

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: AMBER SESSOMS

Dear Beloved Community of Transformational Leaders,



As I write my final Presidential Pen, I invite in the necessary reflections on my presidential journey. Looking back on the past two years, I recall the myriad of emotions that were invoked when taking on this role. As a Black psychologist and someone who engaged with the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP) in the periphery, I found myself right in the center of its inner workings! So, what did I do when I entered this esteemed organization of dedicated volunteers? I listened. I listened and I made meaning from the wisdom that was shared.

As school psychologists, we are one of the few educational professionals who have had direct instruction in consultation and psychotherapy. It is a beautiful distinction that has helped me improve my question-posing to get to the root of an issue. My natural curiosity, or what I like to call being a "perpetual toddler," was something I immediately put into practice with ASPP by utilizing a SOAR Analysis that asks the following questions:

Strengths:

What makes our organization unique? What are our individual and collective strengths?

Opportunities:

What are our students/families/members asking of us?

Aspirations:

What do we value? What do we want our organization to be known for?

Results:

What will our organization look like when our top prioritized opportunities and aspirations are fully realized?

Through this meaning-making tool, I was able to harvest rich, thick data to get a clearer understanding of what we needed to do to help us *ahem* SOAR. From a revised Operations Handbook to a restructured organizational structure grounded in the Multicultural Organizational Development framework, we have brought greater clarity and capacity to our roles. We have formed deeper partnerships with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network to not only inform our state system but also leverage our Commonwealth's amazing advocates for our field.

I am so grateful for all the support from my team to push through the discomfort and develop the will and skill needed to view problems as opportunities for meaningful change. These changes have created more effective policies, practices, and procedures to facilitate greater alignment with our core values. These changes allowed us to reorganize and grow our board to

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Events In Sight!

July 24-26
[National Association of School Psychologists Public Policy Institute](#)

July 31-August 1
[Pennsylvania State Education Association \(PSEA\) Department of Pupil Services Virtual Conference](#)
 Ronne Mitchell, ASPP Government Public Relations Committee Chair will be presenting a session *Retaining School Psychologists of Color to Serve All Students*, July 31, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

November 12 - 13
[Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania Fall Conference](#), Harrisburg, PA

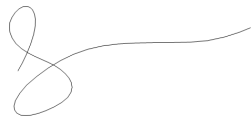
If you would like for your Key Event to be considered for the fall issue of InSight, please send information to roh206@ehigh.edu

support collaborative problem-solving and better fiscal responsibility. These changes have given us permission to freedom dream and take risks to better reach all our membership because each and every one of you belongs here. For this, I am tremendously proud.

It is my hope that as our incoming president, Shradha Gera, takes the ranks on July 1, 2024, our growing team (which includes you) will continue to support our strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, so that we can fully realize the results we want to see. We are striving to be an organization that amplifies your voices and builds a beloved community where we are not just recognized for our expertise but also for our inherent dignity.

So, in this season of change, I invite you to consider my final question to each of you: How can you detach yourself from a narrow imagination of individual and collective progress and practice freedom dreaming? Just imagine the world we can create if we honor the creative possibilities within each of us. I look forward to our continued collaboration and growth as we enter our next chapter with dignity at the center.

In solidarity, action, and love,



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Amber is a narrative disruptor, meaning maker, and radical connector from Central Pennsylvania. She is the founder of Natural Inclination LLC, where she supports courageous leaders in cultivating liberatory spaces for individuals to be their full, authentic selves. Amber is the former school psychologist at Central Dauphin High School, where she practiced for nearly 13 years. In 2021, she became the first person of color to be awarded the SPOTY.



The Pennsylvania Regulations and Evidence-Based Assessment of Specific Learning Disabilities

Drew Hunter & Joseph F. Kovalesski

In 2008 the Pennsylvania State Board of Education published a revision of its regulations for Special Education Services and Programs. It is typical for states to revise their regulations after the federal government reauthorizes its statute (in this case the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; IDEA) and revises its regulations. IDEA 2004 included ground-breaking new provisions for identifying students with specific learning disabilities (SLD), prohibiting states from requiring the long-criticized ability-achievement discrepancy (AAD) approach and allowing for the use of response to intervention (RTI) as part of an SLD evaluation. This article will provide a close analysis of the 2008 Regulations for Special Education in regard to two areas that have particular salience for school psychologists -- screening for potential disabilities and SLD identification. In particular, we will address two fundamental questions: (1) Is the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), which undergirds both the screening requirements as well as RTI, required in Pennsylvania? and (2) What procedures are indicated in the regulation for evaluating students for SLD identification? We will then review the professional literature on competing approaches for SLD identification and make recommendations regarding best practices in view of both the regulations and current research.

