THE PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE OF ONE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY INTERN:

A PRACTICUM REPORT

A Practicum Report
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In
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by
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ABSTRACT

This practicum report is written in summation of my experiences in completing my practicum in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s of Education (MEd) in Educational Psychology (EPSY). My practicum took place in Sun West School Division under the supervision of my Professional Associate, Jolee Kambeitz M.Ed., and in collaboration with the Sun West School Division Student Services Team. This report uses the 2006 document, School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice III, published by the National Association of School Psychologists (Ysseldyke et al., 2006) to frame my experiences as a practicum student.

Key words: practicum report, Educational Psychology
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children – Dylan, Alexis, Myles, and Mario, who lived with me throughout this experience, and Angel, Kayla, Angus, Roslyn, and Cammie, who did not. It is also dedicated to my grandchildren, Emery and Colin. On the most difficult of days, it is thoughts of you that get me out of bed and force me to keep going. On the best of days, it is with you I wish to celebrate. I love you.
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The Practicum Experience of One Educational Psychology Intern: A Practicum Report

Introduction

I’ve always been a people-watcher. As a child, I remember sitting with my dad in public places silently watching the people around us. Afterwards we would share our observations and he would teach me about the dynamics of human interaction. It only made sense, therefore, that I was drawn to the disciplines of Sociology and Psychology as an undergraduate student. Sociology was my declared major but I enjoyed Psychology so much that by the time I graduated I had accumulated nearly enough credits within the subject area to declare a second major.

In my final year as an undergraduate student I had a professor in Social Psychology who worked as an Educational Psychologist in the local school board. One day I was asking her questions about her work and she suggested to me that hers would be a career that I would also likely enjoy. She encouraged me to consider it as a profession. I was intrigued but life’s circumstances would not allow me the luxury of changing course. I was a new mother and our little family struggled financially. I needed to finish school as soon as I could and find work. The next year I started Teacher’s College, and soon I was gainfully employed as a teacher in northern Saskatchewan, where my growing family would live for the next eight years.

Northern Saskatchewan is the kind of place that people either love or hate. For me, it was love right from the start. I loved the beauty of the area – the tall trees, the clear blue lakes, the kaleidoscope of Northern Lights across the winter sky. More importantly, I loved the people. The people of northern Saskatchewan are primarily Indigenous. They are warm and welcoming to strangers, do not dwell on negativity and instead greet difficulties with laughter, and can solve nearly any challenge that comes their way with ingenuity and resolve. Unfortunately, there are many challenges.
Despite the resiliency of the northern people, the impact of colonialism has been profound; addictions to drugs and alcohol are prevalent, HIV rates are epidemic, sexual and physical assault is all too common. In many communities employment is scarce and it has become increasingly difficult over the generations to sustain a traditional life living off the land, thus poverty is a serious issue in many communities.

As a classroom teacher I could see all too clearly the challenges my students faced. A typical child in northern Saskatchewan begins Kindergarten already far behind their southern peers. Most southern children enter school with the fundamentals of literacy already in place. They may not know how to read, but they likely know their alphabet, are familiar with the orientation of a book when reading, know which direction text runs in English, have familiarity with simple nursery rhymes and have been surrounded by rich vocabulary since birth. Northern children are being raised in an isolated environment by people for whom English is a second language. Vocabulary is simple, nursery rhymes are not well known, nor is the alphabet, and many children have not been read to and thus do not understand the fundamentals of literacy. These children, therefore, are often beginning school with a knowledge base that is several years behind that of their southern peers and this lag continues throughout school.

Additionally, the isolation of northern communities makes medical care extremely difficult. A southern child can expect to receive medical care for a variety of causes including difficulties at birth, vision and hearing checks, and developmental concerns. In the north, doctors may only visit communities once a week and there is no access to specialist care. Many children simply do not receive the medical care they need. Care for social issues is also scarce with far too few social workers, addictions counsellors, and psychologists available to help families and communities.
For these reasons I found myself being drawn further and further from the narrow confines of a classroom and instead searched for ways to help my students in all areas of their lives. I started a scholarship fund to support students who went on to post-secondary school, administered an emergency medical fund for Elders so that they could travel to the city for medical appointments, started a Parenting class for teens, and led the community’s Trauma and Emergency Response Team (TERT).

In 2016 TERT responded to a school shooting in La Loche, Saskatchewan. This experience was one that profoundly impacted my life. I spent seven days in the community of La Loche in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, and when I returned to my home it was with the realization that our northern children desperately needed more help. Our school division had not employed a psychologist in all of the eight years I had been employed there and I soon realized that this could be a way in which I could help our kids.

If I were to become a psychologist and return to the school division, I could help to create programs and policies to support the deficits our children face, and I could work with individuals to ensure their learning needs were being met within the classroom. I soon applied and was accepted into the University of Regina’s Master’s program in Educational Psychology, and thus began a two-year whirlwind that would culminate in my practicum experience.

