



MCWEP

MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM 2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

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LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP) is a partnership among the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF), the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NJ), and a consortium of four graduate social work programs – The MSW Programs of Kean University, Monmouth University, Rutgers University, and Stockton University. This program evaluation covers the months of August 2017 – July 2018. Kean’s first cohort of MCWEP students entered in the Fall 2017 semester, so this is the first annual program evaluation that will include data from Kean University MCWEP students. The MCWEP partnership was formally initiated in June 2012, when the project was funded by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

The intent of MCWEP is to enhance the knowledge and skills of supervisors who are currently employed at the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), through completion of a Master’s Degree in Social Work (MSW). Through participation in MCWEP, DCP&P supervisors broaden their perspectives on social work and child welfare (including evidence-based public child welfare practice), develop advanced clinical skills, and deepen their supervisory skills so that they become more confident supervisors and mentors in their work with at-risk children and families and more effective leaders in promoting exemplary practice within New Jersey’s public child welfare system. In evaluating the project, the perspectives of the students were sought to capture the academic and experiential components of the program. This report includes data from respondents in six cohorts of students accepted into MCWEP.



Descriptive Data - A total of one-hundred fourteen (114) students were funded during the first five years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS

	# of Students						
AGE GROUP	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
30-35	7	3	1	1	5	3	20 (18%)
36-40	6	5	10	5	2	10	38 (33%)
41-45	4	4	5	4	5	8	30 (26%)
46-50	2	3	3	5	6	0	19 (17%)
>51	1	3	1	1	1	1	8 (7%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	114
	# of Students						
GENDER	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
FEMALE	18	16	17	11	17	17	96 (84%)
MALE	2	2	3	5	2	4	18 (16%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	114
	# of Students						
ETHNICITY	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
African American	8	7	3	9	8	14	49 (43%)
Caucasian	6	8	5	2	3	2	28 (25%)
Latino	6	3	8	4	5	4	30 (26%)
Other/Unknown	----	----	4	1	3	1	9 (8%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	114



	# of Students						
DGP&P TITLE	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
SFSS1/CWS	2	6	3	2	4	3	20 (18%)
SFSS2	14	10	16	14	15	18	87 (76%)
LOM	4	2	1	----	----	----	7 (6%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	114
	# of Students						
YEARS AS SUPERVISOR	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
1-5 years	8	5	6	9	6	9	43 (38%)
6-10 Years	8	8	13	2	7	7	45 (39%)
11-15 years	4	4	1	5	5	3	22 (19%)
16-20 years	----	1	----	----	1	2	4 (4%)
>20 years	----	----	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	114
	# of Students						
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Kean University	----	----	----	----	----	6	6 (5%)
Monmouth University	6	6	7	7	6	5	30 (26%)
Rutgers University	8	7	8	5	8	5	36 (32%)
Stockton University	6	5	5	4	5	5	26 (23%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	19	21	114
	Students Who Separated from MCWEP						
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	TOTAL # (% of Total)
Kean University	----	----	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
Monmouth University	----	1	1	----	----	----	2 (2%)
Rutgers University	----	----	----	1	----	----	1 (1%)
Stockton University	----	----	1	----	1	----	2 (2%)
TOTAL	0	1	1	1	1	0	4 (4%)



Number of Students Admitted from DCP&P Local and Area Offices:

Atlantic East:	3
Atlantic West:	2
Atlantic/Burlington/Cape May Area:	0
Bergen Central:	3
Bergen South:	3
Bergen/Hudson Area:	1
Burlington East:	3
Burlington West:	1
Camden Central:	3
Camden East:	6
Camden North:	3
Camden South:	6
Camden Area:	0
Cape May:	2

Cumberland East:	1
Cumberland West:	1
Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem Area:	0
Essex Central:	5
Essex North:	0
Essex South:	4
Essex Area:	0
Gloucester East:	1
Gloucester West:	2
Hudson Central:	3
Hudson North:	1
Hudson South:	4
Hudson West:	1
Hunterdon:	0

Hunterdon/Mercer/Somerset/Warren Area:	1
Mercer North:	5
Mercer South:	5
Middlesex Central:	0
Middlesex Coastal:	9
Middlesex West:	2
Middlesex/Union Area:	0
Monmouth North:	4
Monmouth South:	4
Morris East:	1
Morris West:	3
Morris/Sussex/Passaic Area:	1
Newark Center City:	4
Newark Northeast:	3

Newark South:	1
Ocean North:	4
Ocean South:	1
Ocean/Monmouth Area:	0
Passaic Central:	5
Passaic North:	8
Salem:	4
Somerset:	2
State Central Registry:	3
Sussex:	1
Union Central:	2
Union East:	1
Union West:	2
Warren:	2

**MCWEP Applications/Acceptances/Completions**

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7	All Cohorts
# of applicants	26	22	28	20	22	26	26	170
#/% offered and accepting traineeship	20 (77%)	18 (82%)	20 (71%)	16 (80%)	19 (86%)	21 (81%)	21 (81%)	135 (79%)
# terminated prior to completion	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
# completing traineeship	20	17	17	15	1	0	0	70
# not graduated yet	0	0	1	1	17	21	21	0





PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Competency-Based Assessment