Is MTSS Required in Pennsylvania?

The term MTSS is not used in the Pennsylvania Regulations. However, all of the components of a fully functioning MTSS as described by researchers in the field (e.g., Batsche, et al., 2005; Burns & Gibbons, 2012; Kovalesski et al., 2023) are specifically detailed as components of screening in the Pennsylvania regulations (§14.122). First, the regulations indicate that the purpose of screening is to “(1) ... provide screening... prior to referral for a special education evaluation, (2) provide peer support for teachers ... in working effectively with students in the general education curriculum...” (e.g., instructional support

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teams), and “(3) identify students who may need special education....” They require that school districts must not only conduct the traditional hearing and vision screenings, but also must conduct “(s)creening at reasonable intervals to determine whether all students are performing based on grade-appropriate standards in core academic subjects” (§14.122 [b]). These requirements are directly in line with two core features of MTSS – universal screening and team-based support for teachers.

This section is followed by an eight-point list of components for conducting early intervening services, which is required of schools that have disproportionality in special education programs (“must”) and is an option for all others (“may”). According to an official at the Bureau of Special Education at the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), there are currently 32 local education agencies in Pennsylvania that are required to implement early intervening services. First on the list is an interesting provision in which the school district verifies that the student was provided with appropriate instruction in reading as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). A review of this section of the ESEA (§1208[3]) describes the “big ideas” in reading, now commonly referred to as the science of reading. So, while not a requirement for all districts, the Pennsylvania regulations support the importance of explicit core instruction (Tier 1 in MTSS). Next, the early-intervening component includes further assessments relative to state standards for students with academic concerns and a systematic observation for students with behavioral concerns. Kovalski et al. (2023) refer to these types of academic assessment as “drill-down” assessments and provide details on how systematic observation can best be conducted in the context of MTSS and RTI. Of course, classroom observations have long been a federal requirement for students evaluated for SLD.

The fourth component of early intervening services in the regulations is a “...research-based intervention to increase the student’s rate of learning or behavior change...” based on results of the (aforementioned) assessments. This is followed by “(r)epeated assessments of achievement or behavior, or both, conducted at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal monitoring of student progress during the interventions.” These provisions reflect the essence of the MTSS/RTI framework in which assessment-based, research-supported interventions are implemented

and evaluated for effectiveness based on progress monitoring. These data are then utilized in a following provision that calls for a “determination as to whether the student’s needs exceed the functional ability of the regular education program to maintain the student at an appropriate instructional level.” This determination is the basis on which referral to MDE is indicated or not, and directly informs the decision about whether the student displays a degree of need for special education, which is the second prong of eligibility (the first being documentation of a disability).

The remaining features of early intervening services directly mirror federal requirements for evaluation that stipulate that the school district makes “(a) determination as to whether the student’s assessed difficulties are the result of a lack of instruction or limited English proficiency,” and provides documentation to the student’s parents about the aforementioned progress monitoring results. The lack of instruction provision directly relates to the aforementioned language related to the verification that the student was provided with appropriate instruction (at least in reading). The screening section ends by indicating that “(s)creening or the provision of early intervening activities do not serve as a bar to the right of a parent to request an evaluation.”

In summary, some components of MTSS are required in the Pennsylvania regulations for all schools, including team-based decision-making and universal screening of hearing, vision, and academic skills. Other key components of MTSS, including the early intervening steps of providing appropriate instruction in reading, assessing academic skills, providing observations for students with behavior concerns, implementing research-based interventions and monitoring student progress are suggested in the Pennsylvania regulations for all school districts, and required for those that are cited for disproportionality. Two other features of MTSS (the determination of a lack of instruction and informing parents about the results of progress monitoring) are also mentioned in the early-intervening provision of screening, and are restated later in the regulations as requirements of an evaluation for SLD (see below).

What Procedures are Indicated for Evaluating Students for SLD Identification?

The criteria for identifying an SLD in the Pennsylvania
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regulations (§14.125) maintain the same overall four components as defined by the federal regulations (cf. Kovalski, et al., 2023), but provide more precise language within some of the components. The first criterion uses the federal language to require that the student "... does not achieve adequately for the child's age or meet State-approved grade level standards..." in one or more of the familiar eight academic areas – oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving", but embellishes the federal language to add "... when provided with learning experiences and *scientifically based instruction ...*" (italics added to reflect unique Pennsylvania language). Two items are of particular note here. First, both the federal and Pennsylvania language indicate that the identified deficit in academic achievement is in relation to age-level standards and not to the student's intellectual level (i.e., IQ). One ramification is that a student who has a high IQ but average academic achievement would not be identified with SLD, even if the district uses an AAD approach (as the second criterion of an SLD evaluation). Further, students with lower IQs (but not in the intellectually disabled range) would meet this first criterion if the district uses RTI rather than the AAD (as the second criterion). The other aspect of note is that the Pennsylvania regulations indicate that the instruction provided to the student be scientifically based, which in this instance applies to all school districts. The implication is that a student may not be determined to have an SLD if they have not been provided with instruction that is scientifically based, which is reiterated in the fourth component (see below).

