

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Spring 2009

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From the Director's Desk by Rob Dixon

What a year we have had as a nation and as a school psychology community. Nationally, there is a new President, an economy where most of us would like an AIG Executive bonus, and schools that are facing some drastic cuts. Hopefully, school psychology continues to be resistant to these cutbacks. I know that everything I hear is that districts continue to look for quality school psychologists to lead the schools in the transition to Response to Intervention (RtI).

On the national level, our program continues to shine. We were reviewed by the National Association of School Psychologists and received Full Approval for the maximum allotted time (5 years). This validates the time and effort the students have put into making a difference with children as well as the faculty guiding the graduate student efforts. Our students continue to do well on the NCSP exam with the entire class passing a recalibrated test with flying colors. Even locally, when the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) reviewed our program we were regarded as exemplary. Two individuals with ties to the La Crosse program were honored this spring for significant accomplishments. Our alum

and frequent practica supervisor, Mary Jo Snow, was named the Wisconsin School Psychologist of the Year. Her name will be forwarded to the national level to compete for the NASP School Psychologist of the Year (see

Andy Kastner's article on page 3 for more details). In addition, one of our second year students, Ben Burns, was chosen as the Allard Award winner, which goes to the top student in a school psychology program. We are thrilled that the Wisconsin School Psychologists



Association selected these two very deserving winners.

This year the UW-La Crosse's presence at the NASP convention in Boston grew from prior NASP conventions. Not only did we have all of the 2nd year students attend, but we also had three 1st year students attend as well. As if that was not enough, three student posters were also accepted! I look to Teresa to verify historical facts and she cannot recall having a single poster ever accepted to NASP. Kudos to the following students (and advisors) and the quality research that they put together: Benjamin Burns (Dixon) on *Professional burnout in school psychology: Impact of changing practices*, Andrew Kastner & Amy Litfin (Dixon) on *Barriers to RtI: Teacher education at the pre-service level* and Sadie Parsley & Lindsey Anderson (Newton) on *Cultural competence in pre-service and in-service teachers*. These posters will be on display at Roundtable, so please check out the student's research. Personally, I described the whole experience akin to being the coach of a national championship team with the pride and joy that I had for "my players" that day. We are certainly proud of our students and their accomplishments.

With the students taking on interesting research projects and presenting at distant locations, there are two issues that immediately spring to mind: research ideas and resources to attend the event. Research ideas, and specifically having a population to collect survey information or conduct interventions, are going to become increasingly important for our students to put together quality presentations for NASP and other conferences. Some of the topics on the minds of first year students include: student engagement, core instruction and fidelity, adoption of RtI practices, psychological well being and factors of resilience in minority students, family connectedness and pre-school achievement, school connectedness and extra-curricular participation, gender differences in self efficacy in minority populations, and relational aggression/bullies. If your school is willing to be a research site for the above questions (or others), we have a pool of interested students that are willing to help your school answer some important questions.

This brings me to my second point – resources to attend national conferences. The graduate school has been generous and allocated (on a competitive basis)

dollars to support research, but the amount going to support travel has been tougher to find. There are a number of ways that our alumni can support UW-La Crosse school psychology students. The students have organized themselves into a recognized student group on campus to conduct fundraising activities. The annual garage sale at the Dixon home is fast becoming a profitable and traditional offering. If you are close enough to La Crosse and wish to donate something for the students to sell, I am sure they will appreciate it. Future treasures are also in need of interested buyers. The students also participate in Brat Barns and have two scheduled: Friday June 5th and Sunday September 13th at Festival Foods in Onalaska (10:00am-6:00pm). Please come out and support our students! Of course, you can always provide students with a cash donation!!

Finally, I wish to bring greetings from all of us. Teresa continues to be the lifeline of the program. Please consider joining her Facebook page to allow us to stay up to date with all of you. Betty has just been promoted to Associate Professor. She has also taken this spring semester as a sabbatical to catch up on writing and her research interests with Reactive Attachment Disorder. Joci is in her second year and is also enjoying some time practicing school psychology in the Onalaska Schools. Finally, I continue to be busy presenting on RtI around the state (and beyond) as well as being a mentor to the Onalaska Schools in their reform efforts. Thank you for being part of the UW-La Crosse School Psychology Family in providing support, encouragement and a positive voice for school psychology and advocating for children.

NASP Conference by Dixie Schubert and the Second Year Students

We kicked off our trip in West Bend, WI with some celebratory drinks at a classmate's family home - just to get ourselves in the vacation, I mean conference, mindset. Our 6 a.m. flight out of Milwaukee the next day was not only early but a bit snowy. We just made it out of Milwaukee with a minor delay once on the runway as a snowstorm rolled in. Nonetheless, that afternoon we landed



in Boston to good weather!!!!

