

The Psych Scene

NEWS and NOTES from PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Lane W. Roosa, Ed.D., NCSP - Director

SEPTEMBER, 2006

SETTING THE "SCENE"

This year's first issue of the The Psych Scene opens with two articles about crisis response and recovery. A positive that came out of our experience with Hurricane Wilma is a heightened awareness that our district's response to crisis events can only be as good as our preparation. We are very pleased to be able to include an article submitted by Scott Poland who is a highly respected authority on crisis response.

The Psych Scene regularly includes information directed toward parent concerns. An article, in this issue, addresses the powerful effects produced by parental involvement in schooling and offers suggestions for how parents can get involved.

The final article urges our readers to consider the premise that scores from standardized testing do not provide the full picture of how students are progressing in mastering all of the essential competencies for success in today's world. The author presents the implications of this idea.

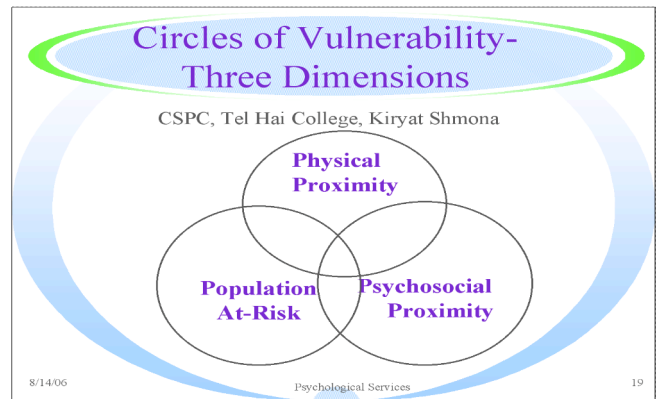
The members of our writing team share the hope that you will find the content of this and future issues of The Psych Scene to be interesting and helpful. We welcome your reactions and encourage you to share copies with others and to suggest topics of interest for future issues.

L. Roosa

CRISIS RESPONSE: PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION

by
Karen Hoff

We have all dealt with some aspect of crisis intervention, whether it has been the death of a loved one, helping a friend during a difficult period, or surviving the first few days (or weeks) after a hurricane. For many of us, dealing with the short-term effects of a crisis situation feels like an accomplishment in itself. Frequently, the long-term effects are not readily apparent until symptoms appear months, sometimes years later. Clearly, the issues associated with recovery from trauma represent a significant concern that impacts schools and families. With this in mind, the following



article highlights important issues in recovery. This past year, our District Psychological Services team has been gathering and distributing crisis response and recovery materials that can be used in the schools, as well as fine-tuning procedural information regarding crisis intervention and recovery.

Crisis response and recovery training began last spring and has been provided to school psychologists, school social workers, guidance counselors, family counselors, ESE family counselors, and BLAST counselors. The training addressed a variety of recovery issues (e.g., risk signs, identification and follow-up of at-risk individuals, etc.). One tool we can use to help identify those who may be at-risk is the Circles of Vulnerability (Community Stress Prevention Centre; Tel Hai College, Kiryat Shmona). The diagram (shown above) provides a visual representation of which individuals may be at-risk. Those individuals who have risk factors in overlapping circles may be more likely to show stress symptomatology. *Physical proximity* refers to those who were physically closest to the critical event. *Psycho-social proximity* refers to those who were emotionally closest (e.g., immediate family) or those who may identify with the victim on some level (e.g., employer, job role, parent, age, etc.). *Population at-risk* refers to factors that make an individual more at-risk for a significant reaction to a traumatic event, such as having experienced a recent similar trauma or a significant loss in the past year.

For many, recovery is a lengthy process and it takes a team effort to address the numerous issues that arise after the immediate crisis has passed. Many students (and adults) have short-term reactions (e.g., shock, disbelief, anger, grief, guilt and confusion, etc.) to a crisis, and it is important that team members are there to support students and staff. In order to begin recovery, we need to provide individuals opportunities to discuss their experiences in the safe environment of the school. For example, classroom activities can teach students positive coping strategies and give them opportunities to strengthen peer relationships, support each other, and hopefully decrease feelings of anxiety and isolation, while increasing their feelings of control.

Crisis intervention and recovery work takes a lot of time and energy. Often, individuals on crisis teams are so busy taking care of others that they neglect their own needs. The negative impact of crisis-related stress should not be underestimated. It is important that individuals on crisis teams (and all adult caregivers) take care of themselves, making time to do things they enjoy (e.g., reading, watching movies, exercising, spending time with family and friends, using relaxation techniques, etc.). By nurturing themselves and using healthy coping strategies, crisis responders will be better prepared to handle recovery work.

