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Annual membership dues are \$60 for full membership, \$30 for leave, \$30 for associate, and \$20 for student membership. The opinions and products, including advertising, class/workshop notices, and job announcements, appearing in this newsletter do not necessarily indicate official sanction, promotion, or endorsement on the part of the newsletter or the Wisconsin School Psychologists Association, Inc. Articles, announcements, and letters should be submitted to the Editor, Jennifer Kamke Black, N4212 Townline Rd., Shawano, WI 54166, 715-524-4180 (home), 715-526-2175 x4169 (work), e-mail: kamkeblj@sgsd.k12.wi.us.

Deadlines for receipt of material by the editor:

- #1--August 15
- #2--November 15
- #3--January 30
- #4--April 15

Editor's Note

By Jennifer Kamke Black

My thanks to all contributors. If you find that you have information to share with the membership that would be appropriate for the newsletter, please feel free to contact me at N4212 Townline Rd., Shawano, WI, 54166. Or, phone me at 715-524-4180 (home), 715-526-2175 x4169 (work). My email address is kamkeblj@sgsd.k12.wi.us. Topics or features we would like to promote in the upcoming newsletters include (and are not limited to) trainers' column, medical column, book/software reviews, student column (results of thesis, highlighted accomplishment), "post-retirement" articles, and "kudos" articles. If you have any ideas for these topics, or an idea for another topic, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Advertising Rates:

The newsletter of the Wisconsin School Psychologists Association, Inc., is published four times per year. Circulation includes all association members (700-900) and editors of other state newsletters. Thus, advertisers reach a majority of practicing school psychologists and university trainers in the state of Wisconsin, making advertising in the newsletter of the Wisconsin School Psychologists Association, Inc., the best means of reaching this potential market. Rates established for the 2001-2002 academic year are as follows:

- 1/4 page - \$25
- 1/2 page - \$50
- 3/4 page - \$75
- 1 page - \$100

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President's Message

By Milt Dehn

Why We Constantly Need Professional Development

Like many other professions, the practice of school psychology is constantly changing. For example, the instruments we use to assess behavior and intellectual functioning are frequently altered. To be effective school psychologists, we must continually acquire more knowledge and develop new skills. Keeping up with the expanding knowledge base and evolving practices can be quite a challenge. The amount of information that applies to our roles and functions can be overwhelming. I've had the opportunity to do more professional reading this past year and I've been surprised to discover how much new information I have been missing.

The diversity of our school psychology roles makes it even more challenging to stay current. We are expected to have expertise in everything from low incidence childhood disorders to the finer points of effective instruction. It makes me wonder how much longer we can continue to be school psychology generalists. Maybe we would be more effective as specialists. I know of a large urban school district in Minnesota that has implemented a service delivery model that divides school psychologists into those who do full time assessment and those who do full time consultation. However, those of you who work in small school districts may never have the opportunity to specialize like this.

To stay current with the expanding knowledge base and the frequent changes in practice, continuing professional development is a must. For some, reading professional books and research is preferred; others learn best when they participate in workshops, college classes, or conferences. Because WSPA recognizes your ongoing need for professional development, one of WSPA's primary goals is to provide you with conferences on current topics. Once again, a small group of volunteers has put together an excellent conference. So, join your colleagues in Wisconsin Rapids in March and do what we ask children to do everyday--learn something new. *Detailed information on the spring conference can be found at www.wspaweb.org.*

The End of IQ Testing as We Know It

Now that the new Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 has eliminated the requirement for an ability-achievement discrepancy in LD determination, our use of IQ tests, especially the Full Scale IQ, is expected to decline. Evaluations will still be required but the role of any Full Scale IQ score will be diminished, if it is used at all. In anticipation of this change, some test authors have been advocating more in-depth assessment of process-

ing, using the current cognitive scales for this purpose. My personal belief is that IQ tests can provide valuable information about a child's cognitive strengths and weaknesses and why the child has difficulties learning. However, if the powers that be view IQ testing as offering nothing more than a Full Scale IQ, they may restrict our use of IQ tests in LD evaluations.

It remains to be seen exactly how Wisconsin's LD criteria will change and how soon. The word from DPI folks in Madison is that they are going to implement changes before the beginning of the next school year, in order to stay aligned with the new federal law and regulations.

Connecting with the Child's First Teacher

It always been my strong belief that we should be doing more with the child's first teacher(s)-- the child's parent(s). We involve parents in the IEP process but how much consultation and support do we provide beyond that? My belief was recently reinforced when I talked with a "Parent Coach" who has a booming business providing coaching and classes on topics such as how parents can help their child cope with bullying, how parents can manage their child's anger, and how parents can help with homework. Parental concerns with behaviors such as these give us an opportunity to increase our contact with parents; for example, we might offer a class on one of these topics. More interaction with parents, especially those whose children are having difficulties at school, helps us to view the situation from their perspective. Viewing the situation from the parents' perspective will help us avoid the negative attitudes towards parents that are common in educational settings. The increased interaction may also alter some parents' perceptions of the educational environment and help them feel more connected with their child's education. Moreover, you will generally find parents very receptive to the ideas and strategies you suggest because they consider you to be an expert.

Legislative Concerns

Each year the Wisconsin legislature considers and passes legislation that has a significant impact on children and education. Legislators pay more attention to communication they receive from their constituents than they do from lobbyists. And legislators are usually very approachable; they welcome information and opinions. To find out what the legislature is considering this year go to: www.legis.state.wi.us. At this website you will also find information on how to contact your legislators. Let your voice be heard. This is one of the best ways to be an advocate for children.



Upcoming Events



The Central Region School Psychologists
invite you to

Extreme MAKEOVER

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST EDITION

**Expanding the Role of the
School Psychologist**

2005 WSPA Spring Convention

March 17 – 18

Hotel Mead & Conference Center
Wisconsin Rapids, WI

**For additional information
about convention speakers, specific
content, and university credit, please
see the WSPA website:
www.wspaweb.org**

Convention Highlights

- A variety of topics focusing on the latest developments in federal legislation and how these may impact practice
- Keynote Address – The New IDEA and the Expanding Role of the School Psychologist
Libby Nealis, NASP Director of Public Policy
- Friday Breakfast with *John Humphries, DPI School Psychology Program Consultant*
- Children’s Services Auction
- Student Poster Sessions
- “Psych Ward” – Gather with colleagues for conversation and fun on Wednesday and Thursday evening.
- WSPA Advocacy Action Center – Send a message to Congress or your state policymakers.
- 2004/05 WSPA Awards presentation at Thursday luncheon
- Vendor Room on Thursday
- Graduate Course Credit, Certificates of Attendance, and APA Continuing Education Credits

WSPA Children’s Services Auction CALL FOR DONATIONS

This year, the WSPA Children’s Services Silent Auction will be held on Thursday, March 17, 2005, during the Spring Convention in Wisconsin Rapids. Proceeds from this year’s auction will be used to sponsor children’s involvement in a wide variety of programs, such as peacemaking and conflict resolution, and provide scholarships for innovative direct services to meet the needs of children. This year, we are requesting that each region design a “Regional

Basket” of unique and desirable items, hopefully some of which are representative of your region. Be creative and have fun with this! Please consider collaborating with your regional group for this worthwhile cause. Individual donations are also highly encouraged. For more information please contact Heidi Horton, WSPA Children’s Services Committee Chair: (608)783-4610 ext. 8008 or hrhe@mail.onalaska.k12.wi.us

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY ASSN

Post - Conference Tour

GREEK ISLANDS & TURKEY

July 18 - July 30, 2005

Tour Includes:

- 3 Day Aegean Cruise (Santorini, Rhodes, Crete, Patmos)
- Air Fare from Athens to Istanbul
- Bosphorus Cruise
- Turkey Land Tour - Istanbul, Kusadasi, Ephesus, Troy, Cannukale, etc.)
- First Class Hotels (Breakfast and Dinner)
- Deluxe Motor Coach
- Tour Guides/Entrance Fees

The itinerary is now available for this tour.

