

International School Psychology: an excuse to visit China

Marco Polo called Hangzhou, the site of the 2003 International School Psychology Association summer colloquium, "Paradise on Earth." With this endorsement, who wouldn't want to take the opportunity to travel to a country that overwhelms our imagination.

ISPA colloquia give participants a chance to see parts of the world they might otherwise never visit, and they offer a chance to learn how school psychology is practiced around the world. Some 300-400 people attend each colloquium. In 2002, they came from 35 countries, and 2003 promises the same. Each colloquium is organized by ISPA members from the host country in conjunction with the ISPA executive board. Professional development opportunities are many and varied, but the chance to network with other professionals and learn about the host country's culture and history are other attractions that draw school psychologists. And once

you've attended one colloquium, you'll want to come back for more! The dates for the 2003 colloquium are July 28-August 1.

Although you might think that travel to China is very expensive, in fact, you can travel there for no more than you might spend to travel to Europe in the summer. And once in China, costs are phenomenally cheap travel, food, and

Surgeon General (from p. 7)

pointed by the previous administration." At the time, Satcher said, "We try to make very clear what's needed to improve sexual health and what's supported by the science."

During his four year term, Satcher issued reports on reducing tobacco use, smoking among women, youth violence and oral health. His focus on suicide and mental health resulted in plans for suicide prevention and the promotion of ap-

propriate care for the mentally ill. lodgings are all far less expensive than what one would pay for a comparable experience either in the US or in Europe.

Interested? Please check out the ISPA website to learn more (www.ispaweb.org). To obtain a copy of the registration materials (available in December) please contact the Local Organizing Committee (LOC@ispa-china.org).

propriate care for the mentally ill.

Satcher's confirmation in 1998 was opposed in the Senate by then-senator John Ashcroft, R-MO., who is now Bush's attorney general.

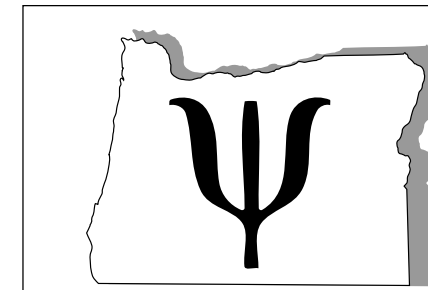
Dr. Satcher has recently been appointed as Director the new National Center for Primary Care at Morehouse School of Medicine. Dr. Satcher did not ignore mental health. Let's hope during his successor's tenure that it (mental health) doesn't go away. As the saying goes, "Mental Health...Ignore it, and it may go away."

Oregon School Psychologists Association



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The Oregon School Psychologists Association provides leadership in creating a brighter future for all Oregon children through professional affiliation, collaborative problem-solving, and promotion of practices that are both innovative and based on solid psychological and educational research.



OSPA Bulletin

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Fall 2002

Carmel Hanes Named "Outstanding School Psychologist"

Carmel Hanes was recognized as Oregon's Outstanding School Psychologist for the year, in an award presentation at the OSPA fall conference in October. The OSPA board received glowing letters of support from both fellow professionals and supervisors for Hanes' work over the years. She works for Willamette Education Service District. The award was presented by OSPA president Alex Granzin.

Hanes was described by her supporters as organized, approachable and dedicated to the students and families that she serves. Her thoughtful contributions to the peer review process were noted, as were her writing skills. She has assisted the Willamette ESD by preparing an overview of Functional Behavioral Assessment and by developing a comprehensive guide to writing statements of adverse educational impact in IDEA evaluation reports.

Testifying to Hanes's skills as a mentor, Shelly Starkey traveled from Salem to help honor her colleague at the award presentation. Starkey spoke of the value of Hanes's mentorship and

of the esteem in which Hanes is held by both building administrators and teachers. She praised her thoughtful interventions with children, her availability to work with staff, and her kind and caring nature. In closing her introduction, Starkey warmed the audience by reading letters of support written by students with whom Hanes has worked; and then Starkey presented her with a wand and a

tiara.

