



Promoting Parent Involvement in Assessment

Putting Parents First

by Leo R. Sandy, Ed.D.

Since 1972 I have been involved in special education child evaluation meetings, commonly referred to as staffings. In the school district where I have been a consulting school psychologist since 1984, we generally do well in working with parents. The staffings are upbeat and never rushed. School staff and parents operate on a first name basis and the climate is favorable to communication. However, improvement is always possible, and it is in the area of increasing parent involvement in staffings that I saw a need for change. It has been customary in the District for all the specialists to present their reports, usually beginning with the psychological evaluation report. The only two team members at the staffing without reports to present are the parent and teacher – the two most important people in the child’s life. The problem with this situation is the possible perception that those with reports are somehow superior to those without them. One source I read on parental involvement described parents as “senior partners”. I realized that little was done to make parents really feel like senior partners. This made me wonder how that could be done. I also felt that the classroom teacher deserved more status at the staffing. Although specialists were important people in the lives of students, they were still peripheral in comparison to parents and teachers. On that basis, I decided to do two things. One was to invite parents and teachers to present first in staffings.

Since I am the person the case manager asks to present first, I was able to control this process and immediately defer to the parent and teacher. After a while, some case managers caught on quickly and immediately and started the meeting with reports from the parent and teacher. The second thing I did was to develop a form for parents to complete (if they chose to) when they came to a staffing so that they could have a report if they wanted one. In any case, they would be invited to share their views of their child at the onset of the meeting. The form I created was developed by me, my co-teacher, Allan DiBiase, and the students in a new course I helped create at Plymouth State University called *Promoting Parent Involvement in Education*:

Home Assessment of the Child

Dear (Name of Parent(s))

The knowledge you have of _____ is important. What you share will help all of us work together more effectively. Please consider the following questions and bring your thoughts and ideas to the meeting on _____.

1. Please describe _____’s strengths and positive qualities (For example: gets along with others; likes to read; willing to try new things).
2. Please describe concerns you have

What’s inside...

President’s Message	Page 2
Editor’s Voice	Page 3
Take Time to Honor One of Our Own	Page 4
NASP Children’s Fund, Inc.	Page 5
Problems and Solutions	Page 6
Research-Based Interventions	Page 8
Working With Kids Whose Parents are Deployed	Page 9
Ask Alex	Page 9
The New Hampshire Autism Registry	Page 10
Audrey’s View	
Burning My K-ABC	Page 11

- about _____. (For example: doesn’t share well; doesn’t like to lose; can’t finish things).
3. What would you like to see your child achieve in the near future? (For example: be more independent; have friends; develop better math or reading skills; develop everyday skills).
 4. What do you feel is important for us to know about your child and family life that will help us work together? (For example: needs time to adapt; doesn’t like to do homework; recent loss in family).
 5. How can we be more helpful to you and your family? (For example: help with discipline at home; help with family routines and schedules; develop _____ better communication; transportation).

It was my intention for the parent to receive this form with other materials that go home prior to an evaluation such as the permission to test form.

Continued on page 4

Opportunities Abound Right Down the Road!!

by Raina Chick

Please don't miss the opportunity to participate in NASP's 2009 Annual Convention to be held in Boston, February 24th through 28th. Many of us have not been able to attend NASP conventions in the past, as the travel costs often are prohibitive. This year it is being held "right down the road" and NASP planned it during our winter break, which means permission for release time will not be an issue. If you still need to convince your supervisor about the benefits of attending the world's largest and most important gathering of school psychologists, NASP has developed a helpful list of ten points to help you make the case.

The NASP Convention is a great opportunity to:

1. Expand your ability to serve as a resource for your school or district.
2. Learn new approaches to improving outcomes for students and aligning your services with NCLB objectives.
3. Stay abreast of the latest research and evidence-based practices in the field.
4. Find out about current developments in federal legislation and policies, such as changes in IDEA and LD identification, and how these affect practice.
5. Acquire new strategies to address a specific problem in your school or district.
6. Build relationships with other professionals who can be a resource for information and problem-solving ideas throughout the school year.
7. Train with leading experts on current issues such as culturally competent assessment, reading interventions, response to intervention, problem solving, violence prevention, and creation of positive school environments.
8. Bring back useful information to share with colleagues in your school or district.
9. Share ideas and contribute to discussions regarding the role and future of school psychology, such as shortages,

funding, training, and emphasis on prevention and problem-solving services.

