

OSPA TODAY



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President's Message

Thank You and Best Wishes for the Coming Year

As I write this, my final message during my presidency of OSPA, I reflect upon all that I have to be thankful for and all that we as an organization have to look forward to. First of all, I would like to thank the OSPA board for their unending support and encouragement as well as tireless dedication to our organization and profession. We have accomplished so much this year, and it could not have been done without you. I appreciate each and every one of you! I want to say a special thank you to **Peggy Kerr**, who has dedicated so many years to school psychology and publishing our newsletter, *OSPA TODAY*.

Secondly, I have just returned from our annual NASP convention in Anaheim, California. There is nothing quite as energizing to a school psychologist as convening with over 4,000 school psychologists from around the United States and the world (especially towards the end of a school year)! I attended some fabulous workshops which enriched my knowledge in many areas. Additionally, I was able to visit with fellow school psychologists from around the nation and discuss concerns they are facing, as well as learn about accomplishments in our profession. If you have never attended a NASP convention or perhaps it has been awhile since you've last attended, I urge you to consider attending next year when it will be in New York City. NASP conventions have something to offer everyone, from assessment issues and procedures, to emotional issues, to ethics. It is a positively uplifting and enriching environment!

We have accomplished so much for you this past year. As many of you know, funding for the Nationally Certified School Psychologists bonus was added to Sandy Garrett's budget this year. Thank you **Candis Hogan** for your unending support! As we all anxiously await the final regulations to be put into print, OSPA has taken a proactive approach to the concept of using Response-to-Intervention as an eligibility approach. Thank you **Gary Duhon, Eric Mesmer, and Rich Putnam** for authoring a position statement on Response-to-Intervention. OSPA's position statement will be disseminated at our Spring Conference on April 21st to all who attend. You may also view this document on our website at www.ospaweb.org. Additionally, we are in the process of placing our position statement in the hands of Oklahoma's superintendents to let them know that school psychologists have the knowledge and training to utilize this method of assessment. OSPA also sent two delegates to the NASP convention to be trained as trainers on "Developing School-Based Crisis Intervention Teams and Systems for the Public Schools." Steve Crane, from Edmond Public Schools, and Tracy Fenton, from Hilldale Public Schools, will serve as Oklahoma's trainers on crisis intervention. Crisis intervention is an area in which we all know is extremely important, though few of us know how to really pull together a crisis intervention team. We look forward to Steve and Tracy offering the OSPA membership

training in this area, possibly as early as this summer. Watch the mail and our website for more details!

And finally, by the time you read this newsletter our spring conference will be over. If you attended, I hope you enjoyed our speaker, Mark Shinn. If you weren't able to attend, we missed you. OSPA strives to find speakers that you find both interesting and informative. We would like to equip Oklahoma's professionals with up-to-date research and information to enhance your job performance. Please let a board member know if you have a great idea about a topic that you would like presented at a conference. We are always ready to listen and explore new ideas!

Cindie Milford, Ed.S., NCSP

Tracy Fenton Named Oklahoma 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 **Tracy Fenton**. Tracy has been a leader in the field of school psychology, both on an individual service level and for the profession as a whole. She is a dynamic influence on the field of school psychology by her diligent involvement in professional organizations, volunteerism and service delivery.

Tracy has been responsible for the development of crisis plans for her school and has been a first responder in crisis. Her preparation and delivery of services at such times has been critical to students, teachers and parents. She is also involved with prevention of crises by creating and promoting such programs as Bullying and Violence Prevention. Tracy has also used her expertise in volunteering many hours to the service of children by being active in the American Red Cross, Disaster Mental Health Response Team, acting as a trainer for HIV/AIDS education, Critical Incidence Stress Management Team, Court Appointed Special Advocate for Children, V.A. Center volunteer and a Special Olympics volunteer. Within her community she has provided parent and teacher workshops on various topics including ADHD training and interventions, bullying prevention, school safety and behavior management.