OSPA president Granzin commented that "Carmel Hanes has clearly established a record of outstanding service to children, parents and staff in the Willamette Education Service District. She has contributed to the development of fellow professionals, supported inter-agency collaboration, worked effectively with teachers and students, and in general set a high standard for the practice of school psychology."

In addition to her work with her local school district, Hanes has also served her state association, in the capacity of OSPA secretary in the late 1990s. Executive board members remember her promptness at typing up minutes of meetings and getting them distributed, and her considered contributions to board discussions.

As one of Hanes's students commented: "Happiness is working with YOU."



OSPA President Alex Granzin awards plaque to Carmel Hanes

Edgefield Fall Conference Gets High Marks

Oregon school psychologists, joined by nine of their colleagues from the state of Washington, gathered at McMenam's Edgefield Manor in October for one of OSPA's largest fall conferences ever. Some 130 individuals registered for the event, of which 110 were present for the Thursday sessions. There were 85 attendees for Friday presentations.

Conference planners Vinny Martin (Forest Grove) and Mark Downing (Portland) had put together a varied program of nationally known and local presenters,

including a panel of school psychology trainers and students from Oregon school psychology training programs. Panel members discussed similarities, differences, and general goals in their programs.

Other presentations during the two days discussed the issues of "Improving School Psychology's Impact" that included past OSPA presidents Karen O'Brien (Roseburg) and Steve Haskell (Central Point); NASP's "Blueprint II for Training and Practice," with Alex Tho-

mas; and an open-mike/panel discussion on professional issues with Phil Bowser (Roseburg) and Fred Grossman (Beaverton).

The highest marks in evaluations for individual presentations went to former NASP president Alex Thomas's reprise presentation on the effectiveness of "Chicken Therapy" in the work of school psychologists, and an open-mike/question-answer session featuring attorneys Connie Bull (Portland Public Schools)

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presidential perspective



As the leaves begin their show display of fall color and the days become shorter and cooler, referrals are beginning to pile up on my desk, my pager has been buzzing all day, and I know that yet another school year is fully underway. Each year I return from my summer vacation well rested, well read and full of curiosity and enthusiasm about the new year. And, as is often the case within a few short weeks, if not days, the

peace of summer gives way to the stress of fall. Like many of you I returned to over crowded and sometimes understaffed classes, teachers who are often frustrated by the large numbers of students they must serve, and parents hoping for and sometimes demanding services and accommodations that are difficult if not impossible to provide. In addition, the state's fiscal woes have had a substantial impact on both school districts and other agencies that provide services to families and their children. In spite of all this, it's great to be back. In spite of all the shortages and constraints and in spite of the threat of more to come there remains the prospect of having a positive impact on students that are struggling with a variety of issues. There is also the prospect of working daily with a host of professionals that care deeply about children and who are committed to making a difference in their lives. You don't have to be a Pollyanna to see the silver lining in this cloud, but if you don't see the cloud, you probably aren't looking.

The challenges that most of us face as we return to our districts this fall are quite real. Deficits in school funding, decreases in mental health services for children, and the prospect of changes in IDEA that may impact the way we conduct certain assessments are some of the more substantial difficulties that we are likely to face. While it would be understandable to feel somewhat discouraged and powerless in the face of these substantial challenges there remains much that we can do as individuals and as members of OSPA. One of the most important ways in which we can help ourselves, each other and our clients face these challenges is through our support of each other and through our participation in ongoing professional development. Toward that end OSPA offers each of us the opportunity to work together with other school psychologists and to participate in a variety of ongoing professional development activities. By providing quality conferences, establishing links with state and national organizations, publishing a newsletter and maintaining a website, OSPA provides its members with a host of opportunities to expand their knowledge and collaborate with colleagues.

