

**A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, MOVING TOWARD THE IDEAL**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Basic information has not been available about which psychological services school psychologists view as most important for the children enrolled in North Carolina public schools. This study was conducted to a) present an accurate portrait of the services currently provided by North Carolina school psychologists, b) report what school psychologists say they should be doing, and c) develop recommendations for policy changes that will provide a basis for moving toward improved services in the field.

School psychologists practicing in North Carolina were surveyed in phase I of this study to determine what services they currently provide (actual services) and what services they believe should be provided (ideal services) to benefit children. Services were ranked on level of importance. Respondents were also asked to comment on school psychological services in North Carolina as well as for suggestions to improve services. Demographic information was collected. In phase II of this study, survey findings were presented to a panel of experts in the field of school psychology who followed group process procedures to determine priorities and recommend appropriate next steps.

This study found the largest gaps between actual and ideal functioning in the survey categories of Consultation and Relationships to Other Professionals. Interventions, evaluations for special education services, and consultation, were rated among the most important services. Survey respondents made suggestions for the improvement of services including reducing the testing load and increasing the number of psychologists. The expert panel placed accountability through communication as highest priority for action leading toward improved services.

Recommendations to improve school psychological services in North Carolina were made for the North Carolina School Psychology Association (NCSPA), local education agencies (LEAs), and school psychologists. Recommendations for NCSPA included a.) appointing a task force to organize and lead efforts to increase policymaker and stakeholder knowledge regarding psychological services, b.) recruiting school systems for the purpose of conducting pilot studies to further investigate ways to close gaps between actual and ideal services, c.) providing guidance for increasing effective communication among North Carolina school psychologists. LEAs were encouraged to conduct needs assessments of their own, and recommendations for school psychologists included individual ways to increase consultation and intervention. Further research recommendations were also made.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my heavenly Father who quietly insisted I not give up my dream and provided never ending love, care, and strength to allow me to reach it; and to my earthly father, Clifton B. Metcalf, whom I wanted to make proud. I love each of them dearly.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Public education is greatly shaped by legislation, economic, and social events. These factors dramatically influence school psychology and the provision of psychological services for children. In order to improve their own services, school psychologists as a group need a clear picture of what they and their colleagues are actually doing, agree what they should be doing, and commit to a plan for improvement that impacts policies governing the practice of school psychology.

Statement of the Problem

Basic information is not available about which psychological services school psychologists believe are the most important for the children enrolled in North Carolina public schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are to a) present an accurate portrait of the services currently provided by North Carolina school psychologists, b) determine what school psychologists say they should be doing, and c) develop recommendations that will provide a basis for moving toward improved standards in the field.

Events Influencing the Services to Children

Public Education

Public education is an intensely regulated business. Only part of that regulation is related to legislation. During the past 30 years several political, economic, and social events in public education have dramatically influenced school psychology. Some examples are (a) increased funding from federal mandates, (b) influx of non-Americans, (c) inclusion of handicapped children, and (d) school-based accountability.

Unfortunately, education reform movements from the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's have failed, largely due to a mismatch between innovations and purpose (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991). For example, with the passing of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) in 1975 funding increased for the hiring of additional school psychologists. Unfortunately, need for time-consuming assessment also increased as a consequence. While additional resources often accompany politically motivated change, they can also bring about practices that produce overload and unrealistic demands (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). In the case of the school psychologist, this often means an increased number of meetings, paperwork, and unnecessary and/or excessive testing.

During recent years, as more and more non-Americans have moved into local school districts (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991), psychologists have been faced with assessment and placement issues for non-English speaking students. Culture-free and non-verbal intelligence tests are available such as the Lieter International Intelligence Test - Revised, and the Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence. However, few culture-free, non-verbal academic achievement tests exist. This missing element affects placement decisions. The act of gathering background information and planning and implementing interventions for these students is often quite cumbersome due to a lack of bilingual personnel and understanding of cultural diversity.

Inclusion of children with handicaps in the regular classroom setting has increased the need for teacher consultation, intervention strategies, and follow-up.

Planning and follow-up of effective strategies can be challenging with limited time for activities other than assessment.

In recent years, greater accountability has been placed at the school level (this phenomenon will be addressed in greater detail in a later section). Public schools have virtually no control over the student population they serve. Consequently, some schools serve a much larger and needy population of students than other schools. A disparity in psychological services sometimes occurs with larger, more needy schools getting little, if any, additional psychological services.

Legislation

Federal legislation dating from the 1970's has shaped the practice of school psychology. Examples of such legislation are:

1. Public Law 94-142 Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975
2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504 added in 1977)
3. Public Law 99-457, Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1986
4. Public Law 101-476, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 1990 (IDEA)
5. Public Law 105-17, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 1997 (IDEA)

Federal mandates and their implementation by state and local education agencies greatly influence the practice of school psychology. Psychologists are expected to deliver psychological services while adhering to timelines for student evaluation requirements for initial placements, re-evaluations, manifestation determinations, and other such administrative duties. The psychologist is challenged to broaden the scope of psychological services while still being held accountable for meeting the needs of students in funded programs for exceptional children. The psychologist has an obligation to provide services for large numbers of children who do not qualify for special services according to funding criteria, but need educational or behavioral interventions, counseling, and instructional support.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) state that many major educational initiatives are generated through government policymaking and legislation in areas in greatest need of reform, such as special education. As previously noted, such legislation has impacted the field of school psychology, forcing change in its practice. For example, with the 1977 implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, school psychologists faced a new challenge of addressing attention deficit disorder (ADD). While not considered a handicapping condition under PL 94-142, ADD was considered a handicapping condition under Section 504. This provision made a vast difference in the evaluation of children suspected of having ADD and impacted decisions regarding what and how accommodations could be made within the school setting.

Federal legislation having the greatest impact on school psychology is considered by Fagan and Wise (1994) to be PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, amended in 1990 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This "civil rights act for the disabled" mandates that all children, regardless of handicapping condition, are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Accordingly, all children must be provided with education in the most *normal* setting possible at the expense of the public. Provisions are made for nondiscriminatory assessment practices, due process procedures, and an individualized education plan (IEP) to be reviewed annually for students meeting special education eligibility requirements. The school psychologist is directly involved with the

identification, diagnosis, and placement of handicapped children through performing the assessments that determine eligibility and by being a part of regular intervention/referral teams and special education committees. An extension of PL 94-142 (1975) is PL 99-457 (1986), extends free and appropriate education to infants and toddlers, and further increases the assessment load of the psychologist by requiring additional expertise with the assessment of younger children.

The provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are closely interfaced with IDEA. Both require school districts receiving federal funds to provide a free and appropriate education in the most normal setting for all children who qualify (Clelland, 1978; Section 504 Manual, 1996). Under Section 504, a student with a disability is defined as a student having a “physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment” (p. 1). Students qualifying for special education under IDEA automatically fall under the protection of Section 504. However, the opposite is not always the case. Examples of students qualifying under Section 504 but not necessarily IDEA include those students with asthma, juvenile arthritis, sickle cell anemia, or ADD. Typically, these students need some accommodation in the regular classroom setting, but not the services of special education. Thus, Section 504 falls under the general education program. There is no funding for Section 504. Regardless of whether a student is covered by IDEA or Section 504, the school psychologist is often required to determine eligibility and assist in planning interventions and delivering services. The state and local education agencies primarily determine their level of required involvement.

On June 4, 1997, President Clinton signed into law several amendments to IDEA. These new components have had an impact on school psychologists because of a potential decrease in testing (Dwyer, 1997). However, it is up to each state and local education agency whether testing will actually decrease. One new component is the requirement for an additional meeting to include the parents before conducting routine three-year re-evaluations. Re-evaluations could require less formal assessment and more evaluation of services (observation, curriculum-based assessment, intervention validation, etc.) since another new component gives the IEP team the authority to choose what if any assessment is warranted. Greater consultation skill and group process skill will be needed on the part of the psychologist in assisting the IEP team in determining the components of re-evaluations, should additional data be deemed necessary. Historically, psychologists have performed much the same comprehensive battery of tests for reevaluation as initial placement.

The school psychologist’s workload also becomes heavier through the new IDEA’s increased emphasis on positive behavioral interventions and functional behavior assessment. Because school psychologists are among the few qualified personnel to deliver both services, they may become over-burdened if their assessment load does not lighten as stated in Today’s School Psychologist (1997).

IDEA 1997 provides school psychologists opportunities for expanding service delivery and moving toward the goals of educational reform, to be discussed later in this paper. However, it is still somewhat uncertain how individual states and educational agencies are implementing these amendments. Thus, it is timely for school psychologists

to evaluate their practices and make known their activities and needs to policymakers, so practitioners can improve psychological services for students.

Reforms in Special Education

The move toward expanding psychological services and implementing alternative service delivery systems is not new. This shift from traditional assessment to expanded roles began as a result of the special education reform movement driven by unresolved dilemmas in the 1980's (*Education of the Handicapped*, 1986). These dilemmas included "prevalence of learning disabilities, confusion over the learning disability diagnostic construct, placement litigation, cost/benefits of services, and quality and usefulness of current assessment" (Reschly, 1988, p. 459). The reform movement originated from several policy statements written by governmental, scientific, advocacy, and professional agencies or groups, including the National Academy of Science. Additionally, the reform movement was designed to shift greater emphasis to providing remedial services of the *mildly handicapped* student in the regular classroom setting and to the planning of effective learning environments, instead of assessing students to determine eligibility (Reschly, 1988). According to Reschly (1988), mildly handicapped encompasses the categories of (a) specific learning disabled (SLD), (b) speech/language impaired (SLI), (c) educable mentally disabled (EMD), and (d) behaviorally emotionally disabled (BED).

As many as 90% of school children classified as handicapped fall in this mildly handicapped category (*Education of the Handicapped*, 1986). At least two-thirds of school psychologists' time is spent on the classification and placement of mildly handicapped students, who make up three-fourths of the clients (Reschly, Genshaft, & Binder, 1987; Reynolds, Wang, Walberg, 1987). It is not surprising that a move to reduce this classification load would mean significant changes in service delivery models or a decrease in psychological assessment (Reschly, 1988).

Effectiveness of the current classification systems/eligibility criteria, reliability, validity, and efficiency are the main reasons for special education reform (Reschly, 1988). Reschly (1988) further states that there is no convincing evidence to support a belief that "eligibility determination is reliable and valid or related to differential instructional effectiveness" (p. 463). In fact, according to Reschly (1988) there appears to be no concrete difference between SLD "pull-out" resource services and regular education "pull-out" services such as Reading Recovery. Furthermore, evaluations and re-evaluations necessary for placement in Reading Recovery services are more efficient and cost effective. In addition to being expensive (Reschly, 1988; Reynolds, Wang, Walberg, 1987), current assessment practices may foster the compartmentalization of programs--special and regular education programs not working in conjunction with each other. This "us or them" mentality can lead to less effective, disjointed programs focusing on a small portion of the school population, leaving growing numbers of at-risk students unserved.

Because the majority of the school psychologist's time is spent serving students in special education/exceptional children's programs (Reschly, Genshaft, & Binder, 1987; Reynolds, Wang, Walberg, 1987), the large number of borderline students and others who do not meet eligibility requirements are left essentially unattended (Reynolds, Wang, Walberg, 1987). Current assessment practices focus on determining eligibility and are not useful for designing, monitoring, or evaluating interventions; "we diagnose the problems that regular education cannot handle" (Reschly, 1988, p. 471). Thus, it appears that in

order to move toward emphasizing remedial service in the regular classroom and planning effective education programs, school psychology training programs and local school systems need to encompass training in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational interventions.

Though the profession of school psychology has traditionally reflected the role of testers and gatekeepers for special education, it has shown increased emphasis on innovation and change (Bontrager & Wilczenski, 1997). Professional Associations such as the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the National Council of Advocates for Students (NCAS) have formally backed the move toward alternative delivery systems with less emphasis on placement (NASP/NCAS, 1985). Their position statement suggests a gradual but focused implementation of changes occurring over a 5 to 10 year period. Reasons for heightened emphasis on reform may stem from the national recognition of need for reform in the entire field of education, increased diversity in the populations served by school psychologists, and desire within the profession to expand its role. Results from Bontrager and Wilczenski's 1992 survey of 1000 school psychologists who were NASP members reported that "despite a persistent emphasis on innovation and change in service delivery in the recent school psychology literature" (p. 28) actual field practices do not mirror the called-for reform.

Educational change comes slowly. Perhaps there is a lack of self confidence (Bontrager & Wilczenski, 1997), even reluctance, to change on the part of the school psychologist or a feeling of being powerless to implement changes in the schools (Dawson, 1994). Practitioners must continue to strive for balance between what they are required to do in the schools and what they need to do, principally to better serve children but also to protect the very existence of school psychology as a separate discipline (Bardon, 1994; Dawson, 1994). "We may lose our viability in the schools if the only major reason we continue to exist in public education is because we are required to do a particularized task---testing" (Bardon, 1994, p. 586).

Continually growing and changing legislative mandates, increased responsibility on public schools, expanding cultural diversity of school children, and reforms in Special Education make it necessary for school psychologists to take a close look at what they are doing. Do the services school psychologists provide meet the needs of the schools and most importantly, the children they serve? What improvements are needed?

North Carolina

Within the past seven years, through its ABCs Plan, North Carolina has placed greater emphasis on accountability at the school level (NCDPI, 1996a). The North Carolina State Board of Education developed a master plan designed to upgrade public education. This plan, the New ABCs of Public Education was written in response to a mandate by the General Assembly to "examine the structure and functions of the state public school system with a view to improving student performance, to increasing local flexibility and control, and promoting economy and efficiency" (NCDPI, 1996a, p. 1). This comprehensive accountability plan places emphasis on basic subjects and high educational standards, and provides schools with as much local control as feasible.

Individual schools are held accountable by the State Board of Education to meet or exceed an established growth rate for each academic year. Growth rate is established by combining students' expected growth from their performance on End of Grade (EOG) tests the previous year, comparison to statewide average scores, and a statistical

adjustment. Incentive awards are available for those schools meeting performance standards. Assistance is mandated for schools failing to meet their expected growth and considered *low performing*. Assistance teams composed of educational personnel are assigned to these schools on a long-term basis to develop plans for increasing student achievement. If assistance is not successful, the State Board of Education may intervene by replacing a principal or removing teachers. Basic subjects in the plan are reading, writing, and math. To be most effective, psychologists will have to become more adept in curriculum issues in the basic subject areas and will need to work more closely with classroom teachers (NCDPI, 1996b).

Summary

Before moving toward improved psychological services for children, it is first necessary to discover which are psychological services that school psychologists view as most important. The intent of this study is to a) present an accurate portrait of the services currently provided by North Carolina school psychologists, b) report what school psychologists say they should be doing, and c) develop recommendations that will provide a basis for moving toward improved standards in the field.

Study Questions

Four main questions are addressed in this study. Through a comprehensive survey and use of group process methods, answers to the following questions have been sought:

1. What services do North Carolina school psychologists currently provide?
2. What are the beliefs of North Carolina school psychologists regarding what psychological services they should be providing in order to be of most benefit to the children served?
3. What discrepancies exist between what they are doing and what they say they should be doing?
4. Based on the results of this study, what recommendations do a panel of experts make for improving psychological services?

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Evolution of the Role of School Psychology

School psychology first originated more than a century ago with roots grounded in social reform. Reform movements involving compulsory schooling, juvenile courts, child labor laws, mental health, vocational guidance, and growth of institutions serving children were among those responsible for the emergence of school psychological services (Cohen, 1985; Cravens, 1985; Siegel & White, 1982). Fagan and Wise (1994), referred to the early years (1890-1969) of school psychology as the "hybrid years" (p. 20), saying that during this time, "school psychology was a blend of many kinds of educational and psychological practitioners loosely mobilized around a dominant role of psychoeducational assessment for special class placement" (p. 20). Many early school psychologists began as teachers or guidance counselors who added specialties to their certification. Fagan and Wise's (1994, p. 20) "thoroughbred years" (1970-present) are known for growth in school psychology training programs, practitioners, state and national associations, literature, and regulations governing the field. Table 1 (Fagan & Wise, 1994, p. 21) indicates historical landmarks in the evolution of school psychology.

Trends over the past 30 years in school psychology can be viewed incrementally by decades. The 1970's saw practitioners in the field of school psychology focusing on such guild issues as training and assessment. The 1980's dealt more with service delivery; the decade was a time for turning toward more indirect services and emphasizing regular classroom interventions (Reschly, 1988). Roles and functions began to be greatly affected by such federal legislation as Public Law 94-142, which increased funding for the hiring of more psychologists and promoted direct services through the need for individual assessment. Researchers studied how psychologists were spending their time and how they should be spending their time to be most beneficial to the largest number of children. The 1990's found the call for alternative service delivery through increased indirect delivery of services (e.g. consultation, inter and intra agency communication and collaboration) growing louder.