We had several days to explore Boston and celebrate a classmate's birthday before the convention began. We ambled through the city, which really allowed us to take in all the sights and scenes of the city. We stopped a couple times at Mike's Pastry for a connoli, found a few bars with drink deals, picked up souvenirs at the Quincy Market, visited Harvard, ate a lot of seafood, walked around Fenway Park, mastered the "T" (Boston's subway system), and spent some time at Cheers where everybody knew our names.

Boston certainly lived up to its reputation of being a walking city as we put on a lot miles over the course of week. To truly appreciate Boston we walked the Freedom Trail, which really allowed us to take in the city's amazing history. Along the trail we were able to see the oldest park in the country-Boston Common, commentaries that dated back to the 1600's that are the final resting place for many famous founding fathers, the Boston Massacre Site, Faneuil Hall, Paul Revere's House, the Old North Church, the site of the Boston Tea Party, the USS Constitution, and the Bunker Hill Monument. Not only did we end at Bunker Hill, but we climbed all 294 steps to the top of the monument to literally enjoy a breathtaking view of the city.

The NASP Convention got going on Tuesday and gave our legs a rest after our extensive treks through the city. As we registered we received a massive convention program that we were able to spend time each day/night paging through and planning out what presentations we wanted to go to. The overall number of presentations offered was overwhelming and needed to be tactically approached. The Keynote speaker on Wednesday, Donald Meichenbaum, gave a very entertaining, animated, and interesting presentation titled "The Nature and Development of Angry and Aggressive Behaviors: Implications for School Psychologists," which we would consider one of the conventions highlights. We were also able to meander through the exhibit halls, collect great resources, and catch sight of some of our textbook authors.

We were able to get some funding from the Graduate Student Organization at UW-L for this trip through research projects a number of us completed. We presented three research posters that included the topics: professional burnout for school psychologists, cultural competence,



and teacher education as a barrier to RtI. Presenting our research proved to be a rewarding experience as many interested conference-goers stopped to engage us in thoughtful conversation and to offer positive comments about our projects.

Overall, traveling to Boston and attending NASP was an excellent experience. It was an experience itself to be amidst thousands of school psychologists. We left Boston with many resources that will be helpful in our practice as future school psychologists, many great memories and stories, tired legs, and lots of pictures!!!

UWL Alum Named Wisconsin School Psychologist of the Year by Andy Kastner

As the Wisconsin School Psychologist of the Year Award recipient was announced, the large WSPA spring conference crowd emphatically stood for a standing ovation that would give anyone that excitement-produced chill. The award winner humbly rose from her chair, surrounded by her husband, two children, and parents and as she approached the podium, her school's principal, Dr. Troy Harcey, provided a heart-felt speech recognizing not only her accomplishments as a practitioner but also who she is as a person and what she has meant to the school district of La Crosse. Many of you may know, and others might have guessed already, but the UW-La Crosse School Psychology program is proud to announce that one of our alums, Mary Jo Snow, was awarded the 2009 Wisconsin School Psychologist of the Year Award.

Mary Jo, Class of 1980, has been a practicing school psychologist in the School District of La Crosse for 29 years. Her initial introduction into the world of education began as a child when her father was a teacher, principal, and associate superintendent in Illinois. As a senior in high school, Mary Jo held a part-time job typing psychoeducational reports using a Dictaphone and she also shredded confidential files. It was then, that she began to develop an interest and curiosity into the process of providing for and understanding student needs within the school system. Mary Jo felt that her interest in psychology and teaching would be a perfect combination for a career in school psychology.

She graduated from UW-La Crosse with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology and elementary education. Through her enjoyment of working with children, especially those with more educational support

needs and being in a supportive role for teachers and parents, Mary Jo soon realized that school psychology was the career she had a passion for.

After being in the field for 29 years I just had to know what her favorite aspects of the profession were. Mary Jo responded that she enjoys working collaboratively with colleagues, especially for the most challenging cases and during the most difficult parent meetings. She also takes pride in being a child advocate and thoroughly enjoys the time she spends directly working with students. However, that is not all....Mary Jo also stated that she has truly enjoyed her relationship with the UW-La Crosse School Psychology Program over the many years of providing supervision to practicum students, being a part-time lecturer in the Psychology department, and as a student.