The second criterion in the Pennsylvania regulations gives districts two options – RTI or a pattern of strengths and weakness. Both options include specific language that requires close analysis. First, RTI is defined as "... the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention..." and documentation is required that "(t)he student received high quality instruction in the general education setting, (r)esearch-based interventions were provided to the student, and (s)tudent progress was regularly monitored." (§14.125 [2][i]). Here again the repeated emphasis on scientific research-based instruction and interventions as required as part of eligibility decision-making for students with SLDs is notable.

In regard to the second option (for the second criterion), it should be noted that the pattern of strengths and weaknesses is "...relative to intellectual ability, *as defined by a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement, or relative to age or grade (italics added).*" (§14.125 [2][ii]) Thus, the second option is basically the AAD. PDE's (2008) SLD Guidelines also suggest that the discrepancy can be related to age or grade as follows: "... the team may find that a student's reading standard scores on a nationally normed achievement test are significantly below his/her math, writing, and language scores... A possible criterion might be that the confidence intervals of the lower scores do not overlap the confidence intervals of the higher scores, thus indicating a significant difference in achievement" (pp. 11). Language specific to the use of profile analysis, such as patterns of cognitive strengths and weakness (PSW; e.g., Hale et al., 2001) to identify SLD does not appear in the Pennsylvania regulations or the PDE guidelines.

The third and fourth criteria in the Pennsylvania regulations parallel the federal requirements. The third criterion is that the student's academic concerns as documented in the first and second criteria are not the result of another disability or an environmental or cultural factor. The fourth criterion is that the student may not be identified with an SLD if the underachievement is "... due to a lack of instruction in reading or mathematics..." and requires documentation that "... the child was provided scientifically-based instruction in regular education settings..." as well as documentation that "... repeated assessments of achievement were conducted at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, which was provided to the child's parents" (§14.125 [4]).

In summary, in the contexts of screening for the possibility of a special-education eligibility and for the identification of students with SLD, the Pennsylvania regulations frequently and repetitively indicate the importance of using scientific research-based procedures in general-education instruction and in interventions with students having academic-achievement concerns. Although MTSS is not required per se in all districts, any child being considered for SLD identification should have had access to instruction and intervention within a system that carefully and frequently monitors the student's

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progress. These provisions are tantamount to the effective implementation of MTSS, as it is commonly described. In regard to the identification of students with SLD, the Pennsylvania regulations provide detailed language about the use of RTI and allows for the use of the AAD, but do not specifically mention the use of PSW approaches as they are understood by most school psychologists.

Reviewing the Current Literature on the Identification of SLD

The construct of SLD and the identification of students as such has been controversial since it was first introduced in federal special education law (Kavale et al., 2009). The introduction of the use of RTI as part of the evaluation of SLD in the federal rules was in response to years of research that was critical of historical approaches to identification, particularly the AAD approach. Nonetheless, this practice is still common among many school psychologists. A survey conducted by Kranzler et al. (2020) found that 37% of school psychologists reported using AAD and 53% reported using PSW to identify students with SLD. Furthermore, profile analysis is still a prevalent practice with 64% of school psychologists surveyed reporting interpreting index scores, nearly 70% surveyed reporting interpreting subtest scores, and 62% of respondents reporting invalidating a global IQ score based on scatter among the index scores.

Research on Profile Analysis

Current research does not support the interpretation of index or subtest scores for the identification of learning disabilities or treatment planning. The only score produced by IQ tests that should be interpreted is the global composite. IQ tests have limited, if any, treatment utility. Historically and currently, most methods of profile analysis proposed in the literature were suggested without any empirical validation of the models (Kamphaus et al., 2018; McGill et al., 2018). Research has consistently shown that scatter among the index scores does not impact the predictive validity of the global composite related to achievement (Daniel, 2007; Freberg et al., 2008; Kotz et al., 2008; Watkins et al., 2007). These studies examined a variety of different cognitive tests and different editions (e.g., WISC-III, WISC-IV) with the same results. There is no empirical basis for invalidating a full-scale IQ score due to scatter and using another composite instead to summarize general ability.