Who is the School Psychologist?

On occasion, the school psychologist is fondly referred to as a jack-of-all-trades and master of few. Perhaps practitioners in this field escape clear, precise definition. However, there are several perspectives from which the school psychologist can be viewed. For example, the school psychologist can be defined using demographic descriptions of practitioners, and by examining policies and standards which govern the work of the psychologist; or specific services provided by the school psychologist can be described. One general definition was expressed by Bardon and Bennett (1974): "school psychology differs from other psychological specialties in that it brings psychological

Table 1. Landmarks in the history of school psychology

1892	First organization for psychologists (APA)
1896	First psychological clinic (University of Pennsylvania)
1899	First psychological clinic in the schools (Chicago)
1905	First version of the Binet-Simon Scales
1907	First practitioner journal (Psychological Clinic)
1908	First internship in clinical psychology (Vineland)
1910	First literary usage of term school psychologist
1912	First psychoeducational clinic (University of Pittsburgh)
1913	First survey of practitioner/examiners (Wallin, 1914)
1915	First person appointed as a school psychologist
1916	First Stanford revision of the Binet Scales (Terman, 1916)
1917	First association of clinical psychologists (AACP)
1923	First journal article with "school psychology " title
1925	First public school licensing exam for psychologists
1928	First training program in school psychology (New York University)
1930	First textbook on school psychology (Hildreth, 1930)
1935	First state department of education certification (New York)
1937	First practitioner association with sections (AAAP)
1945	First organizational identity for school psychology (APA Division 16)
1953	First recognized/organized doctoral program

(Table continues)

Table 1. Landmarks in the history of school psychology (Continued)

1954	First state-approved internships (Ohio)
	First national conference on school psychology (Thayer Conference, 1954)
1962	First school psychology journal (Journal of School Psychology)
	First National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) reference to school psychology program
1969	First national association for school psychologists (NASP)
1971	First accreditation of school psychology program (APA)
1983	First joint APA/NCATE accreditation of a program
1988	First National School Psychology Examination
1989	First National Certification in School Psychology

Taken from Fagan and Wise (1994) who reprinted with the permission of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

knowledge, skill, and techniques to bear on the problems presented by the school as a total, unique place in which people live and work and on the problems of the people living in the school" (p. 8). A more specific definition from Fagan and Wise (1994) is as follows:

A school psychologist is a professional psychological practitioner whose general purpose is to bring a psychological perspective to bear on the problems of educators and the clients educators serve. This perspective is derived from a broad base of training in educational and psychological foundations as well as specialty preparation, resulting in the provision of comprehensive psychological services of a direct and indirect nature. (p. 3)

The NASP defines school psychologists in terms of its policies and standards. Its *Professional Conduct Manual* (1992) states: "A School Psychologist is a professional psychologist who has met all requirements for credentialing as stipulated in the appropriate NASP standards. The credential is based upon the completion of a school psychology training program which meets the criteria specified in the *NASP (1994) Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*" (p. 36). This manual includes NASP's "Principles for Professional Ethics" and "Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services," which can also be found in another publication of the organization, *Best Practices in School Psychology III*. When joining NASP, psychologists agree to uphold the association's ethical standards for professional competency, professional relationships and responsibilities, and professional practices in public and private settings. Standards for psychological services speak to administrative agencies, employing agencies, delivery of comprehensive psychological services, and standards for school psychology training programs.

Several studies (Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; NASP, 1989; Reschly & Wilson, 1992) have shown school psychologists to be predominantly Caucasian, English speaking females with an average of eight years of experience. Demographic data from a 1981 national survey of the daily activities of school psychologists (Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981) showed 54% of their sample return to be female. The age group with the highest percentage (22.4%) was the 30 to 34-year-old group, with the second highest (19.7%) being comprised of 26 to 29-year-olds. Seventy-five percent held master's degrees, while 24% held doctorates. The mean number of years of experience was eight. Ethnically, 85% of the sample population was white and 2% black. Eighty-four percent spoke English and 6% reported being bilingual, mostly Spanish speaking. A random sample of 1,000 members of the National School Psychology Certification System in 1988 (NASP, 1989) found 38.2% were male and 60.1% were female. The median years of school psychology experience were 8.0. Further, ethnicity was noted as: white, 92.7%; black, 2.8%; other, 4.5%. According to Reschly and Wilson (1992), most school psychologists (65%) are females with 8.9 years in the field being the median experience.

Although some school psychologists have doctorates, the majority hold the specialist degree (master's plus 30 hours). A full year internship is required before being credentialed at the specialist's level. Statistics from the NASP (1997a) show that currently, more than 13,500 practitioners are certified or are in the process of becoming a nationally certified school psychologist (NCSP). National certification is obtained by graduating from a NASP approved program, completing a NCSP application, and passing the Praxis School Psychology Examination. Fourteen states have adopted NCSP

standards (NASP, 1997b). If a psychologist is nationally certified, he/she will automatically be granted a school psychology certificate in these states. The intent of NASP regarding national certification is to eventually attain national school psychology standards.

Since becoming a certified school psychologist in 1988, I have observed that the school psychologist is likely to have the highest degree of education among school personnel delivering student services. With this distinction also comes the disadvantage of often being looked upon by school personnel as an expert who should have all the answers. The reality is that the school psychologist knows eligibility requirements but may be the person in the school who has the least direct contact with the student and, thus, the least first hand knowledge with which to plan interventions. Considering what little time they are able to spend at a school in consultation with teachers, parents, and individual students, asking the school psychologist to take the lead in making decisions as they pertain to improvement of a student can lead to dissension among teachers. This leaves nothing accomplished, or, at best, leaves some teachers feeling put upon by the decision of others. Even though federal law states consensus is required rather than agreement of the majority, if group process methods are lacking, follow-up likely will also be lacking. Consequently, it is the student who most often suffers. The re-authorization of IDEA placed greater emphasis on the team approach. Each participant (i.e. parent, school psychologist, resource teacher, regular education teacher, etc.) has a different perspective and area of expertise. If all members do not attend and participate in decision-making meetings, the group process approach is difficult to follow.

It is common practice for school psychologists, like speech pathologists, social workers, physical therapists, and occupational therapists, to be itinerate student support personnel who travel to schools from a central location, such as the local education agency's (LEA) central office, administrative office, or education center. An alternative to being based at a central location is to be based in a school, (though psychologists likely serve schools other than their home base school). It is common for school psychologists to serve multiple schools and be in a different setting each day with, ideally, one day per week reserved for report writing. Parent conferences and team meetings may necessitate the need to travel among several sites on any given day. With this schedule, travel among schools and office can mount, decreasing contact time with students and teachers.

While LEAs most often employ full time school psychologists, some are hired on a contract basis from psychological agencies or by independent contract. Contracting for psychological services may occur when a school psychologist position remains vacant or at certain times of the school year (i.e. headcount) when supplemental services are needed to meet federal and state timelines in order to establish funding. It should be noted that psychologists hired on a contract basis are commonly clinical psychologists who do little more than perform routine assessments and may actually know little of the school system in which they contract (Fagan, & Wise, 1994).

Finally, a school psychologist can be defined by functions. Many studies have been conducted on the functions of the school psychologist (Cheramee & Sutter, 1993; Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984, and Watkins, Tipton, Manus, & Hunton-Shoup, 1991). The three most frequently performed functions are found to be assessment, consultation, and intervention. According to the NASP's (1992a) Standards for the provision of school psychological services, "consultation, psychological and

psycho-educational assessment, direct service, supervision, research, and program planning and evaluation are the services provided by the school psychologist (p.44 - 45). The functions of the school psychologist will be elaborated further in the next section.

Functions of the School Psychologist

The NASP (1992a) speaks to comprehensive school psychological service delivery in the following:

School psychologists provide a range of services to their clients. These consist of direct and indirect services which require involvement with the entire educational system: (a) the students, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel; (b) the families, surrogate caretakers, and other community and regional agencies, and resources which support the educational process; (c) the organizational, physical, temporal, and curricular variables which play major roles within the system; and (d) a variety of other factors which may be important on an individual basis.

The intent of these services is to promote mental health and facilitate learning. Comprehensive school psychological services are comprised of diverse activities. These activities complement one another and therefore are most accurately viewed as being integrated and coordinated rather than discrete services. (p. 44).

Lacayo, Sherwood, and Morris (1981) developed a school psychologist activity list, which contains 13 items. Activities are listed below in rank order of frequency.

1. Psychological-educational assessment
2. Reviewing referrals, writing cases, other office duties
3. Lunch, inactive, or personal time
4. Consultation with teachers
5. Consultation with other school staff
6. Staff meeting or case conference
7. Consultation with parents
8. Driving from one educational facility to another
9. Individual counseling
10. Attending workshops or in-service training
11. Giving workshops or in-service training
12. Research or program evaluation
13. Group counseling

Lacayo, Sherwood, and Morris (1981) presented this activity list in questionnaire form to 750 members of the NASP from 1978-1979. Forty-five percent of the original number of questionnaires were usable with representation being sufficient to pose generalizations. Results found that assessment, inclusive of test giving, protocol scoring, and report writing, took 40% of the psychologist's day. Consultation, including contact with parents and teachers, took 33% of the day. One half-hour per day was spent in counseling, with 80% being conducted with individuals instead of groups. Time engaged in research and program evaluation was little more than one half-hour per week.

Smith's 1984 national survey revealed that an average of 54% of psychologist's time was spent in assessment. This same study showed intervention accounted for 23%, consultation for 19%, and research for only 1% of school psychologists' time. This ranking of activities from assessment, intervention and consultation to research appeared

consistent between male and female psychologists and across regions (based on NASP membership regions) of the country. School psychologists in the Southeastern (SE) United States appear to adhere to more traditional functions where the emphasis is on intellectual assessment (63%) rather than consultation and intervention. Less time (17%) is spent on intervention activities and significantly less time (6%) is spent in consultation with teachers by school psychologists in the SE, as compared to colleagues in other regions.

Figure 1 gives a visual perspective of the amount of time school psychologists spend in assessment, consultation, intervention, and research according to studies previously discussed (Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984).

Smith (1984) also looked at how school psychologists from different regions of the country spend their time. According to his research, school psychologists in the Southeast (including North Carolina) spend much more time in assessment and much less time in consultation than is the national norm. (See Figure 2.)

Seven major functions of school psychologists are noted on the North Carolina School Psychologist Performance Appraisal Instrument. This accountability instrument was developed in 1988 by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) with input from school psychologists. The seven functions include:

1. Assessment and interpretation
2. Direct interventions for students
3. Consultation and training
4. Program development
5. School psychology program implementation
6. Professional practice and development
7. Communication and relationship skills.

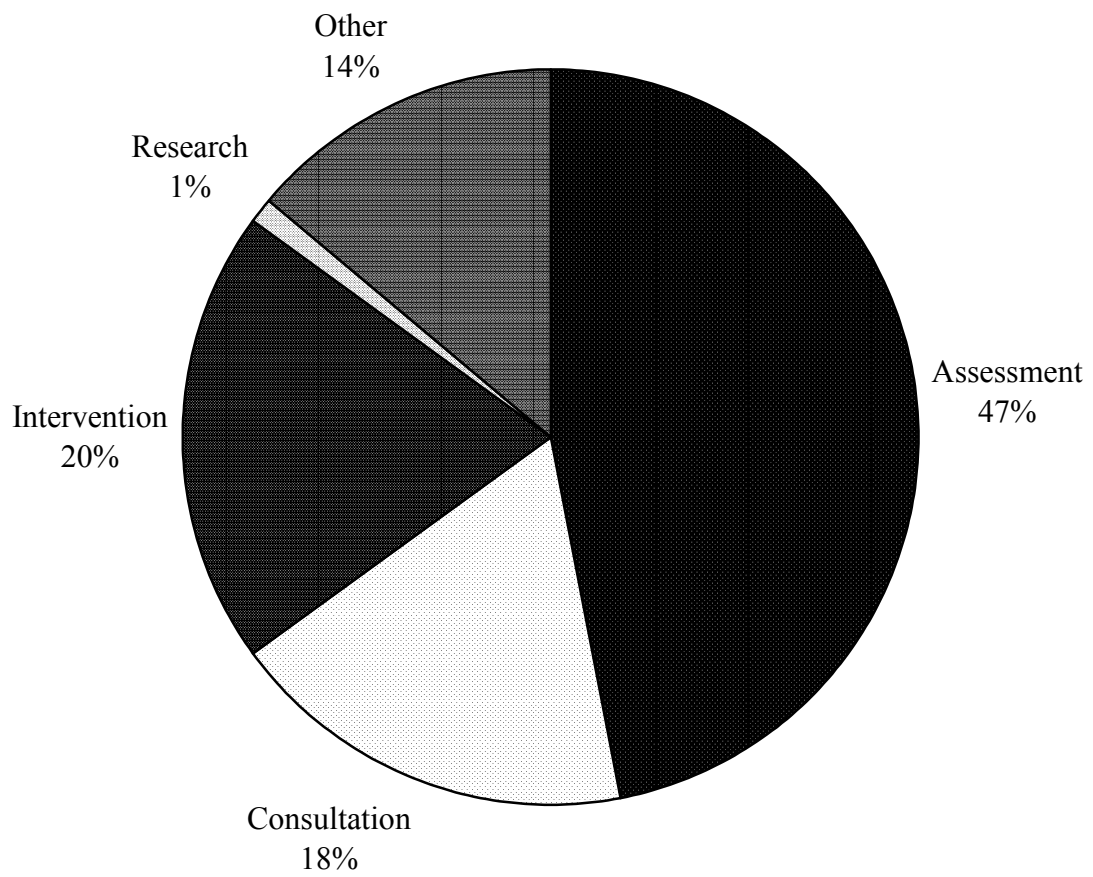


Figure 1. National Percentages of Time Spent

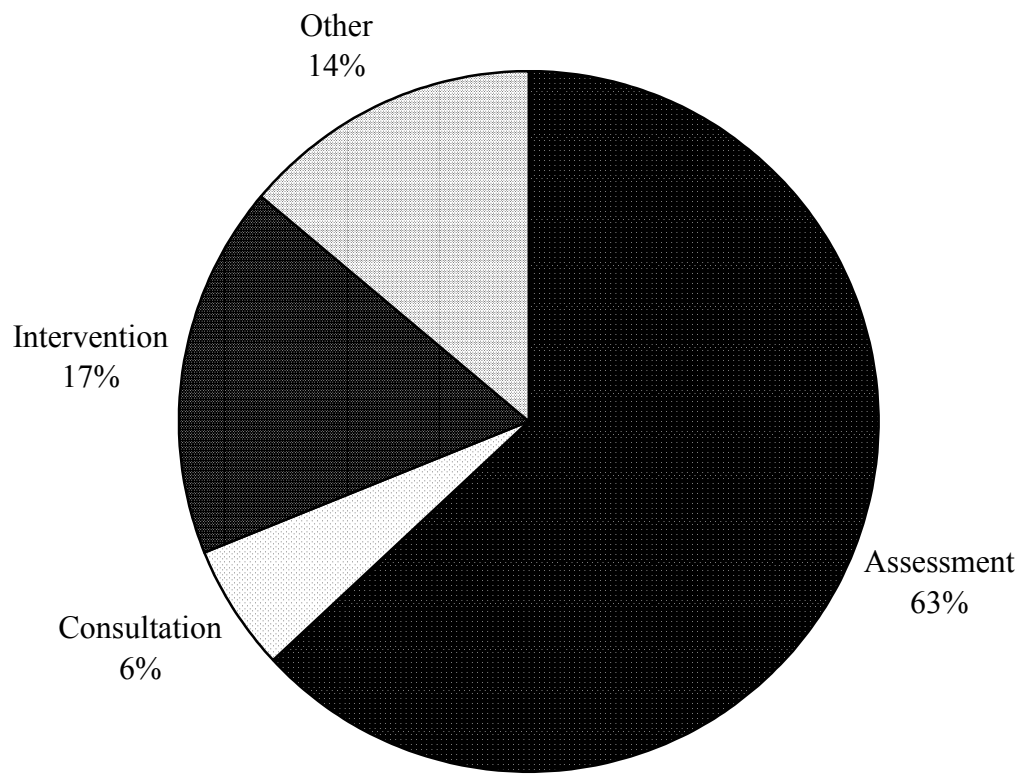


Figure 2. Southeastern U.S.A. Percentages of Time Spent

Accountability

With inevitable changes forthcoming in the role of school psychology because of federal and state legislation, and regular and special education reforms, there is even greater need for accountability measures to ensure appropriate, effective services for the students served. Accountability often carries a negative connotation for school personnel. A more productive and less frightening way for school psychologists to look at accountability might be for them to consider it a means to improve services, further develop professional skills, build upon psychological services programs, and document its validity and increase its visibility (Fairchild & Zins, 1992). The NCDPI (1988) states that "accountability is an obvious and required aspect of employee performance appraisal" (p. ii), and that its appraisal instrument "fosters a performance appraisal orientation that facilitates professional growth of the employee through supportive training, mentoring and supervision" (p. ii).

