

President's Message

We, as school psychologists and psychometrists, are often called upon to make clinical assessments of children in a variety of contexts. Our work may be directed toward looking for individual weaknesses in a child while ruling out certain disorders. We then present a neatly analyzed statistical report to illustrate problems, which do exist. Unclear results still focus on the problem area. Perhaps the single most overlooked aspect of a complete evaluation is identifying the resiliency and individual strengths of a child. We often minimize this portion of our results. While adhering to strict test interpretation is important, it is equally important to recognize and include other positive facets of a child's personality.

My suggestion, for this year, is to focus more intently on resiliencies in all children we evaluate. First, we may need to examine how a child operates in his everyday life at home and school and identify individuals who become his/her support system. How does s/he make it through each day? One place to start is, of course, inside the family system. Which caring individuals support this child? Which parent or adult communicates openly and regularly? Who understands the child's point of view? If there is not such a parent, it could be a trusted teacher who becomes the child's advocate. Next, can this child confide in this adult, or does s/he live in fear of disapproval or reprisal? Does this supportive adult blame the child for his/her problems, or does s/he encourage the child to become responsible for his actions. Supportive adults will communicate regularly to this child in an open, direct manner and discover ways to enhance resiliency.

Guides for resiliency for adults who nurture: 1) Define any difficulty in specific terms. Quit blaming others for individual problems. 2) Accept problems as a normal part of living and not as a sign of weakness. 3) Join together to find solutions to problems—solutions that consider everyone's perspective, including the child's. 4) Assume an adult, leadership role with the child while acknowledging and validating others points of view. A family who practices these points will provide many opportunities for growth and recovery.

Resilient children possess certain characteristics that are recognizable as well as teachable. Resilient children are adaptive to their environments, to others' demands, and to changes within.

Many children fear change because it can be an unsettling challenge. Despite the fear, it does provide an avenue to develop new skills. Change affects all of us differently. For some, change is a massive challenge with which we cannot cope; while for others, it becomes a way of conforming to adult requests. The latter child will change and conform to every subtle suggestion made by others. In evaluating the adaptability of each child, consider the changes s/he has already met. What are the challenges s/he has overcome both at home and in school? Sometimes we as professionals have unrealistic expectations of implementing change in others. We may assume that if results are not immediate, we have all failed. We become blind to the small steps of progress that a child makes. Our focus then is to become more aware and appreciate each positive step in the direction of needed change.

A second characteristic of resiliency is the ability to endure and persist despite great adversities. In recent years we have all become accustomed to thinking that life should be without struggle. We have led children to believe that good things in life can be obtained without effort and struggle. Good things will just come their way. They are entitled! Children who do not experience struggle in their lives may become quite helpless and hopeless for they have been robbed of life's challenges. There are boundaries for struggle in children. We would not allow a child to encounter successive defeats in academics or sports without intervention. We facilitate a balance of success and defeat in his/her life. Adults encourage and support appropriate struggle for the results of winning are self-confidence and reliance.

The last and perhaps the most significant component of resiliency is optimism. It is that attitude of strong hope that things will turn out well, despite unexpected problems. It is a belief that no deterrent will stop the individual's progress. This attitude is, of course, highly related to failure and success in life. An optimist reacts to disappointments by formulating a different plan of action, while the pessimist may assume a "do nothing" attitude about the same setback. What optimistic approaches does a child exhibit? Does s/he repeatedly try for success, or is the attitude of defeat evident before s/he attempts the job. Martin Seligman's 1984 study of college freshmen at the University of Pennsylvania found that optimism was a better predictor of college grades than were the SAT test scores. An attitude of "I can do this, and I can do it well" affects areas of success in academics as well as resiliency in personal setbacks. Optimism can be learned from others, especially those who work closely with children. A child who lives with optimism sees a potential in many opportunities, and learns an important form of resiliency.