**Practicum Setting**

Sun West School Division is a rural school division located in west-central Saskatchewan which covers approximately 31,252 square kilometers. The borders of the division are Davidson and Kenaston to the east, the Alberta border to the west, the South Saskatchewan River to the south, and Biggar in the north. There are 41 schools within the division, including 13 Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools, six elementary schools, and three high schools. Within this
school division there are also 17 Hutterite Colony Schools (Town of Rosetown, 2018). Student demographics include an increasing number of English Language Learners as well as Indigenous students.

My Professional Associate, Jolee Kambeitz, is responsible for a total of eight locations within the division. Jolee also oversees eight Hutterite Colony schools. During my practicum I travelled with Jolee to many of these communities to conduct assessments with students.

**Professional Associate**

My Professional Associate, Jolee Kambeitz, has been a fully registered member of the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists since 2014. Previous to completing her Master’s of Education in School and Counselling Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan, Jolee was a classroom teacher with ten years of teaching experience. Jolee has also been contracted with the Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan and SaskApprenticeship to complete psychoeducational assessments.

Jolee’s philosophy as a Professional Associate includes a belief that students should be introduced slowly and progressively to their practicum responsibilities. She provided ample encouragement and feedback and was always available to answer any questions that I had about my experience. When topics were outside of my previous knowledge, Jolee was generous in providing resources to help me understand the topic more thoroughly.

**Practicum Goals**

My stated goals in completing my practicum were as follows: Become familiar with a variety of professional resources including texts, software, and assessment kits; observe then practice comprehensive assessment techniques including testing, observations, and interviews; observe then practice techniques related to scoring and interpreting assessments, developing
interventions, preparing reports, communicating with students, families, and schools, and making referrals; learn appropriate and expected procedures related to the role of an Educational Psychologist within a School Division; receive feedback regularly from my Professional Associate and use this feedback to improve upon my practice; attend workshops and seminars, and consult with other professionals.

**Practicum Structure and Responsibilities**

My practicum began on April 13, 2018 and was completed on June 19, 2018. I typically worked two to three days each week and completed 191 hours within this time. On days that my Professional Associate and I travelled farther than Rosetown we would meet and travel together, which was an excellent opportunity to discuss cases as well as general issues in the profession. Jolee and I spoke often about topics such as how to develop competencies, what to do when you are unsure about a case, determining the best procedures for managing ethical considerations, identifying the best available resources, and creating the most effective recommendations. These conversations were a valuable part of my experience.

My practicum experience began without responsibilities, each task was introduced after I had been given an opportunity to first observe Jolee, and then to ask questions. By early May very little observation was required and I was given full responsibility for the remaining three referrals to be completed before the end of the school year.

My responsibilities as a practicum student included: classroom and playground observation of clients; file reviews; interviews with students, teachers, and parents; formal assessment using a variety of resources; research; collaboration with other professionals; scoring and interpretation of assessments; creating recommendations; writing reports; and conducting post-assessment meetings.
Ethical Considerations

Clients and other team members were informed of my graduate student status and were notified that the practicum experience partially fulfills the University of Regina’s requirements for a Master’s degree in Educational Psychology. Clients were given the opportunity to give their written consent to work with me using my professional associate’s standard form (see Appendix A). Additionally, all clients were fully informed of the assessment process and gave their consent/assent for all assessments.

Several times throughout my practicum experience Jolee and I needed to discuss the ethical standards put forth by Sun West School Division as well as the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, fourth edition, published by the Canadian Psychological Association. In one instance, a client and the client’s parent reported ongoing bullying that was causing distress. Jolee and I felt that it would be helpful to the client if the school was aware of the bullying, although assent to share information with the educational support team had already been given, we felt that in order to comply with Principle One of the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists we should consult with the client and ask for assent before sharing information with the school team. In a second instance, a client disclosed that he/she had recently experienced visual hallucinations and had been seeing a psychiatrist. The client would not be returning to school the following year so, although we felt that this may have otherwise been a concern that the school team should be aware of, in this instance we again considered Principle One of the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists and determined that we would not include details of this mental health issue within the report, nor would we divulge any information to the school support team. Instead we spoke privately to the client regarding our concerns and
received consent to write a letter to the psychiatrist outlining information that may be helpful to the treatment of our shared client.

**Training and Practice in School Psychology**

In 2006 the National Association of School Psychologists, under the direction of James Ysseldyke, published the document *School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice III*. This document provided an excellent framework for understanding the role of Educational Psychologists within school systems and I will use it to organize the remainder of my report. The model is divided into three broad categories of interest (see Figure 1): outcomes, delivery systems, and domains of competence (Ysseldyke et al., 2006).

*Figure 1. Training and Practice in School Psychology. This figure illustrates the framework that is used to organize much of this report (Ysseldyke et al., 2006)*
Outcomes

Two primary outcomes in the practice of school psychology were identified. First, school psychologists must improve competencies for all children and youth. This means that “school psychologists should be instructional consultants who can assist parents and teachers to understand how children learn and what effective instruction looks like” (Ysseldyke et al., 2006) but also that “school psychologists should be mental health practitioners who can guide parents and teachers in learning how to create environments where children and youth feel protected and cared for” (Ysseldyke et al., 2006).

