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West Virginia School Psychologists' Roles in Contrast to the NASP Practice Model

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WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' ROLES
IN CONTRAST TO
THE NASP PRACTICE MODEL

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the current roles of school psychologists practicing in West Virginia in contrast and comparison to the National Association of School Psychology (NASP) *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*. A needs-assessment survey developed by the West Virginia School Psychologist Association (WVSPA) was distributed to all the school psychologists in West Virginia in order to determine the main services being provided in the state. The results indicated that school psychologists in West Virginia spend the majority of their time in data-based decision-making as opposed to evenly distributing their time conducting a broad array of roles as encouraged by the NASP Model.

CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The profession of school psychology has evolved greatly in its relatively short existence, and although it has come a long way since its beginning it continues to evolve in response to current events. The field is constantly changing – it must stay up to date with new laws and legislation, adjust to persistent economic problems, and embrace the latest requirements outlined by the National Association of School Psychology (NASP). Therefore, school psychologists must wholeheartedly welcome such transformations by adapting to the roles which are necessary. Although the general function for practicing professionals in the field is to ensure that students and schools achieve their best, many specific roles and services are required to fulfill this broader objective. Because of that fact, NASP developed the *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* that has been applied as the official policy for the roles and services in which school psychologists should provide.

A Brief History of School Psychology and the Roles of School Psychologists

School Psychology has been continuously transforming since its establishment in the early 1900's. Contributing to the emergence of the field were many important events that had occurred throughout our nation's early history. The field of psychology began in the mid-to-late 1800's, which was also during the critical time period of the industrialization and urbanization of America, which led to the pronounced appearance of public education and the start of the compulsory schooling movement. Along with these happenings, the vast social changes occurring due to the end of the Civil War also played a large role in the necessity for trained professionals who would focus on education, mental health, child development, and support to individuals in need. Each of these were extremely influential in their own ways, but the two most

significant factors that would ultimately leave lasting effects on school psychology were the development of the IQ test and the general state of racial segregation and inequality within schools. When the field was barely in its early stages and lacked any form or structure, Arnold Gesell became the first person to be appointed with the role of "school psychologist", and served in that position in Connecticut between 1915 and 1919 (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

Once the School Psychology training programs and credentialing procedures were established in the late 1920's, these programs grew exponentially throughout the years. Although this was an optimistic start for the new field, there were many dilemmas that it faced, and one of the largest was the unregulated practice of psychology in the schools. Individuals practicing psychology in schools did not go primarily by the title of "school psychologist", but went by various titles which depended much on the work in which they were doing on a daily basis, such as "psychological examiner", "clinical" or "consulting psychologists", and "psychoclinician"(Fagan & Wise, 2007). By 1930, Gertrude Hildreth published the first book about school psychology, and as one of the prominent features, included the illustration of what a typical day was like for a school psychologist and the separation of different activities expected of these professionals. Hildreth had a fairly broad view of the daily roles and services being provided, revealing that although individual testing and diagnosis is an important role, the majority of school psychologists' time is consumed by consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators (Merrell et al., 2006).

Throughout the 1940's and 1950's, the field continued expanding, and two notable conferences that largely impacted the future of school psychology were held. In 1949, soon after the end of World War II, at a time when the practice of psychology was expanding immensely due to the growing need of medical services for Veterans, the Boulder Conference on Clinical

Psychology was held. Resulting from the Conference was the articulation of the scientist-practitioner model of training and models in the credentialing of psychologists. Shortly after the Boulder Conference, the Thayer Conference occurred in 1954 in order to further advance training, credentialing, and practice in school psychology (Merrell et al., 2006). Furthermore, the Thayer Conference presented the first complete picture of the field and the roles and services included in the profession, and really emphasized how school psychologists were spending the majority (more than two-thirds) of their time conducting assessments, not consultation (The emphasis of time spent conducting assessments is in contrast to what Hildreth found to be the main function of school psychologists nearly 25 years prior to the Conference.) (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

Influential Factors Impacting the Field of School Psychology

Individuals with Disability Act. In addition to the extra need for medical services required for Veterans from World War II was the need for adequate services for the large growth in the number of school children in this era, who are known as the "baby boomers". This expansion in school-aged children was underway by the mid-1950's, until well into the 1970's. Such an increase in the children attending schools obligated the schools not only to increase, but to also expand their guidance services. With the numbers of school children on the rise, so were the numbers of students who had disabilities or who were struggling academically (Merrell et al., 2006).

In 1975, the United States Congress passed Public Law 94-142, which is now codified as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This is arguably one of the most influential laws impacting and shaping the field of school psychology because it was the first unified federal law demanding a free and public education for *all* students, and it compelled

school psychologists to provide the services necessary to help fulfill the law. Therefore, greater numbers of school psychologists were needed to perform the proper special education eligibility assessments. This created a new role for school psychologists as being more of a "gatekeeper" between regular education and special education (Merrel et al., 2006).

Since IDEA's initial beginning in 1975, it has been revised three times (1990, 1997, and 2004), and continues to impact the profession strongly. Two specific examples from the law that have added to this impact were the original definition of learning disabilities (LDs), (what characteristics are specifically necessary to constitute determining a LD?), and the requirement of conducting a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) for students who have severe behavioral problems. Although the most recent reauthorization of IDEA (2004) was supposed to reduce the amount of dependency school psychologists have on the ability-achievement discrepancy, school psychologists are still performing more assessments than any other activity in the field (Merrell et al., 2006). Unfortunately, this assessment-based "gatekeeper" role has been resistant to change and continues to be a basis of frustration for school psychologists who want to be involved in a broader range of services, such as designing and implementing more academic and behavioral interventions (Roberts, Marshall, Nelson, & Albers, 2001), additional consultation (Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2001), and more group and individual counseling (Prout, Alexander, Fletcher, Memis, & Miller, 1993).

No Child Left Behind. Another extremely influential mandate on the field of school psychology was President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was passed in 2001(No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). The main goals of this mandate were to establish high educational standards for all children by placing "highly qualified" teachers in every classroom, for every state to use appropriate tests to measure if students are meeting the expected

standards, and to increase funding in order to assist with this process (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). The law forced public schools within each state to become accountable for academic progress of *all students*; if the schools wished to have federal funding, their students – even those with disabilities - must meet the academic requirements implemented by NCLB. To be more specific, states are obligated to raise the annual state-wide reading, writing, and math scores from the 2001-2002 school year scores of about 60-70% proficiency to 100% student proficiency in the 2014 school year (Thompson & Crank, 2010).