Providing school staff with tools they can use to assist students, staff, and each other during the recovery process, helps to avoid negative long-term reactions to the crisis. However, despite our best efforts, long-term reactions can and do occur. For example, there are some individuals who are only now beginning to show signs of stress-related symptoms from Hurricane Wilma. This issue highlights the importance of continuing to follow up on at-risk individuals throughout the year. Signs to look for include: detachment and/or withdrawal, denial, depression, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, and fatigue. If you find that you need support, the Employee Assistance Program (754-322-9900) is a confidential service for employees and their dependents who need follow-up services beyond those offered during an initial crisis response. If a student needs additional counseling, there is help available. All students in Broward County have various options, including the Family Counseling Program (754-322-3153).

CRISIS RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOUR SCHOOL SAFE TEAM

- The new document, Crisis Recovery: Responding to Trauma and Returning to Learning, should be added to each SAFE Team's Critical Incident Resource Manual (CRM). If you would like a copy, please contact Psychological Services (754-321-2460).

The document will also be available online through the SIU department.

- The Emergency Resource List has updated phone numbers for national organizations, local shelters, housing services, social service agencies, health related services, transportation, veteran's services, etc. If you would like a copy of the Emergency Resource List, please contact School Social Work and Attendance (754-321-2490). The document will be available online through the Department of School Social Work and Attendance.
- The *District Crisis Support Team* can assist the school SAFE teams and Area teams in crisis situations that have impacted the entire community after a declared emergency (e.g., hurricanes, terrorism, Avian flu pandemic). For further information on the services the District team can provide, please contact Psychological Services (754-321-2460).
- With regard to the issue of suicide, please note that each school has a Suicide Prevention Designee. Suggested guidelines for Suicide Prevention Designees are outlined in the Student Suicide Prevention Handbook. If your school does not have a handbook and would like a copy, please contact the Office of Prevention Programs (754-321-2568).
- Information about the Employee Assistance Program (754-322-9900), a confidential and free program for employees and their dependents, is available on the Broward Schools website under Benefits.
- The Family Counseling Program (754-322-3153) is available for students who may need short-term counseling and crisis intervention. Individual, family, and group counseling services are available.

- Three websites that offer downloadable resources follow. Please note that the first two websites provide information specifically focused on hurricane issues.

- www.fasp.org (click on new and important and look under hurricane resources)
- www.psy.miami.edu/child/childclinical/HelpingChildrenCope.pdf
- www.nasponline.org (click on NASP Resources)

If you would like further information on recovery and/or training for your school, please contact any of the Student Support Services professionals that serve your school or Psychological Services (754-321-2460).



SCHOOL CRISIS AND RECOVERY: A TOP TEN LIST

by
Scott Poland
Nova Southeastern University

Note: Scott Poland is a faculty member in the School Psychology Program at Nova Southeastern University and Chair of the National Emergency Assistance Team. He has 25 years experience as a School Psychologist, has written four books on school crisis, and has served on national crisis teams after school shootings in Paducah, Littleton, Jonesboro, and Red Lake. The following "Top Ten" list has been generated based on his experience in responding to school crises for more than two decades.

1. Verification of the facts is essential. Double check facts with police and adults to ensure that you have correct information. *Example:* The secretary reported Ms. Wilson at the local high school was killed, but corrected information later verified it was Ms. Smith.

2. Convene your crisis team as soon as possible and make decisions as a group. Experience indicates that the wisest decisions are made in a group and administrators are encouraged to include support personnel such as mental health professionals. Review crisis plans and assign duties while empowering your staff. One principal told her crisis team that this would be “the worst day they ever spent in education,” which did not get the “best” from her team. Keep school open if at all possible or reopen quickly, as schools offer a great deal of support to students. When they are closed due to a crisis many children are unsupervised. In some other cultures schools have been closed permanently due to violence to honor the dead, but in our Western culture this tends to dramatize and/or glorify the actions of the perpetrator(s).
3. Tell the faculty first and offer support to those most affected by the crisis. Provide faculty direction on how to best support students. Media coverage and cell phones often result in information being transmitted quickly. The administrator needs to be seen as the dispenser of accurate information. One quick way to notify faculty and provide direction is to send a message by e-mail and announce that all faculty need to check their e-mail immediately. Many faculty appreciate when these messages contain a sample script of what might be said to students.
4. Share information truthfully with students in a developmentally appropriate way. Younger children should be protected from explicit details and sensational media coverage, but no student should be lied to or misled about the basic circumstances. Students need to hear sad or tragic news from trusted adults such as teachers, not from someone on the street. Students need to be given permission for a range of emotions

through artwork, music, and writing, in addition to talking. One NYC teacher reported that even though her classroom looked out on the World Trade Center, the principal told her not to talk with students about what had happened. Desks should have been arranged in a circle with students allowed to express thoughts and concerns, with emphasis placed on coping skills and student safety. The majority of students should get the help they need in classrooms, with support personnel such as counselors and psychologists coming to classrooms to assist teachers with group discussions.