Program assessment in MSW education focuses on student outcomes (the extent to which students demonstrate competencies and associated practice behaviors), rather than inputs (curriculum content). Similarly, assessment in the Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP) is focused on student attainment of a set of competencies and associated practice behaviors. Under the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), all MSW graduates are expected to have mastered certain competencies. In addition, each participating MSW program has its own direct practice/clinical concentration and has developed a set of advanced MSW competencies to guide learning in the classroom and field. All students in MSW programs are assessed for mastery of the CSWE competencies and the specific advanced competencies established by their MSW programs. To assess the additional mastery of competencies required by MCWEP, we use the specialized competencies that students develop through their participation in MCWEP. These competencies specifically address the Division of Child Protection and Permanency requirements that child welfare supervisors have an exceptionally well-developed perspective on the knowledge base in social work and child welfare practice, are able to effectively use clinical skills and theories, and are able to supervise effectively in an organization where workers regularly make difficult decisions that affect the lives of vulnerable children and families. These two sets of competencies, trauma-informed child welfare practice behaviors and leadership and supervision in child welfare practice behaviors, are developed in two elective courses all MCWEP participants are required to take prior to graduation. These two sets of competencies are also rehearsed and reinforced during the sessions of the Learning Community.

MCWEP students completing one or both courses during the 2017-2018 academic year rated their own mastery of these specialized competencies. The following summarizes the results of those self-assessments.





Assessment of Student Learning – Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the listed statements regarding Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice Behaviors. Mean scores are reported below (1 = Very Much Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Very Much Agree):

Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Competencies	Mean Score					
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
1. I am able to integrate the concept of “child traumatic stress” in case practice and supervision by knowing what types of experiences constitute childhood trauma and utilize a trauma-informed lens to manage child welfare cases.	4.71	4.71	4.82	4.94	4.38	4.94
2. I am able to apply knowledge of how traumatic experiences affect brain development and memory and understand the relationship between a child’s lifetime trauma history and his or her responses through comprehensive case planning.	4.29	4.47	4.55	4.76	4.38	4.76
3. I can articulate how trauma has an impact on the behavior of children over the course of childhood and how child traumatic stress is exacerbated over time by ongoing stressors (including separation from/loss of caregivers, and/or foster placement) in a child’s environment and within the child welfare system.	4.43	4.65	4.36	4.82	4.31	4.82
4. I am able to identify and promote the utilization of trauma-sensitive interventions such as strategic referrals to timely, quality, and effective trauma-focused interventions and trauma-informed case planning with multi-disciplinary teams.	4.29	4.41	4.45	4.76	4.19	4.76
5. I can articulate how the impact of traumatic stress can be prevented and/or mitigated by trauma-informed responses of child welfare workers and child welfare systems.	4.43	4.35	4.36	4.71	4.38	4.71
6. I am able to consider how cultural factors influence the manner by which children may identify, interpret, and respond to traumatic events during the case practice process.	4.43	4.35	4.45	4.71	4.13	4.71
7. I am able to identify the impact of secondary traumatic stress (STS) on child welfare workers and employ appropriate interventions.	4.43	4.41	4.27	4.71	4.31	4.71
8. I support Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) goals of safety, permanency, and well-being by increasing skills to effectively serve children and families (biological and resource) in the child welfare system that have experienced traumatic stress.	4.57	4.71	4.36	4.71	4.25	4.71



Assessment of Student Learning – Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the listed statements regarding Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision Competencies. Mean scores are reported below (1 = Very Much Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Very Much Agree):

Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision Competencies	Mean Score					
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
1. I am able to assess my own strengths and challenges as a leader.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86	4.76
2. I am able to describe key qualities of leaders and the impact on child welfare systems and staff.	4.33	4.75	4.45	4.93	4.93	4.82.
3. I can demonstrate an understanding of the role of ethics and the systems perspective in leadership behavior as a supervisor.	5.00	4.83	4.85	4.87	4.86	4.59
4. I am able to describe key child welfare workforce issues, trends, and challenges from a national perspective.	4.00	4.66	4.85	4.47	4.64	4.53
5. I can demonstrate the ability to identify evidence-based practice in child welfare supervision.	4.00	4.83	4.85	4.67	4.79	4.71
6. I am able to demonstrate an understanding of the stages and key issues in the implementation of change initiatives.	4.67	4.92	4.45	4.53	4.71	4.53
7. I am able to understand the relationship of creating a learning culture to staff retention and performance..	5.00	4.83	4.45	4.80	4.71	4.94
8. I am able to describe interactional clinical supervision and discuss how it would be implemented in a public child welfare setting.	5.00	5.00	4.92	4.67	4.79	4.82
9. I can describe and apply strategies to foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued.	4.33	4.58	4.45	4.67	4.79	4.88
10. I am able to describe the impact of trauma on worker retention and list strategies to mitigate the stress of secondary trauma.	3.67	4.58	4.18	4.87	4.86	4.88



Learning Community Assessment

The Learning Community is an integral component of MCWEP designed to enhance students' MSW classroom and field learning experiences and meaningfully connect these experiences to child welfare practice and supervision. The purpose of the MCWEP Learning Community is to foster a state-wide network of MCWEP participants to disseminate educational information related to child welfare and encourage dialogue among participants regarding MSW education and translation of educational outcomes to workforce experiences. The Learning Community also provides an avenue for process evaluation of the needs of student participants in MCWEP.