North Carolina holds its school psychologists accountable through summative evaluations conducted using the previously mentioned Performance Appraisal Instrument (see Appendix A). Each major function (assessment and interpretation, direct interventions for students, consultation and training, program development, school psychology program implementation, professional practice and development, and communication and relationship skills) on the instrument is broken down into specific behavioral indicators and rated on a six category continuum from *unsatisfactory* to *superior*. Each category is subject to the interpretation of the supervisor completing the rating. This is to say that a rating of superior in one LEA might not equal that in another.

From my experience, other accountability data collection methods used in North Carolina school systems include testing and activity logs. Testing logs typically include:

1. Name of student
2. Date of birth
3. Grade
4. Types of assessment (e.g. initial, re-evaluation, addendum, etc.)
5. Suspected classification
6. Actual classification if eligible
7. Date of referral
8. Date evaluation complete and written.

Activity logs may be in narrative form with psychologists writing in their daily activities or in a checklist form. Check lists typically include: (a) consultation/intervention with school, parent, agency; (b) direct interventions with individual student, group, parent; (c) staffing of Individualized Education Plan Team (IEPT), Assistance Team, or agency. These data are usually collected by the psychologist's supervisor at the end of each month and used to loosely monitor activities and compare workloads. Testing information is primarily used as a check for staying in compliance with state and federal mandates.

Fairchild (1980) states that while most school psychologists are interested in evaluating the effectiveness of the services they provide, they do not actively engage in the process of evaluation because they are unfamiliar with the process or methods in which to conduct them or do not have the time and/or support needed to conduct meaningful evaluations. If school psychologists are not engaging in self and program

evaluation it seems likely that psychologists will be unable to take the next steps to improving the services we provide to children.

National Association of School Psychologists

The NASP was founded in March of 1969 to benefit nondoctoral-level school psychologists. The Association's stated mission is to "promote educationally and psychologically healthy environments for all children and youth by implementing research-based, effective programs that prevent problems, enhance independence, and promote optimal learning. This is accomplished through state-of-the-art research and training, advocacy, ongoing program evaluation, and caring professional service" (NASP, 1997c, p. 1). Strategic goals of the NASP center around three areas: (a) children, families, and constituents; (b) the profession of school psychology; and (c) NASP as an association. These goals drive the activities of the association. Specific features and accomplishments of the NASP (Fagan, 1994) are:

1. Governance structure = delegate assembly with an executive board comprised of regional directors and officers
2. Committee structure = committees on all aspects of the field
3. Current membership of more than 2,000
4. Financial growth exceeded \$1 million in 1988
5. Annual convention
6. State affiliate growth of more than 50 state organizations by 1992
7. Publications include a newsletter (Communique') and a journal (*School Psychology Review*), texts, position papers, etc.
8. Though not an accrediting body, the association has helped bring order to nondoctoral program regulation.
9. A government and professional relations office has been established in Washington, DC to monitor legislation and influence national policy in children's issues, education, and child mental health.
10. Standards and National Certification
"The NASP contributed to the growth of the field, gave the field a stronger sense of identity, established standards in areas where few existed, and unified at least the nondoctoral members of the field," (Fagan, 1994. P. 617).

School Psychology in North Carolina

The North Carolina School Psychology Association (NCSPA) was organized in 1976. With current membership numbering 279 of approximately 727 practicing school psychologists in the state (Howard, 1997). In the fall of 1996, NCSPA revised its constitution and by-laws to facilitate the reorganization of the Association. The Purpose of the Association reads as follows:

1. To promote and maintain the highest standards of ethics, training, and professional practices in the provision of psychological services in the public and private schools in the state of North Carolina.
2. To promote and advance education and mental health through psychological research and dissemination of professional ideas.
3. To serve the educational and mental health needs of students and to assist in the development of sound educational practices for the total school program.
To advance the professional interests of school psychologists.
4. To promote the interests of school psychology as a science and as a profession.

(p. 1)

The American Psychological Association's Code of Ethics and the NASP's Principles for Professional Ethics have been adopted by the NCSPA. Changes are made in NCSPA's ethics and professional practice principles as they occur in the APA and NASP.

An elected Board of Directors comprised of officers and regional representatives governs the Association. Officers include a president, president-elect, secretary, and treasurer. Regional representatives are elected from the four regions (Coastal, Mountain, North Piedmont, South Piedmont) of the state with an appointed representative-at-large. The Board of Directors forms committees when the need occurs to serve until the committee's goal is met or the Board terminates it.

The NCSPA holds a fall conference each year. During this conference a membership meeting is held where a draft budget is presented to the membership for its comments. Each region typically has one meeting of its own per year to address specific needs/concerns in the region.

The association hires a lobbyist to monitor state legislation that may impact the field and to provide a voice for school psychologists in state government. NCSPA recognizes the need for better communication and greater cooperation among all levels of government, as well as regular and special education to meet the needs of all children.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA GATHERING ANALYSIS

Overview

School psychologists practicing in North Carolina were surveyed in phase I of this study to determine what services they currently provide and what services they believe should be provided to benefit children. Services were ranked on level of importance. Respondents also were asked to comment on school psychological services in North Carolina as well as for suggestions to improve services. The survey also collected demographic information. In phase II of this study, survey findings were presented to a panel of experts in the field of school psychology who followed established group process procedures to determine priorities and recommend appropriate next steps.

Study procedures are presented in this chapter. Procedures and issues related to survey and group process exercises are explained. Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board, which must approve all survey and interview procedures for Research Involving Human Subjects, approved this study.

Survey Procedures and Issues in Research Methods

Survey population

The purposive sample in this study consisted of 685 full-time school psychologists in North Carolina. Psychologists were surveyed to ascertain the services they actually provide and the services they believe they ideally need to provide to most benefit the children they serve. In order to make reliable statements about discrepancies between "actual" and "ideal" practices of school psychologists, a high survey return rate is required.

According to Suskie (1996), most professional researchers believe a survey instrument return rate of 70% is acceptable, and consider 50% minimally adequate. Four factors greatly influence the response rate, according to Suskie (1996). These include (a) the survey topic, (b) the people being surveyed, (c) convenience and comfort, and (d) how professional and important the study appears. All four factors are addressed by this study.

Survey questions allowed respondents to identify what they are doing well and highlight those services they should provide to take their practice to the next level. This exercise in itself is a positive and beneficial experience because this information is needed by professionals to shape their own future in school psychology. Completing the survey in close proximity to the 1997 IDEA re-authorization (discussed in chapter one) should allow respondents to find the study very timely and important in considering role expansion and change in their field. The survey was designed to be revealing without being time consuming. Piloting indicated that respondents could complete the survey in approximately 15 minutes.

The survey mailing included (a) a cover letter explaining the study (see Appendix B), (b) a postage-paid, self-addressed return envelope, and (c) a copy of the six-page survey (see Appendix C), mailed first class. The president of NCSPE endorsed the study and co-signed the cover letter, which was printed on NCSPE letterhead. NCSPE officers also agreed to endorse this study because the research planned to collect demographic information identifying the professional organizations in which North Carolina school

psychologists hold membership. Finally, follow-up post card reminders were sent to initial non-respondents. As an extra incentive, respondents returning surveys by the designated date were eligible to win a one-year NCSPA membership.

The most accurate source of current addresses for school psychologists in North Carolina was investigated. According to Leigh Armistead (1997), school psychologist and NCSPA representative, the NCSPA periodically (approximately every two years) compiles the addresses of all North Carolina school psychologists through the help of its Membership Committee. Psychologists' names, the county in which they practice, and current addresses are sent to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). The NCDPI integrates the NCSPA list of practicing psychologists with the NCDPI list to form the most up-to-date list of school psychologists in North Carolina. Surveys for this study were mailed to school psychologists on the NCDPI mailing list on November 12, 1997. There were 700 addresses on this list. Duplicate mailings were eliminated if addresses were identical. In cases where work and home addresses were provided, surveys were sent to both addresses to increase the probability of the recipient receiving the survey. Fifteen addresses were duplicated. Whenever possible, missing names were added to the list and addresses corrected. Surveys were mailed to 685 school psychologists.

Due to incorrect addresses, sixty-two surveys for psychologists practicing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg were returned by the post office. Because this area is known for its unique psychological service delivery model, surveys were re-mailed internally through the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system ten days after the initial mailing.

After all mailing was accomplished, 320 surveys were returned by the post office. 311 were returned due to incorrect addresses. Nine returned surveys went to recipients who did not meet the requirements of full-time practicing school psychologists. These recipients were retired psychologists, school psychology students, or not currently working in the field of school psychology. There were 365 accurately addressed surveys.

Of the 685 school psychologists surveyed, 290 returned their surveys completed. This resulted in a 42% response rate. Using Suskie's (1996, p. 102) formula:

$\sqrt{1/n} \times 100\%$ where n = the sample size

for calculating sampling error when using percentages, the error of margin in this study was 4%. According to Suskie (1996), the sampling error should be 5% or less.

Survey Instrument Adaptation from Previous Forms

The NASP is recognized for setting national standards in the practice of school psychology. In 1984, NASP published a *Professional Conduct Manual* as a guideline for professionals in this field. This manual includes comprehensive guidelines for professional ethics and standards for the provision of school psychological services. It represents the culmination of several years of collaborative work by school psychologists across the country. Input for the *Professional Conduct Manual* was obtained by the Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee of the NASP from the chairs of state association ethics committees, the NASP Executive Board, Committee Chairs, and the Delegate Assembly. University trainers in school psychology, school psychology students, administrators, public practitioners, and school psychologists in private practice provided additional feedback for this document. This publication was revised in 1992 using the same procedure to reflect current views and trends in school psychology.

Virginia Smith Harvey conducted a pilot study on the *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services* (Harvey, 1992b). Harvey, who is the Chief School Psychologist for the Nashua, New Hampshire Schools, conducted a pilot study as an internal evaluation of psychological services in her school system. Specific questions posed in this pilot study (Harvey, 1992a, p. 10) included: (a) “Do teachers, administrators, and special educators consider [psychological] services adequate”, and (b) “How do our [psychological] services compare with professional standards?”

A steering committee was formed which consisted of school psychologists, school board members, assistant superintendents, directors of special education, principals, and regular and special education teachers. The steering committee’s purpose was to plan the evaluation of school psychological services in Nashua County, review evaluation results, and formulate an action plan. Short questionnaires consisting of 22 questions were mailed to parents whose children were seen by school psychologists. Medium length questionnaires of 48 questions were sent to regular education teachers who had worked with the psychologists, school nurses, remedial reading teachers, school counselors, special education teachers, and speech and language therapists. Full-length questionnaires of 129 questions were distributed to special education administrators, upper level administrators, school psychologists, and principals. Questions were based on the frequency of observed behaviors such as “school psychologists explain test results clearly” (Harvey, 1992a, p. 10). Respondents chose from among five choices: *almost always, frequently, sometimes, almost never, and don't know*. The response rate for this pilot study was 45%. Results were presented to the steering committee in the form of strengths and weaknesses. Though the school psychologists were not surprised by the results, upper administrators and school board members on the steering committee “were not aware of the constraints under which the school psychologists worked” (Harvey, 1992a, p. 10). This process resulted in greater public recognition and support for school psychology and led to an increase in the number of school psychologist positions. No reliability or validity measures were conducted.

Survey questions for this revised instrument were taken from the NASP’s 1992 edition of its *Professional Conduct Manual* and modified from the original version of *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services* (Harvey, 1992b). Items on Harvey’s (1992b) original survey were developed from the NASP’s 1984 edition of the *Professional Conduct Manual*.

Harvey’s 1992 *Guidelines for Conducting a Self-Evaluation of School Psychological Services* was revised for clarity in 1996 using the Standards for the Provision of School Psychological Services found in the NASP’s *Professional Conduct Manual* (NASP, 1992a). The preface to the conduct manual states that revisions involved a collaborative effort with the authors of the original conduct manual. Recommendations for revisions were distributed to a random sample of NASP members for comment before the final version was written.

The original *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services* (Harvey, 1992b) and the pilot study were also used as a basis for the *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996). Research questions were expanded from two questions in the original work to six questions in the revised edition. Research questions addressed by the *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996) are:

1. Do administrators, parents, and teachers consider services adequate?
2. How do our services compare with professional standards?
3. Are we providing quality services?
4. Do procedures comply with local, state, and federal guidelines?
5. How do we know if services are having an impact on students or staff?
6. How can school psychological services be improved?

Harvey (1996) did not expect or recommend addressing all evaluation questions in one study but reported them so each researcher can choose which questions best fit his or her study. Customized surveys were provided by Harvey (1996) for all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, and school psychologists) for use as needed.

To assist in answering additional research questions the survey format of the *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996) had been changed from the 1992 original version. The format of Harvey's revised version consists of three sections. The first section consists of 49 items within eleven subheadings.

Subheadings are:

1. Organization of School Psychological Services
2. Relationships to Other Professionals
3. Consultation
4. Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment
5. Direct Service
6. Supervision
7. Research
8. Program Planning and Evaluation
9. Autonomous Functioning
10. Accountability
11. Professional Ethics and Guidelines

Respondents were asked to rate each of the 49 questions twice. The first rating evaluated the current functioning of psychological services and the second suggested ideal functioning. Likert scale choices were changed to *almost always*, *sometimes*, and *never*. Choices were treated as continuous variables for purposes of analysis. Section II consists of a list of 17 services provided by school psychologists. Survey respondents are asked to select the services they believe are the most important for school psychologists to provide. Section III asks two open-ended questions (a) do you have any comments in general about our school psychology services, and (b) do you have any suggestions for improving school psychology services? No reliability or validity information has been provided for the *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996).

By modifying Harvey's 1996 survey with permission (Harvey, 1997) for use in the current study, several benefits were anticipated. First, the survey questionnaire for this study incorporates expertise used to create *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996). The survey was developed with extensive input from the NASP, the leading authority on school psychological services. This input occurred over an extended period of time.

Second, research questions in this study are addressed in the school psychologists' survey from the *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised*

(Harvey, 1996) with only slight modifications to survey items. The research questions in this study are:

1. What services do North Carolina school psychologists currently provide?
2. What are the beliefs of North Carolina school psychologists regarding which psychological services they should be providing in order to be of most benefit to the children served?
3. What discrepancies exist between current and ideal services?
4. Based on the results of this survey, what recommendations do an expert panel North Carolina school psychology make for improving psychological services?

Third, a pilot study was conducted with the *Guidelines for Conducting a Self-Evaluation of School Psychological Services* (Harvey, 1992b), which proved beneficial for the school system (Harvey 1992a). Thus, there is tangible evidence that Harvey's survey is useful in documenting the needs of school psychologists.

A fourth factor in the decision to use this questionnaire is the advantages noted by Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) and Suskie (1996) in using Likert scales. Three advantages to using Likert scales are outlined by Suskie (1996, p. 33). First, since Likert scales are familiar to many people, they are easy to complete. Second, Likert scales are a quick way of providing extensive information, which allows comparisons among items within the survey. Finally, Likert scales successfully measure attitudes. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) state Likert scales have a fewer number of points on the scale than such scales as Thurstone scales, making them easier to construct, and may be more reliable.

The survey questionnaire in this study utilizes a Likert scale. In an effort to obtain additional specific and detailed information on school psychological services, it was necessary to expand the survey format. It was also necessary to make modifications to items in Harvey's (1996) questionnaire. These changes will be addressed later following a detailed description of the survey.

Survey Instrument Used for This Study

The survey for this study (see Appendix C) consists of four sections. Section I includes 58 modified items from *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996). Survey items fall within seven subheadings or categories. These categories are:

1. Relationships to Other Professionals
2. Consultation
3. Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment
4. Direct Service
5. Research
6. Program Planning and Evaluation
7. Accountability

These categories as well as the supporting items are based on the body of literature discussed in the section Functions of the School Psychologist in Chapter 2. Respondents were asked to rank items based on a five-point Likert scale. Rankings range from five (*almost always perform the function*) to three (*sometimes perform the function*) to one (*almost never perform the function*). Respondents were asked to rate each questionnaire item twice. The first response is the school psychologist's actual functioning and the second ranking is what the respondent views as ideal functioning. These data provide a basis for identifying discrepancies between what school

psychologists actually do and what they think they should be doing to provide ideal psychological services.

Section II of the survey presents respondents with a list of 17 services commonly provided by school psychologists. Many studies (Cherame & Sutter, 1993; Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984; and Watkins, Tipton, Manus, & Hunton-Shoup, 1991) confirm that school psychologists commonly provide these services. Respondents are asked to list the services they view as the most important. Data from this section will reveal specific services school psychologists want to perform in order to provide school children in North Carolina with improved services.