Although the goals of this mandate are positive in nature, they have impacted the roles of school psychologists in making them accountable for ensuring academic success for *every* student. Traditionally speaking, school psychologists are strong supporters of a more individualized approach to education, treatment, and assessments of children with disabilities and low-achieving children. Such a mandate that demands benefits for all children requires school psychologists to focus not only on "at-risk" or disabled children, but to attend to *all* the children in order to ensure that schools meet the expected Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) of NCLB (Thompson & Crank, 2010).

Response to Intervention. The implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) has also created extra responsibilities for school psychologists. RTI has been utilized as the model for instruction for the state of West Virginia as well as several states around the nation. It consists of a three tiered approach: *Tier I* is instruction in the general classroom, *Tier II* is implementing strategic interventions, and *Tier III* is customized (one-to-one) learning interventions where instruction is similar to that of special education. As you move up the three-tiered model, the intervention and amount of instruction becomes more intense, and the students are benchmarked and progress monitored more frequently (Krieg, 2010). School psychologists,

in particular, are largely influential in the decision-making processes of placing students with the appropriate instruction, making it crucial for students' academic needs to be met and their progress to be monitored often (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

Therefore, this high-standards reform and application of RTI has made school psychologists even more aware and accountable to provide the proper help and services for students who are "slipping through the cracks." As Fagan & Wise (2007) mention, "Schools need help with these efforts, and no one can better assist than school psychologists with knowledge of assessment, statistics, research methodology, and learning and instruction" (p. 143).

Economic factors. Along with the strong impact that the constantly changing laws and legislation have on the profession, the economic factors have had a significant influence as well. For instance, the state of the economy has tremendous effects on the current roles and services school psychologists should be providing. As the economy struggles, so does *nearly everyone* in it. Critical issues such as unemployment, poverty, and drug and substance abuse (all of which are strongly correlated with a depressed economy) impact the need for and the type of services school psychologists should provide to ensure academic success amongst those who need it most. For example, group counseling or school-wide prevention programs focused on the targeted areas (such as drug and substance abuse) could be implemented, and such programs would potentially be very beneficial in helping students learn to overcome these harmful circumstances and focus more on being successful in school (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

The National Association of School Psychologists' Response to the Evolving Roles and Services

The ever-changing laws and legislation and the persisting economic difficulties have undoubtedly impacted the field of school psychology by broadening the roles and services provided by school psychologists. Moving away from the traditional roles (assessment, intervention, consultation, etc.), school psychologists have been expanding their job by including *additional* services, such as research, training, and administration. Although these services do not help students in a direct manner, they do benefit students by delivering data, training, supervision, and support to individuals who work directly with the students. These less-traditional roles also lead to school psychologists working in less-traditional settings and acquiring less-traditional clients. For example, school psychologists within this category may very likely be occupying more of their time in providing services such as: working with postsecondary students with disabilities, offering services to students in charter schools, developing an educational program for gifted students, training bus drivers about behavioral modification techniques, or even delivering more support to infants. All things considered, whether school psychologists are functioning in more traditional or more contemporary roles, they continue to use the basic knowledge and skills in data-based problem solving, intervention planning, and in consultation (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

From this emergence of the broader and more contemporary services being provided by many school psychologists throughout the nation, special efforts have been made by the National Association of School Psychology (NASP) to identify the various roles that are necessary for practicing professionals. Out of such efforts came the *Blueprint for Training and Practice*, which acts as more of a guideline, and then the *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School*

Psychological Services, which is the official model that school psychologists are strongly encouraged to follow (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010).

      NASP's *Blueprint for Training and* Practice. The first *Blueprint* for school psychology was created in 1984, revised in 1997 (*Blueprint II*), and revised again in 2006 (*Blueprint III*). The *Blueprint* was developed by a task force of six school psychologists who used the "think tank" approach. The intention of the *Blueprint* is to be used as a visionary guideline to encourage discussion in the field, and includes much detailed information about school psychology training and the roles which school psychologists should provide (Ysseldyke, Burns, Dawson, Kelley, Morrison, Ortiz, Rosenfield, & Telzrow, 2008).

