



Considerations for Portfolio Evaluation in School Psychology Internships

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Internship Portfolios

Key Elements (Lee, 2005)

- Stated purpose (e.g., showcase, documentation, evaluation)
- Authentic works
- Clear scoring rubric – reliable, valid criteria

Purposes

- **Direct:** Assess competence - skills in NASP Practice Domains
- **Indirect:** Assists us in monitoring real-world practice to inform training

Establishing Requirements

- One approach is use of a summative evaluation portfolio. Students submit and faculty critically evaluate actual products from the internship (e.g., evaluation reports, summaries of intervention cases, summaries of experiences such as in-service training design and implementation).
- Some programs, such as at UHCL, use a predefined grading rubric to evaluate each portfolio product according to specific, multi-component criteria.
- Elements of the rubric are calibrated in alignment with the faculty’s appraisal of current evidence-based practice in each domain. Required work products are selected to reflect the range of skills described in the NASP Practice Model.

Challenges

Dissonance: What We Teach vs. Intern Experience

- We train our students with the most up-to-date evidence on how to best serve students in the schools, but pressures from “real-world” practice contexts may punish practitioner use of optimal assessment and intervention procedures and reinforce lower value but more expeditious practices (Farmer et al., 2021).
- How to best evaluate student skills during their internship experience?
- Use of an evaluation portfolio with operationalized criteria and grading rubric may seem practical and meaningful.
- However, received products often deviate from what is expected from the rubric and instead reflect what the intern was asked to do by their supervisor or district policy (see Examples below).
- The key question then becomes “Should the standard for passing be products that align with how we teach them (presumed “best practice”) or is it acceptable for them to be reflective of “real world” practice?”

Examples		
Product: Element	Portfolio (Rubric) Standard	Practice Deviation
FBA/BIP: Number of behavioral targets	Identify 1 (or rarely 2) behavioral targets	Local practice often expects 3+ behavioral targets
MDR: Review of data	Interview all relevant parties, including the student	LEA policy only allows an administrator to speak with student about the incident
MDR: Rationale	Provide a written rationale for answers to the “Two Questions”	Not expected/included in IEP team deliberations or documentation
Counseling: Progress Monitoring	Progress monitoring data must align clearly with articulated goal(s)/objective(s)	LEA uses template progress monitoring, with resulting misalignment of goals/objectives and measurement scale

References:

Farmer, R. L., Zaheer, I., Duhon, G. J., & Ghazal, S. (2021). Reducing low-value practices: A functional-contextual consideration to aid in de-implementation efforts. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 36*(2), 153–165.

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Lee, S. W. (Ed.) (2005). *Encyclopedia of school psychology*. SAGE Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412952491>

Suggestions

Faculty Support – Faculty can provide direct training support via consultation with interns on product completion during internship, to fill in potential gaps in skills application.

Considerations: balance of support vs. over-reach; supervisor’s jurisdiction of practice

Addendums – Allow interns to submit reflective addendums to the products, demonstrating awareness of best practice, to substitute for ‘missing’ elements in actual cases. **Considerations:** allows flexibility for specific products and practices while ensuring the student understands EBPs; reduced authenticity of products

Discussions – Discuss the dissonance during core classes prior to internship and in monthly intern meetings.

Considerations: Reframe the portfolio vs. real-world ‘problem’ as an opportunity for training. This dissonance foreshadows likely future experiences as a school psychologist (best practice vs. real-practice). Discussions provide a vehicle for talking about how to handle this as a professional—promotion of high standards of practice and being an agent of change in the schools.

Research Product: A Unique Problem

The research product is the only one we include in the portfolio that is not typically completed on internship. Recently, we have discussed the value of shifting from the current requirement of a research paper to an applied product such as an action-research project.

- **Value.** Allows assessment of direct application of a skill during internship. Practical application of this competency--solving a site-specific problem using basic research skills.
- **Potential Barriers.** *Time:* another “thing to do” during a busy intern year. *Feasibility:* will site supervisor have ability to supervise such a project?