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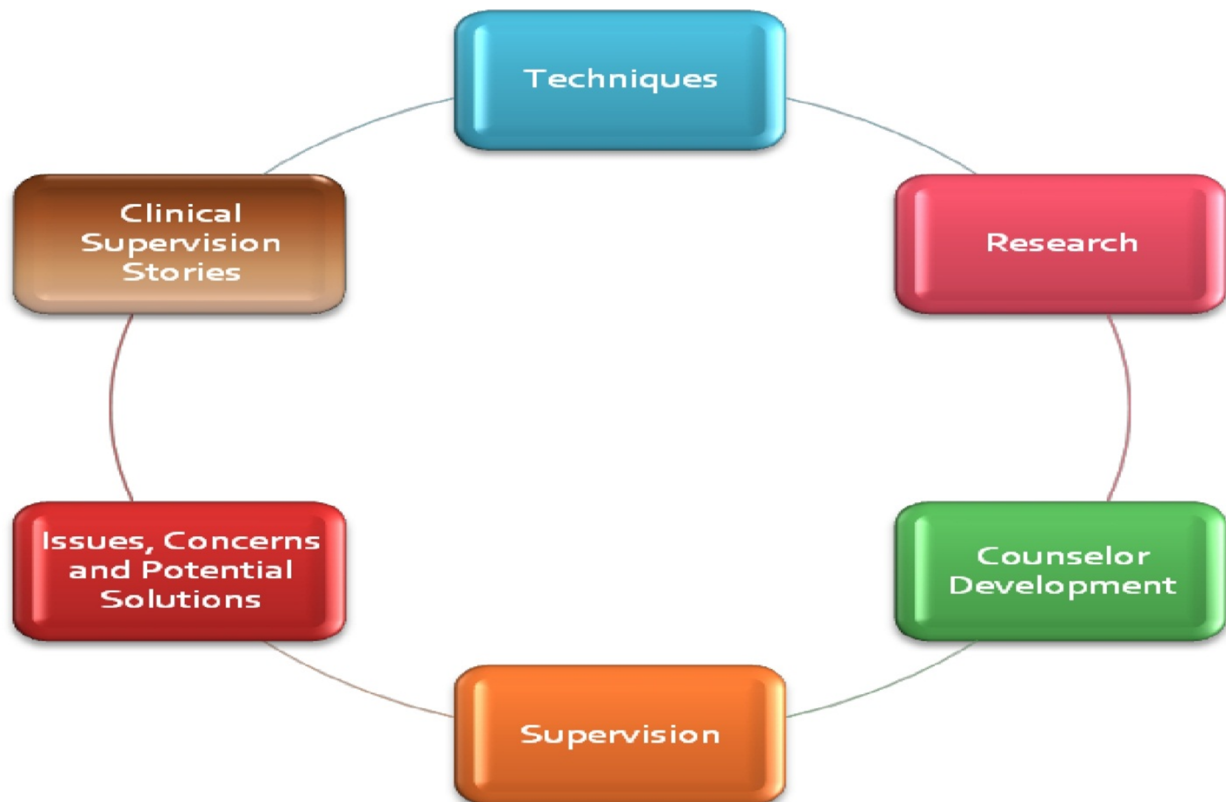

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The mission of the *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision* is to provide a high quality platform for research, theory and practices of counselor educators, counselor supervisors and professional counselors. We believe the journal chronicles current issues, concerns and potential solutions that enable counselors to continue to grow and develop as practitioners, educators and human beings. The journal publishes high-quality articles that have undergone a thorough and extensive blind peer-review.

There are six general categories that help focus the content of the journal.

Research. These articles focus on research (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) in counselor preparation, professional development, supervision, and professional practice.

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Issues, Concerns and Potential Solutions. These articles identify and discuss significant issues facing the field of professional counseling with particular focus on issues in counselor preparation, professional development, and supervision. Exploration of these topics should include elaboration of the concerns as well as an examination of potential remedies or effective responses to the issues.

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Dr. Edina Renfro- Michel
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The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

October 2011 Volume 3 Number 2

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Edina Renfro-Michel and Larry D. Burlew

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Editorial

In our second edition as co-editors, we continued to support the mission of the journal. We did this by examining the types of articles that can be submitted for inclusion: research, techniques, counselor development, supervision issues, and clinical supervisor's stories. We have included articles focusing on research and practice in counselor education.

The articles by O'Halloran et al. and Geltner et al. focus on research in areas related to counselor development, while Graham et al. studied perceptions of school counselors. O'Halloran et al. examine the use of learning contracts as an effective means to help students individualize their learning and create more investment in their work. Geltner et al. determine counselor education curriculum components for school counselors to increase effectiveness in group counseling and classroom guidance. Graham et al. surveyed principals' perceptions of the roles of school counselors, comparing principals with and without training on the ASCA model with surprising results.

The articles by Kelly and McDonald focus on the practice of counselor education. Kelly discusses comprehensive assessment procedures developed from a gate-keeping perspective based on individual student learning as well as meeting the NCATE and CACREP assessment requirements. McDonald provides counselor educators with practical information to increase student knowledge and correct usage of APA, using a sample document to demonstrate specific examples. As a service to the profession, McDonald has provided the sample paper as a separate PDF for use with students.

We thank all of our dedicated reviewers who responded quickly to everything asked of them. We also thank our wonderful Editorial Assistants; Jennifer Midura, Ken Ryerson, and Jessica Spera, who spend endless hours organizing the process, working with reviewers and authors, editing articles, and putting everything together. We also thank the NARACES Board for giving us the opportunity to continue to share practical research and knowledge with our members by appointing us as co-editors of the Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision.

Edina Renfro-Michel, Co-editor
Larry D. Burlew, Co-editor

Using Learning Contracts in the Counselor Education Classroom

Kim C. O'Halloran & Megan E. Delaney

Adult students in counselor education programs bring diverse experiences to the classroom. In order to attract and retain students, institutions are exploring multiple delivery systems of instruction. The following study provides an overview of learning styles and characteristics of adult graduate students and explores the degree to which learning contracts may be a beneficial tool to positively impact student learning in the counselor education classroom. Surveys were administered pre- and post-participation in a master's level counselor education classroom regarding the use of a learning contract. Results indicated that participants found the learning contract to be useful and allowed the students to be more self-directed and connected with their work.

Keywords: Counselor preparation, graduate students, learning, assessment, adult students, learning contracts, learning styles

Today's master's degree students in counseling programs represent a broad spectrum of individuals with diverse experiences. These students vary in terms of work and life experience, family and cultural differences, socio-economic status as well as time attendance status (e.g. full-time/part-time). In addition, students have a wide range of other commitments besides a graduate program such as career and/or family obligations. The adult students may also differ from younger, traditional students in their motivation, self-direction, intent and opinion of learning (Cranton, 2006). Such students may benefit from diverse forms of classroom instruction, especially techniques that involve more accountability and collaboration (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005; Hoshmand, 2004). In order to attract and retain graduate students, some universities and instructors are embracing change in the methods of course delivery (Sarasin, 1999). One particular method is use of a learning contract, which is a written agreement between an instructor and student regarding the learning outcomes and assessment of a course (Boak, 1998). This mixed-method study explores the degree to which learning contracts may be a beneficial tool in the counselor education classroom to address the learning styles and characteristics of adult graduate students.

Adult Learners and Graduate Education

Graduate counselor education programs aim to prepare graduates for state and national certification and state licensure. Programs adhere to standards defined by the profession and often by accreditation organizations. The graduate program curriculum is defined by courses and learning objectives that typically incorporate a variety of skills, activities, and types of learning. Counselor education programs especially incorporate holistic, multicultural

pedagogy that aims to develop empathetic and capable practitioners who are also critical thinkers (Hoshmand, 2004). Students in counseling programs must exhibit the ability to develop their own professional and personal learning goals as well as the ability to assess their own development (Bennett, 2002). They must be prepared for self-directed learning throughout their careers, and be dedicated to ongoing personal growth and development.

Learning Styles

A graduate counselor education classroom is comprised of many different individuals who bring to that classroom and the university their own objectives and goals for learning and their unique learning styles (Renfro-Michel, O'Halloran & Delaney, 2010). In order to effectively instruct adult students, it is important for the instructor to have a general understanding of different learning styles (Stage, Muller, Kinzie & Simmons, 1998). According to Sarasin (1999), learning style is "a certain specified pattern of behavior and/or performance according to which the individual approaches a learning experience, a way in which the individual takes in new information and develops new skills and the process by which the individual retains new information or new skills" (p.1). A student's learning style has a direct effect on their attentiveness and engagement in class as well as their ability to master and retain content (Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2006). In order to reach students who may have differences in learning styles, instructors may need to provide a variety of teaching delivery methods.

Adult students tend to be motivated and have the ability to self-direct their learning (Byer, 2002; Cranton, 2006). For example, adult students are more likely to participate in class, determine their own goals, and monitor their progress throughout the course. In addition, students who share their knowledge and experience with other students reinforce the subjects discussed in the classroom (Cranton, 2006). Adult students thrive by being actively involved in their curriculum and course design. Consequently, classroom structure is changing to become more collaborative (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005; Gnuse, 2004).

Pedagogical Approaches

In order to encourage the enrollment of adult students, institutions are examining ways to modify instructional and delivery methods (Mandell & Herman, 2008). The nature of graduate education has become even more competitive, requiring colleges and universities to offer instruction that is perceived as convenient to adult students. Institutions of higher education are modifying programs, diversifying meeting times, providing distance learning, and amending instructional methods to attract and accommodate adult students to their campuses. As a result, institutions that provide more flexibility and non-traditional methods of instruction may gain a competitive edge over those who do not. Furthermore, an instructor who understands adult learners and makes accommodations within his or her lesson plan and/or curriculum or classroom structure can empower and motivate students, as well as have a direct impact on the student's commitment to learning (Gnuse, 2004).

Roles and responsibilities for instructors are also changing. Instructors adapting this form of adult education are identified as a facilitator in the learning process (Stage et al., 1998). Rather than just presenting material, an adult educator and/or facilitator helps develop the classroom process and procedures alongside the students. In addition, this facilitator assists

students in recognizing their learning styles and needs. In this way, students and instructors work collaboratively to achieve mutually established learning goals.

Collaborative teaching assumes that each participant has the ability to make valuable contributions and decisions for their learning needs (Stage et al., 1998). Working with their instructors, students analyze their needs and establish their learning objectives into goals for the course. Instructors then work with students to find the resources they need to achieve their goals, support the student throughout the process, and help develop an evaluation tool to monitor and assess progress and achievement (Knowles, 1986). For an adult learner in counselor education, this may be helping that student identify goals that are applicable for their area of research or appropriate for their current or future occupation. Learning contracts are one example of a tool that facilitates the goals of collaborative teaching.

Learning Contracts

One effective way of organizing the needs, goals, objectives, assignments, and evaluation of a course in a collaborative way is through the development of a learning contract. A learning contract is a written agreement between an instructor and student regarding the learning outcomes and assessment of a course (Boak, 1998). Lemieux (2001) defined a learning contract as "an agreement between the instructor and student that establishes the nature of the relationship, the objectives of the learning experience, the activities to accomplish the learning objectives, and the means by which the educational effort will be evaluated" (p. 265). The learning contract encourages an open dialogue between instructor and student and shared responsibility in the learning process (Marsden & Luczkowski, 2005). The instructor's role becomes more facilitative and supportive rather than authoritarian.

Instructors using learning contracts have a great potential for helping students become more self-directed, motivated, and confident (Bearle, 1986; Caffarella & Caffarella, 1986). Learning contracts are used as a strategy to motivate adult students in identifying their needs and desired outcomes for the course. As self-directed learners, students have the opportunity to choose activities, assignments, responsibilities, and resources to support their learning process. They can also use learning contracts to optimize the likelihood of success by choosing assignments that fit their learning style. Learning contracts can look different depending on the instructor and the content of the course. For example, a learning contract may include a choice of assignments. After discussing learning styles with students, an instructor can help students choose assignments based on their strengths and goals for the course. Learning contracts could include an agreement on goals for the course, a commitment for participation, or simply a signed contract (see Appendix for a sample learning contract).

The use of a learning contract allows for greater potential of a positive learning experience as well as the increased probability of retention of the material (Gnuse, 2004). "A humanistically-oriented counseling education program that emphasizes the development of the personhood of the counselor would focus on the student's self-understanding and the use of self in the process of learning and potentiating positive development in others" (Hoshmand, 2004, p. 83). The use of learning contacts may provide a tangible introduction to counselor education students preparing to take responsibility for lifelong learning and professional development.

Benefits and Limitations

Learning contracts are beneficial for adults since course outcomes are more likely to match the student's learning needs (Boak, 1998; Gnuse, 2004). Students learn self-direction by being accountable for designing the contract and identifying the particular goals they wish to achieve. This allows for students to be more motivated, thereby generating additional enthusiasm for learning. Individual learning styles are supported by generating objectives that match the student's preferred style of learning. Flexibility in assignments offers variation and choice. A student can then focus these choices on specific objectives and outcomes. The formal nature of a written agreement provides structure and guidance as well as clear expectations. Additionally, frequent feedback from the instructor and/or peers helps the student make progress toward their goals. Boak (1998) stated that learning contracts help students develop independent learning skills that will carry on into the students' lives and "enhance their ability to manage changing situations and the needs of the future" (p.5). These actions build autonomy, strengthen the ability to apply theory to practice, and allow students to engage in consultation, all of which are behaviors and skills that are goals of counselor education programs.

Despite the advantages, there are some limitations for using learning contracts with adult students. First, a learning contract is not appropriate for all types of learners, especially for learners who need more direction, who have more dependent personalities, or who thrive in the traditional style of instruction (Gnuse, 2004). Learning contracts may not be appropriate when content is complex and completely unfamiliar to the learners. Introducing a learning contract as a new concept will require some rethinking of learning in the minds of some students. They may need time to adjust and understand the concept.

Purpose

Due to the changing environment of modern higher education, adaptability, flexibility, and accommodation in teaching pedagogy are required to attract and retain adult learners. As a proven effective strategy, learning contracts have a future in adult education. That being said, little to no research has been conducted on the effectiveness of using learning contracts in counselor education pedagogy. The purpose of this study was to understand the degree to which learning contracts may be a beneficial tool in the counselor education classroom. Specifically, it sought to gather student perceptions regarding their own learning styles and types of assessments. It also aimed to understand if students perceived a learning contract as having impacted their performance, their learning, and their sense of responsibility for their own learning, growth and development. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways did counselor education master's students describe their learning styles and the methods by which their learning could best be assessed?
2. In what ways did counselor education master's students perceive that the use of a learning contract enhanced their learning in a specific course?