Throughout my practicum I was able to provide evidence-based instructional recommendations that stemmed from my assessments of my clients’ needs. These recommendations were individually crafted for each of my clients based upon their needs and their unique home and school environments. To illustrate, my Professional Associate and I created a document to help high school students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to plan timelines for assignments in an organized and efficient way (Appendix B). Further, communication with parents, students, school support teams, and mental health practitioners focused on creating environments in which students could feel supported, cared for, and successful. For example, a review of one client’s student file revealed that his attitude and motivation in school had deteriorated over the years as his frustration with school work had increased. In our post-assessment meeting and in our final report, we made sure to emphasize that this client’s perceived lack of motivation and “bad attitude” were likely the result of this frustration and that continuing to identify him as a problem student was likely exacerbating his problems.
The second primary outcome is to build and maintain the capacity of systems. This means helping systems to become efficient and effective in teaching the competencies referenced in the first outcome. During my practicum I was able to assist Jolee as she conducted a series of surveys and interviews with members of the Student Services team at Sun West School Division. Listening to the concerns of counselors, psychologists, and student-service consultants helped me to understand some of the systemic challenges met by school psychologists. This included a need to connect meaningfully with school staff and administration, a need for clearly defined processes and expectations, and a need for follow up after recommendations were provided.

**Delivery System**

The delivery system recommended by Ysseldyke et al. (2006) divides the supports that students require into needs-based categories, starting with the universal, or general needs of all students, followed by targeted interventions for students who require further support, and finally intensive interventions for students who have not been helped by initial attempts to intervene. This delivery system mimics the Response to Intervention model which is used in many Saskatchewan school divisions, including both Sun West School Division and my home school division of Northern Lights. Ideally, school psychologists should be involved in all three tiers of this model. The universal needs of students would be met by systemic approaches, whereas the higher tiers would require more individual attention.

**Domains of Competence**

Ysseldyke et al. (2006) identified eight domains of competency that school psychologists must develop. This includes four Functional Competencies (data-based decision making; systems-based service delivery; enhancing the development of cognitive and academic skills; and enhancing the development of wellness, social skills, mental health, and life competence),
and four Foundational Competencies (interpersonal and collaborative skills; diversity awareness and sensitive service delivery; technological application; and professional, legal, and social responsibility).

**Functional competencies.** If carrying out the responsibilities of a school psychologist could be described as both an art and a science, the functional competencies of the psychologist would be the scientific component.

**Data-based decision making.** In order for psychologists to provide recommendations that will be effective in schools, it is crucial that evaluation be data-based and drawn from a variety of sources. “These include the use of observation, interviews, standardized norm-referenced tests, functional behavioral assessment, curriculum-based assessment/measurement/evaluation, ecological or environmental assessment, technology enhanced assessment, and progress monitoring” (Ysseldyke et al. 2006).

Sattler divides these areas of assessment into four “pillars,” including: informal assessment procedures, observations, interviews, and norm-referenced tests (Sattler, 2001). During my practicum my Professional Associate and I began each assessment with informal assessment procedures. These procedures may include criterion-referenced tests, written language samples, prior and current school records, referral documents, and questionnaires (Sattler, 2001). Our first step in the assessment process was to carefully review the referral document. These documents provided basic information about each client including his or her age, grade level, contact information, and whether or not the referral was an initial assessment or re-assessment. Most importantly, the referral document included the referral question(s) that provided basic information regarding the perceived challenges.
After reviewing the referral, my Professional Associate would email questionnaires to both classroom teachers and parents. The teacher questionnaire queried teachers on the strengths and challenges they observed as well as asking what accommodations had already been attempted and to what extent these accommodations were successful. Finally, teachers were asked to identify what they felt would be helpful steps to take toward ensuring the future success of the client. These questionnaires were beneficial in developing a picture of the student within different environments. Common observations were noted, as were differences in achievement between academic subjects.

The parent questionnaire was quite extensive and would later serve as the basis of the parent interview. Questions explored the client’s birth and developmental history, medical history, family dynamics and family medical history, temperament and interpersonal skills, perceived strengths and challenges, and the parent’s expectations.