The Learning Community consists mainly of quarterly in-person meetings where students have opportunities to gain further education, disseminate information in group presentation format, and engage in process evaluation. After each Learning Community meeting, an evaluation is administered to assess the meeting's effectiveness. Mean scores for each of the items were above 4.2 in all cases, indicating that students are highly satisfied with their experiences in the Learning Community. The following data represent information gathered from each of the four Learning Community Meetings that took place during the 2017-2018 academic year:





Learning Community Evaluation Results

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
August 17, 2017 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to MCWEP mission/purpose/structure • Keynote Speaker – Lisa von Pier, Assistant Commissioner, New Jersey DCP&P • Recognition of MCWEP Graduates • “Intro to Critical Thinking for MCWEP” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.5
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.5
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.5
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.4
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.4
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.5
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor	4.4
		8. The content of this learning community was helpful to me as an MSW student	4.4
November 3, 2017 9:00am – 4:00pm Kean University Union, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided discussion in Cohorts • “Ethics, Responsibility, and the Danieal Kelly Case” • Group/Student Presentations “MSW Curriculum Basics” • “CFSR Data: A Closer Look” 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.4
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.4
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.3
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.2
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.4
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.2
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.3
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.3

Table continued on next page.



Learning Community Evaluation Results (continued)

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
February 9, 2018 9:00am – 4:00pm Stockton University Galloway, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Discussion – “Where Are You on Your MCWEP Journey?” • “What’s New in Crimes Against Children: CPS Processing, Investigation, & Testimony” by Anne Crater • “Balancing Fieldwork and Well-Being” by Kit Siracusa • Myers-Briggs Personality Type Discussion 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.5
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.5
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.2
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective.	4.3
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.2
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.4
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.2
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.2
June 8, 2018 9:00am – 4:00pm Monmouth University West Long Branch, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Discussion/Debrief • “International Child Welfare and Its Philosophical Underpinnings” • “The National IV-E Landscape” • Reports from Students Attending the NASW Conference • Team-Building Activity 	1. The speakers demonstrated expertise on the subject matter presented.	4.6
		2. The speakers communicated in a clear and organized manner.	4.6
		3. The speakers were able to hold my interest.	4.4
		4. The methods of the presentation were effective	4.6
		5. The content was directly related to MCWEP.	4.6
		6. Handouts supplemented presented material.	4.4
		7. I will use content from this learning community meeting in my work as a DCP&P Supervisor.	4.4
		8. The content of this learning community will be helpful to me as an MSW student.	4.5



The Learning Community evaluations also included open-ended questions. These questions were:

1. In your opinion, what were the strengths of this Learning Community?
2. What suggestions would you offer to improve this Learning Community?
3. What will you do differently in your practice/employment as a result of this Learning Community?
4. What was the most important thing you took away from today's Learning Community Activities?

The following tables report the themes identified in a content analysis of student responses to the open-ended questions and the frequency with which the themes were mentioned. Following the table are examples of the students' comments in their own words.

In Your Opinion, What Were the Strengths of This Learning Community?

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Content/Material Covered	55
Sense of Community and Support	43
Linking MSW curriculum & Learning Community content to Child Welfare Practice	24
Development of Skills and Resources	20

Content/Material Covered

- The material/discussion presented is always helpful
- The reading materials and critical thinking activity based on our experience
- Presentation about case practice/law
- Always appreciate and benefit from speakers; very good message from prosecutor
- The presentation/activity on personality type
- The presentations were very inspiring and motivational
- The presentation on child welfare's philosophical assumptions was amazing. I wish we had more time for it. Team building activities are always important too.
- I enjoyed the group work, also the presentations about Guatemala and Uganda.

Sense of Community and Support

- The ability to join with others that are going through the same program as we are
- Always good to get together with fellow students for support
- Thank you for all of the support from the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner
- Very comfortable and supportive environment
- Sharing with each other and knowing that everyone is feeling the same way



- Time to support each other and hear what other MCWEP students are experiencing
- You get to share your experiences with others, and realize you have commonalities

Linking MSW Curriculum and Learning Community Content to Child Welfare Practice

- The learning community provides updated educational information that is directly applicable to field work. Presentations are helpful and useful.
- The learning community is very supportive and provides constructive feedback that can be applied to the workplace
- It presents an array of knowledge and practical “how to’s” for everyday work. It also shows the strides the program is making.
- Coming together to integrate our learning to our practice
-

Development of Skills and Resources

- Learning of new ideas related to critical thinking
- Giving us ideas of critical-thinking to use or have our staff use
- The critical thinking piece was good and we will utilize it as we move further through the program
- Practicing PPT presentations and receiving feedback was helpful

What Suggestions Would You Offer to Improve This Learning Community?

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Suggestions for Topics and Issues Students Would Like Addressed in the Learning Community	37
Suggestions for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities and Activities	27
Various Practical and Logistical Issues	21

Suggestions for Topics and Issues Students Would Like Addressed in the Learning Community

- Trauma-informed practice training
- Learn more about the effects of Domestic Violence on Adolescents
- Tools for building self-care and support
- A few techniques around time-management would be nice—how to deal with multitasking work, school, etc.
- Strategies on how to circumvent systematic issues in supervision. More training on clinical supervision strategies to use with management.
- Time management and surviving the return to school
- Concrete ways on how to handle work, life and school challenges; stress management techniques
- I would like to hear someone present on social justice issues
- Mindfulness training, meditation, stress management techniques



Suggestions for Content Delivery/Learning Modalities and Activities

- Have the graduates speak about their experience
- Maybe some more get-to-know-you type games
- MCWEP learning communities should be a time to de-stress and relax. Next MCWEP learning community include relaxation techniques, such as yoga
- More group work with peers. Less listening to people speak
- More group activities; more counseling and venting sessions with peers

Various Practical and Logistical Issues

- Change time to 9:30am for arrival, and end 3:30pm
- Different room – too noisy and distracting
- Closer locations. Distance too far.
- Offer food at all learning communities, self-care always!
- To improve, shorten the day—it doesn't have to/shouldn't be a full day

What Will You Do Differently in Your Practice/Employment as a Result of This Learning Community?