As the recipient of the Oklahoma School Psychologist of the Year for 2006, Tracy is nominated to NASP for National School Psychologist of the Year. In her nomination, Tracy was described as being highly respected by her colleagues for her positive attitude and services to children. We were proud to recognize Tracy with this award, which was presented to her at the OSPA 2006 Spring Conference.

Building Resiliency: Helping Children Learn to Weather Tough Times

By Cindie Milford, Ed.S. , NCSP

Adversity is a natural part of life. At some point, we all face difficulties, such as family problems, serious illness, a personal crisis, or a painful loss. Being resilient is important to effective coping with such adversities. While most parents hope that their children never face extreme adversity, successfully facing tough situations can actually foster growth and give children the skills to be more resilient in the future.

Most people have a natural tendency to adapt and bounce back from adversity. However, parents can help their children learn to face challenges successfully, whether it is the stresses of everyday life, such as academic difficulties or problems with friends, or severe crisis, such as losing a home and being displaced from normal routines for months. Following are five ways to promote resiliency in your children and help protect them from long-term ill effects of difficult experiences.

1. **Think positive!** Modeling positive attitudes and positive emotions is very important. Children need to hear parents thinking out loud positively and being determined to persist until a goal is achieved. Using a “can do” problem-solving approach to problems teaches children a sense of power and promise.
2. **Express love and gratitude!** Emotions such as love and gratitude increase resiliency. Praise should always occur much more often than criticism. Children and adolescents who are cared for, loved, and supported learn to express positive emotions to others. Positive emotions buffer kids against depression and other negative reactions to adversity.
3. **Express yourself!** Resilient people appropriately express all emotions, even negative ones. Parents who help kids become more aware of emotions, label emotions appropriately, and help children deal with upsetting events are giving them useful life skills.
4. **Get fit!** Good physical health prepares the body and mind to be more resilient. Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect kids against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.

5. ***Foster competency!*** Making sure that children and adolescents achieve academically is great protection against adversity. Children who achieve academic success and who develop individual talents, such as playing sports, drawing, making things, playing musical instruments or playing games, are much more likely to feel competent and be able to deal with stress positively. Social competency is also important. Having friends and staying connected to friends and loved ones can increase resiliency. Social competency can even be created by helping others.

Protecting our children against all of life's unexpected painful events is not possible. Giving them a sense of competency and the skills to face adverse circumstances can be a valuable legacy of all parents. Resiliency can be built by understanding these important foundations. The more we practice these approaches, the more effectively our children will weather whatever life brings.

Adapted from: "Resiliency: Strategies for Parents and Educators," Virginia Smith Harvey, *Helping Children at Home and School II: Handouts for Families and Educators*, NASP, 2004.

Kerr and Nickell Recognized for Lifetime Achievements

The Lifetime Achievement Award was created by the National Association of School Psychologists to identify and recognize an outstanding school psychologist who has had a national impact on the field and who has dedicated their professional life to the development and betterment of school psychology. This year OSPA is honored to submit two nominees for the award, **Peggy Kerr, Ph.D.** and **Linda Nickell, Ph.D.**

Linda grew up on a small farm in northwestern Oklahoma and attended a small town elementary and high school. She earned a B.S. in Education from Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford in 1968. In 1969, Linda began teaching physical education to grades 1 through 12 at Casady, a private school in Oklahoma City.

Linda earned a M.Ed. in physical education from the University of Oklahoma in 1970. In 1972, she began her career in public school education, as a social studies and physical education teacher at Taft Middle School in Oklahoma City. She coached girl's basketball, volleyball, track and field and served as a department chairperson and the school's intramural director. She also had the privilege of witnessing and participating in the process of school desegregation during the early 70s. Linda remembers that it was an exhilarating and challenging time in our country's history. In addition to being a part of the desegregation process, Linda was a pioneer in implementing Title IX, which mandated that boy's and girl's sports instruction, facilities, and participation should be equal. Being a physical education teacher at the time, Linda vividly remembers how she and the male physical education teacher struggled to make their classes coeducational, adjust their lesson plans appropriately and interpret what was required by Title IX.

