

School Psychology Specialists:

Working to make a difference
for Arkansas children!

Presented to the
Arkansas Legislature's Joint Committee on Education
by members of the
Arkansas School Psychology Association
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Contact persons:

Joan Simon, Ph.D., UCA, jsimon@uca.edu
John Hall, Ph.D., ASU, jhall@astate.edu
Rita Phillips, SPS, lrwphillips@yahoo.com
Kyla Warnick, SPS, kyla.warnick@russellvilleschools.net
Charity Means-Burdess, SPS, cburdess@rps.k12.ar.us



Imagine being...

- ◆ A child who thinks suicide is the best solution to a terrible home or social life
- ◆ A teacher who wants to help a student who has behavior problems but just doesn't have the time to research or learn quality interventions
- ◆ A high school educated parent who cares about her child but is too self-conscious to attend a meeting at school about her child's poor grades or too embarrassed to say she needs help with him at home
- ◆ An administrator who wants to make better use of school-wide assessment information but can't fit it into his/her day
- ◆ An adolescent who is so tired of being bullied year after year without school support that he's considering "taking out" the bullies.

Overview

- ◆ Qualifications of School Psychology Specialists (SPSs)
- ◆ Current roles of SPSs in Arkansas
- ◆ Future roles of SPSs in Arkansas
- ◆ Reasons why districts need SPSs

According to our 25,000-member national association...

- ◆ The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) defines school psychologists as professionals who...
 - ◆ *Support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach.*
 - ◆ *Apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior in school setting.*
 - ◆ *Help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.*
 - ◆ *Partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments.*

From www.nasponline.org

SPSs in Arkansas

- ◆ **School Psychology Specialists (SPSs)** - licensed by ADE (Arkansas has 249 – unsure how many of these are working at this time)
- ◆ SPSs complete minimally a 60-hour graduate program in school psychology and a 1,200-hour supervised school-based internship.
- ◆ Arkansas has three nationally-accredited programs
 - ◆ M.S. program (60 hours) at UCA
 - ◆ Ed.S. program at ASU
 - ◆ Ph.D. program at UCA
- ◆ Emphasis areas in training programs
 - ◆ Prevention & intervention - reduce need for restrictive settings
 - ◆ Applied behavioral analysis
 - ◆ Response-to-Intervention (RTI)

Current roles of most SPSs in Arkansas schools

- Roles are mostly limited to special education assessments (ratio)
- ◆ Initial evaluations on children with disabilities (ex: Specific Learning Disability, Autism, or an Emotional Disturbance)
- ◆ Re-evaluations on children with disabilities
- ◆ Report evaluation results to child's educational team
- ◆ Provide academic & behavioral recommendations to a child's team
- ◆ Brief consultations with teachers or other school staff

But wait...

Aren't SPSs trained to do so much more for the schools and the children they serve?

YES!!

YES!!

YES!!

For Arkansas schools, SPSs IMPROVE achievement of ALL children...

- ◆ RTI Process (academic)
 - ◆ Locate universal screening tools
 - ◆ Administer universal screenings
 - ◆ Analyze / interpret data from screenings (Dyslexia, Act 1268)
 - ◆ Analyze / interpret data from interventions
- ◆ Meet children's academic needs at school and home (e.g., in-service presentations, modeling interventions, fostering home-school collaboration)
- ◆ Providing research-supported academic interventions to individual children or small groups

For Arkansas schools, SPSs IMPROVE the achievement of children with disabilities...

- ✓ Initial and re-evaluations children with disabilities
- ✓ Research-supported targeted academic interventions
- ✓ Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 Disability Accommodation Plans
- ◆ Evaluations for children with dyslexia
- ◆ Transition planning
 - ◆ early childhood to school age
 - ◆ school age to post-secondary education/employment

For Arkansas schools, SPSs IMPROVE children's mental health / behavior...

- 💧 RTI Process (behavior)
 - 💧 Locate universal screening tools
 - 💧 Administer universal screenings
 - 💧 Interpret data from universal screenings / interventions
- 💧 Problematic behaviors – document, analyze, intervene, evaluate
- 💧 Providing research-supported mental health / behavioral interventions to individual children or small groups
- 💧 Crisis intervention
- 💧 Community mental health providers
- 💧 Meet children's mental health / behavioral needs at school and home

We all know the needs and SPSs can offer solutions!

- 2014 - 6th graders
 - 31% not proficient in Reading
 - 27% not proficient in Math
- Almost 20% of Arkansas children do not complete high school
- Almost 20% of children report being bullied on school property
- 14 to 20% of children experience a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder that interferes with daily functioning – approximately 70% of these children who need help do not receive it
- Almost 8% of 9-12 graders attempt suicide

Why is now the time for SPSs in ALL Arkansas schools?

- ◆ SPS to child ratio - **1:2,330 in the 34 districts who have SPSs**
 - ◆ Far from the **ratio of 1:500-700 recommended** by the NASP
- ◆ Overreliance on Licensed Psychological Examiners
 - ◆ **Not trained** in the schools
 - ◆ **Typically do not provide** comprehensive services
 - ◆ **License no longer available** by Arkansas Psychology Board
- ◆ Our work is in line with many current AR laws and initiatives
 - ◆ Dyslexia, Arkansas Act 1268
 - ◆ ADE's recent endorsement of Forward AR
 - ◆ ADE's Response to Intervention initiative

Moving forward

◆ What ASPA is going to do:

- ◆ Continue educating district administrators on the value of SPSs
- ◆ Have our membership contact their state senators and representatives to share their opinions on this issue

◆ What we'd ask you to do:

- ◆ Talk with contacts / friends in education to explore about what SPSs are or could be doing in their districts
- ◆ Continue communication with ASPA's legislative committee and our lobbyist, Brent Stevenson and his staff, to explore the possibility of SPSs in all of AR's schools

Sources for Statistics

- Reading (Arkansas Dept. of Education)
- Math (Arkansas Dept. of Education)
- High school completion (National Center for Educational Statistics)
- Bullying (National Center for Injury Prevention & Control)
- Mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders (National Academy of Sciences)
- Mental health services (Greenberg)
- Suicide (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention)