



Trainers of School Psychologists

A BOLD New Approach: Preparing Our Trainers to Counsel in Dual Pandemics

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Abstract

Bowie State University Building Online Learning Disciplines Parent Initiative (BSU BOLD) was designed to address the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial/social justice through a holistic lens that recognizes that stress and trauma can negatively affect the brain and body (Bremner, 2006). In addition, this initiative wanted to address the reality that these dual pandemics were disproportionately impacting the African American community at a higher rate (Vasquez, 2020). This research was a qualitative investigation on the impact of using a curriculum rooted in mediated learning strategy (MLE) and social-emotional learning (SEL) on school-aged African American children and families. It focused on the qualitative experiences of 5 BSU graduate student trainers who designed a counseling curriculum using MLE and SEL that would be used to lead weekly student sessions with school-aged children. Before counseling, graduate students attended several hours of trainings hosted by BSU school psychology program's professors and MLE/SEL experts.

Objectives

- To prepare graduate students to gain a level of mastery in the mediated learning experience (MLE) and social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks
- To create a culturally responsive counseling-based curriculum for primary students that can be implemented virtually
- To identify lessons learned for graduate students in the implementation of an online responsive counseling-based curriculum with school aged students

Methodology

Participants

Five graduate students enrolled in BSU's school psychology program served as training assistants and lead trainers for the BSU BOLD student component.

Materials

- Curriculum and lesson plans designed by graduate training assistants
- Lesson plan fidelity checklist
- Guided workshops in MLE and SEL practices
- Recorded Zoom counseling sessions and meetings

Implementation Feedback Materials

- Focus group protocol of 10 questions focusing on administrative structure, skill development or professional growth, curriculums that did not work, successes, challenges or hurdles, recruitment and external or contextual roadblocks
- Graduate trainer survey consisting of 11 questions focusing on professional growth, reflection on experience, and relevancy to the school psychology profession

Procedures

To prepare for conducting BOLD sessions, graduate TAs:

- Attended seven one-hour trainings that focused on MLE practices and curriculum development (December 2020 - April 2021)
- Collaborated together to develop a scope and sequence with lesson plans
- Hosted weekly BOLD sessions and received feedback on implementation immediately after lesson (February 2021 - May 2021)
- Attended Weekly meetings focusing on SEL practices and reviewing BOLD lessons (February 2021 - May 2021)
- Took part in a focus group sessions led by an internal evaluator and completed a survey summarizing their experiences (May 2021)

Results

- All graduate TAs noted a growth in skill development, some noting to have obtained mastery, in MLE, SEL, counseling, and curriculum development
- Majority of graduate TAs agreed that they have acquired the tools needed to address dual pandemics of COVID-19 and Racial Justice
- All graduate TAs agreed or strongly agreed that the content learned in BOLD training is relevant to their career in school psychology

Graduate Training Assistant Testimony

"It has allowed me to become an effective school psychologist intern through incorporating the lens of MLE into my practice of working with students and teachers."

"I think this experience helped me learn how to be flexible and work with what you have which is a huge part of the school psychology field."

"It allowed me to practice a lot of the skills I would need as a school psychologist such as patience, empathy, and data entry/analysis."

"I have already been able to see how my experience in BOLD has helped me be more prepared in counseling environments during my practicum training."

References

- Bremner J. D. (2006). Traumatic stress: effects on the brain. *Dialogues in clinical neuroscience*, 8(4), 445–461. <https://doi.org/10.31887/DCNS.2006.8.4/jbremner>
- Vasquez Reyes M. (2020). The Disproportional Impact of COVID-19 on African Americans. *Health and human rights*, 22(2), 299–307.

Acknowledgements

Maryland Governor's Office GEER Relief Fund

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