

Administrative Information

1. **Institution:** Texas State University-San Marcos

2. **Change Request:** Change the Master of Arts (MA) major in School Psychology to a Specialist in School Psychology (SSP) major in School Psychology.

3. **Display how administrative unit(s) and program(s) would appear on the Coordinating Board program inventory; include Texas CIP code designation(s).**

College of Education
Department of Educational Administration and Psychological Services
School Psychology SSP 42.1701.00

4. **Proposed Implementation Date:** Fall 2008

5. **If changing degree program titles, how would name(s) of program(s) appear on student diplomas?**

Specialist in School Psychology major in School Psychology

6. **If changing degree program titles, how would name(s) of program(s) appear on student transcripts?**

Specialist in School Psychology major in School Psychology

7. **Administrative Unit:**

Department of Educational Administration and Psychological Services

8. **Contact Person: (Provide contact information for the person who can answer specific questions about the change.)**

Name: Stan Carpenter, Ph.D.
Title: Professor and Chair, EAPS Department
Phone: 512-245-8851
Email: stanc@txstate.edu

I. Describe briefly the change(s) requested.

The School Psychology Program at Texas State University-San Marcos currently offers a Master of Arts in School Psychology. However, this 69-hour program is equivalent to and more accurately designated as a specialist degree. Therefore, we would like to change the name of our degree from Master of Arts to the Specialist in School Psychology. The unique level of advanced training that a school psychologist must receive for entry-level national certification or state licensure is beyond the bounds of a typical master's degree.

II. Provide a rationale for the proposed change(s).

School psychologists identify children at-risk for learning and behavioral problems, train educators to recognize these children, and provide intervention services to children, youth, parents, and educators. A national and state shortage of school psychologists exists, as most schools are in dire need of professionals with assessment, consultation, counseling, and intervention skills. As a program that is approved by the National Association of School Psychologists, the School Psychology Program at Texas State provides comprehensive training that equips our students with the knowledge and skills needed to competently provide psychological services in the schools. However, the many responsibilities of a school psychologist demand a unique level of training that should be recognized by an appropriate degree designation (i.e., the Specialist) upon completion of such a program.

Nationally, the recognized entry level of training for school psychologists is referred to as the specialist level (*Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*, 2000). Of the states having school psychology training programs, 75 percent award the specialist degree (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). The professional training standards for school psychologists from both the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) require a minimum of 60 graduate hours, significantly more than most master's degrees.

Since 1996, the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) requires licensure as a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP) for the practice of school psychology. The LSSP is modeled after the national entry-level training standards for the practice of school psychology. Even the title of the school psychology license in Texas recognizes the fact that entry-level school psychologists have significantly more training than the minimum required for licensure at the master's level. In Texas, a graduate degree is required with a minimum of 60 graduate hours that includes the specific school psychology curriculum required by national training standards. In addition to the curriculum requirements, LSSP applicants must pass a national proficiency test and a state law test.

When applying for national certification, graduates of school psychology programs must document adherence to the specialist level of training, as a master's level program in psychology is not considered adequate training. Similarly, graduates with the MA in school psychology who seek certification or licensure in other states must again document an adequate level of training, as most states have adopted the

national standard “specialist level” of 60 hours. Therefore, the SSP provides the level of training that is recognized by all states and adheres to the national standards and would effectively eliminate the extra work that graduates must go through to provide the additional documentation. Following this logic, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved Texas Woman’s University’s request to change the title of their master’s degree in school psychology to the Specialist in School Psychology in 2006.

Additionally, the specialist degree would offer a career opportunity to educators and other professionals who want to become trained as school psychologists. Currently, there is no clear career path or incentive for educators with master’s degrees in related fields to pursue advanced graduate training in school psychology. In Texas, educational diagnosticians, special education teachers, and other psychology master’s degree holders continue to express interest in becoming school psychologists; however, there is little incentive to obtain a second master’s degree. A specialist degree would offer recognition of these professionals’ advanced level of graduate training in school psychology and encourage them to enter the field. If Texas State were able to award a Specialist in School Psychology (SSP) degree, educational diagnosticians, special education teachers, and others would complete the 69 required hours for SSP while receiving some transfer credit from their prior master’s coursework.

In Texas the following universities offer school psychology training programs at the specialist level:

Table 1
Texas Universities Offering a Specialist Level of Training in School Psychology (Require
≥ graduate hours)

University	NASP Approved	Degree Offered
Abilene Christian University	Yes	MS in School Psychology
Baylor University	No	Specialist in Education (EdS)
Sam Houston State University	Yes	MA in School Psychology
Stephen F. Austin State University	Yes	MA in School Psychology
Tarleton State University	No	MS in Educational Psychology
Texas A&M University-Commerce	No	MA in Psychology
Texas State University-San Marcos	Yes	MA in School Psychology
Texas Woman’s University	Yes	SSP in School Psychology
Trinity University	Yes	MA in School Psychology
University of Houston-Clear Lake	Yes	MA in School Psychology
University of Houston-	No	MA in School Psychology

Victoria		
University of North Texas	No	MA in School Psychology
University of Texas-Pan American	No	MA in School Psychology
University of Texas at Tyler	No	MS in Clinical Psychology

There are fourteen specialist-level school psychology training programs in Texas. Seven of the fourteen programs are nationally approved by NASP. Five of the NASP approved school psychology programs currently award a Master of Arts in School Psychology degree. As noted previously, Texas Woman’s University now awards a Specialist in School Psychology degree. Two non-NASP approved programs award a Master of Arts in School Psychology degree, while the remaining programs offer a combination of master’s degrees in Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology, or Psychology. All of the programs listed above require 60 or more hours of graduate training, yet are currently awarding only a master’s degree. One exception is Baylor University, a private university that is already awarding an Ed.S. degree in school psychology.

III. Include an assessment of its effect on the administrative unit(s) and degree program(s) involved and on the institution as a whole.

This change would benefit our graduates by providing them with a degree that more accurately reflects their level of training and the requirements for becoming certified. Additionally, it may attract applicants to our program who have a choice between universities that offer a master’s program versus the SSP degree. Attracting more applicants will ensure healthy enrollment and a strong pool of prospective students. In accordance with NASP standards, we maintain a faculty to student ratio that limits the number of students admitted. Therefore, we do not anticipate the need for additional resources.

IV. Summarize implications for classes, distribution of personnel, availability of facilities, equipment and library.

Not applicable.

V. Give information regarding any additional costs or savings.

Not applicable.