Additionally, the majority of index scores do not meet the minimum recommended reliability standards for high stakes decision making (.90). Although index scores typically evidence strong internal consistency, they often lack temporal stability (i.e. test-retest reliability). When scores lack stability, decisions and recommendations derived from them have limited diagnostic and treatment validity. Watkins and Canivez (2004) found that at three-year reevaluation, ipsative analysis of strengths and weaknesses had a stability level no greater than chance. Watkins and Smith (2013) replicated these results and found that approximately one-third to one-half of the index scores in their sample demonstrated score differences greater than or equal to 10 standard score points over an almost three-year period. Given these results, practitioners would do just as well to flip a coin when making high-stakes decisions regarding children using this approach.

Research has also failed to produce evidence of cognitive profiles unique to students with SLD. Most recently, Watkins and Canivez (2022) analyzed a sample of 1,830 school-identified students with SLD and 2,200 simulation participants and found no profiles unique to students with SLD. Profiles that did emerge were based on level of abilities and flat as opposed to the shape of the profile. This suggests there are no consistent markers among index scores that can be used to reliably identify students with SLD. Furthermore, index scores do not add incremental validity to the global composite. To justify interpreting index scores, they should account for meaningful portions of achievement beyond what is accounted for by the global composite. Research has consistently shown that index scores do not add incremental validity beyond what is accounted for by the global composite (Canivez, 2013; Freberg et al., 2008; Glutting et al., 2006; Kranzler et al., 2015).

A final point to consider is that independent research does not support the factor structure purported by many test publishers. Dombrowski et al. (2015) outlines several concerns with the factor analysis reported in the WISC-V technical manual and found no support for a distinct Fluid Reasoning or a Verbal Comprehension factor. This is consistent with Canivez et al. (2017) and Sattler (2018) who failed to find support for a distinct Fluid Reasoning factor. Multiple studies also found that the index scores from the WISC-V all have g loadings too high to support

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independent interpretation, with the exception of processing speed (Canivez et al., 2017, Canivez et al., 2020; Dombrowski et al., 2015). There is also very little evidence to support the factor structure and interpretation of the Woodcock-Johnson (WJ-IV) stratum II composite scores or to warrant interpretation of the index scores beyond the global composite (Dombrowski et al., 2016, 2018a, 2018b).

Research on PSW Approaches

One of the most concerning issues with PSW models is their inability to differentiate students identified with SLD from those without on academic achievement level, a key classification feature. Miciak et al. (2014) conducted a study comparing students identified with and without SLD using the cross-battery assessment and the concordance/discordance models. Performance of students without SLD on measures of reading and spelling did not differ from those with SLD. Furthermore, the different models of PSW are not interchangeable and will differentially identify students with SLD depending on the model employed (Fletcher et al., 2014; Miciak et al., 2014). When implemented with fidelity, the models under-identify students with SLD as well (Stuebing et al., 2012). Miciak et al. (2018) reached similar conclusions and found that the use of additional measures, as is common in these approaches, did not improve classification accuracy.

PSW methods also have psychometric problems that go beyond classification reliability created by the imposition of arbitrary cut points onto a continuous construct. The numerous score comparisons made in the models drastically increase the chance of false positives. Additionally, the reliability of difference scores used for such comparisons is often below the reliability of the original measures and not adequate for high-stakes decision making. These difference scores can also produce high levels of error which results in confidence bands surrounding the critical value that render them uninterpretable (McGill et al., 2018).

The Problem of Treatment Utility

Instructional recommendations generated from IQ tests are limited and not worth the resources spent administering these measures. Attempts to improve specific cognitive processes through intervention have been unsuccessful for decades and produce no

meaningful results on academic skills (Hammill, 1972; Kavale & Mattson, 1983). Differences in IQ are only useful for predicting the complexity of information processing that students can generally engage in during instruction; that is to say that students with higher IQs can benefit from instruction that is less complete with more demand complexity while students with lower IQs benefit from instruction that is more explicit (Kranzler & Floyd, 2020). Practitioners do not need an IQ test to recommend more explicit instruction with a narrower focus for students displaying learning problems.

Multiple studies have found that IQ does not predict response to reading intervention (Stuebing et al., 2009; Vellutino et al., 1996). A meta-analysis conducted by Stuebing et al. (2014) found that the association between cognitive processes and response to reading intervention was small with little practical significance, explaining only 2-11% of the variance in intervention response. Although phonological awareness and rapid automatic naming were the best predictors, they did not explain more variance than academic skill measures of reading. Miciak et al. (2016) found that pretest reading ability accounted for 68.5% of the variance in reading intervention response with cognitive strengths and weaknesses adding little predictive validity. Crystallized knowledge added the most variance of any cognitive variable in the study accounting for an unimpressive 1.8% of variance when predicting posttest word reading results. Burns (2016) also conducted a meta-analysis examining the effects of interventions derived from neuropsychological assessment data and found small effects (0.17) for interventions based on cognitive-processing results. Moderate effect sizes for interventions derived from measures of reading fluency and phonemic awareness were obtained (0.43 and 0.48 respectively). Clearly, practitioners should be emphasizing the direct measurement of academic skills over IQ tests when assessing learning problems.

