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## President's Message

*Ashley Arnold, President*

It is hard to believe that my year as your TASP President is coming to an end. I have been nothing but humbled to serve you in this capacity. Who knew a former Graduate Student Representative would become President in less than 10 years??

When I think back to the beginning of the year, I am amazed by all the change that has happened in 2011. For me personally, 2011 started off rough with the death of my father in January. In addition, January brought the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas Public Policy Institute, which was a great success. A public hearing with TASP and TPA squaring off over the use of the NCSP also occurred during this month. A public hearing over a proposed rule change at TSBEP is a rarity. February brought grumbings of my job being in jeop-

ardy, as well as me testifying in front of a Senate Health and Human Services Committee defending the right to use the NCSP. While I had been to our Capitol numerous times and spoke to legislators, actually testifying in front of a Senate Committee was a first. March brought the resignation of my job before I was laid off, April brought a new job for the fall, and May brought our NCSP bill being voted out of the aforementioned Senate on a unanimous vote. While the bill ultimately died, TASP made the most progress on our particular piece of legislation in a very long time. The summer months brought me working nonstop to make up for the loss of salary when changing from an administrator contract to a LSSP contract, including in July, which brought a new director of special education, and September brought one of the worst



natural disasters in Texas to the town where I work, as well as a new Secondary Coordinator to our district. October brought a conference with a lowered number of participants than expected in our typically largest attended city. I am still proud that we had just fewer than 600 people at our conference this year. How will I close out the year I wonder?

One of my greatest joys of serving as President has been answering emails and phone calls from people wanting to join the field of school psychology in Texas, whether it is from seasoned professionals looking to relocate to



## Membership Notes:

- Renewing your membership online is fast and easy! <http://txasp.org/membership>
- Regular- \$60.00 Trainee- \$30.00 Student- \$25.00 Retired- \$40.00 Affiliate- \$40.00
- Reminder: membership is valid 1 year from the date of YOUR personal renewal.

## Notes from the Treasurer:

At the last meeting of the TASP Executive Board, Treasurer Kathy DeOrnellas reported that TASP is fiscally sound and has sufficient funds to cover the expenses of TASP and the costs of the 2011 Conference. However, some expenses of the 2011 Conference have not been paid and some payments have not come in; an exact accounting of the success of the Conference is not available at this time.

Over the past few months, the Treasurer began investing excess cash in Certificates of Deposits with maturity dates of no more than one year per the Executive Board's decision.

# GRADUATE STUDENT CORNER

Greetings Fellow Graduate Student Members,

I hope that everyone who attended this year's TASP conference obtained valuable information on a host of topics. In addition to regular sessions, the Graduate Student Speaker Series featured various professionals who presented on numerous issues facing students with emerging experiences in the field. Issues covered this year included TSBEP and licensure, effective consultation with parents and teachers, NASP and advocacy, and maintaining enthusiasm as an LSSP. In an effort to improve the series, I would like to obtain feedback from all of you who attended, as well as those of you who chose to attend a regular session instead. Comments about the following questions would be particularly helpful, and can be submitted to [acanas@twu.edu](mailto:acanas@twu.edu).

Why did you choose to attend or not attend the series?

What topics would you like to have covered in the future as part of the series?

Any changes or suggestions to the format (i.e., time slots, etc.) of the series?

I would also like to congratulate the four recipients of this year's TASP scholarships. While the Scholarship Committee received various applications from well-deserving students, the following students demonstrated excellence across various domains including, but not limited to, work experience, research, and commitment to the field. The following students will receive a \$500 scholarship in addition to reimbursements of TASP conference registration fees. I highly encourage students to keep track of future application deadlines and apply!

Congratulations go to:

**Sandra Thomas- University of Houston- Clear Lake**

**Kerri Nowell- University of Houston**

**Janae' Walker- University of Houston-Victoria**

**Sherzine McKenzie- Sam Houston State University**

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to all of our graduate student volunteers who helped out during conference sessions.

Sincerely, Angela

# DEAR ETHICAL EDDIE:

Dear Ethical Eddie,

I like to follow the rules and stay out of trouble. That's why I always introduce myself with my name, followed by "LSSP-- Licensed Specialist in School Psychology." I never call myself a "School Psychologist," because I'm aware that in Texas, only those who are licensed as doctoral level psychologists can currently use the word "psychologist" when representing their credentials.

Here's the problem: one of my colleagues is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) and an LSSP, and she continues to introduce herself as an LSSP and Nationally Certified School Psychologist. It makes me very uncomfortable to hear that she uses the word "psychologist" when she presents her credentials, because I know that she's not behaving in a way that's consistent with board rules. Am I obligated to report her to the board?

Signed,  
Stressed Over Credentials

Dear SOC,

You seem to have a solid grasp of the TSBEP/LSSP/NCSP issue, which is remarkable, considering how many acronyms we have to juggle here. Let's untangle this by breaking it into some manageable pieces. We can start with the NASP Principles for Professional ethics. Principle III.1 (Accurate Presentation of Professional Qualifications) seems appropriate:

"School psychologists accurately

identify their professional qualifications to others.

Standard III.1.1

Competency levels, education, training, experience, and certification and licensing credentials are accurately represented to clients, recipients of services, and others.

School psychologists correct any misperceptions of their qualifications. School psychologists do not represent themselves as specialists in a particular domain without verifiable training and supervised experience in the specialty."

Note that NASP uses the language, "school psychologists," because in every other state but Texas, that's the term that sub-doctoral specialists in school psychology use. But SOC, your question is about your colleague. Is she accurately representing herself? She has the license (LSSP) and credential (NCSP), so she's not trying to pass herself off as something that she's not. So in this respect, yes, she is representing herself accurately.