The quality of professional development OSPA is able to provide as well as opportunities for professional collaboration depend on the efforts and energy of members who volunteer their time and knowledge. We are fortunate to have members like Vinny Martin and Mark Downing, whose efforts are responsible for the Fall Conference at McMenamins, Bulletin Editor, David

Streight, whose efforts provide our membership with an informative and engaging newsletter on a regular basis and Phil Bowser, who is responsible for the development and maintenance of the OSPA website. There are other members such as Karen O'Brien whose tireless efforts help us maintain a close link with our national organization and other regional state organizations and Steve Haskell who has provided a critical link to the political activities in Salem that have such a dramatic impact our practice. In addition, there are members such as Brian Craig, Membership Chair, Colleen Caulfield, Treasurer and Sirena Brown, Secretary who have executed functions that are absolutely critical to OSPA. Each of these individuals is actively involved in providing you with opportunities to expand your skills and increase your knowledge in areas critical to the practice of school psychology. The time and energy that these dedicated professionals have donated to OSPA constantly impress me. And while each of these individuals devotes a substantial amount of time to OSPA it isn't necessary for you to make that sort of commitment in order to join us. There are a variety of ways in which you can contribute to our efforts, e.g., assisting with some aspect of preparing for and putting on a conference or continuing education activity, contributing an article or newsworthy item to the Bulletin, contributing to the website, or even through the simple act of encouraging your colleagues to join OSPA. Of course, if you're interested in a more substantial commitment I'd be delighted to hear from you.

The practice of school psychology offers us the opportunity to participate in a broad range of activities that offer substantial benefits to schools and the children and families that they serve. Each day we are likely to encounter diverse situations that require an array of skills, highlighting the fact that to practice effectively, we must be well trained and well informed. I hope that you will join us in our efforts to create a strong state organization that is a genuine resource for its members, one that will support its members efforts to practice effectively and to provide the best possible services to the children they serve

Alex Granzin

NASP Convention 2003

Toronto, Ontario April 8-12
see NASP Delegate Article, p. 3

Edgefield (from p. 1)

and Diane Wiscarson. Wiscarson works in private practice as an advocate for children and families with special education issues. Marks were far above the level of "satisfaction" in all areas, according to evaluation forms filled out and handed in.

Downing and Martin rounded out the program with some "fun," too. Portland musician Dan Balmer and his trio were present Thursday evening, offering participants a chance to "jam" with them; and Friday closed with a nine-hole par 3 golf tournament on the Edgefield course.

After expenses, the event earned just short of a thousand dollars.

Review article: The Prevention of Reading Difficulties

by Jennifer Kingsley

"The Prevention of Reading Difficulties," *Journal of School Psychology*, Volume 40, Issue 1, January-February 2002, pages 7-26.

Written by Joseph K. Torgesen, a professor in the Dept. of Psychology at Florida State University, this article describes practical methods to prevent reading failure based on the knowledge acquired to date on reading growth. The article outlines facts about reading relevant to the prevention of reading difficulties, the importance of reading comprehension and the skills required to reach that goal, and common causes of early reading difficulties. In addition, the article provides instructional methods to help prevent reading difficulties, including elements for regular classroom instruction and for children at risk for reading difficulties.

Explicit and systematic instruction in beginning word reading skills are recommended for students felt to be at-risk for reading difficulties. Intensive instruction is also recommended through the use of peer-assisted learning strategies (specifically the Class Wide Tutoring model) and


small group instruction (3-4 children) in addition to the regular classroom instruction. Lastly, instruction should be supportive. This is described as carefully "scaffolded" instruction.

One type of scaffolding involves teaching systematically and practicing skills required for any task students are asked to do. Another type of scaffolding involves teacher-student dialogue to work through the processing of completing a task (e.g. student tries to spell the word "flat" and does so incorrectly, teacher says, "When you say that word, what does it say?" student responds, "fat," teacher asks, "When you say "flat" what do you hear coming right after the beginning sound /f/?") This interactive dialogue continues until the student is led to accomplish the task successfully.

