



Hybrid interdisciplinary training for school psychologists and special educators: Opportunities to promote skills for collaboration and address personnel shortages

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Abstract

With a goal of supporting high-quality interdisciplinary hybrid training that will be sustained over time, school psychology and special education faculty at Michigan State University collaborated on a redesign of the Ed.S. program in 2020-2021. The redesigned 9-semester program includes 1 day per week of in-person classes for 4 semesters, and several online courses originally targeted for students in the online MA in special education program. In addition to having multiple opportunities for school-based collaboration (all special education coursework is applied), the Ed.S. program redesign has facilitated opportunities for school psychology students to participate in paid part-time school psychology apprenticeship positions. With support from a federal training grant, substantial process and outcome data are being collected and used to inform changes to the program over time. A summary of program activities, as well as initial data on student perceptions is shared.

1. Background on State Needs and Difficulties Attracting Students

- A fall 2019 survey of all 56 intermediate school districts in Michigan suggested a need for more than 100 additional school psychologists in 2020 (Kanouse, personal communication, 2020).
- From 2015-2020, there was a steady decline in enrollment within the School Psychology Ed.S. Program at Michigan State University (MSU).
- Increasing tuition rates + a decrease in guaranteed assistantship opportunities for Ed.S. students were identified as factors contributing to the enrollment decline.

2. Drawing on Existing Institutional and Statewide Strengths and Opportunities

- The MSU College of Education is a leader in online/hybrid program development, with **five** online masters programs ranked in the top 10 according to *US News and World Report*, and 10 online/hybrid masters program total.
 - University-based incentives are provided for developing new online/hybrid programs
- Two tenure-stream faculty members serving the MSU special education online masters program had considerable expertise in literacy and assessment, including one with the NCSP.
- Strong interest among school districts to create Grow-Your-Own programs and part-time paid positions to align with hybrid school psychology training to address personnel shortages

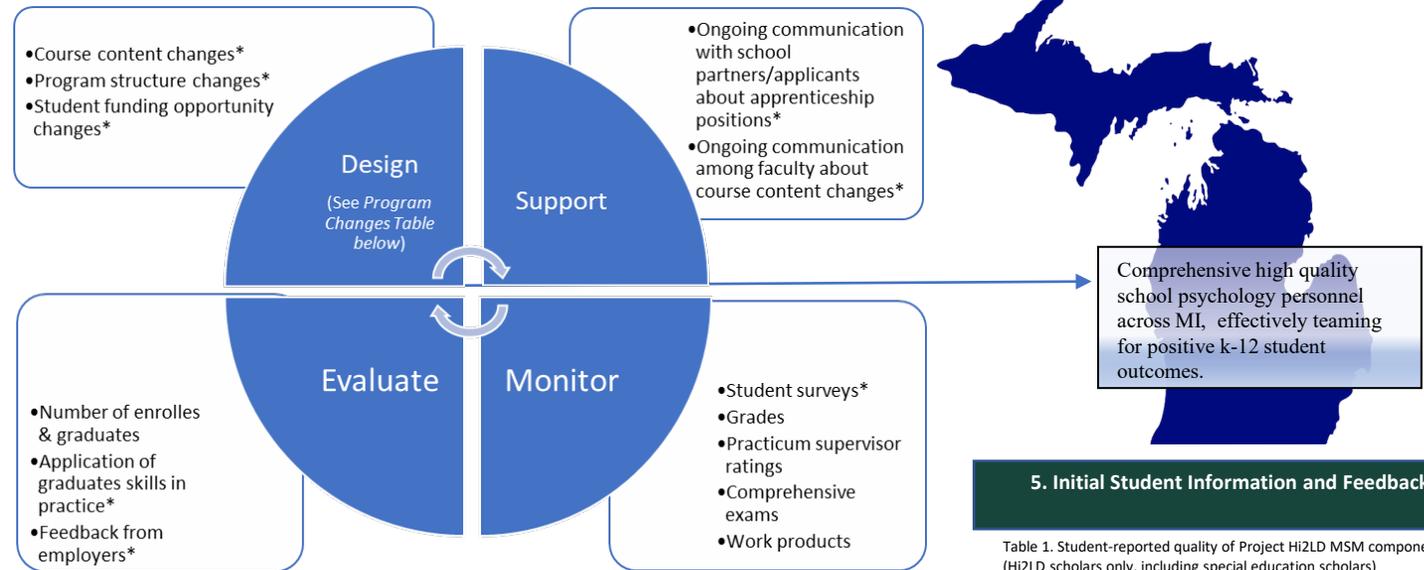
Reference: Kanouse, S. (personal communication, 2020). *Michigan school psychologist shortage survey*.

3. Opportunities Converge to Facilitate Hybrid Transition

- MSU school psychology and special education faculty collaborated in development and successful funding of an OSEP training grant (Project Hi2LD) to offer a multidisciplinary specialization for school psychologists and special educators in data-based individualization (DBI) that simultaneously supports transition of the in-person Ed.S. program to a hybrid school psychology program.

Michigan SMART bill funding offered to districts to develop school psychology apprenticeship positions that can align with hybrid training structure.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Hybridization of Ed.S. in School Psychology Program



*New activities supported through Project Hi2LD (OSEP-funded training grant)

4. Program Changes

In-person	Hybrid
Course content	
Heavy theory emphasis; taught by educational psychology faculty	Heavy evidence-based practices emphasis; taught by special education faculty Monthly seminar modules (MSMs) focused on DBI optional for all students; required for top students (i.e., Hi2LD scholars)
Program structure (first two years)	
12 credits in AY semesters; 3 in summer	9 credits in fall/spring/summer
3-4 days/wk on-campus	1 day/wk on-campus (Tuesdays)
Changes in opportunities for student funding	
Top students offered graduate assistantships.	All students have access to paid part-time school-based positions that aligned with program structure *Top students (Hi2LD scholars) have access to two years of tuition coverage

5. Initial Student Information and Feedback

Table 1. Student-reported quality of Project Hi2LD MSM components (Hi2LD scholars only, including special education scholars)

	Mean (SD)
The quality of the video presentation(s)	4.6 (0.6)
The quality of the required reading(s)	4.4 (0.6)
The quality of the assignment description	4.5 (0.7)
The quality of the discussion thread(s)	4.3 (0.7)
Overall the amount of learning I experienced	4.3 (0.8)

NOTE: Components of seminar modules were rated by students each month on a scale of 1 (inadequate) to 5 (Excellent).

Table 2. Student perceptions of hybrid programming (N = 5)

	Mean (SD)
I felt part of a learning community	4.2 (1.8)
On-campus time was worth the time investment	4.0 (1.7)
I would recommend this hybrid program to others	4.0 (1.7)
My fall school psychology courses were helpful	4.0 (1.7)
My fall special education courses were helpful	3.8 (1.6)

NOTE: These statements were rated by students for their experiences in fall semester 2022 on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

Table 3. Student experiences with school psychology apprenticeship positions (N = 5)

	% agreement
The paid position I current have in a school setting has been manageable in light of program requirements.	80%
The paid position I currently have in a school setting allows me to practice my developing skills as a school psychologist.	100%
I enjoy the paid position I currently have in a school setting.	100%