RTI

The IDEA statute and regulations as well as the Pennsylvania Special Education Regulations and PDE Guidelines consistently feature RTI as a key component to the evaluation of students for SLD identification. Further, the use of RTI in the identification of SLD presupposes, complements, and encourages the use of MTSS as a structure for

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improving the academic attainments of all students. As an assessment methodology, the convergence of empirical evidence suggests that RTI is the only valid option available for the identification of learning disabilities (Fletcher & Miciak, 2019).

Conclusion

There is little empirical evidence to support the routine administration of IQ tests for the identification of SLD nor the use of profile analysis/PSW as part of this determination. Although the Pennsylvania regulations continue to recognize the use of AAD in the evaluation of SLD, they do not mention PSW as it is commonly understood. In fact, Zirkel (2013) described PSW as “legally flawed” (p. 93). The Pennsylvania regulations do require academic screening, scientifically-based instruction, and progress monitoring regardless of the identification method used. They also recommend the use of early intervention as part of screening, and require high-quality instruction, research-based interventions, and progress monitoring when RTI is used. The regulations and guidance documents also seem to allow for the use of an academic performance discrepancy to satisfy the severe discrepancy criterion for SLD. Practitioners are encouraged to use these provisions to advocate for the increased use of MTSS as a service delivery model and RTI as the preferred second component of the SLD-identification procedure. Further, school psychologists should de-emphasize the use of cognitive assessment, particularly cognitive discrepancy models, for the identification of SLD. A focus on assessing academic skills and other relevant areas of functioning (e.g., phonological skills, oral language) in conjunction with the use of MTSS data should replace the reliance on cognitive discrepancy approaches. ■

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Advocacy in Action: Government & Public Relations Committee Spring 2024 Update

Ronnie Mitchell

The Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania Government and Public Relations (GPR) Committee is looking to focus upon strategic goals for the 2024-2025 school year, including areas related to state legislation, professional development, retention and recruitment of school psychologists, public policy /legislation, social justice, and more.

2024 Public Policy Institute

It’s that time of year again! The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) will be holding its annual Public Policy Institute (PPI) in Washington, D.C., on July 24 - 26, 2024. This year’s PPI will focus on helping school psychologists develop the advocacy skills, strategies, and state association system supports to advocate for safe, welcoming, and inclusive schools for all students. It will offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit for prerecorded modules to be completed before coming to Washington, DC, and for the in-person training sessions.

Interstate Compact Legislative Summit

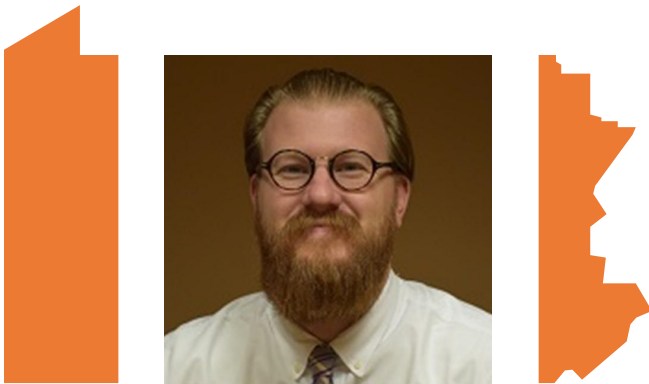
The Council of State Governments (CSG), in partnership with NASP, will be hosting an in-person Legislative Summit in Washington DC, on June 20, 2024. Summit attendees will learn about interstate compact benefits, provisions of the Interstate Compact Legislative Summit (ICSP), answers to common questions, lessons learned, and best practices from 2024 legislative sessions. The summit attendees will include state legislators and staff, Governor’s office policy staff, Legislative research staff, and state licensing agency staff and administrators. ASPP is excited to announce that Pennsylvania has been selected to participate as a good candidate for the Interstate Compact for School Psychologists! As the ASPP GPR Chair, I will attend this event on behalf of our state.