10. Rejuvenate, reenergize, and refocus on your commitment to help students do their best.

If you have never attended a NASP national conference, the format can be confusing. The "workshops" are an additional fee, and, although they are almost always superb, there is so MUCH to do without adding workshop fees. It is often possible, too, to be admitted to a workshop by offering to volunteer, which involves checking registration and handing out materials—easy! The base cost of the NASP national conference is about \$200 for a member, which works out to about \$50 a day. That's a great deal! Registered attendees will receive a catalog of simultaneous and overlapping presentations and events that boggle the mind. There are *Featured Sessions* and *Special Sessions* with nationally known presenters; there will be a *President's Special Strand*; and there are countless mini-skills workshops, symposia, panels, and poster presentations.

Don't make the mistake of missing this rare opportunity for New England practitioners. After having attended various national conferences, I can say without reservation that NASP's Annual Convention has the most to offer.

While we are on the subject of conferences, NHASP members should save the date and encourage building leaders to plan for NHASP's spring conference to be held April 8- 2009, at the Grappone Center in Concord. **Shannon Harkin** will be presenting and her topic is **RTI Means Really Terrific Instruction**. She is a professional development provider with the Heartland Area Education Agency in Johnston, Iowa, where they **really** know how to do RTI! This NHASP event is designed for all interested educators. ✨

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Editor's Voice

January Musings

by Betty Lenehan

My daughter and her husband are both teachers. About a year ago, they decided to expand their horizons beyond their cozy life in Maine and, as a consequence, they now find themselves living and teaching in The Philippines. They've made a 2-year commitment to teach at the International School Manila. Rosie teaches 5th grade and Andrew landed in middle school science and math. Their students are from all over the world—Rosie's class boasts 10 different nationalities, mostly from Asia. Their colleagues are from all over the English-speaking world, and they have bonded with several who are likely to become lifelong friends. Their new life outside of school couldn't be more different than their Maine existence. But Rosie was surprised to find that her teaching experience is not that different! I guess schools and 5th graders all over the world share a lot. They have felt a bit homesick and claustrophobic in their (albeit huge) high-rise apartment in a teeming city. But they have already had numerous travel experiences—several weekend trips to fascinating islands of the Philippines and Christmas vacation in Thailand and Laos. And just living in another culture has been a real eye opener.

The world of the international school is a fascinating one. Who knew there were international schools in virtually every country in the world numbering in the hundreds?? Most are K-12 English language schools for international students. They operate similarly to a typical private school in the US. And they even have school psychologists! When I read the newsletter of the International School

Association, I discovered the myriad of possibilities open to all educators with a sense of adventure and a master's degree. Though some folks become 'lifers' in the international school circuit (reportedly they 'get hooked' on the lifestyle), many only stay for their 2-year stint. As a result, the schools are always hiring. The opportunities are too numerous to list, but on just one page there were employment ads for The American Schools of Sao Paulo, Moscow, Tripoli, and The Hague; The International Schools of Belgrade, Islamabad, Aruba, Jakarta, Beijing, Saudi Arabia, Caracas, and Aberdeen, Scotland. The American International School of Dhaka (Bangladesh) even specifically mentioned an opening for a school psychologist! Though I don't want to spark a wholesale exodus of New Hampshire school psychologists to more exotic locales, it certainly is a fun prospect about which to fantasize during these frigid and inhospitable days of winter in New Hampshire. To further indulge the fantasy, just Google *teaching at international schools* for various relevant sites.

Speaking of escaping frigid times, my husband, Mike, and I are making the trip to Manila in March. We'll explore the city with Rosie and Andrew and spend a week on the island of Bohol, the eco-tourism hub of the Philippines. Then we've planned a week in Vietnam, where Mike 'toured' in the late-60s. I'll report back in the spring....which is just around the corner according to Phil! *

**Don't forget to
check out our website at
www.nhaspweb.org
for the most up to
date information
on upcoming
meetings, conferences
and more!**

Promoting Parent Involvement

Continued from page 1

The first time I invited parents to present first, both parents were at the staffing and the father began by sharing his views of his child. Then he invited his wife to do the same. The information they both shared took about 15 to 20 minutes but it was very comprehensive and gave a picture of the child that was most helpful in the evaluation. As the staffing proceeded, the parents seemed quite at ease and offered comments and asked questions liberally for the duration of the meeting. I also felt that they projected a sense of equality and confidence. Following another staffing, a mother told the special education director that she did not like being put on the spot by being asked to share her views of her child at the beginning of the meeting. While this does raise some questions about the blanket use of this procedure, I still feel that for the most part it is highly successful for most parents because of its democratic orientation. I have used this approach for some time and feel that it has been most effective. In summary, if we are to invite parents into the educational process, we must act in ways that facilitate it. This approach strongly supports the belief that the parent knows his or her child better than anyone else. Until educators understand this, too many parents will remain on the boundary of the educational process instead of being active, involved, and equal partners in it.