Schools that have implemented a preventive reading program are described in the article, as are their statistical outcomes. The author briefly discusses identification of students in need of preventive instruction before concluding that "We must work more effectively to insure that classroom teachers acquire the skills and knowledge to teach reading to

children who do not learn easily. We must work to develop and institute procedures to identify children in need of extra instruction in a timely and accurate manner. Finally, we must work to find sufficient instructional resources to provide more intensive, explicit, and supportive instruction to the children who need it."

The recommendation I found most interesting in this article was the use of the ClassWide Peer Tutoring model. The ClassWide model engages all students in the class by having each student participate in being both a tutee and a tutor. For instance, students in a fourth grade class tutor students in a second grade class, who then tutor a Kindergarten class. Students would need to go through training on how to be a tutor that includes being tutored themselves.

More information on this model can be found in the ERIC Digests (www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed362506.html) and the full text of the article on preventive instruction can be found on the online version of the *Journal of School Psychology* (link located through www.sciencedirect.com). 

What a Difference the Surgeon General Can Make

By Vinny Martin, NCSP, Oregon Health Care Coordinator to NASP

For most of us, the most important decision we make during our lifetime is the significant other with whom we choose to spend our time. The decision about whom to vote for as President of the United States is somewhere down the list and we have virtually nothing to say about who becomes Surgeon General, unless of course we consider our vote for President (who appoints the Surgeon General) as significant, which it is.

President George Bush has appointed Richard Camona as David Satcher's successor. Tommy Thompson, Health and Human Services Secretary, characterized Camona as "a dynamic leader... as a medi-

cal professor at the University of Arizona, he was responsible for developing and implementing the weapons of mass destruction, anti-terrorism, preparedness and consequences management plans for the university and community at large." Secretary Thompson has also praised (on the HHS website) outgoing Surgeon General Satcher, but without specific mention of the fact he was the first Surgeon General to focus on suicide and mental health issues. There appeared to be significant differences between the former Surgeon General and the current appointee, in large part reflective of political agendas.

David Satcher was reported in an AP article to rankle the White House last

summer when his office released a report that found no evidence could be found showing that the teaching of sexual abstinence in schools is successful. It called for schools to encourage abstinence among students but also to teach birth control techniques. Also, the report found no evidence that a gay person could become heterosexual. The report drew criticism from the White House and political conservatives demanded Satcher's resignation.

While Satcher was merely reporting the research, Ari Fleischer, a spokesperson for the Bush White House said, "The president understands the report was issued by a surgeon general that he did not appoint, a surgeon general who was ap-

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LD (from page 5)

tive to current practice is deemed premature. Instead Torgesen, like Gresham, recommends a response-to-intervention model that includes:

- Identifying children at risk for learning disabilities in kindergarten and first grade, and providing these children with intense high quality preventative instruction.
- 4- Carefully monitoring their response to instruction using frequent repeated measures.
- 4- Assigning the specific learning disabilities (SLD) label to those children in third grade who continue to achieve below a criterion level.

Kavale, in his paper "Discrepancy Models in the Identification of Learning Disabilities," provides an exhaustive review of discrepancy models from their inception in the early 1960's to the present. He argues for the importance and legitimacy of ability/achievement discrepancy as one, but not the sole criterion for the identification of specific learning disabilities. He notes that the statistical and psychometric challenges to discrepancy models can be overcome by using models that incorporate standard scores and regression to the mean effects. Research is presented that suggests that ability/achievement discrepancy can be used to distinguish learning disabled and low ability populations. The author strongly defends the continued use of discrepancy models and cautions against the elimination of ability/achievement discrepancy as a factor in the determination of learning disabilities.