Those who oppose the use of "National Certified School Psychologist" for sub-doctoral practitioners argue that this is (or at least is potentially) a misrepresentation, for the general public may be confused by the terminology and think that the practitioner is a doctoral level licensed psychologist. For this reason, TSBEP declined to change the rules when petitioned to do so. At the time of this writing, LSSPs are not permitted to call themselves Nationally Certified School Psychologists in Texas.



Are you obligated to turn her in to the board? No. In fact, our ethical standards demand that we approach the individual as our first step. This is a wonderful approach for many reasons. First, it prevents a lot of unnecessary reporting to the board, because we are often mistaken. Talk to your colleague about this and you may discover that she does not represent herself as an NCSP (someone told you that she did and he was wrong). Also, by talking to your colleague about the issue, she may say to you, "My goodness, I had no idea! I won't use the NCSP in my professional communications until that board rule is changed."

We certainly don't need a witch-hunt atmosphere in school psychology, so Ethical Eddie does not encourage you to turn in names. However, if someone is behaving unethically in such a way that causes real harm (e.g., showing a serious disregard for the privacy of others) and they are unresponsive to your one-on-one conversation about the issue, by all means, report the concern to the appropriate supervisor and/or licensing/credentialing agency.

And if your colleague wants the TSBEP rule changed, she can contact TASP and volunteer her time and energy toward the organization's effort to allow LSSPs to use the NCSP.



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- A behavior monitoring system that allows customized progress monitoring of specific rater identified behaviors
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## 2011 Professional Development Conference

### Kid Tested...TASP Approved

Wow! TASP's 19th annual Professional Development Conference was a success. Approximately 575 School Psychologists from across the state enjoyed the list of distinguished speakers at the event. All sessions were well attended, and feedback from the attendees was positive regarding the topics and delivery of each presentation. In addition, we had our largest group of poster presentations this year. If you missed their presentation session, make an effort to come by next year. The graduate students and interns involved are doing some great research pertinent to service delivery in the schools...Quite Impressive.

Attendees were also impressed with this year's venue, The Westin Galleria Houston. Not only were the luncheon options and session break snacks a huge hit, but School Psychologists had ample opportunities for networking and just catching up with old friends in the vast Galleria area. In fact, the conference hall opened right into the Galleria mall. A few of my own friends in attendance, left the conference with their CEU's and a few pairs of new shoes.

As every year, TASP had the privilege of honoring a few of our members at the annual Awards ceremony and reception. Congratulations, again, to **Katy ISD** for Outstanding Delivery of School Psychological Services, **Jordana Elyse Mortimer** our Outstanding Doctoral Level Graduate Student, and **Jennifer Byrne** our Outstanding Specialist Level School Psychologist. Each of you have impacted our profession, and the children you serve.

Many thanks go to those that make our conference a success every year. From the loyal vendors to each volunteer board member, each of you are a crucial piece to continuing this annual event. Know that your efforts, year after year, help to provide much needed information to our TASP membership. Thank You.



Photos by Jan Opella



# FEAT-Houston

Families for  
Effective  
Autism  
Treatment

The Children's Assistance for Living Committee (CACL) for TASP identified Families for Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT) as the charity to support at this year's conference. FEAT-Houston helps support families and teachers of individuals with autism & other developmental disabilities by providing workshops and resources on research-based interventions and treatments. FEAT accepted donations and offered drawings for gift cards based on donation amount. For a \$1.00 donation, you were offered a kiss (of the chocolate variety) and entered into a drawing for a gift card valued at \$25.00. For a \$5.00 donation, you also received a Spanish DVD set of the ABC's of ABA and for a \$20.00 donation, you received all the previously mentioned items and a book on Autism and ABA. The winners of the FEAT gift card drawings were: Shirley Chevalier, Jonna Webster and Gwen Smith. Congratulations to all!



## Texas Wildfires: Close to Home

It is one of those that you don't really understand until it happens to you.....

I am in my 8<sup>th</sup> year as an employee of Bastrop ISD. I also spent a year as an employee of Smithville ISD. Prior to being a public school employee, I worked for 3 years for the local MHMR center (Bluebonnet Trails MHMR); therefore I have affectionately called the Lost Pines of Bastrop "home" for over ten years. I was spending Labor Day weekend in West Texas- leaving my cell phone and the internet silent. Someone told me "there's a fire in Bastrop" on Sunday. I thought "another wildfire" has sprouted up again in this drought stricken area. (A year ago, we had a wildfire). Then, on Monday on the journey back home, I turned my phone on-BOOM!!! Voicemails and text messages galore!!! One of the first: "school's canceled tomorrow because of the fire". Wow!! My husband (a Bastrop ISD teacher) and I just looked at each other and remarked "Wow! Must be bad if school is cancelled". I spent the next three hours on the drive home constantly on my phone desperately getting updates. As I approached the outer city limits of Austin from the west, I could already see the smoke on the horizon from the Bastrop fires, which was 30 miles southeast of Austin.

I got a phone call from two colleagues (and TASP members, including Jan Opella-Past President) saying they were on their way to our home in Manor to evacuate from the fires. Monday night was a long night desperately trying to get updates on friends and co-workers. The bad news would not stop coming in: one co-worker lost all, then another, then another, and so on. Tuesday was a little better-my evacuees were able to return to their homes in Bastrop as their houses were spared. Wednesday those employees that could come into Bastrop went into work to debrief. After carefully determining our route into Bastrop, the immediate smell and sight

of smoke was unbelievable. My office is about a little over a mile from one of the fires. Gathering with my co-workers was a welcome relief. We gathered to plan crisis intervention like we had never planned before. We still had several co-workers still unsure at this point of the status of their home.