      Rather than being seen as *revolutionary*, the most recent *Blueprint*, *Blueprint III*, is perceived as being "evolutionary" because it has been developed from various constructs from the previous *Blueprints*. As depicted in Figure 1, *Blueprint III* consists of competence domains, how these areas of competence are delivered, and the preferred outcomes from this delivery. On the left side of the model are the two main pillars of school psychology: a complete knowledge base in both psychology and education and the application of the scientific method to practice delivery of this knowledge base. Upon the pillars are eight foundational and functional competencies (four of each) that have been developed during school psychologists' specialized training and experience. Revealed in the delivery system portion of the model are the three levels in which school psychological services are delivered: universal, targeted, and intensive. Lastly, the two key outcomes of school psychologists' work in schools are to develop and uphold the capacity of systems to meet students' needs and to improve competencies for all students (Ysseldyke et al., 2008).
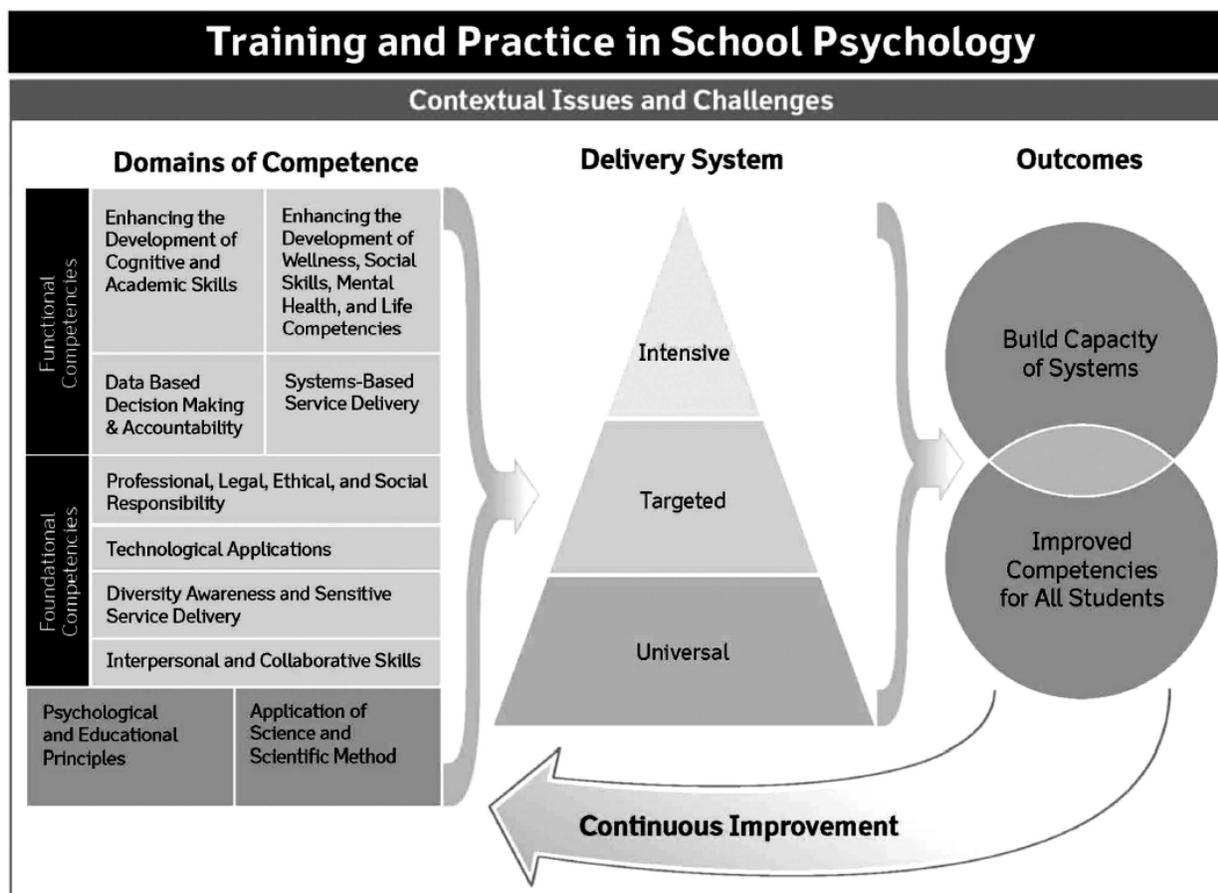
Figure 1. *Blueprint III* **Model for Training and Practice in School Psychology**

As it appears from not only the progression of the field but also from the *Blueprints*,
school psychologists are performing *many* different roles. Cowan (2010) narrates this point very
well when discussing (what should be) a simple answer to the well-known question, "What do
you do?" Cowan's (2010) response was as follows:

> Well, I assess kids for learning problems and provide academic interventions and consult
> with teachers on instructional strategies and lead IEP teams and sit on school
> improvement teams and provide mental health services and do bullying prevention and
> respond to crises and train teachers on classroom management and help kids learn how to
> control their behavior and consult with principals on school disciplinary actions and help
> collect and analyze data to improve school climate and work with parents on how to help

their kids succeed in school and do gang prevention programming and lead the suicide

intervention and postvention team and help culturally and linguistically diverse parents

engage in school activities in a meaningful way and collaborate with community service

providers and help to develop and implement our RTI processes and go to court to ensure

proper services for a student and comfort kids when they are sad…" (Cowan, 2010).

Such a response made by practicing school psychologists is not uncommon. They hold

numerous distinct responsibilities, all of which are performed to ensure their main function of

helping students and schools succeed. Considering that it has been listed as one of the "Best

Careers of 2011," school psychology will undoubtedly continue to grow in the coming years

(Baden, 2011). As the majority of the current work force is getting older and much closer to

reaching the point of retirement, many positions are becoming available, making school

psychology a very attractive profession to pursue at the present time. Therefore, it is crucial for

school psychologists' roles to be distinctly identified so that those who are interested in the

profession have a complete understanding of what the job consists of. Although NASP created

the *Blueprints* in order to *guide* professionals, something further was needed to capture the

plethora of services provided by school psychologists in a way that could be easily understood

and accepted. Therefore, NASP developed the *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School*

Psychological Services, which is a consistent and comprehensive standard that can (and should)

be implemented by *all* school psychologists in order to provide students with the services needed

to help them succeed in school (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010).

The Official Model: NASP's Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services

School psychology has evolved greatly since it began nearly a century ago, and has faced many challenges throughout its short existence. A common challenge experienced by school psychologists throughout the field's life is dealing with the ambiguity of their roles. Quite frequently, other individuals, even those in the school systems, are unfamiliar with what school psychologists' specific roles actually are (Watkins, et al., 2001).

In order to identify the specific services in which school psychologists should be adequately trained in and practicing on nearly a daily basis, NASP created the *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*. Unlike the *Blueprint for Training and Practice*, the model is adopted as an official policy by NASP. The *Model* was first written in 1978 as the *Guidelines for Provision of School Psychological Services*, and has been revised five times since (1984, 1992, 1997, 2000, and 2010). The purpose of the *Model* is to act as a guide to both the organization and also in the delivery of services delivered by school psychologists at the federal, state, and local levels. For schools implementing the *Model*, the recommended ratio is one school psychologist for 500-700 students. The *Model* contains 10 general domains of school psychology: data-based decision making and accountability, consultation and collaboration, interventions and instructional support to develop academic skills, interventions and mental health services to develop social and life skills, school-wide practices to promote learning, preventive and responsive services, family-school collaboration services, diversity in development and learning, research program evaluation, and legal, ethical, and professional practice. Each of the domains of practice will be briefly described in the following sections (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010).
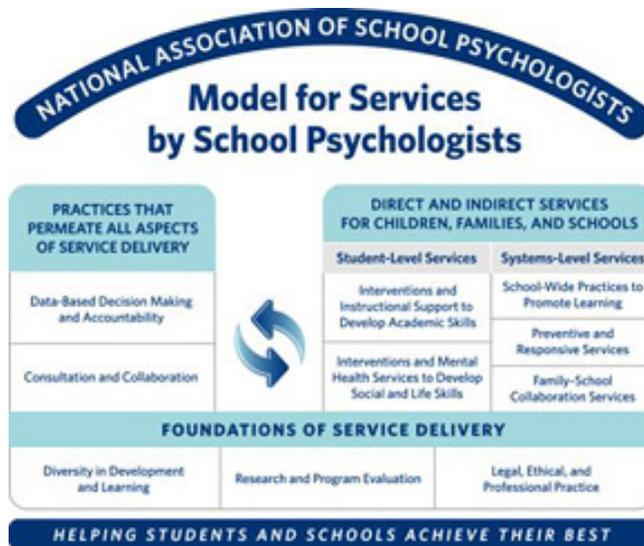
Figure 2. *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services.*

Practices that Permeate all Aspects of Service Delivery

 Domain 1: Data-based decision making and accountability. School psychologists are well-educated in the various models and techniques of assessment and data collection in order to identify the strengths and needs of students, teachers, and programs. They are also responsible for developing effective services, and in measuring their progress and outcomes so that any change can be implemented if necessary.