Dr. Sandy is a Professor of Counselor Education and School Psychology, as well as Coordinator of the School Psychology and Parenting Education Certificate programs at Plymouth State University, in Plymouth, NH. He is also a consulting school psychologist for the Inter-Lakes School District, a columnist for the Laconia Daily Sun, and a volunteer parent educator for the NH State Prison system. He lives in New Hampton, NH. *

Take Time to Honor One of Our Own

*by Fredye Sherr, NCSP
NHASP Past President*

Each year, the New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists solicits nominations for the *School Psychologist of the Year*. I encourage you to take a few moments to think about your colleagues whose daily work makes a positive difference in the lives of children, parents and teachers. We know there are many hardworking, dedicated school psychologists in New Hampshire who, because they travel from school to school, often do not get recognized for their efforts. Please consider nominating a school psychologist for the award if you believe he or she meets the following criteria:

- Nominee must be a member of the New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists and work primarily in New Hampshire.
- Nominee must be a practicing school psychologist, associate school psychologist or licensed psychologist who provides direct services to students, teachers and parents in school settings.
- Performs job in an exemplary manner.
- Earns respect of others and is held in high regard by fellow professionals, students, and parents.
- Has involvement or leadership in projects that contribute significantly to the school, community, or profession.

The nomination process involves first contacting your nominee to verify that he or she is a current member of our Association and then writing a one-page nomination statement explaining why the candidate should be considered for this award. Please give

examples using the above criteria. We ask that you use 10- or 12-point Courier or Arial font and that you keep an electronic copy, as required by our National Association, because the winner may be nominated for the national School Psychologist of the Year award. The nominee will then be contacted and provided with further instructions to complete the process. The winner will be recognized at the New Hampshire EDies Award event in the spring.

Nominations should be submitted by mail by April 1, 2009 to:

Fredye Sherr
14 Bowman Lane
Pelham, NH 03076

If you have questions, please contact me by e-mail at f_sherr@yahoo.com or by phone at 603-635-7822.

Don't wait. Nominate!

**Take Strides to
Make a
Difference**

**NASP 2009 Annual
Convention**

**February 24–28,
2009**

Boston, MA

NASP Children's Fund, Inc.

The NASP Children's Fund is a tax-exempt, non-profit, independent charity. The Fund accepts and disburses monies for charitable purposes that are consistent with the Fund's priorities. These include:

1. Advocating for the essential rights and welfare of all children and youth;
2. Embracing individual and group differences in children and youth based upon gender and diverse ethnic, cultural, language, and experiential backgrounds;
3. Promoting learning environments which facilitate optimal development; and
4. Producing effective interventions that address both learning and social/emotional issues that impede a child's success and happiness.

Structure

The Children's Fund is administered by a board of ten trustees elected by NASP Delegates at Delegate Assembly that occurs in conjunction with the NASP annual convention. Two representatives are elected as at-large members. Trustees serve staggered four-year terms.

Donations and Membership

Anyone may donate to the Children's Fund. The Fund accepts cash donations and gifts of goods or services for their auction at the NASP annual convention. NASP members may add a cash donation to their NASP membership application/renewal form or send a check payable to the *NASP Children's Fund* to NASP, 4340 East West Highway, Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20814. There has been some confusion in the past regarding how to become a member of CF. The easiest way to become a member is to send \$10 to Judy Martin, CF Treasurer, stating that you want to become a member. A donation alone does not constitute membership in CF. The same can be done through the NASP office as long as a statement of intent to become a member is included.

2007-08 Activities

The Fund received \$14,000 at the 2008 NASP Convention from donations and for the 5K Run. The Children's Fund also received a donation from the estate of Joanne Stroigan, a school psychologist, for \$17,000.

The Children's Fund sent out all of their plush animals to children affected by the fires and floods this year. We may be asking for plush animal donations soon!

NASP's Children's Fund will be adopting a school in the Boston area as a community outreach program. At this time we are considering extending the school's science program in some fashion. There will be more details to follow. Also look for a change in the Children's Fund Auction at the Boston convention.