At this stage, it would be appropriate to review the client’s school file, although this was not always done at this stage in the assessment process. School file reviews would include reviewing any previous psychoeducational assessments, speech language pathology assessments, hearing and vision tests, criterion-referenced tests that may have been conducted within the school such as Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT), grades and comments from old and current report cards, behavioral reports, and examples of student work. I found it helpful to read over files twice. On my first read-through I would look for patterns and items of note within the file, on my second read-through I would create a chart to succinctly document my findings. Using this method, I was able to discern patterns of ongoing difficulties in specific academic subjects, identify problematic behaviors, and recognize significant changes that had occurred.
The second of Sattler’s Four Pillars of Assessment is observation. The purpose of observation is to assess client behavior during testing and other settings. Jolee provided me with an observation form to use during formal assessment. This form allowed me to record important information I observed such as strategies the client used throughout the formal testing procedure, body language, facial expressions, movement, and notable statements. This recording procedure was very useful when one of my clients reported that he was feeling anxiety and did not want to return to the testing procedure. I was able to use my recorded observations to clarify when the client began to feel distress and to more closely examine the validity of those subtests. My observations were also included in a letter that was sent to the client’s psychiatrist to provide evidence of anxiety. Jolee emphasized the importance of distinguishing between saying “X appeared to be anxious” and “X demonstrated the following behaviors which may indicate anxiety.”

On several occasions I was also able to observe clients outside of the formal assessment setting. On the first day of my practicum I was able to observe a Grade 1 student in his classroom. I recorded pertinent information such where was the student seated in the classroom, what were he, the teacher, and the rest of the class doing at the time I observed him, what affect did I observe, and what behaviors did I observe. One thing that was immediately notable with this child was that he constantly chewed upon the cord of the headphones he was wearing. My Professional Associate addressed this issue immediately that day and suggested to the classroom teacher that gum should be made available to the child. I appreciated that immediate intervention was possible when necessary and we did not have to wait to make a formal recommendation. Later, Jolee and I observed the same child on the playground and recorded our observations regarding his ability to socialize with other children.
The importance of quality observation was also emphasized when Jolee and I conducted classroom and playground observations of a grade one child who was engaging in selective mutism. We were able to observe other indicators of anxiety within the classroom. For example, during a classroom game that included the throwing and catching of a ball, the client smiled and was engaged in the activity, but ducked behind other students so that she would not be required to participate at an individual level. Playground observations demonstrated that the child seemed to want to engage with others as she often played in the periphery of other children and would smile and make eye contact. In this case, norm-referenced testing was not conducted and recommendations to provide support for anxiety were communicated to the parents and educational support team.

Sattler’s third Pillar of Assessment is the interview. This is a method of assessing client functioning by asking a series of pertinent questions. Typically, school psychologists conduct interviews with parents, teachers, and the student. During my practicum, parent and teacher interviews were conducted simultaneously, although teachers did not remain throughout the parent interview. The purpose of this was to clarify for parents the reason for their child’s referral. Teacher interviews were brief and focused primarily upon the strengths and challenges they observed within the classroom. Teachers were also asked what they had already done to support the student and how effective these interventions had been.

Parent interviews were simple in design as we used the completed questionnaire as a basis for the interview. Parents were asked clarifying and elaborative questions based upon their previous answers in order to gain further insight. Prior to any questioning, however, it was essential to build rapport with parents so as to establish a positive relationship. I regularly used humour and empathy to create an environment in which parents could feel comfortable. I also
allowed myself to be personal with parents, often sharing stories of my own experience as a
parent whose children were assessed by a psychologist. This shared experience appeared to make
parents who were feeling nervous or self-conscious somewhat more relaxed.

Lastly, the final component of Sattler’s Four Pillars of Assessment is norm-referenced
tests. These tests are used to assess intelligence, achievement, behavior and functioning and to
assign a numerical value which allows comparison of strengths and weaknesses to peers. Before
determining which norm-referenced tests should be used in each assessment, I sometimes needed
to conduct further research. For example, one client disclosed during the interview that he had
recently received a diagnosis of drug-induced psychosis. I was not familiar with how this
disorder may affect cognitive domains, and so I spent several hours researching the possible
effects of this psychosis on cognition. In this case, my research results were somewhat
inconclusive as I found evidence that psychosis due to Schizophrenia could cause deficits in
processing speed and working memory, but could find no research that directly linked drug-
induced psychosis to the same deficits. It seemed likely that there may have been a similar effect
but that there had not been significant research into the less well-known disorder, but without
evidence I could not legitimately determine that any weaknesses I found would be due to drug-
induced psychosis. Based upon this research, and in consultation with Jolee, I determined that
weaknesses in processing speed and working memory would not be attributed to the diagnosed
disorder.

After conducting any necessary research, my next step was to select which instruments
would be used for testing. The selection of appropriate assessment instruments was based on
several factors including the reliability and validity of instruments, the availability of
instruments, consideration of those instruments that were used in any previous assessments (in
order to more effectively track changes), and most importantly, determining what questions needed to be answered. Typically, at least one instrument was chosen in order to assess cognitive functioning and one instrument was chosen in order to assess academic functioning. Comparison of these two domains is an important aspect of interpreting assessment results. In several cases we also used instruments designed to test expressive and receptive language abilities, attention, and behavioral functioning.

