

OSPA TODAY



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President's Message

Promoting Yourself as a School Psychologist

By Cindie Milford, Ed.S., NCSP

Each school day begins with waves of children trooping off to school laden with book bags, lunchboxes, and coats. Did you notice them dragging along anything else? Of course you can't see the extra baggage these children are toting, but it's there. We're talking about family arguments, divorce, domestic violence, learning difficulties, health concerns, culture differences, and behavior issues. And it's all related to mental health. That's where you as a school psychologist come in.

Do you *really* consider yourself a mental health provider? Or is this a term or responsibility you feel more comfortable pushing off onto a clinical psychologist, LPC, social worker, or psychiatrist? Let's stop a minute and examine your qualifications. As a school psychologist you:

1. Are trained to specialize in assessing children's needs
2. Understand children's learning styles and needs
3. Can identify behavior problems (including the antecedents and consequences of those behaviors) and remedy them
4. Understand curriculum development, presentation, and modifications that can be made within curriculum
5. Can provide counseling both individually and in groups, to both children and families
6. Can diagnose mental health issues, offer non-medical treatment services, and understand the variety of treatment options

As we know, mental health issues rarely are present in only one environment. Family dynamics often bleed over and interfere in school learning, and school problems often are taken home and interfere with family functioning. We are *specialists*. We are trained to work through the complex nature of children and their various environments.

As a school psychologist, you are in an ideal position to provide a strong support system to Oklahoma's children. A family is typically a child's first source of support. However, more and more families are undergoing stresses which make them unavailable as a strong support system. Think of the opportunity you have! School-age children spend the bulk of their day in school, and as educators we are able to provide them good role models, abundant support and concern, and care for acute situations. Mental health is so much more than just mental illness (i.e., depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia). School should be the place to promote good mental health! There are three primary levels in which a school system supports children's mental health:

1. *Environmental* – creating a supportive school climate that fosters mentally healthy traits (i.e., connectedness, self-esteem, respect for others)

2. *Programmatic* – implementing programs or curriculum targeted at specific issues and skills development (i.e., bullying prevention, conflict resolution, social skills)
3. *Individual* – providing interventions to students with chronic or acute mental health needs (i.e., learning disabilities, depression, ADHD, grief, trauma)

So, why should you be responsible for promoting good mental health in all of these children when you are so backlogged with testing referrals? Because prevention is an intervention! If we can help these children with all of the other issues they face in addition to just showing up for school each day, then they might not be referred for testing. Is it possible that their “learning problem” is instead anxiety that their parents might divorce?

It saddens me to hear of many school districts around the state and the nation who are increasingly contracting their services out to clinical psychologists. I realize the severe shortage of school psychologists nationwide has somewhat increased this practice. However, are we really protecting what is our area of specialization? In all professional practices, one must meet certain professional standards. Only school psychologists meet these professional standards in working with children in the school setting. Only school psychologists have the skills previously mentioned and the ability to fully understand the complexity and implications of children in the school environment, and arrive at appropriate school-based interventions. If we continue to under-sell ourselves and think ourselves as not as qualified as other professionals, we may end up selling ourselves out of a career. Don't be afraid to promote yourself and your abilities, especially if the focus is on prevention, promotion of mental health, and support for our children. I urge you to stretch yourself and become the school psychologist you want to be. The children of Oklahoma are counting on your support!

Northwest Region Report

School Psychologists are few and far between here in the Northwest Region. Many small school districts are contracting with former RESC psychometrists for psychological services. These employees, from what we understand, have no input into pre-referral interventions and no input into the question of eligibility. We should be glad that someone is evaluating our students, but the level of services these school districts are receiving is not optimal for the student population. Also, the knowledge of those conducting the evaluations is often going to waste. We have tried to inform school districts of the importance of full service providers but many of them do not have the finances to hire someone full-time and contracting is the next best answer. The districts that do employ school psychologists are short staffed and school psychologists are (used as) little more than diagnosticians. If anyone has an answer or suggestion for our dilemma, we would appreciate hearing from you.

*Sandra Reese-Keck
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OSPA Members Participate in the Redevelopment of the OSAT

The Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation (OCTP) is in the process of redeveloping the Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) in School Psychology. The OCTP will be holding their Item Review Conference on February 22 and 23 at the Crowne Plaza in Oklahoma City. Several OSPA members have been invited to participate in this conference and will form the School Psychology Item Review Committee. The committee will review draft test items to ensure that they are appropriate for assisting School Psychologists in preparing for the OSAT.