Method

Survey Implementation

The study was conducted using survey methodology, and used a mixed-method of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Approval for the research was granted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning the study. Pre- and post-course surveys were designed to measure student perception of the use of a learning contract in graduate courses in a master's program in counseling. They further sought to assess the success of a learning contract to meet the differential learning needs of students. They included multiple-choice and open-ended questions regarding student perceptions and preferences regarding their learning styles and the learning contract. Specific questions in the pre-course survey included how the student would best describe his or her learning style, how he or she would prefer to be assessed/graded on his/her learning, whether he or she believed that a method of assessment impacts academic performance, and whether he or she had ever used a learning contract in a course. Post-course survey questions asked students to share their thoughts regarding the freedom to choose the assignments that would contribute to their course grade.

Participants

The survey was pilot tested with a small group of graduate assistants and revised prior to implementation in the courses. The study was conducted at a mid-sized Masters I university in the suburban Northeast, where the average master's student is 33 years old and the graduate population is made up of 70% part-time students. The surveys were administered on the first and last day of class to a convenience sample of master's degree students in three different counseling master's program courses that incorporated learning contracts, resulting in participation by 57 graduate students.

Procedures

The first survey was distributed to students at the beginning of the first day of class. The purpose of this pre-course survey was to assess student attitudes toward learning styles and their impact on assessment in a course. Following the completion of this survey, students received the course syllabus and learning contract, which allowed them to choose from a variety of assessment types for the course. At this point, the professor led a discussion about learning styles and the options students might consider in using the learning contract in a way that worked best for them, followed by a question and answer period. Students chose from a menu of course assessments, including in-class examination, short papers, individual or group class presentations, and research papers. Students were able to select from this menu so that their choices would add up to 100 points. The goal of utilizing the learning contract was to allow students to choose assessments that would best fit their learning style and to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students had one week to complete and return the learning contract to the professor and had the opportunity for optional individual meetings with the professor to discuss the choices. Once students made their choices and submitted the learning contract it could not be modified. Students completed the post-course survey at the end of the final class meeting. The purpose of this survey was to assess students' experiences with the learning contract format.

Quantitative analysis was performed on fixed response portions of the surveys, using SPSS to run frequencies for all questions. Qualitative analysis was performed on open-ended portions of the surveys. Open-ended responses were coded and reviewed for prevailing themes across individuals and courses. This process was completed separately by the researcher and a graduate assistant and compared for consistency. The researchers used an inductive method of coding, manually reviewing each question across all respondents to ascertain the main themes, and then repeated the process to determine if the themes captured all responses.

Results

Completed pre- and post-course surveys were received from 57 students in three different courses. In the pre-course survey, 61% of the students surveyed described themselves as having a preference for a visual learning style, as opposed to auditory or kinesthetic learning styles. 72% of students indicated that their first choice for assessing their learning in a course would be a series of short, written papers and 43% indicated that their second choice for assessment would be an oral presentation. Other choices, including a written in-class exam, one or two research papers or a written group project were chosen as the least favorite forms of assessment. Students felt strongly about the degree to which assessment impacts their academic performance in a course, with 87% responding that the type of assessment has a direct impact on how successful they are in a course. In the post-course survey, 89% of the students preferred or strongly preferred the learning contact as opposed to being assigned a specific set of assessments for a course. In both surveys, there were no significant differences in results across course sections or based on students' academic concentration, number of credits taken in the program at the point of the survey, or demographic variables.

Coding of the responses to the open-ended survey questions revealed four primary themes from participants. These themes revealed their positive perceptions of learning contracts that center around the role of student choice and responsibility; the themes were: (a) the opportunity to choose assessments that reflect their learning style (b) the ability to choose assessments that help them to balance their work and life schedules (c) the chance to take responsibility for their own learning, and (d) the ability to customize assignments for their own learning goals and interests.

Choosing assessment that reflect learning style

First, participants reported that the use of learning contracts allowed them to choose assessments and assignments that best reflected the way that they learned and processed new information. In their open-ended responses, participants commented on the importance of choosing assignments.

"I am the person who knows my learning style best and I think that I would be better able to demonstrate what I have learned if I am given a choice."

They also recognized that everyone learns differently and excels at some forms of assessment more than others. Learning contracts take this differentiation into account.

"Everyone has a different talent. I feel I do best when given time to write a paper or produce an oral presentation. Exams are timed and it is hard to answer essay questions the way you would like in a certain time limit."

Participants also commented that the learning contract pushed them to reflect on

their own learning styles and how those styles could positively affect their learning experience in the classroom.

"It was enlightening to me because it was the first time I actually thought about my style and was able to see how being able to use my style positively affected my experience."

Choosing assessments that allow students to balance work and life schedules

Second, students reported that the learning contracts allowed them to make choices that fit with their professional and personal responsibilities and schedules. Participants often commented about the importance of flexibility in their schedules, and that the choice embedded in the learning contracts gave them the ability to better manage their schedules.

"It allowed me flexibility in my schedule, as having the choice helped me manage my schedule"

They would further comment that they would not only choose assignments that would reflect their learning style, but also could choose the assignments that fit best with their schedules.

"I was able to choose the assessments that worked best with the time and resources that I had available this semester."

Taking responsibility for their own learning

Third, participants stated that the learning contact compelled them to take responsibility for their own learning. Participants reported that the learning contracts provided them with opportunities for self-directed learning.

"I feel I have control and more responsibility for the outcome of my grade."

They also reported that the learning contract fostered greater accountability and responsibility due to having to make their own choices, and that such freedom also led to greater commitment."

"It was the first time for me to have a choice. I appreciate such freedom. I noticed that I gained a sense of responsibility and commitment as soon as I signed the learning contract."

Customizing assignments to meet their own learning goals and interests

Finally, students appreciated the way that the learning contract allowed them to customize assignments for their own learning goals and interests.

"I learned so much in class and was fortunate enough through the learning contract to further explore the areas of greatest interest to me."

Participants also commented that the ability to use the learning contract to explore their own goals and interests had a positive impact on their learning experience.

"It had a positive impact on my learning experience because it allowed me the chance to do additional research and work on topics in which I was interested."

The survey responses and categories derived from the study are consistent with the literature on adult learning and learning contracts. Through the use of a learning contract, participants reported that having different options regarding assignments and assessments allowed them to makes choices that best matched their individual learning styles and their personal and professional schedules and responsibilities. They also reported experiencing greater levels of responsibility for and engagement in their learning. By choosing their assignments and means of assessment, students felt that they could concentrate more on the actual learning and less on the exercise and

logistics of the learning and felt that they learned more as a result. They also commented that the learning contract allowed them to further explore areas of their specific interest and tailor their learning to meet their professional goals.

Discussion

The first research question the study aimed to answer was:

1. In what ways did counselor education master's students describe their learning styles and the methods by which their learning could best be assessed?

In the pre-course survey, the majority of the students characterized themselves as visual learners, and implied that they would prefer learning through activities that allow them to see charts and diagrams, and prefer assessments that allow them quiet time to reflect on their learning. This is consistent with the adult learners' preference for self-direction and reflection cited in the literature (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005; Gnuse, 2004). Each of the preferred choices provided quiet time for students to reflect on their learning as individuals, which is another preference of adult learners. Participants also indicated that they believed the manner in which they were assessed would impact their academic success in a course, which is consistent with the literature that a student's learning style directly impacts his or her engagement and learning (Boak, 1998; Gnuse, 2004; Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2006).

The second research question was:

2. In what ways did counselor education master's students perceive that the use of a learning contract enhanced their learning in a specific course?

Analysis of the open-ended responses in the post-course survey resulted in four primary themes, three of which are consistent with the literature on adult learning styles and learning contracts. Participants appreciated the opportunity to choose assessments that reflected their learning style, which the literature indicates will directly impact their academic success (Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2006). They also appreciated being able to take responsibility for their own learning, which the literature states is especially important for adult learners who thrive when they are involved in their curriculum and course design (Bearle, 1986; Caffarella & Caffarella, 1986; D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005; Gnuse, 2004). Finally, they liked being able to customize assignments for their own learning goals and interests. This is consistent with the literature that emphasizes the importance of counselor education students to develop their own professional and personal learning goals and to assess their own development (Bennett, 2002; Gnuse, 2004; Hoshmand, 2004).

The one resulting theme that was not directly addressed in the literature was the participants' preference for choosing assessments that helped them to balance their work and life schedules. However, this preference appears to be consistent with the increasingly competitive nature of graduate education that emphasizes convenient forms of delivery to meet the scheduling needs of adult students (Mandell & Herman, 2008).

Limitations

While the results of the surveys were consistent across three different courses, it is important to recognize a limitation of this study. It was conducted using a convenience sample of students at a single university in the Northeast. As a result, the results may not be generalizable to a larger

population; therefore further research of this type at additional institutions would be advantageous to further understand the impact of learning contracts in the counselor education classroom.

Implications for Pedagogical Practice

While learning contracts may have clear benefits to students, the researchers discovered that use of learning contracts is not without challenge for the professor who uses them in a course. A faculty member who uses the learning contract methodology needs to invest in a good deal of planning prior to the start of the course and in the development of organizational tools to use throughout the course. Instead of developing one set of assignments for all students, the professor needs to take the time to develop multiple assignments from which students can choose, and that reflect different learning styles and preferences. For each of the assignments, the faculty member will also need to develop different grading rubrics.

This amount of planning and ongoing record keeping can be time consuming. Grading responsibilities become much less predictable. In a traditional course, the professor knows up front how many assignments will need to be graded following specific due dates. With the learning contract methodology, it is impossible to predict how many students will choose each assignment type, which may result in unpredictable amounts of grading over the course of the semester. On the other hand, if students choose different assignments during the semester, this may in effect spread the grading out, making the professor's workload more even. One way to alleviate this issue is to predetermine due-dates for different assignments.

Learning contracts may increase the amount of ongoing discussion and feedback between professor and student during the course, for a variety of reasons. Students may have fewer peers engaging in the assignment(s) they have chosen, reducing their peer group resources. Students who are less sure of their learning style may need to spend more time with the professor early in the semester to make good choices prior to committing to their learning contract choices. As there will be students who need more direction in this area, it is important for the professor to spend some time discussing learning styles early in the semester, prior to students committing to specific assignments in the learning contract.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that learning contracts appear to particularly meet the needs of adult learners in the counselor education classroom. Adult learners benefit from being self-directed, from work that reflects their unique experiences, and from learning that addresses their intrinsic motivation and is organized around their goals and interests (Byer, 2002; Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1986). They also benefit from diverse approaches to instruction, increased accountability for learning, and collaboration around learning goals (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005).

Having students be actively engaged in and take responsibility for their own learning draws on the intrinsic motivation of adult students, which often leads to greater retention of information learned (Knowles, 1986). This retention of knowledge and the ability to foster ongoing motivation for learning is especially important in the counselor education classroom, as students must prepare to be lifelong learners in the counseling profession. Learning contracts allow professors and students to collaborate to accomplish classroom goals because they

foster student reflection and responsibility for their own learning and needs. They also allow students to enhance their learning through this responsibility and through exploration of specific interests. In addition, contracts allow students to concentrate on the learning itself, rather than worrying about the mechanisms for learning and assessment. Furthermore, learning contracts afford students more flexibility and provide options that can assist students in balancing academic, professional, and personal responsibilities.

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Appendix

Sample Learning Contract

Student Name (please print): ____

Please place a check mark in the "Selection" box next to each of the choices you will be using to make up your grade in this class. The total must add up to 90%, as class participation is a mandatory selection at 10%. Please sign your contract upon completion and date it. Learning Contracts are due in class on January 29, and may **not** be changed after that date. I encourage you to contact me prior to the due date with any questions you may have.

Major Requirements (choose two to add up to 70%)

Choice	Description	Due Date	Worth	Selection
Midterm Examination	Covers Chapters 1 through 6, multiple choice and short answer	In class on 2/26	30%	
Final Examination	Covers Chapters 7 through 13, multiple choice and short answer	In class on 4/23	40%	
Group Presentation	Choose a counseling issue and, using the literature, discuss the ethical and legal issues pertaining to that issue (15-minute presentation plus handouts). Groups must consist of two to three individuals. Students electing this option should provide a one-page topic proposal, authored by the group, by 2/12 for feedback/approval.	Presentations in class on 4/16.	30%	
Research Paper	Choose a counseling issue and, using the literature, discuss the ethical and legal issues pertaining to that issue (minimum 10 pages). Students electing this option should provide a one-page topic proposal by 2/19 for feedback/approval.	Due in class on 4/23	40%	

Minor Requirements (choose one for 20%)

Choice	Description	Due Date	Worth	Selection
Journal Article Critique	Choose an article from a professional journal dealing with an ethical or legal issue in your field, and conduct a critical analysis of the article, using what you've learned in class and in the text (5 pages). Students should include copy of article critiqued.	Due in class on 3/19	20%	
Position Paper	Choose an ethical issue, take a stand on that issue, and support your position using research and what you've learned in class (8-step process) and in the text (minimum 5 pages).	Due in class on 3/19	20%	

Student Signature: ____________________________________ Date: ______________

Faculty Signature: ______________________________________ Date: ____________

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Identifying Curriculum Components for Classroom Management Training for School Counselors: A Delphi Study

Jill A. Geltner, Teddi J. Cunningham, and Charmaine D. Caldwell

The Delphi Study was conducted to determine recommended curriculum components to be used in training school counselors to be effective classroom managers when conducting (large-group counseling) classroom guidance. Thirty-five participants, including nationally certified school counselor practitioners and prominent school counselor educators, were the two expert groups in the study. Eighty-nine initial curriculum items were identified, both knowledge and skill items included. After three rounds of the survey, the 40 items that remained were the final recommendations of the expert panel. In further analyses, no statistically significant differences were found when examining responses by expert group, gender, years of experience, or educational level. Specific recommendations are made to incorporate the findings into school counselor preparation programs.