The norm-referenced tests I administered throughout my practicum included:

- Bracken Basic Concept Scale – Third Edition: Receptive (BBCS-3:R) (Bracken, 2006)

I was also able to observe the administration of:

• Conners Continuous Performance Task – Third Edition (CCPT-3) (Conners, 2008)

Scoring of these tests was typically done using online software, which was very easy to use, but I also kept a running record of subtest results as I tested in order to quickly identify areas that may have required further testing. I used Flanagan, Ortiz & Alfonso’s Cross Battery Assessment software to compare results and was able to identify which tests I would need to administer from a different test battery if the results from one battery were not interpretable. I found the Cross Battery Assessment program to be confusing and I did not always know when it was best to test further, and when it was best to report scores separately, however Jolee was always willing to walk me through the process.

Interpretation of these tests was by far the most difficult part of my practicum. I often pored over test results for hours, comparing scores and conducting research into possible interpretations. Jolee and I spent many hours discussing interpretation and she provided me with several helpful resources that helped to clarify what I was seeing. She also drew my attention to the process outlined by Flanagan, Ortiz, and Alfonso (2017), for identifying specific learning disabilities. This was immensely helpful. By the end of my practicum, and thanks to Jolee’s patience and encouragement, my skills and confidence grew.

*Systems-based service delivery.* Though the work of a school psychologist is most commonly associated with individual assessments, it is equally important to help create systems that support the academic success and mental health of students as well. During my practicum I not only was able to be part of the discussions held by the Student Services team regarding the structure of their system, but I was also able to spend a small bit of time familiarizing myself with the Zones of Regulation program (Kuypers, 2011). This program is one that has been utilized in Sun West School Division in entire classrooms and even within entire schools. It is a
program that helps foster self-regulation and emotional control in children. Though there was not a lot of opportunity within my short practicum to consider systemic approaches, I was still able to understand the tremendous positive impact these programs can have.

*Enhancing the development of cognitive and academic skills.* Once the school psychologist has engaged in data-based decision making regarding the needs of clients, it is then imperative to use this knowledge to enhance the student’s academic and cognitive performance. This is typically done through the provision of a series of recommendations for effective and alternative instructional methods within a psychoeducational report.

The recommendations I provided during my practicum were empirically supported and responsive to specific weaknesses measured by the norm-referenced tests, but they were also crafted with the client’s particular situation in mind. A student who was leaving for post-secondary school was provided with recommendations that would fit that situation. A student who felt she benefited from doodling when she needed to concentrate was provided with a recommendation that this practice be permitted to continue (after I conducted research to ensure that this practice was an empirically-supported way for her to manage her specific cognitive weaknesses). Lists of recommendations were kept to a reasonable number so that teachers would view them as manageable tasks and the amount of effort and time required by teachers to perform any recommendation was always carefully balanced. In theory, we can provide many excellent recommendations, but in practice these recommendations need to be practical suggestions that can be utilized effectively.

*Enhancing the development of wellness, social skills, mental health, and life competencies.* Just as school psychologists are responsible for enhancing the development of students’ cognitive and academic skills, so too must they consider the students’ development of
wellness, social skills, mental health, and life competencies. This can be done systemically by creating proactive programming, but I was not able to engage in systems-level interventions designed to promote mental health and wellness during this practicum. I did, however, have the opportunity to assist several students on an individual level.

I had several clients throughout my practicum who struggled with mental health and wellness difficulties, and was able to observe while my professional associate worked with several other clients who struggled in this area. Typically, the issue tended to be anxiety based, although there were also two students who were dealing with psychosis. For these clients it was important to craft recommendations that would support these needs. Conversations with parents and clients also provided empathetic direction for how to proceed when faced with anxiety. In some cases, communication with other mental health practitioners was necessary.

Though none of my clients required a diagnosis of a mental health disorder, this is a component of the school psychologist’s responsibilities and several of the students I worked with had previously existing diagnoses.

**Foundational competencies.** Just as the functional competencies could be described as the more scientific side of the role of school psychologist, the foundational competencies could be described as the “art”.

**Interpersonal and collaborative skills.** School psychologists are tasked every day with the responsibility of helping people to navigate through information that may be confusing, upsetting, and which may compromise their aspirations. Nowhere is this navigation more evident than it is in the post-assessment meeting. Post-assessment meetings are an opportunity for psychologists to share results and recommendations with clients, families, and the educational support team.
Richard Auger has identified a series of steps for School Counselors to utilize when delivering difficult news to parents. These steps may be easily translated for the school psychologist who is delivering difficult news. Auger suggested that the first step involves careful preparation for the upcoming meeting (Auger, 2006). For example, during my practicum, Jolee helped me to plan ahead of time to determine who should attend the meeting. Usually, parents and school staff were invited to the meeting and occasionally the students were as well. In each case, however, we needed to determine ahead of time if the student should be there. We considered the student’s age and anxiety levels when making this determination. In two cases we also dismissed school staff so that we could discuss more private information alone with families.