For more information, please email or call Shirley Natzel at snatzel@whitnall.com or 414-525-8443.

This tour will be limited to 30 persons.

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION

Shirley Natzel

The 26th Annual International School Psychology Association (ISPA) Colloquium was held at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom from July 27th to 31st. The theme of the colloquium was "Educational/School Psychology in the 21st Century. Whose needs? Whose benefits?" The convention consisted of workshops, paper presentations, symposia, and poster presentations that related to this broad theme. Distinguished keynote speakers included Professor Martin Coventon, Berkeley University, USA; Professor Helen Cowie, University of Surrey, UK; Professor Alex Kozulin, The International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential and Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel; and, Professor Chryse Hatzichristou, University of Athens, Greece. Approximately 350 professional psychologists and university trainers attended the convention, two of whom represented Wisconsin.

Next year the 27th Annual ISPA Convention will be held in Athens Greece, from July 13th - 17th. A post convention tour will follow from July 18th - 30th which will include a Greek Island cruise and a land tour of the Aegean region of Turkey. The tour will be arranged by Shirley Natzel. For more details see this issue of the WSPA newsletter or contact Shirley at: snatzel@whitnall.com.

Trainers' Corner

A new section will appear intermittently in the WSPA newsletter that will focus on trainer related issues. Submissions will be accepted by WSPA Trainers' Representative, Betty DeBoer, at deboer.bett@uwlax.edu. Articles may include announcement, general information and recommendations on policies and procedures, major program changes, changes in faculty staffing, admissions issues, or other feature topics.

This time, I would like to welcome newer trainers to the WSPA Trainers' group. A warm welcome to UW-Stout's **Kelly Lamont** and **Sandra Leroy**; Whitewater's **Tracey Scherr**; River Fall's **Scott Woitaszewski**; La Crosse's **Susan Wabaunsee**; Milwaukee's **Timothy Cleary**; and Madison's **Jennifer Asmus** and **Craig Albers**. We hope to see you all at the WSPA conference this spring!

FROM: Gary J. Robertson, VP, Research & Development, Wide Range, Inc.

We are currently conducting a national standardization program for Wide Range Achievement Test: Fourth Edition and we very much need examiners from your area. We are hopeful that you can alert NASP members through your state newsletter to this need as ask them to contact Susan M. Trujillo, standardization coordinator, for further information. Susan's e-mail address is suemtr@aol.com Her telephone number is (813) 905-9875. My e-mail address is gjr44@aol.com . If you know of anyone who might be interested, please refer them. Thank you so much for any help you can provide.

Hear ye, hear ye, read all about it.

By Bob Moeller, WEAC Member Benefits

(Reprinted from *On WEAC In Print*, December 2004)

I read a lot of financial publications as part of my job, and I will occasionally, in my seminars, refer to something I've read. As many of you know, I firmly believe you should be well informed when making financial decisions, and I hate to see members get ripped off. So I thought I would review for you the headlines of some of the articles I've read this year along with a brief explanation of what to watch out for.

FEE ACCOUNTS FACE SCRUTINY BY REGULATORS

(Wall Street Journal 10/5/04)

This article deals with a growing problem of brokers convincing investors that they are better off paying an annual fee (usually 1% or more) than simply paying commissions. In fact, my individual meetings with thousands of members have convinced me that almost no members benefit from this type of arrangement. You would have to do a lot of stock trading to make it pay off. In some cases, this will be presented as the broker "managing" the account. When I was a broker many years ago, this type of managing was simply a part of what a broker did in return for regular commissions. I remember meeting with a member a couple of years ago who had just inherited about \$400,000. It was residing in a brokerage account invested almost entirely in mutual funds. The member did little or no trading and did not expect to do a lot of changing in the mutual funds other than an occasional re-balancing. He was paying \$4,000 per year in fees. The lesson for you is to not agree to annual fees unless you know exactly what you are getting for it and conclude that it is worth the cost.

HOW VARIABLE ANNUITIES CAN GNASH INVESTORS

(Wall Street Journal, date unknown)

This is a basic lesson on how high fees (the average is more than 2% per year), withdrawal charges, salesperson-induced churning, etc., means bad news for investors. The lesson is to never buy variable annuities. Note: this article was not referring to 403(b), tax-sheltered annuities, although if they are from life insurance companies, they will have similarly high fees.

FINANCIAL PLANS: SELLING FOR IN-HOUSE GAINS? (Wall Street Journal 2/9/04)

This article lambastes American Express Financial and similar companies for preparing financial plans for clients for a fee, and then making sure those plans recommend mainly mutual funds that pay the broker the highest commissions. The lesson for you: be very cautious about committing to a financial plan, especially if it is prepared by a commissioned agent.

SALE OF LIFE INSURANCE PROBED

(Wisconsin State Journal 10/13/03)

This article deals with questionable sales practices used by Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance to sell variable life insurance products to investors. It mentions that the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD) – which regulates firms – was investigating Northwestern sales practices and was looking for buyers willing to testify. The lesson for you: don't ever buy variable life insurance; the fees and withdrawal penalties are much too punitive.

WHY A BROKERAGE GIANT PUSHES SOME MEDIOCRE MUTUAL FUNDS

(Wall Street Journal 1/9/04)

This is the story of how Edward D. Jones & Co. – with 5.3 million customers – essentially trains its brokers to sell only funds from seven mutual fund families that have "kick-back" type arrangements that could top an estimated \$100 million per year. The lesson to you: don't buy "load" mutual funds; go with "no-load" funds from top-rated fund families such as Vanguard, Fidelity, Thompson -Plumb, and T. Rowe Price. By the way, if you hold an insurance company tax-sheltered annuity, you may see names in the sub-accounts like Fidelity. These are not mutual funds but funds managed by Fidelity for the insurance company, and these do not prevent the insurance company from tacking on high fees.

The overall investing lesson is that you should read a little about money every month; be very careful whom you trust; and become knowledgeable about your money, what it can do, and what it costs you to do it.

Coulee Region Association of Psychologists in the Schools Meet with Republican Senator Dan Kapanke



By Heidi Horton, School Psychologist



For several years now, the Coulee Region Association of Psychologists in the Schools has invited a local/regional politician to attend our January meeting and speak with us about current issues impacting education. This year, we were pleased to be joined by Republican State Senator Dan Kapanke, who represents the 32nd district.