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Integrate/Apply Content to Practice	42
Share Content with Staff/Supervisees	32
Further Exploration or Research into Content Area	8

Integrate/Apply Content to Practice

- Continue to apply what I learn at the workplace
- Focus more on self-care and put it into practice
- Pay closer attention to commonly overlooked issues of case practice; i.e., assessing service needs based on client history
- Pay closer attention to the review of cases. Ask critical questions.
- Consider the NASW Code of Ethics more frequently
- The information provided will be integrated into my practices at work
- Help my workers develop their critical thinking skills
- Share more of the self-care tools/techniques
- Refresh my unit's understanding of the importance of cultural competence; review case study with staff.



- Ensure my workers are aware of the importance of interviewing and capturing information in investigations
- Continue to transfer my learning to my workers
- Continue to integrate and disperse information to my peers and office

Share Content with Staff/Supervisees

- Help my workers develop their critical thinking skills
- Share more of the self-care tools/techniques
- Refresh my unit’s understanding of the importance of cultural competence; review case study with staff.
- Ensure my workers are aware of the importance of interviewing and capturing information in investigations
- Continue to transfer my learning to my workers
- Continue to integrate and disperse information to my peers and office

Further Exploration or Research into Area of Content

- Maintain my current understanding of different cultures and try to learn about more cultures
- Think deeper about our CPS practices, while still following laws, think more about moral issues
- More emotional intelligence education
- Continue to focus on my leadership techniques to be more productive and efficient

What Was the Most Important Thing You Took Away from Today’s Learning Community Activities?

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Valuable Information	44
Direction for Future Practice	15
Hope, Encouragement, and Support	11
Tangible Skills	10

Valuable Information

- Critical thinking and its importance
- Self-care – a better understanding
- Information about CFSRs and impact on casework
- Cultural competency
- The importance of understanding my personality and my leadership style
- I learned information from the prosecutor that I didn’t know
- Seeing the presentations about Guatemala and Uganda was refreshing



Direction for Future Practice

- Self-care will be even more important for me to practice going forward
- Ensure we remind ourselves and workers of the purpose of what we are doing and not lose sight of it despite everything being a numbers game
- The need to continually review cultural competencies/stay abreast of change
- Self-awareness, self-regulation, importance of communication

Hope, Encouragement, and Support

- I can do this and I will have a lot of support
- Peer support
- Sense of support and encouragement from everyone
- The team building/connecting activities

Tangible Skills

- Critical thinking tools
- Time-management strategies
- I learned tips on presenting PowerPoints
- Self-care techniques

Summary of Student Feedback

In sum, students indicated that they value and benefit from the information and materials disseminated in the Learning Community. This reflects the significant time and effort that MCWEP faculty and staff put into planning and arranging these meetings. Students also expressed strong appreciation for the sense of community and support aspect that is one of the most consistent strengths of our Learning Community, and MCWEP as a whole. We continue to devote time at each meeting to foster this strong sense of solidarity and collegiality between the cohorts and with program staff. Students also seem interested and encouraged to engage in further exploration and research into areas of interest, aiming to promote change in their units and across the organization. The students also related that they will continue to transfer the skills and knowledge gained through their MSW courses to their staff and also apply it to their own practice in child welfare. This has been a consistent finding of our Learning Community assessment over time, and connects with one of its objectives: to facilitate meaningful transfer of learning from students' MSW courses to DCP&P practice. Students are eager to apply their learning, whether specific content areas or practice approaches, to their work setting and with their supervisees. Students voiced a clear appreciation for their colleagues' support, and the desire to offer support to both colleagues and supervisees. Students expressed a longing for additional information, more interactive group activities, and ideas for self-care within the child welfare environment.

Additionally, the students provided feedback related to the areas of content, learning modalities and topics for which they have preferences. While most feedback was positive, some students advocated for logistical and design changes for the Learning Community, such as shorter days or less frequent meetings. This is not surprising, given the extreme time demands placed upon them while part of MCWEP. Still, program staff take these comments as a reminder to work hard to keep the Learning Community relevant, interesting, and engaging for students. This feedback will be integrated in the 2018-2019 Learning Community and beyond. As the Learning Community curricula is explored, adjusted, and solidified, student feedback has been perhaps the strongest guiding input for improvement. The Learning Community environment has been a laboratory for MCWEP staff and faculty to explore effective pedagogical strategies and have meaningful impact with a captive and invested audience of engaged MSW students and DCP&P supervisors.



OVERALL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

To elicit information about current students’ perceptions of the MCWEP program as a whole – MSW programs’ curriculum, MCWEP elective courses, field placement experiences, and the Learning Community meetings — students were asked to respond to several open-ended questions in a questionnaire given to them at the end of the Academic Year.

1. What are the strengths of MCWEP?
2. How well do you think MCWEP is preparing you to be a more impactful supervisor at DCP&P (consider your MSW coursework, The Learning Community Meetings, and the MCWEP electives, if taken [Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice, and Child Welfare Leadership & Supervision] all as a part of MCWEP)?
3. Is there anything about MCWEP that you think should be changed? If so, what and why?
4. Do you feel you are being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey’s public child welfare system? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about MCWEP?