MacMillan and Siperstein, in their paper "Learning Disabilities as Operationally Defined by Schools," present powerful evidence that the manner in which public schools interpret and implement the federal definition of SLD results in significant levels of over-identification. These authors contend that subjectivity inherent at all levels of the identification process from teacher referral to placement deliberations results in high levels of false positive identifications. Additional pressure for SLD identification comes from reluctance on the part of placement teams

to identify children using eligibility categories that may have acquired negative connotations, i.e. mental retardation, emotional disturbance. Additionally, the authors present evidence that placement teams routinely fail to use the "exclusionary criteria" in the definition but instead focus on a student's absolute low achievement. Little consideration is given to factors such as "lack of instruction," poor academic motivation, low general ability, and environmental disadvantage as explanatory factors in the eligibility decision. Like several of the previous papers, these authors recommend strategies to address these concerns that center around repeated assessment of students' response to effective instruction and intervention as a viable alternative to current practices.

As one of the organizations that comprise the National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), NASP has been invited to respond to the papers and to make recommendations regarding LD. Of the five areas to be addressed by OSEP (Eligibility Criteria, Identification Process, Professional Development, Intervention and the Nature of LD), NASP has chosen to respond to Eligibility Criteria and the Identification Process. As described in the insert to the March, 2002 Communique, NASP recommended that the LD identification process should include methods of assessment that are closely linked to interventions for academic problems, such as curriculum-based assessment and the evaluation of marker variables, e.g. phonological processing. Perhaps reflecting the diversity of opinions among its members, the NASP position did not include a blatant call for the elimination of the IQ-achievement discrepancy, but stated that the discrepancy should be determined through "collaborative clinical judgment" rather than through a formula. It also asserted that measures of cognitive ability could still be used for other purposes, e.g. identify students' strengths and weaknesses. NASP also indicated the utility of methods to assess response to intervention, and particularly mentioned the instructional support team (IST) as a preferred approach to pre-referral intervention.

Questions about the discrepancy approach have also been raised in *The School Psychologist* (APA's Division 16 newsletter) by Dumont, Willis and McBride (Winter, 2001) and in *Phi Delta Kappan* by Sternberg and Grigorenko, (December, 2001). In the latter article, the authors declare that, "We should immediately stop using discrepancy scores to identify children with learning disabilities" (p. 338).

Most significant of the current challenges to LD, and especially to the viability of the IQ-achievement discrepancy, are the public statements of Robert Pasternack, the current Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Remedial Services (OSERS) in the Department of Education, and President Bush's senior advisor on special education. In a high profile, and possibly historic, presentation at the recently concluded NASP Convention, Pasternack, a certified school psychologist, asserted that the preponderance of the research indicates that the discrepancy approach should be eliminated. "LD is real," Pasternack remarked, "but the way it is identified is fatally flawed."

We are clearly in the midst of a period during which some basic assumptions about LD and the way it is assessed are being questioned. It is unclear at this point where this controversy will lead, but it now seems possible, if not inevitable, that the operational definition of LD may change in the forthcoming reauthorization of IDEA. If the discrepancy approach is eliminated in favor of other identification procedures, it will signal not only a change in procedures for school psychologists, but also a revised way of conceptualizing the construct itself. ■

Got Time?

to help your state association
help serve the children
and families
of Oregon?

email Alex Granzin at
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from the Nasp Delegate

Membership: I invite you to join NASP if you are not already a member. NASP is the only national association that promotes and supports school psychologists. There are many benefits: a member's only section on the website, discounts on publications, the monthly *Communique*, and *School Psychology Review*, just to name a few. You can join NASP on the web or contact me for an application.

The Futures Conference will be November 11-14, 2002. Invited speakers and participants will discuss the future of school psychology. OSPA's Brian Craig (Klamath Falls) will be one of the participants. The conference can be viewed on the internet or at remote sites. If you are interested in watching the presentations or reading the materials you can get the information at <<http://www.indiana.edu/~futures/>>.