In the early 80s, Linda served as an acting assistant principal at two different Oklahoma City middle schools. At this point in time, corporal punishment was still widely practiced in the school system. Linda recalls being called on to wield a heavy wooden paddle on students who were brought to the office for punishment. She remembers that it was never a very effective form of punishment and that she was glad when her tenure as an assistant principal came to an end.

In 1986, she earned a M.Ed. in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. In 1990 she became a psychometrist and in 1992 a psychologist for Oklahoma City public schools. While working as a psychologist, Linda completed the requirements to become a Licensed Professional Counselor in 1997. While still working as a psychologist, she fulfilled a life-long dream in 2004 when she obtained her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. She is very proud of the School Safety Survey she developed for her dissertation that measures

perceptions of school staff and students in regard to potential dangers in the school environment. Linda feels that the most significant event that occurred while she has been a school psychologist was the bombing of the Murrah building in Oklahoma City in 1995. She recalls that she learned a tremendous amount about how children process disaster and how to help children process crises during this time. She feels that one of the most significant developments she has witnessed taking place in school psychology is the large role that laptop computers now play in the performance of a school psychologist's duties. She reports being resistant to adapting to the use of laptop computers in her job, but now feels that the laptop computer has become an indispensable part of her equipment.

Linda began her career in education 36 years ago. She has been employed by Oklahoma City Public Schools for the last 33 years and continues to add to her years of experience. She has enjoyed a wide variety of experiences in education and its associated activities. Over the years, she has seen and been a part of many changes both in the private and public school sectors. She has presented papers and posters at National and Regional conferences. She has published articles in National and State publications. She has been involved in research projects studying adolescent patterns of friendship, as well as studies of chemical dependency and its effects on parents and children. As a member of OSPA, she has served as a past President, President-Elect, Central Representative, Parliamentarian, Chairperson of the Awards Committee, and Chairperson of Ethical and Professional Standards Committee. She feels that her years as a psychologist have been the most rewarding part of her career. She has learned that although research based approaches and standardized tests are important tools that psychologists use in evaluating students, it is also important to utilize the tools of empathy and intuition in conjunction with the more quantitative approaches. She has learned that what is truly important is not so much the ability to apply a diagnostic label to a student's behavior, but rather that it is more important to understand *why* a child is behaving in a particular way, and sharing those insights with the child's teachers and parents in order to aid in the process of bringing forth a child's best efforts.

Peggy began attending Central State College the first summer after graduation from high school and earned a B.A. in English with minors in education and math in three years time. A lot happened in those early years—marriage, children, and four years of teaching in Colorado. She taught another eight years in Oklahoma while earning an M.Ed. in Special Education at Central State University in 1976. While teaching learning disabled children in the Deer Creek Schools, she became interested in learning more about the diagnosis and interventions for these children. This interest prompted her return to UCO for certification as a School Psychologist.

Peggy entered a doctoral program at Oklahoma State University in 1984 and began teaching at the UCO in 1987. In 1989, She completed a Ph.D. in Applied Behavioral Studies, with an emphasis in School Psychology.

Although she has worked outside the classroom, in a family owned business, law firm, and private clinic, her professional life is really all about teaching. Having served as a professor in the psychology department at UCO for the past 19 years, Peggy was recently given the honorary title of “Professor Emeritus of Psychology” by the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges. During her tenure at UCO, Peggy coordinated the M.A. in School Psychology, the Psychometry Certification program, and the School Psychology Certification program. In addition to her many grants, presentations, and publications, she also directed the Special School Services Clinic which provided assessment services to approximately fifty children and adults in the community each year.

In 1999 Peggy was awarded the Fay Catlett Award for Outstanding School Psychologist from OSPA. She has been a member of OSPA for 19 years and has served in a variety of significant roles. She first joined the OSPA Executive Board as the Higher Ed Representative in 1988 and was elected President in 1996. She has also edited *OSPA Today* for the past seven years.