 Domain 2: Consultation and collaboration. School psychologists have the knowledge of various methods and approaches of not only consultation and collaboration, but also in effective communication with children, families, individuals, and groups.

Direct and Indirect Services for Children, Families, and Schools: Student-Level Services

 Domain 3: Intervention and Instructional Support to Develop Academic Skills. School psychologists are knowledgeable of the biological, cultural, and social influences on academic skills. They are also well-informed of human development, learning, and cognitive processes, and in evidence-based programs and instructional methods.

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Domain 4: Interventions and Mental Health Services to Develop Social and Life Skills. School psychologists are familiar with the biological, cultural, developmental, and social influences on mental health and behavior, and the impact of each of these on learning and life skills. They also have expertise of evidence-based strategies to help mental health and social-emotional functioning.

Direct and Indirect Services for Children, Families, and Schools: Systems-Level Services

Domain 5: School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning. School psychologists are well-informed of school and systems structure, general and special education, resources, and evidence-based programs that facilitate learning and mental health.

Domain 6: Prevention and Responsive Services. School psychologists have knowledge of the strategies and research that are related to risk factors in learning and mental health, programs in schools and communities to aid prevention, and evidence-based approaches for effective responses to crisis.

Domain 7: Family-School Collaborative Services. School psychologists are familiar with the principles and research associated with family systems, culture, strengths and needs, and in evidence-based strategies in supporting family influence on children's learning and mental health, and in methods to create and maintain collaboration between families and schools.

Foundations of School Psychological Service Delivery

Domain 8: Diversity in Development and Learning. School psychologists are well-educated about individual differences, abilities and disabilities, families, cultures, schools, and have evidence-based strategies to support and have a positive influence on diversity.

Domain 9: Research and Program Evaluation. School psychologists have expertise in research design, statistics and measurement, data collection and analysis techniques, and effective program evaluation.

Domain 10: Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice. School psychologists are knowledgeable in the history and the foundations intertwined with school psychology, various service methods and models, the ethical, legal and professional standards, and any other factors that have an influence on the profession (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010).

Recent Research of School Psychologists' Roles

As previously discussed, it is evident that numerous school psychologists seem to be moving from occupying the more traditional roles to providing a full range of services. Although this may be the case for many, several school psychologists continue working with the responsibility of delivering the more traditional services, such as conducting assessments. Only one study could be found that assesses the roles school psychologists are practicing in schools (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002). According to the results from their nation-wide survey, respondents indicated that school psychologists spend approximately 46% of their time performing assessments, followed by consultation (16%), interventions (13%), counseling (8%), conferencing (7%), supervision (3%), inservicing (2%), parent training (1%), research (1%), and other (3%) (Bramlett et al., 2002).

Statement of the Problem

School psychologists have an essential job. They facilitate in ensuring academic, social, behavioral, and emotional success in today's youth. In doing this, they must collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals in order to produce a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment that strengthen bonds between home, school, and the community for all

students. Clearly, school psychologists have many important responsibilities, and in order to demonstrate both *what* and *how* these responsibilities are to be performed, NASP created the *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*. In reaction to the most recent revision of the model, which occurred in 2010, the West Virginia School Psychology Association (WVSPA) developed a survey to assess where school psychologists in the state of West Virginia *fit* in regards to the model. In other words, what roles are school psychologists performing in the state of West Virginia? Of these performed roles, which roles are consuming the most time? How does the execution of these services compare to NASP's *Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*?

Need for the Current Study

Research has shown that job roles among school psychologists vary depending on the given need of the school and the unique abilities of individual practitioners. There has only been one study of roles of school psychologists, and that was conducted ten years ago. A current study is needed to assess what roles school psychologists are practicing now.

The null hypothesis states that school psychologists practicing in the state of West Virginia will be spending the majority of their time in data-based decision-making, more specifically, conducting assessments, writing reports, and attending eligibility, individualized education program (IEP), and 504 meetings. The research hypotheses are as follows:

1. School psychologists practicing in the state of West Virginia will be spending the majority of their time in data-based decision-making.

2. After eliminating data-based decision-making, school psychologists spend the majority of their time in consultation.

3. School psychologists spend little time in program evaluation.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subject

The surveys were available for school psychologists to complete on laptops at the 2011 West Virginia School Psychologists Association (WVSPA) Conference, and were also sent out by e-mail to all the members of the WVSPA through the WVSPA listserv, for a total of 112.5 school psychologists (0.5 being a school psychologist that worked half-time). As an incentive, there was a lottery drawing for four school psychologists to win a membership to the WVSPA (each membership is about a $50 value). Of the 112.5 school psychologists, 63 (56%) completed the survey. However, only current practitioners who completed all aspects of the survey analyzed in this study were used, reaching the final number of 53 respondents. The data were created as an online form and were collected in an online database called "Google Docs". The data provided to the researcher contained no identifying information; therefore, confidentiality was not an issue. Each survey contained responses provided by the practitioners along with a number.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a survey developed by a WVSPA work group. The work group developed the survey to examine the current role of West Virginia school psychologists. This survey included Likert scale items and qualitative items where respondents were asked to write answers in detail. A copy of the survey is available in Appendix A.

Procedure

The researcher examined surveys completed by members of the WVSPA. The WVSPA created a work group, which consisted of seven school psychologists who served as state

department representative, university professors, and practicing school psychologists, to examine the current role of school psychologists in West Virginia. The work group was motivated with creating a model of service delivery for West Virginia school psychologists, and the survey was designed to gather data to facilitate in the development of the model. The majority of the survey was developed between October 2010 and March of 2011 by a WVSPA work group devoted to the development of the survey. The work group met through executive board meetings and discussed the survey through conference calls, making it a collaborative process to understand the role of the school psychologists in West Virginia.