We also discussed ahead of time the best way to phrase information so that there was a balance between realistic expectations and a sense of hope and optimism for the future. It was crucial to be mindful of the parent’s and student’s view of the present, and their hope for the future, before discussing results. In one instance there was a student whose parent had very strong aspirations for him that he would eventually go to university. This student had serious cognitive weaknesses and, despite his best efforts, had never been able to find academic success. In his case, part of the discussion included emphasizing the strengths that this child did have and suggesting that university may not be the best path for him, but that he would have other paths available to him which would be beneficial. To communicate this message in an accessible way, I prepared ahead for this meeting by printing off an illustration that demonstrated how unreasonable it is to test a fish by asking it to climb a tree (Appendix C). Jolee and I also provided a list of programs available at Saskatchewan Polytechnic which accept modified classes. These preparations appeared to make the conversation more palatable to the parent. I
did, however, forget to bring Kleenex, and after this meeting I purchased a dozen Kleenex travel packs to bring to post-assessment meetings. It sounds trivial, but this small act of preparation can be of great benefit when you need to offer comfort during a difficult conversation.

Auger suggested that the delivery of difficult news should follow several simple guidelines. He suggested that conversations should begin by reinforcing those aspects of the parents’ understanding that are correct (Auger, 2006). For example, if the parent has disclosed that math and science are difficult subjects for their child, you may begin by reinforcing that these have been difficult areas. During my practicum, Jolee also reminded me to set a tone at the beginning of the meeting by talking to parents about the ways in which their child is doing well. This acknowledgement that people are more complex than their ability to do well academically is crucial to making the experience more palatable. Once this positive alignment has been established, the psychologist may begin to introduce information that is not in alignment. Auger suggests that psychologists may also consider giving warning that there may be some information which is disturbing (Auger, 2006). Though this was not something that I did within my practicum, I would consider trying this in my practice next year.

It is important that information be presented to parents in a way that is understandable to them. Auger suggested that information be broken down into manageable chunks (Auger, 2006). During my practicum I utilized an effective strategy that Jolee practiced. For each discussion, a copy of the normal curve was made available, on which percentile ranks were printed (Appendix D). As I broke down the assessment results, I would mark each result onto the curve. This practice not only allowed for a thorough breakdown of the client’s cognitive abilities, but also made the information more understandable. This method was particularly effective when explaining the diagnosis of a specific learning disability.
In line with Auger’s suggestions, discussions also included frequent check-ins with parents to ensure understanding, the avoidance of jargon, and were conducted with empathy and understanding. Auger reports that parents are more likely to accept difficult messages from school psychologists if they believe the psychologist likes their child (Auger, 2006). Though I sometimes found it difficult to express myself with perfect clarity, Jolee encouraged me by saying that my ability to empathize with parents and convey warmth was more crucial. She reminded me that I will get better at expressing my understanding of my clients’ assessment results as my own expertise grows.

**Diversity awareness and sensitive service delivery.** As with all educators, school psychologists must be aware of the diversity found within our schools. One of the less typical days of my practicum was the day I was able to join Jolee while she did a presentation to Sun West School Division teachers about the learning process of English as an Acquired Language learners. This type of information is vitally important to educators and gives the psychologist an opportunity to effect systemic change.

**Technological application.** Technology is a valuable tool for school psychologists. In my practicum I used iPads to administer both the WAIS V and WISC IV, online software to score the Wechsler and Woodcock Johnson tests, and Cross Battery software to aid in my interpretation of scores. One thing that I am now more cautious of, however, is the use of the iPads to administer processing speed subtests. I observed, after administering these tests with one client, that the results were unusually low. I then administered paper subtests from a different battery and found results to be closer to the normal range. Public schools are not known for their fast wi-fi and I believe there may be some lag when administering these tests. In my practice I will use paper for administration of all processing speed subtests.
**Professional, legal, and social responsibility.** It is critical to remember the professional, legal, and social responsibilities of a school psychologist when considering team consultation. These interactions should include only information that is pertinent to the needs of the client, and only with the client’s assent/consent. Furthermore, consultation should be effective and should benefit the client. An effective consultative problem solving process follows the following steps: clarification of presenting problem; analysis of identified problems; brainstorming alternative solutions; developing plans for intervention; assigning responsibilities and time lines; and monitoring interventions and follow-up (Cole & Siegel, 1990).

I was able to consult with many other professionals throughout my practicum including psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, speech language pathologists, school administration, student support teachers, classroom teachers and educational assistants. Though the consultative process was not always accomplished in one sitting, all aspects of this process were followed through formal and informal meetings throughout many of the assessments. It would be interesting to see if formalized team meetings, which were not a part of my practicum experience, would be beneficial to clients.

**Summary and Reflection**

Two weeks into my practicum I received a job offer from my school division in the north. The division was without an Educational Psychologist for over a decade. Beginning next year, I will fill this role. I was highly motivated to learn as much as I could throughout my practicum about both individual and systemic interventions, given that soon I will be working as a school psychologist and will be responsible for creating and improving systems within my school division in order to better enhance both student academic success and mental health.
Sun West School Division has been an excellent division in which to complete this training. I found the staff to be incredibly supportive and welcoming throughout my practicum, and I learned a great deal from the professionals working in this division. Next year, however, will hold significant and unique challenges for me. I am confident that this practicum, and my excellent Professional Associate, have prepared me well to meet the challenges my new role will require me to meet.

