

OSPA TODAY



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President's Message: New Year – New Perspective

Welcome to the New Year. I hope your first semester has been successful and you have made an effort to view your job from a different perspective. In doing this your experiences with your students should have been less stressful and more rewarding.

I was able to get a different perspective on association issues and leadership effectiveness by recently attending the Central Regional Meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with Eric Mesmer and Candis Hogan. NASP sponsors this event for the thirteen central states so that they can meet and share major association issues. In addition, leadership training is provided. I attended last year and was awed by the differences and similarities in the states and this year was no different. Many states had lobbyists, the oldest being an 80-year-old from Illinois, with salaries ranging from \$20,000 in Michigan to \$3,000 in Oklahoma. A few states had paid positions for clerical staff (Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois) but most did not.

Most executive board positions were for one year but in a few states they were for two years. Michigan's presidential position was shared by three people and Ohio mentored their replacements for a year prior to becoming an actual board member.

Conferences ranged from three days in Illinois (conference always held in Chicago) to one day in most other states. Nebraska had joint conferences and satellite conferences due to travel distances for members throughout the state, lack of money to put on a conference and inconsistent membership. Wisconsin gave college credit for their conferences and Kansas had regional conferences and/or state conferences each year. Conference themes varied but many attempted to develop continuity by having specific strands for their conferences.

In order to encourage membership, states varied in their approaches. North Dakota offered discounts at local businesses and each Indiana University paid for all student memberships by giving a flat fee of \$100 to the state organization. Many provided newsletters and discounts in conference fees. A common theme was the concern that many members will be retiring in the near future and the impact that will have on associations and the children they serve.

The leadership training was centered on the issues of how to attract future leaders. Some of the reasons given for members' lack of interest were related to the perceived inaccessibility of leadership opportunities and lack of interest to new ideas. It is my goal that this not be the case in Oklahoma. I encourage all of you who have any interest in being involved in OSPA to let me or any of the other board members know. We need new ideas and energy to keep our association active and involved with the children of Oklahoma. All the addresses of the board members can be found on our website. Another good way to become involved is to attend the NASP annual convention. The site this year is Atlanta, Georgia, on March 29-April 2, 2005 where the theme of the convention is "Achieving Better Outcomes for Children". Our spring conference will

follow on April 22, 2005, in Tulsa at the Southern Hills Marriott. Training on the BASC-II will be in the morning and ideas for practical application of our fall conference theme "Response to Intervention" will be presented in the afternoon. Good luck on the rest of your year and I look forward to hearing from you.

Nancy Barton, OSPA President

CALL FOR 2005-2006 OSPA NOMINATIONS

OSPA is currently seeking nominations for the 2005 Spring election. OSPA members may nominate themselves or other members. All nominees will be contacted to determine if they are interesting in seeking the office. Only REGULAR members may hold elected office. Please complete a separate form for each nomination.

Name of Nominee _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (W) _____ (H) _____

Nominated for

President-Elect Secretary Treasurer-Elect NE Representative NW
Representative Central Representative SE Representative SW Representative

This is your opportunity to become involved within the Executive Board of OSPA and to provide professional services to your colleagues. Please send your nomination to:

Cindie Milford
5216 E. 110th Place
Tulsa, OK 74137
cmilford@cox.net

Development of a Single-Form School Safety Survey for Early Adolescents and Adults

Linda Nickell, Ph.D.

The single form school safety survey was developed to assess levels of concern and apprehension of those associated with the middle school environment in regard to safety and security issues. The survey was administered to middle school students in each of the stages of survey development. The psychometric properties of the school safety survey indicated that the survey has good internal consistency and strong construct validity. The final version of the survey will be utilized in an ongoing school safety needs assessment program in a medium sized midwestern city.

Theoretical Subscales

The domains comprising the school safety survey are based on Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecology (1979). Each domain of the survey represents a microsystem of the school environment. An important tenet of ecological theory is the concept that in terms of affecting behavior, perception is more important than objective reality (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The school safety survey assesses the perceptions of the inhabitants of the school environment across some of the physical, social and emotional microsystems that comprise the school environment. Factor analysis of the data indicates that the 43 items, which utilize a Likert scale format, all load on three factors or scales. The three scales are (1) Actual Events that Threatened Feelings of Safety and Security, (2) Areas of the School that Elicit Feelings of Concern, and (3) Contribution of Existing Safety Measures, Supports, and Rules. In terms of microsystems, scale one focuses on elements of the school microsystem that are perceived by the constituents as being threatening. Scale two focuses on some of elements of the physical microsystems comprising the physical structure of the school that are perceived as potentially threatening. Scale three combines supportive aspects, as well as social and interactive microsystems that engender feelings of safety and security for the individual in the school environment. The microsystems of the middle school environment are conceptualized as being nested in the mesosystem of early adolescent or middle school characteristics. Surrounding these two systems is the exosystem of the history and development of the middle school and finally encompassing all of these systems, one within the other, is the macrosystem of social, cultural, educational and political factors.

