

Online Clinical Preparation Modules for Graduate Training in Speech-Language Pathology

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Speech-Language-Hearing

Background

MA students in Speech-Language Pathology enroll in SPLH 862 & 864, Clinical Processes and Practicum, for their first three semesters. These courses are taught by 11 clinical faculty on the Lawrence and KUMC campus as part of the Intercampus Program in Communicative Disorders.

The purpose of this project was to provide foundational knowledge for students in key areas, prior to providing clinical services to clients in their practicum. Program assessment over several years showed a desire for more preparation before beginning practicum from both clinical faculty and student perspectives. This preparation would provide students with a stronger foundation to begin their clinical work and allow for more in-depth learning across the semester.

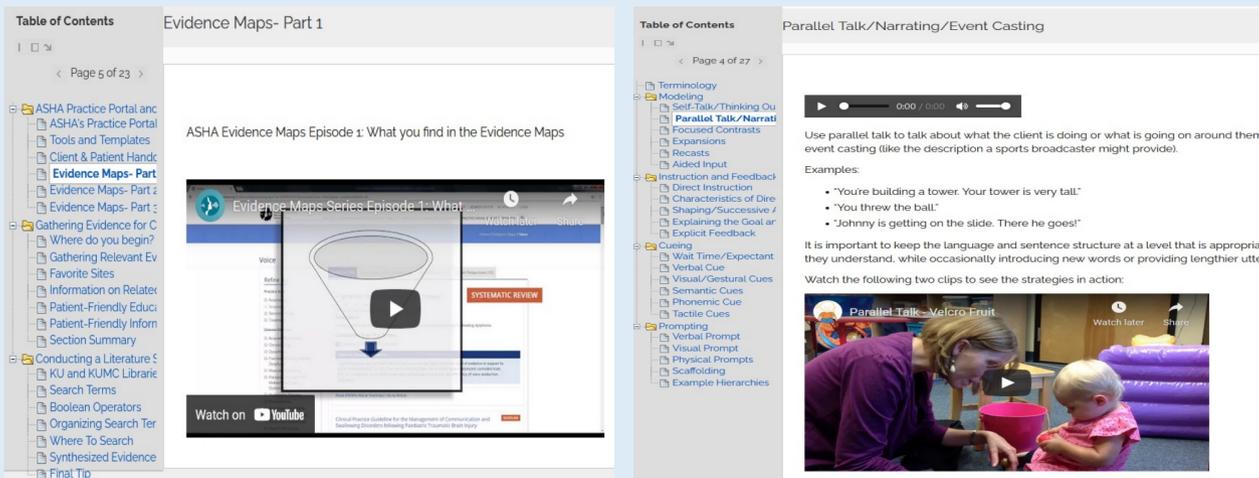
Module development

Faculty met during Summer 2020 to develop key areas and content. A GTA then created Blackboard modules including introductory text, videos, images, audio recordings, and links to resources.

39 1st-year MA students participated in the Clinical Modules during orientation week, totaling 7 ½ hours of content across the following areas:

- Therapeutic process
- Clinical decision-making
- Session design
- Intervention strategies
- Developing short-term goals
- Documentation
- Speech-language sampling

Modules were meant to ensure all students entered with essential content including terminology, key principles and practices, procedural knowledge, and examples of how practices vary across the lifespan and clinical settings. Topics would be revisited throughout the semester for deeper discussions as students applied knowledge to their work with clients.



Implementation

Students' perceptions of their knowledge and clinical readiness were higher after completing the modules (M=84.63, SD=7.05) than before (M=68.89, SD=10.47) with statistically significant differences in mean composite scores between the pre- and post- surveys, $t(61.5)=7.26, p<.01$.

- 90% of students learned “a great deal, a lot, or a moderate amount”
- 25% felt modules prepared them “very or extremely well” and 37.5% “moderately well”
- All faculty felt the modules were “moderately effective” in preparing students

Students Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements on Post-Module Survey

Survey Item	%
The modules were easy to navigate.	100
Information in the modules was presented in a clear manner.	100
Overall quality of the modules was outstanding.	90
Completing the modules was a valuable learning experience.	83
I enjoyed completing the modules.	63
I feel more prepared to begin clinic after completing the modules.	77

Student learning

Almost all students felt positive about the **content**, including the depth of information and examples provided.

- “It gives you a more in-depth understanding of varying aspects related to clinic, but also things you didn’t even realize you should know.”
- “They showed me ways to find research that I can use to influence the therapy that I provide.”

Modules were viewed as a **resource**.

- “It’s nice to have a place where I can look back and refer to items throughout clinic.”

Students made direct connections between the modules and their upcoming clinical practicum experience seeing them as “valuable as I meet with new clients.”

Students liked the media types, organization, and layout of the modules.

- “I appreciated the option of being able to listen to the modules along with the readings.”
- “You split them up nicely to avoid page fatigue.”

Suggestions related to the timing of the modules, particularly assigning them all at once was overwhelming for some students.

Reflections

Five faculty made specific comments about skills they observed in some students, such as “the ones who wrote stronger goals,” or who “referenced knowing how to look up disorders.”

“I do feel like this group was better able to describe their teaching strategies than they have in years past. . . and that was something from the beginning that I felt like they had a good handle on.”

There was a strong consensus that it was difficult to determine “if they had those [skills] from prior clinical experiences or if it’s because they took the initiative to go through the modules and others didn’t take that initiative.”

Faculty agreed modules need to be integrated more throughout the practicum experience. Most reported that despite having the “intentions of hitting on it each week,” they ultimately felt that they “didn’t emphasize them enough.”

“It’s just about us guiding them either in the correct timeline or bridge that connection between this general piece of information to the direct application they need on our specific teams.”

Suggestions included incorporating more active learning components having “them apply right on the spot” could improve the modules.