

Technology Thoughts and Updates for School Psychologists

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Everything has changed and although the learning curve has been really tough for those of us who are no longer 'spring chickens', the change is basically good. The computer has permeated our lives to our very core.

I sit writing this piece in a room with dueling computers. My husband pecks away with two fingers at incredible speed on one side the room while I type away at the keyboard on the other side. We each have become extremely adept at multitasking. He can watch at least three and often four channels on television with the 'clicker' beside the computer as he works, and I have so many 'windows' open at the same time on my big screen Mac it is a wonder that any one of the tasks I attempt ever gets completed.

This piece of technology has changed our lives. Television has fallen from the throne as has the telephone and I found myself totally out of sync yesterday, trying to actually write a thank you note longhand. My hands no longer flew smoothly across the paper and I had to start over several times because my mind now moves at the speed of the computer keyboard and my cramped hands can not longer keep up.

In an instant, I can contact all of the students in my class via 'group' E-mail or talk live with video with my grandchildren in another state. I can IChat or talk live with video with my son who is around 12,000 miles away although I may wake him up too early or keep him up too late to accomplish this. Today I will load a PowerPoint presentation into software to show to people on the other side of the country, I will register and list my entries for an art show via E-mail, and will do a detailed bit of searching for data on bullying. I can recall saying to my children that I remember when there was no television and now can say to my grandchildren who were quite adept using computer games before they started preschool, that I remember when there were no computers. It's a strange feeling.

At any rate, those of you who are reading this are probably now computer literate whereas five years ago as Technology Chair I was admonishing members to take the plunge and get on board. Now the computer is solidly entrenched in our lives, in our homes and at our work and it is hard to imagine what we would do without it and however we managed in the past.

NASP considers technical savvy to be part of our responsibility as school psychologists. Information Technology is one of the eleven domains of competence that school psychologists are expected to demonstrate. We are expected to have knowledge of information sources and technology relevant to our day-to-day work and to be able to competently evaluate sources of information on the Internet "in ways that safeguard or enhance the quality of services" according to the 2000 NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology. Not only are we expected to be competent as we start our careers in school psychology we are expected to continue to refresh our skills and to keep abreast of what is valuable for our work out there on the web. So, in my role as Technology Chair I have crawled around the web a bit to see what gems I could find to share with you.

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Response to Intervention

Probably the most significant change to 'come down the pike' in a long while is the updating of IDEA to include a choice in determining eligibility for special education services. We will be able to look at a child's response to educational or psychological interventions (RTIs) in determining whether or not a child has made such weak progress after research-based interventions have been tried, that the child may be eligible for special education services.

School psychologists have a great deal of information available to them on a number of sites but a clear description of RTI can be downloaded at: http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/Response_to_Intervention.pdf This may be useful in sharing 'what it's all about' with others. For more sophisticated information, refer to the long lists of details on the NASP website and the many disability websites, and the disability organizations such as LDOnline.

Resources for Curriculum Based Measurement

Of course as we move in this direction, work with curriculum based measurement (CBM) will be even more important than in the past and those of you who are working at sites which do not use CBM will need to assist schools in using CBM. If you have not found it already, the Curriculum based measurement 'Warehouse' of materials can be found at: <http://www.interventioncentral.org/htmldocs/interventions/cbmwarehouse.shtml>

Locating Information While Saving Time

Some of you may not enjoy surfing and would prefer to benefit from other's searches. Sandra Koser Steingart, Ph.D., NCSP, well known for her website research for school psychologists, has revised and updated her book, *The Web-Connected School Psychologist*, for 2004-2005.

This text is published by Sopris West, To quote the publisher, The Web-Connected School Psychologist puts hundreds of reviewed and annotated Web sites at your fingertips. It is your portal to the valuable professional resources the Internet has to offer. You can order directly from the publisher (Sopris West) at 1-800-547-6747. Or, you can order online from the publisher. <http://www.sopriswest.com/ERP2Web/e500.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/ERP2Web/e2wltemMain.aspx>

Identifying Learning Disabilities

It will still be important to identify learning disabilities even though we may often use RTI. When trying to understand a child's functioning and learning difficulties, a single assessment tool may not be helpful. A cross-battery approach may be the answer. The official site of the CHC Cross-

Massachusetts School Psychologists Association

Helping students, parents and teachers.

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battery approach may be the answer. The official site of the CHC Cross-Battery Approach developed by Dawn P. Flanagan, Ph.D., Kevin S. McGrew, Ph.D., & Samuel O. Ortiz, Ph.D. can be found at: <http://www.crossbattery.com/>

The cross-battery approach is based on an integrated Cattell-Horn-Carroll (CHC) model of intelligence (formerly known as Gf-Gc theory), Cross-Battery assessment is an innovative and promising framework for significantly enhancing the reliability and validity of the measurement and interpretation of cognitive abilities. CHC Cross-Battery Online will serve as the central clearinghouse for dissemination of information, electronic resources, and downloadable materials regarding CHC Cross-Battery assessment and interpretation. Automated worksheets are available, along with a number of PowerPoint presentations and tutorials for those just getting acquainted with cross-battery assessment.