Only surveys completed by respondents who identified themselves as school psychologist practitioners were evaluated in this study. The following questions were taken from the survey to be examined:

• What services do you provide as a School Psychologist in your district that no other school
  staff provides?

• Describe the major advantages of being a School Psychologist in your district. Include mention
  of any variables or job roles within your district that heighten job satisfaction.

• Describe the major obstacles of being a School Psychologist in your district(s).

• In what ways has your role as a school psychologist changed in the last five years?

Duplicate Survey Responses. The work group conducted a duplicate search and identified two duplicates, one from Ritchie County and one from WVDE. The work group removed the earlier records of these two and maintained the final submission as their final record. Next, the work group recoded some of the answers and standardized some of the responses for recording purposes (e.g., Kanawha County as "KANAWHA," and Marshall University/COGS/Marshall University School Psychology Program as "MUGC").

Conversion Problem. There was a glitch with inserting the typical work-day hours – for example, if a respondent typed in 8/4 (8 *slash* 4), the computer converted it to a random number that was non-meaningful. The work group fixed the problem by changing it back to the appropriate time.

Coding Time Chart Responses. Respondents were asked to estimate the amount of time they spend performing specific roles by identifying one of five allotted time percentages: 0% of the time, 1-10%, 10-20%, 20-50%, or 50% or more time. In order to efficiently analyze the responses, time percentages were coded on a 1 to 5 scale: 1 = 0% of the time, 2 = 1-10% of the time, 3 = 20-50% of the time, and so on.

Blank Data. The work group requested names or a PIN from the school psychologists upon completing the survey. If county of employment was left blank and the work group knew where the school psychologist worked, the work group would plug that in to decrease the amount of missing data.

When there were missing data for target variables (for example, with the time chart), the work group would code the blanks for 0% (or appropriate) – if it made sense in respect to other responses made by that individual. This happened in five records, for an average of two fields per record, where the person's position and role explained what the answer would be. For example, an IEP Specialist is not practicing direct intervention. Therefore, the missing data for that question regarding the amount of time spent on direct intervention would be coded to 0%.

Research Design

This study consisted of qualitative and quantitative research components. Convenient sampling was utilized by analyzing surveys completed for the WVSPA work group on the roles and functions of school psychologists in West Virginia schools.

Data Analysis. Analysis was completed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software as well as Microsoft Office Excel. For the current study, the significance level was set at $p < .05$.

Institutional Review Board. The current study was examined by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was deemed not human subject research due to the fact that the examiner was provided with the data with all identifying information removed. The letter from the IRB is provided in Appendix B.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Thirty-five of West Virginia's 55 counties were represented (63%); however, five participants opted not to disclose their district of employment, so that may be an underestimate. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were females (N = 46) and 13% males (N = 7). In regard to race, participants were 92% Caucasian (N = 49), 4% African-American (N = 2), 2% Hispanic (N = 1), and 2% Asian (N = 1). The majority (96%; N = 51) of the respondents held Masters or Specialist degrees, and the remainder (4%; N = 2) held Doctorate degrees. Seventy-five percent of the sample (N = 40) completed their school psychology training at Marshall University, whereas the remaining 25% (N = 13) were trained at other programs throughout the United States. Fifty-five percent of the respondents (N = 29) had been engaged in school psychology 10 years or fewer, 19% (N = 10) had 11-20 years of experience, and 26% (N = 14) had over 20 years of experience. The ratio of West Virginia school psychologists to students was 1:2,507.

Professional Roles and Functions

According to Table 1, which shows West Virginia school psychologists' time allocation in performing more traditional services, 80% of school psychologists surveyed reported spending 20% or more of their time assessing students; and one of five respondents spend at least 50% of the time in assessment. Seventy percent of school psychologists reported spending 20% or more of their time writing reports; one quarter of the respondents spends 50% or more writing reports alone.

As Table 2 indicates, after eliminating data-based decision-making, school psychologists spend the majority of their time in intervention planning and teaming – not in consultation, as what was hypothesized. To be specific, just over 70% of the school psychologists reported spending more than 10% of their time in intervention planning and teaming; one in three reported spending more than 20% of their time in this domain. In contrast, only one of every two school psychologists reported spending more than 10% of their time in consultation.

In regard to the amount of time West Virginia school psychologists spend performing program evaluation, nearly 90% of respondents reported to spend less than 10% of their time in program evaluation.

Analysis of Differences

In order to identify associations between demographic variables (gender, race, degree attained, training program attended, and years of experience) and the reported time allotted to providing specific services, a series of preliminary analysis were conducted. The mean scores for the traditional roles are presented in Table 3, the mean scores for the consultative and intervention-related roles are displayed in Table 4, and the mean score for program evaluation/research is presented in Table 5.

An Independent Samples *T*-Test yielded a significant effect between gender and the amount of time spent in program evaluation/research, $t(51) = -1.22$, $p < .05$, with men spending more time than women in this domain. There was also a significant effect between gender and crisis intervention, $t(51) = -0.44$, $p < .05$, with men spending more time performing crisis intervention than women. Another significant effect was present between gender and intervention planning and team meetings, $t(51) = 2.52$, $p < .05$, with women performing more time than men in this area. Lastly, there was an association that was *approaching significance*

between school psychological training (Marshall University versus other institutions) and the amount of time involved in providing counseling services, $t(51) = 2.29$, $p = .068$, with practitioners that acquired their training at Marshall University spending more time in providing counseling services when compared to practitioners who accomplished their training from an out of state institution.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded a relationship that was *approaching significance* between race/ethnicity and program evaluation, $F(3, 49) = 2.68$, $p = .057$, however, there were too few participants in each group to run the post hoc tests to determine race/ethnicities of significance. Another relationship that was *approaching significance* from a existed between years of experience and writing reports, $F(2, 50) = 2.98$, $p = .059$, with the practitioners with 11-20 years of experience reporting to spend the most amount of time writing reports, and practitioners with 21 or more years of experience spending the least amount of time writing reports.

These data were also analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient, and Table 6 displays the results.