Section III consists of two open-ended questions intended to gather input regarding school psychologists' general comments and suggestions for improvement in the field. These questions are (a) Do you have any comments in general about school psychological services in North Carolina, and (b) What are your suggestions for improving school psychological services? Open-ended questions in this survey differ from those in *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996) only in that they are directed specifically to school psychologists in North Carolina.

Section IV asks for demographic data about each respondent. This information will prove useful to the NCDPI, those universities that prepare school psychologists, and LEAs in further understanding who is in the profession and what conditions they face while striving to provide beneficial and ideal services for children. Demographic data of the following type was collected:

1. Race
2. Gender
3. Primary language spoken
4. Additional languages spoken fluently
5. Number of years' experience in school psychology
6. Degree level
7. University training program where degree was obtained
8. Region of current practice
9. Number of children served (i.e. ratio of students to psychologist)
10. Age range of children served
11. Number of schools served
12. Primary location
13. NCSPA membership standing

Modifications of the 1996 survey were made for the present study. The dissertation committee and myself were concerned that survey questions on *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996) were too lengthy or ambiguous. For example, in some questions it was difficult to establish whether the focus of an item is on parents, teachers, community agencies, or a combination of all these groups. Useful data could not be collected unless questions were clear to respondents. In order to address this concern, two school psychology colleagues, dissertation committee members, and myself scrutinized survey questions looking for overlapping issues. These were reworded for clarification. Each survey item was matched to the research questions to insure clarity and relevance to the study. If an item was unclear as to whether responses were directed toward parents or teachers, schools or

community agencies, items were re-written as separate items. For example, this item from Harvey's (1996) survey: "S19. School psychologists consult and collaborate with parents, school, and outside personnel regarding mental health, behavioral, and educational concerns" (p. 3), was reworded in the current study as follows: "11. School psychologists consult and collaborate on psycho-educational concerns with: (a) parents, (b) school personnel" (p. 3). The reference to "outside personnel" in Harvey's original question was addressed by the current study under another category "Relationships to other professionals."

Each of the 58 survey items was scrutinized for content validity. The author and two additional school psychologists worked first independently and then as a group to ensure the content of each item addressed one of the research questions. If an item did not assist in answering a research question it was restated or deleted from the survey. Four subheadings from Harvey's (1996) study (a) organization of school psychological services, (b) supervision, (c) autonomous functioning, and (d) professional ethics and guidelines, were dropped from the survey because they were administrative in nature.

Threats to survey reliability

According to Suskie (1996), a reliable survey will obtain consistent responses. Over time, respondent's answers may change. Suskie (1996) further notes, "the purpose of a questionnaire study is often to collect information to help us facilitate change" (p. 55). This is certainly the case in this study.

A first step in ensuring reliability is to make sure the questionnaire is long enough to adequately address the subject matter. According to Mueller (1986) questionnaires with as few as 20 to 22 items will have satisfactory reliability (often above $\pm .80$) if the items are well constructed. Survey items on the questionnaire used in this research totaled 58 forced choice items in addition to open-ended questions. Items under each of the seven categories numbered fewer than 20 items.

Threats to survey validity

Suskie (1996) affirms that internal validity is important to a survey because it means the questionnaire "measures accurately what you want it to measure, and inferences you make from this questionnaire will be accurate" (p. 56). Suskie (1996) further states that the goal is for every respondent to interpret each survey item the same way. Accordingly, effort was made to ensure the survey was comprehensive and definitive, yet precise and easily readable. Each item has been examined to ensure that it is clear and easily understandable, interpreted in the intended way, sensitive to the study's topic and goals, and the intent is clear to professionals who are knowledgeable about school psychology. Since the original version of *Guidelines for Evaluating School Psychological Services – Revised* (Harvey, 1996) had been pilot tested, I conducted my own field test of the current survey questionnaire. Six of my school psychologist colleagues agreed to complete the questionnaire and make comments and suggestions for improvement. Colleagues who are readily available to the author checked for content validity. Each survey item was scrutinized against research questions to make sure the item was clear, concise, and appropriate to include in the survey questionnaire.

If the survey yielded a low response rate external validity would be compromised and the study would not have been representative of the population and statements about the role and practice of the school psychologist could not be made. Thus, the following steps were taken to ensure a high response rate. The cover letter was printed on NCSPA

letterhead and holds the endorsement and signature of the NCSPA president to provide increased significance to the study. The survey was checked closely by my doctoral advisors, participants in pilot testing, and by two school psychologist colleagues for readability and understanding. The survey was mailed with a postage-paid, self-addressed stamped return envelope for the respondent's convenience. Follow-up postcards were mailed. A chance to win a free one-year membership in NCSPA was offered to those returning surveys.

In phase II of the study, survey results were discussed with an expert review panel. The panel confirmed that survey results were an accurate reflection of school psychologists' actual and ideal functioning. The panel further concurred with the ranking of important services delivered by psychologists and found respondents' comments/suggestions to open-ended questions to be representative of the population.

Survey Analysis

The survey was designed to examine the actual services school psychologists provide in North Carolina and to determine what services are ideal for the purpose of improving the profession. The survey provided a basis for examining discrepancies between actual and ideal functioning. A rank ordering of the most important services was called for along with gathering demographic data depicting the school psychologist. Survey questionnaire items elicited two types of information (a) forced-choice, and (b) written responses to open-ended questions.

As outlined in Suskie (1996), a codebook was created with the purpose of documenting my coding scheme and plan for entering data into the computer for calculation. I entered all survey responses into the data bank. A graduate teaching assistant in the Virginia Tech's Statistics Consulting Lab made random checks for accuracy and found no errors.

Each survey item in Section I of the survey was assigned two numbers. The first number corresponded with the response about actual functioning and the second number corresponded with ideal functioning. Respondent ratings were recorded using the number code for their response (e.g. 5,4,3,2, or 1).

Item ratings were treated as continuous variables, a common practice in questionnaire survey research. Data from survey questionnaire items in Section I was recorded by calculating mean scores. Comparisons were made between scores for actual and ideal functioning items. Discrepancies were recorded and those of greatest magnitude were examined for meaning. The critical threshold for discrepancy between actual and ideal was set at 1.5. This threshold was based on 30% of the highest possible mean between actual and ideal items (5).

Data analysis for the rank ordering of 17 commonly performed psychological services in Section II of the survey, started with response frequencies. Each respondent was asked to circle the letter beside the services they felt most important for school psychologists to provide. There was no limit to the number of services respondents could select. In the codebook, each activity was assigned its own number and treated as separate yes/no questions. Each response was entered into the computer as a separate question by coding checked responses as a "1" and blanks recorded as "0". The service selected by the highest number of respondents was rated as being the most important and so on down the continuum until the service selected by the fewest number of respondents ended the list as the service of least importance. Findings are reported in percentages. The

percentage assigned to each service corresponds to the percent of respondents selecting that service as being important.

Data collected from responses to open-ended questions in Section III were coded as suggested by Suskie (1996). First, responses were read for gist. Responses to the open-ended questions were then recorded verbatim. Responses to questions one and two were compiled in separate files. The respondent's survey number was recorded with their responses. Once the data were codified, one other colleague and myself independently studied the data to find emerging themes. After reviewing the data several times, varying themes began to emerge. The two readers agreed to assign each theme a color and highlight respondents' statements according to theme. Thus, color-coding was used to distinguish between different themes. The two readers compared themes for content verification. Reviewers noted frequencies of responses in each category. The theme with the most statements was ranked first and the theme with the fewest relating statements was ranked last.

Demographic information data was tabulated and converted to percentages. Each item was assigned a coded number. Categories within demographic items were assigned numbers, which were used to calculate frequencies. For example, there were five choices in the category "race": Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian. These categories were assigned a number from "1" to "5" respectively. Gender was coded as a "1" for females and a "2" for males. Similar coding systems were used for each of the 13 demographic questions in Section IV of the survey.

Expert Panel Procedures

A second phase of the study used initial findings from the survey questionnaire to set priorities and plan next steps toward improving school psychological services in North Carolina. In order to do this, a panel of school psychology experts was formed from across the state of North Carolina. This panel was presented with the findings of phase I of this study and invited to define priorities and propose specific steps for improving school psychological services. The desired outcome was the creation of an action plan for improving school psychological services for children

Expert Panel Selection

A panel of 11 experts was randomly formed from a list of school psychologists who completed and returned the survey questionnaire. In forming this panel survey respondents were divided into subgroups according to the region in which they work. Regions were designated as coastal, mountain, north piedmont, and south piedmont, in accordance with the North Carolina School Psychology Association (NCSPA) criteria. In selecting panel members, every effort was made to include three groups: (a) psychologists from across the state, (b) administrators, and (c) university trainers. The panel consisted of one coastal representative, two mountain, three north piedmont, two south piedmont representatives, two administrators (a director of exceptional children and a testing coordinator), and one university trainer (Appalachian State University school psychology program head). Administrators and the university trainer serve dual roles, also functioning as school psychologists. There were seven females and four males on the expert panel. One panel member was also on the author's dissertation committee and additionally served on the expert panel for quality control purposes.

Initial phone calls were made to school psychologists who responded to the survey, briefly describing the study and requesting his/her participation as a member of

the expert panel. Calls were continued until positions were filled in the three subgroups previously described. School psychologists agreeing to sit on the panel were mailed follow-up reminder letters with a map and detailed directions. Expert panel proceedings were held at location central to all panel members, the Old Hickory Council Boy Scouts of America facility in Winston-Salem, NC on May 23, 1998.

Group Process Procedure

The panel proceedings began with self- introductions followed by distribution of information packets to all expert panel members. Each information packet contained the following items:

1. A group process agenda
2. Participant informed consent form
3. Profile of the “typical North Carolina school psychologist”
4. A copy of the study’s survey questionnaire
5. Copies of overhead charts showing responses to survey items on actual and ideal functioning
6. A handout showing meaningful discrepancies between actual and ideal functioning
7. A handout ranking the 17 psychological services from most to least important
8. Survey respondents’ suggestions for improving school psychology services in North Carolina

The agenda was then discussed and all expert panel members signed the Virginia Tech Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects form (see Appendix D). This part of the process took 30 minutes.

In a brief overview of the study, expert panel members were informed that the purpose of the study was to determine what services school psychologists in North Carolina provide and which services they view as ideal in serving children. Additionally, discrepancies of greatest magnitude between actual and ideal services were highlighted. Based on the results of the survey, panel members participated in a group process designed to set priorities and make recommendations to improve school psychological services in North Carolina.

Panel members were given a profile of the “typical” North Carolina school psychologist. This profile was based on demographic data collected from respondents to the survey questionnaire.

Each of the four sections of the survey was explained as to format and information obtained. Section I was further broken down by each of the seven categories (Relationships to Other Professionals, Consultation, Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment, Direct Service, Research, Program Planning and Evaluation, and Accountability). Responses to questionnaire items under each subheading were displayed in chart form on an overhead projector. Data on actual and ideal functioning was displayed on separate charts. After a discussion of each type of functioning I overlaid the charts. Because charts for actual and ideal functioning were different colors it was easy to see where discrepancies existed and made for a more dramatic presentation. Charts in panel information packets set actual and ideal functioning side by side on the same chart to allow for easy visual comparison for discrepancies. After a presentation of items under each category, a more detailed presentation was conducted on items showing a meaningful difference between actual and ideal functioning.

Next, the handout displaying the rank order of the 17 services provided by school psychologists was highlighted (see table 3). Services were presented in order of the most to least important. Finally, suggestions from school psychology survey respondents were given for improving school psychology services. Initial findings of the study required 30 minutes to present. After the presentation of findings, a 30-minute block of time was allowed for questions and answers.

At this time, the first task was presented to the expert panel. Panel members were divided into two groups by counting off every other person. One group consisted of five members and the other had six members. The author instructed the two small groups to select a recorder and a spokesperson. The recorder was given a large easel pad and markers and asked to record their group's responses. Spokespersons were asked to be responsible for verbally reporting their group's discussion and findings in a large group session to be held later on that day. I gave directions to the small groups as follows: "Using the initial findings from the survey questionnaire, decide which three ideas are the top priorities in improving school psychological services. Then, in looking at these priorities, suggest and outline appropriate next steps toward reaching these priorities."

Panel members were asked to keep in mind that beneficial psychological services for the children should guide their thinking. A time limit of 30 minutes was set for discussion and task completion. Questions about procedures were addressed. Panel members asked whether groups were to rank order the top three priorities. Discussion followed with participants agreeing that ranking was not necessary. Accordingly, the top three priorities from each small group were not ranked by importance.

During the small group 30-minute work session, I moved about the room making sure the groups were on task. I clarified the survey results as needed and wrote down her personal comments and reflections from small group conversations and discussions.

After ending the small group discussions, each group's findings were displayed on easel paper for everyone to view. Lunch was provided at this point. The lunch break lasted 30 minutes.

Following lunch all expert panel members regrouped in the meeting room. The two small group spokespersons reported to the entire panel the priorities and recommendations for next steps from their respective groups. This part of the proceeding lasted 30 minutes. I then gave the expert panel these final challenges: first, to take the priorities generated by both small groups and reach a consensus as to the top three priorities, and secondly to suggest and outline appropriate next steps toward reaching these priorities. Panel members had up to one hour to complete this last task and reach consensus regarding top priorities. During this discussion, I remained at the front of the room. In approximately 45 minutes the expert panel had completed the task and shared results. In total, not including time for lunch, the group process procedure to establish priorities and propose an action plan for improving psychological services took approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes.

Group Process Data Analysis

Expert panel members created the data in this part of the study through group process procedures. Documents written by the large group and both small groups were used for accuracy to report expert panel findings in this study. Findings from the expert panel are discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss data analysis and present specific findings. Research conclusions are presented in two parts: survey results and expert panel conclusions/recommendations. Results from the survey phase of this research are presented first. Findings from group process methods are presented next. All results are aggregated to protect the anonymity of survey and expert panel members.

Survey Results

Survey results are reported and discussed below. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C. Survey Section I, Likert Scale Items, consists of 58 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. Differences between means are reported with emphasis on items showing discrepancies of greatest magnitude between means. There are seven subheadings or categories in Section I of the survey. Subheadings are (a) Relationships to Other Professionals, (b) Consultation, (c) Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment, (d) Direct Service, (e) Research, (f) Program Planning and Evaluation, and (g) Accountability. Section II, Ranking of School Psychological Services, presents 17 activities commonly performed by the school psychologist in rank order from most to least important. Section III, Open-ended Questions, consists of two open-ended questions requesting comments and suggestions regarding school psychological services. The final survey section, Typical School Psychologist Profile, contains 13 demographic questions designed to gather information about the “typical” North Carolina school psychologist. Section IV will be discussed first in order to provide a portrait of the “typical respondent.”

Survey Section 4: “Typical” School Psychologist Profile

The “typical” North Carolina School Psychologist is a white, English-speaking female with 11 years of experience in the field. She holds a Masters Degree and Certificate of Advanced Study (MA/CAS). She received training outside North Carolina or at Appalachian State University. Her caseload is 2,189 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The term “caseload” refers to the total number of students for which she is responsible. Services can range from indirect, e.g., consultation with teachers, to direct, e.g., comprehensive evaluation. The psychologist is typically based at the central office and travels between the four schools that she serves.

Survey Section I: Likert Scale Items

Data from this section describe the services performed by school psychologists and identifies services psychologists think they should perform in order to provide ideal services. Respondents rated each item twice. The first rating noted “actual” functioning and the second rating addressed what psychologists thought they should be doing to provide “ideal” services. For purposes of this discussion, these ratings will be referred to as actual and ideal. Ratings are made on a five-point Likert scale. A rating of five corresponds with *almost always* performing a function, rating of three with *sometimes*, and a rating of one with *almost never*. Responses were averaged and mean scores were compared to find differences between actual and ideal functioning. SPSS version 7.5.1 was used to calculate means.

Survey results are grouped by level of discrepancy between means of actual and ideal functioning. Levels of discrepancy are specified as follows: a difference of 1.5 or

greater between mean scores is “of greatest magnitude”, a difference of 1.0 to 1.49 is considered “medial”, and a difference of less than 1.0 is considered of “little difference.”

Survey items with the greatest differences between actual and ideal function will be discussed first, and then all discrepancies will be addressed by descending order within the seven categories previously mentioned. Addressing the data by category allows for a general comparison of actual and ideal functioning of the school psychologist and additionally addresses discrepancies of performance within specific areas of function.

Items Showing Discrepancies of Greatest Magnitude Between Means

Seven survey items generated discrepancies of *greatest magnitude* between actual and ideal functioning. (Survey items can be found in Appendix C.) Specific differences between actual and ideal functioning of these seven items are noted in table 2. Charts recording differences between actual and ideal functioning of each survey item broken down by category are found in Appendix E.