The OSAT is required for educator candidates seeking Oklahoma public school certification in School Psychology. The revised OSAT will be administered for the first time in September 2006.

The New World Order in Education: Coordinating IDEA, RSA, and NCLB

By Susan M. Linde, Ph.D.

School districts today are managing multiple and costly programs designed to improve student achievement and the stakes are high. District efforts are designed to meet local goals related to multiple federal mandates. District goals are working on reading acquisition skills for the general education students, as designated by the Reading Sufficiency Act. No Child Left Behind continues to consume vast amounts of local energy and budget, and then there are the updated mandates related to special education, and IDEA, 2004. As district administrators grapple with these demands, they, quite reasonably, are looking for ways to dove-tail different programs to achieve the best possible results for children across all programs, given the monetary investment. As school psychologists, we have long considered ourselves to function within the confines of special education law. However, the winds of change that began as a mild shift in the breeze now constitute a full blown gale.

With the pressures that districts across the country face related to No Child Left Behind, Special Services Directors are increasingly defending special education programs, outcomes, and identification to the district-level administration. The status quo, in many cases, is not yielding the level of results needed to meet Annual Yearly Progress as defined in NCLB. Eligibility, programs, service delivery, and teacher standards are all being scrutinized. In many instances, past practices designed to help children, have actually been failing them. Individually, and as a professional organization, Oklahoma school psychologists must contemplate how to meet the needs of children, while helping the districts we serve to meet NCLB goals. Considerations include the way that we have been identifying children with Specific Learning Disabilities, the services we recommend, and our general role within the special services and district improvement departments.

In the past, identifying children with Specific Learning Disabilities was prescribed federally to include the discrepancy model, a process of finding a significant delay compared to an individual's general intellectual ability. This conceptual framework, while very familiar to us, poses several difficult problems within education's new world order. How can districts meet the guidelines of NCLB, while leaving the vast chasm of the slow learner with no support? How can we adequately assess the educational needs of our children from increasingly diverse cultures, when we continue to compare their education performance to an inadequate measure of intellect? We might have a Spanish assessment available in some cases. But do we have Hmong, Russian, Arabic? Of course not! And that TONI-3 or UNIT is not the panacea we wish it was. We cannot adequately measure all of these children's intellect. So the old concepts of the aptitude/achievement discrepancy model make less and less sense. As districts pour money into DIBELS and other early reading intervention programs, as they expend time and money to develop benchmark assessments for the districts, school psychologists need to contemplate how we can use that expensive information in our assessments. Shall we ignore existing data that demonstrate a student's obviously poor response to massive interventions, and then

declare the child *ineligible* for LD classes based upon a lack of discrepancy? These are tough questions that we must address. With the 2004 IDEA reauthorization, the discrepancy model has lost its clout. We need to figure out what a new model should look like. What shall we keep, what shall we discard?

School psychologists also provide influence in the proper educational settings and interventions for children who have been identified as having a disability. But, the long-standing service delivery models used for so many years do not adequately serve children. How many times have we had a child identified with a disability in reading, but by high school the child is receiving services for math, English, history, science? The reasons for pulling the child in for more service often have less to do with academic weakness, and more to do with behavior or work completion. Can the LD teacher provide quality education for these children across so many different content areas? The use of a single special education teacher for multiple content areas is likely to fail the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements. Are we doing our children a disservice to continue this practice? What alternatives can we suggest? Do new ideas require discussions about the allocation of resources within the special services departments?

Critical questions about eligibility and services are wrapped up in the NCLB legislation on several levels. Districts must use disaggregated data to calculate AYP for any school or district in which a group (e.g. special education, ELL) exceeds 52. For larger districts with big schools this is a huge problem as any *site* in the district is evaluated on disaggregate data. If any sub-group at any site fails to meet AYP, then the entire school district joins the "Needs Improvement" list. This is a real occupational threat to superintendents across the nation. They will take this threat very seriously. We must help them in deciding what changes will best meet the needs of individual students *and* districts. Our districts cannot be ignored as stakeholders. If the district is in danger, administrators will take action. This action may be drastic, and it may at times be ill informed. Oklahoma school psychologists can help them if we are courageous enough to move out of our comfort zones.

