

A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY IN VERMONT

“to know where we are going, it is useful to know from whence we came”

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The 1970's

The profession of school psychology really did not exist in Vermont in the early 1970s. Schools, of course, required the episodic services of psychologists, mainly for evaluation purposes, and in most instances such services were obtained, often via contract, from the local community mental health center. Psychological evaluations, mainly for special education eligibility purposes, were conducted by clinical psychologists from the CMHC. Evaluation reports were typically given to the school district's Director of Special Education who then passed them on to special educators so critical information from psychological reports could be incorporated into special education evaluation reports. Rarely did the psychologist who conducted the evaluation attend any school meetings, such as Basic Staffing Team (read as Evaluation and Planning Team) meetings where evaluation questions were initially formulated and results were later explained to parents. And, most psychological evaluations at that time were nothing more than intellectual assessments; the handicap (read as disability) du jour during the 1970s being specific learning disability. As less than 1% of Vermont's child count consisted of students identified with an emotional disturbance, comprehensive psychological evaluations tended to be few and far between.

The Vermont Department of Education did offer a credential titled *School Psychologist*, although it was not mandatory that psychologists who provided services to schools held that certification. The endorsement itself consisted of a single paragraph description of the school psychologist as evaluator. There was no mention of consultation, intervention, counseling or other services that would define a broader role for the school psychologist. It was not surprising that psychologists who provided services to schools were not required to hold a *School Psychologist* endorsement; at the time, Vermont did not have any form of licensing law for psychologists. Anyone could, and did, hang out a shingle promoting themselves as a psychologist and many CMHCs tended to

be equally loose in bestowing the title “Psychologist” on employees whose education or training ran far afield from the typical psychology graduate program. Such circumstances changed in the mid-1970s when the Vermont legislature, after considerable lobbying on the part of the Vermont Psychological Association (VPA), finally enacted a licensing statute that regulated both the title “Psychologist” and the practice of psychology. The Vermont licensing statute was a generic one and while it identified an individual’s level of training (Psychologist-Master’s or Psychologist-Doctorate) there was no reference to psychological specialty (e.g.: Clinical, Counseling, School or Industrial/Organizational). Those who held what became known as a “practicing license” were deemed qualified to provide psychological services to schools. The irony was that almost all of the psychologists employed by CMHCs were clinical psychologists and, of this group, nearly all had been trained to work with adults.

-1-

Two notable events occurred in the mid-1970s that marked the beginning of school psychology as a distinct profession in Vermont. Federal legislation was enacted - Public Law 94-142, *The Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act*. Among other things, this legislation mandated certain evaluation procedures and safeguards, somewhat defined the role (and credentialing) of psychologists and identified a set of “related services” that were to be provided to students (even parents) if such services were needed to facilitate access to special education. Here in Vermont, the Department of Education found itself in the challenging position of having to implement the services, procedures and safeguards outlined in PL 94-142. To do so, Jean Garvin, then Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services, sought the expertise of the Special Education Advisory Council, a group of concerned citizens and professionals that assisted the Department in policy and procedural matters. Whether by coincidence or fate, two members of the advisory council were psychologists who provided services to the schools. Later that year, Patricia Pallas, the Department of Education’s Consultant for Pupil Personnel Services, brought together a group of psychologists who provided services to schools to assist in rewriting the Department’s *School Psychologist* endorsement. The result was an endorsement that identified the competencies that needed to be demonstrated in order to be certified as a *School Psychologist* and defined the role and function of the school psychologist in a much broader way. There was some discussion of requiring that psychologists who provided services to schools hold the endorsement. However, since fewer than a dozen individuals held a *School Psychologist* certificate from the VTDOE at that time, making certification mandatory was deemed unrealistic. The training requirements of

the newly rewritten *School Psychologist* endorsement were such that psychologists with clinical and counseling specialties would need to re-train to an extent in order to meet the new standards. To allow sufficient time for that to occur, an interim solution was to allow psychologists holding a practicing license to continue to provide services to schools.