Application of ecological theory to the assessment of the school environment in relation to safety and security issues provides a more complete picture of the school environment as seen from multiple perspectives (teacher, administrator, student, parent, teacher's aide, janitor, bus driver, school counselor, cafeteria worker, secretary, librarian, school psychologist, speech pathologist, school nurse, maintenance worker, school social worker and so forth). Ecological theory includes not only the elements of the physical environment, but the interpersonal aspects of the environment as well. The interactions among students, adults and the physical environment of the school provide an example of the immediate setting surrounding an individual that Bronfenbrenner refers to as the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Lewin (1939) (developer of

field theory) agree that the environment as it is perceived, rather than how it may exist in objective reality, is what matters for behavior and development. Inclusion of all the adults who are associated with the school environment on a regular basis is one characteristic that sets this survey apart from other existing school safety and security surveys. The use of a single form to sample all the constituents of a school environment allows the school environment to be seen in terms of ecological theory. In other words, because the survey enables an assessment of multiple perspectives that can then be compared directly to each other in numerous ways, statistical information emerges that allows the school environment to be seen in terms of each individual's safety and security concerns, knowledge and supports, whether they be student or adult. The survey is capable of providing multiple perspectives not only as seen through the eyes of students and adults, but also as seen from the perspective of the roles and habitual paths each individual assumes in the school environment. Other existing school safety surveys utilizing multiple forms (one for students, one for teachers, one for parents and so on) that differ in content and style of question can reflect only one dimension of a school environment at a time because the responses from the different groups cannot be combined for comparison and analysis. Because ecological theory is a multi-dimensional concept with individual perspective as one of its core tenets, a single form instrument that can statistically portray the multiple perspectives of a school's constituents is essential to applying ecological theory to the assessment of safety and security concerns.

Practical Applications

In today's atmosphere of fear and concern regarding school safety and security, perceptions of the inhabitants of the school environment can serve as a useful needs assessment tool for guiding school staff in developing appropriate interventions and procedures to deal with safety and security issues. The early adolescent or middle school level is a focus because of the lack of studies that have focused on this level, as well as the unparalleled physical and emotional changes that are characteristic of the age group. Used as a needs assessment tool, the school safety survey can assist school officials in three ways: (1) by identifying events that appear threatening not only from the perspective of adults and students, but by gender, grade, position, and race; (2) by identifying physical areas of the school that appear potentially threatening as perceived by the same groupings mentioned in application one; (3) by indicating the levels of effectiveness of existing safety measures and available supports, again from the perspective of the previous mentioned groupings.

Scale one, Actual Events that Threatened Feelings of Safety and Security, provides school officials with a statistical representation of the incidents of stealing, threats, bullying, drug use, weapon carrying, gang behavior and overt threats that are perceived to occur in the school environment. Scale two, Areas of the School that Elicit Feelings of Concern, provides school officials with an opinion rating of the most potentially dangerous areas of the physical school environment. Scale three, Contribution of Existing Safety Measures, Supports and Rules, assists school officials in determining if safe and peaceful feelings are generated by existing safety measures in the school environment, if social and emotional supports are perceived as being available in the

school environment and if rules are appropriately enforced and communicated.

General Implications

The survey can assist teachers and administrators in identifying school problem areas, incidents of personal victimization and effectiveness of school social and emotional supports. In addition, the survey could potentially be used to develop interventions for dealing with safety and security concerns. For example, if the school safety survey indicated high levels of concern among 6th grade girls about the locker room being a threatening area of the school, intervention actions (i.e. increased supervision or reassignment of gym lockers) could be taken to alleviate the problem. Use of the survey could also assist in enhancing the educational environment as well. Employing the survey to assess safety and security concerns on a regular basis as part of an ongoing school safety program could help improve the perceptions of the school's constituents that their individual input (responses to the survey) is important to the school administrators. The perception that safety and security concerns are being heard can serve as an empowering experience to the individuals associated with a school environment.