My husband and I returned to Bastrop the next two days to volunteer. The smoke gradually got better as did the air. The out-pouring of support was simply AMAZING!! People kept showing up with more and more to donate to those that have lost all. All week long, tragic story after tragic story surfaced: The family that was in San Antonio and got a call from a neighbor that the neighborhood was on fire. They said "save our dogs and cats". The neighbor was able to save the dogs but the cats wouldn't come. Multiple accounts of every house on their street burned, but their house was the sole survivor. The family that closed on the house on Saturday, only to have it burn to the ground on Sunday. The co-worker (and TASP member) who lost everything, including the nursery for his baby due to arrive in a month.

The following Monday, school was back in session. We had missed an entire week of school. The first day back was a tad chaotic, but nothing major. Our planning had paid off. But as most school psychologists know, the kids were fine-the adults were another story. Over the course of the week, I counseled everyone from a middle school autistic student to a behavior classroom teacher. As I saw with my own eyes, children are very resilient. The following days were actually pretty smooth. We had more help than we needed. Entire classrooms were set up on each campus with a one stop all approach-from clothing to school supplies to food.

Coming back to work also had a new perspective. Our offices are across the street (as the crow flies) from the convention center, which was the staging area for emer-

gency personnel, media press conferences, etc. The first day we had to adjust to our portable buildings (as are most special education offices) shaking from helicopters flying overhead and the constant hearing of sirens blaring. In ARD meetings with parents and staff over the week, the first question asked was “how did you make out in the fire?” Seeing all the tents of insurance companies invade an area just off the highway. We are all now hypersensitive to the sounds of emergency sirens and the scanner in the office announcing another emergency. Then, just as complacency began to sit in, the day before I left for our conference, another fire broke out. This time- whew-just a small one at just over 300 acres. To walk out of the office and turn over my shoulder and see smoke, the thoughts start racing through your mind all over again.

Life has returned to a new set of normal here in the Lost Pines of Bastrop. I still can’t drive past the charred remains without my breath being taken away. Not near as many pine trees are left, but as the motto is now “Bastrop we are coming back”. Little did we know that this school year’s theme would mean so much: “We are BISD”

### **Bastrop County Wildfire by the numbers:**

- The wildfires burned over 34,000 acres with over 1600 homes destroyed and 2 lives lost.
- Bastrop State Park-95% burned
- 9,000 total students in Bastrop ISD and now over 800 are homeless.
- 1,000 BISD employees and over 200 lost everything.
- Of the 35 employees at the Special Education Co-op, 6 lost everything.
- More than two weeks later, both fires were finally at over 90% contained and we had a cause of this destruction: dead pine

trees falling on electrical lines. To be clear, there were two actual wildfires burning in Bastrop: the Union Chapel Fire (Cedar Creek area of Bastrop) and the Bastrop fire (northeast of the town of Bastrop).

Photos by Ashley Arnold





NATIONAL  
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SCHOOL  
PSYCHOLOGISTS

## Helping Children After a Wildfire: Tips for Parents and Teachers

Natural disasters can be traumatic for children and youth. Experiencing a dangerous wildfire can be frightening even for adults, and the devastation to the familiar environment (i.e., home and community) can be long-lasting and distressing. Often an entire community is impacted, further undermining a child's sense of security and normalcy. Wildfires present a variety of unique issues and coping challenges, including the need to relocate when home and/or community have been destroyed, the role of the family in lessening or exacerbating the trauma, emotional reactions, and coping techniques.

Children look to the significant adults in their lives for guidance on how to manage their reactions after the immediate threat is over. Parents, teachers, and other caregivers can help children and youth cope in the aftermath of a wildfire by remaining calm and reassuring children that they will be all right. Immediate response efforts should emphasize teaching effective coping strategies, fostering supportive relationships, and helping children understand their reactions.

### ISSUES AND CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH WILDFIRES

Unlike other natural disasters such as earthquakes, there is often some warning of an advancing wildfire. However, depending upon the wind and terrain the direction and spread of a wildfire can change abruptly. The amount of warning can vary from one neighborhood to the next. While some people may have hours (or even days) to evacuate, others will have only a few minutes to gather their belongings and leave their homes. Even if evacuation is not ultimately necessary, preparing for the possibility can be frightening for children, particularly if they are seeing images of homes burning nearby on television.

Reactions immediately following a wildfire may include emotional and physical exhaustion. In some instances children may experience survivor guilt (e.g., that their home was left unharmed, while others were completely destroyed). In general it might be expected that greater symptomatology in children will be associated with more frightening experiences during the wildfire and with greater levels of damage to their community and homes. The sights, sounds, and smells of a wildfire often generate fear and anxiety. Consequently, similar sensations (e.g., the smell of smoke) may generate distress among children in the months that follow. Given the scale of most wildfires, individuals living outside the ravages of the fires may still feel exposed to the danger from drifting clouds of smoke, flames on the horizon, and television reports. Some children may also react to follow-up news coverage, and even weather reports that talk about dry fire conditions after the fact. It is important to acknowledge that although a wildfire will last for only a specific period of time, survivors can be involved with the aftermath of a wildfire for months or even years. In attempts to reconstruct their lives, families are

often required to deal with multiple people and agencies (e.g., insurance adjustors, contractors, the Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Salvation Army).

### **POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO WILDFIRES**

Most children will be able to cope over time with the help of parents and other caring adults. However, some children may be at risk of more extreme reactions. The severity of children's reactions will depend on their specific risk factors. These include exposure to the wildfire, personal injury or loss of a loved one, relocation from their home or community, level of parental support, the level of physical destruction, and pre-existing risks, such as a previous traumatic experience or mental illness.

Symptoms may differ depending on age but can include:

- **Preschoolers**—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal from friends and routines.
- **Elementary School Children**—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, and withdrawal from activities and friends.
- **Adolescents**—sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, and poor concentration.