Even after the passage of PL 94-142, psychological services to schools continued to be provided mainly through contractual arrangements with local community mental health centers. However, many school districts now began to make their contractual relationships with CMHCs contingent upon the CMHCs hiring individuals with specialty training in *school* psychology, or at least their clinically-trained psychologists holding the *School Psychologist* credential from the Department of Education. The CMHCs across the state were variably receptive to this request. Some began to hire psychologists who graduated from school psychology training programs, but others were less than receptive to the idea, perhaps in part because the role of a staff psychologist at a CMHC at the time was multi-faceted - individuals commonly carrying a therapy caseload, even serving on the CMHC's crisis team, in addition to providing services to schools or consulting with other community agencies.

In the late-1970s, school psychologists became regular, and valued, participants on work groups formed by the Department of Education to examine and adapt education and special education practices. The area of specific learning disabilities, in particular, posed numerous questions and quandaries, including the very definition of SLD - an issue of substantial debate at the time - plus assessment practices that would reliably and validly identify students as having SLD. The state had adopted the federal definition of handicapping conditions, including SLD, meaning that "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes" had to be specified for a student to

-2-

be identified as having a learning disability. Various visual, auditory and language "processing" measures were being touted by test authors and publishing houses and psychologists were using existing diagnostic measures in ways they had not been intended. Unfortunately, a research base that supported such use was almost non-existent. In Vermont, school psychologists played a key role in defining best practices for the identification of SLD and, in doing so, helped keep special education practices from going off the deep end. (That may seem like an exaggeration, but at the time many schools across the country were eagerly adopting a visual-perceptual training program

that included such remedial activities as children practicing the drawing of straight lines from a picture of a mouse to a that of a piece of cheese, under the assurance that such visual-perceptual training would significantly improve students' reading achievement.) I expect most practitioners today believe the profession is beyond such folly, and yet the fields of psychology and education continue to adopt measures, practices, interventions and curricula that have little, if any, research base. This misguided effort to train "psychological processes" is a cautionary tale.

The 1980s

School psychology in Vermont saw further advancement during the 1980s, especially toward the end of the decade. Psychological evaluation continued to be the primary role of psychologists in the schools; however, psychological assessment transformed into *psycho-educational* assessment and information gathered during assessment began to inform students' individualized educational plans. More and more schools sought out psychologists who demonstrated a working knowledge of academic intervention practices, understood how classrooms (and schools) operated and knew something about curriculum and instruction. Contractual relationships with CMHCs declined as schools either hired their own practitioners or contracted individually with school psychologists in private practices. By end of the 1980s, nearly forty individuals held Vermont Department of Education certification as a *School Psychologist*.

In the late 1980's, the graduate program in clinical psychology at St. Michael's College created a school-based training strand to meet the need for psychologists with educational expertise. Two school psychologists joined the faculty and taught courses in assessment, consultation and school psychology. A number of practicing clinical psychologists took advantage of SMC's offerings to meet competencies required for the *School Psychologist* credential. A psycho-educational clinic, jointly supervised by a clinical psychologist and school psychologist, was established and for the first time a practicum experience in school psychology became available to graduate students. It afforded them an opportunity to complement their clinical training with *educational* coursework and a supervised field experience, as well as meet the requirements for VTDOE certification as a school psychologist. Although not a school psychology training program per se, and despite the clinic's tenure being short-lived, this initiative on the part of SMC was the closest thing Vermont has ever seen to a school psychology graduate program. Credit goes to Dr. Ronald Miller, Chair

of the Clinical Psychology Graduate Program (at the time), for his vision and contribution to the developing profession of school psychology in Vermont.

Further advances in credentialing also occurred. The Department again brought together a group of practicing school psychologists to assist in revising the *School Psychologist* endorsement; the

-3-

goal being to better align the competencies of the endorsement with advances in psychological and educational practice. The breadth of competencies identified in the endorsement expanded considerably. In addition to skills in assessment, the competencies broadened to include skills in consultation and intervention. The new endorsement also required coursework in school/special education law and a course that specifically addressed professional issues, ethical principles and models of school psychology service delivery. With this revision of the licensing rules, holding the *School Psychologist* credential became a requirement for individuals providing psychological services to schools.

