

DEPARTMENT · OF · PSYCHOLOGY

WASHINGTON · UNIVERSITY · IN · ST. LOUIS



*Practicum in  
Applied Behavior Analysis:  
Autism/PDD*

*2006-2007*

*Revised August 2006*

## ***Practicum in Applied Behavior Analysis: Autism/PDD***

The Practicum in Applied Behavior Analysis (Psy 235) offers an opportunity for students to be trained in applied behavior analytic techniques and to work with a child with autism/pervasive developmental disorder. The practicum may be of benefit to anyone considering a career in an applied setting or in any number of health-related areas. It may be valuable for those considering graduate training in clinical psychology, social work, speech, occupational or physical therapy, or a career in education. A special reason to pursue the practicum is the satisfaction to be gained from helping a family and bettering the life of a child. In addition, the knowledge and skills learned should serve you well. You will see how principles of learning derived from laboratory research are applied, and you will learn valuable teaching and therapeutic techniques.

Students interested in the practicum need to be very dependable and, of course, caring. You have a chance to make a profound difference in the life of a young child. You will receive training and regular supervision, and will meet regularly with the other members of the child's training team. For the practicum, the minimum number of hours required is six (6) hours a week of therapy with the child for two semesters, for which you generally are paid about \$10.00 per hour for therapy.

A student may receive credit for Psy 235 only once, and it is offered for 3 units on a 'Credit/No Credit' basis only. Please note that the Practicum requires a year's commitment. All training and supervision will be arranged and coordinated by the family of the child or by Special School District. Students should contact the Practicum Coordinator immediately if they are concerned with any aspect of training or supervision during their practicum experience.

To receive academic credit, the student must undertake not only a year's work with the child and complete the minimum number of hours of therapy (for which you may be paid). In addition, there are academic components that must be fulfilled in order to receive credit for the course, and for which you are not compensated. These include the following:

- attendance at the regular family/staff and consultant meetings at which the therapy and the progress of the child are evaluated and discussed;
- completion of the Special School District's 2-session ABA Basic workshop;
- attendance at and participation in the seminar throughout the year with the Psychology Department's Practicum Coordinator during which assigned readings will be discussed and presentations on autism and therapy provided;
- completion of a satisfactory written paper.

## **Applied Behavior Analysis Therapy with Young Children with Autism/PDD**

Undergraduate and graduate students work as teacher-trainers with young children with autism/pervasive developmental disorder. The therapy program derives from the pioneering, research-based, applied-behavior-analytic approach of Dr. O. Ivar Lovaas. The treatment program is structured, intensive one-on-one work based on principles of learning (e.g., positive reinforcement, extinction, breaking behavior down into smaller units). The treatment is a carefully sequenced and structured program designed for the individual child. Lovaas has reported most impressive results. In his 1987 article (Lovaas, 1987) he reports that data for the treatment group showed that "47% achieved normal intellectual and educational functioning, with normal-range IQ scores and successful first grade performance in public schools. Another 40% were mildly retarded . . . and only 10% were profoundly retarded. . . In contrast, only 2% of the control-group children achieved normal intellectual and educational functioning; . . . and 53% were severely retarded . . ." In a follow-up several years later of those children who had achieved the best outcome at the end of the first grade in the 1987 report, 8 of the 9 were "indistinguishable from average children on tests of intelligence and adaptive behavior." A conclusion was that "behavioral treatment may produce long-lasting and significant gains for many young children with autism" (McEachin, Smith, & Lovaas, 1993).

### **Some of the Learning Objectives of the Practicum include:**

- To learn about autism and pervasive developmental disorders;
- To learn about applied-behavior-analytic techniques;
- To understand the application of laboratory-derived learning principles;
- To gain hands-on experience in behavioral techniques.

### **Selecting a Practicum Family**

A list of names and contact numbers of parents who may need student therapists/trainers can be obtained from the Psychology Department's Practicum Coordinator. If you have an interest, you are to contact the family directly. The parent will inform you of any additional requirements beyond those of the minimum number of hours of therapy, team meetings, training, and meetings with the Practicum Coordinator. All details are to be worked out between you and the parent and should be confirmed in writing. The parent will also be responsible for arranging and coordinating training for you in the ABA treatment techniques

You are responsible for making an independent assessment of the quality of the practicum experience and the personality fit between yourself and the family. You should make this assessment by discussing your expectations and the family's expectations with the family prior to accepting a position. Although the Practicum Coordinator is familiar with many of the families listed, the Coordinator cannot guarantee your satisfaction with your experience. You are also responsible for your own safety, security, and travel to and from the practicum site and are expected to adhere to all University policies and state/federal laws during the practicum.

You may also contact the Special School District (SSD) for possible placements. In such cases, you must be sure the Practicum Coordinator approves the placement. A requirement of the Practicum is that you work one-on-one with a child. Call Lana Lautermilch at SSD at 989-7908 to arrange for training and the filling out of the necessary application materials.

Bear in mind that when you work with a child you have the responsibility to fulfill your obligations and to take those responsibilities very seriously. The family and the child depend on you.

