

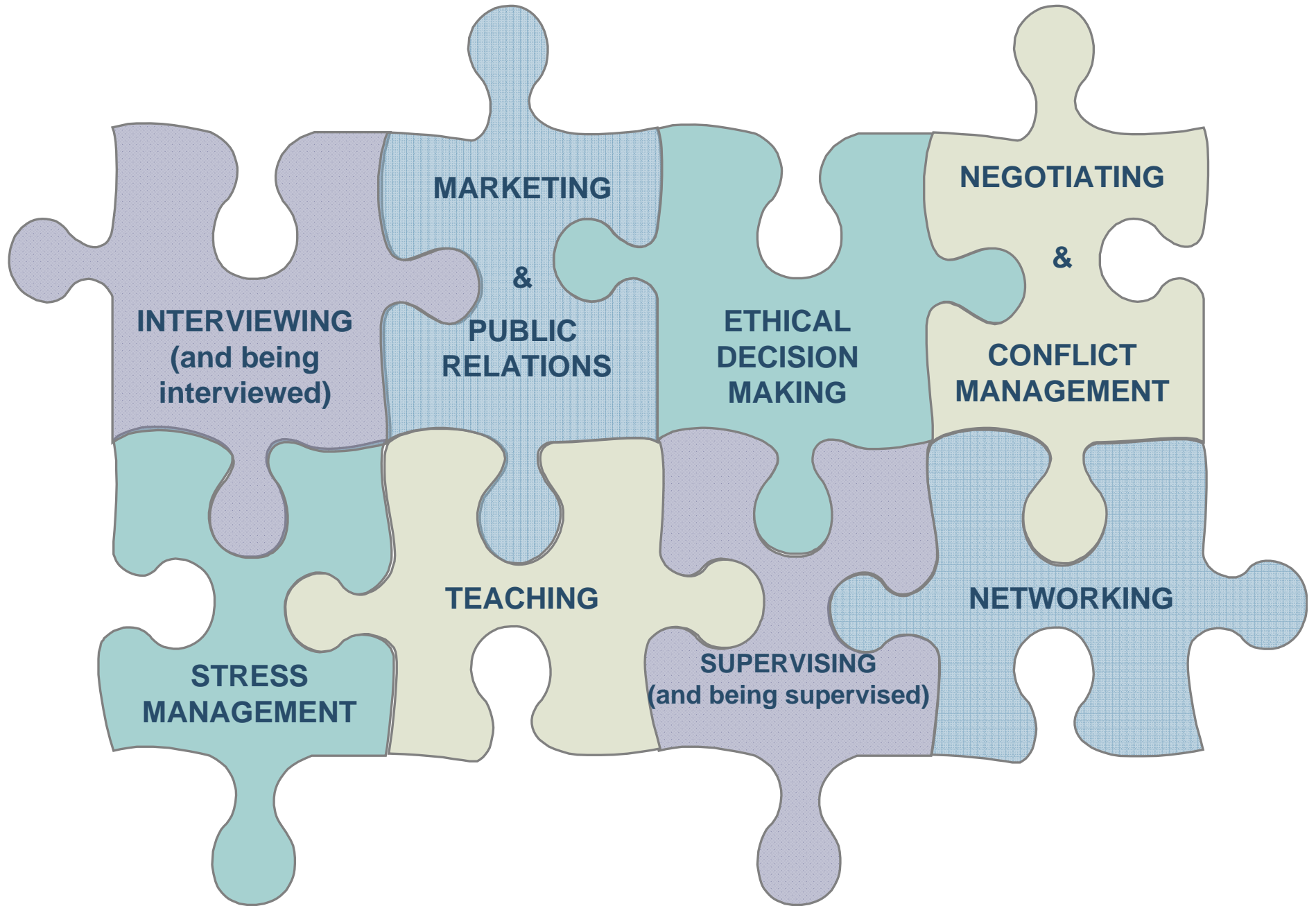
# **Determining the effectiveness of a professional survival skills & ethics curriculum**

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What ***ARE*** professional survival skills?

**In addition to excellent clinical skills, those abilities necessary for a successful and satisfying career. In many cases, these skills are not taught formally, but learned “on the fly” and through “trial by fire.”**



# Background

***CDSP 4023 Professional Issues in Speech-Language Pathology*** is a capstone undergraduate course at The University of Tulsa. The principal investigator is the instructor for this course, which is designed to survey a range of professional issues. Topics include overviews of various practice settings, issues of supervision, ethical decision-making in the workplace, evidence-based practice and service delivery in a multicultural environment. Participants also discuss job searches, resume preparation, and interviewing. The career skills of stress and conflict management are developed during interactive lecture.