Still, that isn't all...I am beginning to get the sense that Mary Jo sincerely enjoys her career as school psychologist, aren't you? She also holds dear to her heart the relationships she has developed with the other La Crosse school psychologists as she states "The humor, support, and affection we share is so awesome!" Mary Jo's colleague, school psychologist and friend, Barb Ellmann, stated "Mary Jo is a phenomenal school psychologist who holds herself to the highest standards. She makes great connections with kids and is a tireless advocate for them. She has the wonderful ability to make everyone she encounters feel valued," a sentiment that I am sure many of her colleagues would echo.

Outside of work Mary Jo enjoys spending time with her family, her husband of 31 years, John, 16-year-old daughter Alyssa, 12-year-old son, Christopher, and 5-year-old golden retriever, Copper. When she's not busy with family activities, Mary Jo enjoys sports activities, music, and reading. She also enjoys reporting that she got the great opportunity to spend her honeymoon in Graff Main Hall due to being married just two days before beginning her graduate assistantship!

Lastly, I wanted to know what being selected out of hundreds of Wisconsin school psychologists to receive this truly prestigious award meant to her. Mary Jo responded "It truly is an honor for me to be given this award and to know that my colleagues and supervisors appreciate what I do every day. I am touched and honored by this recognition." Again, the UW-La Crosse School Psychology Program would like to congratulate Mary Jo Snow for her outstanding career as a school psychologist who has utilized her skills, knowledge, and passion to provide children with an opportunity to succeed in school and in life. Best of luck at the National level.

20-, 10- & 5-year Reunion

We are continuing our tradition of encouraging graduates from certain years to attend Roundtable to see fellow classmates. This is a wonderful way to start reunions and renew friendships, fellowship, and maybe even a little “shop-talk” about how things are going for you in your schools.

20-year (1989 grads) alumni: Tim Gantz, Dan Naidicz, Barb Cesario, and Gail Quarberg.

10-year (1999 grads) alumni: Chad Berg, Dawn Bleimehl, Jill Bristow-Shandro, Tong Chen-Ward, Christy Glysch, Heidi Horton, Heather Kaiser-Hahn, Angie Sanderfoot, and Sherri Stengel.

5-year (2004 grads) alumni: Mikell Franke, Tara Hogseth, Kate Konop, Kristin Kuntz, Tasha Landwehr, Amy Menchl, Caroline Mihalski, Erin Mogensen, Terry Sorenson, Denise Van Etten, Drew Wellman, and Liz Yoder.

Ed.S. Theses Oral Defenses Completed

Leigh Kraemer, March 27, 2008, “An Examination of Teacher Resistance to Consultation with School Psychologists” – Chair: Dr. Robert Dixon, Committee: Dr. Carmen Wilson and Dr. Carol Angell.

School psychologist consultations with teachers are important for the success of students in schools. This research extends on the work Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, & Shwery (2004) in an effort to study the consultative relationship between teachers and school psychologists in the state of Wisconsin. Specifically, nine factors surrounding teacher resistance to consultation with school psychologists were examined. Approximately 450 teachers in Wisconsin completed a survey regarding consultation with school psychologists. The results provided information regarding teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of consultation, their willingness to engage in consultation with school psychologists and which of the nine factors influence consultation with school psychologists. The three main variables, of those studied, that predicted perceived effectiveness of consultation between school psychologist and teachers, as rated by the teachers, were the interpersonal and



relationship skills of the school psychologist, the school psychologist’s problem solving skills, and the teacher’s perception of their own problem solving skills. Overall, teachers in Wisconsin indicated that the interpersonal and relationship skills of their school psychologist was the main factor, of those that were addressed in this study, that predicted the number of times they consulted with the school psychologist over the course of the school year. Implications for the practice of school psychologists are discussed.

Jennifer Hall, April 16, 2008, “Teachers’ Knowledge and Attitudes Toward ADHD and Stimulant Medication” – Chair: Dr. Betty DeBoer, Committee: Dr. Carol Angell and Dr. David Reineke.

This study was designed to assess how teachers’ experience affects their knowledge and opinions toward ADHD and stimulant medication. A sample of 111 elementary teachers were surveyed. Results revealed that teachers had more knowledge than previous studies have indicated. The teachers were split in two groups for comparison based on years of teaching experience. There were no significant differences between teachers with 10 years or less experience and teachers with more than 10 years of experience for overall knowledge and opinion scores.



Talia Lehmann, April 16, 2008, “Gender Differences in the Self-Concept of Gifted and Regular Education Students” – Chair: Dr. Robert Dixon, Committee: Dr. Tracie Blumentritt and Dr. Emily Johnson.