Professional Development Online

Pro-Ed has courses online for Speech-Language Pathologists. Check these out because something may interest you. For example, there is a course on "Dynamic Assessment and Intervention" listed. Dynamic assessment is certainly of interest to school psychologists as well as speech/language pathologists.

Assessment Technical Reports

Many of you are aware of the fact that test publishers offer occasional technical reports which are of great help to school psychologists. Some of you may not realize that these can be accessed online.

Harcourt has some interesting treats on it's website. There are several newsletters including Assessment Focus and Clinicians Forum, and a magazine called Happenings. This tool is filled with assessment reports and articles. The Fall 2005 issue includes articles such as Assessing Young Children, ELL Professional Development, An Innovative Approach to Assessing Spoken English Proficiency, and other interesting articles. Importantly in an Assessment Resources section you can download Research Reports and Product reports. The WISC-IV and the Children's Memory Scale report may interest you. All of these can be accessed at: <http://harcourtassessment.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-US/NewsRoom/Articles/Happenings+Magazine.htm>

Riverside Publishing's Product Support Center can be found at: <http://www.riverpub.com/support/index.html>

The WJ-III Resource Center has a number of Service Bulletins such as Calculating Discrepancies Between the WJ III GIA-Std Score and Selected WJ III Tests of Cognitive Abilities Clusters which can be accessed here. The Stanford Binet Resource Center has four bulletins and several handouts, and The DAS Center has several downloads and slide shows.

Identifying Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can be diagnosed by a wide variety of medical and mental health practitioners. As you know there is no single tool that identifies ADHD with and decent reliability or validity.

In an effort to assist medical professionals such as family practitioners the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) has prepared a Toolkit for the diagnosis of ADHD. These tools are useful for all of those who are involved in diagnosing attentional deficits including school teams. The Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Practitioners' Toolkit: Diagnosis can be accessed at: <http://www.utm.edu/pediatrics/general/clinical/behavior/index.php>

The toolkit was designed to help standardize data collection. The tool can be used as a component of the diagnostic process, and in managing or screening for ADHD. The entire tool can be accessed online in the form of .pdf files. The files include the following:

- NICHQ ADHD Primary Care Initial Evaluation Form
- NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Scale ~ Parent Informant
- NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Scale ~ Teacher Informant
- NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Follow-up ~ Parent Informant
- NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Follow-up ~ Teacher Informant
- Scoring Instructions for NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Scales
- Sample NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Scale ~ Parent Informant
- Cover Letter to Teachers

The materials are to be used for children 6 to 12 years of age. In addition, you can download two papers, one on diagnosis and the other on treatment.

Job Search

Job search is important for interns and for practicing school psychologists who may need a change. If you have the luxury of a national search, look to the NASP web site where you can find job information and internship opportunities: <http://www.schoolpsychology.net>

Don't forget that the new MSPA website has a job's page as well.

NASP Professional Development Credit

You can use online or Internet activities as part of your NCSP professional development credits hours. In order to do this, you need a personal development plan and then you look at the time you spend on line and determine if the activity fits your personal plan. You also need to ask yourself if you were able to upgrade your professional skills or add to your knowledge base. In order to use the time for professional development credit you must verify that the activity went beyond the ordinary aspects of your employment responsibilities.

If your time online met these requirements, you can document your online activity using the NASP self study form. You need to remember that you can only claim 15 hours per subject area during each three-year renewal period. Time alone online would not count; you would need to concentrate in a given area. >

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Disability Information

Medscape is an excellent resource for school psychologists who need specific information on various disabilities for parents and teachers as well as for themselves. Medscape is a free membership service. This means that you need to become a member and use a log in and password to access the information. There are excellent resources to access on this site. The Mental Health strand is particularly useful. You can get notices via E-mail of courses and also about medications and new research. The courses are OnLine and have pre and post tests which once again using a self study form would count toward NASP re-certification and in Massachusetts could be included with other work directly tied to your job for re-certification as a licensed school psychologist, and would work in the same way as it works under NASP procedures for re-licensing as a Massachusetts Licensed Educational Psychologist.

Final Thought

As we work so hard to diagnose children with disabilities in schools or in private practice, it is important to realize that we also may show a few of the symptoms of the various disorders that we examine. In order to prevent ourselves from seeing ghosts now and then in the way that medical students do occasionally, I would refer you to the Institute for the Neurologically Typical which you can find at:
<http://www.isnt.autistics.org/dsn.html>

Work hard to help kids and their families. Try to be empathetic with teachers. Our teachers are working hard and really care about our kids.
They need M & Ms also, once in awhile.