience did not statistically influence comprehension or satisfaction.

## Design and Procedure

The four different report formats were generated from fictitious historical and psychoeducational test data obtained from archives. ANOVA was used to test for significant differences between scores on a measure of comprehension and on a measure of satisfaction (see appendices for these measures). The independent variables were report format: a) a report with bulleted information only (see appendix), b) a report with bullets and tables, c) a report with text only, and d) a report with text and tables. A report with both text and bullets was not included because it was not considered a common report style (whereas a report with text and tables is more common). The data for all four report formats were identical—bullets were taken directly from the text formatted report. The reading level for the reports was 12.0.

## Instruments

The dependent variables were comprehension and satisfaction as measured by a 15-item multiple choice comprehension scale ( $\alpha = .67$ ) and a 10-item Likert-type measure of satisfaction ( $\alpha = .87$ ), both of which were created specifically for this study. No additional information regarding the technical adequacy of these measures was available.

## Results

Results of the ANOVA are provided in Table 1. Results indicated a significant main effect for comprehension using bullets ( $F(1,79) = 27.75, p < .001$ ) in that comprehension scores were significantly higher for the format using bullets only. There was no main effect for satisfaction ( $F(1,83) = 0.00, p = .977$ ). The influence of tables was insignificant. These findings suggest that teachers retain more information from psychoeducational reports when bullets are used and that the use of tables does not influence either comprehension or satisfaction.

## Discussion

Although report formats and the type of obtained data vary considerably in the field of school psychology (e.g., Ross-Reynolds, 1990; Tallent, 1993) school psychologists should be able to streamline (i.e., shorten) their written reports by using bullets and omitting tables in reports without compromising teacher satisfaction. In the very least, psychoeducational test data can be provided as an attached appendix. This should address teacher's tendency to

read the summaries. These findings support other research (e.g., Wiese et al. 1986) in that teacher satisfaction with reports is rather stable, despite the level of technical complexity in the report (e.g., tables).

Consistent with Sattler's suggestion (2001), school psychologists are encouraged to employ evaluation forms/questionnaires in order to develop and compose the most effective and time sensitive report possible. Sample forms are available through Sattler (2001) Table 21-7 and in the appendix of this paper although some practitioners may wish to create their own assessment forms.

In summary, this research focused upon the use of more "traditional" school psychology reports described by Sattler (2001). As a result, the findings may not apply to psychoeducational reports that employ different formats (e.g., checklists, memo styles). Similarly, this research focused upon teacher comprehension and satisfaction, not upon parents, counselors, or clients. Therefore, the findings may not generalize to other consumer groups.

If it can be assumed that comprehensible reports are more useful to teachers than those that are not, then school psychologists should consider using bulleted psychoeducational reports in lieu of the traditional, lengthier reports. Practitioners are, however, encouraged to monitor teacher satisfaction. Shorter reports save time, particularly since over 50% of the school psychologists' time is spent in providing diagnostic and psychoeducational services, which includes report writing (see Fagan & Wise, 2000). Ideally, this savings in time should help school psychologists provide a wider range of professional services.

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**Table 1**

**Mean Comprehension and Satisfaction Scores by Report Format**

	<u>Comprehension<sup>b</sup></u>			<u>Satisfaction<sup>c</sup></u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Bullets Only	19	12.47 <sup>a</sup>	3.32	21	24.00	5.09
Bullets With Tables	22	12.50	2.13	23	23.61	5.00
Text Only	19	9.58 <sup>a</sup>	2.39	20	23.25	4.58
Text With Tables	23	9.65	2.01	23	24.35	3.90

a = Means with same superscript are significantly different.  $F(1,79) = 27.75, p < .001$

b = The mean represents the number correct out of 15 (items 4, 6, and 18 were omitted)

c = The mean represents the sum of the 10 items

A version of this paper was presented at the NASP annual conference in Dallas, TX in 2004. .

*“Streamlining...” continued on page 12*

**APPENDICES**  
**(Comprehension Measure)**  
**Psychological Report Information Form**

Based on the information in the psychological report you have just read, please answer the following questions. Choose only one response for each item. Please do the best you can.

