

Promoting Your Educational Session: Tips for Writing Attention-Grabbing Session Descriptions

The primary goal in giving a presentation at the NASP Convention is to share a particular aspect of your knowledge with fellow school psychologists. This requires that people show up at the presentation. There are typically more than 1,000 presentations and workshops at a NASP convention. The competition for attention is pretty high. Add to this that space in the printed Final Program (provided onsite) is at a premium so brevity is important.

How you write your session title and description can be the difference between grabbing people's attention and not. You are, in fact, marketing your session. Marketing is not a frivolous effort that undermines the authenticity or academic rigor of your work. It is simply a way to get busy people's attention. This is true both the online abstract (75 words) and the session description for the printed program (15 words, for workshops). Following are few tips.

1. **Appeal to the WIIFM** (What's In It for Me) mindset. Time is precious to school psychologists. They need to spend it doing something that will have maximum benefit back on the job. Highlight how the presentation will help them do their job better.
2. **Make the learning objectives useful.** Learning objectives should be brief measurable, actionable outcomes that the attendee can expect to gain from the presentation. "Participants will be able to... (verb like "identify, measure, implement)". See "Guidelines for Writing Learning Objectives for Continuing Professional Development" for more tips.
3. **Be a problem solver.** Most convention sessions address a problem/challenge and what works to address it, at least to some extent. Use your description to help readers connect to the problem (Boy, does sound familiar) and want the solution (Sounds interesting, I should check it out).
4. **Appeal to people's purpose.** Improving outcomes for kids is the point of our work. Don't talk around this but rather point right to it, even if the focus of the presentation is on affecting the context (e.g., school climate) and people (e.g., teachers) within it who are affecting the kids.
5. **Set accurate expectations.** Make sure the description actually describes what the session will really cover. If you are only covering the research identifying a problem, don't promise in the description to discuss effective approaches to addressing it. (Despite what #3. says above.)
6. **Ditch the filler words and phrases.** You can skip phrases like, "In this presentation, presenters will..." This information is a given and just wastes space and time. Get right to the meat of the session content.
7. **Don't repeat yourself.** Often presenters simply rewrite the same idea a few different ways in the same description without imparting new information. Writing the same idea in a different form doesn't actually provide people with more helpful information. It won't make your session sound more compelling and only wastes space.
8. **Get active.** Use active tense. "Strategies to improve student behavior will be examined." NO. "Learn strategies to improve student behavior." YES.
9. **Spend some time on the title.** This is your lead; the idea that will grab people's attention from the get go and maybe the only thing people read. Think about what matters to your potential attendees, not just the topic itself. The title should convey relevance, usefulness, and specificity.

Examples of Session Title and Description "Evolution"

1. **Pretty Classic Description (too long and well, um, Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz)**

What the Research Says About Fidelity in Teacher-Delivered Brief Interventions

In order to explore factors related to successful implementation of brief academic interventions, a study was conducted to examine the trends and reactions of general education teachers toward adapting instruction and providing individualized strategies for students and their perceptions of success. The study is unique in that it assessed the attitude of teachers regarding brief interventions for students across a variety of academic needs, how they approached providing those interventions, and how successful the interventions were. The study also looked at how teacher perceptions either facilitated or impeded effective intervention delivery and what factors might lower barriers to teacher engagement in the process. The presentation will report the results of the study as well as discuss implications for school psychologists who desire to improve use of brief interventions by teachers in their schools.

2. Better (a little punchier and just under 50 words)

A Research-Based Approach to Improving Teachers' Delivery of Brief Interventions

This workshop will address the major issues that interfere with teachers' ability to deliver brief academic interventions and monitor progress with efficacy. Presenters will review the research and describe strategies for helping teachers deliver individualized instruction more effectively. Presentation and discussion methods will be used.

3. On Point (brief 30 words, value focused, and action/outcomes oriented)

Getting It Done Right: Making Brief Interventions Work for Teachers

Helping teachers more effectively deliver and adapt brief academic interventions is critical to improving student outcomes. Learn common barriers and how to share simple strategies that busy teachers can successfully employ.