Students offered a great deal of insight about the program, their experiences, and their aspirations for moving forward in the organizations transformation. Their ideas and trepidations are a major component in our considerations for MCWEP program enhancement.

The following tables describe themes identified in students’ responses to the open-ended questions and the frequency with which those themes were mentioned. Following the tables are specific examples of students’ responses, in their own words.

What are the strengths of MCWEP?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff	19
Knowledge Gained; Academic/Professional Enhancement	19
Program Design and Structure	15
Learning Community Meetings	5

Supportive Community of MCWEP Students, Faculty, and Staff

- The support that you receive from the professors, coordinators and fellow students is definitely one of the program’s strengths. There is a real sense of community, especially in the graduate school.
- The support from the cohort and program coordinators
- The support provided by the leaders of MCWEP (Dawn and Joe) is amazing. Dawn and Joe always promptly respond to questions and concerns, are realistic about things and genuinely care about the members of MCWEP and their success in the program. The sense of community among those in MCWEP is strong.
- Having colleagues in the same position as I am. Having a sounding board for frustrations, concerns, and positive points as well.
- The strengths of MCWEP are the support of peers completing the program and the support of Dawn and Joe.
- The strengths are the connections formed through MCWEP. The connections and bonds gained through the cohorts.



Knowledge Gained; Academic/Professional Enhancement

- It is an excellent opportunity to grow and learn more information as it pertains to the work with do at DCP&P. It opens your eyes to more information, and also helps to gain a better understanding of some of the reasons why families may be involved with DCP&P. It helps you to be a better more informed supervisor when working with staff and making decision.
- The MCWEP program allows supervisory staff to increase their skill set and become more knowledgeable leaders in the agency. By providing an opportunity to learn theories regarding Human Behavior and experiencing hands on learning, supervisory staff are able to become agents of change.
- Another strength is the informative curriculum that challenges students to develop critical thinking skills.
- MCWEP creates opportunity for professional learning and development. It serves a network of additional support for supervisors. It offers opportunity for knowledge sharing. Since MCWEP staff come from various areas of the state, it is the quickest way to impact change in the child welfare system. I see each MCWEP staff as a seed for change that is planted in different part of the state. This seed will eventually blossom and spread branches throughout the state. It will create uniformity of practice and improve quality of service to our children and families.
- The program is preparing us to become better leaders and to acquire additional skills to help the staff we supervise and the families that we serve. Allowing MCWEP students to teach the skills learned will undoubtedly improve staff performance. The program also allows for personal fulfillment.

Program Design and Structure

- One of the strengths that stands out for me is the ability of the program to coordinate with each of the schools to ensure that each MCWEP student is receiving an excellent education regarding social work practice.
- That it provides with the opportunity to obtain a Masters while working, getting the time off from work and for “free”.
- The flexibility of the program structure and willingness to adapt when given feedback
- The program allows for supervisors who are employed full-time to remain working while gaining a graduate degree. The program focuses on helping child protective supervisors enhance their skills in working with families, as well as developing staff and bringing awareness and change within the office and Division. The program allows for supervisors to identify and develop solutions to real-life problems, or at least gain awareness of the factors which oppress the individuals we work with. The program helps supervisors to connect education and experience gained in the internship to the everyday job.

Learning Community Meetings

- The learning community sessions are also important to provide supplemental information and foster relationships with other members that one may not have regular contact with in the program for support.
- The learning community, as it allows us to debrief and share our experiences. It’s nice having the time to check in with our counter parts in other schools.



How is MCWEP preparing you to be a more impactful supervisor?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
“MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work”	21
Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning, Especially Through Learning Community	19
The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses	14
Prepared, but Frustrated with Lack of Opportunities to Put New Knowledge and Skills into Practice	3

MSW Program Knowledge/Experiences, Strengthening the Social Work Perspective

- The MSW has provided an outline of how to be a better leader, educator and mentor to the employees who I supervise. The coursework was painfully difficult at times, but worth it.
- MCWEP has transformed my thinking as far as the supervisory and leadership role I hold. The social work education I am receiving is excellent and I am honestly learning a lot of things that I wish I was exposed to much earlier.
- I believe that MCWEP is teaching me to look not only deeper but from a different perspective and lens. It has provided me with a clinical understanding and better preparation to assess and analyze situations at work.
- Coursework is teaching me how to address matters (with clients and employees) from a more client focused, strength-based approach.
- Many of us did not begin by being Social Workers and yet, here we are. Now that I have gain the knowledge thru education, I feel empowered to help clients because I feel I have a better understanding of their situation.

Enhanced Integration/Transfer of Learning, Especially Through Learning Community

- The learning communities allowed me to bring the knowledge back to the office. I feel that change starts with one person and can continue to be carried out to others as long as we are willing to share the knowledge.
- I am constantly putting forth effort to educate our attorneys and argue why the Division needs to intervene with families where traumatic exposure has clearly had a negative impact. These are the chances to be proactive and implement prevention techniques and strategies through appropriate service implementation.
- It is information I share with colleagues, subordinates, even family and friends. All of the information has been important throughout coursework, electives and learning communities.
- The Learning Communities were helpful to discuss some of the challenges and to learn how to work along with other leaders who are going through the same process.
- My Research class allowed me to learn statistics, and under useful information, that came handy when my office completed had a quality assurance meeting. I was able to understand how the data was collected, as it was things I had learned in my research class. My Human Behavior class was also impactful, as we spent time on the LGTQ topic. I think I obtained useful information which will help me better to work with that population on my worker’s caseloads.