The aim of the resulting survey is to provide a tool for assessing levels of concern involving safety and security in the school environment. The single form instrument can be used across all groups associated with the school environment. This includes students, certified and non-certified personnel, and parents and community members. Since the survey is a single form, it is possible to directly compare the fears and concerns of one group with another. For instance, it is possible to group by gender, grade, adult, student, by position such as teacher, administrator, teacher aides, cafeteria workers or extract any groups by response rates to examine characteristics the respondents may have in common. Thus the instrument is an invaluable tool for enabling survey users to gain a multi-perspective view of the school environment.

For more information please contact Dr. Nickell at lnickell@okcps.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

OSPA Spring Conference

April 22, 2005

Morning Session: Beth Doll
BASC-II

Afternoon Session: Eric Mesmer and Gary Duhon
Response to Intervention

Tulsa Marriott
71st and Lewis

Looking Ahead to NASP Conventions

2005 March 29-April 2	Atlanta, GA
2006 March 28-April 1	Anaheim, CA
2007 March 27-March 31	New York, NY
2008 February 6-10	New Orleans, LA
2009 February 24-28	Boston, MA
2010 March 2-6	Chicago, IL

UCO Welcomes Dr. Mary Sweet-Darter

UCO is pleased to welcome Dr. Mary Sweet-Darter as the newest faculty member in the psychology department at the University of Central Oklahoma. Dr. Sweet-Darter is teaching courses in the School Psychology Program at UCO.

Dr. Sweet-Darter comes to the University of Central Oklahoma from Northeastern State University's psychology department where she was coordinator of the post-graduate school psychology program. Prior to serving at NSU, she was a clinician and research fellow at Johns Hopkins' Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, and a faculty member at Pace University in New York. Mary grew up in Oklahoma, earned her doctorate from the University of Oklahoma and taught at Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma. While at Phillips, she also directed a community counseling and human services center as well as a school-based services grant in cooperation with the Department of Corrections, Office of Juvenile Affairs, and the local Community Development Support Association.

Mary and her husband, Rev. Jerry Darter have several children and grandchildren living in the Oklahoma City area and look forward to serving at UCO and being near their family.

Oklahoma Best Practices Project

Oklahoma is participating in a national research project designed to identify best practices present in consistently high performing schools in relation to their demographics. The National Center for Educational Accountability at The University of Texas piloted the project with new states coming on line each year. The Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition and the Oklahoma Commission for Educational Leadership have joined with NCEA to co-sponsor the project in Oklahoma.

Step one consisted of identifying the past three years of test scores in reading, history, sciences, geography and mathematics, number and percent of low-income students, number and percent of limited English proficient students, and number and percent of students in each major ethnic group. In step two, NCEA analyzed fair school comparisons based on data gathered in step one and provides a list of Oklahoma schools based on consistent achievement on the state tests for the three year period and their demographic circumstances. Oklahoma is now in step three in which researchers from the Special School Services Clinic in the University of Central Oklahoma's Department of Psychology (School Psychology Program) are conducting site-based interviews and collecting documents to provide a qualitative dimension to the analysis of elementary schools.

The purpose of the project is to create a case study of representative high performing elementary schools in Oklahoma so other schools of similar demographic composition can compare their practices to those of the high performing schools. The results will ultimately provide a composite for Oklahoma elementary, middle, and high schools that will illustrate Oklahoma Best Practices. The state results also will provide background for informative seminars to be developed for other schools in Oklahoma with similar demographics, but lower achievement scores, who wish to network with Best Practices schools.

Although not complete, you can go to www.just4kids.org , click on Oklahoma and do some preliminary school comparisons based on test scores. When you click on a school, you will see a bar graph that compares the school in question with the highest performing schools. The difference between the two is referred to as an achievement gap and provides schools with a target for school improvement. Remember test scores alone do not tell the whole story of a best practice school. Stay tuned for The Rest of the Story.

Jane Bias Voted OSPA's School Psychologist of the Year

The Faye Catlett award for Outstanding School Psychologist was established in 1986 to recognize an Oklahoma school psychologist who has made significant contributions to the profession. The award was named to honor Dr. Faye Catlett, then Central State University's leader in school psychology education. This year, the honor goes to **Jane Bias**. Jane is a nationally certified school psychologist who has been employed by Norman Public Schools for ten years. In her position, Jane participates in multidisciplinary team discussions and evaluations to address educational and behavioral concerns for individual students, ages 3 to 21. She provides resources for teachers and parents regarding issues of development, learning and behavior as well as responding to immediate crises such as a bus accident, fire and suicide. Jane has worked with mental health providers from the Norman community to facilitate skill training for children in anger management. Jane has also provided school psychology services in Moore and Oklahoma City Public Schools, beginning her career in 1971.