Keywords: Delphi, school counselor, curriculum, classroom management, classroom guidance, schools, training

Continuing, is a trend that began in the United States, during the 1970s; an ever-increasing number of education professionals, not previously credentialed or experienced as classroom teachers, are achieving state-level certification as school counselors (Goodnough, Perusse & Erford, 2011). In concert with this trend, most states have eliminated or are now eliminating policies that require prospective school counselors to have teaching experience before they enter school counseling preparation programs (ASCA, 2010; Sweeney, 1995). In supporting of this trend, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) has accredited approximately 205 school counselor preparation programs in the United States and/or its territorial possessions (CACREP, 2010). Among the CACREP (2009) specialty standards for the preparation for school counseling programs is the requirement that program graduates be able to provide effective delivery of the guidance curriculum, specifically including the use of classroom (i.e., large-group) guidance activities.

A similar mandate for effective and frequent classroom guidance activities by school counselors comes from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The ASCA requirements for effective school counseling programs are delineated in *The ASCA National Model*: *A framework for school counseling programs* (2005). In particular, it is recommended that classroom guidance be a central component of the

school counselor's duties and activities and be allocated as much as 45% of school counselors' professional work time (ASCA, 2005). In addition, classroom guidance is seen as the primary and most efficient means through which school counselors provide developmental and preventative services to all students in schools (Dahir, 2004; Goodnough et. al., 2011; Myrick, 2003; Wittmer, 2000); that is, to help students acquire skills to cope with life problems and issues *before* they encounter them.

Yet while school counselor classroom guidance activities are widely and strongly advocated, neither applicable school counselor preparation program standards (e.g., the CACREP *Standards of Preparation*) nor professionally endorsed models of school counselor functioning (e.g., the ASCA *National Model*) delineate specific skills, abilities, or associated preparation experiences that school counselors should have in order to deliver classroom guidance activities effectively and successfully. Credentialed and/or experienced teachers have specific, focused preparation in working with entire classrooms of children (Manning & Bucher, 2007). Given that most school counselors now achieve state certification without having a teaching credential and/or experience, how should school counselors be prepared to deliver classroom guidance activities?

Additionally, professional credentialing practices have done little to clarify the specific nature of effective school counselor preparation (ASCA, 2005; CACREP, 2009). The most common and necessary credential for professional school counselors is state-level certification and all states have academic and process requirements for school counselor certification. However, "there is still wide variability across all [school counselor preparation] programs" in regard to program foci, content, and methods (Perusse, Goodnough, & Noel, 2001, p.261). Although there are numerous resources available for classroom guidance activities, there is little information available to assist school counselors in "managing" classroom size groups (i.e., regulate student behavior to maximize learning effectiveness) (Goodnough, et. al, 2011). Baker (2000) asserted that "it is important to train [school counselors] as competent *instructors*, as well as competent counselors" (p.153). Similarly, The ASCA *National Model* (2005) indicates that, "It is important for school counselors to receive training in student learning styles, classroom behavior management [and] curriculum and instruction" (p. 16). Thus, as important components of general teaching expertise, extensive knowledge of and skills in classroom management are needed in combination with counseling and group facilitation skills to impact large groups positively (Henington & Doggett, 2004). Unfortunately, the specific classroom management knowledge and skills needed remain undetermined (CACREP, 2009; Goodnough et. al, 2011; Perusse et. al, 2001).

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. What are school counseling professionals' respective endorsement levels of various counselor preparation curriculum components for classroom management during large-group guidance activities?
2. What is the order of endorsement priorities among school counselor preparation program curriculum components for classroom management during large-group guidance activities?
3. What are the differences in endorsements of school counselor

preparation program curriculum components for classroom management during large-group guidance activities based upon selected characteristics of the responding school counseling professionals?

The Knowledge and Skill Sets for Large-Group Counseling

ASCA identifies large-group counseling as an integral part of both school counselor training and professional responsibilities (ASCA, 2005; Baker & Gerler, 2007; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dahir, Sheldon & Valiga, 1998; Erford, 2011). "Group counseling is one of the professional school counselor's most highly specialized skills" (Goodnough & Lee, 2004, p.173). Classroom guidance, sometimes known as large-group guidance, is the most efficient intervention because it provides direct services to the largest numbers of students at one time (Baker, 2000; Baker & Gerler, 2007; Myrick, 2003; Snyder, 2000; Wittmer, 2000). A large group is generally a classroom-size group of 25 to 30 students (Cuthbert, 2000).

Classroom guidance as a school counseling intervention is becoming increasingly important as professional school counselors struggle to find time to address all students' needs. The recommended counselor-to-student ratio appropriate to implementing a comprehensive developmental program is one school counselor to every 250 students (ASCA, 2005). However, most school counselors operate under a much higher ratio (ASCA, 2010). As indicated by the American School Counselor Association, the National Center for Education Statistics reported an average ratio of 1:457 for the 2008-2009 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

However, a school counselor must have adequate knowledge and skills in effective classroom (large-group) management in order to provide classroom guidance services successfully. Classroom guidance activities are mostly instructional in nature and approximate regular classroom teaching. Good instruction requires good classroom management. The instructor must be able to maintain students' attention, interest, and appropriate behavior during the classroom activity in order for the students to achieve intended gains from the activity (Geltner & Clark, 2005, Wong & Wong, 2009).

Small-group counseling training for school counselors typically includes: (a) exposure to principles of group dynamics, (b) group process, (c) group stage theories, (d) group member roles and behaviors, (e) therapeutic factors of group work, (f) group leadership styles and approaches, (g) theories and methods of group counseling, (h) ethical and legal considerations for group work, and (i) evaluation of group processes (CACREP, 2009). Presumably, some small-group knowledge and skills transfer to large-group guidance activities such as linking member comments or facilitating group member interactions. Group leadership skills are used to guide and direct interactions between school counselors and classroom groups. The school counselor typically relies upon a self-created combination of counseling skills, classroom management strategies, and instructional methods to impart important developmental information.

For the purposes of this study, a thorough review of the counseling literature was conducted to identify both group and classroom knowledge and skills pertinent to the large-group counseling process. The comprehensive list was used to create a comprehensive beginning list of possible knowledge and skill items to be rated by the

expert panel. There were 55 knowledge items and 34 specific skills identified as potentially appropriate for effective classroom management in the context of large-group guidance. A complete list of the original 89 skill and knowledge items with references is available from the author.

Method

The Delphi Technique is a research method in which a panel of experts is polled in an iterative process designed to bring about the highest level group consensus possible about ideas and/or opinions deemed important to a relatively specific purpose and/or activity topic (Dimitt, Carey, McGannon, & Henningson, 2005; Linstone & Turtoff, 1975; Moore, 1986). The collective expertise allows collective decision making that would not otherwise be possible because of geography or interpersonal issues and "attempts to overcome the weaknesses implicit in relying on a single expert, a one-shot group average, or round table discussion" (Clayton, 1997, p. 375).

Participants

The participants for this Delphi study included two groups of professionals, both associated with the school counseling profession: school counselors working in public and/or private K-12 schools and school counselor educators working in university or college settings.

The counselor educators included in this study had an earned doctoral degree, were employed at a college or university with a CACREP-accredited program in school counseling, and had instructional and/or supervisory assignment for school counselors-in-training. They also were members of the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), had published at least two articles pertinent to the preparation of school counselors in a professional journal within the last five years, and had made at least two professional presentations pertinent to school counselor preparation at a state, regional, or national conference for school counselors and/or counselor educators within the last five years. In addition, a few individuals were invited to participate who held national leadership positions in school counseling or were known for their school counseling research. In general, every attempt was made to include panelists who were as representative as possible of their respective primary professional affiliations. Effort was made to include individuals from each of the five regions of ACES. A list of school counselor educators was designed specifically for this study and acquired from the ACA because "expertise…is the desired goal for panel [member] selection" (Clayton, 1997, p. 377). Forty-five school counselor educators were invited to participate in the study, 22 agreed to participate. The number of school counselor educators who participated as panelists through all three rounds of ratings was 18, a 40% response rate.

Practicing school counselors invited to participate were identified from among those who held the National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) credential, had completed a CACREP accredited school counseling program, and had a minimum of three years of professional (i.e., employed) experience as a school counselor. Upon request, a randomized list was generated by the National Board for Certified Counselors and given to the researcher. There were 120 school counselors invited to participate in the study, 29 agreed to participate. The number of school counselors who participated as panelists through all three

rounds was 15, a 12.5% response rate. With respect to the school counselors who agreed initially to participate there was a 69% response/completion rate for all three survey rounds.

In addition, two individuals identified themselves in both the school counselor group and the school counselor educator group. One was originally identified from the school counselor (NCSC) list and one from the school counselor educator (ACES) list. Ultimately, the procedures yielded a group of 15 school counselors and 18 school counselor educators as well as two who identified in both groups, for a total of 35 participants (panelists). The final group consisted of a majority of females (n=27; males=8) and the majority of the participants (87%) were Caucasian. Only two panelists identified themselves as Hispanic, one panelist identified as Native American and one panelist identified Multiracial. No panelists identified themselves as African American or Asian American.

The guideline for a Delphi is described as the following: "general rule-of-thumb [is] 15 to 30 people for a homogeneous population – that is, experts coming from the same discipline and 5 to 10 people for a heterogeneous population" (Clayton, 1997, p. 378). The final group of 35 participants who completed all three rounds of the survey was thus considered sufficient and satisfactory.

Procedure

There were three total rounds including three Likert-type surveys for the Delphi. The initial survey used for this study had two subsections. The first subsection of the initial survey included demographic information. The second subsection for round one included the initial items to be rated. Included within each item was the definition of the item. For the purposes of this study, they are grouped as either knowledge or skill items determined by whether the item was a knowledge component (i.e. heterogeneous or homogeneous groups (Corey, 2008) or a group leadership skill used to guide and direct interactions between school counselors and classroom groups (i.e. drawing out or linking (Morran, Stockton & Whittingham, 2004). As mentioned above, through a thorough review of the counseling literature, 89 items, 55 knowledge items and 34 specific skills items, were identified to include in the initial survey. These items were identified as potentially appropriate for effective classroom management in the context of large-group guidance. All knowledge and skill items were listed in random order simply by word and definition (see below).

	Not Important						Extremely Important
1. Self-help groups (a supportive group for individuals with common problems)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. Enthusiasm (the expression of positive reaction to what is happening in a group)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. Group cohesion (the level of group members' feeling of acceptance among one another)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The survey was web-based and the rating scale for each item had a range of 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important). Each response scale was presented in “radio button” format to disallow more than one rating per item. Participants were notified and reminded to complete the surveys within the timeframe allotted. After panelists completed ratings for the first round, the individual item means were calculated. The survey item means were then ordered from highest to lowest item response mean. Linstone and Turoff (1975) noted that generally there is a “gap” in the ordered item means for a Delphi study. The gap is the appropriate point below which to eliminate items from subsequent consideration (Stone Fish & Busby, 2005). A gap was evident for the round one item response means in this study and items having means below the “gap” were discarded from subsequent item presentations. Therefore the second round included 56 items. The respective item wordings were not changed and remained the same across rounds.

Feedback is an important element of the Delphi process because it allows respondents to examine and possibly reevaluate their item ratings from the previous round (Dalkey, 1972; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Stone Fish & Busby, 2005). Therefore in the second round panelists were provided with the respective item means from the first round for the 56 items that had been retained. They were not given the item means for the discarded items. The second round of the survey had 56 items to be rated and the third round had 43 items to be rated. For the second and third rounds, the immediately previous round item mean scores were presented along with each item to be rated. A list of the items from these rounds and specific definitions for each item included is available from the author.

Results

The third round ratings resulted in a final list of 40 classroom management curriculum items. These are school counseling professionals’ respective endorsement levels of various counselor preparation curriculum components for classroom management for large-group guidance activities. These elements are presented in mean item score order from lowest to highest (see Table 1) illustrating ranked order of endorsement priorities among the components. Items having means below 5.80 in the final survey were not considered further in regard to data analyses and therefore data from 40 items were entered into the data analyses.

A series of quantitative data analyses were conducted to allow evaluation of possible differences in endorsements of school counselor preparation program curriculum components for classroom management training based on selected characteristics of the responding school counseling professionals. An alpha level of $p = .05$ was used as the criterion for statistical significance for all quantitative analyses.

Upon examination by respondent group, respective item means were highly similar across groups, however, no statistically significant differences in item means between respondent groups were found. There was no difference based upon panelists’ gender, professional position, race/ethnicity, highest degree achieved, or years of experience in current professional position.

It can be noted that there was substantial consensus among the panelists throughout the Delphi process conducted. While a wide range of endorsements levels for the possible curriculum components was evident initially, movement toward consensus was rapid across rounds. In

particular, fewer items were eliminated across the second and third rounds. The initial item set included 89 items, the second included 56 items (33 items eliminated), and the final one 43 items (13 items eliminated). Further, most final item means were high relative to the top of the rating scale; panelists apparently held relatively strong opinions about the (final) items they endorsed. For example, the lowest item mean among those in round three was 5.51. In addition, the panelists' item endorsement priorities had a very small difference in ratings. The difference between the largest and smallest item means for the final round was .48. With such a small difference in ratings, the importance of the order of the item mean rankings is negligible.

Limitations of the Study

Certainly, a study involving repeated survey implementation has drawbacks. The need for participating experts to complete the questionnaire for all three rounds may have created a situation in which all those requested to participate could not commit. In addition, school counselors with previously occupied schedules may not have had an opportunity to participate due to work obligations. As a result, the perspectives of these individuals who did not choose to accept the participation invitation are not available. However, it can be assumed, with such consensus, these potential respondents' responses might have been similar to those who did participate.

The necessity for panelists to make three sets of ratings raises the issue: "To what extent is sustained motivation a limitation?" To counteract this potential limitation, strategies proven to maximize participation for internet surveys (e.g., continued communications with panelists) were used (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2008). In addition, panelists knew the nature and extent of requested participation prior to agreeing to serve as panelists. Presumably the panelists had appropriate and sufficient motivation throughout the study because there was not any indication that they did not (e.g., all responded in a timely manner during each round).

Finally, the panelists were provided with a list of possible curriculum components for classroom management training for school counselors and were not allowed to add their personal suggestions. It is possible that some panelists may have reacted to the list not containing components they believe to be important. However, the initial list was extensive and was a broad-scale representation of suggestions extant in the professional literature. Additionally, there was not feedback from the panelists as to insufficient content in the lists provided. Therefore personal reactions to the list of items apparently were not a limitation for this study.

Implications for School Counselor Training Programs

Knowledge of the requisite and desirable components of school counselor preparation to engage in classroom guidance activities effectively and efficiently has implications for school counselor professional preparation and practice and also for associated future research and theory development. Furthermore, knowing what school counselors should know and be capable of in regard to classroom management for large-group guidance activities allows for determination of what should and should not be included in school counselor training programs.