1. Who requested this psychological evaluation?
  - child's parent(s)
  - child's teacher
  - child's physician
  - child's therapist
2. What was the main reason the psychological evaluation was requested?
  - due to a history of learning disability
  - due to a history of attention problems
  - due to a history of behavior problems
  - due to a history of multiple disabilities
3. With whom does the child currently live?
  - his mother
  - his father
  - his grandparents
  - his foster parents
4. According to school records, the child's behavior
  - has been consistently disruptive and inappropriate
  - has been historically disruptive, but has improved in the past year
  - has been historically compliant, but has become disruptive in the past year
  - has been consistently compliant
5. The child's mental health treatment history includes
  - current medication treatment
  - current psychotherapy treatment
  - both current medication and psychotherapy treatment
  - none of the above
6. During the evaluation, the child's compliance with requests was
  - exemplary, he was consistently compliant with requests
  - average, he complied within a reasonable time frame to most requests
  - variable, sometimes he complied while at other times, he refused
  - consistently poor, refusing to participate in most tasks
7. During the evaluation, the child's attention and concentration were
  - consistently above average, no problems noted
  - variable, he was often distracted by items in the room and sounds outside of the room
- variable, he required repetition of questions and instructions
- consistently problematic, unable to focus for more than a few seconds at a time
8. The child's overall intelligence is
  - well below average
  - low average
  - average
  - above average
  - well above average
9. The child's verbal reasoning is:
  - well below average
  - low average
  - average
  - above average
  - well above average
10. The child's non-verbal reasoning is:
  - well below average
  - low average
  - average
  - above average
  - well above average
11. The child's reading skills are
  - well below average
  - low average
  - average
  - above average
  - well above average
12. The child's math skills are
  - well below average
  - low average
  - average
  - above average
  - well above average
13. The child's written language skills are
  - well below average
  - low average
  - average
  - above average
  - well above average
14. Reports of the child's behavior from the child's guardian and teachers
  - were generally consistent
  - were generally consistent; with one teacher reporting many more behavior problems
  - were not consistent; with the guardians reporting many more behavior problems
  - were not consistent; with the various raters reporting a variety of conflicting information
15. With respect to his own behavior problems, the child reported
  - no significant problems
  - significant aggressive and disruptive behavior
  - significant anxiety and low self-esteem
  - significant problems in multiple domains, including the above-mentioned domains
16. Based on the evaluation, a recommendation about the child's educational placement suggests that
  - the child should no longer be considered learning or behavior disordered
  - the child should no longer be considered learning disordered but should retain assistance for students with behavioral disorders
  - the child should no longer be considered behavior disordered but should retain assistance for children with learning disorders
  - the child should retain assistance for students with both learning and behavioral disorders
17. Based on the evaluation, a recommendation about managing the child's behavior is
  - to use incentives to motivate him to persist in the face of difficult tasks
  - to use punishment, such as time-out, for displays of inappropriate behavior
  - to use a combination of incentives and punishment
  - to allow the family to develop and deliver consequences for his behavior at school
18. Based on the evaluation, a recommendation was made that the child should
  - attend an after-school program
  - participate in extra-curricular activities
  - be placed on homebound education
  - be admitted to a psychiatric treatment facility

Note: Items 4, 6, and 18 were omitted to improve reliability.

**(Satisfaction Measure)**  
**Psychological Report Information Form**

We want to know how helpful psychological reports are to those who read them. Please help us evaluate the quality of our report by answering the following questions. Check only one response for each item.

1. How well did the report answer the referral question?  
 Very well  
 Somewhat well  
 Somewhat poorly  
 Very poorly
2. How clear and easily-understood was the language used in the report?  
 Very clear  
 Mostly clear  
 Somewhat confusing  
 Very confusing
3. How relevant was the history provided about the client?  
 Very relevant  
 Mostly relevant  
 Somewhat irrelevant  
 Very irrelevant
4. In terms of understanding this child, how helpful was the information about the child's intelligence?  
 Very helpful  
 Mostly helpful  
 Not very helpful  
 Not at all helpful
5. In terms of understanding this child, how helpful was information about the child's academic skills?  
 Very helpful  
 Mostly helpful  
 Not very helpful  
 Not at all helpful
6. In terms of understanding this child, how helpful was information about the child's emotional and behavioral characteristics?  
 Very helpful  
 Mostly helpful  
 Not very helpful  
 Not at all helpful
7. How helpful were the recommendations about how to teach the child?  
 Very helpful  
 Mostly helpful  
 Not very helpful  
 Not at all helpful
8. How helpful were the recommendations about how to deal with the child's behavior?  
 Very helpful  
 Mostly helpful  
 Not very helpful  
 Not at all helpful
9. Overall, how useful was the content of the report?  
 Very useful  
 Mostly useful  
 Not very useful  
 Not at all useful
10. Overall, how complete was the content of the report?  
 Very complete  
 Mostly complete  
 Somewhat incomplete  
 Very incomplete

*"Streamlining..." continued on page 14*

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**Submission Deadlines**

Trainer's Forum is published four times (September, December, March and May) a year. Employment notices, announcements, and advertisements (including display ads) are due by the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication.