Short Answer Responses

School psychologists were requested to communicate the services they provide that no other school staff provides. The majority of respondents (approximately 65%) reported performing psycho-educational evaluations, report writing, and interpretation of reports makes them unique. Other services that were noted to make them unique to other school staff included: consultation (24% of respondents), providing mental health assistance (19%), conducting and training other faculty in performing functional behavior assessments (FBAs) and behavior intervention plans (BIPs) (13%), and active involvement in response to intervention (RTI) (8%).

When asked to describe major advantages of their profession in their district, 61% of respondents reported their relationships with staff and students. Respondents also noted job flexibility (e.g., hours, work location, etc.) (28%), the autonomous nature of job (26%), the abundance of assessment tools (15%), and being well-paid (15%). In describing major obstacles of being a school psychologist, the majority of respondents (approximately 61%) noted there being too many expectations with too little time. Other obstacles reported were: a lack of clarity and research regarding RTI and teacher resistance to intervention implementation (11%), a shortage of clerical staff (9%), uncooperative staff (7%), lack of communication with curriculum staff (7%), role confusion (7%), and funding deficiencies (7%).

Lastly, school psychologists were asked to share how their role has changed in the last five years. Twenty-six percent reported having more intervention and consultative responsibilities, 22% noted RTI, and 20% disclosed to have more administrative responsibilities. Another way in which the role of the West Virginia school psychologist has changed is that there is less focus on assessments and fewer evaluations (9%) and more FBA involvement (4%). Eleven percent of the respondents reported that their role has not changed in the last five years.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the amount of time school psychologists practicing in West Virginia spend performing specific job roles in contrast to the roles depicted in the NASP Practice Model. The findings of this study indicate that school psychologists practicing in West Virginia are continuing to provide more traditional services (see Table 7), even though the NASP Practice Model encourages school psychologists to provide a broader range of services, which includes more consultative and intervention-related roles.

Although results from the time chart support the hypothesis that school psychologists spend the majority of their time in data-based decision-making, it was surprising just how much more time West Virginia school psychologists reported to filling such roles considering how much the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) has taken an active role in urging the implementation of RTI within its schools. In other words, it was expected that school psychologists would still be performing more traditional roles than consultative and intervention-related roles, but that there would be more of an equal distribution of allotted time among services rather than the majority of time being applied to assessments, report writing, and meetings.

When considering the professional roles and functions of West Virginia school psychologists, after eliminating data-based decision-making, practitioners reported spending the most time performing intervention planning and teaming. These results did not support the second hypothesis that school psychologists spend the majority of their time in consultation after removing data-based decision-making. One explanation for these findings could be due to the strong emphasis of RTI within the school systems in West Virginia. Another explanation for

these results could be the vague wording of the question regarding the percentage of time spent in consultation. Since the question fails to define the meaning of consultation, respondents may have been confused in answering it, resulting in them reporting a lesser percentage of time in performing that duty.

The findings that showed that West Virginia school psychologists spend the least amount of time in program evaluation were fully expected. Understandably, school psychologists must attend to the needs their school district, which entails providing the more traditional services, which are then followed by more consultative and intervention-related roles, as demonstrated by the results. Fulfilling these responsibilities leaves little to no time for practitioners to be actively involved in program evaluation, which helps explain why school psychologists spend the least amount of time in this domain.

When determining if any relationship existed between demographic variables and time allotment of services, men reportedly spent more time than women involved in both program evaluation/research and crisis intervention. These are interesting findings because both of these services require an individual that tends to take a more leadership role and assertiveness, which are personality traits that have demonstrated to be characteristic more so of men as opposed to women (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001). Another possible explanation is the limitation of the small sample size of men (N = 7), suggesting that one or two males who are heavily involved in providing these services may have skewed the results. The results also showed that female practitioners reported spending more time than male practitioners in intervention planning and team meetings. One possible reason for this is that past research has shown that women tend to be more nurturing and extroverted than men (Feingold, 1994). Another association existed between school psychological training and time reported in providing counseling services: scores

were *approaching significance* between practitioners who acquired their training at Marshall University spending more time in providing counseling services compared to practitioners who accomplished their training from an out of state institution. The most likely explanation for this finding is the amount of emphasis put on counseling training within Marshall University's school psychological program. Professors in Marshall's program encourage their graduate students to utilize their attained counseling skills in their daily work. A relationship between race/ethnicity and program evaluation was also present, but just as there was a small sample of men, there was also a small sample of minority groups, making it difficult to make a determination of the relationship truly exists or if the small sample size skewed the results. Lastly, an association between years of experience and writing reports existed, indicating that practitioners with 11-20 years of experience spend the most amount of time writing reports, and practitioners with 21 or more years of experience spend the least amount of time writing reports. Although this relationship was only *approaching significance*, one explanation for this association could be that school psychologists with more years of experience may be expected to fulfill more administrative responsibilities, as many of the responses indicated on the short-answer question regarding how the job has changed within the last five years.

Results from the correlations reinforce the differences between the more traditional roles and the intervention and consultative roles (Table 6). More specifically, positive relationships existed amongst the traditional services (conducting assessments, report writing, and attending eligibility, IEP, and 504 meetings), and amongst the intervention and consultative roles; negative relationships existed between the traditional services with the intervention and consultative services. There was one exception, however, and that was the positive relationship between time attending eligibility, IEP, and 504 meetings with the time involved in intervention planning and

team meetings, which makes sense considering both activities involve team meetings and intervention planning.

In discussing written responses, the question regarding the services school psychologists provide in their district that no other school staff provides also support the hypothesis that school psychologists spend the majority of their time performing more traditional roles. On the topic of performing psycho-educational assessments, which was the most common response to what makes their job unique, one school psychologist respondent summed it up well: "Psychological assessments are the anchor. No one else is professionally trained or licensed to do this, and it is a very important function. There is nothing more important to parents, educators, and service providers than a well-done, comprehensive assessment to identify and guide the developmental trajectory of students' academic, behavioral and social learning over time." Consultation was the second most frequent answer for a service that West Virginia school psychologists provide in their district that no other school staff provides. To be specific, respondents noted providing consultation on a broad array of domains: the RTI process, student assistant teams (SAT), data analysis, behavior, and individual special education cases. These responses support the fact that West Virginia school psychologists are not only trained in and have knowledge of many areas outside of purely conducting psycho-educational assessments, but also value their ability to provide consultation in their everyday work.