In the depth of winter,
I finally learned that within me
there lay an invincible summer.

-Albert Camus

Nothing gives one person so
much advantage over another
as to remain always cool and
unruffled under all
circumstances.

-Thomas Jefferson

Be more concerned with your
character than with your
reputation. Your character is
what you really are, while your
reputation is merely
what others think you are.

-Dale Carnegie

Will you be at the NASP Convention in Boston??

Come to the Northern New
England get-together.

See old friends and meet new
ones from Vermont, New
Hampshire, and Maine in an
informal setting.

**When: Wednesday,
February 25th at 8 pm**

**Where: Champions
American Sports Bar The
Marriott Copley Place**

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS:

Improving Intervention Efficiency Through Problem Solving Methodology

by Rob Richardson

Money and time are both in short supply in schools, so inefficiencies in intervening with problem behavior must be minimized. Inefficiencies result from five sources: (1) ineffective interventions, (2) wasteful integration of services, (3) lack of systematic use of data to inform practice, (4) handling problems at the individual level when it could be handled within groups, and (5) lack of focus on a problem-solving methodology.

Ineffective interventions waste valuable time, build up behavioral immunity, and make problems more difficult to remediate as they become more ingrained and educational opportunities have been lost. Schools are largely not using evidence-based interventions. For example, in spite of meta-analysis indicating that graphing is highly effective at improving outcomes (e.g. Kavale 1999, ES = .70), a recent survey indicates that only 6% of schools are using this efficacious technique (Truscott, 2005). Instead teams generate weak interventions, such as changes in seating or counseling, or changes in placement, such as referrals to special education, that don't attempt to change classroom environmental contingencies that support problem behaviors (Truscott, 2005). Why are school teams making poor intervention choices? It results from poor knowledge of effective elements of intervening, such as matching behavior function with interventions, graphing behavior and using data to improve decision making, creating positive social support networks, and improving the quality of positive contingencies. The Tough Kid Books (Jenson & Hepworth, 2003; Rhode, Jenson, &

Reavis, 1992) are an outstanding way to put effective interventions into the hands of school personnel. Another major issue is that teachers lack a consistent, user-friendly structure, to guide intervention linked assessment and to guide improving previous interventions based on student response to those interventions.

A second reason for inefficient handling of problem behaviors is wasteful integration of behavioral support services. Often this "current practice" happens because data generated from a student's lack of response to interventions is not used when designing intensified interventions (Hawken, et al., 2008). In essence, there is a disconnect between assessment and progress monitoring data gathered for Tier 2 and what happens at Tier 3 (i.e., school teams are starting over with assessment and intervention planning vs. using existing data).

A third reason for inefficient handling of problem behaviors is poor use of data (Horner, et al., 2002). Data generated from student response to intervention should give school behavior teams a measure of problem severity and student response to the intervention. When progress is monitored and graphed, school teams get an idea of whether or not the intervention is working. Was there progress over pre-intervention conditions (baseline)? Is it enough progress?

A fourth reason for inefficient intervening is that behavior problems are frequently handled at the individual student level when they could be handled at the group level (Sugai &

Horner, 2002). That is, labor intensive individualized interventions based on functional assessment are implemented when an easier group intervention would be a sufficient level of support. There are simply too many students requiring support to be effectively handled individually given typical school resources. Consequently, schools need to prevent behaviors through solid school-wide behavior plans, and wherever possible perform research-based group interventions with students who require additional support.

A fifth reason for inefficiency is that school personnel tend to not engage in an effective problem-solving approach (Truscott, 2005). Teams of school professionals are expensive (in terms of money and time) and are all too frequently frustratingly inefficient and ineffective. These inefficiencies result from not sufficiently defining the problem to be solved, not focusing on variables that can be altered (e.g., blaming parents, disability labels), not finding a suitable way to measure whether or not progress is being made, and by agreeing with a perceived behavior expert and not thinking through drawbacks of options (i.e., "can the teacher really implement this intervention?"). Because of this lack of problem solving structure, school teams often admire ("can you believe how awful Jim was today?") rather than solve problems. A guiding structure is needed to keep school team members focused on finding solutions and not wondering into problem admiration.