Senator Kapanke is new to the Wisconsin State Senate, having been sworn into office on January 3rd, 2005. He expressed that he considers it an honor and a privilege to represent the people of the 32nd district and is eager to work in their best interest. While meeting with us, Senator Kapanke shared information about his personal history, education, and life experiences. He is a parent of four children and a grandparent of ten children. He coached baseball and taught Sunday school for 16 years. Senator Kapanke earned his Masters of Science degree in Education from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He served as the Chairman for the Town of Campbell, and he is the current owner of the La Crosse Loggers baseball team. His wide variety of experiences allows him to relate with many of his constituents.

Senator Kapanke discussed several issues of interest and listened to opinions brought forth by members of the Coulee Region Association of Psychologists in the Schools.

- Several school psychologists commented on the potential ramifications of the proposed Tax Payers Bill of Rights (T.A.B.O.R). Senator Kapanke expressed agreement that there are problems with it and stated that he does not endorse it as it is written at this time. He did not wish the state of Wisconsin to move forward on this proposal without caution and encounter the same problems that the residents of Colorado are experiencing. He did not, however, oppose a temporary tax freeze if necessary.
- Merose-Mindoror School Psychologist, Mrs. Sherry Holt, expressed concerns about No Child Left Behind (NCLB), stating that this mandate involves a significant commitment of time and resources, yet is under funded. Senator Kapanke stated that he felt the state should fund it if it felt strongly enough to make it a mandate. Mrs. Holt also shared with Senator Kapanke the unrealistic expectations NCLB places on students with special needs. School Psychologists, Lisa Hesch and Jodi Pfaff, shared their experience working in Holmen which achieved excellent ACT scores but was cited for their reading scores, noting that eventually, all schools will not be making “adequate yearly progress” as defined by the state.
- University of Wisconsin- La Crosse School Psy-

chology Professor, Dr. Milt Dehn, discussed the proposal to lift the cap on the voucher system in Milwaukee. He explained that one of the primary concerns with this proposal is that it expands the voucher system, yet does not appear to specify or require accountability on the part of the private voucher school. University of Wisconsin instructor/School Psychologist, Mrs. Susan Wabaunsee, posed the following questions: What level of expertise/certification do the voucher school teachers hold? What experience do these schools provide? Are they well-established or are new ventures sprouting up due to a revenue source? Mrs. Wabaunsee also expressed that the funding for this voucher system appears to come from all regions of the state and has an impact on everyone. Several school psychologists noted that they had knowledge of a teacher positions being cut in nearby school districts in order to support the Milwaukee Public Schools voucher system.

- Finally, implications of particular sections of the reauthorized IDEA were discussed, including the possibility of requiring special education teachers to have certification in both special education and a curriculum specialty (e.g. science, math). Such a requirement may dissuade teachers from pursuing special education degrees and could result in a need for more special education teachers, particularly at the high school level, where special education teachers often teach replaced curriculum in many subjects. Several school psychologists also observed the effects of teachers with multiple certifications finding themselves back in the special education classroom after many years of teaching regular education.

As the evening came to a close, Senator Kapanke graciously accepted an invitation from School Psychologist, Mrs. Sherry Holt, to come and visit her school and meet some of the children that we work with on a daily basis. We all agreed that there are tough decisions to be made in regard to the education of children in Wisconsin, and no simple solutions are in sight. Our group, however, is committed to the education of all students. *Senator Kapanke expressed interest in hearing the perspectives on school related issues that were brought to the table.* The Coulee Region Association of Psychologists in the Schools thanks Senator Kapanke for speaking with us and encourages other school psychologists across the state to become involved politically, educate themselves about proposals that affect education, and contact their local and state politicians as well.

Comprehensive Evaluation of Learning Disabilities: A Response to Intervention Perspective

Frank M. Gresham - University of California-Riverside

Daniel J. Reschly - Vanderbilt University

W. David Tilly - Heartland Area Education Agency

Jack Fletcher - University of Texas Health Sciences Center at Houston

Matthew Burns - University of Minnesota

Theodore Christ - University of Southern Mississippi

David Prasse - Loyola University of Chicago

Mike Vanderwood - University of California-Riverside

Mark Shinn - National Louis University

[Reprinted from the ISPA newsletter *School Psychology in Illinois*, Vol. 26, Issue 1 (Fall, 2004)]

Recently, the American Academy of School Psychology (AASP, 2004) expressed concern over certain language contained in the House (HB 1350) and Senate (SB 1248) reauthorization bills of IDEA. The language that concerns the AASP is the “response to intervention” alternative in both the House and Senate bills. This language addresses state education agency (SEA) and local education agency (LEA) SLD policies, and states specifically “...the LEA shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in...” (achievement areas listed) and “In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a LEA may use a process which determines if a child *responds to a scientific, research based intervention* (emphases added).

The AASP seems to fear that some educational agencies and school psychologists may take this language to mean that a comprehensive evaluation is *not* needed to qualify a student as having a specific learning disability (SLD). There is obviously nothing in this language that would suggest a comprehensive evaluation is not needed. In fact, the student’s right to a comprehensive, fair, and nondiscriminatory assessment is ensured under the Procedures for Evaluation and Determination of Eligibility component of both the House and Senate versions of the reauthorization bills. In fact, the proposed reauthorization does *not* change the protections that first appeared in the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) (1975, 1977) and that have continued in subsequent reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) including the most recent (1997, 1999). We know of nothing that will change the “full and individual evaluation” requirement (34 C. F. R. 300.531), nor do we wish to do so.

The AASP statement reflects two misconceptions about current requirements.

1. Does the law require the assessment of cognitive and perceptual processing in the full and individual evaluation of students suspected of specific learning disability?

First, it should also be noted that nothing in the current and past versions of the IDEA statute or regulations *requires* that standardized tests be given to determine a child’s eligibility for special education. Moreover, there is nothing in either the pending House or Senate IDEA reauthorization

bills that mandates a response to intervention (RTI) model, although we believe that the best interests of children are served by a strong RTI component of eligibility determination. RTI along with a problem solving process operationalizes disability in part by documented slow rate of learning and large differences from age or grade expectations even though high quality, scientifically based interventions are provided to the child.

The EHA/IDEA has never required the assessment of cognitive or perceptual processes as part of determining SLD eligibility. The history of SLD as part of EHA clarifies this issue. When Congress enacted EHA in 1975, a conceptual definition of SLD highlighting deficits in psychological processes related to learning was in prior federal statute. This conceptual definition was continued in EHA; however, Congress expressed grave concerns about the absence of well-established methods to diagnose SLD, the likely of large variations between states in diagnostic methods, and the possibility of unacceptably large percentages of children and youth diagnosed as SLD.

Due to these concerns Congress ordered the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (the forerunner of the Office of Special Education Programs) to establish classification criteria for SLD that would provide guidance to states and limit prevalence (1975 EHA statute cited in the Federal Register, November 29, 1976). What followed was an intense debate about how best to diagnose SLD. Cognitive and perceptual processing approaches were *rejected* because ample evidence available then indicated that these measures did not produce more accurate identification of SLD, provide valid and effective implications of instruction, or improve accuracy of predictions about outcomes.