Four items of greatest discrepancy between actual and ideal functioning of school psychologists relate to Consultation. No other category had more than one item with a difference greater than 1.5. The categories of (a) Relationships to Other Professionals, (b) Research, and (c) Accountability each have one highly discrepant item. The categories of (a) Direct Service, (b) Program Planning and Evaluation, and (c) Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment have no items of *greatest magnitude*. Program Planning and Evaluation is the only area where psychologists indicate they are already doing more than needed. Specifically, respondents reported conducting more tests of intelligence and cognitive functioning than they considered ideal.

In general, Consultation was the area most in need of improvement. Consultation is defined by NASP’s Best Practices III (1995, p.609) as “a method of providing preventively-oriented psychological and educational services in which consultants and consultees form cooperative partnerships and engage in a reciprocal, systematic problem-solving process within an ecobehavioral framework.” The goal is to enhance and empower consultee systems, thereby promoting student’s well being and performance. Consultees include parents, teachers, and community agencies, that is, anyone working with the student or student in need of assistance.

The four consultation activities showing the greatest difference between actual and ideal functioning are (a) designing and developing procedures for preventing disorders and promoting mental health, (b) designing and developing procedures for learning and improving educational systems, (c) provide skill enhancement activities regarding issues of human development to parents, (d) provide skill enhancement activities regarding issues of human development to others in the community (e.g. civic organizations, scouting programs, etc.) Examples of skill enhancement activities include in-service training, program planning and evaluation, and parent education programs.

Table 2. Items Showing Discrepancies of Greatest Magnitude Between Means

Relationships to Other Professionals

9. School psychologists have the opportunity to participate in community agency staffings of cases involving their clients.

Actual - 2.2
Ideal - 4.1 Difference -1.9

Consultation

- 12a. School psychologists design and develop procedures for preventing disorders and promoting mental health.

Actual - 2.4
Ideal - 4.1 Difference -1.7

- 12b. School psychologists design and develop procedures for learning and improving educational systems.

Actual - 2.8
Ideal - 4.3 Difference -1.5

- 13b. School psychologists provide skill enhancement activities (e.g. in-service training, program planning and evaluation, and parent education programs, etc.) regarding issues of human development (i.e. learning and behavior) to parents.

Actual - 2.3
Ideal - 3.9 Difference -1.6

- 13c. School psychologists provide skill enhancement activities (e.g. in-service training, program planning and evaluation, and parent education programs, etc.) regarding issues of human development (i.e. learning and behavior) to others in the community (e.g. civic organizations, scouting programs, etc.).

Actual - 1.8
Ideal - 3.4 Difference -1.6

(Table Continues)

**Table 2. Items Showing Discrepancies of Greatest Magnitude Between Means
(Continued)**

Research

21. School psychologists report, utilize, design, and/or conduct research of a psychological and educational nature.

Actual - 1.9
Ideal - 3.4 Difference -1.5

Accountability

30. School psychologists devise systems of accountability and outcome evaluation, which aid in documenting the effectiveness of services they provide.

Actual - 2.8
Should - 4.3 Difference -1.5

Note. Survey category items are listed in italics.

Questionnaire results in the category Relationships to Other Professionals revealed the great need school psychologists feel to have the opportunity to participate in community agency staffings of cases involving their clients. The data suggests school psychologists see a need for increased communication with agencies outside the school system that are involved with their children. Being included in team meetings and case staffings would provide opportunity for consistent and quality services.

Under the Research category, respondents viewed school psychologists as needing to report, utilize, design, and/or conduct research of a psychological and educational nature to a higher degree.

Finally, under Accountability, school psychologists noted the need to devise systems of accountability and outcome evaluation, (which aid in documenting the effectiveness of services they provide) as one of the activities needing the most increased time and attention.

Survey Items by Category

Relationships to Other Professionals.

Survey respondents indicated school psychological services divisions need to engage more in reviewing provided services to make sure services are uniform and match the needs of the children. Responses showed there is some need for increased activity in the coordination of school and community services by the school psychologist as well as consultation with community agencies regarding psycho-educational issues. Survey respondents also recognized some need to be more mindful in inviting community agency personnel to participate in school conferences.

School psychologists noted little improvement is needed in planning psychological services in accordance with best professional practices. Items which addressed establishing and maintaining collaborative and cooperative relationships with other school personnel were rated as only having a little difference between actual and ideal functioning. Respondents also viewed little need to increase referrals to outside agencies.

Consultation.

Survey results showed a great need to increase provision of skill enhancement activities for parents and community groups such as civic organizations and scouting programs. Skill enhancement activities for school personnel need to be increased but to a lesser degree. Little need was noted for increasing consultation on psycho-educational concerns with parents and school personnel. School psychologists rated facilitation of the delivery of services as adequate.

Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment.

The item on career and vocational development, aptitude, and interest testing was the only one in this category which psychologists rated as needing some additional attention. In contrast, they indicated there was little need to increase activity in assessment of personality, emotional status, behavior, social skills, processing, scholastic aptitude, adaptive behavior, language and communication skills, academic knowledge and achievement, perceptual-motor functioning, environmental influences, or educational setting. Intelligence testing was the only area psychologists rated as performing more than considered ideal. School psychologists noted little room for improvement in increasing the variety of test instruments, procedures, and techniques they utilize. They

also saw little room for improvement in areas relating to professional and ethical guidelines regarding non-biased assessment and programming.

Direct Service.

Responses indicate some additional attention is needed in designing direct service programs in the areas of cognition, affect, socialization, and vocation. The provision of direct service to facilitate the functioning of individuals, groups, and or organizations needs to be increased to some degree. School psychologists rated their level of functioning as needing little improvement in developing collaborative relationships with their clients via involvement in direct service procedures such as assessment and program planning and evaluation.

Research.

This category included only one survey item. This item was previously covered under pertinent differences between actual and ideal functioning and was discussed earlier in this section.

Program Planning and Evaluation.

Survey respondents noted room for some improvement of service on committees responsible for developing and planning educational and educationally related activities. In addition to planning such activities, psychologists need some additional engagement in the evaluation of such activities. Responses indicated that school psychologists see only a modest need to increase the reading of professional books and journals. Respondents viewed the amount of time spent discussing professional issues with colleagues and maintaining active membership in professional organizations as needing little improvement. Psychologists rated there is little need for change in continuing to engage in supervision and seeking assistance from professional associates in reference to particularly difficult or complex cases. They also viewed expansion of services beyond areas of common practice and formal training as needing only minimal improvement.

Accountability.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of school psychological services needs moderate improvement in the regular evaluation of services in terms of money, time, and resources. Duties are performed in an accountable manner through keeping records of efforts and modifying practices and/or expanding services as needed.

Survey Section II: Ranking of School Psychological Services

Respondents were provided with a list of 17 services commonly provided by school psychologists. They were asked to rank the services in order importance. Table 3 presents the results.

A natural break occurred in test data between the seven services ranked highest and the others. The seven activities ranked highest in importance were as follows:

1. Behavioral interventions for the classroom,
2. Evaluations for special education services,
3. Academic interventions for the classroom,
4. Consultation for pre-referral programming,
5. Crisis intervention,
6. Inservice training, and
7. Early intervention/prevention (before special education).

Services ranked highest were considered by respondents as the most important services provided by school psychologists. These were consultation and intervention (i.e. behavioral interventions for the classroom, academic interventions for the classroom, consultation for pre-referral programming, crisis intervention, and early intervention prevention). In addition to ranking high in importance, consultation identified as the area where psychologists most need to increase their time in Section I of the survey. The reverse was true in the area of psychological and psycho-educational assessment, this being the only high ranking category where school psychologists perceive they are already doing enough or more than enough.

Table 3. Ranking of School Psychology Services (Ordered from most to least important)

	<u>Percent</u>
1. Behavioral interventions for the classroom	95.2
2. Evaluations for special education services	88.8
3. Academic interventions for the classroom	83.0
4. Consultation for pre-referral programming	78.9
5. Crisis intervention	72.8
6. Inservice training	69.0
7. Early intervention/prevention (before spec. ed.)	68.7
8. Individual counseling	49.0
9. Coordination of services with outside agencies and psychiatrists	42.5
10. Parent skills training	39.1
11. Group counseling	37.8
12. Social skills training	37.1
13. Program evaluations	23.8
14. Case management for interagency wraparound services	18.7
15. Study skills training	18.0
16. Substance abuse prevention/intervention	9.5
17. Family therapy	5.8

Survey Section III: Open-ended Questions

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions, (a) Do you have any comments in general about school psychological services in North Carolina, and (b) What are your suggestions for improving school psychology services? Open-ended questions provided respondents with an opportunity to express their views on school psychological services and give suggestions for improvement in greater detail than provided by forced choice questionnaire items.

The three most common suggestions for improving school psychology services were (a) reduce the testing load, (b) increase the number of school psychologists, and (c) expand involvement with the intervention/pre-referral process, respectively. While agreement was reached regarding additional themes, the readers differed somewhat in ranking their themes. In comparing the highlighted statements the readers found that in some cases respondents offered more than one suggestion and readers sometimes differed as to which theme was the main idea and thus the one highlighted. It became evident to the readers from this closer look at the data that respondents did not always distinguish between the two open-ended questions. Therefore, data was collapsed into one category, which addressed “what is wrong with school psychology?” This perhaps offered less productive ideas for positive change than would have responses to the two intended questions. Table 4 shows the themes generated from the open-ended questions. Suggestions are listed from the most to the least frequently mentioned. Samples of school psychologists’ responses to open-ended questions can be found in Appendix F.

Table 4. Suggestions for Improving School Psychology Services: Responses to Open-ended Questions

1. Reduce the testing load
2. Increase the number of school psychologists
3. Expand involvement with the intervention/pre-referral process
4. Decrease the variation of services between counties
5. Raise salary
6. Improve job satisfaction
7. Provide additional in-service opportunities

Expert Panel Conclusions/Recommendations

The Expert Panel groups used survey findings to determine top priorities for improving school psychological services. Neither small group was able to narrow down the number of top priorities to three. Panel members agreed that there were more than three top priorities.

Group one listed their priorities as (a) improve interagency coordination, (b) increase consultation, (c) increase accountability, and (d) increase the provision of indirect services. Group two listed priorities as (a) increase consultation, (b) increase early intervention, (c) evaluation of re-evaluation procedures (d) improve coordination with other agencies, (e) increase accountability/public relations, and (f) increase crisis counseling.

Strategies to bring about change were listed by group one as (a) target parent groups to increase their knowledge of the services school psychologists provide, (b) educate administrative groups in what school psychologists are trained to do, and (c) target school boards/advocacy groups at state and local levels.

Group two listed its single strategy as legislative action. This group felt that, while communicating the school psychologists' qualifications and needs to all levels of stakeholders, it would be most beneficial to start with stakeholders in the most powerful positions.

Priorities and strategies generated by two groups were then discussed for 45 minutes within the large group/entire expert panel. Small group spokesmen led the discussion within the expert panel. The goal was to establish the top priority from among those listed by the small groups and make recommendations for accomplishing this priority. After much discussion, accountability was identified as the top priority. Consensus was reached that before school psychologists could expect much support to move toward "ideal" services, they must be accountable for getting information to the appropriate leaders in public education and public policymakers concerning what they do and can do if provided adequate support. The group as a whole was unable to reach a conclusion as to whether this education of the school psychologist's role should first be initiated at the local or state level. The panel consensus was that all levels (i.e. parent groups, school administration, school boards, state legislators) should be made aware of who psychologists are and what they can provide. The expert panel decided that school psychologists in each school system should work to educate parents, local administrators, and school boards. The panel suggested the NCSPA form committees to educate administrative groups and school boards at the state level, as well as work with legislators through the association's lobbyist. Panel members commented that the exercise had provided a "spring board" to moving toward the next level. All panel members agreed to lead the next steps in expanding communication in their respective school districts. NCSPA representatives volunteered to share research results and expert panel suggestions with NCSPA board members.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes findings of the study and addresses implications of the research. Recommendations based on the findings are made for the improvement of school psychological services.

Restatement of the Purpose

One source of useful information about how to improve psychological services is the view of practicing school psychologists. This study a) presents a firsthand account of the services provided by North Carolina school psychologists contrasted with what they say are ideal services, and (b) develops recommendations for improved services. This was accomplished by addressing four questions:

1. What services do North Carolina school psychologists currently provide?
2. What are the beliefs of North Carolina school psychologists regarding the psychological services they should be providing in order to be of most benefit to children?
3. What discrepancies exist between what they are doing and what they say they should be doing?
4. Based on the results of this study, what recommendations do a panel of experts make for improving psychological services?

In phase one of the study a survey was used to collect information addressing the first three questions. School psychologists in North Carolina were surveyed by questionnaire to determine the services they provide and the services they believe are ideal. Discrepancies between actual and ideal services were calculated. Services also were ranked by level of importance. Respondents were invited to comment on school psychological services in North Carolina and to make suggestions about improving services. The survey collected demographic information on respondents. In the second phase of the study survey findings were presented to a panel of school psychology experts. Through well-known group process procedures, the panel established priorities and made recommendations for improving services.

Summary of Findings

Highlights from Research Questions

Research Question 1: What services do North Carolina school psychologists currently provide?

North Carolina school psychologists provide an enormous range of services from working with community agencies, providing consultation, conducting assessments, giving direct service, conducting research, participating in program planning and evaluation, to designing measures of accountability. More specifically, school psychologists say they provide social skills training, group counseling, parent skills training, coordination of services with outside agencies, individual counseling, early intervention/ prevention, inservice training, crisis intervention, academic interventions for the classroom, behavioral interventions for the classroom, and evaluations for special education services.

Compared to studies cited in chapter two (Cheramie & Sutter, 1993; Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984, Watkins, Tipton, Manus & Hunton-Shoup,

1991; and NASP, 1992), this study found that school psychologists in North Carolina generally provide the same services as school psychologists across the nation.

Research Question 2: What are the beliefs of North Carolina school psychologists regarding the psychological services they should be providing in order to be of most benefit to the children served?

School psychologists ranked the importance of 17 services from most to least important. A natural break occurred in the data indicating seven services are clearly most important. These services are providing: (a) behavioral interventions for the classroom, (b) evaluations for special education services, (c) academic interventions for the classroom, (d) consultation for pre-referral programming, (e) crisis intervention, (f) in-service training and, (g) early intervention/prevention (before special education).

Research Question 3: What discrepancies exist between current and ideal services?

While psychologists describe all the services they provide as beneficial and necessary, they also report a need for certain services to be increased in order to optimize the provision of psychological services.

Results of this study indicate that school psychologists see their relationships to other professionals as the main difference between actual and ideal service. Specifically, school psychologists do not participate in community agency staff meetings to the extent needed to provide quality services.

Consultation is the area of service most commonly under-utilized. Consultation, as measured in this study, includes designing and developing procedures for preventing disorders and promoting mental health, learning and improving educational systems, and providing skill enhancement activities for parents and others in the community. Designing, conducting and utilizing research of a psychological and educational nature also is an area of notable difference between actual and ideal functioning. School psychologists report that they have little time to design and conduct studies.

School psychologists reported a great need to engage more in devising systems of accountability and outcome evaluation that documents the effectiveness of their services.

Survey respondents reported the categories of Direct Service and Program Planning and Evaluation as needing only moderate increases in service.

Conducting psychological and psycho-educational assessments is the only service school psychologists regard as over-utilized. Psycho-educational assessment includes the administration of individual intelligence tests, as well as tests measuring academic achievement, adaptive behavior, and problems that are emotional, behavioral or both. School psychologists often do little more than assist schools in determining a student's eligibility for Exceptional Children's programs when they only administer tests.

Research Question 4: Based on the results of this survey, what recommendations do a panel of school psychology experts make for improving psychological services?

Accountability through communication was identified by a panel of school psychology experts as the main avenue for improving school psychological services. The panel theorized that since school psychology is a specialized field in which most work is confidential, few school personnel have full knowledge of the services school psychologists provide. Panel members further proposed that if personnel with whom school psychologists' have the closest working relationship do not understand the role the psychologist has in providing assistance to children, it stands to reason that school

administrators and policymakers at local and state levels most certainly do not understand. Accordingly, the panel concluded that school psychologists must be accountable for informing these individuals of the psychologists' role. They postulated that once those parties with the capability to provide greater resources for school psychologists understand the psychologists' preferred role and the value of expanded psychological services, they might be more likely to provide support to promote improved services. The panel recommended parent groups be targeted along with school administrators, school boards, and state legislators for psychologists' efforts to inform.

The panel concluded that efforts to inform state associations and organizations about psychologists' activities on behalf of children might appropriately come from the NCSPA. The panel further suggested that individual school psychologists take an active role to inform parents, local administrators, and school boards about school psychological services. Specific recommendations for increasing general awareness of psychological services are addressed later in this chapter.

Overall Findings

School psychologists in North Carolina provide a variety of services ranging from direct service with students and teachers, to consultation with parents and teachers, to teaming with community agencies. Psychologists view the services they currently provide as beneficial and important in striving to reach the needs of children. However, discrepancies exist between the extent to which some services are provided and what is ideal. Though working with community agencies yielded the largest difference between actual and ideal functioning, Consultation is the area rated by school psychologists as most under-utilized. Participation in accountability efforts, and conducting psycho-educational research are other areas school psychologists say greatly need more time and attention.

