



OSPA TODAY

Volume 32 Issue 2

Summer 2008

OSPA Annual Fall Conference

Presented by

James Hanson, M.Ed.

Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses in Specific Learning Disability Evaluations:

What's It All About?

At

Rose State College
6420 S.E. 15th Street
Midwest City, OK

On Site Registration
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Pre-Registration must be received
by October 14

Members: \$90.00
Nonmembers: \$115.00
Student/Life: \$60.00

Send name, address, e-mail, and
payment (Check or PO) to:

OSPA
Box 665
Jenks, OK 74037

This Presentation will discuss the role of the PSW (Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses) model in a comprehensive evaluation for Specific Learning Disability. The presentation will also discuss how to use a wide variety of assessment tools and strategies, including PSW model and the RTI model, to provide a full and individual special education assessment that is relevant to intervention and student achievement.

See you there!

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News from UCO

A New Post-Graduate Opportunity!

The School Psychology Program at the University of Central Oklahoma is happy to announce the introduction of a new post-graduate opportunity to qualify for the national exam to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). The ABA program requires 15 cr. hours in coursework and a 1600-hour internship. This Fall, a 25 person cohort group started the course sequence. A second cohort group will start Fall, 2009. Applications for the new cohort group are due by April 1, 2009. This new program is in direct response to SB 2071 directing the regents (RUSO)-to request that UCO create a training program to address the increase in reported cases of autism.

In partnership with Easter Seals Oklahoma, the School Psychology Program at UCO is also co-sponsoring a therapeutic day school for pre-schooler with autism. 17 children ages 2 to 5 are assigned specially trained tutors under the supervision of a BCBA and 3 BCBA interns. The children spend part of their day in one on one therapy and part of their day practicing

their social skills among the regular day school population.

In addition to UCO's new program, the School Psychology students have exciting events planned for this semester. Currently, students in the Introduction to School Psychology class are volunteering at Edmond Public Schools with their instructor, Dr. Scott Singleton, to participate in a Response to Intervention project. Also, the School Psychology students will host School Psychology Awareness Week November 10-14.

Finally, program coordinator, Dr. Sweet-Darter, received the "Modeling the Way" award at the Fall Faculty Convocation. This award recognizes faculty members who show exemplary dedication to mentoring students and model service to the community. Dr. Sweet-Darter has certainly done this, and we are all proud of her.

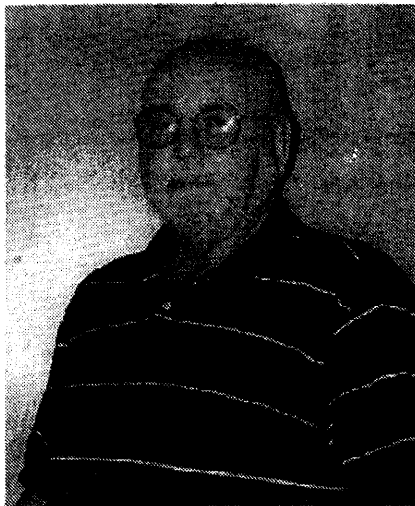
Megan Tibbits
UCO student representative

Read Any Good Books Lately??

Share your professional literature with others or submit a book review for the next OSPA Newsletter. Submit articles as e-mail attachments in Word or PDF to ospa.newsletter@yahoo.com by December 26 for the next newsletter.

President's Message

Dr. Richard Putnam



Hello friends and neighbors. It's newsletter time once again. It seems like just last week that I was telling you all about the school psychology training programs in Oklahoma for the summer newsletter. Now I am writing my first

ever OSPA president's message.

The executive board met last Saturday to discuss the up-coming year. Some of the issues that we will be monitoring during the year are credentialing issues in Oklahoma and the nation, our relationship as a profession with sister professions such as licensed psychologists and professional counselors, the role and function of school psychologists, and developing techniques such as response to intervention (RTI) including how various techniques interact with other techniques to meet the needs of our clients. We will keep you posted as developments occur that affect the practice of school psychology in Oklahoma.

The OSPA fall conference on October 24th is taking shape as an excellent opportunity for Oklahoma school psychologists to explore current standards

and techniques of practice from throughout the country. The president of the Oregon School Psychological Association will bring us up to date on how RTI integrates with a comprehensive assessment system for identifying special needs children. I am looking forward to seeing you there and to sharing with you some interesting discussions about the ways in which we go about helping Oklahoma children and their families.

This is probably the shortest president's column in the history of OSPA newsletters. That's ok. According to my students, I only pontificate at length when they are trying to get home after a night class. So, please let me or any board member know of your concerns. Please put October 24th on your calendar, and, most of all, have a great year.

Book Review

Professional Ethics for School Psychologist: A Problem-Solving Model Casebook.

Authors: Barbara Cole Williams, Leigh Armisted, Susan Jacob

Published in 2008 by the National Association of School Psychologists

Reviewed by Lorene Reid, PhD, School Psychologist, Fort Zumwalt School District.

This book provides school psychologist with a practical resource that deals with many facets of the field's ethical principles. The authors begin by providing an overview of the development of Codes of Ethics by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). They also discuss the ethical principles that are the foundation of school psychological practice. They focus the discussion on issues such as respect for the dignity of persons, professional competence, and responsibility.