## BULLETED REPORT PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL EVALUATION (Identifying information is fictitious)

**Name:** Martin Mistler

**School:** Elvira Elementary

**Grade:** 4th

**Chronological Age:** 10 years, 6 mos

### Reason for Referral

- Referred by Mr. Jackie Wann, Special Education teacher
- Legal guardian and director disagreed with results of previous testing
- Reason for referral: To determine if Martin continues to meet criteria for Multiple Disabilities

### Relevant Background Information

- History of family disruption and abuse
- Resides with maternal grandparents
- No contact with biological father; little contact with biological mother
- Four different schools; six different school changes
- Retained in 2nd grade
- Receiving services for behavior and learning disorders since August 2000
- History of disruptive behaviors, refusal, and argumentative
- Behavior has improved over the past year
- Taking 15 mg of Ritalin daily and .5 mg of Catapres daily
- Enjoys basketball

### Behavior Observations (during testing)

- Initially presented as quiet and withdrawn
- Refused to cooperate after 30 minutes
- Grandmother sat in to assist in behavior management
- Low frustration tolerance
- Little effort
- Good attention and concentration
- Word finding problems
- Results are best obtainable under the circumstances

### Intellectual Functioning

- Overall Intelligence is well below average
- Verbal Comprehension is well below average
- Verbal Reasoning is well below average
- Perceptual Organization is average
- Non-verbal Reasoning is average
- Freedom From Distractibility is average
- Processing Speed is average

### Memory and Attention

- Average to below average range; consistent with expectations

### Academic Achievement

- Reading skills were “average” and better than expected compared to IQ
- Reading comprehension was better than word decoding
- Mathematics and writing skills were well below average and generally consistent with IQ
- No significant discrepancy between IQ and academic functioning found

### Behavioral Performance

- Consistency among 4 of the 5 raters; no evidence of aggressiveness or hostility in most raters
- Ms. Pearson, teacher, reported significant problems in all areas of behavioral functioning
- Grandparents reported problems in withdrawal and anxiety
- Adequate interpersonal and adaptive skills noted by 4 of 5 raters
- Child denied behavior problems on self-report measures

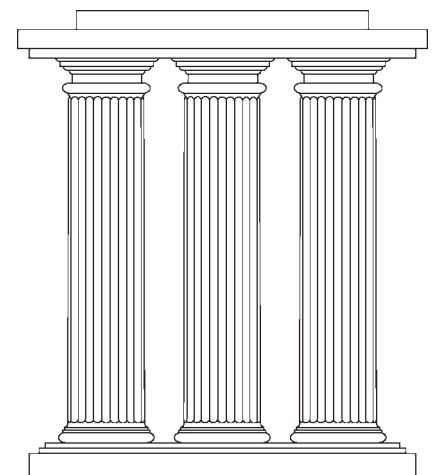
### Summary

- Martin continues to meet the diagnostic criteria for LD and Emotional Behavioral Disability because of severe ADHD. He has significant deficits in language functioning, math, and writing.
- One teacher reported aggressiveness, argumentativeness, and anxiety.
- His grandparents reported problems in anxiety.
- Average range performance was found in non-verbal thinking and visual problem solving, reading skills, and adaptive functioning.

### Recommendations

- Maintain Martin’s current educational diagnoses of Multiple Disabilities (i.e., Specific Learning Disabilities, Emotional/Behavioral Disability, Other Health Impaired)
- Academic instruction should be provided on his current functioning level using small group and individual instruction, and incorporate visual imagery and hands-on instruction
- Martin responds best to: a high degree of structure; clear expectations; models for appropriate behavior; frequent reinforcement for acceptable