A small minority of children may be at risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms can include those listed above, exhibited over an extended period of time. Other symptoms may include re-experiencing the wildfire during play and/or dreams; anticipating or feeling that a wildfire is happening again; avoiding reminders of the wildfire; general numbness to emotional topics; and increased arousal symptoms such as inability to concentrate and startle reactions. Although extremely rare, some adolescents may also be at increased risk of suicide if they suffer from serious mental health problems like PTSD or depression. Students who exhibit these symptoms should be referred for appropriate mental health evaluation and intervention.

### **IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A WILDFIRE: INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

**Remain calm and reassuring.** Children take their cues from adults, especially young children. Acknowledge the loss or destruction, but emphasize the community's efforts to cleanup and rebuild. To the extent it is possible to do so, assure them that family and friends will take care of them and that life will return to normal.

**Acknowledge and normalize their feelings.** Allow children to discuss their feelings and concerns, and address any questions they may have regarding the event. Listen and empathize. An empathetic listener is very important. Let them know that their reactions are normal and expected.

**Encourage children to talk about wildfire-related events.** Children need an opportunity to discuss their experiences in a safe, accepting environment. Provide activities that enable children to discuss their experiences. This may include a range of methods (both verbal and nonverbal) and incorporate varying projects (e.g., drawing, stories, audio and video recording). Seek the help of the school psychologist, counselor, or social worker if you need help with ideas or managing the conversation.

**Promote positive coping and problem-solving skills.** Activities should teach children how to apply problem-solving skills to wildfire-related stressors. Encourage children to develop realistic and positive methods of coping that increase their ability to manage their anxiety and to identify which strategies fit with each situation.

**Emphasize children’s resiliency.** Focus on their competencies. Help children identify what they have done in the past that helped them cope when they were frightened or upset. Bring their attention to other communities that have experienced wildfires and recovered.

**Strengthen children’s friendship and peer support.** Children with strong emotional support from others are better able to cope with adversity. Children’s relationships with peers can provide suggestions for how to cope and can help decrease isolation. In many wildfire situations, friendships may be disrupted because of family relocations. In some cases, parents may be less available to provide support to their children because of their own distress and feelings of being overwhelmed. Activities such as asking children to work cooperatively in small groups can help children strengthen supportive relationships with their peers.

**Take care of your own needs.** Take time for yourself and try to deal with your own reactions to the situation as fully as possible. You will be better able to help your children if you are coping well. If you are anxious or upset, your children are more likely to feel the same way. Talk to other adults such as family, friends, faith leaders, or counselors. It is important not to dwell on your fears or anxiety by yourself. Sharing feelings with others often makes people feel more connected and secure. Take care of your physical health. Make time, however small, to do things you enjoy. **Avoid using drugs or alcohol to feel better.**

#### **IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A WILDFIRE: SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS**

**Allow time for staff to discuss their feelings and share their experiences.** A wildfire may result in the temporary closure of a school. Upon return to school, it is important to allow time for a group discussion (in a safe and caring context) for staff to discuss their feelings and share their experiences. It is essential that teachers and staff be given permission to take care of themselves in order to ensure that they will be able to help their students. Handouts regarding possible trauma reactions among children and other relevant information can be valuable resources for caring adults (e.g., some handouts are available at [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)). School personnel (including your school crisis team members) should also have the opportunity to receive support from a trained mental health professional. Providing crisis intervention is emotionally draining and caregivers will need an opportunity to process their crisis response. This could include teachers and other school staff if they have been serving as crisis caregivers for students.

**Provide time for students to discuss the wildfire.** Depending on the situation, teachers may be able to guide this discussion in class, or students can meet with the school psychologist or other mental health professional for a group crisis intervention. Classroom discussions help children to understand the wildfire. They also encourage students to develop effective means of coping, discover that their classmates share similar questions, and develop peer support networks. **Teachers should not be expected to conduct such discussions if children are severely impacted or if they themselves are distressed.**

**Identify children and youth who are high risk and plan interventions.** Risk factors are outlined in the above section on children’s reactions. Interventions may include classroom discussions, individual

counseling, small group counseling, or family therapy. From classroom discussions, and by maintaining close contact with teachers and parents, the school crisis response team can help determine which students need counseling services. A mechanism also needs to be in place for self-referral and parent-referral of students.

**Secure additional mental health support.** Although many caregivers are often willing to provide support during the immediate aftermath of a wildfire, long-term services may be lacking. School mental health professionals can help provide and coordinate mental health services, but it is important to connect with community resources as well in order to provide such long-term assistance. Ideally these relationships would be established in advance.

#### **HELPING CHILDREN ADJUST TO RELOCATION AFTER A WILDFIRE**

The frequent need to relocate after a wildfire creates unique coping challenges. It may contribute to the social, environmental, and psychological stress experienced by children and their families. Children will be most impacted by the reactions of their parents and other family members, the duration of the relocation, their natural coping style and emotional reactivity, and their ability to stay connected with friends and other familiar people and activities. To the extent possible parents and other caregivers should:

- Provide opportunities for children to see friends.
- Bring personal items that the child values when staying in temporary housing.
- Establish some daily routines so that the child is able to have a sense of what to expect (including returning to school as soon as possible).
- Provide opportunities for children to share their ideas and listen carefully to their concerns or fears.
- Be sensitive to the disruption that relocation may have and be responsive to the needs of the child.
- Consider the developmental level and unique experiences of each child; it is important to remember that as children vary, so will their responses to the disruption of relocation,

In addition, school personnel should:

- Try to determine the status of every child in the school. Make sure that each child absent from school is contacted by school personnel and a record is kept.
- Determine the unique needs of every child whose home might have been destroyed or sustained damage following the wildfire. Help connect these children to supportive resources.
- Find out the phone numbers and addresses of every student that had to relocate. In this way classmates may be able to write notes or make phone calls.
- Help to provide accurate information and address inaccurate rumors or myths.
- Provide opportunities for children to discuss the event and how they are coping in the aftermath. It takes time for children to understand and adjust following a wildfire.
- Understand that it is perfectly normal for children to discuss the event over and over again.
- Use the creative arts (e.g., drama, art, band, chorus, photography) to help children express their emotions.
- Bring in agencies into the school that can help families deal with needs related to housing, finances, and insurance. Help children get any necessary medical and emotional assistance.

