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ABSTRACT

School counselor education programs are challenged to reassess whether they are providing their students with optimal internship learning experiences. This paper examines the evolution and design of one school counseling fieldwork program. It discusses the implications for school counselors who serve as site supervisors for counselors-in-training. Tools are provided for assisting programs in their own assessment and evaluation process that recognizes the variation in programs and student needs. Although the primary responsibility for internship programs lies with the university, it is essential to collaborate with local school districts, particularly with the school counselors who function as site supervisors for school counselors-in-training. (Contains 25 references.) (JDM)

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Maximizing Internship Experiences for School Counselors-in-Training

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Abstract

School counselor education programs are challenged to reassess whether they are providing their students with optimal internship learning experiences. In this context, the evolution and redesign of one school counseling field work program is examined. Implications for school counselors who serve as site supervisors for counselors-in-training are discussed. Recognizing the variation in program and student needs, tools are provided for assisting programs in their own assessment and evaluation process.

Maximizing Internship Experiences for School Counselors-in-Training

The school-based experiences in which school counselor education students engage during their semesters of internship have the potential to provide school counselor trainees with some of the most valuable preservice learning that they will encounter. Typically, the internship is the school counselor trainee's first extended opportunity to apply theory to practice. What can school counselor education programs do to ensure that their students obtain the most that they can from these experiences? How can those responsible for school counselor education programs best utilize the skills and expertise of both the school counselors who provide site-based supervision for the school counselor trainees and the faculty who serve as university supervisors for these students?

Obviously, there is no one answer to either of these questions; in fact, an internship model that works well for one program could be ineffective for another. Yet, given the importance of the internship experience in the school counselor trainee's development, individual counselor preparation programs must adequately explore these questions if they are to do justice not only to their students, but also to the K-12 students who will be the recipients of the services provided by future school counselors.

Much as been written about the need for appropriate clinical supervision for practicing school counselors (e.g., Blocher, 1983; Christman-Dunn, 1998; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Hogan, 1964; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Stoltenberg, 1981; Williamson, 1999), the lack thereof (e.g., Borders & Schmidt, 1992; Boyd & Walter, 1975; Crutchfield & Borders, 1997), and the desire on the part of school counselors for such support (e.g., Borders & Usher, 1992; Roberts & Borders, 1994). Ironically, however, relatively little appears in the school counseling literature about the extent and quality of supervision that school counselors-in-

training receive, from either their site or university supervisors, when practicing in the field. Moreover, there is scant literature that can be used to guide or support school counselor education programs in determining a structure for the internship experience. Given that the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) states that internship and practicum requirements “are considered to be the most critical...elements in the program” (CACREP, 2001, III), this is a serious void.

The purpose of this article is to assist school counselor education programs in the process of self-examination and evaluation of the internship/field work aspect of the curriculum. Toward that end, I first discuss issues to consider when developing or revising a school counseling internship program. Secondly, I examine the invaluable role that practicing school counselors play as site supervisors for school counselor trainees. Next, I present the evolution and redesign of one school counselor internship (field work) program that struggled with the questions identified above. Finally, I provide a self-assessment tool designed to assist individual programs in determining how well they currently do in relation to various aspects of their internship programs as well as how important they believe that aspect to be to their programs’ effectiveness. I also share an evaluation instrument designed to assess students’ perceptions of their internship/field work experience. Recognizing the variation in terminology across states and programs, internship and field work will be used synonymously to describe the two semesters of school-based experience required of school counselor trainees that follows practicum and other site-based experiences required earlier in their program.

Issues to Consider in Determining an Internship Model

Among the considerations in developing or selecting a model for school counseling internship supervision are: professional (e.g., CACREP) and/or state standards, time/resources,

history, logistical issues, and focus of individual and group supervision sessions. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

Standards

According to the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), all counselor education students, regardless of specialization, are required to “complete a supervised internship of 600 clock hours that is begun after successful completion of the student’s practicum” (CACREP, 2001, III.H.). Accordingly, each student should receive “weekly interaction with an average of one (1) hour per week of individual or triadic supervision, throughout the internship” and “an average of one and one half (1 ½) hours per week of group supervision provided on a regular schedule throughout the internship” (CACREP, 2001, III.H.2, III.H.3). CACREP Standards further state that “[t]he practicum and internship experiences are tutorial forms of instruction; therefore, when the individual supervision is provided by program faculty, the ratio of 5 students to 1 faculty member is considered equivalent to the teaching of one (1) three-semester course. Such a ratio is considered maximum per course” (CACREP, 2001, III.I). School counseling interns must be provided with opportunities to experience a wide range of appropriate professional activities and allowed permission to audiotape and/or videotape a variety of counseling experiences for use in supervision. During initial and reaccreditation reviews, programs seeking CACREP approval must demonstrate that they meet these standards. School counselor education programs that currently are non-CACREP-accredited must individually evaluate the importance of national counselor education program accreditation and construct avenues toward qualifying, should they decide to do so.