The final list of curriculum component items is significant because it suggests what school counselors should know and be able to do in order to manage

classroom groups effectively and successfully. In addition, the relatively high degree of consensus achieved for the items recommended for inclusion in classroom management preparation for school counselors is noteworthy. In particular, the general absence of differences based on respondent characteristics points to substantive agreement about the components endorsed. Thus, the final list of curriculum components for classroom management training endorsed by the panelists could serve as a preparation paradigm for use in school counselor training programs and consequently for future school counseling practice.

The original list of 89 items included both knowledge and skill component items; of the 89 original items, 55 were (pre-classified as) *knowledge* items and 34 as *skill* items, a knowledge-to-skill items ratio of approximately 1.62:1. The final list of 40 items included a much smaller number of knowledge items (13) and a somewhat smaller number of skill items (27), a ratio of approximately .48:1. Thus it became evident across rounds that both school counselors' and school counselor educators' emphasis was on skills for actual practice of classroom management rather than on the knowledge underlying large-group or classroom management.

There are two groupings among the 40 items recommended: (a) *knowledge* items and (b) *skill* items. All the knowledge items appear to be related to group (counseling) work. Therefore, these items could be best covered in the basic group counseling course required for school counselor trainees in CACREP-accredited programs. It would be advisable and necessary, however, to point out specifically the items' significance to classroom guidance and classroom management for school counselors. However, few programs are sufficient in student numbers for such a course. Therefore, integrating these items into a general group work course and also addressing their specific importance to school counselors would accomplish the same goal. For example, a discussion about how to facilitate a therapeutic counseling group versus a middle school classroom could clarify these distinctions for clinical and school counseling students. Further, these items could be reconsidered and stressed in school counseling program students' practica and internship experiences. Here, school counselors-in-training will have the opportunity to practice the skills deemed necessary for successful classroom management with large-classroom groups.

The 27 *skill* items are focused upon specific classroom management actions and/or behaviors that a school counselor should utilize in delivering classroom guidance. Thus, these items can be viewed as classroom management techniques and would be more appropriately placed in a school counseling course. For example, these techniques might be inserted into a core school counseling course such as a class on counseling children. Because the composition of such courses differs across universities, the specific course would have to be determined by the particular counselor education department. However, the integrity of the items could and should be maintained as a curricular grouping of *skill* items to train school counselors in classroom management for the purposes of classroom guidance. As above, these items should again be reviewed as the student proceeds through practica and internship experiences to allow evaluation of the skills in actual practice.

Implications for Future Research

Recommendations for future research include conducting a larger study

that encompasses a greater number of school counselor practitioners. For example, such a study could examine the opinions of the school counselor practitioners in regard to the items recommended in this study. Basically, it would allow determination of whether larger numbers of school counselors concur with the recommendations of the expert panel. It also would be appropriate to investigate the extent to which practicing school counselors already possess the knowledge and skill items presented in the final list of items. It would be important to determine if school counselors believe they already have the knowledge and skills but are not using them or if they believe that they have not been provided such knowledge and skills in their school counselor preparation programs.

Because school counselor preparation programs nationwide are removing the prior teaching experience requirement for program admission, determination of school counselors' effectiveness in classroom guidance activities is warranted to ascertain need for further or additional training. It is especially important to determine whether school counselors who have the knowledge and exhibit the skills identified herein are actually more effective in the classroom than those who do not.

Another important area to study is the difference between practicing school counselors' and school counselor educators' perceptions specifically related to evaluation. The emphasis on evaluation items by school counselor educators was much stronger than it was for school counselors. Both groups rated the evaluation items as important, but school counselor educators rated them much higher. It is important to determine if this issue is problematic. Through examination of these differences of opinion between school counselor educators and school counselors, ways to bridge the divide could be suggested.

Finally, it would be important to examine the perceptions of others in the school system in regard to school counselors' effectiveness in classroom guidance activities. Determining if school administrators and teachers agree with the knowledge and skill items recommended could affect how the school counselors actually conduct classroom guidance activities as well as how their activities are perceived. Both teachers and administrators may be more supportive of school counselors being in classrooms if they concur with the recommendations derived from this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine school counselor and school counselor educators' endorsement levels of school counselor preparation curriculum components for classroom management for large-group guidance activities. Because school counselors often spend a great deal of time in classroom settings, and in most states are no longer required to have teaching experience prior to school counselor certification, prioritization of these training components is more important than ever before.

The classroom setting is the most efficient delivery method for school counselors to impart important career, academic and personal/social information to students. It is crucial that school counseling graduates are prepared for the task of managing and effectively utilizing the large-group counseling setting.

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Table 1

Rankings of (40) Knowledge and Skill Items

Knowledge or Skill Item	Mean score
nonverbal communication (skill item)	5.80
group final stage (knowledge item)	5.80
group conflict (knowledge item)	5.83
group cohesion (knowledge item)	5.89
group initial stage (knowledge item)	5.89
reflecting feelings (skill item)	5.89
group process (knowledge item)	5.91
goal setting (skill item)	5.91
wait time (skill item)	5.91
evaluating (skill item)	5.91
group cohesiveness (knowledge item)	5.94
restating (skill item)	5.94
drawing out (skill item)	5.94
group leadership style (knowledge item)	5.97
clarifying (skill item)	5.97
cooperative learning (skill item)	6.00
acknowledging (skill item)	6.00
multicultural diversity (knowledge item)	6.03
summarizing (skill item)	6.03
initiating (skill item)	6.03
supporting via reassurance (skill item)	6.06
reinforcing (skill item)	6.06
blocking (skill item)	6.06
linking (skill item)	6.09
legal considerations for group work (knowledge item)	6.09
supporting an individual member (skill item)	6.09
giving feedback (skill item)	6.09
processing (skill item)	6.11
group dynamics (knowledge item)	6.14
open-ended questioning (skill item)	6.20
showing empathy (skill item)	6.20
terminating (skill item)	6.23
protecting (skill item)	6.29
modeling (skill item)	6.29
facilitating group interactions (skill item)	6.31
guidance / psychoeducational group (knowledge item)	6.34
evaluation of group (knowledge item)	6.37
active listening (skill item)	6.40
ethical considerations for group work (knowledge item)	6.43
rule setting (skill item)	6.54

Author Note

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State Mandated Principals' Training - Does it make a Difference? An Examination of Principals' Perceptions of the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) National Model, State-specific Models of School Counseling and the Roles of the School Counselor

Mary Amanda Graham, Kimberly J. Desmond, Erica Zinsser

This mixed method study examines the perceptions of both elementary and secondary principals in two northeastern states regarding the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, state-specific models of School Counseling and the role of the school counselor. One state surveyed has mandatory administrative training of the ASCA National Model and a state-specific model of school counseling while the other does not have such state mandates or an implemented model of school counseling. A fifteen-question survey was sent to four hundred ninety-eight school administrators. Results indicate little difference in knowledge of the ASCA National Model between principals in both states. The results of the study and a plan to impact principal perceptions in support of the ASCA National Model are presented.

Keywords: School counseling roles, principal perceptions, training models

Literature Review

School counselors and school counselor educators face many challenges. For school counselors, the support of their administrative team is imperative for facilitating their roles within the school environment. It has been documented, discussed, and verified in the literature that the roles of administrators, primarily the principal(s), are central in determining the function and tasks the school counselor will undertake within the school system (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Zalaquett, 2005; Kaplan & Evans, 1999). Ideally, school counselors and administrators work collegially in developing and implementing school counseling programs, services, and roles. Unfortunately, this may not be the case in many situations. In the field of professional school counseling there is and continues to be a pervasive struggle toward professional identity, role definition, and service delivery, as well as gaining support from administrators to facilitate the work of the school counselor as defined by the

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2005) and state-specific models of school counseling.

The American School Counselor Association (2005) has taken a strong position on defining the role of the school counselor and providing a framework for professional school counselors to follow in regard to establishing and facilitating services inside the school system. Many of today's professional school counselors are being taught to provide services under the ASCA National Model and/or state-specific models of school counseling. A disconnect still remains between what emerging school counselors are being taught regarding their roles and the ASCA National Model and what the reality is in many school districts. Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, and Skelton (2006) reported administrators do recognize the incongruence of what their school counselors should be doing and what services are being provided. The challenge may be in the pressures school administrators face regarding staffing levels, special needs students and standardized testing.

The question becomes not only how professional school counselors and school counselor educators can ensure that school administrative teams are being trained to be knowledgeable about the ASCA National Model and/or state-specific models of school counseling, but also how they can support the implementation of the models given the existing pressures faced in the school system. Poynton, Schumcher, and Wilczenski (2008) noted:

As school districts across the nation implement the ASCA National Model or a state school counseling model, consideration of what facilitates, hinders, and blocks change is significant for school counseling leaders at the state and district levels, and for professional associations guiding model implementation (p. 420).

Public Awareness of Models

According to Schwallie-Giddis, ter Maat, and Pak (2003) the ASCA National Model is an outstanding way to create and facilitate successful school counseling programs for all school stakeholders. The issue becomes how professional school counselors and counselor educators ensure school stakeholders, specifically school administrators, buy into the ASCA National Model as well as state-specific models of school counseling as the foundation for school counseling programs and school counselor roles. There have been numerous articles, books and research published focusing on the importance of the ASCA National Model and its implication for professional school counseling and the role of the school counselors as system-wide change agents (Perusse, 2004; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008). Lacking in the field is empirically-based evidence that establishes if current advocacy and outreach regarding the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling is impacting the level of support given by school administrators regarding model implementation and the role of the school counselor. Because of the impact school administrators have on school counseling program, this study is meant to

explore if current practices around training administrators to the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling have impacted change in school systems regarding the role and function of the school counselor.

Method

Participants

Study participants were recruited by accessing school administrators' e-mail addresses and contact information using the National and State Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals as well as public school websites. Four hundred ninety-eight school administrators from two northeastern states were invited to participate in this study. For the purpose of this study the researchers identified participants from a state that has a state-specific model of school counseling and state mandates for administrators to learn the ASCA National Model as Group A. The researchers then identified Group B as the group of administrators from a state in which there is not an implemented state-specific model of school counseling and no legislation regarding training of the ASCA National Model for administrators.

Group A's state code and state-specific board of education policy declare that schools have: "responsibility for providing professional development, technical assistance and support to each county board of education in the development and implementation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program and policy, including the training for counselors and administrators to implement the national standards specific to state code" 2315;18-5-18b.

Group A was also selected based on their state school counseling association having developed and implemented a state-specific model of school counseling. Group B, a neighboring state, was selected based on the absence of state mandates regarding the training of school administrators on school counseling programs and models. Group B has piloted a volunteer training program focusing on training school administrators and school counselors on the ASCA National Model. One hundred nine participants or 21.89% of the invited administrators chose to participant in the study.

Research Design

This exploratory study examined the following research questions:

1. Are elementary and secondary school principals aware of a state-specific school counseling model, the ASCA National Model or both models?
2. Do principals in a state that have adopted a state-specific school counseling model have increased awareness of the ASCA National Framework of School Counseling?
3. Do principals in a state that has adopted a state-specific school counseling model have an understanding and support of the role

of the school counselor as defined by ASCA?

Research was facilitated using Survey Monkey, an internet survey tool. The first e-mail contact set the groundwork, foundation, and invitation for the study. The second and third e-mail contacts included the survey link for the questionnaire and presented information regarding the researchers' sponsoring Institutional Review Board (IRB). The fourth and final e-mail was sent as a thank-you letter and a survey link to a final opportunity to participate in the study.

Instrument

Participants were asked to complete a 15-item online survey via the survey tool, Survey Monkey (See Appendix A). The survey covered items related to administrators' knowledge of state-specific models of comprehensive school counseling and the ASCA National Model. The survey was constructed by the researchers based on available literature and information regarding state-specific models of comprehensive school counseling, the ASCA National Model, and state-specific code 2315. Survey readability, usability and validity were sought by colleagues in the field of school counselor education prior to administering the survey.

The research design utilized both quantitative and qualitative design. Although the quantitative methodology in this study is both descriptive and inferential, a number of results of the survey will be presented in percentages. Researchers performed a chi-square analysis on three of the survey questions to determine if there was statistical difference between school administrators perceptions in a state that has a state-specific model of school counseling and state mandated administrator training on the ASCA National Model in comparison to school administrators from a state that does not have an implemented model of state-specific school counseling and lacks stated mandated administrator training of the ASCA National Model. A qualitative methodology was also utilized in this research via open-ended questions on the e-mail survey to gather more descriptive details about administrator experience with the ASCA National Model and state models of school counseling. From the responses emerging themes were identified and coded based on commonality. These results are summarized below.

Results

Demographic information was collected from four survey items focusing on administrators' level (principal or vice-principal), grade level of students administrators supervised, and if they had a school counselor on staff and the number of school counselors under their guidance as administrators. Six survey items focused on participant knowledge of state-specific models of comprehensive school counseling and knowledge of the ASCA National Model. Two of the six survey items focusing on knowledge of the ASCA National Model were open-ended questions allowing the participants to provide written responses. Three survey items focused on administrators' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor. All

of these were open-ended questions allowing the participants to provide written responses. The final item in the survey was an open-ended question for participants allowing opportunity for additional responses. The reader might note several percentages adding up to more than 100%. This is due to the fact participants were permitted to select more than one item on the survey.

Group A

Group A consisted of 56 participants. Eighty-three percent of the respondents identified as principals, and 18.9% identified as vice-principals. Elementary administrators comprised 35.7% of respondents, 39.3% were middle school administrators, 21.4% were high school administrators and 7.1% worked in both middle-high school buildings. Of those surveyed, 96.4% of participants reported having a school counselor. When Group A was asked if they had knowledge of the ASCA National Model, 21.4% indicated they did have knowledge of the model. Of the 18 administrators who responded to the question of how they gained knowledge of the ASCA National Model, 27.8% of the participants indicated they learned of the ASCA National Model through their state principals' association, 5.6% through colleagues, and 72.2% from their school counselor. When asked if they were familiar with a state-specific model of school counseling (Group A does have a state-specific model in place), of the 53 respondents 25.9% stated they did have knowledge of a state model, while 74.1% said they did not have knowledge of state-specific model of school counseling. Of those who responded to having knowledge of a state-specific model of counseling, 27.3% indicated learning about the model through their principals' association, while 9.1% learned about it through colleagues and 54.5% through their school counselor.