Identifying a child's resiliencies could provide more valuable information than we expect. Discovering this information is our role. Capitalizing on the resiliency in school is the teacher's role. Encouraging the development of resiliencies is the parent's role. It is through this team effort that a child's greatest potential will be realized.

Jean Benson

OSPA President

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Oklahoma School Psychological Association Spring Conference

Title: Resiliency in Children – A Model for Intervention and Case Application

Sponsored by: Oklahoma School Psychological Association

Presenter: Beth Doll, Ph.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Date: April 6, 2001

Location: Wes Watkins Center for International Trade & Development, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

ATTENTION OSPA MEMBERS

Would you like to have a new OSPA membership certificate? Perhaps yours is lost or just looking old and worn and needs to be replaced. New certificates have been printed and are now available for the asking. Please contact OSPA at P. O. Box 30216, Midwest City, Oklahoma, 73140-3216.

In Memory of Julie Shackelford

On August 11th, Julie Shackelford, Ph.D., school psychologist at Jenks Public Schools, passed away after a long battle with breast cancer. Julie had worked at Jenks for 20 years, the last 18 as a school psychologist. Previous to that, she was a learning disabilities teacher and diagnostician for Sapulpa Public Schools. Julie was born in Tulsa and graduated from Hale High School. She received her B. A. degree in Music, with a minor in Psychology, from the University of Indiana in Bloomington; her M.A. in Learning Disabilities from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois; and her Ph.D. in Applied Behavioral Studies with an emphasis in School Psychology from OSU in 1990. Julie received her psychology license from the Oklahoma State Board of Examiners in 1994.

Julie's areas of expertise included learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, family support systems, and attachment disorders. She was chosen as the Faye Catlett School Psychologist of the Year in 1998. Julie had been a career-long member of OSPA for 18 years and had always felt that membership in this state professional organization was very important for school psychologists and psychometrists. In her employment at Jenks, she was always a proponent of the highest standards of ethical and professional practice in the field of school psychology.

Julie will be greatly missed by her colleagues at Jenks and those in the Tulsa area and around the state who knew her. She always enjoyed attending the OSPA fall and spring conferences and looked forward to learning something new in her field at the conferences as well as having a "day off" from testing or counseling!

Linda Sanders,
School Psychologist, Jenks,
Former OSPA President

Central Region News

Oklahoma City Public Schools is pleased to welcome three new employees; **Mary Tomblin**, who previously worked with the RESC, **Marsha Barger**, and **Judith Dwyer**, formerly from Broken Arrow. **Mark Pennington** moved to Lawton Public Schools. **Naomi Brooks** retired and moved to Galveston, Texas. **Pam Cadamy** moved to Putnam City Public Schools.

Mid-Del Public Schools welcomes two new Special Services employees, **Jennifer VanHemert**, who just received her school psychology certification and **Jeanne Millican**, who is a longtime SLD teacher in the Mid-Del district. Jeanne had her psychometry certification long ago and is beginning her school psychology program at UCO. Mid-Del also reports that ACT helped school psychologists to obtain 10 more contract days for a total of 193, a separate evaluation instrument (authored and submitted by the school psychologists), and additional supplemental pay for psychologists above psychometrists.

School psychologist, **Marcia Oney** joined the Special Services staff in the *Moore Public Schools* this fall.

Congratulations to **Karen Jackson** and **Lea Simonton** who recently earned school psychology certification and moved from psychometry to school psychology positions for the *Edmond Public Schools*. **Sheri Waugh**, Edmond Public Schools psychometrist, is completing her last semester of school psychology internship and **Teresa Knight**, from OSU, is doing her school psychology practicum in the Edmond Public Schools.

The shortage of school psychologists in the central region continues. Oklahoma City Public Schools currently has three vacancies for school psychologists. Moore Public Schools has two positions open for school psychologists.

REMINDER

Have you changed your address, phones or email? Please let us know. This will be your last newsletter if you have not renewed your membership for 2000-01. Address changes can be made and a membership application is available on our website at ospaweb.org or write OSPA, P.O. Box 30216, Midwest City, OK 73140-3216.