SLD classification criteria had to be developed and published in the Federal Register by December 31, 1977 or a de facto prevalence cap of 2% automatically went into effect. A controversial solution in the form requiring “...a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability” with areas of achievement listed was published just before the deadline (Federal Register, December 29, 1977). This action produced, in effect, a definition that emphasized psychological processing and classification criteria that ignored psychological processing and emphasized general intellectual func-

tioning and achievement.

Despite the absence of validity evidence or effective control of SLD prevalence, the ability-achievement discrepancy survived for 25 years. Research published beginning in the late 1980s and continuing to the present established unequivocally the intractable validity and reliability problems with ability-achievement discrepancy as a key marker of SLD. Moreover, ability-achievement discrepancy caused harm by delaying treatment, a phenomenon well known to school psychologists.

It has been nearly 30 years since cognitive and perceptual processing was rejected as a basis for SLD classification criteria. Has anything occurred to change that decision? We note the publication of several processing tests, some of them based on theory, claiming to measure key processing components of SLD. In some cases the results of these tests are tied to hypothetical (usually unverifiable) inferences about brain structure or processes. We have not seen, however, the development of a substantial body of evidence showing that the use of cognitive and perceptual processing measures, a) improve the accuracy of SLD identification, b) produce reasonable control over prevalence, c) contribute to more effective instructional interventions, or d) enhance predictions of important outcomes. Absent evidence that the use of cognitive and perceptual processing measures improve child outcomes, we urge the use of other approaches that are related to positive child outcomes. Current law does not require assessment of cognitive and perceptual processes as part of SLD eligibility determination. We believe this policy is appropriate and in the best interests of children and youth.

2. What is a Comprehensive Evaluation?

AASP advocates for the inclusion of “psychometrically sound, norm referenced measures of cognitive ability and academic achievement” as an important part of LD diagnosis and that “a response to intervention process should not be viewed as a sole criterion for diagnosing LD.” We know of no RTI advocates who suggest RTI as a sole criterion for SLD eligibility. Perhaps we can resolve this question by describing two principles strongly endorsed by RTI advocates.

The first principle is that the measures and domains included in a comprehensive evaluation should be determined by their relationships to child outcomes. Useful and appropriate measures and domains have a documented relationship to positive child outcomes; not just predictions of failure.

Measures without such relationships do little for children and may cause harm because they deflect attention from measures and domains that can be used to produce positive outcomes along with the expenditure of precious resources without benefits to children. If unrelated to positive child outcomes, even with good psychometric properties and ties to theories, we can see no benefit to children.

The second principle endorsed by RTI advocates actually appears currently in two federal regulations at 34 C. F. R. 300.532.

- A variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather *relevant functional* and developmental information about the child (emphasis added)

- The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, *if appropriate*, health, vision, hearing,

social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities (emphasis added)

It is critical to understand the qualifying phrase, “if appropriate” in the clause cited above. Does the list of areas mandate in depth assessment in each of the areas? Surely that cannot be the intent OR all children considered for special education eligibility would be given in depth examinations in the domains of health, vision, hearing, and motor abilities involving multiple medical specialists.

Surely, it must mean that all of the domains listed and others not listed are *considered through screening* for problems and, *if appropriate*, followed up with in depth assessment. The role of general intellectual functioning in SLD, given the failure of the ability-achievement discrepancy, has no greater status than any of the other areas listed in this regulation. It is a domain like vision and hearing in which children should be screened for problems with in depth assessment occurring only when indicated.

If SLD is to be diagnosed as required in most states with categorical special education special education systems, general intellectual functioning should be screened in order to rule out mental retardation (MR). Brief screening measures for intellectual functioning are sufficient to decide whether MR likely exists. If the child obtains intellectual screening measure scores below about 80 (depending on state MR criteria), in depth assessment of general intellectual functioning is appropriate. Absent information suggesting MR and with the rejection of the ability-achievement discrepancy, in depth, comprehensive measures of general intellectual functioning have little role in SLD diagnosis.

3. What is the core of the comprehensive evaluation with SLD?

AASP claims that, “The core procedure of a comprehensive evaluation of LD is an objective, norm-referenced assessment of the presence and severity of any strengths and weaknesses among the cognitive processes related to learning in an academic area.”

We disagree. As noted earlier, there is no substantial body of evidence that cognitive processing domains and measures improve SLD identification, control prevalence, translate into more effective instruction, or improve prediction of the outcomes of interventions. Absent such evidence, any benefits from cognitive and perceptual processing practices are more likely to occur with the psychologists using them rather than to children and youth receiving them!

We view *direct measurement of* achievement, behavior, and the instructional environment in relevant domains as the *core* foci of a comprehensive evaluation in SLD. Our focus is on achievement, behavior, and the instructional environment because we are concerned primarily the assessment of measurable and *changeable* aspects of the instructional environment that are related to child outcomes. That concern leads to in depth analysis of academic skills in key achievement domains in which performance is low compared to peers. In our assessment activities we focus on the factors that are related to achievement and interventions to improve rate and level of skill development.

We would argue that some significant proportion of children who are or might be identified as SLD might be

more accurately characterized as “instructional causalities.” Many of these children “learn to be learning disabled” because they are not exposed to early fundamental literacy skills (e.g., phoneme awareness, print concepts, letter-sound correspondence). Moreover, many are exposed to marginally effective general education reading curricula and instruction that have either not been scientifically validated or that are implemented with poor integrity. Focusing only on the child, as often is the case with comprehensive evaluations using cognitive processing as the *core*, leads to missing extremely important factors in what may appear to be SLD.

The RTI *core* in the comprehensive evaluation of SLD and other students with disabilities involving low achievement is to screen in domains of behavior that might affect achievement (vision, hearing, etc.). Absent information indicating the need for in depth assessment in those areas, we then focus directly on current skills, instructional environments, behaviors, and interventions. The emphasis is on academic skills, for example in reading would necessarily focus on phonemic awareness (seen as a skill area, not as a correlated cognitive process), phonetic knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We determine the child’s current level of skills, differentiate acquisition versus performance deficits, and work with teachers in applying effective interventions to improve academic performance.

The RTI core also involves analyses of prior and current instructional opportunities and the application of powerful instructional principles related to more positive outcomes. Moreover, competing problem behaviors that interfere with the delivery of instruction are assessed and, as needed, powerful behavioral interventions are applied. Instructional variables assessed include alterable factors such as: time allocated for instruction, academic learning time, pacing of instruction, number of opportunities to respond, sequencing of examples and nonexamples of skills, and so forth (See the Direct Instruction literature).

Comprehensive evaluation in a RTI model focuses on direct assessment of *teachable skills* related to the curriculum that inform decision makers about what to teach and how to teach it. Evaluation in a RTI model also collects representative, direct, and low inference measures that focus on referral concerns and answer the assessment question(s).

Evaluation in a RTI model uses the principle of convergent and comparative data collected from multiple sources across multiple settings to inform decision-making. Finally, comprehensive evaluation in a RTI model involves the direct measurement of the treatment integrity of instructional interventions delivered in the general education classroom.