5. Inform parents of what has occurred and reunite younger children (Pre-K to 2nd grade) with parents as soon as possible. Parent communication needs to be consistent through phone calls or e-mails and schools need to be prepared for large numbers of parents coming to campus to pick up children with sign-out procedures in place. In one incident, a middle school principal wanted to write a letter to parents indicating that a gun was brought to campus and threatening remarks were made, but the perpetrator was in custody. He also wanted to reassure parents and students of their safety on campus. The superintendent, however, wanted to keep the incident from the public, but it was “front page news” in the local paper two days later—the PR damages were extensive.
6. Policies and procedures need to be in place that set limits for the media and keep media away from staff and students. In one example, the media were kept off school grounds across the street. Staff and students were encouraged to decline interviews. Parents may allow their youth to appear on national television following large-scale school crises and administrators cannot prohibit such action. However, they can be proactive in recommending that

students be shielded from the media, both at school and in the community, as many students have made statements to the media they later regretted.

7. The crisis becomes the curriculum for a few days and administrators need to provide guidance on when to return to the regular curriculum, especially when to resume testing. In one situation, a teacher with students openly weeping after learning of the death of a classmate asked if the counselor wanted to speak with the class before or after a scheduled test. Students will let you know when they are ready to get back to the curriculum. In another situation, after a multiple homicide at school, students asked if they still had to take the state accountability test scheduled for the following week. Unfortunately, the answer was, "Yes."
8. Identify those students most affected and do not underestimate the long-term impact of the tragedy or crisis. Accept additional assistance and recognize that existing school mental health professionals such as counselors, social workers, and school psychologists have myriad other duties. They cannot provide long-term assistance to many students. After a multiple homicide, for example, one school principal initially declined outside assistance, noting that counselors were present on the first day back to school, our motto is "a stiff upper lip," and we don't need outside help. It was a decision that later had to be reversed, as many more students were in need of assistance than could be handled by existing school staff. Be aware that in many crisis situations outside help will be needed; and be prepared with a plan for how to access such services in an efficient manner.
9. Guide students toward appropriate memorials and allow permission for a range of religious beliefs. Students often feel a need to do something in

memory of the deceased; however, memorials should strive to benefit the living. Positive examples are starting prevention programs to reduce violence or suicide, or volunteering in community programs. Caution is suggested in closing off lockers, erecting memorial statues on campus, and the like. It is not unusual for students and staff to question their faith or beliefs after a tragedy and they need to know they are not the first to do so.

10. Convene the crisis team regularly throughout the management of the crisis and support team members. Discuss what is working and what is not; and what are the lessons to be learned from this crisis for better management and/or prevention of problems in the future.



WHAT IF . . . ?

by
Claudia Perez

What if I told you there's a way you could help your child do better in school, stay in school longer, and enjoy school more? What if I told you it might help your child earn higher grades, pass her classes, have better social skills, improved behavior, and graduate on time. Are you interested in finding out what it is? It's YOU! Parent involvement in their children's education is widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to help students succeed in school. Numerous studies confirm that high parental involvement is linked to increases in student achievement and engagement in school activities (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

On their website, the NEA (National Education Association) asks, "**What is parental involvement, exactly?**" Here are some examples of what they say parents can do to help their children succeed in school:

- Reading to and with your children
- Checking homework every night
- Discussing your children’s progress with teachers
- Voting in school board elections
- Helping your school to set challenging academic standards
- Limiting TV viewing on school nights
- Becoming an advocate for better education in your community and state
- Or, simply asking, "How was school today?"

Involvement is a wise investment because, bottom line, you are sending a message to your children that school and learning are important. Your investment of time will be repaid many times over with increased success in school. Here is what research says time and again about consistent and active parental involvement, irrespective of income level, educational level, or ethnic/cultural group membership:

- When children and parents talk regularly about school, children perform better academically.
- Three kinds of parental involvement at home are consistently associated with higher student achievement: actively organizing and monitoring a child's time, helping with homework, and discussing school matters.
- The earlier parent involvement begins in a child's education, the more powerful the effects.
- Students with more highly involved parents are more likely to gain in both reading and math than children with less involved parents.
- Students from low-income families with more involved parents make greater gains than low-income students with less involved parents.