The third step in the problem-solving framework is to design an intervention

Continued on page 7

Problems and Solutions

Continued from page 6

based on information gathered. This involves deciding what to do about the problem with an eye toward what to teach, how to teach it, how to enhance incentives and how to structure the environment to facilitate problem resolution. In this step, participants specify who will do what and when they will do it. It is also important at this stage to agree on how progress is going to be measured, by whom and what an acceptable improvement will look like. As part of her intervention, our first grader who bolts might receive a flashcard intervention to teach and make fluent, letter-sound associations. The fourth grader who is not earning sufficient points might need to have peer attention incorporated into the intervention for increased buy-in, might need positive and negative examples of what sorts of behaviors are acceptable, or might need to practice appropriate responses to being egged on by her friends. Perhaps the problem-solving team decides to reward the girls jointly when our problematic fourth grader meets her goal, with some social time.

The fourth step of intervention evaluation involves revisiting the problem with data in hand. Did it work? Is there still a gap between student performance and what is expected? Was the plan implemented as planned? If not, why not? What barriers were bumped into? How can barriers be removed? What can be done to tune up the plan to make it work better? Or, does the plan need to be scrapped in favor another? With our fourth grader we might find that at the end of two weeks, she is only earning an unacceptable 45% of the possible points on her DBR. We find out however that the intervention was not implemented as planned. The

teacher did not release the group of girls who were to be rewarded with social time when the goal was obtained because the teacher felt uncomfortable with rewarding a student for doing what other students did automatically without any payoff. The problem-solving team then needs to work with the teacher to relieve her discomfort or proceed through the problem-solving steps again to work out a different plan.

The problem-solving method has been shown to be effective. However like other effective practices, it is not widely used. School personnel need guidance, reminders, data with which to work, and someone who knows what to do with the data. School psychologists are in a strong position to meet these needs and promote the use of problem-solving methodology. Schools need our help. It is time to get to work!

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(This article was reprinted with permission from *The Observer*, November 2008 Issue, Utah Association of School Psychologists) *

Research-Based Interventions

Fidelity of Implementation

by Jennifer Lillenstein, NCSP

School psychologists are aware that Response to Intervention (RTI) is predicated upon the use of scientifically-based academic and behavioral interventions with a high degree of integrity and fidelity. Consequently, many of us are finding it empowering to: 1) assist school-based professionals and parents in their understanding of what constitutes “scientifically-based”; 2) help explain why the term is cited over 100 times in written legislation; and 3) assist in the development of appropriate recommendations for matching interventions to vastly greater numbers of student needs.

It is generally agreed upon that prior to the National Reading Panel’s landmark report, *Reading First* initiatives, and *No Child Left Behind* legislation, schools were much less adept at incorporating the content and instructional methods proven to work best with students learning to read. When results from the Connecticut Longitudinal Study (Shaywitz, 2004) were combined with studies from Britain and New Zealand, there was enough converging evidence to support the fact that reading difficulties exist on an unbroken continuum of severity and are mostly prevented through the use of increasingly intensive scientifically-based interventions. Because these findings and years of other converging research probably were not going to be disseminated directly to classroom practitioners, policy makers were informed and intellectual collaboration between researchers and practitioners ensued. The widespread adoption and implementation of a multi-tiered intervention framework represents one of the many collaborative ventures of vested researchers who are committed

to helping a wide array of teachers engage in daily pedagogy that meets with research-based evidence (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004).

It can be argued that while we have made some progress, there continues to be a rudimentary understanding of the language process, and pre-service training at best has only paid lip service to “the science of reading.” Unfortunately, the marketing arena has complicated matters by associating “scientifically-based” with empty promises and products all within a context of heightened ethical, fiscal, and legal implications.

That being said, school psychologists with sufficient training are uniquely positioned to assist with “fidelity of implementation” at all levels of the three-tiered model. “Fidelity of implementation” relates to: 1) exposing popular but scientifically untenable practices in reading instruction and preventative mental health practices; 2) assisting administrators and key stakeholders in the identification of truly research-based practices; 3) valid interpretation of screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment data in order to customize treatments; and 4) collaborative consultation that is aimed at ameliorating those “real world” constraints currently interfering with fidelity of instruction (whether core or supplemental). Some of these “real world” threats that can be found within the context of student population, culture, and the school improvement process include large concentrations of student needs, grouping and scheduling difficulties with students of widely varying reading levels who are in the same

class, and interactions with teachers who represent a continuum of knowledge, skills, and dispositions and who suddenly may feel de-skilled or de-professionalized.

It should be noted that Pennsylvania has fully endorsed RTI as a school improvement strategy and an alternative to the discrepancy model. School psychologists may come to learn that their most important work does not lie within the 60-day timeline, but rather with the precursory work related to establishing the feasibility, sound implementation, and viability of RTI as a promising service delivery model.