New Member Profiles

Shirley Murphy is a new member of OSPA. This is her fourth year as the Special Education Director for Ardmore City Schools. She has worked for the RESC for seventeen years and with the school system for several years teaching LD and EMH. Shirley is married to Jack Murphy who is an LPC counselor. They have a 12-year-old daughter and two grown children. Shirley reports that her hobbies are sewing, cooking, and exercising on a treadmill and walking several times a week. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado and two master's degrees from East Central University.

Shonda Ballard is a new student member of OSPA. She is working on a master's degree and school psychology certification at UCO and is the graduate assistant for Dr. Peggy Kerr. She will finish her program in May 2001. Shonda and Tim have been married for three years. Tim is originally from Missouri and moved here when he accepted a position with the Oklahoma City Police Department as a police officer. They have purchased a new home in Edmond and have been enjoying the challenges of being homeowners for the past year. Shonda enjoys reading, decorating and a new hobby of gardening. She also enjoys the yearly family ski trip to Colorado.

DID YOU KNOW?

OSPA is a member of the SAFE KIDS Coalition. Oklahoma SAFE KIDS is a group of organizations and concerned citizens from across the state who began to mobilize in 1989 to fight the number one killer of children. The Oklahoma SAFE KIDS Coalition is dedicated to helping raise public awareness among the general public and policy makers and assisting in the formation of local SAFE KIDS coalitions and chapters.

Injury is the leading killer of our children. Injuries kill more children each year than diseases, kidnapping and drugs combined. Approximately 7,200 children are killed and 50,000 disabled annually as a result of traffic accidents, burns, drowning, falls, choking, poisoning and other injuries. In Oklahoma, about 130 children through age 15 die each year from unintentional injuries. For every fatality, approximately 45 children require hospitalization and 1,300 require emergency treatment.

NASP NEWS

NASP is fast approaching a new membership record and I am encouraging everyone to become a member of your professional organization. Currently the benefits for your membership fee includes the newsletter, the "Communiqué", the NASP journal, *School Psychology Review*, numerous publications at a reduced rate, a reduced rate to attend the National Conference, access to numerous professionals through the NASP website and many more professional opportunities. I hope you will consider joining or rejoining.

Current issues facing School Psychologists are the massive shortages of Professional School Psychologists that has been created by an ever increasing need for mental health services in the schools and the retirement of many School Psychologists. We should encourage young teachers and college students to enter the field for a rewarding career. Other issues include the efficacy of testing, linking assessment to instruction and the many diverse needs of student populations.

The election information for a new NASP Delegate for our state will soon reach current NASP members; and I encourage everyone to vote. We have two excellent candidates, Mary Ellen Jones and Andrew Glenn. They are both former School Psychologists of the Year and very involved members of OSPA and NASP. They are both advocates for our profession and will serve our state well as a Delegate.

The Regional NASP meeting will be held in November in St. Louis; and three of our members will attend to devise a state plan and access resources from NASP. The National Conference this year will be held in Washington D.C. This should be an exciting meeting with many informative and educational programs addressing the needs of the students in our schools. I hope you will plan to attend. Please consider becoming active at the local or national level of your School Psychologist's Associations.

Joyce Lowrey, NASP Delegate

What's New at UCO?

The University of Central Oklahoma has experienced a large increase in school psychology enrollment. The number of applicants to the school psychology program per year reached 34 for the year 2000. This number compares to the past enrollment of 7 in 1994, 12 in 1995 and 1997, and 21 in 1999. The reason for increased enrollment is due, in part, to the State Department of Education Tuition Reimbursement Incentive.