In addition to improved student achievement, positive results of parental involvement include reduced absenteeism, improved behavior, and restored confidence among parents in their

children's schooling. Collaboration between school personnel and parents is critical to the success of students. Parents and schools have a built-in partnership with the child as the focus. Building trust and keeping open lines of communication are key to helping your child succeed in school.

There are 6 basic dimensions of family involvement (Epstein, 1997). Here are some ideas about how you can get involved.

<i>TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT</i>	<i>WHAT YOU CAN DO</i>
<i>Parenting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆Express high expectations about your child’s education ☆Limit TV viewing ☆Supervise time use and behavior ☆Discuss interests, issues, and studies at school
<i>Communicating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆Daily parent-initiated contacts about academic performance and academic programs
<i>Supporting School</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆Volunteer at school ☆Attend school activities
<i>Learning at Home</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆Engage in learning activities at home ☆Help with reading and math skills ☆Check homework ☆Discuss school and plans for the future ☆Encourage high school graduation and college
<i>Decision Making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆Take part in parent organizations (e.g., PTA) or other school

committees

***Collaboration
with
Community***

- ☆Use community learning resources (e.g., library and museums) and other community health, cultural, and social services or programs
 - ☆Participate in community groups (e.g., sports, summer programs)
 - ☆Communicate parent-to-parent
 - ☆Mentor students in the community or another parent
-

Helping your child succeed in school is not just helping with homework or attending parent conferences, or any *single* activity in which a parent or caregiver can engage. It is all these things and more. Helping your child in school requires consistent parental involvement, at every grade level, throughout his/her years in school.

For interested parents, more information on how to get involved can be found at:

<http://www.ptotoday.com/0104abc.html>
The ABCs of Involvement: 26 Ways to Get More Parents to Participate,
by Craig Bystrynski

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/twoschools/getinvolved/empowering/100ways.html>
100 Ways to Get Involved
Based on the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/twoschools/getinvolved/empowering/busy.html>
The Busy Parent's Guide to Involvement in Education
by Dr. Linda Albert

STUDENT SUCCESS: IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT THE TEST SCORES

by
Lane Roosa

There is much evidence to support the importance of students achieving competence in the essential skills for learning by age 8. This is especially true in relation to reading. Therefore, the order has gone out to schools to, in Star Trek terms, "make it so." With this mandate comes the need to demonstrate student progress. Standardized testing has become the gold standard for determining whether students are mastering the essential skills and, by extension, whether the instruction they are receiving is effective.

With all of the attention paid to the results of high-stakes testing, such as the FCAT, one might think that the sole concern of educators should be the development of academic skills, which will translate into acceptable test scores. This view is what some people are articulating when they make statements such as: "Everything we do must be tied to promoting student achievement."

Clearly, a student's level of competence in reading, math, and writing has a significant impact on his/her quality of life, during the school years and beyond. While these skills may have a considerable effect on the type of job one can access as an adult, it is interesting to note that other skills are far more likely to determine whether he/she will be able to keep a job after being hired. That is, one's ability to interact appropriately with supervisors, co-workers, and customers is a major determinant of longevity in any position and advancement in one's career. Anyone who has held a job, other than lighthouse keeper, is unlikely to be surprised by this observation. However, do we see the parallel between problematic behavior patterns in the workplace and those that challenge teachers in the classroom? The conclusion to be drawn is that we must define the essential elements

of the “curriculum” from a broader view of what students must learn and be able to do in order to be successful.

There are many personal qualities or attitudes we would like to promote in children and social skills we would like to shape (We could also add “by age 8” for the basics of this learning to occur). The qualities or attitudes would include: optimism, persistence, adequate frustration tolerance, modulation of emotional responses, and flexibility/adaptability.

The important social skills to be learned include: communicating appropriately in different settings (e.g., a classroom versus the playground) and with different individuals (e.g., a teacher versus a peer), accurately “reading” the messages or reactions one is receiving from others, and employing the types of behaviors that would enable the establishment and maintenance of friendships and other relationships (e.g., listening, expression of positive regard or concern for another).

One of the dangers we see in this era of accountability based on test scores is a tendency to assign too low a priority to the development of these other important student competencies. While it is true that “success breeds success,” i.e., that high achievement promotes appropriate behavior in students; one cannot solely rely on that relationship. Intentional efforts to create a supportive school climate, application of effective behavioral management strategies within and across classrooms, and employment of evidence-based interventions (through application of collaborative problem-solving methodologies) for struggling learners are all necessary elements. The establishment of these elements takes the same commitment to professional development, supported implementation, and measurement of outcomes, as does installation of an effective reading program. A very positive sign for our district is the recent addition, to the One Voice Plan, of a research-based

classroom behavior management program (i.e., Conversation Help Activity Movement Participation or CHAMPs) and an intervention-oriented support team model (i.e., Collaborative Problem-Solving Team or CPST).