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(This article was reprinted with permission from *Insight*, the newsletter of the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania, Summer 2008 issue. Dr. Lillenstein is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist who works as a Staff Development and Training Specialist for RtI Initiatives with the Lancaster-Lebanon (PA) Intermediate Unit 13.)*

Working With Kids Whose Parents are Deployed

by Tamara Waters-Wheeler, LSW, Ed.S.

Schools and communities in many states are being impacted by the war in Iraq and the deployment of soldiers away from their families. The effects are more significant for some individuals because of their emotional closeness to soldiers being sent abroad. Without a doubt, you will be called to work with one of the children of these soldiers, either directly or indirectly. Below are some tips to help you along:

1. Acknowledge the children's feelings—don't try to minimize or tell them that everything will be all right, because we don't know that.
2. Organize parents in the school, for example the PTO, and suggest they provide a dinner for the family once a week/month.
3. Find students who are called to do community service through a club/religious group. Suggest that they baby-sit for the family to give the parent who is "single parenting" a break for a few hours.
4. Monitor television and discussion in the classroom. Stick to the facts.
5. The child may need a 504 Plan for temporary accommodations to deal with situational emotional issues.
6. Contact parents frequently to let them know you are doing your best to help them keep things stable at school and home.
7. If a child is highly anxious regarding the possibility of terrorism or loss of a loved one, meet with the family to develop a plan.
8. Encourage the child to talk to you, the school counselor, or another caring adult.
9. Encourage the classroom teacher to incorporate the deployed soldier into class activities. For example, for language arts the kids could write letters to the soldier and his unit. For a community service project, they could collect items for a care package.
10. Children of deployed soldiers may need some extra one-on-one time. Set up temporary mentors through the high school, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, or even social services, if necessary.
11. Connect the at-home parent with others close to deployed soldiers or even with other people who might be able to help with transportation to school or activities.
12. Encourage the parent who is home to attend the family support groups/activities offered by the military. If you have several families of deployed soldiers at your school, you may want to setup your own support group.
13. Organize a school lyceum honoring deployed soldiers.

These are just a few ways to help the military families in your school adjust. Above all, remember that they are going through significant emotional changes during this period. Continue communication with the parents who are stateside and let them know if their children are experiencing difficulties.

Ask Alex

by Alex Thomas, Ph.D., NCSP
Professor Emeritus, Miami (Ohio) University

Q: What advice would you offer to students, interns, and those new to the field?

A: My first suggestion would be to not heed unsolicited advice, of which this response is a prime example. That said.....

The answer is "yes," now what do you want me to do? When you are new, say yes to everything during the year or so it takes to get your bearings. You will soon learn on whom you can rely, who you can trust, who are the energetic caring folk, who are the deadbeats. Don't you be a deadbeat by saying "no" when asked to participate. "Yes" is the best response to make in the beginning. Play nice in the sandbox.

No good deed goes unpunished. Just understand that any good thing you do, any new initiative, any action that has not been done before, will garner some negative reaction. It is the way of the world. In two years, those folks who questioned what you were doing will be your biggest supporters, but understand resistance to innovation comes with the territory. This too will pass. If you want appreciation now, call your parents or plead with your spouse.

Whether the glass hits the rock or the rock hits the glass, it's not so good for the glass. Appreciate that power relationships exist in every school and you need to understand them. The principal on paper is the instructional leader but there are one or more teachers in the building that can make things happen or see that things do not happen. Understanding politics at the school building level is essential to being an effective school psychologist. As a newbie, understand that you are the glass.

Friends come and go, enemies accumulate. Regardless of your best intentions, your most earnest efforts, or the saintliness of your virtue, there will be some people who simply will not like you, nor will they ever like you regardless of how much you try. Be courteous, treat them with respect, and continue to do what you do. Move on.

In the desert, it is dry and hot. Do not complain, whine, or moan about professional issues over which you have no control and will have no influence. Use that energy to focus on those issues where you do have influence. If you are in a desert, don't complain about the heat and how thirsty you are. Hey, you are in a desert—what do you expect? Identify professional deserts and spend your energy and time in the professional oases.

Under promise and over deliver. When all is said and done, there is more said than done. Don't tell everyone what your plans are, do what your plans are. Actions do speak louder than words. A doer is always appreciated more than a talker.

(Reprinted with permission from *MASP Matters*, Fall 2008, Maine Association of School Psychology.)

The New Hampshire Autism Registry:

What Does it Mean for Us?