Jane is a member of NASP and was a charter member of OSPA. She has served on the executive board as secretary and as central representative. Because of her belief that school psychologists and speech pathologists should be recognized for achieving the highest standards of their profession, national certification, Jane worked diligently to ensure passage of SB1207. She attended the first meeting of school psychologists and legislators in 1998 and continued to work with the group every year until the bill's passage in May 2004. Her calm, dedicated, intelligent and thoughtful presentation to members of the Oklahoma Education Association and to the state legislators was a significant asset in their acceptance of this legislation.

Jane received her Bachelor of Arts and her Masters of Education from the University of Oklahoma. Certification in School Psychology was obtained through the University of Central Oklahoma. Jane also holds a teaching certificate in special education and is a Licensed Professional Counselor.

As the recipient of the Oklahoma School Psychologist of the Year for 2004-2005, Jane was nominated to NASP for National School Psychologist of the Year. In her nomination, Jane was described as an exemplary role model for her colleagues and for novice school psychologists. In her thirty-three years in the profession, she has earned the respect of administrators, teachers, parents, students and legislators. We are proud to recognize Jane with this award, which will be presented to her at the OSPA 2005 Spring Conference.

Treasurer Report - January 1, 2005

At midyear, OSPA is in very good financial shape. A total of 174 memberships were recorded as of December, 2004. Membership income came to \$7,255.00. A total of 206 people attended the OSPA Fall Conference in Oklahoma City. Revenue from the Fall Conference is as follows: \$13,215 was taken in pre-registration, and another \$1,620 in onsite registration, for a total of \$14,835 in income. The Silent Auction held at the Fall Conference generated a total of \$459.00. Income from the Silent Auction has been designated for charitable purposes.

Major expenditures for OSPA during the first half of the year included the purchase of two laptop computers and a portable printer for use by the Treasurer and Membership Chairperson. We hope that this sped up the process of taking money and receipting payment for onsite registrants. I have helped in this task for many years, and felt that it was a much quicker process this year with the help of the computer and printer. Charitable donations were made to the OKC Community Foundation in the amount of \$100.00, and to The Children's Hospital Volunteer Organization, in the Oklahoma City area.

Currently, the balance of the checking account for OSPA is \$28,299. Another \$6,931.64 is held in the OSPA Money Market Account.

So far this year, both of the OSPA charitable contributions have benefited the OKC area. We know there are many good causes and organizations in other parts of the state as well. If any of our members from other regions of the state have a favorite organization or a really good idea for donations that will help children and families, please feel free to submit the name of the organization for consideration by OSPA. We would like to spread the giving around. Also, the OSPA board always welcomes suggestions on how we might improve our service to you, the membership. Feel free to contact any of us with suggestions.

Susan M. Linde, Ph.D.
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Using the WISC-IV to Assess Students with a Learning Disability: No Cause for Concern

Milton J. Dehn

With the release of the WISC-IV in the fall of 2003, anecdotal reports that LD students' WISC-IV FSIQ scores were much lower than their previous WISC-IV FSIQ scores led some practitioners to question the use of the WISC-IV for assessing students with a specific learning disability. Reports of significantly lower FSIQ scores for children with LD seemed plausible, given that more processing subtests (Digit Span, Letter-Number Sequencing, and Symbol Search) are used in the computation of the WISC-IV FSIQ.

Revisions of intellectual scales usually produce significantly lower IQ scores than their predecessors. For example, studies of the WISC-III consistently found its mean FSIQ to be several points lower than the WISC-R FSIQ. Lower IQ scores on revised tests have often been attributed to the Flynn effect, even with LD populations. Flynn reported an increase in IQ of approximately three IQ points per decade. Paradoxically, the increasing IQ of the population results in lower individual IQ scores when norms are updated. When IQ scores of children referred for LD drop, the result can be a lower placement rate, especially when a simple difference or regression method is used to compare IQ to achievement. Among school psychologists, educators, parents, and students, a lower IQ score that prevents placement in special education can be a cause for concern.

Validity studies reported in the WISC-IV Technical and Interpretative Manual found the mean WISC-IV FSIQ to be 2.5 points lower than the WISC-III mean in a nonreferred sample of 244. The same study also found the new Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI) to be 2.4 points lower than the VIQ, the new Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI) to be 3.4 points lower than the PIQ, the new Working Memory Index (WMI) to be 1.5 points lower than the FDI, and the Processing Speed Index (PSI) to be 5.5 points lower than the WISC-III PSI. Given the 12-year span between the norming of the WISC-III and the WISC-IV, the FSIQ difference of 2.5 points could be accounted for by the Flynn effect.