In the latter half of the 1980s there was a marked increase in the number of students identified as having an emotional disturbance. In the 1970s and early 1980s, less than 1% of Vermont's child count included students identified as ED. By the end of the 1980s, nearly 10% of the child count fell into the ED classification. This startling jump in the number of students identified as having emotional and behavioral challenges further expanded the need for school psychologists. It also created a need for clarification as to what constituted an emotional disturbance. The Department of Education asked Dr. Stephanie McConaughy (a co-founder of VASP and Vermont's Delegate to NASP from 1988 to 1993) to convene a work group of school psychologists to formulate "best practices" for the identification of ED. The final outcome of that endeavor was a compilation of procedural guidelines (actually written by Dr. McConaughy) that were adopted by the VTDOE as the set of procedures for identifying students as having an emotional disturbance. The set of guidelines also addressed the confusion that existed about ED versus social maladjustment and suggested ways to differentiate between the two, something that was not addressed in the federal legislation.

In the fall of 1989, the Vermont Association of School Psychologists (VASP) was founded, the charter membership consisting of 34 individuals. School psychology now spoke with a unified voice in Vermont. One of VASP's identified missions was to provide professional development for psychologists who worked with schools. The goal was to sponsor two workshops per year, a Fall Conference that brought nationally known presenters to Vermont and addressed topics that would be of interest to teachers and other ancillary school personnel as well as to the members of VASP and a members-only Spring Conference that would be more conversational in nature and focus on day-to-day practice issues in Vermont. An ethics committee was also formed to address issues that might arise during the course of school-based practice. The founding of VASP raised some concerns for the Vermont Psychological Association, not the least of which was a fear that school-based practitioners might forego their membership in VPA in favor of joining VASP. To ease this concern, the presidents of VPA and VASP worked out an arrangement whereby those joining VASP (membership cost of \$20 at the time) could deduct that amount from the cost of joining VPA (membership cost \$75 of at the time). A second arrangement was for VASP and VPA to jointly sponsor a few professional development workshops, given that some topics and some presenters would be of interest to members of both associations. A third agreement was that the ethics committees of the two associations would operate collegially when responding to any questions posed around ethical practice or any complaint submitted to one of the committees that might best be addressed by both ethics committees operating in concert. The arrangements on dues, ethics and conference co-sponsorship between VASP and VPA lasted for quite a while;

-4-

well beyond the tenure of the two association presidents who forged them: the last co-sponsored conference was in 1999 when VASP brought Phillip Kendall to Vermont to speak on childhood depression and individuals were able to deduct their VASP dues from their VPA dues until the early 2000s.

The 1990s

Throughout the 1990s, VASP and VPA operated much like sibling organizations, in part because the majority of VASP members still were individuals who either worked at CMHCs or in private

practices and, as such, they held a practicing license as well as VTDOE certification as a *School Psychologist*. In the early and mid-1990s, only a handful of school districts employed their own school psychologists and, typically, these school psychologists were not dually licensed (the state licensing law included an exclusionary clause whereby psychologists who were employees of a school district were not required to hold a practicing license as long as their work was limited to their employment responsibilities and did not entail the independent practice of psychology). As the decade neared its end, schools increasingly began to hire their own school psychologists. For practicing clinicians, insurance company requirements increased substantially and the concept of risk-management came to the fore. These factors led to a greater degree of separation between VPA and VASP, as the expressed missions of the associations began to differ and membership in the respective organizations became more differentiated than overlapping.