In response to concerns with the increasing incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), the New Hampshire Legislature, in early 2008, approved He-M 501, a rule establishing and implementing a state autism registry. The rule requires all health care and other providers who are qualified to make a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder to record their findings when a new case of ASD is diagnosed in a New Hampshire resident.

The purpose of this registry is to improve current knowledge and understanding of ASD, and to allow the conducting of thorough and complete epidemiologic surveys of the disorder. The collected data can then be analyzed in order to facilitate planning for services for children and adults with ASD and their families. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, as a result of the bill, has established this online Autism Registry, in order for providers who diagnose new cases of autism to register their findings.

The impetus for the NH Registry originally came from the parents of children and young adults with ASD. Nationally — and in NH — it appears that the incidence of ASD is increasing. Public agencies that provide services to children, teens and adults with ASD have been supportive of the NH Registry: Over time this database will be an invaluable tool in planning for the future needs of the ASD population. Because the NH Registry tracks patterns in diagnostic assessment, it will also help public health officials to determine how well NH is doing in meeting the important goals of universal screening and early identification.

Our understanding of the prevalence of ASD has evolved in recent years. For decades, autism was believed to occur in 4 to 5 per 10,000 children. In 2004, however, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) partnered with the American Academy of Pediatrics to issue an Autism A.L.A.R.M. At that time, several studies indicated that prevalence rates were between 2 and 6 per 1000, or as high as 1 in 166 children.

Still more recently, the CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network released data that found about 1 in 150 eight-year-old children in multiple areas of the United States had an ASD. Since the ADDM sites do not represent a nationally representative sample, the prevalence estimates should not be generalized to every community in the United States. Although accurate for the areas studied, rates may be higher or lower in other parts of the country.

In recent years, there has been a great deal of public interest in the prevalence and incidence of ASD in the United States. Studies from California have suggested an increase of 273% from 1987 to 1998. This alarming news captured the attention of national media and the United States Congress. In 2001, Congressman Chris Smith (R-New Jersey) stated, "it is not an exaggeration to say that autism spectrum disorders may be the silent epidemic of our time....It is silent because there are currently no operational autism registries in the nation to tell us how many people actually have autism."

New Hampshire is the second state in the nation to establish a legislatively mandated, state-wide registry for ASD. A unique public health initiative, the NH Registry not only counts the number of new cases, but tracks the average age at which a definitive diagnosis is made. As other states follow with similar registry procedures, our combined efforts will help us understand more about the incidence of this challenging condition and how healthcare systems can best insure early and proper identification.

Reporting

Under He-M 501.02 (f), reporting is mandatory for "any physician, psychologist, or other licensed or certified health care provider who is qualified by training to make the diagnosis of ASD." This would include pediatricians, family physicians, psychiatrists, neurologists, licensed clinical psychologists, and social workers.

Clinicians must report using the electronic form on the [NH ASD Registry web site](#).

For purposes of this registry, ASD is understood to include all five of the Pervasive Developmental Disorders: Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Asperger Syndrome, Retts Disorder, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD). The confirmed diagnosis must be one of these diagnoses, as per the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR). Additional eligibility criteria apply:

1. The NH Registry applies to all cases where a definitive diagnosis has been made. Suspicion of ASD and provisional diagnoses should not be reported.
2. Diagnoses made prior to November 1, 2008 should not be reported.
3. The person with the disorder must also live in the state of New Hampshire at the time the diagnosis was made to be considered for the NH Registry for ASD.
4. The age of the individual and the presence of co-occurring conditions do not rule out the requirement to report the diagnosis.

For New Hampshire school psychologists, this mandatory reporting requirement poses several tough questions. While we are deemed 'qualified examiners' for making an educational diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders according to Special Education law, are we truly qualified to make a definitive initial diagnosis when we encounter a child who fits the diagnostic criteria, but has not already been diagnosed? Furthermore, how do we deal with informed consent issues to let parents know that if the evaluation should lead to one of the ASD diagnoses, we are required by law to report it to the Autism Registry? Those questions and others will be addressed by a NHASP task force that is forming under the leadership of Peter Whelley. If you are interested in getting involved, contact Peter at pwhelley@verizon.net. *

Audrey's View

Burning My K~ABC

by Audrey Myerson O'Neill

Time to get rid of the old tests and confidential records. This goes beyond housecleaning, into ethics.

Ted Feinberg, NASP Ethics Committee, was available by phone. He said you have to see confidential materials destroyed with your own eyes, you can't just give them to someone else to destroy, or put them into the landfill at the dump.

