



Incorporating Student Perspectives in Program Review and Planning



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Introduction

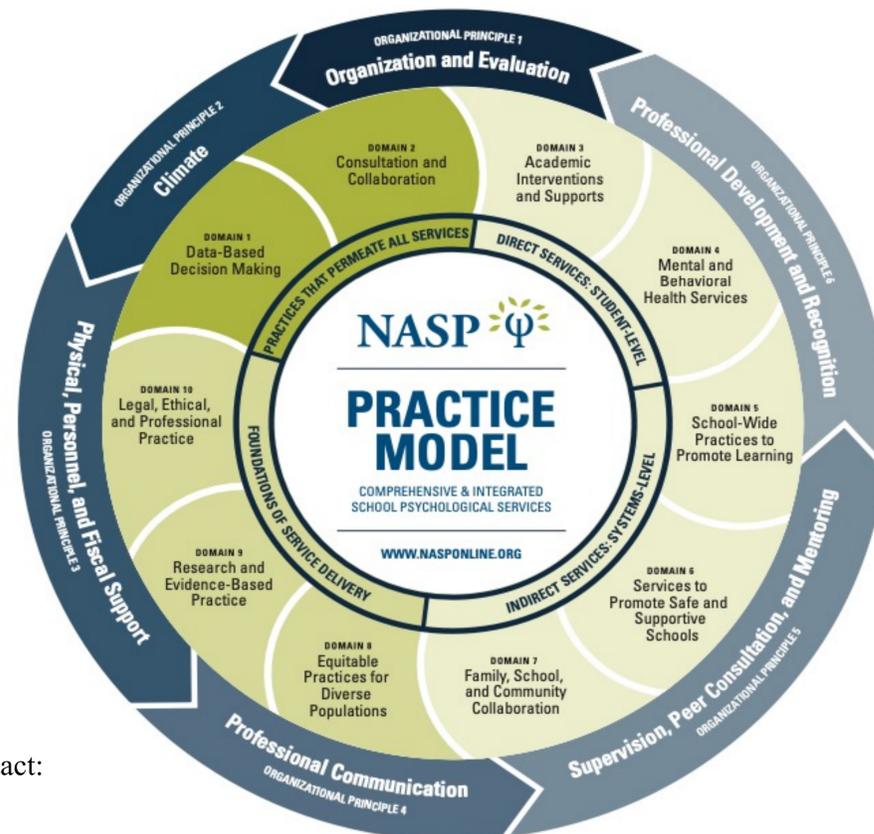
School Psychology graduate programs provide students with frequent and ongoing opportunities to develop and apply their skills within a comprehensive framework. To ensure students receive quality training, completing a thorough and holistic program evaluation is paramount for understanding student progress and needs. The ideal survey would also provide valuable information for program adaptations that may be needed moving forward. Currently available self-assessments do not fully capture program-wide trends or otherwise limit the ability to analyze data across cohorts of graduate students. Therefore, this project hopes to address gaps in the current field by integrating insights from current students on their perspectives of the quality and comprehensiveness of their educational, clinical, and research experiences. The goal of this program evaluation survey is to assess the status quo, quality, and effectiveness of one midsize university's School Psychology graduate program from the perspective of currently enrolled graduate students (EdS and PhD).

School Psychology Practice Model

The current project centers around preparedness and experience concerning the National Association of School Psychologists Practice Model. The model includes ten collaborate yet distinct domains, including:

1. data-based decision making
2. consultation and collaboration
3. academic interventions and supports
4. mental and behavioral health services
5. school-wide practices to promote learning
6. services to promote safe and supportive schools
7. family, school, and community collaboration
8. equitable practices for diverse student populations
9. research and evidence-based practices
10. legal, ethical, and professional practice.

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Methods

Survey

The current survey was developed using Qualtrics, with the goal of utilizing Thurstonian Item Response Theory (IRT) analysis to better understand school psychology graduate students' experiences and perspectives of their training and preparedness. The survey involves a variety of statements regarding academic and applied experiences, in which participants are then asked to rank-order NASP domain skill development based on experience area.

Sample Item

“Rank the following practice domains on which has been most helped by school-based experience from the school psychology graduate program.”

Respondents rank the 10 NASP practice domains from most to least informed by their school-based experiences.

Analytic Framework

Thurstonian IRT provides researchers with access to excessively more information from a more efficient number of items required from respondents. For this survey, graduate student participants rank-order NASP practice domains on 12 different ratings, allowing the researchers to generate approximately 540 items. Within the forced-choice design of the items, participants will not be able to leave any rankings blank, nor will they be able to exclude answer choices from ranking; this will minimize (or eliminate) missing data from participants. Minimizing the impact of missing data is especially important due to the small sample size available for this survey.

Discussion

The researchers plan to share the analyzed data from this project to collaborate with stakeholders around future program directions, refining practices, celebrating successes, and continuously improving the development process for all students. Based on preliminary data completed by graduate students across both campuses and in all years of the program ($N=9$ respondents that completed most of the survey, $N=13$ for partial completion). Several trends were identified after initial analysis, across various contexts (i.e., coursework, mentorship, communities) equitable practices for diverse populations were ranked lower than other practice domains. Most frequently participants self-reported strengths in data-based decision making, along with research and evidence-based practice. Participants also ranked their greatest development needs around consultation and collaboration, along with school-wide practices to promote learning.

Future directions of this research include increasing participation in the survey tool to improve representation of the various perspectives and experiences of current and future students. Finally, collaboration with program faculty and graduate students to ensure this information saturates all aspects of current and future student experiences, all with aim of building the field of comprehensive school psychology.