- Increase staffing for before and after school care. If possible, extend the service for additional hours and even on weekends.
- Utilize the information about the wildfire in related subject areas. Science, math, history, and language arts are especially relevant.
- Use drama, art, music, and photography to help children express their emotions.
- Develop an advisory committee of students to report back to school staff about what resources and changes in routines will help them cope in the aftermath.
- Most of all, listen to all the students. If you listen closely enough they will be able to tell you what they need.

### Internet Resources

#### American Red Cross Wildfire Resources

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/readywildfire.html>  
[http://www.redcross.org/news/ds/fires/wfire\\_pop/practice/firesafety.html](http://www.redcross.org/news/ds/fires/wfire_pop/practice/firesafety.html)

#### Discovery Channel School Forest Fire Lesson Plans for Teachers

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/forestfires/>

#### Federal Emergency Management Agency Wildfire Information

<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/wildfires.shtm>

*Adapted from;*

*Lazarus, P. J., & Jimerson, S. R., Brock, S. E. (2002). Natural disasters. In S. E. Brock, P. J. Lazarus, & S. R. Jimerson (Eds.), Best practices in school crisis prevention and intervention (pp. 435-450). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.*

*Lazarus, P. J., & Jimerson, S. R., Brock, S. E. (2003). Helping children after natural disasters: Information for parents and teachers. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Available on-line [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).*

*Developed by;*

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For further information on helping children cope with crises, visit [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).

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# Government and Professional Relations Update

The Nationally Certified School Psychologist Credential in Texas: Where are we now???

In the past two years, TASP members have engaged in many efforts to protect the use of the NCSP in professional correspondence and identification for LSSPs. We have approached this from several angles including proposed legislation, proposed TSBEP rule modification and legal action/consultation. At present, we have not achieved the result that we are seeking. The Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists has interpreted the existing law to indicate that LSSPs who do not also hold the LP may not use the NCSP credential in professional identification.

The Texas legislature considered the bill that would have amended the Occupations Code to include specific language allowing the use of the NCSP by LSSPs who are not also Licensed Psychologists. This bill was sponsored in the Senate by Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio. The public testimony in support of this bill (including LSSPs, parents, teachers, school and hospital administrators and licensed psychologists) was received favourably by the Senate committee and was intended to be placed on the schedule for a vote by the complete Senate. However, an effort by Licensed Psychologists to oppose the bill resulted in the delay of this scheduling and as a result, the bill was not voted on by the full senate. Several last minute attempts were made by TASP's legislative liaison, Marty DeLeon and members of the TASP GPR committee to amend existing bills to include language related to the NCSP, however, none of these were successful. We have already begun laying the foundation for the next legislative session to continue our attempts to amend the Occupations Code to codify the protection of the use of the NCSP.

At the same time, TASP proposed an amendment to existing TSBEP rules that would allow the use of the NCSP in professional correspondence. TSBEP held a public hearing on the proposed rule change where those in favour of the change significantly exceeded those who testified against the change. However, the TSBEP decided that an opinion from the state attorney general was required to ensure that the proposed rule change was consistent with existing law. At the last meeting of TSBEP in August, the attorney general had not yet given his opinion on the legality of the proposed rule change, therefore, no action was taken and the proposed change "expired". However, TASP did submit a letter, re-proposing the rule change and the whole process is set to start all over again. At the time of this writing, the attorney general has not yet provided the opinion.

A third avenue that is being pursued is related to the legality of TSBEP prohibiting the use of a credential that has been legitimately earned. In conjunction with NASP, TASP is represented by counsel who is following the previously described processes carefully. The current status of this pursuit is that all other avenues should be exhausted before litigation is initiated.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in advocacy efforts related to the use of the NCSP. Your letters, phone calls, emails and personal testimony have made a tremendous difference. Our efforts have led to greater success in advocacy than has been seen in Texas in some time. We should be encouraged with the progress and patiently continue with our efforts to achieve our goals.

## Information from the Area Representatives!

# AREA REPRESENTATIVES

### Area V

Howdy, Area V. I hope everyone was able to attend the annual TASP conference in Houston. We had a very impressive group of workshops and presenters, and it was nice to see strong involvement from graduate students as well.

I wanted to inform everyone of an upcoming professional development opportunity that will be offered by the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at San Antonio. We will be hosting Dr. Art Hernandez, who will be presenting on "Professional Ethics for School Practitioners". Dr. Hernandez is the Dean of the College of Education at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, and also is an LSSP, NCSP, and Licensed Psychologist. He previously served as the Chair of the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists. Thus, he has school-based, clinical, academic, and administrative perspectives on ethical issues encountered by school psychologists, especially issues surrounding supervision of psychological services.

This presentation will take place at the UTSA Downtown Campus on Friday, November 11, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The cost for registration is \$45 and CEU certificates will be provided. To RSVP, please contact [Beverly.Franke@utsa.edu](mailto:Beverly.Franke@utsa.edu). If I can provide further information, please feel free to email me at [jeremy.sullivan@utsa.edu](mailto:jeremy.sullivan@utsa.edu).



Hello Area III LSSPs,

The TASP Executive Board met just prior to our conference in October. In addition to completing last minute tasks in preparation for the conference, the board reviewed our operating budget. After crunching the numbers, we are happy to report that TASP is a financially sound organization. Given today's economy, this is not an easy task and is a reflection of the wise financial decisions made by the TASP Board over the past several years.