The skills that school psychologists bring to the current educational debate are critical. We cannot sit quietly at the side, contributing a comfortable little unrelated piece to process of student achievement. We need to increasingly take a leading role in the development of programs, procedures, and techniques that will serve all students. Hopefully, that includes increasing our interaction in the Early Intervening process. We can serve to not just rubber-stamp a testing referral, but to help develop and assess the student's response to the regular education interventions at a building site level before a test referral is even initiated. Helping regular education teams help students should be considered an important part of our job. Our involvement at the administrative decision-making level is also critical. As some of the most highly educated individuals in each district and state, we must learn how to make ourselves more visible to those in administration, showing foresight and a willingness to think outside the box. Our districts need our expertise, but that may necessitate our helping them understand what we can contribute to the debate and decision-making process. The State of Oklahoma needs our skill. This may require

that we volunteer for a project or make a contact that we would not have made five years ago. It may mean serving on a committee or adding additional duties to our already clogged schedules. But, the winds have shifted and we must make a contribution. It is inevitable that our job descriptions will evolve. How, and in what direction remains to be seen. We must find our voice and then secure a seat at the table.

Government and Professional Relations Report

Candis Hogan, Ph.D., NCSP, LPC

On May 18, 2004, Governor Brad Henry signed into law **Senate Bill 1207**, which established a revolving fund for annual bonuses for Nationally Certified School Psychologists and Speech Pathologists, with the caveat “when funds become available.” Now, for the **first time in history**, State Superintendent Sandy Garrett has included monies for these bonuses in her budget request! Candis Hogan and former lobbyist, Richard Hutton, were present for most of the hearing, and Candis was given a copy of the budget.

Members of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and OSPA continue to collaborate in our legislative efforts. In early fall, several ASHA GPR Committee members, along with our very competent and caring former lobbyist Richard Hutton, and Candis interviewed and hired our **new lobbyist Steve Kelley**. He was recommended by Richard, and has many large clients such as Toyota, large oil companies, the Interior Designers Association, the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges and Universities, banks, etc. We plan to meet with Steve soon to strategize for the upcoming Legislative session, which begins in February.

In October at the **OEA Fall Convention** in Tulsa, OSPA and ASHA collaborated to participate (by invitation) in a debate format regarding all the **National Certifications** for education professionals, in front of the OEA Legislative Committee, to address the question: “Should those who have National Certifications other than from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), be allowed to access funding from the Oklahoma Leadership program?” The School Counselors, who are allowed to pursue NBPTS certification, wanted to substitute their National School Counselor or National Board Certified Counselor (NBCC) for NBPTS, so they signed up to speak for the question.

The School Psychologists and Speech Pathologists, who have sought and achieved legislation for separate funding for bonuses for those who hold the NCSP or Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC)s, signed up to speak against the question. Six people spoke for each side, and each person was allowed five minutes to speak. For our side, there were three school psychologists—**Candis Hogan, Elizabeth Hatcher, and Cindie Milford**-- two speech pathologists, and a Nationally Certified Teacher (who worked with Sandra Reese-Keck), while the other side had six school counselors. We related that service personnel are on the front lines with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other education professionals every day. As an IEP team, we each have an important but different role to play as we work together to make decisions in the best interest of the child. Each National Board carefully selected (different) high standards and qualifying criteria for that particular profession. When someone achieves National Certification, that Board is saying that every person who does so has met the same stringent criteria. Accordingly, we need to respect each kind of National Certification. One cannot substitute

a different set of professional standards such as NBCC and say they were NBPTS-certified. We recommended that they seek their own separate funding, like we did, and further, we asked OEA to assist us in obtaining funding for SB 1207 for NCSP and CCC holders.

To all who are interested in **helping the GPR Committee** by assisting with e-mail alerts, calls and letters to your state senators and representatives at key times, lobbying visits at the Capitol, grassroots campaigning, or other aspects, please contact Candis Hogan by e-mail at hcandis@juno.com

NASP NEWS UPDATE

Candis Hogan, Ph.D., NCSP, LPC

Congratulations to Tracy Fenton and Steve Crane, who have been selected to represent Oklahoma as “Trainers of Trainers” for two specialized trainings that are to be held at NASP in Anaheim, California, this year, to introduce a new curriculum for use in schools. The **PREPARE School Crisis Prevention Workshops** include “Prevention and Preparedness: The Crisis Team” on Tuesday, March 28, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and “Crisis Intervention and Recovery: The Roles of School-based Mental Health Professionals” to be held Thursday and Friday, March 30-31. Both are worthy and capable representatives of our state in this field. Tracy has been involved in intervention for several school crises as well as assisting Hurricane Katrina evacuees at Camp Gruber. Steve was involved in crisis counseling in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building and was instrumental in helping establish NASP’s first-ever National Emergency Assistance Team.