Group B

Group B (without a state-specific model of school counseling) consisted of 53 participants. Of those who responded, 69.8% identified as principals and 30.2% identified as vice-principals. Elementary administrators comprised 32.1% of respondents, 32.1% middle school administrators, 26.4% high school, 7.5% middle-high school and 1.9% indicated they were an administrator of a K through12 building. Ninety-eight percent of the participants reported having a school counselor in the building. When group B was asked if they had knowledge of the ASCA National Model, 32.7% indicated they did have knowledge of the model while 69.2% indicated they did not have knowledge of the model. Of the 20 administrators who responded to the question of how they gained knowledge of the ASCA National Model, 20% of the participants indicated they learned of the ASCA National Model through their state principals' association, 90.0% from their school counselor, 5% from the state school counseling association and 5% from the national school counseling association. When asked if they were familiar with a state-specific model of school counseling (Group B does not have an implemented state-specific model of school counseling),

24.5% stated they did have knowledge of a state model while 75.5% said they did not have knowledge of state-specific model of school counseling. Of those who responded to having knowledge of a state-specific model of counseling, 15.4% indicated learning about the model through colleagues, 76.9% through their school counselor and 7.7% through the national school counseling association.

A chi-square analysis was also used to address if there was statistical significance in the responses of administrators who have school counseling training per mandated state legislature and whose state school counseling association has implemented a state-specific model of school counseling. The focus of the questions was:

1. Do administrators in a state where there is administrator school counseling training and a state-specific model of school counseling recognize what the acronym ASCA stands for?

2. Do administrators in a state where there is administrator school counseling training and a state-specific model of school counseling have knowledge of the ASCA National Model of School Counseling?

3. Do administrators in a state where there is a state-specific model of school counseling have knowledge of said model?

On question one regarding knowledge of the ASCA acronym, the chi-square revealed statistical significance X (1,109) = 8.171, p=.004 <.05. The analysis revealed Group B did have knowledge of the acronym ASCA in comparison to Group A. On question two regarding having knowledge of the ASCA National Model (Framework), the chi-square revealed no statistical significance (X (1, 109= 1.625, p = .202 >.05) between Group A and B. On the final question regarding gaining knowledge of a state-specific model of guidance, the chi-square revealed no statistical significance (X (1, 107) = .028, p = .868 >.05) between Groups A and B.

Qualitative analysis of the open-ended research questions revealed themes under each of the following three questions:

(1) *Briefly describe your understanding of the ASCA National Model and or state-specific model of school counseling.*

Group A

One theme that emerged from this question was the identification of specific components of either the ASCA National Model or state-specific model. More specifically, participants named components of each of the models. Within Group A, those with a state-specific model, participants commented that school counselors spend 75% of their time in direct service to students. One participant stated, “There are specifications that a counselor should be working with children at least 75% or more of the time available.” This allotment is consistent with the state’s model of school counseling. Other participants identified descriptors such as “preventive”,

"developmental", "design", "implement", and "manage"; terms that are all consistent with the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling.

Group B

The theme of helping students succeed emerged from the answers to this question from the state without a State-Specific Model of School Counseling. More specifically, one participant commented, "The ASCA model reflects a comprehensive approach to program foundation, delivery, management, and accountability. The model provides the mechanism with which school counselors and school counseling teams will design, coordinate, implement, manage, and evaluate their programs for students' success." Another participant said the model exists "to help students succeed in school academically by giving them the personal/social help they may need." Another theme that emerged was the ASCA National Model being a source of support for school counselors and students. One administrator explained that "It is designed to support school counselors." Another stated that it "support[s] the efforts of counselors and their work with students in the academic, career, and personal areas."

(2) *What thoughts do you have on the relevance and/or importance of school counseling program models?*

Group A

One theme that emerged from the group of participants with a state model of school counseling was the lack of significance of models of school counseling. More specifically one participant commented, "We're doing just fine without a National Model." Another participant agreed sharing, "Principals do not follow them anyway, and so what is the point?" Several other participants answered "none" that school counseling program models are irrelevant and unimportant. Conversely, another theme that emerged from the responses to this question was the value of the school counseling models. One participant stated, "I feel like the ASCA Model is very relevant and can be useful to school counselors in a school setting." Another echoed similar sentiments, "[the models are] very important to the well-being of our students, parents and community."

Group B

The theme of school counseling programs being an integral component of the school was evident in the responses from the participants without a state-specific model of school counseling. One participant commented, "Counselors are integral to schools, primarily with regard to helping student to be ready to learn and providing assistance for the development of the whole child." Another stated that school counseling is an "integral part of the school team." In addition, another participant explained, "[models] provide a guide for identifying job responsibilities and expectation.

(3) *Identify some of the responsibilities of the school counselor in your building or district.*

Group A

A theme of student support emerged from the participants with a state-specific model of school counseling. One participant stated that school counselors provide“[s]tudent support on an individual basis, small group counseling, and classroom developmental counseling.” Another wrote that their school counselor gave “[d]irect student support [and was a]coordinator of state tests.” Inappropriate roles of a school counselor were also identified by the administrators. For example, discipline emerged as a theme among some of the administrators who answered this question. One stated the role of a school counselor was “504, discipline/counseling” and another shared “student support, teacher support, [and] discipline” as responsibilities of the school counselor.

Group B

The participants from the state without a state-specific model of school counseling identified roles of a school counselor that are in line with appropriate roles of the professional school counselor outlined by ASCA. One participant identified “individual counseling, group counseling, academic counseling, special needs student support, preliminary career advice, [and] teacher support” as some of the responsibilities of the school counselor. Another shared that some responsibilities were “[w]orking with students and parents. Helping teachers who ask about students and related issues…”

Results Summary

The results of the quantitative data indicated a minimal statistical difference between administrators’ knowledge of the ASCA National Model from states with and without state mandated training and state-specific models of school counseling. The chi-square analysis revealed administrators from Group B (a state without mandatory training) did have knowledge of the acronym ASCA in comparison to Group A (a state with mandatory training) but found there no statistical difference in overall knowledge of the actual framework of the model(s) between groups.

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data suggested that there is still much to be learned from the implementation of either the ASCA National Model or a state-specific model of school counseling. The qualitative results of this survey are consistent with the literature identifying the need for a greater understanding of the professional identity of the professional school counselor including clearer roles and responsibilities (ASCA, 2005; Schwallie-Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003).

Discussion

Within the context of the current study and in relation to literature surrounding models of school counseling, the authors have identified four recommendations for building collaboration between professional school counselors, school counselor educators, and school administrators. The first recommendation is to give consideration to the incorporation of

learning communities and partnerships between counselor educators and educational leadership faculty. Given the proximity of many school counseling training programs to educational leadership programs it seems reasonable and pertinent that those faculty members from both domains to not only collaborate but also consider team teaching. The nature of the school environment is conducive to professionals teaming to meet the needs of the students. In fact, this is a theme identified by the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005). Based on this prevalent philosophy in public schools it is unclear why collaborative teaching and learning environments are not the norm in university training programs. According to Amatea and Clark (2005), it would be advantageous for school counselor educators to team teach and create learning communities with faculty in educational leadership programs, school psychology programs, and other related school programs to create leadership teams prior to students entering the field.

A second recommendation is to encourage faculty in school counselor training programs to educate emerging school counselors in ways that help them view themselves holistically (Ameta & Clark, 2005). More specifically, this involves teaching emerging school counseling students how to understand a holistic service approach and how to conduct themselves as school leaders. The research is limited regarding the number of school counseling training programs that actually facilitate this learning process for students. If school counselor educators were consistent in their delivery of curriculum for students that supported their role as collaborative school leaders, it might directly impact the consistency of how school counselors are viewed in the field as well as assist them in gaining support for implementation of the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling.

A third recommendation includes a responsibility of school counselor educators to offer support in the field to those providing direct service. Outreach by faculty to local school districts offering training opportunities and support for implementation of the national and state models to school counselors and administrators is essential. School counselors and school counseling faculty should consider presenting the models at state and national principals' associations. Universities in which school counseling programs are housed could offer free and continuing credit hours to school administrators and school counselors for training on the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling. Faculty internship instructors should consider meeting with principals to discuss and provide information and support regarding the implementation of the national and state models of school counseling as well as incorporating this topic in meetings with their school counseling student and the site supervisor during regular site visits. Faculty outreach and advocacy needs to go beyond words in a classroom through offering support in the field.

Fourth, the research in this study indicated there is a gap in the training, understanding, and support of the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling from both school administrators who have and do not have mandatory administrative training in place. In order for school counselors to fulfill their roles as set forth by the ASCA National Model, school administrators need to understand the role of the school counselor as delineated by ASCA, the importance of the school counselor in system-wide change, and the value of the national model as the foundation for a comprehensive school counseling program. Chata and Loesch (2007) explained that principals hold widely different views of the role of the professional school counselor and their responsibilities in the school. Kirchner and Schetfield (2005) offered another perspective suggesting, "it may not be principals' lack of understanding of counselor roles that leads to poor allocation of counselors' time, but the real demands of the work setting that impinge on both roles" (p. 13). This quandary warrants further investigation to add to the body of knowledge and understanding about the relationship between the professional school counselor and administration in the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study was facilitated with two northeastern states. To strengthen the study, larger nationally-focused research would be appropriate. Future research should consider including school counselors as well as administrators. This would aid in the investigation of the variance of school counselors' perceptions versus administrators' perceptions regarding model implementation. It would also be pertinent to further investigate the level of administrative team support for model implementation. Research should also be facilitated with school counselor educators to investigate the number of programs nationally that are teaching school counseling students to adhere to the ASCA National Model and state models of school counseling.

The survey, in order to encourage participation, was short in length. Future surveys conducted could include themes of the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling and give the opportunity for participants to identify such themes being facilitated in their schools. It is quite possible that the themes, concepts, and foundations of the ASCA National Model and state-specific models of school counseling are alive and well in many schools. The challenge for school counselors and administrators may be to think about how to formalize and link counseling program services to models of school counseling. More specifically, it may be that schools are providing services that are consistent with professional school counseling programs, but are not yet identifying the link to the model.

It is essential to uncover the roadblocks to the support of the ASCA National Model and/or state-specific models of school counseling in order to advocate

more intentionally for the role and services of the professional school counselor.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions (to be facilitated through Survey Monkey) (attachment # 5)

1. Are you a (circle the appropriate title)?

Principal Vice Principal Other

2. What grade levels of students are in your building?

Elementary
Middle
Secondary/High School

3. Do you have a school counselor (s) working in your building?

Yes No

4. How many school counselors work in your building?

1
2
3
4 or more

5. Do you have knowledge of the ASCA National Model?

Yes No

If you answered yes, what does the acronym ASCA stand for?

6. Where did you learn about the ASCA National Model?

Principals' association
Colleagues
School counselor
School counseling association
Other

7. Are you aware of a state-specific school counseling model?

Yes No

8. If you answered yes to the above question, where did you learn about the state-specific school counseling model?

Principals' association
Colleagues
School counselor
School counseling association
Other__________________

9. Describe your understanding of the ASCA National Model and/or State-specific Model of School Counseling

10. What thoughts do you have on the relevance and/or importance of models of school counseling programs?

11. What do you see as the primary role of the school counselor? (check one)

Administrative Support
Teacher Support
Direct Student Support
Disciplinary/Vice Principal Role
Systems Support

12. Identify the responsibilities of the professional school counselor in your building or district.

13. How were the roles of the school counselor established in your building? (check/circle one)

ASCA National Model
Principal Established Roles and Responsibilities
School Board Established Roles and Responsibilities
Other________________________

14. Any other comments or questions?

Assessing Individual Student Progress: Meeting Multiple Accreditation Standards and Professional Gatekeeping Responsibilities

Virginia A. Kelly

Counselor education departments are often required to meet multiple accreditation standards that include assessment of individual student learning. Additionally, faculty in counselor education departments are responsible for acting as professional gatekeepers. The authors propose a model for assessment of individual student potential at the time of program admission. In addition, a comprehensive assessment process applied as students make the transition into clinical fieldwork is described.

Keywords: Assessment, gatekeeping, CACREP standards, NCATE standards, student progress

In an age of accountability and data-driven results, counselor education programs are challenged with devising mechanisms for assessing individual student progress. The 2009 Standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) call for systems of evaluation that incorporate the "assessment of student learning and performance on professional identity, professional practice, and program area standards." (CACREP, 2009, p.8). While this component of program evaluation is clearly outlined, a precise method for assessing individual student progress is absent from the standards and must be developed by counselor education departments.

In addition to meeting the CACREP standards, counselor education programs throughout the country are often required to conduct on-going self-assessment activities in response to other external forces and accrediting bodies (Rabinowitz, 2005). Regional associations of colleges and schools, including the New England Association of Colleges and Schools (NEASC, 2010) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2007) are examples of external accrediting bodies with a growing impact on the assessment activities in counselor education programs housed within schools or colleges of education in accredited institutions. The assessment requirements outlined by such bodies tend to rely on outcome-based measures of student proficiency and may or may not be easily linked with the CACREP standards for program level assessment, creating a set of challenges for counselor education departments.

In the context of a school or college of education, counselor education programs are often idiosyncratic. While they fit on many levels into this larger structure, there are aspects of training and expectations regarding students' professional behavior

that are unique to counselors. For example, counselor educators are responsible for ensuring that students display attributes and behaviors consistent with the American Counseling Association's ethical standards (ACA, 2005). This charge requires that counselor education departments move beyond assessment of specific counseling skills and content knowledge, and consider how to appropriately monitor and evaluate behaviors and attributes that are clinical and interpersonal in nature.

This notion of monitoring individual student progress within counselor education programs in non-academic areas has been addressed within the literature over decades (Bernard, 1975; Keppers, 1960; Sweeney, 1969), originally focusing on broad concepts such as selective retention and due process. These broadly defined practices then evolved to include identification and remediation practices in cases involving impaired students or students exhibiting behaviors inconsistent with ACA's Code of Ethics (2005) (Bemak, Epps, & Keys, 1999; Bradley & Post, 1991; Forrest, Elman, Gizara, & Vacha-Haase, 1999; Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995; Iovacchini, 1981; Olkin, & Gaughen, 1991). In 1999, Lumadue and Duffey proposed a model for evaluating trainee competence in counselor education programs in the context of "professional gatekeeping". This concept of gatekeeping has remained at the forefront in the body of literature pertaining to the evaluation of individual student progress in counselor education departments, and involves defining mechanisms for determining that graduate students possess and demonstrate appropriate clinical and professional attributes (Foster & McAdams, 2009; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Wilkerson, 2006; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). Foster and McAdams (2009) define gatekeeping as "the responsibility of all counselors, including student counselors, to intervene with professional colleagues and supervisors who engage in behavior that could threaten the welfare of those receiving their services" (p. 271), and describe the gatekeeping role as a fundamental obligation for faculty in counselor education departments.

