Psychodiagnosis and Treatment Strategies is a core course within the master’s of Counseling program. This course has approximately 1800 pages of text that faculty and students are accountable for within an traditional 15-week semester. Given the implications for development within the skill set covered in this class, the Psychodiagnosis and Treatment Strategies course is typically regarded as a gatekeeping class within the curriculum.

The Area for Development

Students in counseling programs are typically taught information about psychodiagnoses and their related interventions in a rote way that does not represent critical thinking, integration of information across the degree plan, or much specificity within treatment planning.

The High Impact Practice

- Collaborative Assignments and Projects

The Activity

- Case study strategy to small group work depicted by Bean in Engaging Ideas
- Concept map represents a template approach to critical decision making and problem solving within the context of integrated assessment, diagnosis, intervention, and referral
- The Process: students are assigned to a small group of 2 or 3, they review a case depiction, students are given 45 minutes to systematically complete all sections of the concept map, students present findings to class and receive support and feedback from peers and faculty

Case Excerpt

Delores is a 12-year-old sixth grader whose parents bring her in for counseling following a psycho-educational evaluation by the school psychologist who found that she had a superior IQ and a “mild visually based reading disorder.” Delores did not qualify as having a learning disorder by school standards, however. The psychologist noted that compared with other parts of her IQ test Delores’ performance on recalling digits, metal arithmetic, and symbol coding was much lower, which he attributed to anxiety. He recommended an evaluation for a possible anxiety disorder. Delores has had failing or near-failing grades since the third grade. She received numerous admonishments because of her apparent “laziness.” She appeared to be uninterested, bored and more concerned about her busy social life than about her studies. She complained that the middle school environment was too noisy for her to concentrate.

At home, Delores was generally cooperative except for a growing resistance to homework. Her school papers were sloppy and disorganized. Her handwriting was notably immature and she printed rather than using cursive whenever possible. Delores tended to rush through her work and had to be reminded to check it. Even so, she would often make many careless errors, even in areas where she had demonstrated previous competence. Although generally willing to do everything she was asked by her parents, she was unreliable and frequently had to be reminded about chores that were well established and should have been routine.

Diagnosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Consideration</th>
<th>Biological</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualizing Etiology</td>
<td>Organic Etiology and Brain Systems Affected:</td>
<td>Cause of Problems Based on Theory:</td>
<td>Societal and cultural factors affecting the disorder:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating Variables</td>
<td>Neurotransmitters that are involved:</td>
<td>Related theory-based interventions:</td>
<td>Personal strengths that may promote wellness &amp; development:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigating Factors</td>
<td>Appropriate Medications:</td>
<td>Therapeutic outcomes within a treatment plan:</td>
<td>Community resources available:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Outcomes Observed in Class

- They require effort. Students devote a considerable amount of time and effort to this purposeful task, but over course of semester, they become very efficient, even after changing group membership.
- They increase the level of interaction with faculty and peers. The interaction that occurs between both faculty and peers is substantive and over extended period totaling about 15 hours in a semester. During this time students can observe the thinking and decision making styles of their peers, while also receiving case consultation from their faculty member.
- They provide regular and frequent feedback. During the case presentation phase of the activity, students receive encouragement for tasks well attending and supportive feedback to promote new development for demonstrating competence and precision.
- Learning across classes is integrated in a meaningful way. Students frequently comment on how the activity requires an integrated approach to implementing previously learned knowledge. The activity also requires extension of knowledge into their community regarding what resources are available to individuals such as those depicted in the case study.