Peggy has been instrumental in training many of the practicing school psychologists in Oklahoma today. Through the years she has shown willingness, commitment and professionalism in guiding prospective school psychologist through the maze of higher education training and entry into practice in the field. Her promotion of the standards and ideals in the field of school psychology is a legacy, which she imparts to her students in training. She has also served as a role model for students by encouraging them to become involved in their professional organization.

Stinson and Dodson Receive Graduate Studies Awards

The OSPA Paul Warden and 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. The awards were named to honor Dr. Warden and Dr. Keatley, two of the pioneers of school psychology in Oklahoma and founding members of OSPA. The awards were developed in response to OSPA's professional commitment to encourage promising students to complete a school psychology program. Monetary awards are presented annually in the amount of \$1000 to two selected students.

Based on the recommendation of the Awards, Honors and Scholarships committee, the OSPA executive board awarded scholarships to Amanda Stinson and Kayce Dodson

Amanda Stinson began studying psychology as an undergraduate at Loyola University in New Orleans. After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree at that university she earned a Masters degree in Educational Psychology at OSU. She is currently enrolled in their doctoral program as a second year doctoral student. Amanda is interested in bringing knowledge of Response to Intervention and pre-referral practices to schools in Oklahoma. She has had the opportunity to be involved in research projects in PTSD, labeling and peer victimization. She has an exemplary academic record and is dedicated to becoming an effective school psychologist in Oklahoma.

Kayce Dodson is also enrolled in the doctoral program at OSU as a third year student. She came to Oklahoma after earning a Bachelor of Science degree at Missouri State University. Kayce has a desire to work as a school psychologist in rural areas in need of mental health services. She attributes this dedication to growing up in a rural community. In addition Kayce has a professional research interest in generalization of behavior for students classified as emotionally disturbed. She already has an exceptional service history and numerous professional activities supporting her interest in special needs children in Oklahoma.

We are fortunate to have both of these women as OSPA members and as future leaders in the profession of school psychology.

Kathryn Beaman, Ph.D.
Chair, Awards, Honor, and Scholarships

Oklahoma School Psychological Association Position Statement Response to Intervention

The Oklahoma School Psychological Association (OSPA) supports the changes in the most recent revision of IDEA (2005). Specifically, OSPA supports the inclusion of proposed modifications within IDEA (2005) regarding identification of students suspected of having learning disabilities. In this revision, IDEA allows for alternative assessment procedures to identify specific learning disabilities in children, and OSPA supports the use of Response-to-Intervention (RTI) as a major component of this model.

Definition of RTI

RTI is a data-based model of assessment, which incorporates problem-solving principles. Schools implementing RTI models monitor a student's response to a particular evidence-based intervention designed to address a specific need, typically using a single-participant research design. If the student does not respond positively to interventions that research has demonstrated are effective for most other students, then schools can rule out poor instruction as an explanation for low achievement. Within the RTI model, "interventions" can include high quality, evidence-based instructional practices administered at the classroom, small group, or individual student levels, or in a combination of such delivery modes. Furthermore, as practitioners increase the intensity of intervention for a student, they glean important information regarding how severe the student's need is. Taken together, ruling out poor instruction and assessing the intensity of student need are critical factors in determining special education eligibility within the RTI model.

Available data suggest RTI is a valid model of assessment; however, the research is ongoing and most districts implementing problem-solving models view RTI as an evolving enterprise that requires continuous evaluation and modification as the data indicates. A current limitation of the RTI approach is that no standard exists to determine how much change is required for schools to consider a child "responsive to intervention" versus "resistant or non-responsive to intervention."

Despite the questions regarding how much change indicates a positive student response to intervention, RTI is distinctly advantageous due to its focus on early identification of struggling learners, prevention of serious academic difficulties, and early intervention. Within an RTI model, school psychologists' efforts to determine and respond to a child's needs focus on intervention rather than on the process of eligibility determination.

Finally, RTI approaches may be implemented within a larger system of school support that provides opportunities for all students to experience success. Such approaches can help to ensure the delivery of effective general

education instruction and access to early interventions which can prevent the onset of learning difficulties. Students exhibiting low achievement despite receiving high quality general education instruction may be considered for individualized assessment within an RTI model.

