



## Trainers of School Psychologists

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# Mastering the Mock Intern Interview: Ensuring a Meaningful Experience for Practicum Students

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## Abstract

There are significant regional differences in the availability of internship opportunities and internship stipends (Prus et al., 2014), creating a lucrative market for current practicum students in school psychology. Landing the right internship has the potential to unlock future opportunities for budding professionals. Mock interviews have proven to be a valuable tool to help students successfully prepare for the real interview (Huss et al., 2017). That National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) offers a toolkit designed for graduate students offers some guidance on preparing application materials, but offers almost no advice on the interview and etiquette secure the internship opportunity. The Mock Interview Process (MIP) is designed to prepare candidates for their internship interviews through a student-led process that reflects a practical and real-world focus on the internship interview and preparation procedures. This cross-sectional study aims to explore the MIP's effectiveness by measuring its impact from the students' perspective. This research will focus on collecting feedback from student participants before and after participating, including experiences from previous years. Gathering student feedback can promote successful strategies to use in future MIP implementations at different graduate programs.

## Learning Objectives

- Understand the steps in facilitating the Mock Interview Process (MIP)
- Interpret student's perceptions of what they thought to be most impactful when participating in the MIP
- Discover methods for utilizing this high impact practice in school psychology programs

## Methodology

### Participants

18 current graduate students and alumni from in BSU's school psychology program who participated in the Mock Interview Process (MIP).

### Materials

- Sample writing prompt and interview questions collected and developed based on previous internship interviews
- Online survey questions and responses
- Written and recorded focus group responses

### Implementation Feedback Materials

- Focus group protocol of 6 questions:
  - Questions 1 - 2 focused on successes of the MIP
  - Questions 3 - 4 focused on growths for the MIP
  - Questions 5 - 6 focused on topics to practice in future MIPs
- Online feedback survey of 11 questions:
  - Questions 1 - 2 focused on general demographics of the participant
  - Questions 3, 6 - 8 focused on feelings of preparedness from the MIP
  - Questions 4 - 5 focused on feedback on topics addressed during the MIP
  - Questions 9 - 10 focused on how beneficial it was to participate in the MIP
  - Questions 11 focused on general suggestions and feedback for future MIPs

### Procedures

Gathering feedback on BSU's MIP consisted of:

- Administering and hosting the MIP for current cohort of practicum students (Dec. 2022)
- Create survey and discussion questions based on content, standards, and practices that have been consistently used for the MIP (January 2023)
- Send out online survey via email and text for participants to fill out (Jan. 2023)
- Facilitate focus group conversation with current practicum students (Feb. 2023)

## Results

### Feelings of Preparedness

After participating in the MIP, half of participants felt somewhat prepared and 22% felt prepared to take part in their internship application process. Some topics repeatedly mentioned that participants wished were covered in the MIP were counseling, case scenarios, sharing out personal experiences, and reviewing application materials.

### MIP Areas of Success

When reflecting on their experience, 89% of participants found that the interview question panel was the most helpful part of the MIP. Two-thirds of participants thought that taking part in the MIP experience was worth the time or effort to participate in.

### MIP Areas of Improvement

Results revealed a general trend in wanting all stages of the MIP to take place earlier in the Fall semester than when it is currently being held. Participants also voiced that they wanted to see more participation in the MIP from current interns and professionals in the field.

### Focus Group Feedback

Major takeaways from current practicum students showed interest in starting the MIP-related activities earlier in the Fall semester. To better prepare, students voiced interest in having workshops related to internship preparation during class time. For future MIPs, students suggested focusing the interview more on case scenarios and have less emphasis on the writing sample based on their own recent experiences interviewing.

### References

- Huss, R., Jhileek, T., & Butler, J. (2017). Mock Interviews in the Workplace: Giving Interns the Skills They Need for Success. *Journal of Effective Teaching*, 17(3), 23-37.
- Prus, J. S., Colvard, H., & Swerdlik, M. E. (2014). The prevalence of paid school psychology internships in the United States. *Communique*, 23(3), 1, 28-30.

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