A panel of school psychology experts identified accountability through communication to be the main solution for improving school psychological services. It was established that increased communication is needed at all levels regarding the function of the school psychologist. Once stakeholders know what school psychologists can contribute, the support necessary to increase quality services may follow. The panel further determined NCSPA should lead in taking the next steps toward improving school psychological services in North Carolina.

Discussion of Findings

Psychological and educational literature is replete with time studies (i.e. Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984) on the school psychologist but research is silent on how psychologists view the most effective use of their time. Such studies would identify which services school psychologists view as over-utilized and under-utilized. The lack of such information makes it difficult to compare local and state psychological services to the NASP's standards so that changes can occur improving services for children.

The current study found the North Carolina school psychologist has a caseload of 2,189 students compared to the NASP's (1992b) standard of "at least one full time school psychologist for each 1,000 children served by the LEA" (p. 38). This indicates a need to hire additional school psychologists in North Carolina, a theme identified in the answers to open-ended questions asked in this study.

The North Carolina school psychologist serves four schools, which is the maximum number espoused by the NASP. In general, the profile of the North Carolina school psychologists compares favorably with the NASP's profile, except they have an average of three more years of experience and a caseload of 1,000 more students than NASP recommends.

Previous studies (Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984) indicate that nationally 18% of school psychologists' time is spent in Consultation compared to 6% in the Southeast. Respondents in this study ranked Consultation as the 4th most important service delivered by school psychologists and one service needing an increase of psychologists' time. Thus it appears that in general, consultation services provided by North Carolina school psychologists and psychologists in the entire Southeast are lacking when compared to the national percent of time spent in consultation.

The survey category with the most items of greatest magnitude of difference between actual and ideal functioning was Consultation. Survey items specifically address Consultation in regard to designing and developing procedures for "preventing disorders and promoting mental health" and "learning and improving educational systems," and providing skill building activities for parents and others working with school children. Respondents of this study reported a greater need to increase consultation with parents and community agencies than with school personnel. The Lacayo, Sherwood, and Morris 1981 study reports a similar finding. They also found psychologists more frequently consult with teachers and other school staff than with parents. However, even though data from this and previous studies show a need to increase consultation with parents and agencies, the expert panel in this study made a recommendation to increase communication with school personnel such as principals and superintendents. The panel proposed that increased communication would foster a greater understanding of the role and function of the school psychologist, which would in turn lead to additional resources for the improvement of psychological services. Thus, the panel inferred that increased communication must take place before effective consultation.

Survey results showed the greatest difference between actual and ideal functioning under the category of Relationships to Other Professionals. Specifically, "school psychologists have the opportunity to participate in community agency staffings of cases involving their clients." This is interesting because of the low ranking respondents gave "coordination of services with outside agencies and psychiatrists." Further, communication with outside agencies was not a recurring theme in the open-ended questions. Additionally, only one expert panel group mentioned improvement of interagency coordination as a priority and it was not chosen by the total panel as a top priority. This suggests school psychologists believe it is more important for them to participate in community staffings than vice versa. In my experience, school psychologists view themselves as doing a better job of involving community agencies in student staffings than community agencies do in involving school psychologists. Regardless of whose responsibility it is to call combined agency meetings, school psychologists can take the lead, especially if they embrace the need for inclusion in such meetings. Thus, in the ideal situation school psychologists would have a higher level of involvement and participation with community agencies in planning interventions and working with children. It is my view that difficulties experienced by students at school are rarely limited to school alone and the effectiveness of service is compromised when

consistent service does not occur across all environments. Thus, it is imperative for agencies to work together in meeting children's needs.

Findings of this study show psychologists believe they can have greater positive effects on children if they provide early intervention and prevention before behavior and academic difficulties become so severe. The NASP appears to agree with North Carolina school psychologists in that its mission statement reads "to promote educationally and psychologically healthy environments for all children and youth by implementing researched-based, effective programs that prevent problems, enhance independence, and promote optimal learning" (p. 1). Unfortunately, research is greatly lacking in school psychological services, not only in North Carolina, but nationally (Lacayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984). Accordingly, systems of accountability that measure the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs are lacking (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995). Without accountability measures, it is difficult to ascertain which programs are most effective and should be continued and expanded, and which should be discontinued. Information gained through accountability measures could be used to inform stakeholders about the job school psychologists perform and also document the need for additional resources as well as more school psychology positions. Accountability measures not only help to show the value of psychologists, they assure improvement of quality services.

The only under-utilized area of service in this study is psychological and psycho-educational assessments. The findings indicate this service was rated as over-utilized. Smith (1984) suggests school psychologists throughout the Southeastern United States overly engage in assessment when compared to the amount of time engaged in other activities. Reducing the testing load was the most frequent concerning ways to improve psychological services. Administering a battery of tests is time consuming and often does nothing more than assist schools in determining a student's eligibility in Exceptional Children's programs. If less time is spent in evaluation more time could be spent in consultation, research, and devising systems of accountability, activities found in this study to need an increase.

This study showed that discrepancies exist between the actual and ideal functioning of school psychologists in North Carolina. However, when survey respondents were invited to offer concrete methods for the direct improvement of services, few were given. Instead, in response to open-ended questions about improving services, psychologists focused on their own needs. For example: raise salary, provide additional inservice opportunities, and increase the number of school psychologists. It is understandable that these suggestions could indirectly improve services by providing additional time to participate in consultation, research, and community staff meetings, however, there is no guarantee that an increase in school psychologists would not simply lead to an increase in time spent on assessment. Perhaps school psychologists are stretched and stressed to the point that their own needs need attention before they can really move forward to improve services for students. The school psychology literature does not address such management concerns.

The expert panel identified accountability through communication as the main focus for improving school psychological services. However, the panel failed to shape its recommendations to the findings of this study as directed. Expert panel suggestions were global and did not directly address differences between actual and ideal service. Expert panel discussion and suggestions appear to have a political tone. Perhaps this is a

reflection of the interests and strengths of the spokespersons for the two small groups. Those individuals have been and continue to be very involved in school psychology through the NCSAPA and the NASP. Even though expert panel recommendations were not tied to the findings, I view panel suggestions as important in gaining additional insight into stumbling blocks toward improved psychological services in North Carolina.

Implications

The act of providing psycho-educational assistance to children in the schools may seem simple, but has many stumbling blocks. These appear to be from a lack of communication across educators at all levels and policymakers and from contradictions between the vision of school psychology as outlined by the NASP and its practice. A few examples illustrate these stumbling blocks. Federal and State regulations governing special programs increasingly require much of the psychologist's time. As discussed in chapter 1, Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act) and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 1990 & 1997) require pre-referral paperwork and numerous meetings before testing can take place. This can impede rather than facilitate a process for finding answers and providing better services. Time spent in pre-evaluation meetings, determining student eligibility, and performing other required administrative tasks, takes time away from problem solving and planning activities. A lack of information on the part of administrators and school personnel about the NASP vision for the role of school psychologists, what they are trained to do and should be doing, are impediments to providing more effective services. Additionally, a lack of school psychologists' access to community agencies and effective communication with community agencies further impedes needed services. As mentioned earlier, data suggest school psychologists believe more effort is spent on their part to include community agencies in case meetings of mutual clients than vice versa. There also appears to be some resistance by community agencies to interagency collaborative efforts between school officials and local government agencies. This is in part due to inconvenience. Reluctance to network may also stem from a lack of information on the part of community agencies about the NASP's vision for the provision of psychological services. Regardless of the reason, school psychologists need to increase collaborative efforts with community agencies to strive for services of greater benefit to children and their families.

In a study by Fairchild and Seeley (1996) teachers were generally satisfied with school psychological services. Teachers stated that in addition to performing evaluations, "school psychologists need to be active in creating a broad range of services responsive to consumer needs and then be proactive in evaluating the effectiveness of services provided" (p. 55).

Cherame and Sutter (1993) surveyed 80 special education directors regarding the functions of school psychologists, the degree of effectiveness of services, and activities in which they should become more or less involved. "School psychologists were rated as more effective in assessment, consulting, and crisis intervention" (p. 53). The areas of counseling and consultation were rated as needing more involvement.

Trends in education and new state and federal legislation will continue to shape the context with respect to what school psychologists can do to best meet the needs of the children we serve. Without a proactive stance which places the NASP vision regarding the provision of school psychological services into play, school psychologists could find themselves at the breaking point from an overload of activities which are even less

effective and satisfying than those of the present. Conversely, if school psychologists take action by communicating what they can do to help children and respond to the expressed needs of school personnel instead of reacting to restrictions, they can use coming reforms to move toward improving services and the practice of school psychology.

Dynamics internal to North Carolina school psychologists and the NCSPA may contribute to the stumbling blocks caused by educational trends and legislation. As indicated by inconsistencies between survey data and expert panel suggestions, school psychologists' concerns and suggestions for improvement in the field may not match priorities set by the NCSPA and psychologists in better position to set an action plan in motion for improving services. This raises the question of where does the "ideal" come from? Is the "ideal" a conceptualization of the NASP, school psychology training programs, public education, or individual school psychologists? The answer is found through conducting further research.

Care should be taken in generalizing conclusions and recommendations from this study. This survey did not have a sufficiently high return rate to rule out bias. Additionally, as previously stated, the expert panel did not use survey results to set priorities for improvement in the field, resulting in inconsistencies between survey data and expert panel suggestions.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the NCSPA

The NCSPA is in a strategic position to organize support and suggest ways to improve school psychological services in North Carolina, in addition to following-up and communicating efforts and progress. The finding of this study challenge the president of the NCSPA to appoint a task force to address next steps in improving school psychological services. Stakeholder understanding, available resources, and accountability measures for school psychologists should be considered. The committee, using the information from this study as a basis for recommendations, should write a position paper implementing the NASP vision for moving toward ideal psychological services. This statement should address specific next steps, how to accomplish these needs or steps, and name the responsible party for addressing each action, along with specifying a timeline for accomplishment.

I recommend the NCSPA recruit LEAs to conduct pilot studies to further investigate ways to close gaps between actual and ideal service provision, and increase accountability through improved communication with policymakers and stakeholders of school psychological services. Research efforts of LEAs and individuals deserve support from the NCSPA. If initial monetary support is not possible, then support by way of acknowledgement through the NCSPA newsletter and opportunities to present research findings at the annual fall conference without a presenter's fee should occur. Using its close ties to administrative organizations such as superintendent and principal associations, the NCSPA is strongly encourage share research findings and make alliances for the improvement of services. Through its lobbyist, the NCSPA is in a favorable position to share information and request support from legislators.

The NCSPA officers need to discuss the dilemma of providing for effective communication among North Carolina school psychologists. DePree (1989) describes good communication as "the way people can bridge the gaps formed by a growing company, stay in touch, build trust, ask for help, monitor performance, and share their

vision” (p. 102). With 54% of the addresses on the NCDPI mailing list for school psychologists being incorrect, sufficient means for communication is lacking not only between the NCSPA and school psychologists but also between the NCDPI and school psychologists. I suggest that if the NCSPA is going to utilize the NCDPI mailing list for communicating with its members, a process for forming and maintaining an updated address list is necessary.

Recommendations for LEAs

Results of panel discussions from the study showed school psychologists believe their role is misunderstood at the teacher, school, and district level. This misunderstanding is caused in large part by a lack of information regarding services provided by school psychologists. Additionally, statewide results obscure local problems (Conoley & Gutkin, 1995). Based on a lack of needs assessment information gathered at the organizational level of the LEA, each school system employing school psychologists would be wise to conduct a needs assessment survey of its own using Harvey’s survey instrument. In order for the study to be more productive, the purpose of the survey should be carefully stated to make clear it is to improve on the positives already in place rather than pinpoint weaknesses (Fairchild & Zins, 1992). Studies of this kind are a useful tool in providing local administrators with information regarding the practice and value of psychological services in the schools.

Harvey’s (1996) *Guidelines for conducting a self-evaluation of school psychological services – revised* supplies LEAs with a format for conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, relieving school systems the burden of devising such a study on their own. It would be advantageous to utilize this assessment instrument in local efforts to gain feedback, as suggested from the expert panel, from policymakers, parents, and other utilizing school psychology services. Thus, input from special education administrators, superintendents, principals, regular education teachers, school counselors, special education teachers, and speech and language therapists should be gathered in addition to that of the school psychologist. This could occur using Harvey’s (1996) instrument. After gathering a baseline of stakeholder knowledge, it would then be appropriate to discuss what information is needed to increase stakeholder knowledge and how this should be presented. Each LEA should educate its administration and school board regarding the services provided by the school psychologists in their system and more importantly, what is needed in order to move school psychological services to the ideal, keeping in mind the desired outcome of more beneficial services for children.

Recommendations for school psychologists

The questionnaire in this study documents the viewpoint of North Carolina school psychologists regarding participation in consultation and intervention and reducing the testing load. These changes would improve psychological services. In order to do the former in any consistent and beneficial way, the latter must first occur. Participation in extended services may mean an initial added burden of time and responsibility as the psychologist continues to carry a full testing load while engaging in extensive consultation and intervention when they may not have previously done so. However, this extra effort is necessary for school psychologists to prove their value in consultation and intervention. The purpose of involving psychologists early in the referral process is to solve student and teacher difficulties much sooner and reduce the number of students needing comprehensive evaluations. In many cases, if appropriate interventions are not

correctly carried out prior to an evaluation, valuable time and effort is lost if, upon evaluation, the student does not qualify to receive Exceptional Education services. Even when students do qualify to receive resource services, they continue to be in the regular classroom setting the majority of the day. Thus, these students are still the primary responsibility of the regular education teacher.

The question remains of to how to involve the school psychologist in the pre-referral process to provide intervention and consultation? One study (Bradley-Johnson, Johnson, & Jacob-Timm, 1995) suggests increased intervention will require the school psychologist to keep current on research methods. Findings from this study indicate research is one area North Carolina psychologists need to improve. School psychology literature lacks specific procedures and steps for accomplishing increased intervention and consultation. The plan proposed here is derived primarily from expert panel discussion and personal experience. Involvement in the pre-referral process may be accomplished in several ways. One way to involve school psychologists in interventions would be for directors of Exceptional Education and school principals to require that assistance teams involve and utilize psychologists in the pre-referral process. However, such mandates may be resented. This defeats the purpose of seeing value in intervention and consultation from the school psychologist. This strategy would also require administrative support and communication at two levels. Before requesting such support the school psychology staff or individual psychologist might need to educate and clarify their role with administration.

A second way to increase consultation would be to approach one principal at one school. Again, education and role clarification of the school psychologist may need to occur in order to gain principal support. With the needed support a school psychologist could request that all referrals to the assistance team come first to the school psychologist for the purpose of planning and following interventions. The psychologist using his/her expertise at the beginning of the referral process would prove more beneficial to teachers, allow school psychologists to broaden services to better provide for students, and keep fewer students from unnecessarily and needlessly going through a comprehensive evaluation. Possible stumbling blocks to consider are the need for support from the principal and possible resentment on the part of school staff over being told how to use the school psychologist. This plan may also imply that the members of the assistance team and the classroom teacher are incapable of taking care of the problem within their school. A good working relationship is necessary between principal and school psychologist to carry out this suggestion.

The previous two strategies for increasing school psychologist input early in the referral process require the support of top and mid-level administration. This last suggestion approaches a solution from the bottom up. I suggest finding one teacher with whom to partner in consultation and intervention techniques. If this one teacher becomes a believer in what the school psychologist can do, then he/she will be the psychologist's advocate and share success stories with other teachers, gaining additional interest and support. Sometimes this can prove a stronger yet slower way to build support.

School psychologists must consult with parents and teachers concerning children's needs and provide services accordingly. They must educate teachers and administrators as to their role and function. If communication and teamwork are

effective, the hope is for reduced testing loads and more time spent providing services that are of greater benefit.

Recommendations for Further Research

Before future studies are conducted with North Carolina school psychologists as respondents, the NCSPA and NCDPI need to establish a process to secure current mailing addresses. This fosters increased capabilities for communicating with psychologists and provides the basis to conduct quality studies and gather more information or feedback.

Research is also needed involving recipients of school psychology services (e.g., students, teachers, and parents) to gain a broader perspective of needs. Harvey's 1996 *Guidelines for conducting a self-evaluation of school psychological services (revised)*, provides surveys for such stakeholders and encourages their use. Support from the NCSPA is beneficial for encouraging such studies.

Results of this study indicate further research is needed to address establishing and defining relationships with other professionals and community agencies.

Additional research is needed to address specific strategies for closing gaps between actual and ideal service in the areas of consultation, research, and accountability measures. In conducting studies of this nature it would be beneficial to clarify by whom and how the ideal is established.