VASP kicked off the first few years of its existence in a big way, bringing James Ysseldyke to Vermont to present at the first VASP Fall Conference (1990, the topic being “Future Directions in School Psychology”, the place being the Commodore Inn, in Stowe). Peg Dawson, President of NASP at the time, graced the 1991 VASP Fall Conference stage, presenting on “Assessment and Intervention of ADHD” (at the Holiday Inn in Rutland). Bill Jensen presented the following year on “Working with Tough Kids” (1992, at the Cortina Inn, in Killington) and George DuPaul was the featured presenter at VASP’s 1993 Fall Conference, the topic being “Best Practice in the Assessment of Emotional-Behavioral Disorders” (at Lake Morey Inn, in Fairlee). The remainder of the decade brought the likes of George Batsche, then President of NASP, Sandra Christenson, Russell Skiba, Reece Petersen and Phillip Kendall, plus return visits by both Jim Ysseldyke and George Batsche. VASP certainly made good on its mission to provide high quality professional development for its members. Each of the Fall conferences drew well over 100 people and Bill Jensen’s workshop drew just over 250, the largest gathering at any VASP conference (to date).

The number of individuals holding the *School Psychologist* credential markedly increased during the 1990s, to an extent because the St. Michael’s College clinical psychology program developed a school-based training strand, but also because Vermont began to attract graduates from school psychology training programs in New York, Pennsylvania and neighboring New England states. A factor that figured prominently in attracting out-of-state school psychologists to Vermont was the philosophy and practice of inclusion. For school psychologists seeking something different from the refer-test-place role that still dominated school practice in many states, Vermont offered a broader opportunity. Evaluation still comprised a substantial portion of a school psychologist’s

day-to-day functioning, but it was not the only role. In time, Vermont became known as a school psychologist-friendly state. By the end of the decade, the membership of VASP had grown to 51 individuals - a 50% increase in membership compared to 1989.

The 1990s also saw a number of significant developments that impacted schools and influenced the role of school psychologists. The number of students identified with emotional-behavioral disabilities continued to increase, reaching 15% of the special education child count by the end of the decade. The number of students identified with other health impairments, predominantly ADHD, also increased significantly, from less than 1% of the child count at the end of the 1970s to 8% of child count by 1999. Just as when the number of ED-identified students skyrocketed, the marked increase in ADHD-identified students led the Department to again gather together a group of school psychologists and special educators to identify a set of best practice procedures for identifying students as having ADHD. Chaired by Dr. James Tallmadge (President of VASP from 1994 to 1998 and Vermont's Delegate to NASP from 1997 to 2001), this group developed a set of guidelines for the identification of students as having ADHD and determining if a student was in need of special education services or if accommodations alone were sufficient to support the student in the regular classroom. In the same way that Stephanie McConaughy authored the guidelines for identifying students as having ED, Jim Tallmadge essentially wrote the guidelines for ADHD.

The continued increase in the number of what were now called EBD (emotional and behavioral disability) students, plus the dramatic increase in OHI (ADHD) identified students, posed a real challenge for the schools. Since Vermont's practice was to educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom, it was no surprise that teachers began to struggle with managing behavior in the classroom and differentiating instruction to meet students' varied and often times notable needs. The Vermont Department of Education's response was the B.E.S.T. (Building Effective Supports for Teaching Children with Behavioral Challenges) Project. The project was aimed at supporting schools in their efforts in meet the needs of students, particularly those who exhibited emotional-behavioral difficulties. School psychologists served as active partners in this initiative and assisted VTDOE staff both in program development and in the training of school personnel. Two school psychologists also served on the B.E.S.T. Project's advisory council.

The mid- to late-1990s was also a time of increased concern about school violence. Even before the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School, the VTDOE formed a task force on school safety and school violence, the purpose being to identify measures schools could adopt to best respond to disruptive and violent student behavior and promote school safety. One outcome of this effort was that a number of school districts adopted school-wide violence prevention programs. School psychologists participated on this school safety/school violence task force.