The WISC-IV manual does not report any WISC-III and WISC-IV FSIQ comparisons specifically for children with learning disorders. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to determine how much of a lower FSIQ would be obtained by children with specific learning disabilities. The study also investigated the profile of composite scores for various types of learning disabilities.

Method

All of the 74 participants were children who were receiving programming for a specific learning disability and were being re-evaluated, in most cases for their three-year reevaluation. Most of the subjects (88%) were from a large urban district in Minnesota. The children ranged in age from 8.1 to 16.7 years, with a mean age of 11.8. Except for two Native Americans and one African American, all of the participants were White, and the majority (59%) were males. Each of the three main types of learning disorders was well represented. Thirty-five of the children had a reading disability, 26 had a mathematics disability, and 30 had a written language disability, with many of the children (42%) identified as having more than one of these specific learning disabilities.

Results and Discussion

For the 74 subjects, the .49 difference between the mean WISC-III FSIQ of 92.08 and the WISC-IV FSIQ of 91.59 was not statistically significant. In contrast, the difference between the WISC-IV VCI and the WISC-III VIQ was significant, but not in the expected direction. The mean WISC-IV VCI of 92.82 was actually 3.40 points higher ($p < .01$) than the WISC-III VIQ of 89.42. There was no significant difference between the WISC-IV PRI score of 96.86 and WISC-III PIQ of 96.66. It was not possible to compare the Processing Speed scores and the new WMI with the WISC-III FDI because WISC-III PSI and FDI scores were not available. The WISC-IV PSI mean was 92.89 and WMI mean was 90.49. The standard deviations for the composite scores were mostly in the 11-point range, with a low of 10.6 for the WISC-IV FSIQ and a high of 12.6 for the WISC-IV VCI.

Thus, the concern that most students referred for a learning disability will obtain a much lower FSIQ on the WISC-IV than they would on the WISC-III seems to be unjustified. Of course, the average difference in FSIQ of approximately a half point does not mean that some examinees will not obtain widely divergent scores. In this study the standard deviation of the difference between the two FSIQs was 8.4. WISC-IV FSIQs ranged from 21 points lower to 24 points higher. Twenty-five percent of the subjects had WISC-IV FSIQs that were 7 or more points lower while 25% had WISC-IV FSIQs that were 4 or more points higher.

At first glance, the results seem puzzling. Why would the LD population not experience a decline in FSIQ as predicted by the Flynn Effect and as seen in the general population? The answer may lie in the altered structure of the WISC-IV. Past WISC-R and WISC-III research has consistently found that many children with LD perform poorly on the Information and Arithmetic subtests. Performance on these two subtests is related to academic learning and working memory. These are usually areas of difficulty for students with LD. Thus, the removal of the Information and Arithmetic subtests from the computation of the WISC-IV VCI may account for the higher verbal score.

A change in the test's structure may also account for the lack of a decline from PIQ to PRI. The new PRI subtests require more fluid reasoning than the old PIQ subtests. Students with reading and written language disabilities may have strengths in fluid reasoning that have been untapped by previous WISC versions. Giving more weight to fluid reasoning when computing the PRI may account for improved scores. However, this may not be the case for students with mathematics disabilities, who tend to perform more poorly on fluid reasoning tasks. The reduction in bonus points for speed may also account for higher WISC-IV scores than expected.

In contrast to the LD students' stronger performance on VCI and PRI, it appears that their processing composite scores, PSI and WMI, are lower and are accounting for the slight reduction in the mean FSIQ that is occurring. The index profile also indicates that many students with LD are going to have significant individual weaknesses in WMI. The WISC-IV index profile for all types of SLD was PRI>PSI>VCI>WMI, the same profile as that reported in the WISC-IV manual for a sample of reading disabled subjects.

Given the current results, one might wonder whether the WISC-III may have been underestimating the general intelligence and learning aptitudes of students referred for LD. This may have occurred because fluid reasoning was not measured in enough depth and/or because academic skills, math for example, were included in the FSIQ computation. On the other hand, the heavier weighting of working memory on the WISC-IV, which is often a weakness for LD students, may ultimately be shown to result in underestimates of general intelligence when assessing children with a learning disability.

Despite the limitations of this study, it provides evidence that the WISC-IV is a valid measure of the intellectual/cognitive abilities of students with LD. The concerns about the WISC-IV producing underestimates of LD students' IQs do not seem to have merit.

This article was edited and reprinted from the Wisconsin School Psychologists Association Newsletter, Fall, 2004.