



Preparing Students for
Applied Learning:
Assessment of Mentor
Training



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Background

- Applied learning has become an important part of education for social work majors over the last 20 years.
- In 2014 almost 80% of social work programs identified they begin with applied learning in the early part of the program (Schelbe, Petracchi & Weaver, 2014).
- ONU, as well as many other programs, require an applied learning block in SOWK 200 Introduction to Social Work.
- Little empirical research about service-learning in social work education (Schelbe, Petracchi & Weaver, 2014).

Benefits of Early Applied Learning Opportunities

- Assists students in deciding if Social Work is where they desire to study and practice
- Promotes reflection
- Builds skills, knowledge and values
- Increases awareness of social justice
- Increases cultural awareness and understanding diversity

Challenges of Early Applied Learning Opportunities

- Challenges on the field can deter students from wanting to go into social work
- Limited supervision/accountability
- Limited training/preparation of students
- Time available/transportation

Rationale for Current Study

- Students in SOWK 200 Introduction to Social Work have been completing their first Applied Learning block in Kennedy Middle Grade School for several years.
- Last semester, with new administrators at the school, they felt the SW students were not benefiting the students
- Because the main reason was related to the students not being prepared, the process began to train the students as mentors (same training offered to community mentors)

Study

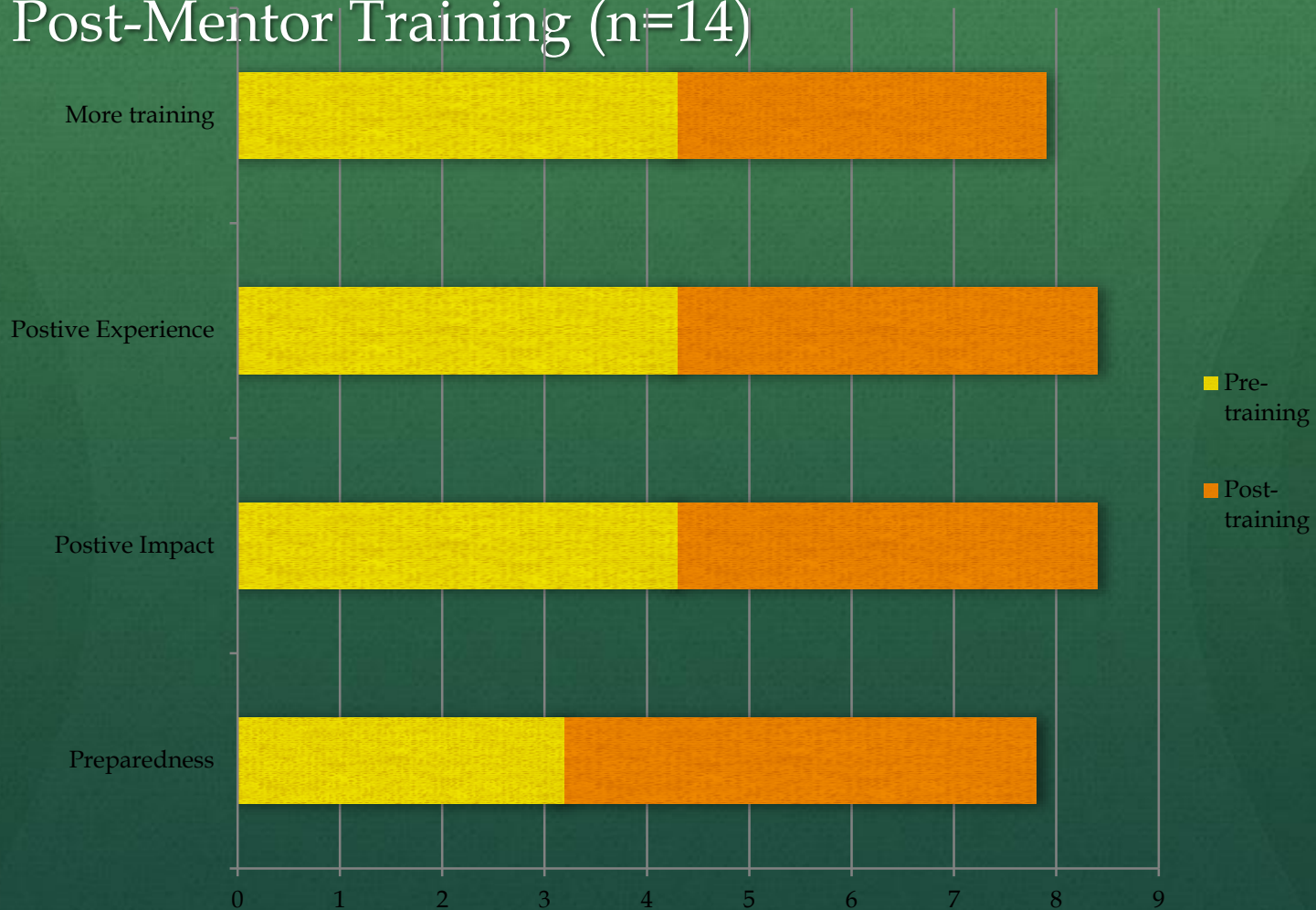
- This semester a 2-hour mentor training was provided by Deb Tamaz, MSW in the first week of classes
- Students were assigned to one of two schools: King Middle Grade (Kankakee) and Liberty Intermediate School (Bourbonnais)
- At Liberty students were paired with mentees.
- At King students were paired with a teacher.

