



Missouri Association of School Psychologists

www.maspweb.org

Facts and Myths: School Psychological Examiner

Myth: A School Psychological Examiner cannot be a member of MASP

Fact: School Psychological Examiners are valued members of MASP and continue to have full voting rights and can hold leadership positions in the organization. MASP encourages all professionals in the state of Missouri who engage in consultation, assessment and identification of children with disabilities to participate in the professional development offered by MASP to ensure best practices for all Missouri children and families.

Myth: Missouri no longer recognizes the School Psychological Examiner Certificate

Fact: The Department of Secondary and Elementary Education currently does offer the certification of School Psychological Examiner.

<http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/26%20SchoolPsychologicalExaminer04%201-08.pdf>

Myth: The Missouri Association of School Psychologists (MASP) organization does not support or recognize the School Psychological Examiner role.

Fact: MASP recognizes the current need for School Psychological Examiners in the state of Missouri and supports the hiring and use of School Psychological Examiners to practice within the ethical boundaries of this certification. However, MASP is working to ensure that the State Department of Education, Local Education Agency's, and Families recognize that School Psychological Examiners and School Psychologists refer to different degrees and areas of competency. It has been brought to the attention of MASP leadership, as well as the National Association of School Psychologists, that some Missouri schools are using these terms interchangeably and are unethically allowing people to use the professional title of School Psychologist when they do not have this certification from DESE.

<http://www.maspweb.org/What-is-a-School-Psychologist>

Myth: The School Psychological Examiner degree is being discontinued at Universities and will no longer be a degree option.

Fact: MASP has always and will continue to first and foremost support and encourage institutions of higher education to offer Education Specialist and/or Doctoral level School Psychology degree programs, and we are actively promoting the development of additional state training programs for school psychologists. However, the MASP board recently voted to recommend to DESE to consider sunsetting the School Psychological Examiner certification within the next few years for the following reasons:



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1. The current Missouri SPE training programs do not have any National Standards to guide institutions of higher education in terms of coursework content. Hence there is no unified set of national or even state level principles that guide coursework content, credentialing, professional practices, and ethical behavior expected of school psychological examiners. In addition, the current DESE training standards for the SPE certification are not sufficient to meet the current and future needs in our state for highly trained professionals. There is a strong national movement towards Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) and Response to Intervention initiatives. Currently in Missouri, both MO-CASE and MSBA are leading an initiative to advocate for the state-wide adoption of MTSS. The current SPE training competencies do not provide sufficient training to meet the needs for implementing MTSS and RTI efforts. Instead, the current SPE competencies focus narrowly on assessment for special education eligibility and do not include training in curriculum-based assessment, functional behavioral assessment, use of research based academic and behavioral interventions, consultation or crisis intervention.
2. The current SPE program requirements include only 150 hours of field experience and do not specify the professional qualifications required for the person designated to provide supervision to the candidate during this field experience. In contrast, to obtain a degree in school psychology, numerous school based practicum experiences are required during the 2 years of coursework and a minimum 1200 hour internship is required, which must be supervised by a certified school psychologist.
3. Of greatest concern with the current SPE certification is that there is no competency exam that the candidate must pass in order to obtain certification. This is the only DESE Educator Certification area that does NOT have a required competency exam with a set passing score, which is not in line with DESE's stated goal to produce only "highly qualified educators". While our MASP members who are certified as SPE's certainly demonstrate high levels of competence, and we recognize that they continue to seek to improve their professional skills by attending MASP conferences and other in-service trainings, this is not the case with every certified SPE. Our concern with the current SPE certification is the fact that in many rural areas, the SPE is often a practicing (or retired) school counselor who received their SPE certification many years ago and has not received any additional training for several years. This results in inaccurate and outdated assessment practices and inaccurate eligibility determinations for special education. Professionally, we consider this to be an unethical practice that hurts many of the children in our state.
4. Missouri is the last state to offer the SPE certification, which makes this an impractical certification to obtain should a person move to another state and want to continue to practice in this field. The few states that previously had the SPE certification have already sunsetted it.

As part of our formal request to DESE, MASP also recommended that all currently certified SPE's should continue to hold this certification and should continue to practice as SPE's in our Missouri schools. If DESE does not accept our proposed recommendation to sunset the SPE certification, then MASP leadership will work to improve and update the professional training competencies and field experience requirements for the SPE certification, as well as to recommend that DESE develop a required competency exam with a set passing score for the SPE certification as soon as possible.