This study examined the relationships between self-concept, gender, and age among the gifted and talented population. Previous research has indicated that gifted children exhibit special social and emotional traits which may impact their overall academic achievement. In addition, some studies have found that gifted females as they progress through adolescence may be more likely to underachieve for social reasons. This study was designed to build on prior research and to examine self-concept and how it varies by age, gender, and gifted status. Data was collected



from 106 students in the 7th, 8th, 11th, or 12th grade utilizing self-report measures. Results showed no significant interaction effects between overall self-concept and age, gender, or gifted status. There were no main effects shown between overall self-concept and age or gender, but a main effect was found between overall self-concept and gifted status. Gifted students had a higher overall self-concept than non-gifted participants. Further analysis revealed significant effects in different types of self-concept according to gender, as females were found to have higher self-concepts in the areas of Verbal Ability and Physical Appearance. Gifted students were found to have significantly higher self-concepts in the areas of Math, Verbal, Physical Appearance, General Self-Concept, Emotional Stability, Parent Relations, and General School Self-Concept. Results also revealed significant differences by age, as middle school students in the study were found to have higher self-concepts in the area of Parent Relations, while high school students in the study were found to have higher self-concepts in the area of Opposite-Sex Relations. Together with results of previous research, this study would suggest school psychologists may play a crucial role not only in identification of gifted students, but also in supporting the social, emotional, and behavioral health of this unique population.

Nicole Mundahl, April 21, 2008, “Coping Styles in Gifted and Talented Adolescents and Adolescents in Regular Education” – Chair: Dr. Robert Dixon, Committee: Dr. Tracie Blumentritt and Dr. Betsy Morgan.

This study examined the general coping style of adolescents and the differences in coping styles of students identified as gifted and talented and regular education students. Adolescence has been identified in previous research as a critical period for examining coping styles as they establish patterns that lead into adulthood. Although adolescence may be a challenging period for any student, it may be especially difficult for those students identified as gifted and talented. Significant research based arguments are made to support the position that gifted students use different coping strategies than their general ability peers. Past research also indicates gender differences in coping strategies as well as differences between developmental



levels. It was hypothesized that differences would be found in coping patterns based on gender, developmental level, and educational status. Data was collected from 106 students in the 7th, 8th, 11th, and 12th grade who attended a district located in the West Metro Suburbs of the Twin Cities in Minnesota utilizing a self-report survey instrument. Results showed no interaction effects between the independent variables of gender, developmental level, or educational status. There were main effects for gender, developmental level, and educational status. Females more frequently endorsed the coping patterns of Pro-Active Orientation, Social Activities, and Family Interaction than Males. High school students more frequently endorsed the coping patterns of Avoiding Problems, Externalizing Feelings, and Social Activities than middle school students. Lastly, regular education students more frequently endorsed the coping pattern of Social Activities than gifted and talented students.

Jeremy Ford, November 6, 2008, “Teacher Cultural Competence at an Elementary School with an Ethnically Diverse Student Population” – Chair: Dr. Jocelyn Newton, Committee: Dr. Robert Dixon and Dr. Dung Ngo.

The current study focused on self-reported levels of multicultural competence amongst teachers at an elementary school with an ethnically diverse student population.



In particular, the current study assessed levels of multicultural teaching skills and multicultural teaching knowledge as measured by the 16 item Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale (MTCS; Spanierman, et al., 2008). An independent sample t-test was used to determine if teachers rate their overall multicultural competence significantly higher than the mean of the scale. Results indicated that the teacher reported mean of overall multicultural competence on the MTCS to be significantly higher than the mean of the scale. A paired sample t-test was used to determine if teachers rated their multicultural teaching skills and their multicultural teaching knowledge differently, and results indicated that teachers reported their multicultural teaching skills to be significantly higher than their multicultural teaching knowledge.

The current study also conducted a one-way ANOVA to determine whether students differed in their

reports of teacher multicultural competence on an adapted version of the Minneapolis Public School Positive School Climate Kit, First Edition Student Survey. Results indicated that students did not vary significantly in their responses on the student survey based on their ethnicity.

Results from additional qualitative questions indicate that teachers believe the school is being culturally responsible in practice, but some incongruent teacher statements may indicate a need for further research. Student responses to qualitative questioning suggest that, regardless of ethnicity, students feel accepted at the school due to the actions of teachers and other school staff. Some responses indicate that some students, across all ethnicity groups, do not feel accepted at the school due to the observation of teacher negative characteristics.

John M. Lucente

July 12, 1917 - Nov 25, 2008

John Lucente, Class of 1975, started the School Psychology Program at UWL at the age of 54 – a second career for him. He practiced as a school psychologist at the Independence School District in Independence, Wisconsin for many years. John was a supervisor for one of our graduate students, Troy Lange, in the fall of 1987.