Survey respondents' answers to open-ended-questions call for research focusing on decreasing the variations of services between counties. The above-suggested needs assessments conducted by LEAs would provide the basis for comparison of school psychological services across counties. As previously stated in this paper, there are many time studies but needs assessments are lacking. I also believe a comparison of school psychological services in North Carolina with those of other states would be helpful in beginning to address recruitment and retention issues.

More research is needed at state and local levels to clarify policymaker knowledge of school psychological services so that effective communication and education with stakeholders can occur. If school psychologists are not clear of the extent of policymaker familiarity with the services they provide, it is a formidable challenge to decide what information is needed and how to appropriately present stakeholders and policy makers with helpful information.

In Summary

In summary, North Carolina school psychologists provide a wide range of important services to children. However, discrepancies exist between actual and ideal services. Given the current trends in education and new state and federal legislation, filling these gaps between actual and ideal services is difficult. School psychologists must work closely with the NCSPA to inform policymakers and stakeholders of their needs in order to meet the NASP vision for providing ideal school services to children.

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Appendix A – Performance Appraisal Instrument

SECTION III - A

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INSTRUMENT

FOR

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

III-1

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS

Guidelines

1. The supervisor/evaluator(s) and the school psychologist mutually define the job functions and competencies to be evaluated at the beginning of each year. The function and/or competencies may be modified to meet the specified role of an individual school psychologist in the local education agency, but all modifications must be noted and signed by the psychologist and the supervisor.
2. A plan for evaluation, feedback, and indicated revision of performance standards is developed. Designated times for formative feedback during the year should be included.
3. Multiple sources of information and data used to evaluate competencies and functions are considered, especially for areas where observations may intrude on the service being delivered (e.g., counseling and assessment).
4. Attempts are made to have a trained psychologist evaluate the employed school psychologist on technical and professional aspects of practice (e.g., assessment, psychological interventions, consultation). Such peer evaluation is especially important during years when the school psychologist is being considered for advancement on the career ladder.
5. Once the evaluation is completed as specified on the performance appraisal instrument, the supervisor and school psychologist develop professional development plans. Professional development plans should not be limited to areas of deficiency but should be developed for areas "at standard" or higher in which the school psychologist may have special interests or desire continued growth.

JOB DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

- REPORTS TO: Superintendent, Level II or Level III School Psychologists, Director, or Associate or Assistant Superintendent.
- SUPERVISES: May supervise professional, paraprofessional and clerical staff.
- PURPOSES: To facilitate learning and to promote the cognitive, social and personal development of all students.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. MAJOR FUNCTION: ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION

Identifies and assesses the learning, development, and adjustment characteristics and needs of individuals and groups, as well as the environmental factors that affect learning and adjustment. Uses assessment data about the student and his/her environment(s) in developing appropriate interventions and programs.

2. MAJOR FUNCTION: DIRECT INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Provides interventions to students to support the teaching process and to maximize learning and adjustment.

3. MAJOR FUNCTION: CONSULTATION AND TRAINING

Provides consultation to parents, teachers, other school personnel, and community agencies to enhance the learning and adjustment of students.

4. MAJOR FUNCTION: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Assists in the planning, development, and evaluation of programs to meet identified learning and adjustment needs.

5. MAJOR FUNCTION: SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Delivers a planned and coordinated program of psychological services.

6. MAJOR FUNCTION: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT

Applies ethics and standards of professional practice in the delivery of school psychological services and observes relevant laws and policies that govern practice. Participates in professional organizations and continually seeks to improve professional knowledge and skill.

7. MAJOR FUNCTION: COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Communicates effectively with students, parents, and school staff.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL INSTRUMENT

- INSTRUCTIONS:
1. The evaluator is to rate the school psychologist on six-point scale as indicated below.
 2. The competencies pertinent to each major function must be selected and discussed by the supervisor and psychologist at the beginning of the year.
 3. The evaluator is encouraged to add pertinent comments at the end of each major function.
 4. The school psychologist is provided an opportunity to react to the evaluator's ratings and comments.
 5. The evaluator and the school psychologist must discuss the results of the appraisal and any recommended action pertinent to it.
 6. The school psychologist and the evaluator must sign the instrument in the assigned spaces.
 7. The instrument must be filed in the school psychologist's personnel folder.

Rating Scale
(Please Check)

School Psychologist Name:

School or Base-assignment:

Superior	Well Above Standard	Above Standard	At Standard	Below Standard	Unsatisfactory
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1.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION

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- 1.1 Assists in early identification of students' learning and adjustment problems.

Rating Scale
(Please Check)

Superior	Well Above Standard	Above Standard	At Standard	Below Standard	Unsatisfactory
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Conducts assessments appropriate to the focus of concern and according to prevailing professional standards.

Conducts assessments with consideration of the characteristics of the student or group of students (including ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and handicapping considerations).

Assists in identifying factors in the learning environment that may affect the student and assessing their degree of impact.

- 1.5 Integrates data from assessment procedures and develops hypotheses relative to (1) instructional and educational programming and (2) program eligibility and placement.

Assists in planning and developing interventions, programs and/or services based on the identified needs of the student or group of students.

Comments _____

2.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: DIRECT INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS

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- 2.1 Teaches students how to develop effective learning strategies and personal and social skills.

Counsels students on educational and personal adjustment issues.

Evaluates effectiveness of individual and group interventions and modifies interventions based on data collected.

Comments _____

Rating Scale
(Please Check)

Superior	Well Above Standard	Above Standard	At Standard	Below Standard	Unsatisfactory
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3.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: CONSULTATION AND TRAINING

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3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of consultation models and processes

Consults with teachers, other school staff, and parents about ways to facilitate learning and adjustment for individuals or groups of students.

Consults with teachers and other school staff on classroom, school, or system needs.

Helps provide liaison and coordination between the school system and other relevant agencies to facilitate services for students and families.

Interprets educational policies, programs, and procedures related to psychological services.

3.6 Provides information, and/or education in the application of learning theory, child development, and other psychological principles to school personnel and parents.

Plans and implements in-service programs for staff and/or parents.

Comments _____

4.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

--	--	--	--	--	--

4.1 Conducts and/or assists in conducting formal and informal needs assessment to determine program characteristics and needs.

Works with others to develop programs and program strategies to maximize learning for students.

**Rating Scale
(Please Check)**

Superior	Well Above Standard	Above Standard	At Standard	Below Standard	Unsatisfactory
----------	---------------------	----------------	-------------	----------------	----------------

Assists in planning for the evaluation of programs.

Assists school personnel in analyzing, interpreting, and disseminating results of program evaluations.

Comments _____

5.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

--	--	--	--	--	--

Assists in the development of a comprehensive program of services to all students.

5.2 Adheres to established program goals, priorities, and objectives.

5.3 Plans, maintains, and/or participates in a system of accountability for services delivered.

Comments _____

6.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT

--	--	--	--	--	--

Delivers services consistent with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the American Psychological Association (APA) ethical principles and professional standards of practice.

Observes federal, state, and local policies and regulations in the delivery of school psychological services.

Rating Scale
(Please Check)

Superior
Meets Standards
Above Standards
At Standards
Below Standards
Unsatisfactory

Works to ensure students' rights and welfare in the school and community.

Engages in continuing professional development by assessing one's own needs and seeking ways to address needs.

Comments _____

7.0 MAJOR FUNCTION: COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

7.1 Effectively communicates knowledge and ideas orally to individuals and groups.

Effectively communicates knowledge and ideas in writing

Maintains effective interpersonal relationships and communication in the professional setting.

Comments _____

Rating Scale
(Please Check)

Superior
Well Above Standard
Above Standard
At Standard
Below Standard
Unsatisfactory

Evaluator's Summary Comments _____

School Psychologist's Reactions to Evaluation _____

Evaluator's signature and date

School Psychologist's signature and date

Signature indicates that the written
evaluation has been seen and discussed.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

- INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Based on the evidence from observation, discussion, and other forms of data collection, the evaluator is to rate the school psychologists performance with respect to the seven major functions listed below.
 2. The evaluator is encouraged to add pertinent comments at the end of each major function.
 3. The psychologist is provided an opportunity to react to the evaluator's ratings and comments.
 4. The evaluator and the psychologist must discuss the results of the appraisal and any recommended action pertinent to it.
 5. The psychologist and the evaluator must sign the instrument in the assigned spaces.
 6. The instrument must be filed in the psychologist's personnel folder.
- The rating scale will be as follows:

Level of Performance

6. Superior

Performance within this function area is consistently outstanding. Practices are demonstrated at the highest level of performance. Psychologist continuously seeks to expand scope of competencies and constantly undertakes additional, appropriate responsibilities.

5. Well Above Standard

Performance within this function area is frequently outstanding. Some practices are demonstrated at the highest level while others are at a consistently high level. School psychologist frequently seeks to expand scope of competencies and often undertakes additional, appropriate responsibilities.

4. Above Standard

Performance within this function area is frequently high. Some practices are demonstrated at a high level while others are at a consistently adequate/acceptable level. School psychologist sometimes seeks to expand scope of competencies and occasionally undertakes additional, appropriate responsibilities.

3. At Standard

Performance within this function area is consistently adequate/acceptable. Practices fully meet all performance expectations at an acceptable level. Psychologist maintains an adequate scope of competencies and performs additional responsibilities as assigned.

2. Below Standard

Performance within this function area is sometimes inadequate/unacceptable and needs improvement. Psychologist requires supervision and assistance to maintain an adequate scope of competencies, and sometimes fails to perform additional responsibilities as assigned.

1. Unsatisfactory

Performance within this function area is consistently inadequate/unacceptable and most practices require considerable improvement to fully meet minimum performance expectations. Psychologist requires close and frequent supervision in the performance of all responsibilities.

Appendix B – Survey Cover Letter



North Carolina School Psychology Association

November 11, 1997

Dear Colleague,

Cathy is a school psychologist in Moore County, North Carolina and a doctoral student at Virginia Tech. She has been in the field of school psychology for nine years. It is her belief that in order to improve services, school psychologists as a group must first have a clear picture of what they are actually doing, decide what they should be doing, then develop a plan for improvement that can be presented to those who make policy that governs practice.

As part of her dissertation and with the sponsorship of the North Carolina School Psychology Association (NCSAPA) Cathy is conducting a survey to 1) develop a description of the current services provided by North Carolina school psychologists and 2) report what school psychologists say they should be doing. With your help from completing this survey, she will work toward developing recommendations that will provide a basis for moving toward improved standards in the field.

Recent changes in legislation make it a critical time in our field. Please help the field of school psychology by taking a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is included for your convenience in returning the survey. If the survey is returned by November 26th, you will be entered in a drawing to win a free one-year membership to NCSAPA. The number on the questionnaire is a code to be used to contact and remind those not returning the questionnaire. Your name will never be connected with your individual answers.

If you have any questions about this study or if you would like a copy of the results, please contact Cathy Metcalf at 275 Tanglewood Drive, Southern Pines, NC 28387 (910) 693-1911.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Cathy Metcalf, MA/CAS
School Psychologist Level II

Dr. Jim Deni
President NCSAPA

Appendix C - Survey

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

We are conducting a needs assessment of North Carolina school psychology services. This questionnaire serves as part of this assessment to 1) document the current services provided by school psychologists and 2) determine what services psychologists feel they should be providing. Please take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire.

Please rate each question twice: the first rating notes your current functioning and the second rating addresses what you think psychologists should be doing. Please answer as many questions as possible. Thank you!

		Almost Always	Some- times	Almost Never		
Relationships to other professionals						
1. School psychologists develop plans for the delivery of services in accordance with best professional practices.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
2. School psychologists establish and maintain collaborative relationships with other school professionals who provide services.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
3. School psychologists maintain a cooperative relationship with colleagues and co-workers in the best mutual interests of clients, in a manner consistent with the goals of the employing agency.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
4. The school psychological services unit reviews the services provided to ensure their conformity with the needs of the population served.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
5. School psychologists employed within a school setting help coordinate with the services of mental health providers for other agencies (such as community mental health centers, guidance clinics, or private practitioners) to ensure a continuum of services.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
6. School psychologists are knowledgeable about community agencies and resources.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
7. School psychologists consult with the community agencies regarding psycho-educational issues.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
8. As needed, school psychologists refer students to outside agencies (e.g. state and community agencies and private practitioners).	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
9. School psychologists have the opportunity to participate in community agency staffings of cases involving their clients.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
10. Community agency personnel are invited to participate in school system conferences concerning their clients, with written parent permission.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
Consultation						
11. School psychologists consult and collaborate on psycho-educational concerns with:						

(a) parents	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
			Almost Always	Some- times	Almost Never	
(b) school personnel	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
12. School psychologists design and develop procedures for:						
(a) preventing disorders and promoting mental health,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) learning and improving educational systems.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
13. School psychologists provide skill enhancement activities (e.g. in-service training, program planning and evaluation, and parent education programs, etc.) regarding issues of human development (i.e. learning and behavior) to:						
(a) school personnel,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) parents,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(c) others in the community (e.g. civic organizations, scouting program	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
14. School psychologists facilitate the delivery of services by assisting all those who play major roles in the educational system (i.e. parents, school personnel, community agencies).						
	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment						
15. School psychologists conduct psychological and psycho-educational assessments which include consideration of:						
(a) personality,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) emotional status,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(c) behavior,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(d) social skills and adjustment,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(e) intelligence and cognitive functioning,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(f) processing,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1

		5	4	3	2	1
(g) scholastic aptitude,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
			Almost Always	Some-times	Almost Never	
(h) adaptive behavior,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(i) language and communication skills,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(j) academic knowledge and achievement,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(k) sensory and perceptual-motor functioning,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(l) educational setting,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(m) family/environmental-cultural influences,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(n) career and vocational development, aptitude, and interests.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
16. School psychologists use a variety of instruments, procedures, and techniques. Interviews, observations, and behavioral evaluations are included in these procedures.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
17. School psychologists adhere to professional resolutions and ethical guidelines regarding non-biased assessment and programming for all students.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
Direct Service						
18. School psychologists <u>provide</u> direct service to facilitate the functioning of individuals, groups, and /or organizations.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
19. School psychologists <u>design</u> direct service programs to enhance development in the areas of:						
(a) cognition,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) affect,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(c) socialization,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(d) vocation.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1

		5	4	3	2	1
20. School psychologists develop collaborative relationships with their clients by involving them in direct service procedures (e.g. assessment, and program planning and evaluation).	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
			Almost Always	Some-times	Almost Never	
Research						
21. School psychologists report, utilize, design, and/or conduct research of a psychological and educational nature.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
Program planning and evaluation						
22. School psychologists serve on committees responsible for developing and planning educational and educationally-related activities.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
23. School psychologists provide program evaluation services to assist in decision making activities.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
24. School psychologists restrict their practice to those areas in which they have received formal training and supervised experience.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
25. School psychologists keep abreast of new developments in the field (e.g. intervention techniques, assessment procedures, computerized assistance).	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
26. School psychologists:						
(a) maintain active membership in professional organizations,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) read professional books and journals,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(c) discuss professional issues with colleagues.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
27. School psychologists, even after three years of supervision, continue to engage in supervision on a regular basis.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
28. School psychologists readily seek additional assistance from professional associates:						
(a) with particularly difficult or complex cases	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) when expanding services into areas in which they infrequently practice.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
Accountability						
29. School psychologists perform their duties in an accountable manner by:						
(a) keeping records of their efforts,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1

(b) evaluating effectiveness,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(c) modifying practices and/or expanding services as needed.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
			Almost Always	Some- times	Almost Never	
30. School psychologists devise systems of accountability and outcome evaluation which aid in documenting the effectiveness of services they provide.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
31. School psychologists regularly evaluate their progress in achieving goals with consideration of the cost effectiveness of school psychological services in terms of:						
(a) time,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(b) money,	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1
(c) resources.	Current	5	4	3	2	1
	Should	5	4	3	2	1

Please circle the letters beside the services you feel are most important for school psychologists to provide:

- A Academic interventions for the classroom.
- B Behavioral interventions for the classroom.
- C Case management for interagency wraparound services.
- D Consultation for pre-referral programming.
- E Coordination of services with outside agencies and psychiatrists.
- F Crisis intervention.
- G Early intervention/prevention (before special education).
- H Evaluations for special education services.
- I Family therapy.
- J Group counseling.
- K Individual counseling.
- L Inservice training.
- M Parent skills training.
- N Program evaluations.
- O Social skills training.
- P Study skills training.
- Q Substance abuse prevention/intervention.

Do you have any comments in general about school psychological services in NC?

What are your suggestions for improving school psychology services?