Also, the Master of Arts in Psychology degree has been revised. Any student pursuing a master's degree in psychology at the University of Central Oklahoma must choose an emphasis. School Psychology is one emphasis of three offered for the Master of Arts in Psychology. As part of the 60-hour program, practica experiences in Psychometry and School Psychology are required. A 1200 clock hour internship is required for certification but is not required for the master's degree. This enables a student to earn the master's degree and School Psychometry certification and work in a paid position during the internship year.

Shonda Ballard
UCO Student Representative

NEW DOCTORAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Oklahoma City Public Schools, with support from the Oklahoma State Department of Education and in collaboration with the Oklahoma Mental Health Consortium, has started a doctoral residency program for candidates who are seeking a Ph.D. in School Psychology, Educational Psychology or Developmental Psychology. The residency will provide a 2000 hour program through the school and the mental health consortium. The residency will meet the guidelines established by APA. Next year's candidates will be able to choose a residency through the APPIC application process and choose to work in the schools as part of their residency experience. Candidates this year are working in urban schools and alternative educational settings. The residency will include: consultation, counseling, assessment, crisis intervention, parent training and other aspects of school psychological services. Currently Elaine Frissell and Trudy Iredale are participating as residents under the supervision of Dr. Walter Davis. Oklahoma City Public Schools anticipates that candidates from across the United States will investigate the possibility of completing their residency in the schools and encourages Oklahoma candidates to stay in our state to complete their residency. The residents receive training and additional experiences through the Oklahoma Mental Health Consortium.

GRADUATE STUDIES AWARDS TO BE GRANTED

The OSPA *Paul Warden & Mary Jo Keatley Graduate Studies Awards* were established in 1998 to recognize and provide financial support to two students in school psychology training programs in the state of Oklahoma. These awards were developed in response to our professional commitment to encourage promising students to complete a school psychology program. Awards are presented to those individuals interested in pursuing a degree or certification in School Psychology.

Each candidate must submit a completed application, a resume, a copy of current transcripts, and three letters of recommendation. A committee from the OSPA board will review all completed applications using the specified criteria. Recommendations for selection will be provided to all voting OSPA board members who will then make the final nominee selections. Selection criteria will not be solely limited to written application forms. Information from other professionals in the field will also be considered in the final selection of the two candidates.

Applications are available from program directors at the University of Central Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, East Central University and Northeastern University. Completed applications, resumes, transcripts, and letters of reference must be received no later than February 1, 2001 for consideration of the 2000-2001 awards.

Monetary awards will be presented annually in the amount of \$500 to the two selected students, who must furnish proof of enrollment to the selection committee. Recipients of the awards will be acknowledged at the annual OSPA spring conference.

For further information contact:

Jami Haywood
OSPA Awards Chairperson
3609 SE 44th Street
Edmond, OK 73013

OSPA Fall Conference Held

The Fall 2000 conference was held on October 6 at the Ramada Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Edmond. Dr. James Sutton gave an outstanding presentation on "The Oppositional and Defiant Child: The Good Kid Disorder." Attendees learned useful information, enjoyed humorous examples, and had a chance to purchase Dr. Sutton's books. A total of 144 OSPA members and other interested individuals filled the meeting room to capacity. A number of OSU students presented posters. Attendees enjoyed lunch in the atrium and a few lucky ones received a prize. Prizes were furnished by the State Department of Education (books), NASP (books), and OSPA (table decorations) and some were distributed to those who could correctly answer trivia questions about school psychology. Overall, the conference was judged to be very successful.

The OEA-OSPA Connection

Recent events surrounding the efforts to obtain an annual salary bonus for school psychologists who hold the National Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential have generated a great deal of interest among Oklahoma school psychologists. The bill (SB 1492) mandating that school psychologists holding the NCSP be given an annual bonus (currently \$5000) was killed in committee in the spring of 2000 due to what was reported by the *OSPA Today* newsletter (Summer 2000 edition) to be Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) opposition. OEA was reportedly opposed to the bill because school psychologists did not involve or inform OEA of their plans when the initial push was begun to obtain the annual bonus for certified school psychologists. This misunderstanding, along with other factors, contributed to the demise in committee of SB 1492.

