

Project BEAMS: Interdisciplinary Support Teams to Enhance Social Emotional & Behavioral Outcomes for Students with Autism

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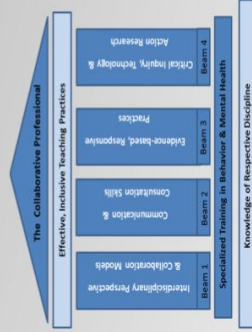
INTRODUCTION

Project BEAMS is an interdisciplinary, five-year training grant funded by OSEP to improve the preparation of school psychologists (SP) and special educators (SE) to deliver intensive, yet coordinated, interventions to address behavior and mental health.

Strong advocacy has emerged for *integrated* educational and mental health services within multi-tiered systems (MTSS) of prevention and intervention to better enhance learning outcomes (Adelman & Taylor, 2020; Atkins et al., 2010). This requires that professional practices in special education classrooms become more coordinated, integrating expertise from professionals across multiple disciplines, in order to improve the quality of services provided to children and adolescents with high-intensity mental health needs. To use high-quality practices more consistently and with greater fidelity, school personnel must adopt interdisciplinary, team-based models of service delivery. There is also an imperative need for more behavioral specialization within our school personnel to address student mental health.

TRAINING MODEL & COMPONENTS

Each *supportive BEAM* in the framework comprises one of four broad, overarching competencies. Data from a review of identified competencies needed to support interdisciplinary practice in school mental health (Ball et al., 2010) informed this model.



*Adapted from a model of teacher training at Columbia College (Division of Education, 2012).

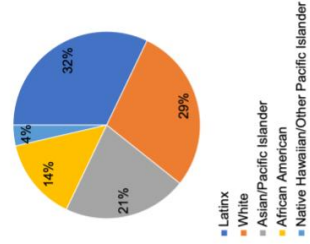
Training Components:

- Research-based courses
- Monthly project seminars
- Clinical practicum - BCBA Supervisors
- Summer institutes
- Co-attendance at research conferences

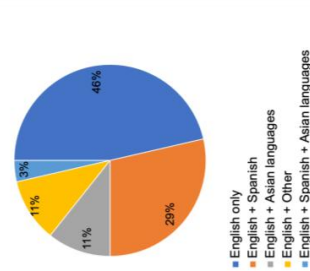
PARTICIPANTS

Project BEAMS has supported two trainee cohorts. Each cohort was composed of seven SP and seven SE scholars who were together for a two-year training cycle.

2018-2022 Scholar Demographics

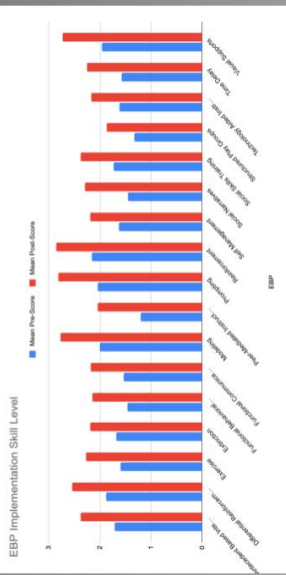


2018-2022 Scholar Language Proficiency



RESULTS CONTINUED...

Evidence-Based Practices Inventory: Based on a 3-point scale with 1 being *novice*, 2 being *practitioner*, and 3 being *expert* the overall mean score for skill increased from 1.41 to 2.15.



Employer Survey: "Scholar A was a valuable member on campus during the COVID closures to help with student supports & needs. Two students in particular, who are both diagnosed with autism and struggle to learn from home, worked weekly with her on thinking out of the box & being flexible. Scholar A also trained instructional aid staff to help them better understand behaviors, mental health needs, & how to work with specific students depending on what they were displaying."

LESSONS LEARNED

- Changes to BEAMS Training Due to COVID-19
- Areas of Program Specialization
 - School Psych - SEL & DEI expertise
 - Special Education - EPBs & Autism expertise
- Invest in Graduate Students' Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Build Relations with School Sites Early

REFERENCES

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RESULTS

Both Spring 2020 and Spring 2022 graduates overwhelmingly reported that participation in BEAMS helped them in multiple areas.

Domain	Above Average /Substantial Contribution
How to use action research	92%
How to use and model different modes of inquiry	81%
How to communicate about formative and summative assessments including data collection sheets, & SMART goals	77%
How to develop students' critical thinking & problem solving skills	88%
How to integrate technology to support students' learning	73%
How to develop learning environments that are inclusive & have a positive impact on student learning	92%

"BEAMS is amazing at addressing different cultural issues and how to create culturally & linguistically diverse interventions. We discuss the differences in needs within specific communities and families and the biases that might come with Special Education in different communities and how to address those biases." (2020 SP Graduate).