Precise measurement and instructional/behavioral interventions are considered part of the RTI model of a comprehensive system of multi-tiered interventions that focus on prevention, early identification/early intervention, and identification of disabilities and provision of special education.

Children proceed through a graduated series of increasingly intense interventions guided by increasingly precise measurement of skills and responses to instructional/behavioral interventions. Disability is conceptualized as: (a) *low level* of performance in a relevant domain in relation to peers, (b) slow growth rates compared to peers despite high quality, scientifically-based interventions, (c) documented

adverse impact on educational performance, (d) documented need for special education, and (e) exit criteria defining goals for the special education program. Child achievement and behavior outcomes in natural settings drive decisions at every step in the RTI comprehensive evaluation of SLD.

The science of psychology is applied through problem solving, development of direct measures that are individualized to children and settings, the application of powerful instructional and behavior change principles, and the assessment of change in performance. Complex measurement issues are involved with determining growth rates compared to peers and in other aspects of measuring outcomes. The objectives are clear. The core of RTI is producing better outcomes and decision-making based on child responses to interventions. These methods are based on a huge database of published research regarding variables related to positive child outcomes.

Conclusion

There is a burden of proof issue in this discussion. The burden of proof rests with those who advocate the use of tests in which they have a financial stake and with those who wish to conduct special education evaluations in a private practice setting, outside of the natural contexts where children play, learn, and interact with teachers. As a developer and advocate of cognitive processing measures, Alan Kaufman commented, “With the certain disappearance of the ability-achievement discrepancy for the determination of learning disabilities, along with other substantial changes in definitions and procedures, the fate of the traditional IQ test and the newer breed of theory-based cognitive measures---as well as the nature of clinical practice in general---hangs in the balance.”

Indeed the stakes are high for traditional psychologists wedded to standardized tests, high inference interpretations, and income from test royalties or private practice. It is quite clear that school psychologists adopting a RTI approach will administer fewer IQ tests and tests of cognitive processing.

We think, however, that the stakes for children are equally salient and a higher priority. Wasting precious time and resources in activities that result in minimal benefits for children cannot be continued even if the interests of some psychologists are diminished. In the end, we all have to be accountable for the child outcomes associated with our services. The continued failure of processing conceptions and measures, whether couched in cognitive, neuropsychological, or information processing terminology, to improve identification and treatment with children classified as poor achievers or SLD must be reflected in policy and practice. The future of school psychology will be bright if we lead the development of practices that produce positive outcomes for children and avoid perpetuation of practices such as cognitive processing assessment that are unrelated to positive outcomes.

We welcome further debate. We insist on one ground rule. The litmus test is child outcomes. On that principle we unalterably stand.

Footnote:

The only references in this statement are those to federal statute and regulations. The authors will supply research-based references for all assertions made upon request.

A Brief Review of Retention and Light's Retention Scale

(Reprinted from *New York School Psychologist*, Fall 2004, Volume XXIII, number 1)

This document was prepared for distribution and discussion at a faculty meeting presentation led by Dr. Douglas in 2001 at Scott M. Ellis Elementary School in Greenville, NY. The document was meant to be a useful summary for teachers.

For present purposes, the document has been slightly modified.

As the state imposes more and more difficult academic standards upon our students, many teachers, parents, administrators, school counselors, and school psychologists are becoming increasingly concerned with the growing number of children who fail to meet the standards each year. Especially since the introduction of NCLB and the ELA and Math assessments at grades 4 and 8, many worry about how to deal with children who fail the assessments and/or those who are ill-prepared to take the examinations. One result is increasing numbers of students being retained.

What does research tell us about the practice of retention?

Through an investigation of the literature on retention, it became clear to me that the overwhelming majority of research studies conducted in the last 20 years has yielded the same general findings: retention rarely results in improved academic achievement (Hagborg, Masella, Palladino, & Shepardson, 1991; Holmes and Matthews, 1984; Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 1999; Meisels and Liaw, 1993; Jimerson, 2001). In many of these studies, children who were retained were followed through high school and compared to either a control group and/or a group of similar students who were socially promoted. The findings indicate that in general, not only did the retained students continue to meet with academic failure (Hagborg, et al., 1991), they also were more likely to have social and behavioral problems (Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 1999; Meisels and Liaw, 1993), poorer attendance (Hagborg, et al., 1991; Holmes, 1989, Jimerson, 1999), poorer attitudes toward school (Holmes, 1989), they were more likely to be identified through special education (Meisels and Liaw, 1993), they had lower academic achievement (Hagborg, et al., 1991; McCoy and Reynolds, 1999), and most importantly they were more likely to drop out of school than children who were socially promoted. One study reported that 69% of the retained students in their sample eventually dropped out of high school (Jimerson, 1999), while another reported that "dropouts are five times more likely to have repeated a grade than are high school graduates" (Shepard and Smith, 1990).

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the negative outcomes associated with social promotion of low achieving students as well. The academic skills of socially promoted students are often not developed enough for future academic success and employment upon completion of high school (if they get that far). These students continue to meet with academic failure because they do not perform at the level of expectations. By continuously being promoted to the next grade level, some would argue that these students do not learn to be academically responsible.

What factors can be considered good predictors of successful retentions?

In 1981, H. Wayne Light published Light's Retention Scale (LRS) in order to provide an objective method of de-

termining a student's appropriateness for retention. The rating scale, completed by the teacher, yields a total score for the child ranging from 0 to 89. Very low scorers are considered "Excellent retention candidates" while very high scorers are considered poor retention candidates. (Ranges of scores are provided in the manual). There are several cautions in using this scale. First, the scale items are based on a wide range of factors, many of which have been shown to have little or no relevance in making a retention decision (e.g., the number of siblings the student has). Second, the scale was not tested on a standardization sample, and can thus only be used as a guideline. Third, the author makes broad and arbitrary assumptions about how the various factors should influence retention decisions. For example, because one research study noted that the student's attitude toward being retained was an influential factor, the author of the scale includes an item that indicates that a student who "requests retention to learn what was missed" is a good retention candidate. This is an unlikely circumstance. Finally, the scoring system is completely arbitrary, with no explanation of how the number of points was determined for each item.

Light's Retention Scale could be useful in the sense that it provides a list of factors to consider (or not) in making retention decisions. The factors in the LRS are listed below, along with evidence to support their appropriateness for use in retention decisions based on a review of the literature on this topic.

1. *Sex of student:* Light reports that "because of girls' faster maturation rate, they are slightly less promising candidates for retention than are boys of the same chronological age." None of the research indicates that retention is more favorable for boys over girls. However, it does indicate that boys are much more likely to be retained than girls.

2. *Student's Age:* Light reports that retention is more beneficial for students' whose birthdays are in the latter half of the school year, thus making them chronologically younger than the other children in their grade. At least one study indicated that chronological age is not a particularly important factor, especially in delayed school entry decisions and kindergarten retentions (May, Kundert, and Brent, 1995).

3. *Knowledge of English Language:* Light reports that retention might provide an ESL student an extra year to acquire better use of English. I was unable to find any research studies that addressed this issue.