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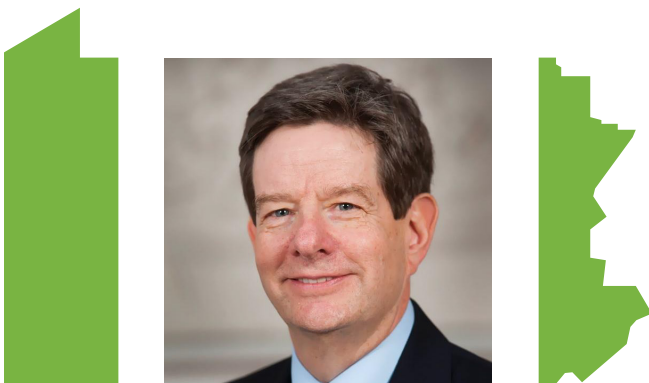


Association of School
Psychologists of Pennsylvania

Promoting best practices in school psychology



Drew Hunter, DEd, is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department of Millersville University. His research interests include multi-tiered systems of support and response to intervention.



Joseph F. Kovaleski, DEd is Professor Emeritus of Educational and School Psychology at Indiana University and lives in Lititz, PA. His professional interests include the use of research-based approaches to assessment and intervention within the contexts of multi-tiered systems of support and the evaluation of students for special education services.

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)

ASPP has worked closely with PaTTAN throughout the past year towards its Attract-Prepare-Retain (APR) repository. Some efforts have included ASPP members providing resources (such as early career transition resources, state and national certification guidelines, and more) to 2 out-of-state interns in PA school psychology programs. During the 2024-2025 school year, ASPP and PaTTAN are anticipating working with six out-of-state interns and school districts to continue developing the Pennsylvania school psychologist workforce. ASPP members have also recently joined an Ad Hoc Committee for School Psychologists to support the Bureau of Special Education's APR efforts.

Pennsylvania Coalition of Student Services Associations (PACSSA)

PACSSA is a newly formed coalition of student service organizations throughout the Commonwealth. The main purposes of PACSSA include role clarification with a strong student services framework; staffing, hiring, and maintaining of student services professionals in schools, and improving the workforce pipeline for student services professionals. ASPP is proud to serve along this new initiative to ensure students receive effective services in schools.

Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) Update

State Funding

As mentioned in the December issue of InSight, Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Court, on February 7, 2023, found that our current system for funding public schools is unconstitutional, failing to fulfill the Pennsylvania constitution's promise of a "thorough and efficient system of public education." Since then, several initiatives towards adequate use of state funds including the proposal of a student teacher stipend and a minimum salary of \$60,000 for educators have been made through testimonies by PSEA. Recommendations for accountability guardrails included investment in evidence-based programs and strategies to meet the needs of students, raising educator wages, and reinstating charter school reimbursement funding.

2024 Lobby Day

PSEA's Advocates for Children and Education (ACE) program is a grassroots advocacy effort that empowers members to advocate for schools, students, and education professionals. This June, ACEs will visit Harrisburg to lobby their state legislators on the issues that are important to students and educators. Dates will be announced via PSEA and ASPP.

PA State Legislation

When you have the opportunity, please contact your State Representative and/or Senator, and ask them to support the following bills that impact Pennsylvania school psychologists and other educators. The best way to find information for your state legislator would be through PA's General Assembly website, where you can find your legislator here: <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>

Bills to Support

The following includes bills that positively impact the work of school psychologists and other educators, and our students, across the Commonwealth. Please urge your State Representative and/or Senator to support the following bills:

- PA SB 926 - This will oppose the act of book banning in public libraries and other public institutions, as well as provide libraries the opportunity to decide which reading material is/isn't appropriate rightfully.
- PA HB 1778 - Legislation to help hold students, parents, and school officials accountable for mitigating and preventing bullying.
- PA HB 1763 - Will help establish an Advisory Council of PANS (Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome) and PANDAS (PAN Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infection) and also require insurance companies in PA to include coverage for the treatment of these conditions.
- PA HB 1779 - Supporting the use of the Safe2Say program in schools to help mitigate bullying.

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- PA HB 341 - Ensuring adequate access to school social workers, school nurses services, school counselors, and school psychologists.

- PA HB 1067 - This bill will urge PDE and the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) to allow valid, non-citizens in PA education certification programs to be certified upon completion. It would also amend the state certificate’s language by allowing a person holding a valid immigrant visa, work visa, or valid employment authorization document that allows them to work in the United States to be eligible to receive a state certificate or permit.

Bills to Oppose

The following includes bills that negatively impact the work of school psychologists and other educators across the Commonwealth. Please urge your State Representative and/or Senator to oppose the following:

- PA HB 1804 – Parental Notification of Implementation of Mental Health Services
 - The issue with HB 1804 is that it will interfere with school districts’ ability to use mental health screenings in schools.
- PA HB 1805 – School Counseling Services
 - The problem with HB 1805 is that it seeks to eliminate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) from counseling plans in schools. ■



Ronnie Mitchell, M.S., NCSP, is a practicing school psychologist in the School District of the City of York, Government & Public Relations Chair of ASPP, and a member of the NASP African Diaspora Subcommittee and NASP Communications Committee. His professional interests include advocacy, social justice, and promoting effective multi-tiered systems of support within secondary schools.