The Trauma and Leadership Elective Courses

- The trauma in child welfare and child leadership classes were the most impactful in my continued day to day supervision.
- The summer courses of Trauma and Leadership gave an opportunity for many of the MCWEP participants to have a class together. Both courses were very intense and while in them, we were quite unhappy about our entire summer being spent in 2 very demanding classes. Now with the classes behind my and in my Field Placement, I learned a lot from the classes and utilizing the learning now.
- Trauma and Leadership. there was nothing more valuable than those two classes for our line of work. those two classes put everything in perspective.
- I was unaware of how trauma impacts individuals, especially when it goes unaddressed, so the Trauma course definitely expanded my knowledge base on how trauma impacts the brain, the imperative need for trauma-informed care interventions and the importance of monitoring secondary trauma in myself, my staff, and other co-workers.
- In my opinion, Trauma in Child Welfare was the most difficult class in the program. However, it forever changed my practice and line of thinking. I feel that this class has prepared me to help my staff develop a better understanding of the impact trauma has on our families and will be evident in all my advocacy efforts within this job

Prepared, but Frustrated with Lack of Opportunity/Support in Implementation

- I think it's doing a good job. I feel like it would be better if we had more support from the LO—that it would be better regarding actually implementing what we learn in case practice but I guess we'll just have to take over leadership to do that...and that's fine.

Is there anything about MCWEP you would like to change?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Various Logistical/Structural Issues	16
Learning Community and Elective Issues	12
Feeling Overwhelmed/Stressed Due to Workload and Lack of Local Office Support	11
Field Placement Hours and Restrictions	10

Various Logistical/Structural Issues

- If there were to be anything done in preparation for those coming into the program--an APA and writing refresher course either online or in person that isn't just an hour or two might be beneficial, given I personally hadn't been in school for close to 20 years.
- Open the program to caseworkers, not just supervisors; however, only workers that have demonstrated good performance and compliance.
- I think that MCWEP and DCPD need to get together and figure out how to better utilize MCWEP students after they graduate. We need to give them a sense of worth and significance.
- I also feel the barring of working SPRU/SCR part-time the nights that students are at field placements during the day is inconsiderate.
- I think the flexibility of use with educational leave should be changed to allow some hours to be used for coursework, given how tough it has been to balance work and school responsibilities. Even if it's just 10-14 hours a semester...anything would assist so that students are not burning up their leave time to stay afloat with assignments.



Learning Community and Elective Issues

- Yes, no summer classes! Figure out a way to include these very important classes within the regular curriculum. The drive is crazy for most people and we need that summer break between classes. I'm feeling the effect of no break and going through fall, spring, summer, and now back into fall with no significant break. It's not good. I'm only 2 weeks into classes and I'm already feeling the effects of not having that summer break to just focus on work (in the office) and time off to recharge.
- The number of Learning Communities. I understand they are important, but I find I communicate mostly with those in my cohort in my actual school because it is most useful to me, therefore while the LCs offer a bit of expansion beyond that, I don't feel I need that as much. Plus, we are out of the office so much already, it almost adds additional unnecessary stress.
- The only aspect of MCWEP I would change would be the time in which we are enrolled in two summer courses when some are taking three courses at the same time. We are practically working full time, attending our internship and still expected to maintain a 3.0. Many of us have families as well to tend to once we get home.
- I think the Summer courses should be changed. It was overwhelming content compressed into a short time... The distance to attend classes was also overwhelming. So maybe it needs to go back to online, and possibly meeting 1-2 a month.

Feeling Overwhelmed/Stressed Due to Workload and Lack of Local Office Support

- The amount of stress on a supervisor leaving the office to fulfill internship hours yet still have full responsibility over supervising a full unit is overwhelming. I am not sure how all of us even handle it! I know that the internship is important and I find it valuable however I think it should be considered how there could be a more fair balance whereas supervisors can feel competent in doing their job(s) and not spread so thin, nothing is getting proper attention.
- I appreciate the current set up of the program. The only thing that needs to change is the local office perception of realistic work that can be completed when supervisors are out of the office.
- Though we get educational leave through MCWEP for field, the offices do not support our being out of the office.
- There needs to be continued dialogue with leadership in the local offices. Although school time is "protected", this is rarely the case. As workloads increase, the stress and pressure of school becomes magnified.

Field Placement Hours and Restrictions

- Creative ideas for internship hours could be created, especially ideas that are beneficial and productive for the agency as a whole.
- The internship hours. I think it could be less hours, probably no more than 600 hrs. Most of us when we start the program, we have over 5 years with the Division and should be taken into consideration. The internship time takes so much time from the work, and we still have to continue performing the same.
- MCWEP should really consider allowing participants to complete some field hours within the department (being responsible for duties that differ from normal responsibilities). Field hours are burdensome and create difficulty and undue stress in required responsibilities at work. It decreases supervisory effectiveness in normal operational needs, being out of the office 2-3 days per week. Also, not being able to complete field hours within the same county in which you work is nonsense. We are a state agency. If I can work and live in the same county, I should be afforded the opportunity to volunteer (intern) in the same county as well, to build up the community in which I am a member.