4. *Physical Size:* Light assumes that children who are small for their age would be better candidates for retention than children who are large. There is no evidence to support this view.

5. *Present Grade Placement:* Light's view is the earlier the retention the better. Retentions between Kindergarten and grade 3 are considered the most beneficial, according to

the LRS. While the bulk of the research indicates that retention at all grade levels is usually unsuccessful, the results of several studies suggest that early retention (K-3) is more favorable than later retention (4-8) in terms of academic and behavioral development (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994; Kerzner, 1982; Meisels and Liaw, 1993).

6. *Previous Retention:* Light suggests that a child who has been retained is not a good candidate for further retention. In fact, this factor is almost used as an exclusionary criterion. Ignoring all other factors on the scale, the LRS guidelines would indicate not to retain if the student had already been retained. It makes sense that if retention was not successful the first time, that it would not be successful the second time. The research strongly supports this view, especially considering that the student's risk for drop-out is even higher when there have been multiple retentions.

7. *Siblings:* Light suggests that a student with no siblings is a better candidate for retention than a student with a sibling close in age due to influences such as companionship and competition fostered within the family. There is no evidence to support the notion that sibling dynamics should influence retention decisions.

8. *Parent-School Participation:* Light suggests that when parents are more involved in their child's education, the retention is more likely to be successful. It should be obvious that any educational decision and every aspect of a child's educational experience is more likely to be successful if the parents are involved. It would not benefit the child to retain him or her in the hopes that the parents will jump to attention and start getting involved.

9. *Experiential Background:* Light suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to benefit from retention. Low SES children are retained much more often than those from other social brackets. However, research indicates that there are no differences in academic and social outcomes for groups of low SES students who are retained compared to groups of low SES students who are socially promoted.

10. *Transiency and School Attendance:* The LRS indicates that students who attend the same school for several consecutive years have a better chance of benefiting from retention than those who move frequently. Similarly, students who attend school regularly have a better chance of benefiting from retention than students who are frequently absent. Obviously, attending one school regularly over a long period of time will have a positive effect on a child's education. However, in contrast to Light's view, a student who misses a significant amount of instruction due to frequent moving or absenteeism would seem to be a likely retention candidate (Sandoval and Hughes, 1981).

11. *Estimate of Intelligence:* Light suggests that students with "average" cognitive ability are the best candidates for retention. (The lower IQ students can't be expected to make adequate progress and the high IQ students are able to catch up on their own at the next grade.) Despite this recommendation, research suggests that it is mainly lower functioning students who are retained.

12. *History of Learning Disabilities:* Light suggests that students who have learning disabilities are not the best candidates for retention, since they can often be provided with

appropriate instruction in small-group settings that is geared toward their individual needs. Students with learning disabilities are already facing significantly greater challenges than non-disabled students in their quest to obtain a high school diploma. Having them repeat a grade only prolongs what is already a difficult road ahead. In addition, several research studies reported that students who are retained have a greater chance of later being diagnosed with a learning disability than those who are promoted to the next grade.

13. *Present Level of Academic Achievement:* Light suggests that students who are one year behind in academic achievement are the best candidates for retention. Students who are on or above grade level are poor retention candidates, even if their classroom grades are low due to lack of task completion and motivation. Similarly, Light suggests that students who are more than one year below grade level have too far to catch up and would not be good retention candidates. Research suggests that some children often demonstrate improved levels of academic achievement during the year of retention, as they are compared to a group of younger students and are learning the curriculum for a second time. However, gains made during that year are usually "washed out" within three years time (Hagborg, et al., 1991; Holmes, 1989). (This is why we often see students retained in early grades who experience failure again toward middle school and are again looked at for retention).

14. *Student's Attitude About Possible Retention:* As mentioned earlier, Light indicates that students who want to be retained are the most likely to benefit from it. This factor seems rather trivial since it is unlikely that a student would look forward to repeating the grade and there is no research to support its inclusion in the decision making process.

15. *Motivation to Complete School Tasks:* Light reports that students who are motivated to succeed and have some interest in learning are the better retention candidates. He argues that retaining an unmotivated student only continues the vicious cycle of failure and lack of self-esteem.

16. *Immature Behavior, Emotional Problems, and History of Delinquency:* Light distinguishes between these three as separate factors by suggesting that socially immature children are good candidates for retention, but that children with emotional problems (e.g., crying often, hyperactivity) or anti-social, delinquent behavior are not good candidates for retention. Research and common sense would suggest that immature behavior, emotional problems, and anti-social behavior are all intertwined and that children with these problems generally do not benefit from retention (Cross, 1984). These types of problems are more likely to worsen if children are retained in the same grade.

The general conclusion to be made from analyzing Light's Retention Scale and various other factors is that it is very difficult to predict who will benefit from retention. Research studies tell us that most children do not benefit from retention and most of the factors that we commonly think of as being influential have generally been found to be poor predictors of successful retention. Research suggests that students most likely to benefit from retention may meet some of the following criteria: they are in an early grade rather than a later grade, have never been retained before, are transient or frequently absent, have no learning disabilities or

other handicapping conditions, have no severe emotional or behavioral problems, and are motivated to learn.

At the very least, when students are recommended for retention, we should be certain that the student will receive something *different* during the retention year than what they experienced the first time through the grade (e.g., different teacher, additional support services, behavior plan, different course requirements).

What can we do instead of considering retention or social promotion as our only two options?

The following list provides some strategies that can be used to help minimize the number of retentions. The list is by no means exhaustive and was gathered through use of a number of resources (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Harrington-Leuker, 1998; NASP, 1998; Rafoth & Carey, 1995).

System/School-Wide Strategies

extended school day
establishing multi-age groupings in classrooms and looping with teachers trained to work with mixed-age and mixed-ability populations
flexible scheduling
making individual retention decisions rather than those dictated by policy
establishing full-services schools to meet the needs of at-risk students
heterogeneous classes
smaller class size
professional development opportunities
parent involvement programs
alternative education programs

Prevention Strategies

implementing effective school-based mental health programs
all-day kindergarten
outreach community programs
providing effective early reading programs
obtaining parental involvement
encouraging parental links with community resources

Intervention/Instructional Strategies

individualized academic and/or behavioral interventions that are evaluated for efficacy
summer school
before and after school programs
tutoring
peer tutoring
mastery learning
team teaching
cooperative learning
specialized remedial instruction
referral to problem-solving teams (IST)
adopting age-appropriate and culturally sensitive instructional strategies
providing appropriate special-education services

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Ruminations on ADHD and Special Education

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If you've seen me speak in the last 8 months or so, we have shared thoughts on ADHD and special education. You may have also seen my chart showing the number of children ages 3-21 with the OHI label increasing in the last 7 years from 3,200 to over 10,500, a 330% increase. While I'm sure that some of these children have other challenges, my personal guess is that about 70% of them have an identified ADHD. I believe school psychologists are the most effective evaluators for ADHD, in part because of their training and in part because of location. Most of the discussions I have with school psychologists about ADHD are about why kids with ADHD need special education. We know about the parents who bring in a prescription slip from a pediatrician with something like, "Student has ADHD, trial of Ritalin, needs IEP" written on it. While this is unfortunate, especially because the child and the parent now have a decreased expectation about the child's ability, it also neglects to use the expertise of the psychologist and school staff who arguably have more information about the child's performance in school than does the parent and almost always more than the pediatrician or family doctor. It's also important to consider the child's needs in the school environment and whether those needs are so extensive as to require *specially designed instruction*. As you know, while a child may have a disability, it is only when they need special education that they qualify for an IEP.