The NASP CONVENTION will be April 8-12, 2003 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. If you plan to attend you will need either a passport or government issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license) and an official copy of your birth certificate. The conference committee is looking for

conference volunteers to help with workshops, assist with poster sessions, help out at the volunteer booth or publications booth. You must be a NASP member and you can sign up to volunteer on the Members Only section of the NASP website.

Position Papers: NASP is currently working on a position paper for Large Scale ("High Stakes") Assessment. Other position papers and statements to help you in your work can be found on the website under the heading NASP and School Psychology.

NASP positions on changes for the next reauthorization of IDEA including the identification of Learning Disabilities are on the website (Advocacy section).

You can comment on the Respecialization Project document that outlines the standards people in other related fields must meet in order to become school psychologists. This document is on the NASP webpage in the Members Only section. Comments are due by November 2002.

NASP's website is at <www.naspweb.org>; or contact me at <kobrien@roseburg.k12.or.us> or 541-247-2740 (H).

TSPC changes requirements for continuing school psychologists

Here's the new wording, approved in September, 2002 (584-070-0221):

Upon filing a correct and complete application in form and manner prescribed by the commission, a qualified applicant shall be granted a Continuing School Psychologist License. This license is issued for five years and is renewable repeatedly under conditions specified below. It is valid for school psychology at all age or grade levels, for substitute counseling at any level, and for substitute teaching at any level in any specialty.

(1) To be eligible for a Continuing School Psychologist License, an applicant must have completed, beyond the initial graduate program in school psychology, an advanced program in psychologist competencies consisting of at least six semester hours or nine quarter

hours of graduate credit or the equivalent. If credit is not awarded directly by an institutional program for continuing licensure approved by the commission, all advanced psychologist competencies must be validated through assessment by an approved professional development program offered by an institution, an employer, or the two working together. Exceptionally, the applicant may qualify for waiver of that institutional or employer assessment of advanced competencies in one of two ways:

(a) By obtaining a current National School Psychology Certificate awarded by the National Association of School Psychologists; or

(b) [b]By having a regionally accredited doctor's degree in educational or clinical or counseling psychology.



The *OSPA Bulletin*, the official publication of the Oregon School Psychologists Association, is published four times a year and distributed to members as a membership benefit. OSPA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational association of professional school psychologists. It is dedicated to providing for the educational and mental health needs of all children and to advocating for their achievement of independence, dignity, and purpose of life.

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The *OSPA Bulletin* invites contributions. Professional issues and news, articles, questions, reviews, letters and graphic works should be sent to David Streight, 7735 SW 87th, Portland OR, 97223, or <streight@rsiss.net>. Changes of address should be sent to Brian Craig, Membership Chairperson, 2727 Old Fort Road, Klamath Falls, OR, 97203, or <bcraig@cvc.net>.

Bulletin deadline for next issue:
January 7, 2003

Is the LD Discrepancy Dead?

by Joseph F. Kovalski & Richard E. Hall

(Editors note: this article is reprinted with permission from InSight, the newsletter of the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania)

In 1977 the first author took a graduate course that was an advanced seminar in learning disabilities (LD). As a final "exam," there was a guided summary discussion of the status of LD as of that date. It was only two years since the enactment of PL 94-142, and while the concept of LD had been around for almost 15 years, it was already a controversial topic. In fact, the very last part of the "exam" was a gladiator-style thumbs-up or thumbs-down on the viability of the construct. The lions won.

Regardless of the fragile nature of LD, it has become a standard of special education practice. Today more than 3 million American school children receive special education under that category. The great majority of students receiving special education are considered LD. This proliferation has occurred in the face of disagreements over theoretical, legal, and procedural aspects of the construct. During the 1980's, for example, the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities (IRLD) at the University of Minnesota published a number of monographs that, among other findings, revealed that students with LD were statistically indistinguishable from other low achievers. Even more disconcerting was the report that 80% of all school students could be identified as LD under one of the operational definitions of the disability to be found in the professional literature of the time.