I have learned how to review information such as referrals, questionnaires, previous reports and school files. I have learned to observe students during testing as well as in their classrooms and on the playground. I have learned to conduct interviews and post-assessment meetings with clarity and empathy. I have learned how to choose appropriate testing instruments, and how to administer, score, interpret, and report my findings. Most importantly, I have learned to collaborate with others to create empirically-based and effective individual and systemic plans. I am looking forward to what the next year will bring me.
References


APPENDIX A:
CONSENT FORM

Your child has been referred for the following services within Sun West School Division:

- ☐ Psychoeducational Assessment
- ☐ Social-Emotional and/or Behavioral Assessment
- ☐ Consultation
- ☐ Review and Updated Recommendations

These services will be provided by Jolee Kambeitz, Registered Psychologist # 855 and/or Catherine Currie (Practicum Student). All of Catherine's activities will be directly supervised by Jolee Kambeitz. When a Psychologist works with your child, the goal is to help understand your child's strengths and areas of need and to help the school in meeting your child's learning, behavioural and emotional needs.

What might the Psychologist do?

Discussion/Collaboration: The Psychologist may speak to you about your child's strengths and areas of need. She may ask you questions about your child's birth history, early development, learning, behavior, emotions and the ways in which they get along with and communicate with others. She may also speak to your child's school team to find out what is doing well with and the areas that are causing him/her difficulty.

Classroom Observation: The Psychologist may watch your child in different places within the school. It is important to watch your child because this helps to get an idea about ways in which we can change the classroom, teaching, or material to help your child do their best.

Informal Assessment: The Psychologist may talk to your child about his/her school experiences. They may also review your child’s day-to-day work, school records and any reports that may have been completed by other people who have worked with your child.

Formal Assessment: The Psychologist may conduct formal testing to gain a better understanding of your child's current skills and abilities. Formal tests are different than classroom tests and may look at things such as your child's thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills, memory, behavior, social/emotional functioning and other areas related to learning. These types of tests help to understand how your child is learning and managing when compared to others of the same age/grade and are helpful in determining the best ways to help your child with their learning and general well-being.

Programming/Monitoring: The Psychologist may work with the school team in to develop learning goals and monitor your child’s progress as they move through school.
Who will receive the information? Once the Psychologist has seen your child, they will write a report or summary note that will outline the results of the assessment process. You will receive a copy of the report or summary note. A copy of this document will also be kept on file at your child’s school and in a secure electronic database by the Division Office. Some of your child’s scores will be stored in databases that are maintained by the assessment companies. A meeting will be held with you and your child’s teachers to review the results and recommendations.

If you would like the report to be sent to someone else, a request signed by you (the parent/guardian) will need to be given to the Psychologist working in with your child.

Limitations to Confidentiality. Information gathered during the assessment process is considered confidential except when:

1. A child threatens violence to harm him/herself or someone else
2. The Psychologist has concerns regarding possible child abuse
3. The Psychologist is required to do so by law
4. The Psychologist is consulting about your child with other members of your child’s learning team

What if I consent and then change my mind? If you want to withdraw your consent for School Psychology Services, please contact Jolee Kambeitz. You can choose to withdraw from these services at any time.

Parent/Guardian Permission

I confirm that I ______________ am the legal guardian of ______________.

☐ I have read and understood the above and agree to proceed with the School Psychology Services provided under these conditions.

______________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian

______________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian

______________________________
Date

______________________________
Date

Second parent signature is required in the case of shared child custody.

Do you have a custody agreement for the above named child? ☐ ☐
If yes, describe: __________________________
Yes ☐ No ☐

Please provide the Psychologist a copy of this legal document.

Your consent for School Psychology Services is considered usable for one year after the date it was signed.

Should you have any questions/concerns or would like to withdraw your consent, please contact Jolee Kambeitz at 306.280.6048 or jolee.kambeitz@sunwestsd.ca.
APPENDIX B:
LONG-TERM ASSIGNMENT PLANNING SHEET

Assignment: ____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEPS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Determine how much time do I have.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Periods:</td>
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<td>Days:</td>
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<td>Due Date:</td>
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<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Determine how much time do I need to spend each day on this task.</td>
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<td>In Class:</td>
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<td>At home:</td>
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<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Write on my calendar what time I am going to work on this task and for how long.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 4:</strong> Breakdown of what I need to do into steps:</td>
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<td><strong>Step 5:</strong> Materials needed for each step:</td>
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<td><strong>Step 6:</strong> Deadline for each step</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7:</strong> Put each step and deadline into my calendar.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 8:</strong> Transfer information from my phone calendar to calendar at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 9:</strong> Check off each step as completed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 9:</strong> Hand in assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 10:</strong> Celebrate my hard work!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C:

NORMAL CURVE
APPENDIX D:

TREE CLIMBING EXAM
APPENDIX E:

PRACTICUM PROPOSAL

Student: Catherine Currie, B.A., B.Ed.