The most current literature proposes an emerging theory whereby the gatekeeping function is conceptualized as consisting of three phases: (a) the preadmissions screening phase, (b) the postadmission screening phase, (c) and the remediation plan phase (Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). This theory was derived as the result of a study of eight counselor educators currently teaching in CACREP-accredited master's level counseling programs. Participants were interviewed and asked to describe how they define gatekeeping, how they conduct gatekeeping activities, and how they define their role as professional gatekeepers. All of the participants reported that the role of professional gatekeeping is important and represents a fundamental responsibility for counselor educators. Participants also held consistent views regarding how they define this role, indicating that professional gatekeeping involves the monitoring of individual student progress to ensure that impaired or incompetent practitioners are blocked from entering the field as professional counselors. In terms of conducting gatekeeping activities, themes emerged from the data reflective of the three-phase process described above.

The implementation of formalized procedures for conducting professional gatekeeping has been empirically supported (Gaubatz & Zera, 2002). These researchers found that the rates at which deficient students advanced through their programs without remediation were significantly related to the formalization of the gatekeeping procedures employed. Faculty

in programs that used more formalized procedures reported significantly lower rates of deficient students' slipping through the cracks to become professional counselors. In addition, the potential emotional and practical backlash of conducting gatekeeping activities has been shown to diminish with accurate identification of incompetent practitioners using behaviorally-focused methods of evaluating student potential and progress (Kerl & Eichler 2005).

Described here is a formalized, behaviorally-focused assessment system that has been developed and applied at the time of admission (preadmission), and prior to entry into clinical fieldwork (postadmission). Our goal has been to develop a model of assessment of individual student progress for departments of counselor education: practices that are grounded in theory, formalize gatekeeping procedures, and meet the assessment standards of multiple accrediting bodies. These assessment practices have been designed to provide a framework for making student-centered, data-driven decisions. The department under discussion includes CACREP-accredited school counseling and clinical mental health counseling programs. In addition, the counselor education department described here is housed in a Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions (GSEAP) that is accredited by NCATE (2007).

Background

In addressing assessment mandates, initial efforts were focused on the collaborative development of a conceptual framework for GSEAP designed to meet the NCATE standards for accreditation. Because this department is part of an institution of higher education with a long-standing and deeply ingrained mission, the conceptual framework was precisely reflective of this larger mission. In response to this conceptual framework, a unit-wide (GSEAP) assessment data collection system was developed to meet the NCATE accreditation standards for assessment. This assessment system includes five unit-wide proficiencies that are evaluated at five transition points along the training continuum. In accordance with the NCATE nomenclature of describing and assessing the acquisition of content knowledge, professional skills and professional dispositions appropriate to accredited disciplines within the specified unit, our unit (GSEAP) has linked the first proficiency to the acquisition and assessment of content knowledge and the second proficiency to the acquisition and assessment of professional skills. Because of this university's commitment the internalization of its mission, there are three proficiencies linked to the demonstration and assessment of appropriate dispositional attributes. These five unit-wide proficiencies are then assessed at the following transition points, as determined by individual departments within the unit (i.e., each identified proficiency is not necessarily assessed at every transition point): (a) program admission, (b) entry to clinical fieldwork, (c) exit from clinical fieldwork, (d) graduation, and (e) employment. We subsequently worked to link the NCATE assessment standards and the unit-wide proficiencies with the 2009 CACREP assessment standards for individual student progress (i.e., assessing student learning and performance on professional identity, professional practice, and program area standards). We paired NCATE nomenclature with the language used to describe assessment activities in the 2009 CACREP standards, and linked these standards to the unit-wide proficiencies (see Table 1). The described assessment

activities were then developed within this overarching framework and grounded in the emerging theory of gatekeeping.

Program Admission

In choosing assessment activities to implement at the time of program admission we deliberately focused on effectively assessing dispositional characteristics (i.e., attributes reflective of an appropriate professional identity) of program applicants. At this point along the training continuum, we do not expect applicants to possess a sophisticated knowledge base of the counseling profession (i.e., evidence of learning related to program area standards) or higher-level counseling skills (i.e., evidence of skills related to professional practice). Our goal at this point is to ensure that potential students possess professional attributes consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (2005). Disposition is defined as "a natural or acquired habit or characteristic tendency in a person or thing", suggesting that it may be difficult to teach this to students (iGoogle, 2010). Therefore, we deliberately focus efforts during this particular transition point on assessment practices that screen out applicants that may not possess dispositional attributes consistent with success as a professional counselor.

Admissions Process

We currently hold two rounds of admissions per academic year: one during the fall semester and one during the spring semester. We have conceptualized our admissions process under the assumption that there are quantifiable criteria that are predictive of successful completion of a graduate level program in counseling (Schmidt, Homeyer & Walker, 2009; Smaby, Maddox, Richmond, Lepowski, & Packman, 2005) and begin our admissions process with an application review. Using an Application File Review Rating Form (see Appendix A), faculty rate applicants on (a), writing proficiency (as evidenced in a written statement required with each application), (b), academic potential (as evidenced by undergraduate grade point average and grades in any graduate coursework that have been completed), (c), dispositional potential (as evidenced by experience as well as letters of recommendation), and (d), overall fit with the counseling profession and this program (as evidenced by the completed application packet). Items on the Application File Review Rating Form rate academic, clinical, dispositional, and overall potential. We have developed a scale for scoring this form that identifies applicants as below target, target or above target, as these categories are identified in the NCATE assessment standards as a methodology for making student-centered decisions. Applicants who receive target or above target overall ratings on the Application File Review Rating Form are invited to Admissions Day.

Admissions Day is a daylong experience that is comprised of informational panels presented by faculty and currently enrolled students, and group and individual interviews with a faculty/current student team. During the faculty panel applicants are introduced for the first time to the concept of on-going systematic assessment and our commitment to, and intentional emphasis on, professional gatekeeping. We present our shared view of the program-level assessment process, and emphasize that this process is anchored in our commitment to professional gatekeeping. We have conceptualized the role of professional gatekeepers as consisting of "acts of professional care and responsibility rather than as acts of betrayal or punishment" (Foster & McAddams, 2009,

p. 277), and we stress this characterization within the context of the faculty panel. Currently enrolled students then reinforce this theme during a student panel that allows applicants the opportunity to hear directly from students. Faculty are not present during this portion of Admissions Day, allowing the applicants to freely and openly interact with currently enrolled students.

During the group interview, applicants are presented with several scenarios and asked to discuss and process their reactions to the described situations. Our primary goal in presenting these scenarios is to screen for unprofessional behavior or attitudes that are inconsistent with the ACA Code of Ethics and admit students who are open to feedback, respectful of the learning process and committed to a high standard of professionalism. Examples of the scenarios we use include: (a) During a class a fellow student makes a comment that you find offensive based on your perception of intolerant racial or ethnic undertones. How might you respond?, and (b) Imagine you are a faculty member who has planned a mandatory meeting for students. One of the students expected to attend this meeting did not attend. When asked why she did not attend, she advises you that she simply could not fit it into her schedule. How might you respond to her answer? A faculty member and a current student facilitate this discussion and complete a Group Interview Rating Form (see Appendix B) on each of the participating applicants. Using a Likert-type scale, applicants are rated on their ability to listen and their demonstrated comfort with issues of diversity. This form also derives ratings of applicants' interpersonal skill level with items that measure the extent to which they function as a positive and contributing group member. In addition, applicants' ability to self-reflect is assessed with items that measure the extent to which they present personal reactions to the scenarios reflective of respect and openness to feedback.

Individual interviews are then conducted by a faculty/current student team and provide an opportunity to ask applicants specific questions. The individual interview begins with several open-ended questions. Subsequent questions focus on issues of diversity and social justice, again placing the emphasis on the assessment of dispositional potential, specifically as it relates to a personal orientation of inclusion, social justice, and advocacy. For example, applicants are asked: (a) Describe your experiences with diversity, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. How do you think these experiences will inform your work as a counselor? (b) How might you define social justice, and (c) How might you relate social justice to counseling? The interviewers then complete an Individual Interview Rating Form comprised of items that measure applicants' ability to think critically, present in a professional manner, provide answers reflective of openness to issues of diversity, multiculturalism and social justice, and demonstrate an ability to reflect on themselves in relation to others. Admissions Day ends with a debriefing session among faculty and student participants to review interview data. Following the debriefing session, participating students leave, and program faculty make the admissions decisions using the Counselor Education Admissions Summary Scoring Rubric (see Table 2). Using six items that summarize academic, clinical and dispositional potential for success in our department, this rubric includes composite scores based on applicants' ratings on the Application File Review Rating Form, the Group Interview Rating Form, and the Individual Interview Rating Form. A scoring methodology has been developed to identify below target, target and above target ratings on the

assessed attributes. Applicants identified with above target potential are accepted into the department, along with several applicants with overall ratings at the target level.

New Student Orientation

The final portion of our overall admissions process is a required New Student Orientation. We use this opportunity to further explore and define the role of gatekeeping as a fundamental component of our overall assessment process. We have developed a detailed student handbook that is distributed during this meeting. The handbook acts as a contract between the student and the department, and we stress the importance of referring to it on a regular basis. Included within the handbook is a "Verification of Understanding" that we have adapted from similar documents in use at Rollins College in Florida and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. We require students to sign and hand in the Verification of Understanding within the first week of the semester during which they begin their program of study. This process holds students accountable for reading and agreeing to the terms of the Counselor Education Student Handbook, the Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions Catalog, and the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2005). The Verification of Understanding also ensures that students have familiarized themselves with two forms we use throughout the program as assessment tools. These tools, the Evaluation of Counselor Behaviors (ECB) (Bernard, 2008), and the Interpersonal Characteristics Survey (ICS) (University of New Orleans, 1997), specify the precise clinical and dispositional-related behaviors that will be assessed throughout training and provide the incoming student with a transparent picture of assessment practices that will be implemented as they move through the training process.

Entry Into Clinical Fieldwork

The next major transition point along the training continuum is entry into clinical fieldwork. This transition creates assessment challenges for counselor education departments. Students who may have performed well up to this point because they are academically strong can encounter difficulties specifically related to taking on the role of professional counselor. Using standard-setting methods of evaluating student performance in areas that might not be easily assessed using strictly academic methods has been repeatedly established (Hensley, Smith, & Thompson 2003; Stephenson, Elmore, & Evans, 2000). To assess professional identity development (i.e., dispositional attributes) and levels of professional practice (i.e., skills) we have developed an evaluation process that we refer to as the Practicum Assessment. It is at this point along the training continuum that we have chosen to conduct a comprehensive, individual assessment of each student within the department.

Counseling Relationships and Skills

Leading up to the Practicum Assessment, and in preparation for this comprehensive evaluation, we collect specific and uniform data on students, assessing behaviors we have identified as important to success within our programs, at the end of the Counseling Relationships and Skills course. It is our expectation that students will take Counseling Relationships and Skills within the first semester they are enrolled in our department. This course involves the teaching and practicing of basic counseling skills, skills that might not be as

easily assessed in more didactic courses. We have identified this course as a marker for assessing students' professional identity development and their level of professional practice, providing us with details regarding potential for successful completion of the clinical training components within the program. In requiring that students take this course during their first semester, we are able to provide feedback on these non-academic components of training early on, allowing students and faculty to process this feedback before a tremendous investment into the training process has been made.

At the end of the Counseling Relationships and Skills course, we collect data on each student using a shortened version of the ECB (ECB-S) and the complete ICS. Because we use these assessment tools throughout their program of study, this experience provides students with an initial rating on the specific skills and behaviors measured via these tools, as well as a sense of their clinical and dispositional achievement at this early point within their training. In addition, using these behaviorally-focused tools allows us to make data-based decisions regarding individual students' fit within the counseling profession, as we have established quantitative criteria for below target, target, and above target performance.

Practicum Assessment Process

Once students have successfully completed the Counseling Relationships and Skills course, along with other prerequisite coursework, they can apply for Practicum. Students complete a brief Application for Practicum and we identify a faculty meeting in which we review all of the practicum applications for the upcoming semester. This review process involves a comprehensive assessment of each practicum applicant that includes assessing academic (i.e., learning and performance on program area standards), clinical (i.e., learning and performance on professional practice), and dispositional (i.e., learning and performance on professional identity) success and potential. We have refined and quantified this process, using the data that have been collected on all practicum applicants.

Current GPA is used to assess academic success and potential. Students' grades in the Counseling Relationships and Skills course, along with scores on selected items from the ECB-S administered at the end of Counseling Relationships and Skills are used to assess clinical success and potential. In addition, we use students' scores on the ICS and scores on a different set of selected items from the same administration of the ECB-S to determine dispositional success and potential. Finally, individual faculty impressions gathered through interactions with the identified students, possibly as instructors or advisors, are discussed and processed. Again, specified quantitative criteria that define above target, target, and below target scores in the areas of academic, clinical, and dispositional achievement and potential have been developed and each student is rated accordingly on what we refer to as the Practicum Rubric (see Table 3).

In addition to generating rubric scores and data for assessment purposes through this process, we identify specific feedback to impart to each student. Upon the completion of this faculty meeting, letters are sent to all practicum applicants that include specific feedback on academic, clinical and dispositional strengths and challenges. Students are required to meet with their academic advisor upon receipt of this letter in order to review their progress within the program to that point. This meeting is intended to support students as they transition into the intensive clinical

component of their training and provides an opportunity for faculty to act as professional gatekeepers.

As a result of the practicum assessment process, we are able to accurately identify issues of concern based on behaviorally focused assessment tools, and pinpoint specific skills that individual students can target as goals in subsequent courses and clinical fieldwork experiences. We provide specific feedback to every student at this major transition point, and we support our commitment to professional gatekeeping using this well-defined post admission screening process (Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). Individual meetings with an academic advisor offer additional support and encouragement to students as they begin their clinical work in professional settings.

Impact of Assessment Practices

The impact of the assessment practices described here has been tracked over the course of two academic years. During this time, we have held four rounds of admissions. While our acceptance rates for these admissions rounds remained consistent with rates over the past six years, current data further clarify why individual candidates were either accepted for admission or rejected. In fact, we are able to identify precise reasons for the admissions decisions made.