Study

- A satisfaction survey was developed for both students and teachers/administrators
- IRB approval gained
- Surveys were distributed to students, teachers/administrators from last semester
- Preliminary surveys were given to students from this semester
- Qualitative data was collected in class discussion for previous students (and will be collected this semester)

Results - Students

- Pre-Mentor Training (n=9)
- Post-Mentor Training (n=14)



Results-Students

- PRE-TRAINING

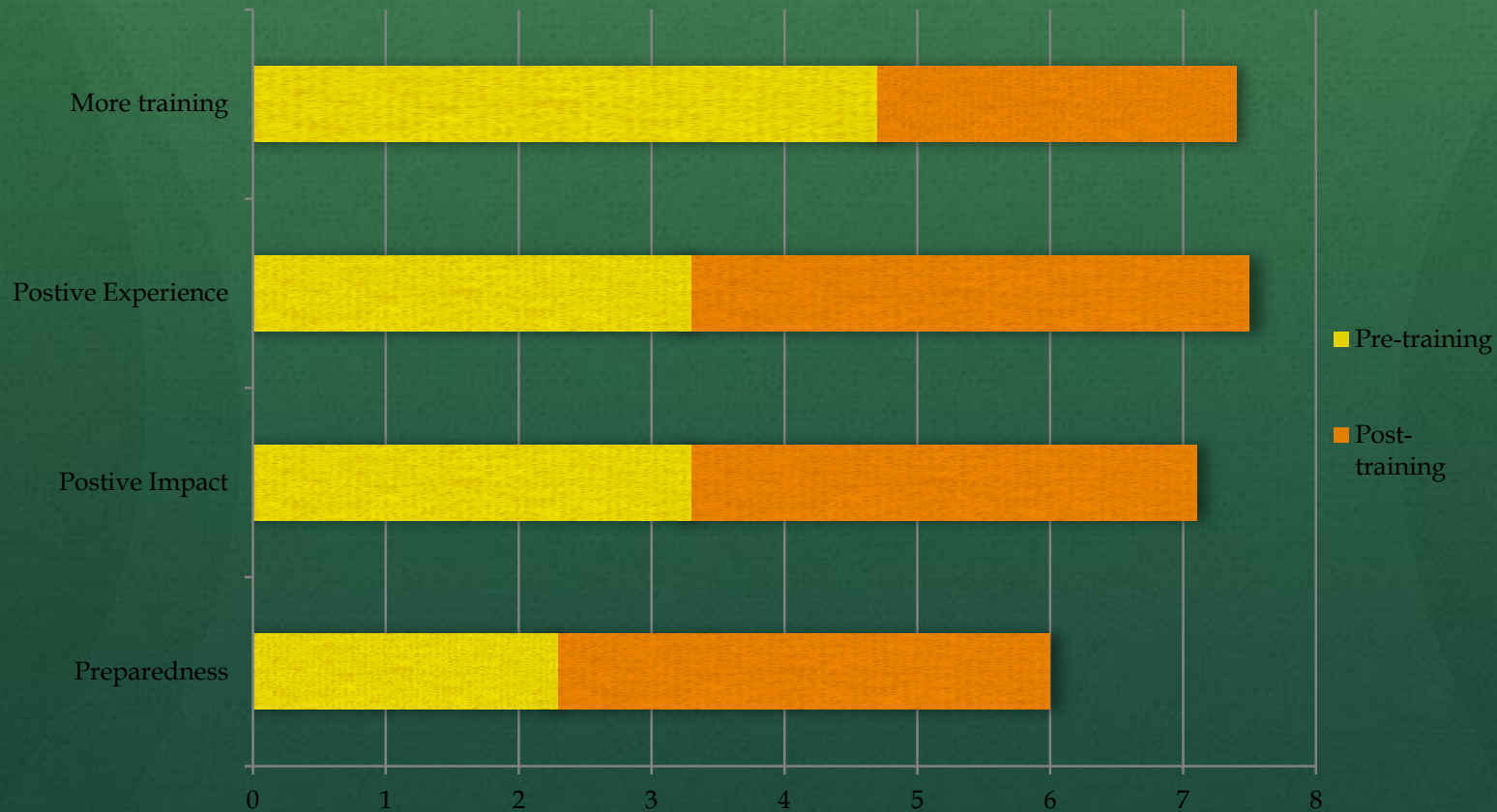
- I wish we had been given examples and scenarios of what to expect
- Teachers didn't always seem they wanted us there
- I didn't feel like I had any preparation for mentoring students
- I didn't know what to say to the students in the beginning
- Felt like I was thrown into the experience

- POST-TRAINING

- I learned more than I ever could in a classroom about issues faced by children
- It has been wonderful.
- I've learned so much
- This should only be for social work majors.
- Experience was less than expected
- Communication with school is a challenge

Results- Teachers

- Pre-Mentor Training (n=3)
- Post-Mentor Training (n=14)



Results-Teachers

- PRE-TRAINING

- Mentors were great but it became a distraction for the classroom.
- Mentors were great, but the program needs more structure and the mentors need more training.
- Mentors had great attitudes but they lacked training: responding to abuse/neglect disclosures, when to involve staff, etc.
- Would be better to pair mentor/mentee

- POST-TRAINING

- Students loved having their mentor come meet with them.
- More communication between the mentor and teacher would be helpful

Recommendations

- Train students as mentors as this semester but add case scenarios for how to respond to different issues mentees might be facing.
- Pair mentors with 4-5 mentees in different schools so students can develop relationships and work more intentionally with mentee (similar to community mentoring program).
- Develop a form to fill out after each mentor session to help communicate with teacher and help mentor be more intentional.

References

- Schelbe, L., Petracchi, H. E., & Weaver, A. (2014). Benefits and Challenges of Service-Learning in Baccalaureate Social Work Programs. *Journal Of Teaching In Social Work, 34*(5), 480-495.