Clearly, the traditional roles of performing assessments, writing reports, and attending meetings are vital to the role of school psychologists practicing in West Virginia. However, when asked to communicate what services practitioners would desire to provide in contrast to what services they are already providing, many reported a desire for more opportunities to perform consultation, behavior management, and counseling. This indicates that West Virginia

school psychologists are open to expanding their job roles to include more than just the traditional services that have so heavily influenced the field of school psychology throughout its history (Fagan & Wise, 2007; Merrell et al., 2006; Bramlett et al., 2002). Unfortunately, the main barrier that impedes these job roles from occurring more frequently, as reported by practitioners, is having too little time to accomplish too many tasks, specifically in relation to the assessment process. Research is needed in this area to gain more insight into the barriers that obstruct school psychologists from providing additional services.

The WVSPA has taken an active role in response to the apparent desire of West Virginia practitioners to provide more consultation, behavior management, and counseling, and the need for expanding services to align more closely to the NASP Practice Model. Through providing trainings at the State Conference, presenting feedback as to how to overcome the barriers hindering movement towards the best practices model, offering university-sponsored workshops for experienced practitioners, and partnering new interns with knowledgeable practitioners with guidance from university faculty to improve the skills of the school psychologist and the intern, the WVSPA has proven its commitment in this process. This study is a demonstration of the need to assess the current status of each state to help determine the strategies needed to help states align themselves with the NASP Practice Model.

 Although much useful information derived from this study, there were limitations. One major limitation was the overlapping percentages of time in the questions requesting practitioners to estimate the amount of time spent providing specific services (e.g., 0%, 0-10%, 10-20%, 20-50%, and 50% or more time). Future survey research focused on the true allotment of time school psychologists are performing specific duties should have more clearly defined percentages, or should allow the respondents to report independently their estimated percentage

of time performing various roles as long as it totals 100%. Another limitation is the unclear wording of questions directed to time allotment of services. Future surveys concentrating on the amount time practitioners are performing specific roles should include definitions of those roles in order to ensure that respondents have a clear understanding of what those roles truly are.

In conclusion, school psychologists practicing in West Virginia continue to spend the majority of their time providing more traditional services, such as conducting assessments, writing reports, and attending eligibility, IEP, and 504 meetings, as opposed to providing a broader range of services, as portrayed in the NASP Practice Model. As the environment is constantly changing, it is expected that the profession of school psychology will do the same as well, and the WVSPA has demonstrated its dedication to facilitating this process of aligning services provided by West Virginia school psychologists more closely with the best practices model. It is recommended that this study be replicated in other states in order to determine the current roles of school psychologists in our country in relation to the NASP Practice Model.

West Virginia School Psychologist Survey January 2011

The West Virginia School Psychologist Association (WVSPA) is conducting a survey in order to determine the role and function of school psychologists in West Virginia. Additionally, WVPSA would also like to collect basic demographic information including the average salary, contract length and experience of school psychologists in West Virginia. The information you provide will be reported collectively to the WVSPA membership and no personal identifying information will be shared. Your input may also be used in a best practice document detailing the role of the school psychologists in our state. Please take a few minutes to respond to this survey. It is important that we receive input from all school psychologists across the state to fully represent the actual practice of school psychologists in West Virginia.

* Required

What is your name? * If you prefer to remain anonymous, please submit a unique pin number for the prize drawings.

Demographic Information

What is your gender? *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

What is your age? *

What is the name of the School Psychology Program you attended? *

What is your race/ethnicity? *

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Native American/Alaskan
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Multiracial (Two or more races)
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ White (not Hispanic)

What is your highest degree level in School Psychology? *

- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Specialist
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Other:

- What is your job title? *

- ☐ School psychologist practitioner
- ☐ School psychology intern
- ☐ Special education coordinator, specialist or administrator
- ☐ Faculty or trainer
- ☐ Other: [   ]

How many years of experience do you have as a School Psychologist? * [   ]

What is your current salary as a School Psychologist? * [   ]

If you are a licensed School Psychologist, please indicate level of licensure. *
- ☐ Level I
- ☐ Level II
- ☐ I am currently working toward obtaining licensure.
- ☐ I am not a licensed School Psychologist nor actively working toward licensure.

Please list any careers you had prior to becoming a school psychologist (e.g., teacher/educator, business professional.) *

[   ]

Information about You as a School Psychologist

What is your county(ies) or agency of employment (salaried and/or contracted)? [   ]

What is your length of contract? Example 1: 200 days for a salaried position; Example 2: 40 days per year for a contracted or 1099 position [   ]

Describe your work hours (e.g., 8 AM to 4 PM) [   ]

On average, how many hours do you spend each week working on School Psychologists responsibilities (e.g., report writing) beyond your regular paid work hours? [ ]

How many schools do you serve? [ ]

What is the estimated populations of your schools served? [ ]

Do you receive extra duty contracts to provide psychological services during the summer?

- ☐ Yes, every summer
- ☐ Yes, sometimes
- ☐ No, never
- ☐ School year contract already includes summer hours

If applicable, please name any other extra duty contracts you receive. Example; after school tutoring, coaching, counseling and evaluations

[ ]

Please check all services you provide as a School Psychologist and estimate the percentage of time spent performing each role.

	0% of time	1-10% of time	10-20% of time	20-50% of time	50% or more time
Assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Report writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intervention planning and team meetings (e.g., grade level, student assistance, and behavior intervention team meetings)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eligibility/ IEP / and 504 meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program evaluation / research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	0% of time	1-10% of time	10-20% of time	20-50% of time	50% or more time
Consultation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Direct academic or social skill intervention (individual or group)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Counseling (individual or group)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crisis Intervention	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
University College Teacher or Trainer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please describe your role in the Response to Intervention as both an intervention process and a process for identifying students with specific learning disabilities.

Please describe your role in providing school based mental health services.

What services do you provide as a School Psychologist in your district that no other school staff provides.
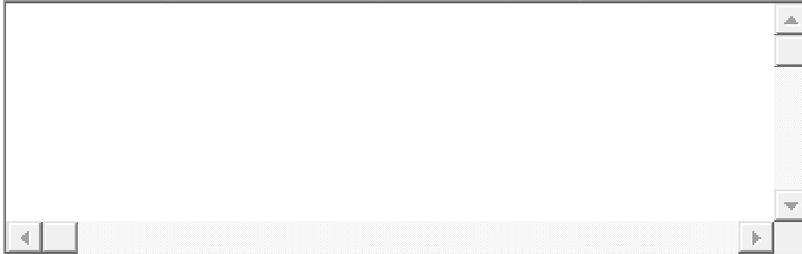
In what way has your role as a School Psychologist changed in the last five years? If you have less than 5 years experience, please skip this question.