The current cohort of students in our programs represents the first group to participate in all of the practices described here. Therefore the data we have collected and analyzed thus far is limited. However, the number of students who have been asked to exit our programs has decreased. While a total of three students were asked to leave our programs over the two-year period prior to the implementation of the described assessment practices, none have been asked to leave over the past academic year. In addition, level of clinical and dispositional skills as measured on the ECB-S and the ICS has increased over the past two academic years, and Practicum Evaluation Scoring Rubric scores indicate an increase in the number of students rated as target and above target in clinical and dispositional areas. More sophisticated data analyses are not possible at the current time due to insufficient sample size. We are currently designing a study to evaluate the impact of these practices, expecting that we can conduct a substantial study within the next two academic years

The assessment methodology described here represents one department's attempt to develop a model for assessment of individual student progress that meets the multiple standards for accreditation often placed on counselor education departments. The implementation of this behaviorally-focused system has enabled this department to identify challenging student issues early on and with great specificity. Transparency surrounding our role as professional gatekeepers is a central theme within our department, and guides our assessment activities. These practices have provided the basis for developing a model for assessing individual student progress in counselor education programs that is anchored in theory and practice, and supports ongoing feedback.

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Appendix A

ADMISSIONS PROCESS - APPLICATION FILE REVIEW

Name: ____

Phone: ______________________ Email: ______________________

Undergraduate GPA: __________ Major: ______________________

Application for: MA in CMHC: _____ MA in School Counseling: _____ CAS:_____

Reviewer: ____

Please rate the candidate on the following criteria:

	Weak				Strong	UA*
Academic/Clinical Potential						
1. Undergraduate GPA	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Related coursework	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Graduate work	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Letters of recommendation	1	2	3	4	5	
Knowledge & Experience Base						
5. Related work experience	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Related volunteer experience	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Reported life experience	1	2	3	4	5	
Fit with program orientation and direction						
8. Ability to articulate an understanding of diversity issues	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Ability to articulate an understanding of counseling	1	2	3	4	5	
Communication Skills						
10. Written skills	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Professionalism of application packets	1	2	3	4	5	

*UA = unable to assess

Comments: invite for an interview: ______ reject: ______

Appendix B
GROUP INTERVIEW RATING FORM

Candidate's name______________________________ Date_____________________

Interviewer's name____________________________

Please rate the candidate on the following criteria:

	Weak				Strong
1. Professional presentation	1	2	3	4	5
2. Verbal expression	1	2	3	4	5
3. Evidence of bias	1	2	3	4	5
4. Ability to think critically	1	2	3	4	5
5. Ability to listen	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ability to relate to others	1	2	3	4	5
7. Level of enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5
8. Attending skills (voice tone, body posture)	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ability to be reflective	1	2	3	4	5
10. Ability to articulate an understanding of the counseling profession	1	2	3	4	5
11. Overall strength of the interview	1	2	3	4	5

Interviewer comments:

Author Note

Dr. Virginia Kelly is an Associate Professor at Fairfield University. She has conducted several presentations and consultations in the area of program-level assessment and assessment of individual student progress.

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Teaching the 6th Edition of APA Style of Writing in Counselor Education

K. Elizabeth McDonald

The development of professional voice takes practice. At present, little literature exists to aid counselor educators helping students develop their writing style and adjust to APA style in academic writing. The author provides practical suggestions for teaching APA to counselors-in-training and offers a teaching resource for use in the classroom. Suggestions include: addressing why APA style is used in the profession, joining with colleagues to emphasize the importance of writing style, modeling strong style, requiring the use of APA, providing feedback specific to style, using style focused peer review, and providing examples of strong APA style.

Keywords: APA, Counselor Training, Written Communication, Scientific Communication, American Psychological Association Style, Professional Voice, Writing Style

The American Psychological Association's (APA) style is standard not only for psychologists, but also for students and authors in the behavioral and social sciences such as counseling (APA, 2010). The APA manual has been translated into many languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and Chinese (APA, 2010) and is currently being translated into Arabic, French, Italian, Nepalese, Polish, and Romanian (Gasque, 2010). Although the APA manual has undergone six editions to improve the uniform style, to reflect new knowledge, and to demonstrate how it is acquired (APA, 2010), little literature exists providing a rationale as to why APA is suitable for some disciplines but not others.

Scholarly authors offer articles written to guide authors in professional journal publication (e.g. Davis & Sink, 2001; Granello & Haag, 2007; Kress, 2006; Prieto, 2005; Sink 2000). Unfortunately, this literature does not provide guidance to student authors, nor does it aid educators working to help develop the students' professional voices in the educational setting. The purpose of this article is to offer suggestions for effectively teaching APA style to counseling students. A resource paper about APA in APA style with recommended guidelines has been inserted in this article for use in the classroom. The resource at the end of this article is a working document for faculty and students to use to further develop the student practitioner voice in preparation for the professional setting.

Suggestions on Teaching APA

A review of the literature regarding APA and its importance to students and professionals resulted in the identification of two themes in the literature: (a) follow the guidelines for publication provided by the publisher (*Davis & Sink, 2001; Granello, 2007;* Kress, 2006; Prieto, 2005; *Sink, 2000),* and (b) adhere to the writing style guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (*Davis*

& Sink, 2001; Kress, 2006; Granello, 2007; Sink, 2000). The general themes do not address the importance of APA outside of professional publication (e.g. in academic writing). In other words, I found no argument for using APA style, but rather APA is presented as foundational without rebuttal (i.e. the *absolute* in the counseling profession of *exceptions*). Perhaps answering the "Why APA?" question, drawing parallels between APA and clinical work, and providing various resources will encourage students to see value in learning APA and stimulate valuable discussion regarding the importance of a professional writing voice in counseling. The following suggestions are not the only approaches to help counseling students master APA style. In addition to other creative methods not presented in this article, the recommendations outlined here can be modified to fit the specific needs and cultures of each classroom and student.

Address the "Why?" Question

The APA published the first printing of the APA 6th edition manual with so many errors that they provided an exchange service to patrons with the first printing (APA, n.d.). Students who question the purpose of APA style (a style so complicated that it causes difficulty for the authors and editors of the manual) are exercising critical thinking; they are providing evidence of thoughtful and deliberate judgment. It is appropriate, therefore, for counselor educators to present a rationale as to how APA addresses the writing concerns in our profession. In a study focusing on the *why* in program evaluation, Friedman, Rothman, and Withers (2006) state that "a structured, systematic, and deep inquiry into the 'why' question provides a rational means for deliberating about human values. This inquiry process provides a means for goal refinement and value alignment that also fosters team building and collaboration" (p. 202). Similarly, in the case of writing style in the counseling profession, inquiry may foster shared values, cohesion, and cooperation first in the classroom, and also in the profession.

First, address the uses and roles of writing skills in the profession. When faculty ask students to write papers, faculty are asking them to further develop their professional voice. Some students will go on to turn school papers into professional manuscripts, but for the most part, writing papers in graduate school is an exercise in presenting important information in an easy to understand and concise manner. Brevity, clarity, and precision (required in strong writing) are essential elements of a strong professional voice. Writing skills are particularly important for advocates for social change.

Advocacy, an ethical responsibility (ACA, 2005), often involves approaches that involve written communication. A developed professional voice can be beneficial in professional situations, such as a written petition to a client's insurance company for more sessions, presenting subpoenaed case notes about a client in court, and/or applying for grant money for a counseling agency. In other words, a developed professional voice, including APA style, can enable more effective advocacy for clients.

Next, provide a rationale for APA in the counseling profession over other styles, rather than presenting/demanding a set of rules without reasoning. Some students who object to APA may be more familiar with other writing styles, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2008) or Chicago Style (University of Chicago Press, 2010). While MLA is appropriate for the humanities (MLA, 2008), and Chicago is an

excellent inter-disciplinary style (University of Chicago Press, 2010), neither provides sufficient information for the social sciences. Specifically, neither MLA nor Chicago style prominently incorporates dates into the text as APA does. Dates are of particular interest in the social sciences, and certainly in counseling; cautious consumers of social science research proceed with care regarding older articles. Many cultural considerations (e.g. gender, racial and ethnic, spirituality) were viewed very differently in 1960, for example, than they are currently. The date of the research may impact the conclusions present day readers make from articles.

Draw similarities between APA rules and tangible clinical work. For example, when students paraphrase or summarize in APA style (rather than use direct quotes), they provide evidence of comprehension. Clients also prefer paraphrasing, summarizing, and reflection of content rather than parroting. Another tangible example of APA involves the use of headings and subheadings. A counselor-in-training recently shared the importance of headings in her clinical documentation. The counselor-in-training works with clients whose cases are already in the court system due to victimization and the case notes are at high risk for being subpoenaed. She states, "I must ensure that my case notes are clear, concise and professional, all the time. To make sure I get it right I use sub-headings…I find using sub-headings helps with flow and helps me to record data that is relevant" (D. Seldon, personal communication, March 29, 2011). APA has clear connections to clinical skills, but students do not always see these connections as the counselor-in-training above does. Draw early connections so students may create other connections they make on their own.

Providing a United Front

Find out about writing resources available through the university and in the department. Most universities have writing centers, tutors, or other resources; faculty and staff who offer these services may be willing to provide a classroom presentation on basic APA intricacies. Writing across the curriculum is "pedagogical and curricular attention to writing occurring in university subject matter classes other than those offered by composition or writing" (Bazerman, Little, Bethel, Chavkin, Fouquette, & Garufis, 2005, p. 9). Although initially conceptualized for younger students, writing across the curriculum certainly has something to offer for graduate students. The involvement of the entire institution of higher education provides the statement that writing is valued and that writing skills are never fully learned, but that writing skills are a process.

Work with colleagues to send the same message about the importance of writing formatting. Students know who expects developed writing skills and who does not. Joining together as a department presents a united front regarding the importance of professional voice. Counselor educators can minimize additional work by sharing resources (e.g. referral templates, APA templates, or the APA paper written in APA style). Work together to think of other creative ways to address the specific writing needs of current students.

Modeling writing best practices

Students learn by example and repetition (MacArthur, 2007). Instructors should hold themselves accountable to writing in APA style to provide positive reinforcement of APA formatting. Students are inundated hourly by written material that is not in APA style (e.g. newspapers,

magazines, virtually everything on the internet). Make sure that handouts, emails, and presentations use APA style (e.g. a reference list when posting in a discussion board, or emailing students) to provide both examples of scholarly writing and evidence of the value you place on APA style.

Requiring students to use APA style

The concept of practice leading to competence is evidenced through field experience requirements in counseling programs (e.g. the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2009). Just as counselors-in-training must practice counseling skills to gain mastery; students must also practice writing skills to gain competence. Reward student practice by incorporating writing style into grading rubrics; this will encourage students to learn and adapt to APA. If students have difficulty mastering APA, refer them to one of the available writing resources. Consider creating a standard letter to send to struggling students to empower students to seek writing assistance, while acknowledging the difficulty and uniqueness of APA style. This letter can be shared with other faculty to further enforce the importance of scholarly writing within the department.

Providing meaningful feedback

Feedback that is thorough and specific is most helpful to students who wish to improve writing skills; "the goal is to teach the writer, not just refine or fix the particular piece of writing" (Pressley, Mohan, Pingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007, p. 19). Meaningful feedback that teaches the writer, though, can take up precious time and cause frustration for instructors who find similar errors on multiple student papers. Faculty can use shortcut methods of providing feedback through the creation of documents that contain explanations of common APA errors. The running head, for example, is commonly incorrect in the papers of new counseling students.

Instructors who request that students turn in papers electronically can use the Autocorrect function in Microsoft Word to create meaningful feedback using the track changes function for common APA mistakes. Instead of simply typing "Not APA" next to the running head (or where it should be) faculty can create standard paragraphs for common APA errors and store them in Autocorrect. After the paragraph has been saved by the faculty member, a few keystrokes can provide a paragraph that includes (a) a statement about what the running head is, (b) the page number in the APA manual (2010) addressing the running head, (c) a link to the APA webpage that provides step by step instructions about how to format a running head, and (d) a link to a video that provides the same step-by-step instructions as a visual aid. The following is an example paragraph about the running head that faculty can create, save once, and insert, an infinite number of times, into student papers. The paragraph can be inserted into a comment box in track changes in the students' Microsoft Word document with the keystrokes "runn":

Your running head is not quite right. Think of the running head as the line that would enable the reader to organize your document if she dropped it in the parking lot with other student papers. The running head is tricky. Please see the APA manual (pages 41-51) or the APA paper I shared with you for more information. Please note that the running head is different for the cover/title page than it is for the rest of the document; APA provides step-by-step instructions on how to

make the running head on the cover different than the other pages: http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/running-head.aspx). I have also provided a template for you in the classroom that has the running head set up already.

Those who collect hard copies of student assignments can create a similar document with common APA errors and information paragraphs with the same information above. The APA errors can then be numbered and be distributed to students as a decoding document. Then, instead of writing the entire APA error out in the paper, the corresponding number can be written and the student can use the decoding document to identify the APA errors and further information.

The use of the "common APA error comments" may significantly shorten the time it takes to provide feedback. It should be noted, though, that the initial creation of this list can be time consuming. Consider working with others in the department or profession to create a thorough list while distributing labor, making sure to keep a copy of the codes for future reference.

Encouraging peer review for APA style

Peer review of writing has been used for improving writing for students in elementary (Pressley, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, & Raphael-Bogaert, 2007), secondary (Graham & Perin, 2007; Perin, 2007), and even graduate school (Hara, 2010). Peer revising, coupled with faculty instruction and support, can increase student writing success (MacArthur, 2007) and increase critical thinking and understanding (Schneider & Andre, 2007). Providing time in a physical classroom to review writing is one way to show support of peer review. Virtual spaces can also be created through online classrooms. Overt support for peer review of style may encourage students to review work without fear that they will be penalized for working together.

Providing strong examples

Examples from peers make writing more approachable and may increase student confidence in writing skills (Slade, 2010). Seek permission from exceptional student writers to share their work with others (ensure that identifying information is removed to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 2000). If the document is electronic, faculty can use track changes to highlight strong writing skills (e.g. a comment drawing attention to strong argument construction, critical thinking, use of literature to support points). Providing examples of strong student work in APA style may encourage other students to realize that it is possible to master their own writing (Slade, 2010).