The TASP journal, TASP TIPS will be available on the TASP website very soon! We are anticipating our first journal to be available for viewing by January 2012!

School Psychology Awareness Week is just around the corner, 11/14-11/18. You can find ways to promote our wonderful profession and ideas for celebration on the NASP website. Visit <http://www.nasponline.org/communications/spaw/2011/> for more information.

The TASP conference themed *Kid Tested, TASP Approved* was held at the Westin Galleria October 5-8. The conference was a huge success! The speakers received glowing reviews, the venue was beautiful, the shopping was terrific and the snacks were great! The lunch on Friday was absolutely wonderful. The conference will be at the Westin Galleria again next year, so why not make plans now to attend? It is a wonderful time to network with fellow LSSPs, reconnect with colleagues, accrue some CEUs, and reenergize yourself for the remainder of the school year.

As your Area III representative, please contact me with any ideas or recommendations on how TASP can better serve you.

[Pmoore1@ccisd.net](mailto:Pmoore1@ccisd.net)



Hello Area 1 LSSPs.

The 2011-2012 school year is off to a rapid pace. We had a great conference in Houston this year with a great turn out. For those of you who attended the conference you know we had many informative and exciting presenters. Those of you who were unable to attend missed this as well as fun times of catching up with fellow LSSPs. However, you will have another opportunity next October in Houston for the 2012-2013 TASP Conference. Your TASP board will be meeting to plan for this conference as well as many other exciting ways to help LSSPs in Texas better meet the needs of students and their families.

A couple of reminders:

TASP is continuing to work on the online journal. I encourage you to submit articles for this publication.

TASP is continuing to grow as an organization and we need your help. I encourage you to solicit LSSP non-TASP members to consider joining our organization.

Continue to check with your Regional ESC for new workshops specific to LSSPs

I hope to see those of you in the Region 10 ESC at workshops this year.

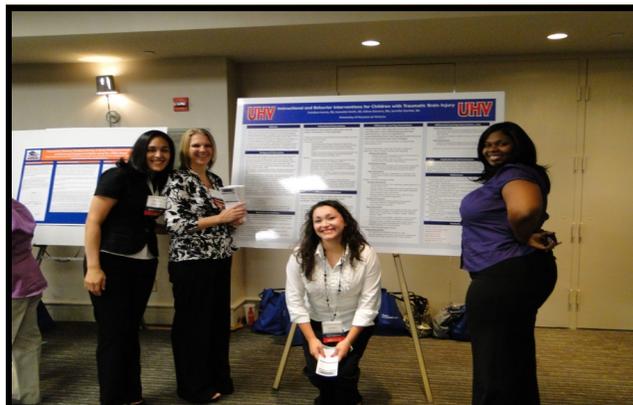
On behalf of students, parents, and educators thank you for what you are doing to help students reach their social, emotional, behavioral, and academic goals. I hope you have a great year.

Lisa Daniel  
TASP Area 1 Representative



## TASP POSTER PRESENTATIONS

This year's annual TASP conference marked an excellent year for student poster presentations in terms of both quality and quantity. Twelve posters were chosen for presentation this year and all were outstanding examples of research that students are doing. Student presenters represented 4 different school psychology programs, including the University of Houston, University of Houston - Victoria, University of Texas at San Antonio and University of Texas at Tyler. This year's winner for best poster presentation was Natasha Comeaux who presented her poster entitled "After the Diagnosis: An Examination of Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder." We hope to see a large number of submissions for next year's conference and look forward to holding the poster session again.



## TASP Awards Excellence at the Annual Professional Development Conference

Awards were presented at the TASP Annual Professional Development Conference for Outstanding Doctoral Graduate Student, Outstanding Specialist Level School Psychologist, and Outstanding Psychological Services Delivery.

Jordana Mortimer was presented the award for **Outstanding Doctoral Graduate Student**. As an intern in Fort Worth ISD, Ms. Mortimer has demonstrated skills and insight observed in more experienced professionals. She is professional, takes the initiative, and is highly motivated to serve students.

Ms. Mortimer takes on challenging cases and masters them with ease. She completed the internship requirements within seven months, so that she could seek out more experiences in low incident assessment, individual and group counseling, and supervision of others. With regard to assessment and consultation, Ms. Mortimer is able to function with little supervision. She is able to select appropriate cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and/or neuropsychological measures to address areas of presenting concerns. She engages with the student, teachers, and parents, so that she insures a complete understanding of the child. Most importantly, Ms. Mortimer is able to conceptualize a case and commit her thoughts to paper such that a professional, teacher, or parent can read her consultations or professional reports and understand the strengths and weaknesses of a student and how best to serve the student.

Ms. Mortimer has chosen to focus the latter part of her internship on intervention (i.e., individual and group counseling, suicide/violence risk assessment, and social skills training), as well as supervision of others. She has been able to quickly assess the needs of the students and create unique interventions to address the student's issues. With her opportunity to supervise a practicum student in providing interventions, she has brought that same creativity and energy to motivate and propel her practicum student. Ms. Mortimer's received extremely positive feedback regarding improvements in the students with whom Ms. Mortimer works from both parents and teachers.

In supervision, Ms. Mortimer demonstrates an eagerness for feedback regarding her performance and progress. She accepts positive and corrective feedback with grace and quickly integrates new thoughts and ideas into future practice. She has exhibited good professional judgment by seeking supervision regarding particularly difficult situations and asking pertinent and thoughtful questions. In her supervision of her practicum student, she has done well to challenge the practicum student within the supervisory developmental process while providing appropriate and constructive feedback regarding performance.