Program: Master of Education, Educational Psychology (Practicum Route 1)

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Ron Martin, Ph.D.

Professional Associate: Jolee Kambeitz, M.Ed., R. Psych., Sun West School Division

Practicum Setting:

Sun West School Division
Box 700, 501 1st St. W. Rosetown, SK, S0L 2V0
1-866-375-2677

Sun West School Division encompasses a rural area approximately 25, 600 square kilometres in west-central Saskatchewan. There are 39 schools within the School Division. During my practicum I will work with my Professional Associate covering K-6 schools Walter Aseltine School (Rosetown), Harris-Tessier Central School (Harris), and D’Arcy School (D’Arcy), 7-12 schools Rosetown Central High School (Rosetown), and K-12 schools Kyle Composite School (Kyle), Eston Composite School (Eston), and Biggar Central School 2000 (Biggar) and Elrose Composite School (Elrose) for a total of eight locations. I will also work with my Professional Associate covering eight Hutterite Colony schools, including Big Rose Colony, Cleland Colony, Goldenview Colony, Kyle Colony, McGee Colony, Sovereign Colony, Springwater Colony and Valley Centre Colony. Student demographics include an increasing number of ELL students, some Indigenous students, and several Hutterite communities.

Office space for the practicum will be based out of Harris-Tessier Central School in Harris with some assessments taking place within individual schools. Consultation with other professionals will occur on an as-needed basis and will most often be via telephone. My Professional Associate and I will travel together as necessary and utilize this time for continuing discussion.

Timeline:
The practicum will commence on April 9, 2018 and be completed by June 22, 2018. The three-month term will include a minimum of 150 service hours and will involve approximately 4 days per week for 11 weeks. Within six weeks following the completion of the practicum, I will
submit a comprehensive written report based on my field experiences to Faculty of Education at the University of Regina.
Purpose and Anticipated Learning Objectives:
Under the supervision of my Professional Associate, I intend to obtain practical experience administering psychological assessments, consulting with clients, creating behaviour plans, and assisting with workshops and training. More specifically, my goals are to:

- Refine my skills in administering the WPPSI, WISC, and WAIS
- Become familiar with a variety of cross-battery assessments as well as assessment software
- Refine interview and classroom observational skills
- Work collaboratively with other professionals
- Learn psychological and professional protocol from a qualified, experienced and registered psychologist
- Accept feedback in order to reflect on and refine my performance as a psychologist-in-training and professional team member

Significance of Fieldwork:
The opportunity to work and learn under the supervision and guidance of a registered and experienced psychologist will assist me in my efforts to gain skill and confidence in a number of professional practices including; selecting, conducting, scoring and interpreting psychoeducational assessments; performing observations and interviews; developing interventions and recommendations for clients; working collaboratively with students, families, teachers, and other professionals; and making appropriate referrals.

Anticipated Learning Objectives:

- Become familiar with a variety of professional resources including texts, software, and assessment kits
- Observe then practice comprehensive assessment techniques including testing, observations, and interviews
- Observe then practice techniques related to scoring and interpreting assessments, developing interventions, preparing reports, communicating with students, families, and schools, and making referrals
- Learn appropriate and expected procedures related to the role of an Educational Psychologist within a School Division
- Receive feedback regularly from my Professional Associate and use this feedback to improve upon my practice
- Attend workshops and seminars, and consult with other professionals

Methodology and Activities to be Carried Out:
During the three-month placement, I will begin by observing my Professional Associate and engaging in dialogue to clarify my understanding of practice as well as familiarizing myself with a variety of resources. Once my Professional Associate is satisfied that I am prepared, we will gradually introduce my engagement in all duties carried out by a Registered Psychologist working within Sun West School Division under the direct supervision of my Professional Associate. I will receive feedback on my practice and will refine my skills accordingly. I will also take part in any applicable professional opportunities that arise such as team meetings, workshops, and professional development.
Ethical Considerations:
Clients and other team members will be informed of my graduate student status and they will be notified that the practicum experience will partially fulfill the University of Regina’s requirements for a Master’s Degree in Educational Psychology, they will be given the opportunity to give their consent to work with me. The clients I will work with will be fully informed of the assessment process and will give their consent/assent for all assessments. The names of the clients I work with will not be mentioned in the written practicum report to ensure confidentiality. I will follow the policies, procedures, and any ethical standards put forth by Sun West School Division as well as the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, 4th ed., published by the Canadian Psychological Association.

Evaluation:
My Professional Associate will directly supervise my practicum experience and will provide ongoing feedback and evaluation. Any areas of concern will be brought to my attention as soon as possible and will be addressed accordingly. Further to this, my Professional Associate will also provide a final written evaluation of my performance as outlined in the Guidelines for the M.Ed. Practicum. Upon completion of my practicum at the end of June I will draft and submit a written report of my practicum experience to Dr. Ron Martin, my Faculty Supervisor by August 1st for his consideration and evaluation.