Do you feel you are being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey’s public child welfare system?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Yes	28
Yes, but Expressing Frustration/Reservation Due to Perceived Barriers/Lack of Opportunity	4
No	0

All students responding to this questions answered “yes,” they did feel they were being prepared to play a role in transforming New Jersey’s Public Child Welfare System. However, some students expressed that while they felt prepared, they expressed frustration and worry that they might not be given the opportunity to put their new knowledge, skills, and perspective to use at DCP&P. This finding reflects student responses to other questions above, as well as verbal feedback from conversations in the Learning Community. It is also consistent with feedback from previous years’ reports. There were various reasons why students reported feeling prepared, and why they might feel some reservation or frustration. Samples of their responses are given below:

- I strongly believe I am being prepared to play a pivotal role in the transformation of NJ’s public child welfare system. The courses I am taking help to find formal ways to address the current holes in the child welfare system. I hope to play a key role in policy changes and implementation.
- Absolutely! as stated before, we feel empowered by the knowledge that has been learned. We are better people, better supervisors, better workers, better writers, better I feel I am becoming prepared to make change and transform child welfare. However, I do not feel child welfare is completely ready for the changes or open to the ideas in all areas. But we can only present an idea and if others are not willing to listen, those changes can’t be made.
- I feel that I am being prepared to play a role in the transformation of NJ’s public child welfare system as I am learning to look at cases with more of a clinical lens and therefore have a better understanding of the underlying need.
- I am definitely being prepared to play a role in the transformation of the New Jersey’s child welfare system. The educational experience is birthing in me a greater level of accountability to children and families. I’m hoping I will be able to obtain an executive leadership position where my input will be useful in shaping the ongoing policies and practices that drive outcomes for children and families.
- Currently, I do feel that my participation in the MCWEP program is preparing me for the transformation that our child welfare system is undergoing. Being enrolled in a world class university is allowing me to increase my skill set and knowledge regarding child welfare issues and human behavior. This has allowed me to look at cases differently and has impacted how I supervise staff. The child welfare system will continue to evolve and with the new commissioner, this agency is headed toward even greater things. MCWEP allows supervisory staff to be on the cutting edge of this knowledge and transformation.
- Definitely. I do find myself teaching others what I have learned. I also am able to educate my workers and provide them with useful information gained from my education. I am able to speak to families in a different way as a result of having a better understanding and not passing judgement. The change is occurring although slowly.
- No Doubt - I am a better supervisor today due to my MCWEP training. I have learned to review cases critically - focusing on the underlying issues and being able to identify internal and external stressors that contribute to the underlying issues.



Summary of Students' Feedback:

In summarizing students' responses to the open-ended questions that constitute our overall program assessment, there is a largely positive trend in terms of the program's strengths. It is clear that the program strengths more than balance the challenges. Students perceived the program as being very supportive, especially because of their MCWEP colleagues, MCWEP staff, and the DCF administration's consistent support for the program. Students were very grateful for the educational information and skill attainment they are gaining through MCWEP and are transferring that knowledge to their local offices. They perceive the Learning Community in particular as a strong asset of MCWEP, reporting that they gain a lot of confidence, information, support, and camaraderie through its quarterly meetings. Students also indicated that structure of MCWEP was a strength in itself, specifically that program design takes into consideration their work responsibilities. They also indicated that being able to use educational leave was very helpful. The data suggests that fieldwork, along with the knowledge that they are obtaining through their core courses, the specialized information in the MCWEP electives, and the information relayed in the Learning Communities is preparing participants to be more impactful supervisors. Students also mentioned how they are already sharing the information they are learning with those they supervise in local offices and also with the families they work with, either directly or indirectly. They support the transformation goals of New Jersey's public child welfare system and report an eagerness to be part of that process.

Despite their overall enthusiasm for the program, students identified several areas where the program could be strengthened. This year's feedback included a pattern of concern from students about whether they would have the opportunity to use their new knowledge and skills to maximize their impact on the continuing transformation of New Jersey's public child welfare system. They also discussed some of the difficulties they experience because of some local office staff and other colleagues who do not fully support their MCWEP involvement, despite the endorsement and support of the commissioner. Students also discussed the need to have the MCWEP elective courses structured differently, as the increased demand during the summer session felt stressful to students and precluded them from retaining some of the material. Finally, students requested a number of miscellaneous logistical and programmatic changes, related mostly to their Fieldwork requirements and the Learning Community, citing the large volume of work they are already responsible for in the office and the classroom. Indeed, students continue to report difficulty juggling the multitude of demands on their time.

Progress on Last Year's Recommendations

In the 2016-2017 MCWEP Annual Report, four recommendations were made in order to improve students' experiences. The first recommendation evolved from students' comments in multiple evaluations that they desired the modality of the summer elective courses exclusive to MCWEP, (Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare) to continue in a more traditional format, with minimal virtual online content. Our commitment to this change was strengthened in the 2017-2018 year. Both courses were offered in a traditional 12-week course format, with only a few sessions being offered in an online platform. However, feedback from students this year deviated greatly from past evaluations, with a significant negative attitude toward certain aspects of this elective format. While the students indicated that they are gaining valuable knowledge and skills from both of these courses, the distance and frequency of class meetings seemed to be a source of stress for them. Some suggested less frequent meetings or moving back to an online format. Further consideration of this goal will be a primary goal for us in the upcoming 2018-2019 Academic Year (see Goal #1 below).

The second recommendation from the 2016-17 report related to difficulty integrating field placement experiences with their responsibilities as supervisors for DCP&P. It was suggested that MCWEP staff conduct an anonymous survey of students to catalog their experiences with field placement hours, release time and office duty expectations. The results from the survey might then be used to revise MCWEP field placement policies, as well as local office expectations and understanding of program requirements. This survey has not been conducted yet, but will be integrated into the end of year assessment given to all MCWEP students at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Results and recommendations will be included in next year's program report.