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Describe the major advantages of being a School Psychologist in your district. Include mention of any variables or job roles within your district that heighten job satisfaction.

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Describe the major obstacles of being a School Psychologist in your district(s).

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What factors would cause you to leave your current job to move to a neighboring county or state?

- ☐ More pay
- ☐ Better work environment
- ☐ Family considerations
- ☐ More desirable location
- ☐ Other: _____

Information about Other School Psychologists in your District

Please do not include clinical psychologists or counselors in your answers.

How many salaried School Psychologists (including yourself if applicable) does your county employ? (Count those with benefits only) _____

How many contracted School Psychologists (including yourself if applicable) does your county hire? (1099 employees or those without fringe benefits who are paid per diem or case) [   ]

How many of these School Psychologists (including yourself if applicable) primarily serve students with disabilities or students suspected of disabilities? [   ]

What is the starting salary for a School Psychologist in your county? [   ]

If applicable, how much of a supplement does your county pay School Psychologists? (Do not include supplement for

NCSP) [   ]

How many school psychologists in your county (including yourself if applicable) are Nationally Certified? [   ]

Do school psychologists in your county get additional county pay for the National Certification (NCSP)? [Yes ▼]

If you receive a supplement or additional pay for NCSP, please list the amount. [   ]

WVPSA Roles and Responsibilities

Please rate the importance of the items in terms of issue WVPSA should be addressing.

	Not at All Important - Do not want WVPSA to address	2	3	4	Very Important - WVPSA should be spending considerable time focusing on this issue.
Development of a work group for those seeking national certification.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Establishing or maintaining competitive salaries.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Defining the role of WV School Psychologists.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Obtaining the same economic benefits as teachers such as early declaration of retirement and national certification pay parity with teachers and other school personnel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not at All Important - Do not want WVPSA to address	2	3	4	Very Important - WVPSA should be spending considerable time focusing on this issue.
Right to practice legislative issues – The movement of APA/WVPA to limit certified school psychologists practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Legislative activism.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recruitment and retention of school psychologists in WV.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provision of professional development to school psychologists to improve services to children and youth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provide mentoring and support for new and less experienced school psychology practitioners.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What information do you wish to receive on the WVPSA listserv?

	No, I do not wish to receive this information on the listserv.	I don't mind receiving or not receiving this information on the listserv.	Yes, I want to receive this information on the listserv.
Access to participate in research studies.	☐	☐	☐
Announcements regarding professional development opportunities.	☐	☐	☐
Legislative announcements.	☐	☐	☐
WVSPA meetings/conference notices.	☐	☐	☐
Best practices as a School Psychologist	☐	☐	☐
Regional meetings	☐	☐	☐
Sharing questions and dilemmas from other School Psychologists across WV	☐	☐	☐

0	

Submit

Appendix B

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY.

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Office of Research Integrity

May 4, 2012

Sandra Stroebel, Ph.D.
Professor
School Psychology Department
Marshall University Graduate College

Dear Dr. Stroebel:

This letter is in response to the submitted abstract for your project titled "WVSPA Survey regarding School Psychologist Roles." After assessing the abstract it has been deemed not to be human subject research and therefore exempt from oversight of the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Code of Federal Regulations (45CFR46) has set forth the criteria utilized in making this determination. Since the information in this study consists solely of deidentified archival data provided by West Virginia School Psychology Association (WVSPA) it is not human subject research and therefore not subject to Common Rule oversight. If there are any changes to the abstract you provided then you will need to resubmit that information for review and determination.

I appreciate your willingness to submit the abstract for determination. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding future protocols that may require IRB review.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, Th.D., CIP
Director
Office of Research Integrity

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Table 1

West Virginia School Psychologists' Time Allocation – *Traditional Services*

Time Allocation	0%	1-10%	10-20%	20-50%	50% or More	Total
Assessment	1.9	3.8	15.1	56.6	22.6	100
Report Writing	1.9	9.4	18.9	45.3	24.5	100
Eligibility/IEP/ and 504 Meeting	3.8	22.6	35.8	35.8	1.9	100

Table 2

West Virginia School Psychologists' Time Allocation – *Consultative/Intervention Services*

Time Allocation	0%	1-10%	10-20%	20-50%	50% or More	Total
Consultation	3.8	47.2	26.4	20.8	1.9	100
Intervention Planning and Team Meeting	1.9	22.6	43.4	28.3	1.9	98.1
Direct Intervention	43.4	45.3	1.9	3.8	5.7	100
Counseling	37.7	45.3	3.8	5.7	7.5	100
Crisis Intervention	24.5	67.9	3.8	1.9	1.9	100

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Traditional Roles

	Assessment	Report Writing	Eligibility/IEP/and 504 Meetings
Mean	3.94	3.81	3.09
N	53	53	53
Standard Deviation	.842	.982	.904

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics: Consultative and Intervention-Related Roles

	Intervention Planning and Team Meetings	**Consultation**	**Counseling**	**Crisis Intervention**	**Direct Academic or Social Skill Intervention**
Mean	3.02	2.70	2.00	1.89	1.83
N	53	53	53	53	53
Standard Deviation	.866	.911	1.160	.725	1.051

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics: Program Evaluation/Research

Mean	1.72
N	53
Standard Deviation	.662

Table 6

School Psychologists' Reported Time Allotment Performing Traditional and Consultative/Intervention-Related Roles: Correlations (N = 53)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Assessment	-							
2. Report Writing	.685**	-						
3. Eligibility/ IEP/504 Meetings	.437**	.432**	-					
4. Intervention Planning and Team Meeting	.133	.208	.391**	-				
5. Consultation	.002	-.065	.245	.617**	-			
6. Counseling	-.256	-.253	-.018	.211	.509**	-		
7. Crisis Intervention	-.294*	-.328*	.017	.341*	.501**	.549**	-	
8. Direct Academic or Social Skill Intervention	-.337*	-.311*	-.023	.257	.528**	.867**	.656**	-

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 7

Breakdown of Services Provided by West Virginia School Psychologists in 2011