Ms. Mortimer exemplifies the finest qualities of a school psychology intern. Her emphasis is on what will ensure the best educational, behavioral, and psychological outcome for students.



The **Outstanding Service Delivery Award** was presented to Katy Independent School District. Katy Independent School District is a flourishing suburban school district encompassing 181 square miles in east Texas. Its eastern boundaries stretch to Houston's energy corridor approximately 16 miles west of downtown Houston and extend along Interstate 10 to a few miles west of the city of Katy.

In 2006, Katy ISD's Department of Counseling and Psychological Services received TASP's Outstanding Delivery of School Psychological Services Award. Since that time, Katy ISD has maintained a "Recognized" rating on the state's ac-

the great state of Texas or graduate students interested in the field.

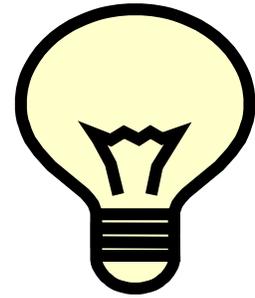
One of my goals as President was to increase membership-mission accomplished! We went from a little fewer than 600 members to now having a little fewer than 800 members of TASP. In this time of economic hardships, I am probably most proud of accomplishing this goal. In fact, if you remember from my lovely January article my goal was to get to 800 members.

Another proud accomplishment of TASP for 2011 is the creation of the Graduate Student Scholarship. We were able to award 4 scholarships in our inaugural year. We all remember how poor graduate students are and to be able to help a future school psychologist accomplish their goal is outstanding. We have visions of this growing tremendously in the future-perhaps as an endowment?

In addition, my other goal was to increase the visibility of our organization. One of the ways we accomplished this was through our website receiving a makeover this year and I am, as I am sure you are, very pleased with our new 'do! Many thanks goes to our outgoing webmaster-Mindi Jeter-for her tireless effort in improving the TASP website.

One goal I have not yet accomplished, but will before the end of December is the publication of the much anticipated, long awaited TASP peer reviewed journal-Tools for Intervention and Practice in Schools (TIPS).

Again, thanks to all of you. It has truly been a pleasure to serve you as President. I have nothing but best wishes for TASP in the future. Our future is so bright, you better wear shades!



## KEEP US INFORMED!

Let TASP know your if your e-mail address changes and update your membership profile!

Send your E-mail to [membership@txasp.org](mailto:membership@txasp.org) or call TASP at their toll-free number:

1-888-414-TASP (8277)

**Limited fellowships/scholar loans available** for LSSPs who are interested in getting their Ph.D. in School Psychology from an APA accredited/NASP approved program. Possible through grant funding from OSEP (DTELL) and will be available for 4 years for students specializing in Special Education and English Language Learners. Application by December 1, 2011 and acceptance to the full-time APA approved School Psychology Doctoral program for Fall 2012 is required. A scientist-practitioner program, graduates are employed in higher education, schools, and clinical settings. Information on admission and course is available on our website ([spsy.tamu.edu](http://spsy.tamu.edu)). Interested students are invited to visit the campus, and meet with students and faculty on November 4 – if you are interested please contact Kristie Stramaski ([kstramaski@tamu.edu](mailto:kstramaski@tamu.edu)). For additional information, please contact Cyndi Riccio, Program Coordinator ([criccio@tamu.edu](mailto:criccio@tamu.edu)).



## University of Texas at San Antonio

### School Psychology Program

The Department of Educational Psychology at UTSA is pleased to announce the approval and implementation of a new Master of Arts program in School Psychology. The program includes coursework and field-based experiences consistent with guidelines provided by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists and the National Association of School Psychologists. Most courses will be offered in the evening at the UTSA Downtown Campus, in order to accommodate working professionals.

For more information, please contact Dr. Jeremy Sullivan  
(jeremy.sullivan@utsa.edu)



University of Houston

College of Education

## COLLABORATION

### FOR LEARNING & LEADING

Department  
of Educational  
Psychology

### Ph.D. in School Psychology



### School Psychology Program

Texas State University offers a Specialist in School Psychology (SSP) degree in school psychology, approved by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The program endorses the scientist-practitioner training model. Texas State also offers a program for individuals who already hold a master's level psychology degree in a related field and would like to re-specialize in school psychology.

#### For more information, please contact:

Jon Lasser, Ph.D.

Coordinator, School Psychology Program

[www.txstate.edu/clas](http://www.txstate.edu/clas)

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The TASP newsletter is published to enhance communication among school psychologists in a manner that advances the general purpose of the Texas Association of School Psychologists. The acceptability of an ad for publication is based upon legal, social, professional, and ethical considerations. All advertising must be in keeping with the generally scholarly, and/or professional nature of the publication. Thus, TASP reserves the right to unilaterally reject, omit, or cancel advertising which it deems not to be in the best interest of the scholarly and professional objectives of the Association, and/or not in keeping with appropriate professional tone, content, or appearance. In addition, the Association reserves the right to refuse advertising submitted for the purpose of airing either side of controversial social or professional issues.

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#### Advertising Deadlines

Camera ready artwork or Employment Notices must be received prior to deadline date for desired publication. Contact TASP at 888-414-8277 for artwork specifications.

Join us for the

20<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Development  
Conference!

**TASP 2.0**

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countability system. In addition, the district has grown by 13,000 students, and recently welcomed its 60,000<sup>th</sup> student. Katy ISD is now comprised of 53 campuses, including six four-year high schools.

Psychological services are provided to district students, families, and staff members via Katy's Department of Counseling and Psychological Services. Our Director, Dr. Anita Horton, is a Licensed Psychologist, Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), and a Nationally Certified School Psychologist. Dr. Horton leads school counselors, LSSPs, and the district's Licensed Master Social Worker. Dr. Horton also provides professional supervision to LSSP Trainees.