## **Requirements for Completing the Practicum**

**Two semesters of work are required.** The minimum amount of time engaged in the delivery of therapy is 6 hours per week, for 13-15 weeks each semester, for which you may receive compensation (generally \$10/hr). The minimum total number of hours of therapy required with the child is 150, not including the required therapy-team meetings. The parent must make arrangements for you to receive appropriate training in the applied-behavior-analytic approach to be undertaken with the child. In addition, the student is required to attend the weekly/bi-weekly meetings of the child's therapy team, at which discussion of the therapy takes place along with information about changes in the therapy protocol. There may also be periodic meetings between the therapy team and the family's professional behavioral consultant.

In addition to the therapy, for which you may be paid, and the training required by the parent, there are also academic requirements that must be fulfilled in order to receive credit:

- (i) All students engaged in the practicum are required to undertake the 2-session training workshop on ABA Basics provided by Special School District. The 2 classes cover the basics of applied-behavior-analysis principles and application. This is to be completed during the first semester of the Practicum. (Dates are provided at the end of this brochure.)
- (ii) Students are required to meet with the Practicum Coordinator at scheduled seminar meetings each semester. The dates and times of these meetings are announced at the beginning of each semester. At these meetings, assigned readings will be discussed. These readings may relate to autism, the diagnosis of autism, applied-behavior-analytic therapy, and evaluation of therapies. It is expected that the student will have read all material assigned and is prepared to discuss it. Some meetings might also include videos of therapy sessions and presentations by parents and professionals. Attendance at all seminar meetings is required.
- (iii) The Practicum Coordinator will also provide details on the paper that is required for successful completion of the Practicum.
- (iv) Students meet regularly with the child's therapy team and behavior consultant and/or the Special School District's consultant at which the therapy and the progress of the child are evaluated and discussed.

The parents or SSD may have additional requirements and readings. If so, then the student must fulfill these obligations. These additional requirements will be explained to the student and noted on the *Petition for Practicum* form.

The parent or Special School District will be responsible for turning in the log of hours and weeks worked to the Practicum Coordinator. In addition, the Practicum Coordinator must be provided with an evaluation of the student by the parent or the SSD coordinator at the end of each semester.

### **Registering for Practicum**

You must submit a completed *Petition for Practicum* form to the Department of Psychology's Practicum Coordinator, signed by you and the parent or SSD coordinator, after you have been approved and hired by a parent or Special School District. This form is to be completed each semester.

You cannot register independently for Psy 235. The Practicum Coordinator will take care of the registration process in the second semester of your practicum.

**The Practicum may be taken only once, for 3 units, only on a Credit/No Credit basis, and requires a year's commitment of work. Enrollment is by the Department of Psychology's Practicum Coordinator only.**

**Dates for the training classes at Special School District for AY 2006-2007**

Contact Lana Lautermilch at SSD (989-7908) to make an appointment for the training classes. You are required to attend both sessions. Be certain to get a note/form verifying that you have successfully completed the pair of sessions to be handed in to the Practicum Coordinator.

The training classes are offered at two different locations at two different times:

\*CO                   Central Office – Special School District  
12110 Clayton Road  
Town & Country, MO

\*TLC                   SSD-ABA  
800 Maryville Centre Drive  
Town & Country, MO

**2006:**

<b>Class Dates</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Room</b>	<b>Times</b>
September 6 & September 22	Bess Puvathingal	TLC	217C	12:30 -3:30 p.m.
October 4 & October 26	Jenny Frisbee	CO/Neuwoehner	61/Cafeteria	5:30 -8:30 p.m.
November 1 & November 16	Lisa Gilbertsen	TLC	213/214	12:30 -3:30 p.m.
December 7 & December 14	Melissa Sanson	CO	61	5:30 -8:30 p.m.

**2007:**

<b>Class Dates</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Room</b>	<b>Times</b>
January 4 & January 25	Beth Mrozowicz	TLC	217C & 213/214	12:30 -3:30 p.m.
February 8 & February 22	Dave Pentz	CO	61	5:30 -8:30 p.m.
March 1 & March 22	Jenny Frisbee	TLC	213/214	12:30 -3:30 p.m.
April 12 & April 26	Bess Puvathingal	CO	61	5:30 -8:30 p.m.
May 10 & May 24	Melissa Sanson	TLC	217C	12:30 -3:30 p.m.
June 7 & June 21	Lisa Gilbertsen	CO	61	5:30 -8:30 p.m.



Please Note:

To receive academic credit, two semesters of work are required. The Practicum may be taken only once, for 3 units, and only on a Credit/No Credit basis.

The minimum number of hours of therapy required is 6 hours a week for at least 13-15 weeks each semester. Actual hours are determined with the family, along with any additional requirements the family or SSD might have. The minimum total hours of therapy conducted with the child is 150, not including the required therapy-team meetings. There are also scheduled therapy team meetings that you are expected to attend. In addition, you are required to complete the 2-session ABA Basic classes offered by Special School District. You must bring proof of completion of the SSD class, which must be completed during the first semester of Practicum.

There will be 5 required seminar meetings each semester between students in the Practicum and the Practicum Coordinator, and required readings, along with a written paper. Attendance at all seminar meetings is required.

Additional requirements, readings, expectations, prerequisites on the part of the parent or SSD are to be noted below:

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\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent's/Coordinator's Signature

**STUDENT'S SIGNATURE**

The student should sign below acknowledging her/his understanding and acceptance of the requirements and obligations.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's Signature

**PRACTICUM COORDINATOR'S APPROVAL**

The student is to bring this completed form to the Practicum Coordinator

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_