In the 1990's the controversy seemed to quiet down a bit. Reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) focused on early intervention (preschool) and discipline of students with disabilities. Now, in 2001-2002, as IDEA is again being reviewed for another reauthorization, the LD controversy has been resurrected.

Perhaps the first salvo in the new debate was the publication of "Rethinking Special Education for a New Century" by the Progressive Policy Institute and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (available at www.edexcellence.net/library/special-ed/index.html). Among its 14 chapters is "Rethinking Learning Disabilities," by G. Reid Lyon, Jack Fletcher, and associates. Lyon was a key player in the recently published report of the National Reading Panel of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Lyon et al argues that faulty thinking about the fundamental nature of LD creates equally faulty procedures for identification and remediation. Identification procedures based on discrepancies between ability and achievement inherently limit the number of students identified before age nine (the "wait-to-fail" model), yet students in the primary grades are most responsive to intensive literacy instruction. Lyon et al

posited that LD could be prevented for as many as 70% of students who are currently classifiable in that category. Early intervention in literacy can permanently head off difficulties that grow in severity and result in the severe underachievement that is typical of LD. They argue that the identification process is flawed, and that the IQ-achievement discrepancy should be abandoned in favor of methods that are congruent with current research in LD, especially reading disabilities.

Fletcher and Lyon reiterated this theme in their paper, "Classification of Learning Disabilities: An Evidence-based Evaluation." It is one of nine monographs that were presented at a "summit" conference that was organized by the Office of Special Education Programs in August of 2001. (Executive summaries of the papers are available at www.air.org/ldsummit. There is a link at www.ilispa.org: click on "white papers.") The summit and the commissioning of a series of papers on LD by leading researchers in the area was a clear indication that LD was to be a major focus of the current reauthorization of IDEA. In their monograph, Fletcher et al again argued that the procedures used to identify LD based on a discrepancy model could not be statistically validated. Echoing the IRLD studies of the 1980's, they noted that students identified as LD do not display reliable differences from children who are low achieving, but who are not discrepant from their IQ's. LD, especially reading disabilities, was conceptualized as an interaction between organicity and environment (i.e. early life experiences and literacy instruction), and not related to the child's level of intelligence. These authors suggested that new identification procedures be used that are inclusive of children who display particular cognitive weaknesses (e.g. phonological skills difficulties) and who are resistant to effective instruction. These identification procedures would lead directly to intervention, unlike the current evaluation of intelligence and academic achievement.

Unlike the Fletcher/Lyon conclusion, Fuchs and Fuchs et al, in their paper, "Is Learning Disabilities just a Fancy Term for Low Achievement?", concluded from an extensive meta-analysis of 79 research studies that LD students had lower achievement than other low achievers who were not identified. Nonetheless, they came to a similar conclusion: if low achievement is the most salient aspect of students with LD, why not just identify as LD those students who have the lowest achievement scores?

Frank Gresham, in his paper "Responsiveness to Intervention: An Alternative Approach to the Identification of Learning Disabilities," recommended that the psychometric discrepancy model be replaced with methods that feature an analysis of a student's responsiveness to instructional strategies that are delivered with a high degree of treatment fidelity. Students would be identified as LD only if they had low performance, a low rate

continues

of learning, and resistance to effective instruction. Pennsylvanians will recognize these concepts from the now defunct special education standards that featured an instructional evaluation that incorporated an analysis of rates of acquisition and retention.