The third recommendation from the 2016-2017 report was based on feedback from students on the Learning Community. Significant progress was made on this recommendation in the past year. Students requested that content in the Learning Communities be related to practice skills and utilize strong guest speakers. We pursued these exact changes over the past year in the Learning Community, and student feedback confirms that they appreciate this. Students also report enjoying and benefitting from a newly introduced module that focuses on team-building skills, as well as the addition of several new guest speakers and having MCWEP students present to the larger group based upon extracurricular learning workshops and conferences they attended.

The final recommendation from the 2016-2017 report was that we develop opportunities for MCWEP graduates to implement their knowledge and skills after graduation. This is an effort in which MCWEP and DCF have a common interest, as both are strengthened by harnessing and engaging the enthusiasm and expertise of MCWEP graduates. We have made significant progress on this goal during the 2017-2018 academic year. A group of volunteer MCWEP graduates have been formed into a work group that has assisted DCP&P in the evaluation and



revision of some of its policies. Furthermore, the potential for collaboration is growing since a key position within the DCF Office of Training and Professional Development is now occupied by a MCWEP graduate who is continuing to foster the agency's effort to utilize and engage those who have completed our program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2018-2019 ACADEMIC YEAR

MCWEP has cultivated and expanded its many strengths, which will continue to shape the direction and institutional capacity of the program in the future. In 2017-2018, MCWEP has had the opportunity to reflect upon the structure of the program, the needs and strengths of the students, and the demands of the agency as it continues to evolve.

The program has been successful in providing an avenue for transfer of knowledge from social work programs to the DCP&P workforce for these supervisors. The structure of the program allows students flexibility to be able to matriculate in graduate courses while still being able to engage in work responsibilities. MCWEP also reinforces the need for impactful leadership and supervision through specialized electives and consistent connection between core social work courses and the future vision of DCP&P. As DCP&P moves forward in its efforts to become a trauma-informed organization, MCWEP provides students with knowledge of trauma-focused work and catalyzes the infusion of this knowledge from the mid-level out. The Learning Community component encourages students to gain confidence as social work professionals, exposes them to new research and literature in Child Welfare, and provides support and camaraderie among their peers. Finally, the program consistently encourages students to actively engage in the reform effort of the New Jersey public child welfare system, and this year recommends renewed efforts to get students involved that effort.

The following recommendations are made based on student feedback and MCWEP staff deliberation for the 2018-2019 academic year:

1. Over the past few years, students have indicated in their comments a desire for change in the modality of the summer elective courses exclusive to MCWEP, (Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision). Students had expressed a desire that these classes be delivered in a more traditional format, with minimal virtual, synchronous, or online content. This year, however, the feedback has moved in the opposite direction. This could be due to group differences between MCWEP cohorts, but there are some real concerns expressed by students. They reported that the summer session when they take these MCWEP elective courses was very stressful, due in part to the frequency and distance of the face-to-face class meetings. This swing in opinion suggests that a balance may need to be achieved in how we deliver these courses—a balance which maximizes andragogical benefits of the traditional, face-to-face format while minimizing student stress and hardship. Therefore, it is our goal for the 2018-2019 academic year to do another serious evaluation of the summer elective modalities.
2. Students continue to express concern over balancing field placement hours and their work responsibilities. Most students note that while they are granted educational leave time, they are not granted relief from responsibilities, and are still juggling their full-time work load, simply in fewer hours each week. Students have suggested that the required field placement hours be reduced because of their work experience; however, social work programs have accreditation and internal standards that can make this difficult. Still, the amount and strength of student concerns in this area merit continued MCWEP staff investigation and exploration of potential avenues of relief. Last year's recommendation that MCWEP conduct an anonymous survey of students, in which they describe the structure of their field placement hours, academic release time, and office duty expectations, will be conducted this year. As noted above, this survey has not been conducted yet, but will be integrated into the end of year assessment given to all MCWEP students at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Results and recommendations will be included in next year's program report. The MCWEP Consortium, including DCP&P leadership, will explore ways to help relieve and support students in whatever way possible.
3. Finally, there was a small but significant pattern of feedback from students this year suggesting that they are looking for more opportunities to put their newly gained knowledge and skills to work for DCP&P. Some expressed frustration with pushback they have received in their offices, while others simply noted that their current positions do not allow them to fully utilize what they have learned. We continue to emphasize to students that the program is designed to make them more effective in their current supervisory roles, and student feedback suggests this is happening. A subset of MCWEP graduates, however, continue to seek even more opportunities to help serve the public child welfare system. Thus, as mentioned above, it is our aim in the 2018-2019 academic year that MCWEP and the DCF continue to partner to expand the roles and usefulness of MCWEP graduates. This includes nourishing existing efforts, and also investigating other avenues by which our MCWEP students and graduates could be given opportunities to utilize their skills and contribute to the continuing growth and transformation of DCP&P.

Among MCWEP's greatest strengths is the persistent partnership between New Jersey's public child welfare system and the academic community, with the consistent support from professional organizations like NASW. As the recommendations for enhancement are implemented, MCWEP will carry on its improvement and enhance its goals. Bringing DCP&P supervisors back to school to pursue social work education continues to fan the flame of passion for child welfare among this great workforce. MCWEP hopes to maintain this important partnership with DCF as we all work toward improving and enhancing the lives of New Jersey's children and families.



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