A recent case in Florida got some national attention (Manatee County School Board; June, 2004; 104 LRP 38107). A hearing officer agreed with the parents that a child's lack of progress in, "...study skills, leadership skills, and adaptability..." amounted to a need for special education. The decision continued, "[the child's] OHI adversely affected [his] educational performance in citizenship and conduct" which were areas highlighted in the district's mission statement. A decision out of the U.S. District Court for Western WI (Poynette; March, 2004; 41 IDELR 6) is probably more consistent with what schools have been saying to parents in these cases. In that decision, Judge Barbara Crabb

opined that while the child had social challenges, they did not rise to the level of disabling because the child was making adequate educational progress. Conflicting outcomes, yes, and the Florida case is being appealed into the court system. However, both get back to the most salient question in my mind: What is special education for a child with an attention deficit disorder?

For answers, I turned to the Federal Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Their document Teaching Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Instructional Strategies and Practices (available at www.ed.gov) outlines "...a series of instructional strategies that have proven to be successful in educating children with ADHD. However, it should be emphasized again that these techniques are also highly useful for *all* children." Did I read that correctly? Good teaching for kids with ADHD is the same as that for all children? Examination of their suggestions bears this out: use an organizer, review previous lessons, set learning & behavioral expectations. During lessons, they suggest: supporting participation, using audiovisual materials, checking student performance, help students focus. I guess that last one is pretty obvious, and that makes my point. I only found one suggestion that appears to be special education—using Assistive Technology, and that's even a stretch in some districts.

For these reasons, I think we should be especially careful when making decisions about children with ADHD and special education, taking particular care to understand which of their needs cannot be met in regular education classes and why. In some schools this will mean more than others, and for some, multiple interventions added together may equate to special education even though any one intervention may not be too complex. So be careful, talk with teachers, and try to make sure that when you make a determination about a child's needs, they really do add up to something besides just good teaching before that child gets a disability label. Good luck!

School Psychologists' Involvement in the Retention Process

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Although the role of the school psychologist can be multifaceted, the primary role typically consists of working with students who are not succeeding academically, emotionally, and/or socially. As such, involvement in the process of grade retention is consistent with the role of the school psychologist in that students who are typically recommended for retention are those who are not succeeding academically, emotionally, and/or socially. Furthermore, the renewed emphasis on the evaluation of services, the application of the science of psychology to the educational setting, and calls for the use of empirically based interventions support school psychologists' involvement in the grade retention process (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; McLoughlin, 2003; Sarason, 2001; Upah & Tilly, 2002). Through a scientist-practitioner framework, school psychologists can be instrumental in disseminating research findings regarding retention and making the critical link between research and practice (Bradley-Johnson & Dean; Jimerson, Kaufman, Anderson, Whipple, Figueroa, Rocco, et al., 2002). This article briefly summarizes relevant research on grade retention and the role of the school psychologist in these decisions and discusses promising roles for school psychologists with regard to retention at the individual, school, and policy levels.

Research on Retention and the Role of the School Psychologist

It is estimated that more than two million children, or between 5-10% of students are retained each year at a cost estimated to be between \$2 - \$14 billion (e.g., Dawson, 1998; Edie & Showalter, 2001; Jimerson, 2001; Rafoth, 2002; Roderick, 1995). Students who are male, from a lower socio-economic status, of minority decent, and who are struggling academically and/or emotionally are the most likely to be retained (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994, 2003; Edie & Showalter; Zill, Loomis, & West, 1997). The results of meta-analyses do not support the efficacy of retention as an intervention for struggling students (e.g., Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Jimerson). These meta-analyses and other studies taken collectively have found that, at best, retention has no effect on students' academic achievement and socioemotional functioning. Retention has not been found to increase long-term student performance and ultimately contributes to adverse outcomes such as higher drop out rates for students who have been retained, even when compared to similar low-achieving, but promoted peers (e.g., Eide & Showalter; Holmes; Holmes & Matthews; Jackson; Jimerson, 1999, 2001; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002). Therefore, based on the available empirical evidence, if school psychologists are to function from a best practice standpoint, they must be aware of the research findings regarding retention and base their recommendations on this knowledge. Although much of the research on retention is disseminated

in school psychology journals (e.g., *School Psychology Review*, *The Journal of School Psychology*), there is virtually no information available regarding the roles of school psychologists in the grade retention process. A dissertation conducted in 1983 by Gates examined New Jersey school psychologists' present and desired involvement, perception, and training needs in the grade retention process. Of the two-thirds of the respondents that were involved in the process, most were involved at a moderate level and their input consisted of evaluation, placement decision-making, and consultation. A survey of state level school psychology contacts (i.e., state level coordinators of school psychological services) conducted by Rafoth and Carey (1991) solicited the perceptions of the actual and ideal roles of school psychologists in retention decisions. School psychologists were perceived as most often involved in administering achievement and ability tests at the school's request. It was the impression of the state-level administrators that school psychologists were least involved in making specific recommendations regarding grade retention (Rafoth & Carey). The survey found that ideal practice would involve making specific recommendations regarding grade retention. However, it was clear that school psychologist contacts did not want to see this responsibility become yet another form of "gate-keeping." Rather, they expressed a desire for practicing school psychologists to serve in the capacity of consultants, data collectors, and/or coordinators/developers of alternative services (Rafoth & Carey).

Promising Roles for School Psychologists in Grade Retention Decisions and Policies

Despite the limited information available regarding the typical level of involvement of school psychologists in grade retention issues, there have been numerous calls for school psychologists to be actively involved (e.g. Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, 1971; Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland, Sroufe, 1997; Rafoth, 2002; Rafoth & Carey, 1995; Smink, 2001; Tanner & Galis, 1997). Active involvement in the issue of grade retention is consistent with the role and function of school psychologists on several levels. School psychologists are equipped to identify and assess students who are struggling and thus may become candidates for retention. On an individual level, it has been recommended that when a student is in danger of being retained, the school psychologist might complete a comprehensive review of the student's educational records, aid in determining the underlying causes of the student's difficulties, and develop interventions that meet the unique needs of the child (Smink; Tanner & Galis). Specifically, the school psychologist could investigate the causes of school failure by examining the student's educational and developmental history, the effectiveness and appropriateness of the instruction the child received, and his or her access to remedial programs (Rafoth & Carey). It has

been suggested that the school psychologist advocate for appropriate instructional programming for the following year for all students at-risk by recommending empirically-based interventions that address each student's needs (Fagan & Wise, 2000; Reschly, 2000). Essential to the role of the school psychologist in retention decisions is disseminating of information regarding retention and consulting with teachers, parents, and school districts when questions arise regarding the retention of individual students.