Additionally, all school counselor education programs must demonstrate how they meet state standards and/or state mandates to address various issues. As the CACREP Standards gain

increasing recognition in all regions of the United States as the national model for counselor education, more states are aligning their standards with CACREP, as evidenced by the recent revision of California's Pupil Personnel Services Program Standards by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) that now requires 100 hours of practicum experiences, followed by a minimum of 600 instead of 450 internship hours (CCTC, 2001). Nonetheless, wide variability still exists in the number of field work hours required by school counselor education programs across the nation (Perusse, Goodnough, and Noel, 2001)

Time/Resources

School counselor preparation programs differ with respect to the human and financial resources available to them. As indicated above, CACREP has specific requirements regarding the number of internship hours and hours of individual and group supervision that each student must complete, as well as how many students can comprise a university supervisor's work load; however, there is some flexibility in terms of the extent to which supervision is provided by the university versus site supervisor. Individual programs need to consider time and training issues in relation to both parties, and develop a workable, realistic, and perhaps flexible model of who provides what type of supervision, where, and when.

The extent and type of other practice-oriented and school-based experiences required in the school counselor preparation program constitutes another important issue. Non-CACREP programs in particular vary considerably regarding the number of practicum hours required, as well as how they are defined. CACREP and non-CACREP programs alike vary with respect to the extent of pre-practicum site-based experiences or field components of other courses. Thus, the makeup of practicum and other school-based experiences available to students also must be considered when constructing an internship program model.

History and Logistical Issues

History is a factor for school counselor preparation programs that have been in existence for any length of time. If it is the case that a particular structure for the internship has been in place for several years, then there likely will be an expectation on the part of students, site supervisors, and university faculty that the model will continue. Although the enhancement of a program through more stringent internship requirements will be welcomed by some, others may be resistant to change.

Other important considerations have to do with logistical issues, such as whether the university is located in an urban or rural area, how many districts the university program services and how large a geographical area is covered, and whether the majority of students are full-time or part-time. Rural or large service areas may pose additional challenges in terms of travel time for university supervisors who must visit sites and for site supervisors who attend meetings at the university. Similarly, programs with many part-time students who are employed full-time a distance from campus will face far greater challenges in terms of scheduling supervision sessions and expectations for delivery of tapes than those where the majority of students are full-time with few outside commitments.

Focus of Supervision Sessions

Individual supervision sessions vary widely in terms of their focus. Although some variability and flexibility is desirable, programs also may wish to strive for some consistency in the type of supervision provided, particularly by the university supervisor. CACREP requires that university supervisors have adequate training in clinical supervision (CACREP, 2001, III.A.3); however, there inevitably will be a range in the degree of skill and comfort with this process among university supervisors, within as well as between programs.

It also is possible that there will be different viewpoints regarding the importance of a focus on developmental supervision relative to a more “nuts-and-bolts” approach that focuses on specific issues and problems encountered when working in schools. Some supervisors may be comfortable with more of a “this is what I would do” approach, which is frequently welcomed by supervisees but may be less helpful in terms of their professional growth. Other university supervisors may use supervision time to focus on issues related to their individual areas of interest and expertise. Still others may emphasize the importance of providing interns with ongoing opportunities to explore their own attitudes, beliefs, and biases, in relation to diversity issues. It is important to recognize that different university and site supervisors will possess not only different levels of skills and areas of expertise, but also have priorities and values that may differ. All of these factors will influence the content and process of the supervision that they provide. Programs may choose to assign interns to two different university supervisors in their two semesters of internship so that students receive a broader experience of style and focus, whether the format is individual supervision, group supervision, or both.