The collaboration between VASP and the VTDOE throughout the 1990s would not have been as frequent or as meaningful were it not for Dr. Marc Hull. Marc served as assistant to Jean Garvin throughout the 1970s, was Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services during the 1980s and became the Commissioner of Education in the 1990s. Being a special educator, Marc recognized what school psychology could contribute to the educational system and he valued the

-6-

expertise that VASP, through its members, could bring to the Department. He was not shy about reaching out and tapping that expertise; indeed, if you were part of VASP's executive committee at that time, it was not unusual for your phone to ring and to find the Commissioner of Education calling you. Marc was the presenter at VASP's 1997 Spring Conference, although calling him a presenter is a misnomer. Marc simply engaged VASP members in a wide-ranging conversation about what he felt schools needed and how he believed school psychology could help meet those needs. The next year Marc arranged for the B.E.S.T. Project staff to have a similar conversation with members of VASP (at the 1998 Spring Conference). It was a unique era in VASP-VTDOE relations. Other Commissioners have come and gone since Marc, and it is fair to say that many have been supportive of school psychology. However, none have helped put school psychology on the Vermont map as did Marc Hull.

The 2000s

The sea change that occurred during this decade was the shift from contracting for psychological services to school districts hiring their own school psychologists - and in some instances hiring multiple school psychologists (to cite two examples, the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union hired almost as many school psychologists as there were schools in the SU and Chittenden South Supervisory Union did the same). A number of schools developed school psychology internships that attracted individuals from school psychology training programs around the northeast. Many of these individuals remained in Vermont after completing their internship; schools recognizing this pool of talent and hiring from it, thereby expanding the breadth of expertise and the number of school psychology practitioners in Vermont.

Various legislative landmarks also influenced the profession of school psychology, including Act 117 in Vermont and, at a federal level, NCLB, IDEA and the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Act 117 created the educational support system, NCLB impacted the practice of school-wide assessment, IDEA introduced the term “highly qualified teacher” and authorized response-to-intervention (RtI) as an alternative approach to identifying students with learning disabilities and the Blueprint for Reform (part of the ESEA statute) targeted innovation and continuous improvement. A number of additional national and state-wide initiatives further affected the schools. School-wide discipline, violence prevention and positive behavior support programs were implemented in many schools, partly in response to school violence episodes that continued to occur around the country, but also to promote a positive school climate. Response-to-intervention (RtI) changed the manner in which academic and behavioral interventions were delivered and further highlighted the importance of early intervention. Similarly, PBIS stressed a proactive approach to student behavior; one that recognized students for behaving well, versus schools simply reacting to student misbehavior.

School psychologists often played a role in planning, implementing and evaluating the outcomes of VTDOE initiatives. For example, Dr. Richard Reid (VASP President from 1998 to 2002 and Vermont’s Delegate to NASP from 2005 to 2007) was involved in the state’s effort to pilot RtI implementation in a small group of schools in the Northeast Kingdom, and Cindy Cole (VASP’s current President) played a central role in the implementation of RtI within the Chittenden South Supervisory Union).

As changes occurred in school practice, the role of school psychologists also changed. It was no longer sufficient for school psychologists to operate just as evaluators and/or counselors. School

psychologists needed to be knowledgeable and skilled in data-based decision-making, evidence-based academic and behavior interventions, consultation and collaboration with teachers, family-school collaboration, culturally competent practice, instructional support systems, monitoring the outcomes of interventions, program evaluation and an array of school-wide academic, behavioral and mental health programs. School psychologists engaged in such activities on a regular basis, often providing training and leadership for such initiatives. In many ways, the practice of school psychology became as much school as it was psychology, meaning greater emphasis was placed on academics, curriculum, instruction, the classroom environment and school-wide intervention and prevention programs than at any time previous.

The Vermont Department of Education acknowledged this role change for school psychologists and recognized that it called for a corresponding change in the knowledge and skill base needed to fulfill that role. When the licensing regulations were revisited in 2006, the Department sought the assistance of VASP in rewriting the competencies for the *School Psychologist* endorsement.

The result was a set of eleven competencies that reflected the knowledge and skills necessary for school psychologists in the new millennium and that reflected the credentialing standards of the National Association of School Psychologists. In effect, the NASP Practice Model became part and parcel of the VTDOE's *School Psychologist* credential.