I tried shredding records, but it didn't really work for so many. A one-page-at-a-time home shredder is not up to the job. I am a member of an organization that performs services for the local public library, and the librarian agreed to shred some records. I didn't let her know how many there really were. She insisted in doing it herself lest I also shred my hands. The volume ratio of shreds to paper is huge. A few records created a large bagful, and she had to keep hauling them off and installing more bags. A friend who works at Plymouth State University told me of someone there who has a superdeluxe shredder, and told me the magic words to gain access, but it was more of the same. I hadn't the heart to go back to either place.

There is a place nearby that grinds up paper. They helped me out once, but someone has to haul the stuff up several steep flights of stairs, and I had to climb up to see it destroyed. They were not happy to see me, and said, "Don't tell your friends about this."

Absolute Data Destruction in Goffstown is a possibility, but they charge \$50 a box if you take it there yourself and \$75 to pick it up.

The dump, now called the Recycling Center, has a bin for office paper. A neighbor who works there said it gets baled and shipped to China (I'm not making this up), where it is supposed to be ground up eventually to make

more paper. That seems like a very long, unreliable string.

When the environmentalists say there is no away to throw things, they are almost right. Some of the records completely overwhelmed a neighbor's woodstove, and the ashes had to be removed before it could be used again. The old pegmill with a wood furnace has been replaced by a resort and spa with a more up-to-date heating system.

Tests are even more complicated. Colleague Jonas Taub suggested sending them overseas in an article in the *Protocol*, Summer 2006 issue. I don't have the computer skills to do that, and the post office said those dollar-a-pound bags for shipping abroad no longer exist. I wished I had kept the card a psychologist from abroad gave me at the International School Psychology Association convention in New Hampshire in July, 2000.

Ted Feinberg said it's all right to throw the test blocks into the landfill; the men who work at the dump aren't going to play with them. A colleague suggested a creative way to get rid of jigsaw-type puzzles: throw one piece away at a time, each in a separate bag of trash. That way no one can practice putting them together.

The Plymouth State University library was willing to take several tests for their test collection. That left the K-ABC.

A friend offered to burn everything in an old oil drum. It is legal in this area to build a fire in a container, but check with your fire department first.

Burning a contemporary test takes preparation. Several editions ago, tests were mostly paper, and the manual's ring binder could be separated in the back to remove the pages. The newer manuals have plastic-coated tabs that look as if they would give off toxic fumes, and the ring binder is a

continuous spiral.

I carefully cut off everything that looked plastic-coated, and stood in the garage with sidecutters, needle-nose pliers, and safety goggles, cutting each turn of the binder spiral, and pulling each out with the pliers. This is humiliating even though no one can see you. I am willing to do this kind of putzy-ing to keep my house in repair, but not to get rid of a psych test that cost \$300 and would cost \$500 to replace with the new edition. I paid to get it, and should not have to pay again in time and effort to get rid of it.

My friend enjoyed burning the stuff and poking the thick records and test materials with a metal rod. I enjoyed watching the fire, but part of it was the feeling, "There it finally goes."

Test publishers have been making tests that are bigger, heavier, fancier, and more expensive than necessary. Carrying two of the earlier tests at once was not a problem, but as a small person, I have difficulty lugging the more recent ones around. This present development in tests is part of the expensive consumer goods movement since the 80's. Perhaps the current economic retrenchment, which has made it socially acceptable to say "I got it at the Goodwill" (the jacket, not the test), will also see a return to tests that are easier to carry, less expensive, and more combustible.

Publishers too have an ethical responsibility. If they are going to sell us tests that are difficult to dispose of, then buying a test ought to include a way to get rid of it. When we are done with a test, we should be able to ship it back to the publisher at little or no expense so they can deal with the problem they have created for us.

*Audrey Myerson O'Neill is a school psychologist and a frequent contributor to the Protocol. She lives in Plymouth, NH. **

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PRST STD
US POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 31
Concord, NH 03301

The New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists publishes the Protocol, its official publication, four times a year and distributes it to members as a membership benefit. We also send copies to all superintendents of schools in New Hampshire and to members of the NASP newsletter editors' network. NHASP's goals are to serve the education and mental health needs of New Hampshire children.

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Deadlines for Submission

Upcoming issues of Protocol will have the following deadlines for submission of articles, news and announcements:

<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Issue</u>
April 15	Spring
July 15	Summer
October 15	Fall