The Role of Site Supervisors

The critical role that site supervisors play in the development of the school counselor-in-training is indisputable. Acknowledging the dearth of literature related to challenges encountered by site supervisors working with school counselor interns, Roberts and Morotti (2001) offered several guidelines for site supervisors of school counselors-in-training. Briefly stated, these are: (1) understand one’s responsibilities as a site supervisor prior to assuming the role, (2) acquire training in the supervision process, (3) realize one’s power as a role model and take it seriously, (4) be knowledgeable about ethical and legal issues pertaining to school counseling, (5) communicate regularly with the university supervisor, (6) apprise the university supervisor

immediately about major concerns related to the intern's performance or ability, and (7) schedule regular time with the intern for process and reflection. Although these guidelines seem to point to the site supervisor as the responsible party, it should be noted that the responsibility for at least several of them must be shared jointly with the university supervisor / training program.

The key to a successful school counseling internship program may well be the relationship and degree of collaboration between the school and the university. Because supervision training is not typically included in their preservice education, professional school counselors need assistance from the university in obtaining the knowledge and skills that will equip them to excel as supervisors for school counselor interns. Supervision training in the form of workshops or continuing education is vital. Such training will prepare school counselors to better mentor new counselors, a need identified by Peace and Sprinthall (1998), as well as those still in training. Site supervisors further need the university program to create avenues for ongoing communication and clear articulation of the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of the student, university supervisor, and site supervisor.

Kahn (1999) noted that the multifaceted role of the school counselor contrasted with the more homogeneous role of other clinicians may account in part for the lack of research related to site supervision of school counselors-in-training. Complicating matters further is the fact that appropriate professional school counseling duties as defined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (see Campbell & Dahir, 1997) are often in sharp contrast with the realities in many schools. School counselors who provide site supervision to school counselor interns need support and assistance in delineating appropriate tasks for both themselves and their supervisees. Here again, a strong working relationship between the school district and the university can facilitate this process. CACREP's charge that supervisors "are clearly committed

to...promoting the development of the student's professional counselor identity" (CACREP, 2001, III) further intensifies the need to ensure that school counselor interns are performing appropriate duties.

Case Example: California State University, Long Beach

The evolution of the school counselor internship (field work) program at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) is presented here to illustrate some of the points introduced earlier in this article. It is not offered as an ideal, but rather as a program-in-process. The focus here is on our program's field work component only (see Hoffman [2001] for information related to other aspects of our school counselor education program).

Former Model

For many years, CSULB's structure for school counseling field work was such that students met once each month as a group with the university field work supervisor. Requirements for taping and presentation of cases were minimal. Individual supervision was provided by site supervisors. The university field work supervisor was typically responsible for approximately 18 field work students at a time (a 3-unit teaching load for school counseling field work was nine students). The monthly group meeting included all students at one time. The university field work supervisor visited each site once during each semester. Given that approximately half of the students worked at two sites during one semester to satisfy state requirements for experience at more than one level, this model made it difficult to provide students with the degree of attention desirable.

Pilot Program

During 1998-1999 (my second year at CSULB and as coordinator of the school counselor education program), I piloted an alternative field work program with a group of five students.

Participation in the program was voluntary. The pilot program was a modified version of a model that was used in my doctoral training at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Students met with me biweekly as a group and biweekly in individual supervision sessions. Bernard's (1979, 1997) discrimination model of clinical supervision provided the foundation for my work with the supervisees. Relevant diversity issues, such as gender and ethnicity of supervisees and their clients, were explored within this framework. Students developed learning goals at the beginning of the semester; these goals were revisited periodically. Five tapes and one case presentation were required over the course of each semester. Each student also maintained a reflective journal and log. I visited each site once each semester and maintained contact with each site supervisor as needed. A rating form was completed by site supervisors for each intern at mid-semester and then again at the end of each term. The rating form supplemented a checklist detailing completion of competencies derived from the state standards. At the end of each semester, I provided a written narrative summative evaluation for each supervisee.

Evaluative data collected from the students and site supervisors was overwhelmingly positive. Comments from students focused on how much they learned about themselves, the balance of challenge and support, feelings of empowerment, understanding their development as professionals, counseling skill development, and acquiring new perspectives. My own assessment was that these students took a risk by committing to a more intensive, challenging field work experience, and were surprised at how much they learned. I also concluded that a case load of more than six supervisees using this model was not realistic. Per existing guidelines for faculty work load, I received only one and two-thirds units of work load for providing this supervision (based on nine students per 3 unit teaching load); however, I recognized that

implementing this model as part of the standard program would require a modification of the existing work load for school counseling field work.