- behavior; immediate consequences for inappropriate behavior; frequent encouragement
- Continued use of the time-out area of the classroom
- Relaxation training, if modeled, may also be helpful
- Daily, or at least weekly, notes home which summarizes his behavior for the day/week and which indicates if he has met the behavior objective for the time period
- Reinforcement (e.g., access to privileges) and punishment (e.g., removal of privileges) should be provided by both home and school and focus upon the same goals
- Social skills training, role-playing/role-reversal, and modeling
- In the event that his medication regimen is increased or reduced, the school could assist in the process by continuing to carefully monitoring specific behaviors throughout the day and providing the physician with a log of daily behaviors
- A psychiatric or pediatric consult should be considered to review the probability of depression and the efficacy of appropriate medication
- Participation in sports or some type of organized extracurricular activity (e.g., Cub Scouts, Karate)



# Field-Based Experience in Light of Changing Demographics

Fred Jay Krieg, Ph.D.\*; Joyce Meikamp, Ed.D.\*\*; Stephen L. O'Keefe, Ph.D.\*\*\*; Sandra S. Stroebel, Ph.D.\*\*\*\*  
Marshall University Graduate College

## Abstract

*Due to changing demographics of students admitted to the School Psychology Training Program at Marshall University Graduate College, it has become imperative to significantly expand field experiences beginning in the first semester to address the lack of educational background of most of the students entering the program. This organized sequence of field experiences continues throughout the program, parallel to classroom instruction, affording opportunities for students to put theory into practice and to interact with professionals in the field, while also allowing for exposure to the public school environment. The collaborative field experience sequence provides the students with early and continuous feedback on their personal fit with schools as organizations and culminates with the summer enrichment program.*

The demographics of students admitted to the School Psychology Training Program at Marshall University Graduate College have changed (Krieg, 2005). According to a five year study, students are younger; have less work experience and most importantly, less educational background. As a result, field experiences in the School Psychology program have been significantly expanded so that beginning in the first semester of professional course work students are exposed to the public school environment. These field experiences continue throughout the training program, parallel to classroom instruction culminating with the Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program. Supervised field experience is essential to demonstrate attainment of competencies required to be a successful school psychologist and must be an integrated experience for students in the School Psychology Program. The purpose of the field experience is to provide an opportunity for students to apply theory into practice and to interact with professionals in the field to ground their learning and aid in their development as emerging school psychologists.

In the first semester students choose a mentor and an adoptive school with guidance from a faculty advisor. In the second year they complete practica under supervision of a site supervisor and the evaluative review of a school psychology faculty member. Just prior

to the NASP required internship year, students are immersed in an intensive summer experience designed to apply the data-based decision problem solving model within a collaborative, interdisciplinary, consultative approach that embraces both direct and indirect service delivery.

## The Mentorship Program

Students are required to have a School Psychologist mentor, a practicing school psychologist who has volunteered to serve as a mentor for a school psychology graduate student in their geographic area. This individual serves as a professional guide and colleague to help the student become socialized to the role of the school psychologist during his or her years in the program. In order to facilitate this relationship, several courses provide the students structured opportunities to interact with their mentor through participant observation, interviewing, shadowing, attending professional meetings, and analyzing schools as organizations. It is required that all students have a volunteer mentor by the end of the first semester. Students are encouraged to speak with practicing school psychologists in their area and to select someone to serve in this capacity. The program faculty is available to help students identify qualified mentors.

A letter of invitation is extended and becomes the signed agreement defining the relationship between the student, the mentor and the MUGC School Psychology Program. An additional agreement creates the adoptive school program, which legalizes the student's participation in activities with their mentor and the youth and families they serve. The adoptive school agrees to serve as a "home" for the student so that the student can learn how schools are organized and operate. This school serves as a site for completing observations, practice assessments, and other class assignments. Students have the opportunity to interact with children from diverse backgrounds and a variety of handicapping conditions. Students usually elect to complete Practicum I and II within their adoptive school. Often students have access to more than one school since their mentor serves as a

school psychologist to several schools. Through the mentor/adoptive school program, students learn the written and unwritten rules of working in a school; how to communicate with teachers and other educational professionals and have the opportunity to apply lessons learned to real life public school situations.

## Practicum I and II: School-based Practice

Two practicum experiences occur during the second professional year, which include, a wide spectrum of clinical experiences. These experiences typically occur at the student's adoptive school under the supervision of their mentor. The purpose of these two Practicum courses is to provide an opportunity for students to practice emerging skills in a school setting under the supervision of Practicum faculty. Students completing Practicum I (SPSY 738) and Practicum II (SPSY 739) register for three hours of practicum credit for each course which are completed one day a week (or two half days) at the student's adopted school with the school psychologist mentor serving as a site supervisor. The Practicum Instructor provides primary supervision of all practicum requirements which include observation, assessments using standardized instruments, functional behavior assessments, curriculum based assessments, consultation, and tutoring. The students are expected to attend four Practicum Seminars held on Saturdays during the semester.