Sample Paper in APA Style with Suggested Guidelines for Students

An excellent sample paper focusing on age and emotion is presented in the APA manual (APA 2010, p. 41); the paper presents a fine visual example, but does not address APA style in content. A document is included after this paragraph to provide a visual example of APA style while simultaneously presenting information about APA style. The following paper is not intended to be comprehensive; the APA manual is the comprehensive standard for which there is no substitute.

The sample paper that follows succinctly outlines common APA errors and is designed to be both an example and a teaching tool. While this paper cannot fulfill all needs of students with regard to APA style, it embodies and enables many of the suggestions in this article. The sample paper, for example, addresses the *why* question for

some of the elements of APA style (e.g. "headings help the reader to know the purpose of the section and allow for others to refer back to a section easily"). Faculty can use the paper to provide a united front by presenting this (or another) example in each class, thereby stressing the importance of APA style. This sample paper also models best writing practices by serving as a strong example; it provides content about APA style in APA style. Finally, the paper can be used to provide feedback from the instructor (e.g. "please see the APA sample paper on page 3 for requirements on how to set up a title page") as well as a model for peers to provide feedback.

The sample paper is intended to be a beginning tool for students new to APA formatting. Once the student has a firm grasp of the basic tenants of the APA writing style, the student should look to the APA manual to fine-tune writing in accordance to other key areas (e.g. reducing bias in language, references, and reporting statistics). This sample paper may be especially helpful for students who find the APA manual daunting and could benefit from a more concise reference.

An Example of the American Psychological Association's Format

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An Example of the American Psychological Association's Format

The line above this paragraph is the title of the paper from the title page. It is not bold, and it is not a heading. Please also note it is not labeled "Introduction." There is no heading of "Introduction" in APA.

The purpose and format of the paper are introduced here. The purpose of this paper is to provide a basic written example of the format of the American Psychological Association (APA). The first section of this manuscript, APA Basics, is an overview of things used in all APA papers, including the title page and page headers. The next section, Citations and References, focuses on how to cite and reference citations, including the format of the reference page. The third section, Specific Concerns, handles special instances in APA that may or may not be utilized in an APA document (e.g., quotations, the usage of numbers, and seriation). Finally, I will present a conclusion section.

APA Basics

This section includes information about the standards used throughout every APA document. I will present standards for the entirety of the manuscript (e.g., spacing, font, margins, paragraph length, and person) followed by standards that should be included in every manuscript (e.g., title page, page headers, and headers).

Standards for the Entirety of a Manuscript

All typing in APA is double spaced. The acceptable font size is 12 point serif font (e.g. Times New Roman or Courier, although Times New Roman is often expected). The spacing between paragraphs should be set to zero. Margins are 1 inch on the top, bottom, and sides. Default font, margins, and spacing in Word documents are not APA standard; wise authors reset the standard margins to 1 inch and the standard spacing between paragraphs to zero. Authors

should maintain the lesson learned in fifth grade: all paragraphs should be at least three sentences in length.

Standards to be Included in Every Manuscript

This section is about standards that happen only once in a manuscript, including the title page and page headers. A title page is similar to a cover for a book, and is necessary for the front of every manuscript. Page headers ensure that the manuscript is in the correct order.

Title page. The title page is page 1 of this document. The title page consists of (a) the running head, (b) the title, and (c) the byline and institutional affiliation. The running head is an abbreviated version of the title of the paper, and it indicates what the page headers will be in the "header" of each page thereafter. In order to complete the running head, type an abbreviated version of the title in all capital letters. On the same line as the running head, place the page number flush right.

The title, byline, and institutional affiliations are center justified, in uppercase and lowercase letters, and positioned in the upper half of the page (nothing should be in the lower half of the page). The byline is the author's name. Institutional affiliation is the name of the university. Please note that the class name and number should not be included in the title page.

Page headers. Page headers are typography at the top of the page; they are separated from the body of the text. Think of page headers as insurance in the event that an instructor accidentally drops a stack of papers on a windy day and has to put them back in the correct order. Page headers go in the header field of a document (in Word, go to *insert>header*). Left align the text from the running head and right align the page number.

Please note that the title page has the phrase "Running head:" (capital 'R' lowercase 'h') before the running head is typed in all capital letters. This is different than all other headers in

the rest of the document (i.e., the phrase "Running head: TITLE OF PAPER" is only on the title page). In order to do this, please do one of the following: create a section break to keep the header from going onto page two, or manually enter the running head in the first line of text in the paper (i.e., go to *header and footer> different first page* in order to complete this in Word).

Headings. Headings are similar to chapter titles in textbooks. It is often helpful for the author to begin writing out the headings of the document before actually writing, as it provides the structure for the paper. Headings help the reader know the purpose of the section and allow for others to refer back to a section easily (e.g., information about headings can be found under the *Headings* section of *Standards to be Included in Every Manuscript*). Headings are never underlined, nor do they utilize bullet points or colons.

Levels of headings. There are five potential headings in APA, although authors may only use two or three. Regardless of the number of headings used, headings should always be used in order, beginning with level 1. It is rare to only have one heading; one level of heading offers little guidance to the readers as to the purpose/point of the document.

It is likely that most papers for school work will need three levels of heading. This document uses four levels of heading. Most literature reviews should be either three or four levels to provide direction and guidance to the reader. The format of each level is illustrated below:

Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading (level 1)

Left-Aligned, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading (level 2)

Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period (level 3).

Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with a period (level 4).

Indented, italicized, lowercase heading with a period (level 5).

Citations and References

Citations are credit given to authors in the text. When an author fails to cite others for their ideas, the author plagiarizes. References are included at the end of the document, and include all information needed for the reader to locate the original document (e.g., book, journal, website). The next section covers how to cite in text, followed by how to format the reference page.

Citations in Text

Document manuscripts by citing the author and date of the works utilized to compose the document. This allows the reader to quickly identify sources and locate the entire source at the end of the manuscript (in the references). In order to cite a source, first determine if there is/are (a) one author, (b) two authors, (c) three to five authors, or (d) six or more authors. An example of how to cite each of these appears here, both when the author's name appears as part of the narrative, and when it does not. Please note that "within a paragraph, when the name of the author is part of the narrative…you need not include the year in subsequent nonparenthetical references.…Do include the year in all parenthetical citations" (APA, 2010, p. 174). See the APA manual for more information.

One author citation. McDonald (2009) indicated that red, blue, and yellow helium balloons make her happy. Elizabeth is made happy by red, blue, and yellow latex helium balloons (McDonald, 2009). McDonald discovered that, within a paragraph, authors need not include the year of an already cited source in subsequent citations, so long as it is in the narrative and not in a parenthetical. Citing one author is rather straightforward (McDonald, 2009).

Two author citation. McDonald and Merk (2009) are not night owls. Night owls go *whoooo* in the night (McDonald & Merk, 2009). Always cite both names every time the

reference occurs in the text (McDonald & Merk, 2009). McDonald and Merk, however, discovered that the year need not be included in subsequent in-text citations as long as it is not in a parenthetical. Note that when citing multiple authors in the narrative, the word *and* is used, but when the names are in a parenthetical, an *&* is used (McDonald & Merk, 2009).

Three to five author citation. Hutchison, McDonald, Reed, and Datti (2006) are crazy people who like APA. It has been found that APA format makes most people very angry (Hutchison et al., 2006). Cite all authors the first time the reference occurs. In subsequent citations, include only the surname of the first author followed by *et al.* and the year in the first citation of the reference within a paragraph (Hutchison et al., 2006). Hutchison et al. found this very confusing, despite their masochistic passion for APA.

Six or more author citation. McDonald et al. (1979) are nutso. It is actually kind of nice when there are six or more authors, because only surname followed by *et al.* is cited (McDonald et al., 1979). Cite only the surname of the first author followed by *et al.* (with a period after *al.*) and the year for the first and subsequent citations (McDonald et al., 1979). In the reference list, however, instead of using et al., cite the first six authors, then use ellipsis points, then cite the final author).

Reference Page

The reference page is how readers can locate the original document. Start references on a new page at the end of the document. Type the word "References" in uppercase and lowercase letters, bolded, and centered at the top of the page. Use hanging indent format (the first line of each references is flush left, and subsequent lines are indented). The reference page of this document is on page 13.

Arrange entries in alphabetical order by surname of the first author. Remember: *nothing precedes something* (e.g., Brown, J. R. precedes Browning, A. R.). If there are two entries with the same author, the earliest date goes first. References with the same first author and different second or third authors are arranged alphabetically by the surname of the second author, or, if the second author is the same, the surname of the third author, and so on.

Periodical. A periodical is printed periodically, such as a journal. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference a periodical. Note only the periodical title and volume number are in italics. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of an article (and first letter of subheading if applicable) and any proper nouns, such as a place or name. Place a period at the end of the reference.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2009). Title of article: Subheading if applicable. *Title of Periodical in Italics, xx,* xxx-xxx.

Online periodical. An online periodical is posted online periodically, such as an online journal. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference an online periodical. Note only the periodical title and volume number are in italics. In the title, capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). For example, in the article "Night Owls Who Love Cheese," there is no period at the end of the reference in the references list. Include the article's DOI (provide the URL for the journal homepage if no DOI is available). The retrieval date and database information are not needed for scholarly articles retrieved from online sources. The website should not have a hyperlink.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2009). Title of article: Subheading if applicable. *Title of Periodical in Italics, xx,* xxx-xxx. doi:10.4179/0423198108282008

Nonperiodical. A nonperiodical is printed once, such as a book. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference a nonperiodical. Note only the *Title of work* is italicized. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of the article source (and first letter of subheading if applicable). Place a period at end of the reference.

Author, A. A. (2009). *Title of work: Subheading if applicable*. Goshen, IN: Publisher.

Part of a nonperiodical. An example of a part of a nonperiodical is a book chapter. After this paragraph, there will be an example of how to reference part of a nonperiodical. Note only the *title of work* is italicized. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of the article or chapter (and first letter of subheading if applicable). Place a period at the end of the reference.

Author, A. A. (2009). Title of chapter*:* Subheading if applicable. In A. Editor, B. Editor, & C. Editor (Eds.) *Title of work* (pp. xxx-xxx). Location: Publisher.

Online document. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference an online document. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). There is no period at the end of the reference. The website should not have a hyperlink.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2009). *Title of article: Subheading if applicable.* Retrieved month day, year, from http://www.source.com

Online multipage document created by a private organization. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference an online multipage document. If the date is given, simply omit n.d. (which stands for no date) and insert the date. Note only the title of the webpage is in italics. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). There is no period at the end of the reference. The website should not have a hyperlink.

Name of Organization. (n.d.). *Title of webpage: Subheading if applicable.* Retrieved month day, year, from http://www.source.org

Stand-alone online document, no author. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference a stand-alone online document. If the date is given, simply omit *n.d.* (which stands for no date) and insert the date. Note only the title of the webpage is in italics. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). There is no period at the end of the reference. The website should not have a hyperlink.

Title of webpage: Subheading if applicable. (n.d.). Retrieved month day, year, from http://www.source.org

Specific Concerns

There are many specific concerns that the APA manual addresses. This section presents a few of those concerns (i.e., quotations, seriation, i.e. and e.g., and the use of numbers). Please refer to the manual for more information.

Quotations

According to the APA manual, there are two ways to quote in a manuscript. One is applicable for quotes containing fewer than 40 words, and the other is applicable for quotes encompassing 40 or more words. An example of both is given here. See the APA manual for more information.

Quotations fewer than 40 words. Credit must be given to the source of information, regardless of whether it is a paraphrase or a direct quote (American Psychological Association, 2010). Quotations with fewer than 40 words "should be incorporated into the text and enclosed by double quotation marks" (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 292). More information about quotes can be found on pages 117-122 of the APA manual.

Quotations with 40 or more words. Quotations with 40 or more words should be used sparingly, if at all. At the end of the quote, after the punctuation, enclose the page number in a parenthetical. The APA (2010) manual said the following:

> Display quotations of 40 or more words in a double spaced block of typewritten lines with no quotations marks. Do not single-space. Indent five to seven spaces or ½ in. from the left margin without the usual opening paragraph indent. (p. 292)

Quotations from electronic documents. A special note should be given regarding quotations from electronic documents without page numbers. Cite paragraph numbers if given, indicated the abbreviation "para." in the citation (e.g., 2000, para. 17). If there are no paragraph numbers, cite the nearest preceding section heading and count paragraphs from there (e.g., Smith, 2000, Method section, para. 4).

Seriation

Seriation is the arrangement or listing of things in a series. To show seriation within a paragraph or sentence, use lowercase letters (not italicized) in parentheses. For example: Students correctly used APA format in the (a) margins, (b) title page, (c) page headers, and (d) headings. This will ensure that instructors are happy!

Use of "e.g." and "i.e."

The Latin phrase *Exempli gratia* (which means *for example*) has been shortened to *e.g.* in APA format. A mnemonic device to remember this may be helpful (e.g., if *example* were to be spelled like it sounds, it would start with *eg*). Use *e.g.* when the phrase *for example* can be substituted. Often *e.g.* is used when a complete listing is not possible (e.g., fruit), so examples are given (e.g., apples, bananas, and kiwi). The Latin phrase *id est* (which means *that is*) has

been initialized to *i.e.* in APA format. Use *i.e.* when the phrase *that is* can be substituted (i.e., when writing completely, not simply giving examples).

Numbers

In general, numbers nine and below should be expressed in words. Use numbers or figures to express numbers 10 and above. Do not begin sentences with numbers. See the APA manual for exceptions.

Conclusion

Just as fifth grade teachers instruct, every well-written document summarizes what was covered and identifies the most salient points of the paper. The last section is perhaps the most important section of the entire paper, as it clarifies the author's intention. Think of the conclusion section as the punch line to a joke; the rest of the information is important to understand the punch line, but without the punch line, the purpose of the joke is lost.

This document serves as a visual example and written direction of writing in APA format. It is not meant to be a substitute for the APA manual, but it lays the foundation for those who are new to the APA format. It covered the logistics of APA format including how to write a title page, format a document, cite and reference others, and conclude the document.

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Conclusion

This purpose of this paper is to initiate a discussion of the importance of APA style in professional writing for counselors-in-training. Counselor educators can provide a rationale for APA over other writing styles, describe the importance of writing in the counseling profession, and provide parallels between writing and clinical work to further develop student professional voice. Practical suggestions for teaching APA to counselors-in-training are offered as well as a writing resource for teaching writing in the classroom.

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