During 1999-2000, I submitted a curriculum proposal to implement the field work pilot program on a full-time basis. The proposal was approved by the department and college curriculum committees. During 2000-2001, the model was used in all five sections of field work (total for both semesters).

Considerations and Challenges

Many of the issues that were discussed earlier were factors that influenced our process. Some of these issues became more salient as our program revision was implemented. These considerations and challenges are briefly discussed below.

Time/resources. One of the strongest resources of the CSULB school counselor education program is its partnership with the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) and Long Beach City College (LBCC). Representatives from these three institutions comprise the Long Beach Education Partnership, a collaborative effort to promote a seamless educational system for K-18 students that has earned national recognition (see McRobbie, 2001). The Counseling Reform Launch Initiative (CRLI) is a subgroup of the Partnership with several goals, which include enhancement of the CSULB counselor education program as well as clarification of the role of the school counselor in relation to ASCA's National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). As the School Counseling Programs Coordinator, I have co-chaired this initiative since 1998. The CRLI has functioned as a vital force in the evolution of recent CSULB counselor education program changes, including the enhanced field work program. The involvement of local professional school counselors who served as site supervisors was integral to this process.

Relatedly, the CRLI supported a new course that I developed during 1998-1999 for first-semester school counseling students that requires 20 hours of field experiences. In this course, students are asked to observe how counselors in the schools apply principles from current school counseling literature to their work. Each student is paired with one or more professional school counselors who serve as mentors to them during the semester. Many of these mentors are members of the Counseling Reform Launch Initiative. This pre-practicum experience contributes to students' preparation for their internship/field work.

Although funding from our department (Educational Psychology, Administration, and Counseling) has made it possible to implement a modified work load for field work supervisors for 2000-2001 and will continue to do so for at least 2001-2002, this modification has not yet been approved on a permanent basis. As a state university, limited resources is a salient issue. However, our department and college both support quality instruction and the pursuit of appropriate accreditation. Although we have not yet applied for CACREP accreditation for CSULB's counselor education programs, we have been working toward this goal. Currently, our College of Education is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); however, we recognize that CACREP accreditation would further enhance our status. Our purpose is not to attract more students, as the school counselor education program alone already draws approximately 100 applications each year for roughly 20 places. Rather, the goal is to offer our students the best preparation possible. As noted earlier, CACREP supports an internship work load of five students for three units, for university supervisors who provide individual supervision. Given that the student:counselor ratio for professional school counselors in California is 976:1 (Hinds, 2001), time constraints essentially prohibit our local school counselors from providing the extent of individual supervision required, making it

imperative that the university assumes appropriate responsibility for this task. We are hopeful that the field work program now in place, or one of equal or even better quality, will be approved as a permanent enhancement to our school counselor education program.

One of our goals has been to provide site supervisors with training in supervision that will supplement the supervision provided by the university supervisors. A workshop series for site supervisors across all counseling program specializations, funded by the College of Education and coordinated by a general counselor education faculty, is currently in the planning stage. A resource that will be used is the video “Learning to Think Like a Supervisor” (Borders & Benschoff, 2000), available from the American Counseling Association.

Focus of supervision sessions. As might be expected, each of the university field work supervisors in our program has unique strengths and a somewhat different approach to supervision. As the program coordinator, I facilitate bi-monthly meetings of the university supervisors that provide a forum for sharing of experiences and strategies. This has proved to be beneficial in promoting greater consistency across sections while still giving the students a diverse set of experiences.

History and logistics. Although most students have responded quite favorably to the revised program, there has been a degree of resistance from some who expected a less demanding experience. Some of the specifics of the program, such as procedures for delivery of tapes and frequency of sessions, are currently being reevaluated in an effort to respond to student needs while maintaining high expectations.

Resources for Internship Program Assessment and Evaluation

A self-assessment tool designed to assist individual programs in examining their current program effectiveness is presented in Appendix A. This instrument asks respondents to assess

how well their current program does in relation to different issues, as well as how important they believe each aspect is to their program's effectiveness. For example, one may determine that his or her program rates poorly in terms of meeting CACREP standards (item 3), but also may believe that meeting CACREP standards is not critical to one's program. The individual's overall assessment for that item would thus indicate that there is not a concern in this regard. On the other hand, if one assesses that his or her program is lacking in its training and preparation of site supervisors (item 6) but judges this aspect of the program to be important, an area of concern is identified.