More information regarding this course can be found at the course website: [www.pro-issues-slp.net](http://www.pro-issues-slp.net)

# Research Questions

- **Is a professional survival skills curriculum effective in increasing the knowledge base of undergraduate students majoring in speech-language pathology?**
- **Do learners completing a professional survival skills curriculum demonstrate significant increases in scores on a self-assessment of their abilities related to the subject area?**

# Subjects

**Participants were solicited from the group of undergraduate students enrolled in the Professional Issues in Speech Pathology course during the Spring 2006 and Spring 2007 semesters at The University of Tulsa.**

# Methods: Part I

- **Participants completed 20-question pencil/paper tests assessing knowledge in the subject area at three points in time:**
  - **Sample A, taken a full semester before taking the Professional Issues course (beginning of the Fall semester)**
  - **Sample B, taken approximately 15 weeks later, before beginning the Professional Issues course (end of the Fall semester)**
  - **Sample C, taken following completion of the Professional Issues course (end of Spring semester)**
- **A multiple baseline across single-subjects design was utilized for this portion of the study.**

- **Three test versions were used across the administrations to decrease effects of learning across multiple administrations.**
- **Test version order was randomized for each participant. Each participant completed all three versions.**
- **Pre- and post-test scores for the control and experimental conditions were compared using one-way ANOVA.**

# Tool: Part I

- **Multiple choice test questions were generated based on review of current literature, the curriculum materials provided through participation in the Conference on Teaching Survival Skills and Ethics offered by the University of Pittsburgh, and professional experience.**
- **A group of licensed speech-language pathologists responded to all questions. Internal reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha.**
- **Test questions were divided among three parallel forms of a 20-question multiple choice pencil/paper test covering subject matter.**
- **Randomizing the order in which subjects completed the versions minimized effects of differences in test version difficulty.**

## Sample test questions

- **Kevin is a recent graduate of the University of Tulsa and has a Master's degree in speech-language pathology. In order for him to become licensed as an independent practitioner in Oklahoma, he must**
  - a) Join the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**
  - b) Receive the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC)**
  - c) Complete the requirements for the Clinical Experience Year (CEY)**
  - d) Receive a score of at least 700 on the Praxis Examination**
  - e) All of the above**

## **Nonfeasance is**

- a) A positive act performed incorrectly which causes harm**
- b) Intentional wrongdoing on the part of a healthcare provider**
- c) Failure of a healthcare provider to provide or recommend appropriate care**
- d) A type of billing error resulting in fraud**
- e) None of the above**

**A SLP who documents and charges for services in one facility which overlap with the date and time of services billed at another facility is**

- a) Bundle billing**
- b) Billing for services not rendered**
- c) Providing telehealth services**
- d) Violating HIPAA guidelines**
- e) Breaching confidentiality**

**Kathy is a SLP in a rural hospital. She is conducting interviews with other SLPs to fill a position in the outpatient rehab department. Which of the following questions can she legally ask an applicant during the interview process?**

- a) “What is your native language?”**
- b) “What is your religious affiliation?”**
- c) “What is your age and date of birth?”**
- d) “Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?”**
- e) None of the above are legal questions**

# Methods: Part II

- **Participants completed a 25-item self-assessment related to the content area at two points in time.**
  - **At the beginning of the semester, prior to exposure to content material in the Professional Issues course (beginning of the Spring semester)**
  - **Following completion of the Professional Issues course (end of Spring semester)**
- **Ratings on the self-assessments were compared using *t*-test to determine whether there were statistically significant changes in participants' ratings of their skills following exposure to the curriculum.**

# Tool: Part II

- **A 25-item pencil/paper self-assessment related to subject matter was developed.**
- **Content items were selected based on the ratings of item importance assigned by a group of licensed speech-language pathologists.**
- **Each item on the self-assessment was presented in a Likert-scale format.**
- **The self-assessment measured the degree to which participants felt they had acquired select professional survival skills.**

## Sample items:

Please rate yourself on each item using the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

- **I know how to access information needed to apply for licensure as a SLP.**

1	2	3	4	5
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- **I can recognize violations of professional ethics.**

1	2	3	4	5
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- **I am comfortable interviewing for a job.**

1	2	3	4	5
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- **I am developing a professional network.**

1	2	3	4	5
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# Results: Part I

- **One-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between performance in the control condition vs. performance in the experimental condition,  $F(2,37) = 9.99, p < .001.$**
- **The means and standard deviations for the groups of scores are shown in the following table.**

<b>Sample</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Sample Size</b>	14	12	14
<b>Mean</b>	7.29	8.75	12.50
<b>S.D.</b>	3.47	3.02	2.98

# Results: Part II

- **N = 14**
- **On average, there was an increase of 22.86 points from initial self-assessment to final self-assessment.**
- **Participants scored higher on the final self-assessment ( $M = 113$ ,  $SD = 8.55$ ) than they did on the initial self-assessment ( $M = 90.3$ ,  $SD = 17.4$ ),  $t(13) = -6.10$ ,  $p < .001$ .**

# Conclusions

- **Findings support the hypothesis that a focused curriculum can be effective in increasing knowledge about various professional survival skills and ethical decision-making.**
- **Results also indicate that learners report increased confidence in their own abilities to handle professional situations and avoid unethical decisions or behaviors after completing such a curriculum.**

# Discussion

- **The desired outcomes of an organized approach to professional survival skills training are that learners with increased knowledge and confidence in the subject areas will find future employment easier to obtain and retain, will experience increased job satisfaction, and will deliver excellent healthcare to consumers of speech-language pathology services.**
- **The results of this study should be considered in the context of a small sample size. They do suggest that including such a curriculum in the academic training of a SLP can improve career readiness and clinician confidence.**

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**[www.survival.pitt.edu](http://www.survival.pitt.edu)**