Just as the number of students identified as having ED raised concerns during the 1980s, and the number of students identified with OHI (mainly ADHD) raised similar concerns in the 1990s, the disability category that experienced a marked increase in the 2000s was autism. Vermont's 1989 special education child count did not list a single student in the autism category. By 1999, that had changed with 221 students being identified with ASD (1.6% of Vermont's child count). By 2009 that number had more than tripled - 752 students being identified as having ASD (5.3% of Vermont's child count). The concern over the growing number of children identified with ASD was so great that in March of 2006 the Vermont Department of Education and Vermont Agency of Human Services authored a white paper on ASD that examined the basis for the increase and services available to children identified with ASD. For many (if not most) school psychologists, assessment/intervention tailored to ASD was a new practice arena. In years past, school districts typically served only a handful of students with ASD and, more often than not, schools relied on child development clinics or autism specialists when it came to diagnostic assessment. With the increased prevalence of ASD, schools began to ask their own school psychologists to undertake

these assessments. It did not take long for measures like the ADOS, CARS and ADI to become almost as familiar to school psychologists as the various versions of the Wechsler Scales.

The growth of school psychology in Vermont during the 2000s was reflected by a meaningful increase in VASP membership. By 2009, VASP's membership reached 77 individuals - a 51% increase compared to ten years before and a 126% increase since the founding of VASP in 1989. Most, but still not all, school psychologists in Vermont belonged to VASP (the estimate was that slightly over 100 individuals held the *School Psychologist* credential [now called a license] from the Vermont Department of Education [now Agency of Education}). As an organization, VASP

-8-

continued to provide quality professional development. Kevin McGrew presented on the revised Woodcock-Johnson Battery (2000, at the Radisson, in Burlington) and Amy Dilworth-Gabel, of the Psych Corp., introduced the new WISC-IV (2004, at the Inn at Essex). Thomas Power spoke on the importance of family and school partnerships (2001) and G. Reid Lyon presented on the prevention of reading problems in children (2002, both Fall Conferences being at the Sheraton, in South Burlington). Frank Gresham presented on RtI and SLD (2005, at the Inn at Essex) while Beth Doll spoke on resilient classrooms (2009, the Hampton Inn, Colchester). George Batsche, Peg Dawson and Bill Jensen reprised their visits to Vermont, Bill Jensen doing so twice. George presented on RtI at the 2007 Fall Conference (at the Hampton Inn, Colchester), Peg presented on executive functioning in children and adolescents (2008, at the Holiday Inn, in Rutland) and Bill presented on hostile and unmotivated children (2002, the Doubletree, South Burlington) and on evidence based interventions for autism (2006, the Hampton Inn, Colchester). For the first time, VASP brought nationally known presenters to a Spring Conference; James DiPerna and Robert Volpe co-presenting on academic competence and academic intervention (2007). Members-only Spring Conferences continued to invite staff of the VTDOE to speak with members of VASP on such topics as Act 117 and pre-referral interventions (2001), adverse effect in SLD identification (2003), the educational support team (2004) and positive behavior intervention supports (2008). Douglas Dennett spoke about medications for children and adolescents (2000) and Bill Halikais presented on dangerousness and risk assessments (2002). Various VASP members presented on such topics as identifying students as ED (2003), as having ADHD (2009) and the challenge of implementing RtI in Vermont schools (2006).

2010 and Beyond

A new decade has begun and the profession of school psychology in Vermont continues to grow, prosper and - in the natural way of all things - change. Membership in VASP increased by leaps and bounds during the first few years of the decade, a recent count indicating VASP has nearly two-thirds more members than only five years ago (a truly stunning 370% increase since VASP was founded some 25 years ago). The old guard has stepped aside and a cadre of energetic new leaders has taken on the task of guiding the profession. In doing so, VASP did not lose track of those who came before. The Association created a Lifetime Achievement Award to recognize the contributions of individuals who pioneered the profession in Vermont. To date, that honor has been bestowed on Donald Hillman (although Don's award had a somewhat different name), Stephanie McConaughy, Robert Smolinski and David Ritter. VASP even has a Facebook page, courtesy of Lily Moreno and Mariel Adsit; a very nice complement to vasponline.org, VASP's website that was developed - and has been capably managed since its inception - by Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan.

