

Experiential Learning of School Counselors-In-Training to Work with English Learners

A Research Brief Adapted for the Center of Equity, Leadership, and Social Justice

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Why this study?

The population of English Learners (ELs), students receiving English language services or enrolled in English as Second Language (ESOL) programs, are rapidly growing population of the United States education system. To promote their academic achievement and enhance their psychological wellbeing, social-emotional wellbeing is of extreme importance. School counselors can play a large role in supporting ELs, however, many counselors reported that they did not feel prepared to effectively work with EL students. Similarly, EL students did not perceive that their school counselors as accessible or that they received adequate services. To better inform the lived experiences of student-counselors-in-training (SCITs) working with EL students, this study utilized an experiential learning approach in a summer program to improve upon future trainings of SCITs to work with ELs.



What are the research questions?

1. What challenges did school counselors-in-training (SCITs) experience in working with EL students in the summer program?
2. What strategies did SCITs use to overcome these challenges?
3. What experience during this experiential learning did SCITs perceive as beneficial for their future work with ELs?

What are the key findings?

SCITs shared several gains from the experience including:

- Gaining confidence working with the EL population.
- Examining their own assumptions and biases.
- Cultivating a deeper understanding the importance of collaboration between themselves and other stakeholders.

Implications for Counselor Educators

- Programs that prepare SCIT's to be fluent in cultural competence benefitted SCIT's in feeling more culturally aware and have a deeper understanding of the EL population, and counselor educators could expand projects like these to a larger scale by nurturing partnerships with community agencies.
- The focus of the experiential learning activities for SCIT's should center around providing the opportunity for them to work with diverse student populations, challenging them to overcome their self-doubts and struggles through hands on learning.

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