On a systems level, school psychologists should also be involved in the development and/or revision of grade retention policies (Rafoth & Carey, 1995). Research has found that teachers often support the continued use of retention based on anecdotal evidence (Manley, 1988; Smith, 1989; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Further, teachers are often unable to monitor the long-term progress of students and therefore see only the short-term gains that tend to diminish over time (Byrnes, 1989; Tomchin & Impara). In contrast, school psychologists are in a position to monitor student progress over time. When students are retained, the school psychologist could collect follow-up data to document their progress over time. Data could also be collected on similar but promoted peers to document the effects that retention has at a local level to help districts understand the effects of retention in their particular district, and to inform future policy (Rafoth & Carey).

Related to policy, it has been suggested that school psychologists could develop and implement more effective interventions and educational programs prior to or in place of retention (e.g., Jimerson, 2001; Rafoth & Carey, 1995). School psychologists may be involved in creating or selecting program or school-wide alternatives as well as individual and classroom interventions that are aimed at reducing the number of children who become candidates for retention (Rafoth & Carey). Rafoth and Carey noted, "of the many professionals involved in either developing district wide retention policies or making retention decisions about individual students, the school psychologist is uniquely qualified to act as a consultant in generating alternatives" (p. 413).

Beyond the limits of individual school districts, school psychologists can lobby for changes regarding promotion policies on a legislative level (Rafoth & Carey, 1995). With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the increase in high-stakes testing as a basis for promotion decisions (e.g., Hartke, 1999; Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003; Sarason, 2001), school psychologists will likely not only be asked to disseminate research findings regarding retention to parents, teachers, and administrators, but will also be called upon to explain research findings to lawmakers. While NCLB calls for the use of empirically supported educational interventions (McLoughlin, 2003), which retention clearly is not (e.g., Jimerson, 2001), it also encourages the use of high stakes testing. In many districts, the political pressure to increase test scores in the short term often overshadows the importance of using empirically based interventions (Hartke; Rafoth & Carey; Sarason). There could be no better example of this phenomenon than in the current policy changes in New York City schools. In January of 2004, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced a plan that could lead to 15,000, or one in five third grade students being retained. Third grade

students who scores at a Level 1 (out of four levels) on reading and math standardized tests would not be promoted (e.g., Edozien & Campanile, 2004; Herszenhorn, 2004). In an instance such as this, school psychologists have a professional responsibility to delineate the problems with this approach and recommend more viable alternatives.

In sum, although there has been a significant amount of research suggesting the ineffectiveness of grade retention (e.g., Jimerson, 2001), the findings do not appear to impact the current practice of retention by administrators, teachers, and perhaps most importantly, politicians. School psychologists are in a unique position to be involved in the decision making process across the continuum from individual decisions to policymaking. Involvement in grade retention decisions and advocating for empirically based alternatives are not only appropriate roles for school psychologists, but they are essential to operating from a best practice model. Because candidates for retention are often the very same students with whom school psychologist invest the majority of their efforts, ignoring the issue of retention and not advocating for these students places them at an increased risk for detrimental outcomes.

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WSPA Children's Services Grant Recipients

This year, the WSPA Children's Services Committee was pleased to receive numerous proposals for the annual grant opportunity. We thank everyone who applied for their dedication and commitment to meeting the needs of children. WSPA congratulates the following recipients, whose grant proposals were selected for funding:

- Cheri Polster, Reading Specialist, and Kathy Rusch, School Psychologist
Tomorrow River School District
Parent-Child Reading Workshops
- Tina Helmer, School Psychologist, and Tina Seiler, School Counselor
Howard-School District
"Timberland Trackers" community service activities
- Dawn Bleimehl, School Psychologist
Lake Geneva Schools
Early Learning Fair

We look forward to hearing more about these initiatives in a future WSPA newsletter!

No Cow Left Behind

By Kenneth Remsen

Principal at Underhill I.D. School

Jericho, Vermont

(Reprinted from the OnWEAC website, "From our Readers" section, posted 12/4/03)

As a principal facing the task of figuring out all the complexities of the No Child Left Behind legislation and its impact on education, I have decided that there is a strong belief that testing students is the answer to bringing about improvements in student performance.

Since testing seems to be a cornerstone to improving performance, I don't understand why this principle isn't applied to other businesses that are not performing up to expectations. I was thinking about the problem of falling milk prices and wondering why testing cows wouldn't be effective in bringing up prices since testing students is going to bring up test scores.

The federal government should mandate testing all cows every year starting at age 2. Now I know that it will take time out of the farmers necessary work to do this testing every year and that it may be necessary to spend inordinate amounts of money on the testing equipment but that should not detract us from what must be done.

I'm sure there are plenty of statistics to show what good milk producing performance looks like and the characteristics of cows who achieve this level of performance. It should, therefore, be easy to figure out the characteristics necessary to meet this standard. We will begin our testing finding out which cows now meet the standard, which al-

most meet the standard, which meet the standard with honors and which show little evidence of achievement. Points will be assigned in each category and it will be necessary to achieve a certain average score. If this score is not achieved, the Department of Agriculture will send in experts to give advice for improvement. If improvements do not occur over a couple of years, the state will take over your farm or even force you to sell.

Now I'm sure farms have a mix of cows in the barn, but it is important to remember that every cow can meet the standard. There should be no exceptions and no excuses. I don't want to hear about the cows that just came to the barn from the farm down the road that didn't provide the proper nutrition or a proper living environment. All cows need to meet the standard.

Another key factor will be the placement of a highly qualified farmer in each barn. I know many of you have been farming for many years but it will be necessary for all farmers to become certified. This will mean some more paperwork and testing on your knowledge of cows but in the end this will lead to the benefit of all.

It will also be necessary to allow barn choice for the cows. If cows are not meeting the standard in certain farms they will be allowed to go to the barn of their choice. Trans-

portation may become an issue but it is critical that cows be allowed to leave their low-performing barns. This will force low-performing farms to meet the standard or else they will simply go out of business.

Some small farms will be probably go out of business as a result of this new legislation. Simply put, the cost per cow is too high. As taxpayers we cannot be expected to foot the bill to subsidize farms with dairy compacts. Even though no one really knows what the ideal cost is to keep cows content, the legislature will set a cost per cow. Expenditures too far

above this cost will be penalized. Since everyone knows that there are economies of scale, small farms will probably be forced to close and those cows will merge into larger farms. Some farmers may be upset that I proclaim to know what is best for these cows but I certainly consider myself capable of making these recommendations. I grew up next to a farm and I drink milk.

I hope you will consider this advice in the spirit it is given and I hope you will agree that the NO COW LEFT BEHIND legislation may not be best for a small state like Vermont.

Reasons Why The English Language Is Hard To Learn:

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 4) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 5) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 6) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 7) Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- 8) A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- 9) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 10) I did not object to the object.
- 11) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 12) There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- 13) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 14) The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- 15) A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- 16) To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- 17) The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- 18) After a number of injections my jaw got number.
- 19) Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
- 20) I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
- 21) How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

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**We hope this Spring puts a
spring in your step!**



Please remember, NASP members, to take time to vote for the NASP delegate prior to
2/28/05!!

Also, WSPA members attending the Spring 2005 conference--look for the silent auction
benefiting WSPA's Children's Services funds! See page 4 for more information!