Speaking of the **NASP Annual Convention 2006 in Anaheim, California**, mark your calendars for the greatest professional gathering of school psychologists in the world March 28-April 1, 2006. This year’s theme is **“Prevention IS an Intervention.”** There will be over 800 workshops, presentations, and special events, including humanitarian and award-winning actress Goldie Hawn’s keynote address about her Bright Light Foundation and its programs for children. Learn about new research, develop new skills, network with colleagues, and find out about job opportunities or career transitions. Help us celebrate Mickey Mouse’s 50th Birthday at Disneyland or the new Disney’s California Adventure, Downtown Disney (walking distance from the hotel) or within driving distance at Universal Studios, Wild Rivers Water Park, Knott’s Berry Farm, Sea World, the San Diego Zoo, the Speedzone, Laguna Beach, Newport Beach, Sea Beach, great dining, shopping, entertainment, spa, and sports opportunities. Check it out online at www.nasponline.org/conventions (Remember—member discounts.)

Every year, each state has to come up with something to donate for the **NASP Children’s Fund Auction**, a wonderful and very fun event at the NASP Convention, to raise money for the Children’s Fund. Last year, OSPA donated an autographed basketball from the OSU basketball team and all the coaches, including Coach Eddie Sutton. In the interest of sportsmanship, this year’s item is a signed, numbered lithograph of the University of Oklahoma’s three living Heisman Trophy winners, which is autographed by all three: Steve Owens, Billy Sims, and Jason White. If anyone would like to donate anything else (especially autographed sports or

celebrity items) for this worthy cause, please contact Candis Hogan at hcandis@juno.com

NASP is offering a **Special Renewal Opportunity** (without reapplying, or retaking the Praxis exam) for those who held the **NCSP** in 1992 or later, but let their NCSP credential lapse beyond the three-year renewal grace period. Individuals who qualify for the Special Renewal Opportunity must meet the same standards of training and continuing professional development as individuals renewing their NCSP through the normal process. Individuals interested in applying for the Special Renewal Opportunity must complete the standard NCSP Renewal Booklet and Special Renewal Opportunity forms, which can be downloaded at www.nasponline.org/certification or requested by e-mail at cert@naspweb.org or by calling the Certification Department toll-free at 1-866-331-NASP (6277).

Interested in becoming an **NCSP (Retired)**? If you recently retired as a school psychologist, don't let your NCSP expire! Convert it to an NCSP (Retired) if you meet the following requirements: all full- and part-time public or private remunerative activity as a school psychologist has ceased; you have been an NCSP for at least six years, and your NCSP status is current at the time your application is received in the NASP office. Anyone holding the retired designation who wishes to re-enter the workforce can convert their retired status to active status at any time by completing the current CPD requirements and paying the renewal fee, which is currently \$40. For more information and a downloadable application, please visit www.nasponline.org/certification/retired_NCSP.html, e-mail cert@naspweb.org, or call the NASP Certification Office at (301) 657-0270.

NASP Members: It is **NASP Election** time again. Each member of record as of January 1, 2006, will receive an election mailing by February 1, so remember to return your ballot so your vote counts.

The **NASP Central Region Meeting** was held in Kansas City November 11-13, 2005. OSPA President Cindie Milford, NASP Delegate Candis Hogan, SPAN Coordinator Eric Mesmer, and our OSU NASP Student Representative Nick Gotcher participated in the well organized, working meeting. NASP President Bill Pfohl presided over the many sessions, including an emphasis on communication. This year, the States' Sharing was changed to a poster presentation instead of PowerPoint. The most heartwarming moment came when Pittsburgh State, Kansas trainer Rick Lindskog, recovering from a near-fatal car-truck accident which killed his wife, entered the room using his walker, for a short visit.