Alternatively, students may elect to complete the practica requirements at MUGC's summer lab school due to work or home schedule conflicts. If students make this choice, they are expected to attend the summer lab school daily for five weeks. A practicing school psychologist is on site to serve the mentorship role while providing feedback on assignments. Evaluative feedback and re-teaching is also provided by program faculty who are on site. No student is permitted to fulfill all their field requirements in the summer program. As a result each student has experiences in several settings, including the opportunity to participate in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program as part of our middle school experience.

*"Field-Based..." continued on page 16*

### Practicum III: Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program

The final Practicum III (SPSY 740) occurs at the beginning of the student's third professional year and requires students to attend MUGC's summer lab school daily for five weeks. Students provide a full range of school psychological services in a multidisciplinary training setting supervised directly by the School Psychology program faculty. This Practicum serves as the culminating experience for the students prior to the internship. The expectation for students is that they will apply their learning to practice by collaborating with other educational professionals in a summer school experience. This capstone experience allows the students to demonstrate through practice the competencies and professional demeanor of a school psychologist and prepares them for the internship year that is to follow.

Designed to provide multidisciplinary training, the MUGC Summer Enrichment Program affords a unique learning opportunity for both graduate students and children in grades K-12. The setting provides a clinical field-based experience for graduate students seeking certification or licensure in special education, school counseling, school psychology, writing or reading. Education and support personnel completing graduate training participate in the practicum for 6 weeks, 4 days per week from 7:30-1:30.

Classrooms contain multi-age, multi-ability students along with full inclusion of students with special needs. All mild handicapping conditions are represented. The students are racially representative of the demographics in the state. Instruction is activity based with emphasis placed on best practices. As a direct result, children enrolled in the program have an opportunity to become actively involved in the learning process through numerous hands-on activities. Each classroom is staffed with a team of graduate students comprised of each of the disciplines: school psychology, school counseling, special education, reading, and writing. Thus, graduate students have an opportunity to experience best practices within a collaborative model, which is central to the philosophy of the program.

As a fully inclusive program, the children are recruited in a variety of ways and reflect diverse reasons for attending. Typically participants are recruited through school referral, parent contact, or public and private clinics. While some learners attend to extend their skills or simply because they enjoy being in a

school setting, others seek to offset the usual summer vacation loss of skills. Children, who are enrolled due to school failure, frequently have contracts with their home schools making promotion contingent on summer school participation or educational gain.

In addition, socially maladaptive children attend to decrease their phobic reaction to educational settings and group instruction. These referrals are usually from attendance workers. Moreover, developmentally young children are there seeking an age-appropriate school experience with normally developing role models. Also included are children with a variety of medical conditions placed by their parents so they might have summer learning experiences in a protective setting with full accommodation for medical differences. Students with behavior problems are enrolled in the program to enable psychologists and teachers to observe and develop appropriate behavior management plans. Racially diverse students are recruited through principals of low income and racially mixed schools. While the fee for the program is \$100, students who qualify for free or reduced lunches are offered scholarships as an incentive for attendance. All children are provided free breakfast and lunch through the USDA subsidized meal program.

During the field experience training occurs in three stages. At the initial three hour orientation meeting, Stage One, graduate students are given an overview of program philosophy, goals, and objectives. For the first time grade level teams meet and form to begin working together. Typically six teams of 9-10 graduate students are formed with each team having representatives from all five disciplines. Prior to the meeting, college supervisors assign members to the teams based on experience, strengths, and training needs. Traditionally two-thirds of the graduate students have public school experience. Students are assigned to an age/grade level which compliments and extends their previous experiences. In addition to an overview of the program, students participate in initial team building activities. Students leave the Stage One orientation session with discipline specific assignments, as well as an overview of the program and the realization that team members must collaborate across disciplines.