School psychologists realized that a battle had been lost but that the war was not over. With the support and backing of OSPA, school psychologists have resolved to improve their relationship and rapport with OEA in preparing a new push toward obtaining an annual salary bonus. Many school psychologists belong to OSPA and are currently or were previously active members of OEA. Few current school psychologists and teachers realize that OSPA actually began its existence as a section of OEA. This fact came to light a few years ago when, as a graduate student attending Oklahoma State University, I had the opportunity to research the history of OSPA and was able to interview several of the original founding members. The following excerpt from the resulting research paper provides a fascinating look at how OSPA actually grew out of OEA.

To understand how OSPA originally had its roots in OEA we must look at what was happening in school psychology in Oklahoma in the late 1950's and early 60's. According to the recollections of Dr. Mary Joe Keatley, school psychologist and former director of the psychological services for Tulsa Public Schools from 1964 to 1986, Oklahoma City and Tulsa were the only two school districts in the state who were attempting to provide any sort of school-based psychological testing in the 50's and 60's. Dr. Keatley reported that a testing battery during this time consisted of either the Stanford Binet or Wechsler intelligence test. There were only two main diagnoses available and they consisted of "immature" or "mentally retarded." In contrast to the rigorous referral procedure and mandatory parent involvement we require today, the referral process at the time in Tulsa consisted of a school principal calling the testing department and requesting that a student be tested. Nothing had to be written down and parent permission was not required. After the testing was done, no staffing or conferences were held. She also recalled that individuals doing the testing held degrees in clinical, experimental, or general psychology, but had to be referred to as "testing teachers" rather than school psychologists. This was because the parents of the students were very uncomfortable with the term, "psychologists," being used in conjunction with their child. Therefore, school administrators insisted that school psychologists be called "testing teachers."

Because there were no existing state department of education policies or federal policies to guide them during this period of time, testing teachers began generating their own materials, manuals, and procedures pertaining to working with students with learning problems. In the late 1960's the testing teachers began obtaining certification as school psychometrists and school psychologists from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. These newly certified psychometrists and psychologists began getting together at OEA fall conferences, exchanging information and sponsoring program sessions for teachers to acquire information on testing, identifying handicaps, and teaching children with learning problems. Dr. Keatley remembers the classroom teachers flocked to these sessions literally begging for information. By 1970, these sessions had grown into section meetings and what was once the testing teacher group became known as the Oklahoma State School Psychology Association (OSSPA), a section of OEA. Dr. Mary Joe Keatley served as president of this section during its first year. Dr. Marion Ferguson, a coordinator for testing services in Tulsa at the time, served as president of the section the second year. Charles Simon, formerly a psychologist with Oklahoma City, was president the third year.

During these years that OSPA was known as the OSSPA section of OEA, members increasingly sought to create an organization for themselves that dealt with children's issues and concerns from the perspective of school psychologists and to affiliate with the recently created National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), rather than OEA. In 1974, thanks in large part to the leadership provided by Dr. Paul Warden, then and currently a professor in school psychology at Oklahoma State University, the first conference was held. The group formerly known as the OSSPA became the current OSPA, which later became affiliated with NASP rather than OEA. Charles Simon presided as president over the first OSPA conference which was held in Shawnee in 1974. OSPA has served its membership in outstanding fashion for the past 26 years.

OEA and OSPA were once closely associated. Perhaps it is time to remember our history. There is no need for an adversarial relationship. OSPA and OEA can work together once again to bring positive changes that will benefit both groups.

Linda Nickell

OSPA Ethical and Professional Standards Chair

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Parent Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights (PACER). <http://www.pacer.org>

Population Data. <http://www.census.gov/>

US Department of Education Home Page. <http://ed.gov/>

Wrightslaw: The Special Education Advocate. Information about special education law and advocacy.
<http://www.wrightslaw.com>

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