VASP's professional development offerings since 2010 have included presentations by Amanda VanDerHeyden on the use of RtI to advance learning in math (2011, the Doubletree Hotel, South Burlington), Patricia Prelock on Theory of Mind assessment/intervention for children with ASD (2012, the Inn at Essex, a workshop co-sponsored with the Stern Center) and Michael Giangreco on revisiting inclusive education in Vermont (2013, the Echo Center, in Burlington). The Spring

Conferences included workshops by Art Cernosia on legal and ethical implications of the use of technology in school psychology practice (2012), by Dr. Ron Savage on traumatic brain injury (2014) and VASP members gave presentations on ethical challenges in risk assessment (2010), the NASP practice model (2011) and meaningful and ethical practice when dealing with tough cases (2013).

The important VASP-VTDOE connection has continued, most times with positive outcome, but on a few occasions the results were less than satisfying. For example, the most recent revision of the Vermont Agency of Education's licensing guidelines allows someone who holds a practicing license to obtain a provisional license as a *School Psychologist* while working toward satisfying the competencies for a full professional license. School districts still need to document that they have made an effort to hire a fully-qualified individual, but if this effort proves unsuccessful the district may now request a provisional license for an individual who holds a practicing license. When this provisional license option was under review, the VASP leadership met with Armando Vilaseca, then Commissioner of Education, and also with the State Board of Education to share VASP's concerns about this provision. However, the provisional license option still became part of the licensing guidelines. Since then, a new Secretary of Education, Rebecca Holcombe, has assumed the leadership of the Vermont Agency of Education. VASP has already reached out to the new Secretary to establish a cooperative and collegial working relationship.

In terms of school-based practice, MTSS became the new RtI. Many schools in Vermont were less than enthusiastic about implementing a response-to-intervention service model. Even when the word instruction was added, thereby transforming RtI into RtII (response to intervention and instruction), many schools remained reticent about changing the manner in which they operated. In response, the Vermont Agency of Education adapted the RTII model slightly, renamed it, and MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Supports) was born. MTSS still embodies a core RtII approach; indeed, the field guide to MTSS implementation was collaboratively put together by the Vermont Statewide Steering Committee on RtII and the Vermont Reads Institute, and the title page of the field guide itself uses both terms (Multi-tiered System of Supports Response to Intervention and Instruction - MTSS-RtII). However, this time around, schools are required to implement a multi-tiered system of supports. While school districts will likely involve their school psychologists in MTSS-RtII implementation, it is notable that the membership of the Vermont Statewide Steering Committee on RtII did not include a single school psychologist. MTSS-RtII stands as one of the few VTAE initiatives in recent history that did not include a school psychologist on its steering committee.

It remains unfortunate that no institution of higher education in Vermont has created a graduate training program in school psychology. An equally unfortunate occurrence has been the loss of a school-practitioner training strand within the St. Michael's College graduate program in clinical psychology. This SMC graduate psychology program once offered the closest things to a school

psychology training program in Vermont. There has been recent talk of Castleton State College possibly developing a graduate level school psychology training program. Were this to occur, it would significantly advance the profession of school psychology in Vermont.

-10-

A final thought. The profession here in Vermont is but a microcosm of school psychology practice at the national level. As aptly described by James Ysseldyke and Daniel Reschly in their article, *The evolution of school psychology: Origins, contemporary status, and future directions* (in Best Practices VI's volume titled *Best Practices in School Psychology: Data-Based and Collaborative Decision Making*, published in 2014), philosophical differences continue to exist within the profession. Ysseldyke and Reschly provide research and perspective on the different approaches to school psychology practice, contrasting those who continue a search for psychological (and neurological) processes in assessment as compared to those who focus on instructional intervention. It is, perhaps, a reflection of the age-old debate about whether we are psychologists in the schools or are school psychologists and if our primary focus should be psychology or education. That debate has gone on for the past forty-plus years and in all likelihood it will continue to be a point of discussion, and even disagreement. It will be interesting to see the direction that the profession of school psychology takes here in Vermont.