Our department employs 26 LSSPs, including 23 full time and three part-time LSSPs. Eleven of our full time staff have doctoral degrees, eight are Licensed Psychologists, and one is a Provisionally Licensed Psychologist. Our department also maintains two SSP internship positions and offers supervised practica and post-doctoral experiences to local psychology graduate students. SSP Interns and graduate students receive weekly, direct field supervision from district LSSPs. Our LSSPs provide a wide range of direct and indirect psychological services to all students in the district, including early intervention assistance, behavioral consultation, psychological assessment, crisis response, and parent and staff development training.

Katy LSSPs serve an average of three school campuses. Campus LSSPs are responsible for the provision of expanded psychological services to both general and Special Education students, including early intervention assistance, behavioral consultation, psychological assessment, counseling, crisis response assistance, and parent and staff development training. Department data over the past four years indicate that **40% of total LSSP referrals were to assist general education students, and 60% of referrals were to assist existing Special Education students.**

Department data over the past four school years further indicate that **85.4% of total LSSP referrals involve providing behavioral Technical Assistance and Consultation services to campus staff and students.** A critical component of this role is participation in Katy's **Response to Intervention (RtI)** assistance model. RtI collaborative meetings provide a forum for teachers to present student concerns and receive assistance from administrators, behavioral specialists, special programs coordinators, and LSSPs. LSSP collaborative assistance is documented as **Technical Assistance**. Emphasis is placed on seeking Technical Assistance from LSSPs as a means of expediting interventions implemented by teachers, reducing the necessity for formal referral, and thus making more time available for LSSPs to serve more students.

Through Technical Assistance, LSSPs guide school staff through the functional behavior assessment process, comparing individual's behaviors to groups, monitoring baseline data collection, determining whether individual or whole-group interventions are indicated, developing strategies to remedy the problem, judging the effectiveness of intervention, and determining how to proceed.

If a student has not responded to Technical Assistance interventions such as classroom accommodations, formal behavioral intervention, and/or out-of-classroom supports, then the collaborative team may request **Psychological Services Consultation**. The goal of psychological consultation is to further assist with behavioral intervention strategies and monitoring of student response to intervention by enabling the LSSP to observe, collect data, and interact with teachers and students as deemed appropriate. Consultation reports are brief and focus on functionalizing behaviors targeted for improvement, intervention strategies, and the intervention responsibilities of parents and school staff. Consultation data may lead to additional evaluation if appropriate.

If a student has been referred for initial Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) for Special Education Services, the referral committee formally requests "**Psychological Consultation/Evaluation,**" thus leaving the decision to evaluate for a developmental, emotional, or behavioral disability to the discretion of the LSSP. This practice promotes least restrictive intervention and prevents unnecessary evaluation for additional categories of eligibility.

LSSPs may also obtain informed consent for **Ongoing Psychological Consultation** if they believe the student will benefit from ongoing monitoring, data collection, staff collaboration, and/or direct contact. This process allows LSSPs broad access to assist with student needs throughout the school year.

Heavy emphasis on early intervention assistance and consultation has led to lower numbers of evaluations for Special Education services. Department data over the past four years indicate that **14.6% of total LSSP referrals are for psychological evaluations for Special Education eligibility.** Campus LSSPs are responsible for completing evaluations leading to eligibility as a student with an Emotional Disturbance or Other Health Impairment. Autism and Preschool

Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) evaluations are completed by Katy's Developmental Assessment Team (DAT) which is comprised of four LSSPs and four Speech and Language Pathologists.

Department data over the past three years reveals a **74.6% Special Education eligibility rate for developmental, emotional, and behavioral disorders**. This exceptional qualification rate is directly related to early intervention efforts of our LSSPs. We feel we are well on our way toward achieving qualification levels consistent with RtI best practices literature.

Our LSSPs provide individual and group counseling services to both general and Special Education students. Our LSSPs assist with the coordination of campus crisis response procedures. Our department also coordinates crisis response procedures following district-wide crises. LSSPs actively communicate with community-based medical and mental health practitioners to assist with treatment intervention and monitoring.

Active involvement in campus and district-wide staff development is an important responsibility of district LSSPs. Our department produces newsletters and brochures, disseminated to school staff and parents, addressing a variety of school psychology topics.

Our department provides weekly internship training seminars and these presentations are available to LSSPs as well. Our department provides funding to LSSPs for professional conference attendance and continuing education experiences. Our department also establishes collaborative relationships with neighboring psychological services departments to examine innovative approaches to practice and to promote professional growth.



The **Outstanding Specialist Level School Psychologist** award goes to someone who started their career in 2001 as a teacher at a charter school or boot camp with students with behavioral difficulties, Jennifer Bryne. In 2003 she began teaching students in a resource setting in Bryan ISD. She began her graduate program for school psychology in 2004 at the University of Houston Clear Lake. After graduating, she began working full time for Pasadena ISD. For 3 years, she provided services on campuses, developing effective RTI procedures in collaboration with teachers, providing counseling to special needs students, conducting evaluations and ARDs, administering TAKS, providing support and more!

In the fall of 2010, she was promoted to Coordinator of Evaluation in Pasadena ISD, and began supervising over 50 evaluation staff members, LSSPs, diagnosticians, and occupational and physical therapists. Since she has been in the coordinator position, she has supported the evaluation staff and has kept our best interests in mind at all times. She's not afraid to change procedures to help out the evaluation staff members or make our lives just a bit easier! And, as things start piling up, like evaluations, ARDs, FBAs, etc, she will be the first person to run to a campus to assist with getting things done!! We in Pasadena ISD are extremely lucky to have an LSSP and Coordinator of Evaluation like her. And on top of all that, she is a new wife (married to a fellow educator) and new mother (with 3 month old baby AJ).