Missing Graduates

- Can anyone help? -

The following is a list of School Psychology graduates who are missing, along with their last known area. If you know the whereabouts of any of these people, please send their address (not just a city) or help us find their address. Any help would be greatly appreciated!!

Janice Cordes ('76), Peggy (Fischer) Kolschensky ('82, Eastern U.S.), Richard Green Bay, WI, and Wendy Guzzetta (Elko, NV).

If you know of anyone that has recently retired, please let us know.

Information to share? Call 608/785-8441 (day or night) or e-mail Teresa at znidarsi.tere@uwlax.edu. There's also facebook – look for me - Teresa Znidarsich!

UW-L 31st ANNUAL SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY ROUNDTABLE
UW-La Crosse Cartwright Center, Port O'Call (enter by the circle drive)
1741 State St., La Crosse, WI
Friday, May 8, 2009

AGENDA

- 8:00 - 8:30 Registration. Coffee and rolls served (Compliments of the School Psychology Program)
Posters of Student Research can be viewed at this time.
- 8:30 – 12:00 “A Framework for Understanding Poverty” presented by Kristi Moyer and Mary Jo Snow
How does poverty impact learning, work habits, and decision making? In the middle class world of schools, class differences create conflict and challenges for both teachers and students alike. Kristi and Mary Jo will present an overview of Ruby Payne’s Framework for Understanding Poverty:
- "Hidden rules" or social cues that differ greatly between the classes
 - Impact of economic class differences on communication, interactions, and expectations
 - Symptoms of generational poverty and how they differ from situational poverty
 - Poverty-related behaviors and mindsets that affect learning
 - Identification of the resources and strengths of any student
 - Use of mental models, mediation strategies, and cognitive structures to aid learning
 - Strategies for working with under-resourced learners and preventing middle and high school dropouts
- Kristi Moyer and Mary Jo Snow are both alumni of the UW-L School Psychology Program.
Kristi has 24 years of experience in the field of education. After working several years as a school psychologist and supervisor of special education, Kristi is currently the Director of Student Services for the School District of La Crosse.
- Mary Jo has 29 years of experience in the field of education. She is currently a school psychologist at Logan Middle and Franklin Elementary Schools in the School District of La Crosse.
In 2006, Kristi and Mary Jo completed Ruby Payne’s Training of Trainers for A Framework for Understanding Poverty. Both have continued ongoing training in this area and have offered workshops and staff development to teachers and other school staff. They are looking forward to sharing some of these ideas with all of you!
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch provided
- 1:00 – 2:45 Roundtable discussion
- 2:45 – 3:00 Closing comments

Advance Registration Form (MUST be received by Friday, May 1, 2009)

Name _____ Phone No. _____
Email: _____ Employer: _____

Advance Registration Fee is \$30.00. On-site registration is \$35.00. With the building of the stadium, parking is at a premium. If you choose to park in the lots, please go to the security building on East Ave (across from the stadium) and pick up a parking sticker -- \$2 for half a day. Otherwise, being at Cartwright Center, there should be parking available on the streets. Checks should be made payable to UW-La Crosse. Mail to School Psychology Program, 341 Graff Main Hall, UW-La Crosse, 1725 State St., La Crosse, WI 54601.

As a NASP Approved Program, UW-La Crosse program is recognized as a provider of NASP Approved Continuing Education, which can be used to renew your NCSP credentials.

Annual Alumni Fund Drive

This spring the UW-L Foundation Office will be calling alumni and asking for your continued support of the UW-L School Psychology Fund. The response last year was very encouraging and your gifts were sincerely appreciated.

We can assure you that last year's gifts were put to good use. Funds received directly benefit the School Psychology program. We are in the process of updating the technology (i.e., video equipment) for our clinic rooms that are used by the students for taping intelligence testing. Your support of these projects is greatly appreciated.

Please complete the form below and mail in the attached envelope to make your tax-deductible contribution. The School Psychology staff and students thank you for your ongoing support of our School Psychology program. This campaign is meant to complement the University's Annual Fund. Please continue to support the UW-L Foundation.

_____ Yes, I want to support the **UW-L Foundation School Psychology Fund!**

Please PRINT:

Name: _____ Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Phone: (____) _____

My School Psychology Campaign pledge is \$_____. I have enclosed \$_____

Please make check payable to the **UW-L Foundation School Psychology Fund.**

Please charge my pledge to: (Circle one) Visa Mastercard Am. Express Discover

Card # _____ Expiration Date ____ / ____

Cardholder's name _____

Cardholder's Signature _____ **Date** _____