Four weeks later graduate students return to begin Stage Two of the field experience and to further develop the framework of a functioning team. This four half day long portion of the training further extends team building. Graduate students are provided in-service

training in collaboration, teambuilding, diagnostic teaching of reading through short cycle assessment and curriculum-based assessment. Working as teams they design curriculum, a behavior management plan, and program evaluation. All students participate in evaluating the effectiveness of the program, the impact of the program on school children, and the satisfaction of the parent consumers. Team members develop lesson plans emerging from projects organized around an overall unifying theme. Thus, tools taught in the in-service sessions are immediately applied in team meetings.

The next five weeks of the program encompass Stage Three of the field-experience. Having prepared for the arrival of the children, team members share responsibility for program and child outcomes. During this phase, graduate students have an opportunity to apply skills and competencies in a shared learning environment. In addition to discipline specific assignments, each team keeps a professional portfolio detailing experiences.

Literacy is at the center of the curriculum, evidenced by an uninterrupted 90 minute reading block each day. All team members, instructional and support are involved in teaching using short cycle assessment, running reading records, leveled reading materials, and weekly regrouping of children based on skill level and instructional needs. Instruction and planning are based on the learning needs of the children. Team members use assessment information to differentiate instructional activities which provide project oriented, hands-on, discovery learning opportunities. Thus, graduate students participate in determining the scope and depth of the material the children are expected to learn.

Faculty and site supervisors provide observation, documentation of competency completion, and back-up throughout the program. Site supervisors are certified professionals who have demonstrated excellence and expertise as service providers in their respective disciplines. They model competencies and critique the performance of the graduate students in their assigned disciplines. Students are provided with daily feedback on their performance through competency based observation logs that are completed by the faculty and students together. In addition, each day the faculty meets with the students to discuss any concerns and provide consultation to resolve problems. At the conclusion of each day, all students and faculty attend a group supervision session involving an interpersonal skill build-

ing experience led by program faculty where students analyze their activities as school psychologists and team members. The overall process serves to enhance students' group counseling skills.

### Year Long Internship

The final field experience requires a commitment to a school system for a full academic year. This paid internship consists of 1200 hours (12 credit hours), which is required for certification as a school psychologist and must meet stringent criteria specified by the program and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). This experience provides the intern with the opportunity to integrate the knowledge and skills learned in the program and to apply them to a real world setting, with the support and guidance of both an experienced field supervisor and a university supervisor.

### Contributions of the Field Experience Track

Offering a field experience sequence in parallel to the academic coursework provides the students with early and continuous feedback on their personal fit with schools as organizations. Students who have not had any experience in schools are able to become acclimated to the school culture under the supervision of faculty. This increased field experience has served to meet the need created by the change from students who were experienced educators seeking a second career to young students who have recently graduated. Students have the opportunity to practice the skills which are developed in classes in a field setting at the same time they are learning the skill. An organized sequence of field experiences begins with participant observation, progresses to application and skill practice and culminates with attainment. This attainment is validated first in the University setting and then in a school setting during the year long internship.

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**Table 1**  
*Fast Track Course Sequence for the MUGC School Psychology Training Program*

SUMMER	FALL	SPRING
First Year		
	<u>SPSY 601</u> Professional Competence I – Schools as Systems	<u>SPSY 618</u> Direct Service Delivery I
	<u>SPSY 621</u> Data-based Decision Making I	<u>SPSY 616</u> Child Development
	<u>SPSY 674</u> Biological Bases of School Psychology	<u>SPSY 675</u> Psychological Foundations of School Psychology
Second Year		
<u>SPSY 603</u> Professional Competence II	<u>SPSY 622</u> Data-based Decision Making II	<u>SPSY 624</u> Data-based Decision-Making III
<u>SPSY 617</u> Indirect Service Delivery I	<u>SPSY 619</u> Direct Service Delivery II	<u>SPSY 620</u> Indirect Service Delivery II
	<u>SPSY 738</u> Practicum I	<u>SPSY 739</u> Practicum II
Third Year		
<u>SPSY 740</u> Practicum III	<u>SPSY 745</u> Internship	<u>SPSY 745</u> Internship
<u>SPSY 750/SPSY 751</u> Thesis/Program Evaluation		

Marshall University encourages other training programs to consider this approach. Feedback about our graduates confirms our impression of a more fully prepared program product. Representatives of Towson State University visited the program in 2005 and will be replicating this summer laboratory as The Pride Program during 2006. The field experience sequence demands a different style of teaching and openness to learning. School Psychology faculty members have been significantly informed about the effectiveness of their classroom instruction through this feedback loop. All of our university and public school partners benefit from this collaborative approach.

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