Association of School Psychologists’ Accolades

Lydia Emeigh & Jessica Dirsmith

The Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP) continues to recognize our everyday heroes across the various regions in Pennsylvania. To earn an ASPP Accolade, the ASPP member demonstrates one or more of the following ASPP core values:

- *Advocacy*
- *Continuous Improvement*
- *Collaboration*
- *Diversity*
- *Focus on Children and Youth*
- *Integrity*
- *Visionary Leadership*

School psychologists who are selected for the monthly accolade from September to May of an academic year will be considered for the ASPP School Psychologist of the Year award announced in the subsequent Fall. Below is a summary of the ASPP Accolades for December through April. Information about how to submit accolades for a fellow colleague in future months is also provided. We are delighted to recognize and congratulate our outstanding January through May recipients for their dedicated efforts and exemplary leadership in our profession!

Table 1
Spring 2024 ASPP Accolades

January	Dr. Marissa Reed	West Jefferson Hills School District
February	Mr. Jim Hester	Crawford Central School District
March	Dr. Shirley Woika	The Pennsylvania State University
April	Ms. Brynne Rice	Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network
May	Dr. Conchetta Bell	South Fayette School District

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Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania

January: Dr. Marissa Reed, West Jefferson Hills School District



Marissa was nominated as the January Monthly Member Spotlight ASPP Accolade recipient because of her visionary leadership. Marissa is a true leader who has exceptional skills in the areas of interpersonal relationship building, organization, and visionary leadership. She is always taking the initiative to improve departmental procedures to address the needs of students while also supporting school staff. Marissa consistently demonstrates strengths in her collaboration with colleagues to problem-solve and create solutions to common challenges faced daily in education, despite the many barriers encountered. Consistent with the ASPP core value of visionary leadership, Marissa approaches her work with "optimism, energy, and professionalism, working pragmatically with 'what is' while moving toward 'what can be.'" Marissa is described as a kind and knowledgeable mentor who is always willing to assist and provide support to colleagues, staff, parents, and friends. Her thoughtfulness extends well beyond the professional realm.

February: Mr. Jim Hester, Crawford Central School District



Jim was nominated as the February Monthly Member Spotlight ASPP Accolade recipient because of his collaboration. Jim promotes an interdisciplinary and collaborative team approach across three different buildings with students of varying needs within the Crawford Central School District. He collaborates effectively with teacher colleagues as well as administration and emphasizes a comprehensive approach to service delivery. Jim is an essential team member on the MTSS team, offering suggestions and ideas for setting goals for students. Jim embodies other core values in his practice as well. He is an advocate for all students and thinks deeply about the data he collects to determine how to best meet students' needs. In addition, Jim maintains a focus on children and youth; he is often seen assisting with students who need help with executive functioning skills and de-escalation strategies.

March: Dr. Shirley Woika, The Pennsylvania State University.



Dr. Shirley Woika was nominated as the March Monthly Member Spotlight ASPP Accolade Recipient because of her visionary leadership. Shirley recently retired after serving as the Director of Clinical & Field Training in the School Psychology Program at The Pennsylvania State University. In this role, she was responsible for oversight of the on-site school psychology clinic, mobile clinic activities, and coordination of practicum experiences. Additionally, she taught graduate level courses in school psychology in the areas of assessment, supervision, child psychopathology, and school law. Shirley has supervised and mentored many school psychology graduate students throughout her career, including

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post-doctoral students and school psychology interns. She possesses expertise in clinical supervision and school law. Shirley has provided ongoing, positive, systematic, and collaborative supervision to the developing professionals she has supervised over the years. Her approach to supervision is positively oriented and supportive. She was involved and available when needed, providing a level of support that has been truly appreciated by her students. Shirley is someone who her former students can still reach out to, should they have a difficult case. She is always willing to help. Shirley has served as a board member for ASPP for many years. She is also currently serving as the PPA School Psychology Board Chair. Over her career, she has made significant contributions to the field of school psychology through not only training future school psychologists, but also conducting research, presenting at conferences, and consulting with school districts. Now retired, Shirley continues to work in the field by engaging in contract work and completing private evaluations.

