School Psychology Program Focus Group
Alumni 2007 – 10 Survey Results

Question #1 – There are five university programs in Kansas which train school psychologists. Why did you choose ESU’s program?

Responses:
1. Familiarity with teacher’s college, ease of getting into the program, more practical in approach, and less focused on research in field (training psychs to be in the field vs. training to be researchers with limited field knowledge)
2. Nationally certified program, supportive staff
3. Nationally accredited program, great faculty and staff, smaller class sizes
4. It offered online courses and took my transfer credit hours
5. ESU is known for excellence in developing educators.
6. Seemed like the best program. Liked the location. Liked the size of the school.
7. I liked the program and the advisor at the time, Dr. Sharon Karr.
8. It was an accredited program in a location that worked for my husband and me. I was also offered a position as a GTA which helped me pay my way through school.
9. It seemed to be a comprehensive program.
10. Allegiance to ESU and a program that fit my individual needs.

Question #2 – Looking back at your graduate program, what courses and program experiences did you find most helpful and why?

Responses:
1. PY 714, 841, 842. Most helpful in learning how to interpret information, write reports, and get an overall picture of students.
2. Crisis course, assessment courses, SPED law – Most applicable to profession at this time.
3. Crisis intervention, early childhood assessment, special education law
4. I found the law course most helpful because it was the course I learned the most in.
5. Practicum and internship are obvious as being the most helpful in my opinion because they provide real life application/experience. Seminar in School Psychology was a great class as well because it taught you what it is to really be a school psychologist.
6. WISC-IV class. Early childhood class. Testing classes. Law classes.
7. At that time it was a more traditional approach, so the Wechsler and Stanford-Binet courses were extremely important. Discussions regarding educational disabilities and procedures were very helpful. The collaboration/consultation course was also necessary.
8. The testing classes were helpful simply because we are required to administer so many tests. The law class was very useful in familiarizing us with our legal obligations.
9. The testing courses were very helpful in learning how to give the tests.
10. The special ed law class and the practicum experience.

Question #3 – If you could go back and change any aspect of your training, what would you want to do differently and why?

Responses:
1. I would like to have been more prepared in how to effectively handle staff that don’t see eye to eye with me and how to ease them into changes without damaging relationships.
2. I would like to have had another course in counseling. With a more non-traditional role, this is an area I feel less familiar with.
School Psychology Program Focus Group  
Alumni 2007 – 10 Survey Results

3. I would want more training on the role of the school psychologist and MTSS. Also more information on educational interventions.
4. The only thing I would add is a class that focuses more on academic interventions and understanding the academic areas even more. This is an area that took the longest to catch on in my real job experience because my undergrad degree was in psych. I think coming into the profession with a teaching degree is something I would consider to do differently, although it wouldn’t have helped me near as much with the analysis of behavior and people themselves that my psych undergrad degree gave me.
5. Add a class on how to write an IEP. How to hold a meeting. More daily stuff that a psych does – less theory stuff.
6. More special ed and reg ed law and procedures and required state forms. The more classroom experience, the better. Any early information regarding state forms would be helpful so students are somewhat familiar when entering the field, even as a practicum student.
7. I would have liked to see more training in the intervention (academic and mental health) area. Many districts are being said to ‘over identify’ students, so more training in prevention would have been beneficial.
8. No changes

Question #4 – What trends and new practices are you seeing in your job that ESU faculty need to be mindful or observant of as they prepare future school psychologists?

Responses:
1. Understanding mental health issues and how they affect students, moving towards more curriculum based measurements and less norm referenced assessments.
2. RtI/MTSS, character education, intervention
3. Academic/behavioral interventions and ways to support general and special education students – response to intervention effective models – school-wide positive behavior supports
4. The MTSS process and the amount of testing that the school psychologist completes which is not much unless there is a specific question to be answered.
5. I think ESU faculty are keeping up with the times well. I am a 2nd year school psych, so my training is still fresh. They need to continue to look at mental health because it is continually developing in that direction.
6. More on MTSS.
7. Differentiated instruction, RtI/MTSS, multicultural needs, Ruby Payne
8. I think it would be useful to explore some of the other tests (other than the WJ-Achievement and WISC) that are being used to identify students and gather information. Also, in the push toward RtI/MTSS, it would be useful to have more intervention training.
9. The push towards RtI and what a school psychologist’s role will look like. I do progress monitoring for many students. Student intervention teams also look to school psychologists to interpret data and speak in terms everyone understands.
10. Our role as a mental health “expert” and more experience with counseling students.

Question #5 – What additional recommendations do you have for the faculty to produce effective school psychologists?
Responses:
1. Expose psych students to more curriculum based materials. They need to be very familiar with DIBELS, Aimsweb, EasyCBM, etc. and be able to interpret results as part of a whole.
2. Continue to set high standards for all students in the graduate program.
3. I think some of the special education classes that were online would have been more meaningful if they were traditional classes. For example, the sped consultation class would have been more meaningful if it was more traditional and we could role play consultation and hear lectures on effective consultation versus just reading about it.
4. Keep on truckin’!
5. Is a thesis really necessary for the daily aspects of the job? I like that you are allowing a ‘project’ now, instead.
6. Higher expectations. I had several practicum students in the recent years whose work ethic was definitely not as strong as it needed to be. They did not seem as committed to the profession or students as I felt they should have been.
7. All in all, I felt it was a great program. I much prefer the practicum experience setup to that I’ve seen from other universities. Anything ‘hands-on’ in preparing us is always useful!
8. A course with more in-depth interventions for both behavior and academic skills would be helpful for future students as well.
9. I truly believe that classroom experience is priceless. It should be a prerequisite.