Appendix B contains an evaluation instrument designed to assess students' perceptions of their internship/field work experience. As indicated in the directions to students, I developed this evaluation as a means to solicit student input in ongoing program development. Faculty from other school counselor education programs may wish to use or modify both of these instruments as desired.

Conclusion

As a critical element in any school counselor preparation program, the internship deserves the careful attention of program faculty and coordinators. Although the primary responsibility for this type of program development lies with the university, it is essential to collaborate with local school districts, particularly with professional school counselors who will function as site supervisors for school counselors-in-training. The information presented in this article is shared with the hope of facilitating this process for others.

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Appendix A

School Counselor Education Program Self-assessment of Field Work/Internship

For each item below, you are asked to provide two ratings in relation to your university or college's School Counselor Education Field Work/Internship Program (Rating #1 and Rating #2). For Rating #1: On a scale of 1 to 7, (1 = poor; 7 = excellent), assess how well you believe your program does in relation to each item. (If you do not have enough information to rate a particular item, write "unable to assess.") For Rating #2, provide your assessment of how *important* that item is to your Field Work/Internship Program's overall success (1 = not at all important; 7 = essential).

	<u>Rating #1</u>	<u>Rating #2</u>
1. Meets students' needs for clinical supervision.	_____	_____
2. Meets students' needs for discussion of dealing with on-site issues (e.g., school counselor role definition, issues with teachers and administrators, etc.)	_____	_____
3. Meets CACREP standards	_____	_____
4. Responsibilities of interns are clear	_____	_____
5. Roles/responsibilities of site supervisors are clear	_____	_____
6. Appropriate training/preparation of site supervisors	_____	_____
7. Roles/responsibilities of university supervisors are clear	_____	_____
8. Quality and extent of communication with site supervisors	_____	_____
9. Encourages development of interns' self-awareness regarding diversity issues (e.g., attitudes about race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.)	_____	_____
10. Promotes interns' knowledge acquisition and skill development in working with diverse K-12 students (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.)	_____	_____

Appendix B

**School Counseling Field Work
and
Advanced School Counseling Field Work**

**Supplementary Course Evaluation
Spring 2001**

Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this supplementary course evaluation. As you are aware, the model for CSULB's School Counseling Field Work and Advanced School Counseling Field Work used during 2000-2001 differed from that which typically had been followed in the past. As a student enrolled in EDP 643A and/or EDP 644A during 2000-2001, you are asked to assist us in our efforts to continue to shape the School Counseling Field Work experience to best prepare graduates of our program to enter the field by responding to the questions below. Please place the completed form in the enclosed envelope and return to:

Dr. Rose Marie Hoffman
College of Education
California State University, Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90840-2201

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements below:

1. Meeting regularly in individual sessions with my University Supervisor was beneficial to my development as a school counselor.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

2. The frequency of group sessions with my peers and University Supervisor was beneficial to my development as a school counselor.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

3. My counseling skills have improved as a result of my field work experience this past semester.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

4. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I have a greater understanding of a school as a system and how to effect change within that system.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

5. My strengths were recognized and supported by my University Field Work Supervisor.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

6. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I have a greater understanding of issues of diversity (e.g., ethnicity/race, gender, age, disabilities, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) as they apply to the school setting.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

7. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I have a greater understanding of other critical issues with which a school counselor must be familiar (e.g., child abuse, suicide, violence, alcohol and other drug abuse, etc.).

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

8. My skills in case conceptualization have improved as a result of my field work experience this past semester.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

9. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I am better prepared to work effectively with teachers.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

10. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I am better prepared to work effectively with other pupil personnel service providers (e.g., school psychologists, other school counselors) and other staff.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

11. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I am better prepared to work effectively with parents of the students whom I counsel.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

12. As a result of my field work experience this past semester, I am better prepared to work effectively with school administrators.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

13. I am more self-confident as an emerging professional school counselor as a result of my field work experience this past semester.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

14. I am better equipped to critically evaluate my work as a school counselor as a result of my field work experience this past semester.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

15. I am more familiar with specialized programs and referral sources as a result of my field work experience this past semester.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

16. I am more equipped to deal with my own issues as a result of my field work experience this past semester.

5	4	3	2	1
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

17. What was the best thing about this experience?

18. What was the worst thing about this experience?

19. What would you identify as the most important thing(s) that you learned through this experience? Please describe.

20. I would have benefitted from more

21. I would have benefitted from less....

22. Additional comments:

My University Field Work supervisor for Spring 2001 was: _____

Thank you for your time and your comments!



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