Student support services professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, and social workers) can play an important part in supporting development of the behavioral and social competencies that students need. At the same time that we are expanding our view of curriculum essentials, we also should be looking for support staff to deliver a broader array of services (broader in scope as well as in types of services). Examples of what might be included in an expanded set of services are: leading/coaching problem solving teams; supporting teachers in the design, implementation, and monitoring of interventions; and consulting with schools on ways to address systemic issues (e.g., attendance, violence prevention, discipline, and promoting a positive school climate).

Most have probably heard the saying: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Similarly, students’ success cannot be fully represented by adding up their test scores. Although mastery of educational standards is an important component of student success, so too, are competence in interpersonal behavior, attitudes toward self and others, and development of essential social skills. Schools have a responsibility to address the whole “package” of what students must learn and be able to do in order to be successful in life.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES AWARD RECIPIENTS

Two awards from the Broward Association of School Psychologists (BASP) were presented at the annual BASP luncheon in May 2006. A brief description of each award and the 2006 recipients is provided below. Congratulations to the honorees for their dedication and years of exemplary service to the Broward County Schools.

Phil Seat Award

Dr. Phillip Seat, a member of our district office staff for over 20 years, served as a clinical consultant to district school psychologists until his death in 1998. BASP presents the Phil Seat Award annually as a way of recognizing the special talents and contributions of school psychologists who demonstrate compassion and caring for the students in Broward County, and who are committed to a standard of excellence that goes above and beyond what is normally expected. In this way, Broward school psychologists keep alive the qualities that made their colleague so special.

The 2006 Phil Seat Award was presented to Matthew Zeis. Matt has been a school psychologist in the district for more than a dozen years, working in the North Central Area for the past seven. His commitment to students, parents, and school personnel is well documented through many years of exemplary service to the Broward Schools. Colleagues describe Matt as, "a very caring individual, helpful in almost any situation, a source of calm in crisis situations, and a strong team player." Additionally, Matt has been a key player in the development of new school psychologists by serving as Intern Supervisor on numerous occasions. His commitment to students, parents, colleagues, and interns has helped set a high standard of service delivery for school psychologists in the Broward Schools. Congratulations to Matt on being the recipient of the Phil Seat Award.

Jim Rockwell Lifetime Achievement Award

On special occasions, BASP also presents the Jim Rockwell Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was named for Dr. G. James Rockwell in recognition of the leadership he provided and the high professional standards he set for the local practice of school psychology. The award is intended for individuals with exceptional leadership skills and vision for the practice of school psychology, longevity in the profession, and dedication to professional development of colleagues through mentoring and training opportunities.

The 2006 Jim Rockwell Award was presented to Dr. Lane Roosa, Director of Psychological Services. Lane has been a school psychologist in the Broward Schools for more than 30 years, serving in leadership capacities for most of his tenure. He was North Area Coordinator of Psychological Services for 7 years, then appointed Director of Psychological Services for the district in 1988, a position he has held ever since. As one colleague wrote, "Lane's career in school psychology has been a distinguished one. His leadership skills are outstanding, his vision for the profession has consistently been on the "cutting edge," he has served the district ably and with dedication, both as a practicing school psychologist and in a number of administrative capacities, and his commitment to colleagues is well documented. On a more personal note, Lane is also a pleasure to work with. He is dedicated, hard-working, and serious in his commitments to the profession, but he also has a good sense of humor, maintains a positive outlook, creates a positive environment at the office, and is always willing to assist colleagues with professional issues/concerns they may have. His accomplishments in the district have been numerous, lasting, and beneficial—to the district's schools, to parents and students, to teachers and support staff, and particularly to the school psychologists in Broward County." Congratulations to Lane on an honor well deserved.



The School Board of Broward County, Florida

www.browardschools.com

Benjamin J. Williams, Chair
Beverly A. Gallagher, Vice Chair
Carole L. Andrews
Robin Bartleman
Darla L. Carter
Maureen S. Dinnen
Stephanie Arma Kraft, Esq.
Robert D. Parks, Ed. D.
Marty Rubinstein

Dr. Frank Till
Superintendent of Schools

“The School Board of Broward County, Florida, prohibits any policy or procedure which results in discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national origin, marital status, race, religion, or sexual orientation.”

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide services that support the school community in meeting the educational, emotional, and social needs of ALL students.

PHONE: (754) 321-2460

FAX: (754) 321-2469