Early in the book, the authors also present an Ethical and Legal Decision-Making Model that consists of seven steps: (1) Describe the problem situation; (2) Define the potential ethical-legal issues involved; (3) Consult available ethical-legal guidelines; (4) Consult with supervisors and colleagues; (5) Evaluate the rights, responsibilities, and welfare of all affected parties; (6) Consider alternative solutions; and (7) Make the decision and take responsibility for it. They illustrate each step by describing a Model Example entitled: The Case of Beth and the Superintendent.

The rest of the book consists of 150 real and fictional cases that address situations often faced by school psychologists. In this section of the book, each principle of NASP's Principles for Professional Ethics is listed and followed by examples for consid-

eration. The authors present ethical dilemmas in one of three formats depending on the complexity of the situation: Instructional Cases, Explicated Cases, and Think-Aloud Decision-Making Cases.

This book is not an ordinary recitation of ethical principles or a list of rules for school psychologists to memorize. The 150 cases that follow the ethical principles add a new dimension to this text and make it stand out from the rest. This is a book that really helps school psychologists understand how ethical principles should guide their practices.

Reprinted from MASP Fall 2008 Newsletter

Response to Intervention and Assessments of Cognitive Processing: Is Treatment Validity Important?

Scott Singleton, Nancy Goosen, Kendra Kim, Sadah Lasich, Nicole Power

IDEA 2004 now allows states to use response to intervention (RtI) as a model for identifying children with Specific Learning Disabilities. "...In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process which determines if a child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures..." (PL 108-446, Section 614 (b)(6)).

RtI is a model of service delivery that relies on evidence based methods for the early identification of students who are at risk of academic failure, evidence based interventions of increasing intensity, and frequent progress monitoring data to determine if the interventions have been effective.

If a child has not responded to multiple levels of intervention they may be considered for special education eligibility; however, a comprehensive evaluation is required prior to an eligibility decision. A comprehensive evaluation does not necessarily mean a battery of tests as has been common practice in the past. Comprehensive does mean that exclusionary factors must be ruled out as the cause of academic skill deficits. Exclusionary factors can frequently be ruled out using existing information, interviews, and direct observation. Psycho-educational tests may be needed, at times, as well, but should not be necessary for every evaluation. Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation should include methods to determine the type and intensity of intervention necessary to improve the child's functioning in the area of concern. Such methods might include frequent alternation of interventions with continuous skill probing to determine which intervention will be most effective and which setting is most appropriate for the identified intervention. Some believe that measures of psychological/ cognitive processing should also be included.

Unfortunately, cognitive processing assessment has not lead to improved educational outcomes. In a NASP Communiqué article, Frank Gresham (2007)

pointed out that not a single randomized clinical trial has demonstrated that assessment of cognitive processing leads to improved intervention outcomes. Effective interventions, however, are available in the research literature, and *do not* rely on cognitive processing assessment.

A further problem with many assessments of cognitive processing is that they have only been correlated with achievement. Correlation, as they say, does not mean causation. Rather, performance on test items given one test may correlate with performance on items of another test. Correlations often exist between achievement in math and achievement in reading, yet one would not say that a child has difficulty reading because they have a math processing disorder.

These concerns have been forwarded by many researchers and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). OSERS was clear regarding assessments of cognitive processing in the IDEA Preamble,

"The Department does not believe that an assessment of psychological or cognitive processing should be required in determining whether a child has an SLD. There is no current evidence that such assessments are necessary or sufficient for identifying SLD, Further in many cases, these assessments have not been used to make appropriate intervention decisions."

During the OSEP sponsored Learning Disabilities Summit, Joseph Torgesen (2002) presented a paper on the current empirical support for cognitive processing assessment.

"Although we now have good evidence that current definitions of learning disabilities are valid for many children, the foundation for a reliable and valid assessment of the intrinsic psychological processing weaknesses of children with learning disabilities is not strong enough to recommend it for widespread application in schools."

If assessments of cognitive processing have not been shown to improve academic

skills in high quality studies despite decades of research, why should we include them in practice? If assessments of cognitive processing are only correlated with academic skills, why don't we focus on direct assessment of academic skills? Let's focus our energy into early, *evidence-based* intervention and prescriptive assessments that lead to effective treatments. Let's use our assessment skills to inform intervention, measure the effectiveness of our programs, and the improvement of our students. After all, our motto is "Kids are our only business."

References:

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Gresham, F. M. (2007, October). RtI processing, and the comprehensive evaluation of SLD. NASP Communiqué, 36, 2.

Torgesen, J. K. (2002). Empirical and theoretical support for direct diagnosis of learning disabilities by assessment of intrinsic processing weaknesses. In R. Bradley, L. Danielson, & D. Hallahan (Eds.), *Learning disabilities: Research to practice* (pp. 565-613). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

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Kids are . . . our only business

Dates To Remember

OSPA Fall Conference
October 24, 2008
Rose State College
Midwest City

OSPA Spring Conference
Tentative April 3-4, 2009
Tulsa

NASP Conference
February 24-28, 2009
Boston, MA

School Psychology Awareness Week
November 10-14, 2008

**Don't Forget It's
Time to Renew Membership!**

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Newsletter Submission Deadline

Summer. August 29, 2008
Fall/Winter. .December 26, 2008
Spring. May 31, 2009

Keri Chaffin: editor/publisher

Submissions:
Please submit articles as e-mail attachments in Word or PDF format to the editor at

ospa.newsletter@yahoo.com