CALL FOR 2006-07 OSPA EXECUTIVE BOARD NOMINATIONS

OSPA is currently seeking nominations for the 2006 Spring election. OSPA members may nominate themselves or other members. All nominees will be contacted to determine if they are interested in seeking the office. Only REGULAR members may hold elected office. Please provide the nominees name, address, telephone numbers, and board position (president-elect, secretary, treasurer-elect, NE rep, NW rep, SE rep, SW rep, or Central rep). Please send your nomination to Susan Linde, 4308 S. 249th West Ave., Sand Springs, OK 74063, Lindesu1@aol.com

Serving the Displaced

I remember my response when I was given the news of Hurricane Katrina, but I did not realize at the time the impact that the storm would have on my personal life and that of my community.

I was called because of my training and experience with the American Red Cross as a Disaster Mental Health Services volunteer to help at Camp Gruber and there I feel in love. The object of my affection is disaster relief. Never have I worked such long hours, slept so few, sweated so much and been away from home so many days. Yet, it was rewarding and exhilarating.

Angels - 3,000 of them - volunteers from the Red Cross, church groups, nurses, doctors, paramedics, counselors and others from the National Guard and highway patrolmen surrounded me.

At one point, the number of volunteers and workers outnumbered the people who needed help, but the halos of our 1,600 Oklahoma guests shined brightest. Before they arrived, I tried to imagine how they would feel once they got off the buses. If I had been left on a rooftop and had seen children drowning around me, I would have been an emotional wreck.

The people who had every right to be bitter and heartbroken instead were thankful to the state of Oklahoma for giving them a safe place with hot showers and plenty of food.

Camp Gruber had all the makings of a great shelter. There was plenty of space - 40,000 acres. Instead of cramming 20,000 people in one building, as in the Superdome, about 200 evacuees were assigned to each of the much smaller dormitories. The barracks were made to house people, not host football games, so the buildings came complete with adequate showers, beds and toilets. The once lonely base was busy with people setting up clinics, moving food and water and running hundreds of computer and phone lines.

On Saturday, September 3 at 11:30 p.m. more than 30 charter buses pulled into Camp Gruber. Many arrived extremely ill, and the first night, 35 people were transported to area hospitals. Several hadn't had their blood pressure and heart medications for days. Diabetics had gone without insulin. One man recently had a kidney transplant, and he had been without anti-rejection medication. Coupled with the stress of the situation, people had serious mental illnesses that had gone untreated. Some had lost even the clothes they were wearing during their escape. Moreover, buses with different destinations separated families who had been together in New Orleans. I met with Red Cross directors and Emergency Management workers, who shared the events of the tragedy and problems that the evacuees have

encountered since the storm. I began meeting with individuals and families encouraging them to share their stories and talk about their feelings and reactions.

The first two days volunteers stayed busy helping people with their immediate needs: clothing, food and shelter. The volunteers all worked so hard, and knew our efforts really were making a difference in other people's lives. At the end of the twelve-hour volunteer days/nights my DSHR training through the Red Cross allowed me to lead debriefing sessions for other volunteers.

I was pleasantly surprised by the generosity and caring people in the community. Clothing, supplies, toys began to pour into the Muskogee Civic Center.

After the announcement that 177 displaced children would be enrolling at our local schools and would be bused daily from Camp Gruber, I quickly compiled information sheets to aid their transition, offering suggestions to both parents and teachers about how to talk with children who have experienced traumatic events. The NASP website and handouts in the Crisis Prevention and Response book were helpful resources which were copied and distributed at our local Red Cross and Muskogee area schools. Students were provided a "buddy system" to assist their transition into the new school. Members of the community donated many needed school supplies and the local PTA arranged for school clothes. Everyone worked together to bring back to their lives some normalcy by setting up a supportive school system for the students to attend.

I am thankful and fortunate to have attended many of the workshops on crisis intervention strategies at the NASP Conventions. These workshops have taught me many valuable techniques and strategies that could be implemented with parents as well as with students. Furthermore, the workshops gave me the confidence and skills needed to face the events of the weeks ahead. I was proud to be a part of the largest disaster-relief project in our nation's history.

Tracy Fenton

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

OSPA Spring Conference

April 20-21, 2006

Cox Convention Center, Oklahoma City, OK

Tentative schedule of events:

Thursday evening, April 20th:

Roundtable discussion with a panel of school psychologists from around the state who are currently implementing RTI in their districts.

Friday, April 21st:

Mark Shinn, Ph.D., presents on implementation of Response to Intervention within a problem-solving model.

Registration brochures will be mailed out near the end of February

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