The summit paper by Wise and Snyder, "Clinical judgment in Identifying and Teacher Children with Language-Based Reading Difficulties," is somewhat of a departure from many of the other papers. As its title suggests, the authors encouraged the use of evaluation and identification procedures that are more subjective in nature and rely more on the clinical judgment of "expert clinicians." Although much of the recent research on the nature of reading disabilities is reviewed, the focus of the paper is on a subtype of reading disabilities, specifically those children with relatively intact reading decoding skills and reading fluency, but who struggle with reading comprehension. It is hypothesized that their particular deficits are related to poorly developed semantic and lexical

knowledge that seems to affect their ability to develop a coherent understanding of text. The authors use the concept of what they describe as an "expert clinician" to convey their ideas for how professionals can use and integrate research findings and assessment results to develop "core profiles" that distinguish children with this disorder from students with other types of reading disorders, challenges related to poor motivation and early reading deprivation. Although the paper lacks specificity in terms of how these profiles are developed, it does provide compelling suggestions for using observations of classroom behaviors and miscue analysis to identify children with the disorder and research support for intervention strategies to address the needs of this particular type of reading disability.

In the paper "Early Identification and Intervention for Young Children with Reading/Learning Disabilities," Jenkins and O'Connor summarize research on the precursors to reading disabilities. They then turn their attention to early identification and intervention procedures. These authors provide a cogent explanation for the development of reading disabilities based on the research that highlights the critical role deficits in phonological awareness, graphophonemic knowledge, decoding/alphabetic reading skills, automatic word recognition fluency and language comprehension play in the development of reading disabilities. These authors suggested an analogy for reading skills as a ladder where each skill depends on the mastery of lower step subskills (i.e. sight vocabulary knowledge depends on decoding competence, which depends on letter/sound knowledge, which depends on phonemic awareness). The authors then turned their attention to issues related to early identification of students at risk for reading disabilities. As with several of the other papers in this series, they were critical of the ability/achievement discrepancy criteria for identification of reading disabilities because of its tendency to exclude young children and/or children with low ability from needed services and interventions. Instead, they advocated for screening of kindergarten to second grade children to identify students who

are at risk for the development of reading disabilities using measures of rapid letter naming, phonemic awareness, sound segmentation and blending skills. Interventions then focus on providing direct intensive instruction in phonological awareness coupled with explicit phonics and decoding instruction. More explicit instruction would be directed to young beginning readers and less explicit instruction for older remedial readers. The remainder of the paper discusses ways for school districts to organize assessment and instruction to prevent and/or attenuate reading disabilities.

Joseph Torgesen's paper "Empirical and Theoretical Support for Direct Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities by Assessment of Intrinsic Processing Weaknesses" is quite interesting. The essential question posed in this paper is whether we currently have an acceptable level of scientific knowledge about the intrinsic processing disabilities presumed to be at the heart of learning disabilities to recommend widespread adoption of identification procedures that involve direct measurement of these constructs. This approach would presumably take the place of current diagnostic approaches that rely on the ability/achievement discrepancy. The intrinsic processes that influence reading are distinguished from other kinds of mental processes. Examples of intrinsic processes thought to influence the acquisition of reading include working memory, phonological processing, automatic processing and sequential processing. Torgesen presents convincing evidence that intrinsic processing weaknesses can produce learning disabilities, particularly those related to phonological processing. Additional evidence is presented that suggests that poor readers exhibit disruption in the left hemisphere of the brain, responsible for processing language. However, Torgesen points out the reciprocal nature of the relationship between processing weaknesses and reading instruction. Serious problems remain in terms of the reliability and validity of measures purported to assess intrinsic processing deficits that may limit their usefulness. Despite these concerns, several advantages for a processing approach to diagnosis of learning disabilities are offered.

- Such an approach facilitates the early identification of students who are "at risk" for learning disabilities.
- Using this model, children with low general ability are not excluded from needed services.
- Information gained from assessment is more relevant to instructional design and intervention development.

Despite its promise, many difficulties limit the viability of using intrinsic processing assessment for LD identification. We don't understand the psychological processes required for all areas of learning that are specific to the federal definition. This limits diagnostic reliability and instructional usefulness. Additionally, current measures of intrinsic processing have poor reliability, making it difficult to distinguish between processing limitations and deficits in acquired knowledge. Because of these serious reliability and validity concerns, the widespread adoption of intrinsic processing assessment as a viable alterna-

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