Components of an effective RTI assessment approach may include the following:

- Assessing the students current functioning, including areas of strength and difficulty. The purpose of such assessment is to define concerns that will be targeted for intervention, inform the intervention plan and to collect baseline data regarding the students pre-intervention functioning. Practitioners will select assessment instruments and procedures based on such purposes.
- Setting an appropriate learning goal that the student can reasonably achieve within a brief intervention period. Such a goal must be realistic, as practitioners can use the goal as a standard for determining whether the intervention was effective for the student.
- Implementing with integrity evidence-based interventions designed to address the student's specific needs. "Evidence-based" means that a creditable body of scientific data exists, supporting the intervention's efficacy in resolving a particular problem.
- Monitoring the student's response to the intervention using both ongoing data-collection and pre-post measures.

If a referred student fails to respond to an intervention, the lack of response does not necessarily indicate the presence of a specific learning disability and/or eligibility for special education services. It may be necessary in many instances to modify the initial intervention or implement more intense interventions in order to adequately document student unresponsiveness or responsiveness. Moreover, the use of procedures that are not traditionally associated with problem-solving approaches, such as standardized, norm-referenced assessments, may be warranted to assist in documenting the presence of a learning disability and are strongly indicated when other types of disabilities are suspected (e.g. mental retardation, emotional disturbance, etc.).

Role of School Psychologists

With the introduction of RTI and the increased focus on early intervention in IDEA legislation, many school psychologists will likely need to apply problem-solving consultation skills, alternative assessment procedures, and skills in measuring student response to intervention accurately and adequately. Armed with a sound knowledge base, school psychologists have the skills necessary to collaborate with parents, teachers and school staff to adapt a particular intervention to meet

the needs of a particular student body. Additionally, school psychologists can measure student outcomes reliably and validly in order to answer the question, “did the selected intervention produce the desired effects for a particular student body (or a particular student)?” Finally, by virtue of their training and experiences in assessment, consultation, and intervention, school psychologists will take a leadership role in developing and implementing RTI policies and procedures at the local level.

OSPA’s Contributions

- OSPA will support training efforts by collaborating with School Psychology training programs, the Department of Education, the Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Preparation, school districts, and other professional organizations.
- OSPA will provide training through professional development activities at the state and local level. These activities will include the development of a cadre of trainers with expertise in RTI who will provide support to school psychologists across the state.
- OSPA will collaborate with the State Department of Education to develop policies and procedures that ensure a fair, equitable, and valid process of RTI assessment process within the state of Oklahoma.
- OSPA supports parent involvement throughout the RTI assessment process.

In summary, OSPA supports the inclusion of RTI in considering the identification of students suspected of specific learning disabilities. We support using RTI to assist students in both regular and special education. Further, we consider RTI models within Oklahoma to be an evolving practice that districts will need to evaluate and modify as the data indicates is necessary.

For more information about OSPA’s position on RTI, please contact Gary Duhon (405)744-9436 gary.duhon@okstate.edu or Eric Mesmer (405)744-4808 eric.mesmer@okstate.edu.

The OSPA would like to express appreciation to the Nebraska School Psychology Association (NSPA) for sharing their position statement regarding RTI. Excerpts from the NSPA position statement were borrowed and incorporated within this document. The opinions expressed by the OSPA are consistent with recommendations of the National Association of School Psychologists.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NASP SUMMER CONFERENCES SET FOR ATLANTIC CITY AND CHICAGO

July 17- 19, 2006	Sheraton Atlantic City Hotel
July 27-29, 2006	Renaissance Schaumburg

LOOKING AHEAD TO NASP CONVENTIONS

March 28 - April 1, 2006	Hilton Anaheim and Anaheim Marriott Hotels
March 27 - 31, 2007	Hilton New York
February 5 - 9, 2008	New Orleans Marriott
February 24 - 28, 2009	Boston Marriott Copley Place
March 2 - 6, 2010	Hyatt Regency Chicago