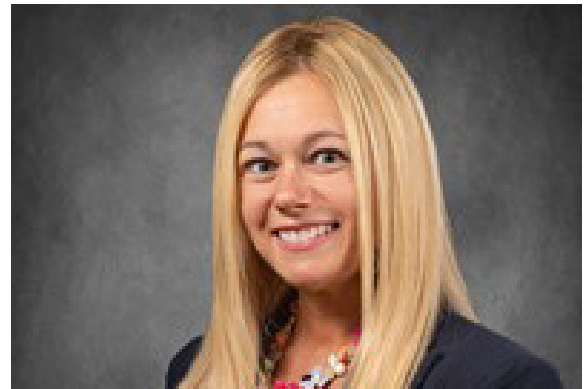
April: Ms. Brynne Rice, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network



Brynne Rice was nominated as the April Monthly Member Spotlight/ ASPP Accolade Recipient because of her collaboration. Brynne is an Educational Consultant at PaTTAN, where she provides training, coaching, and technical assistance to schools in Pennsylvania. She currently serves on the Learning Environment and Engagement, Multi-Tiered System of Supports, and School Psychology Initiatives. Brynne focuses on providing support to school districts through a collaborative lens while leveraging the knowledge and leadership of school personnel to ensure sustainable outcomes. Alongside her colleagues, she emphasizes evidence-based practices when coaching, consulting, and

developing state-wide training opportunities. Prior to her employment with PaTTAN, Brynne served in an expanded school psychologist role at Southern Lehigh Intermediate School. As a core member of the MTSS team, she collaborated with colleagues to develop effective procedures for a comprehensive tiered system of support. Additionally, Brynne led team members in the development of the school's PBIS framework. Along with fulfilling the traditional assessment responsibilities of a school psychologist, Brynne developed strong relationships with students by providing individual and group counseling. Recognizing how her role positively impacted students as well as her own professional growth, Brynne continues to advocate for an expanded role for school psychologists in Pennsylvania.

May: Dr. Conchetta Bell, South Fayette Township School District



Conchetta was nominated as the May Monthly Member Spotlight/ ASPP Accolade Recipient because of her focus on children and youth. Conchetta has been employed at South Fayette Township School District for 15 years, where she serves in many roles, including School Psychologist, Assistant Director of Student Support Services, Transition Coordinator, and 504 Coordinator. She consistently goes above and beyond for the students across the district and works to provide services that best fit each student's unique needs. Conchetta's dedication to students and the school community shines, as she has facilitated many student clubs and events. For 10+ years, she has been the sponsor of the Lion Hearts Club, a volunteer club that performs various acts of service throughout the community and region. Additionally, Conchetta has

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Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania

been sponsoring South Fayette's Best Buddies Club at the high school since the club became a chapter in the 2021-2022 school year. Best Buddies promotes friendship and inclusion of students with and without developmental and intellectual disabilities. Involvement in these student activities has allowed Conchetta to promote inclusion and genuine kindness, both vital aspects of the mission of the programs, and she has supported many students who may be struggling to socially connect. Conchetta continues to support the field of school psychology by supervising interns and practicum students enrolled in Duquesne University's School Psychology program. She received the award for Outstanding Field Based Supervision for School Psychology by Duquesne University in 2022. Described as a role model to her colleagues, Conchetta's focus on children and youth is an inspiration to current and future school psychologists.

Congratulations to our exceptional recipients from January through May; ASPP recognizes their unwavering commitment and exemplary leadership within our profession! Please continue to recognize dedicated professionals and complete the ASPP Accolade Monthly Member Spotlight Nomination Form to nominate a school psychologist who acts as an everyday hero! ■



Dr. Jessica Dirsmith, NCSP is a School Psychologist in the Arin Intermediate Unit 28.



Dr. Lydia Svetkovich Emeigh, NCSP is an Educational Consultant at the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistant Network.

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The Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania is on the Move!

Jessica Dirsmith

The Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP) Membership Services, along with Regional Delegates, organized a series of regional opportunities designed to foster connection and community among ASPP members and prospective members. With a focus on movement and connection, members had the opportunity to mindfully move through yoga, bike, hike, walk, and dine together.



The North Shore River Walk was held for the ASPP Southwest Region on May 19, 2024 in Pittsburgh, PA. Lydia Emeigh, Christian Giannone, Jessica Dirsmith, and Erica Kaurudar welcomed the opportunity to enjoy each other's company and the sunshine!

Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania

InSight is the official publication of the ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS OF PENNSYLVANIA (ASPP) which is an affiliate of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS (NASP).

InSight is published three times a year (September, January, May / June) as a service to the ASPP membership. Copies are also sent to members of the NASP newsletter editors' network and to the chairs of the school psychology programs in Pennsylvania. It is an open forum for news, views and issues affecting the field of school psychology. ASPP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational and scientific association of school psychologists with the goal of serving the educational and mental health needs of children within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

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Articles are submitted to the editor via e-mail. Featured articles should be no longer than 1,500 words in length. Authors are required to use the stylistic

and formatting conventions of the current *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Contact the editor for further information.

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FUTURE ISSUE INFORMATION

Fall 2024 issue deadline is August 1, 2024

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