Demographic Data

Race: _____

Sex: _____

Primary language: _____

Additional language(s) spoken fluently: _____

Number of years experience in school psychology: _____

Highest degree level obtained: _____

University training program where school psychology degree obtained:

Region of current practice (i.e. coastal, mountain, north piedmont, south piedmont):

Number of children served (i.e. ratio of students to psychologist): _____

Age range of children served: _____

Number of schools served: _____

Primary location (i.e. office or school based): _____

Membership in school psychology associations (e.g. NCSPA, NASP, etc.):

Appendix D – Informed Consent Form

Virginia Polytechnic Institute And State University

Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects

Title of Project: “Better Practices in School Psychology: Moving Toward the Future:

Investigator: S. Catherine Metcalf

I. The Purpose of this Research

The purposes of this study are to: 1) present an accurate portrait of the services currently provided by North Carolina school psychologists, 2) report what school psychologists say they should be doing, and 3) develop recommendations that will provide a basis for moving toward improved standards in the field. Surveys will be sent to all practicing school psychologists in North Carolina (approximately 725) and a panel of experts made up of six to ten psychologists, will participate in suggesting priorities and recommendations for change.

II. Procedures

You are being asked to participate in a group process to prioritize school psychology services in North Carolina and develop recommendations that will provide a basis for moving toward improved standards in the field. We will use information from a school psychology needs assessment survey to achieve this goal via brainstorming and group discussion activities. This process should take approximately four hours and will take place at a location which is convenient for you.

III. Risks

There are no risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study.

IV. Benefits of this Project

Your participation in this study will provide important information regarding the improvement of school psychology services. You will be afforded the opportunity to share your thoughts and observations about improving services in the field. You may contact me if you are interested in receiving a summary of the research results.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage your participation in this study.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

I may wish to use some of the material generated by the process for journal articles or in presentations to interested groups. Your identity and input will be kept confidential by assigning numbers and referring to participants by number. All group process material will be kept in my possession at my residence for up to five years, so that I may have ready access to them for my dissertation work. All material will be destroyed by me at the end of this period of time.

VI. Compensation

There is no type of compensation (monetary or otherwise) associated with participation in this phase of the study.

Freedom to Withdraw

You may at any time withdraw.

Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the Department of Teaching and Learning.

IX. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have no special responsibilities to fulfill for involvement in this study.

X. Subject's Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

Signature

date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

S. Catherine Metcalf
Investigator

(910) 693-1911; cmetcalf@pinehurst.net

Larry Harris
Faculty Advisor

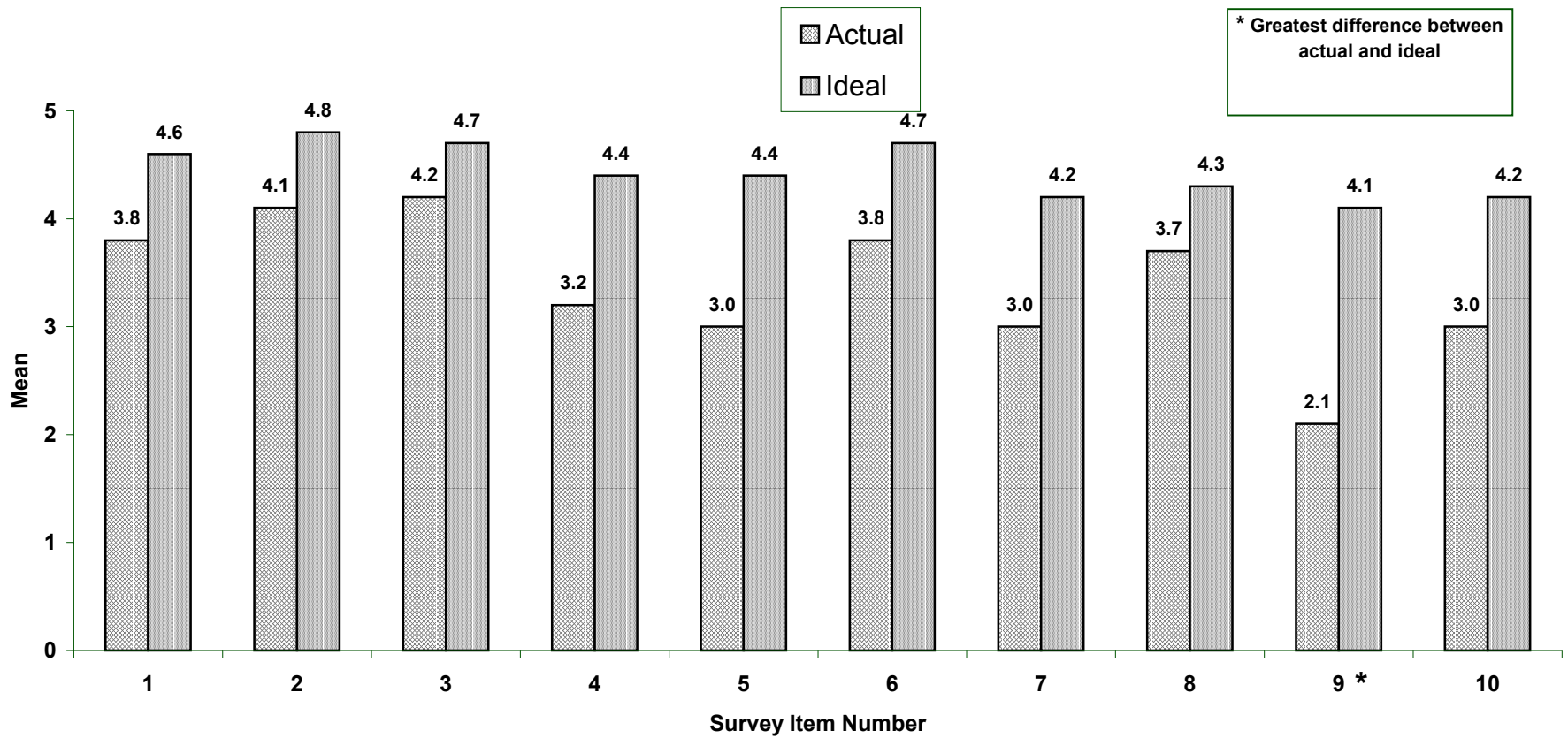
(540) 231-8342; lharris@vt.edu

H. T. Hurd
Chair, IRB
Research Division

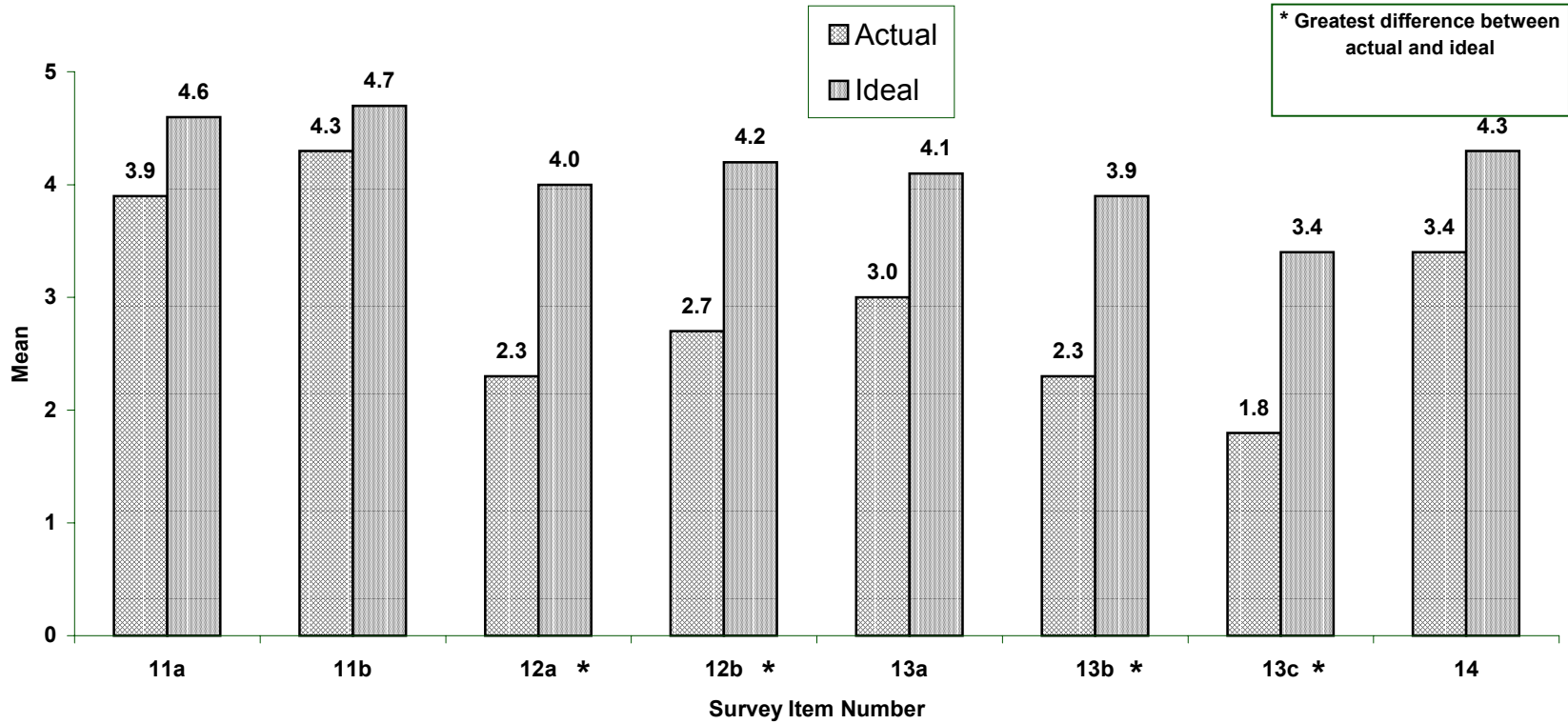
(540) 2431-5281

Appendix E – Differences Between Actual and Ideal

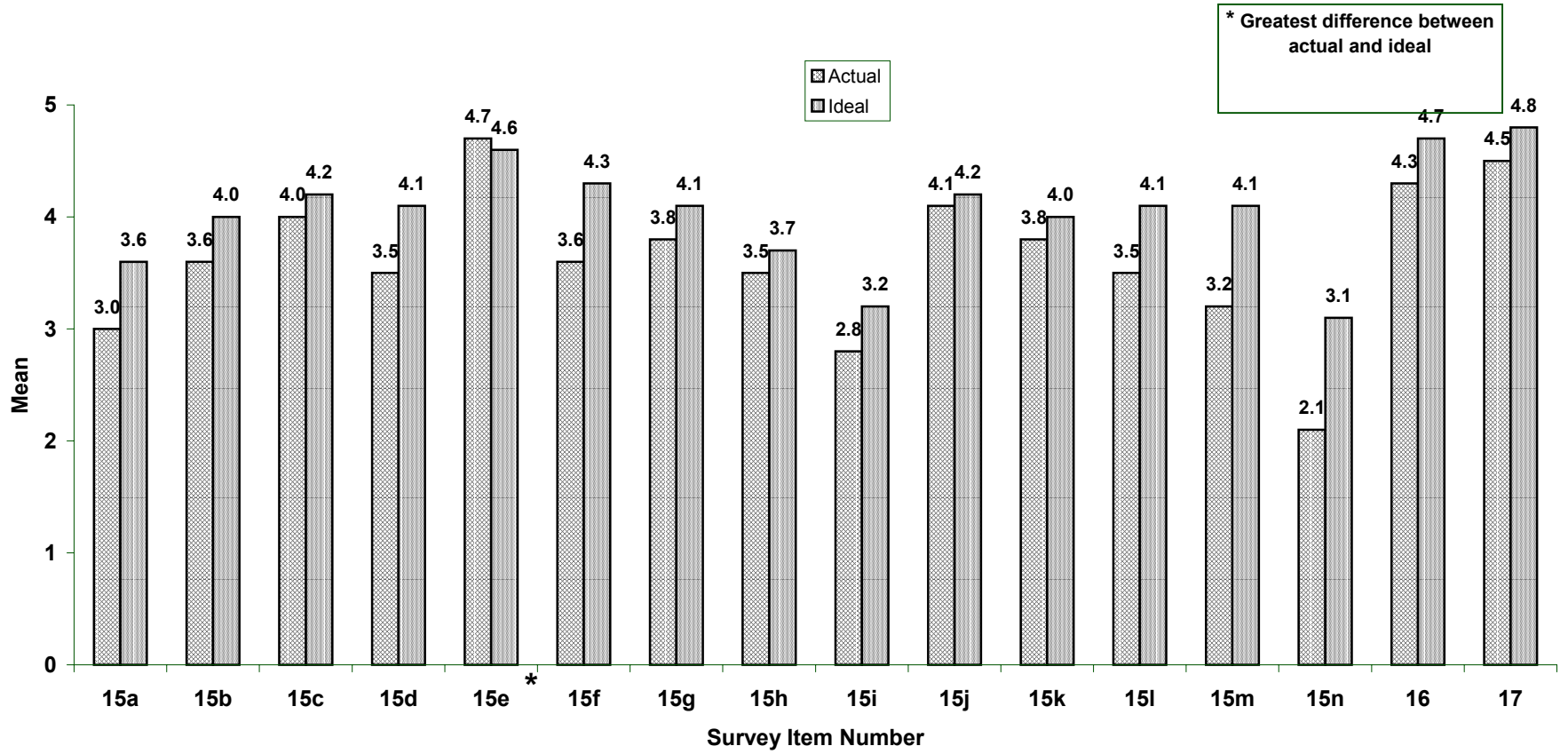
Relationships to Other Professionals Actual Functioning/Ideal Functioning



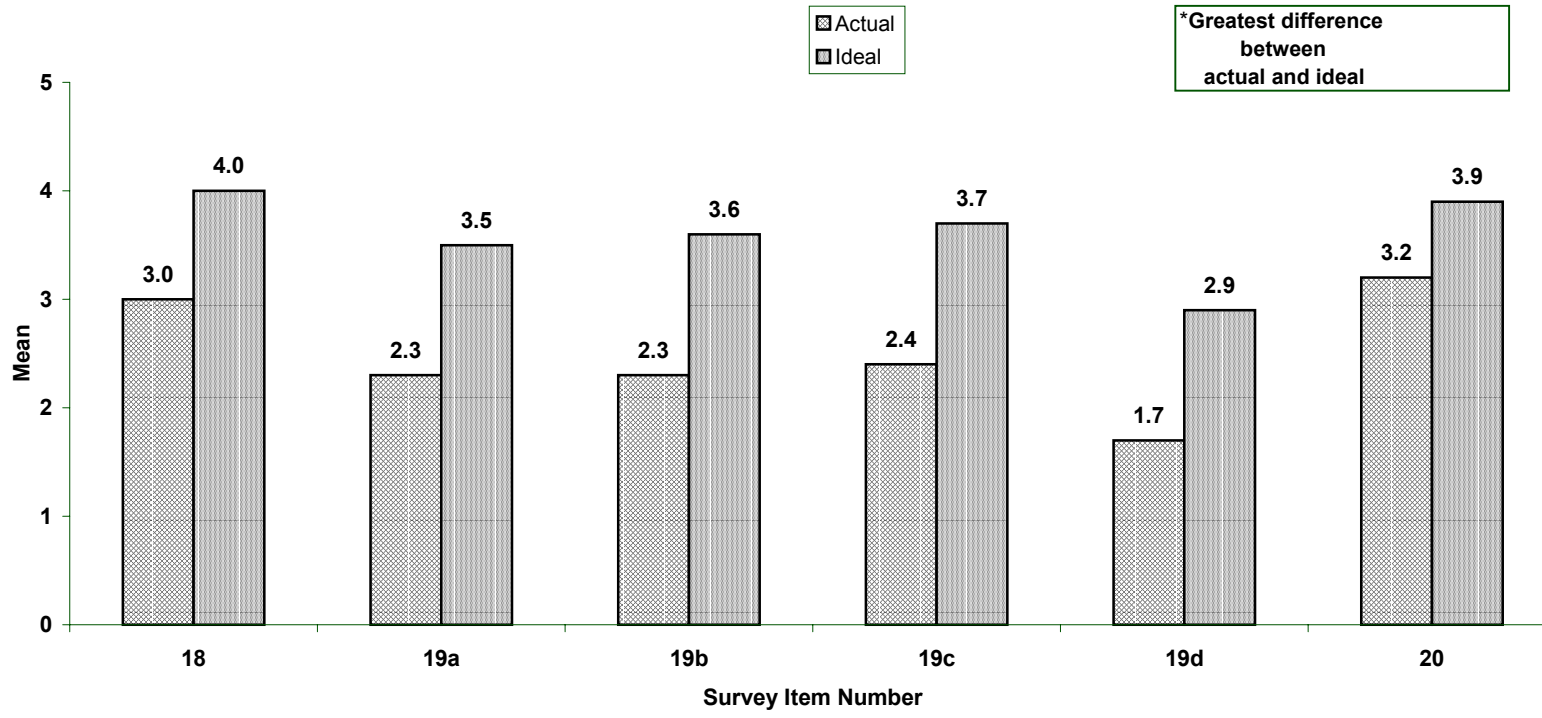
Consultation
Actual Functioning/Ideal Functioning



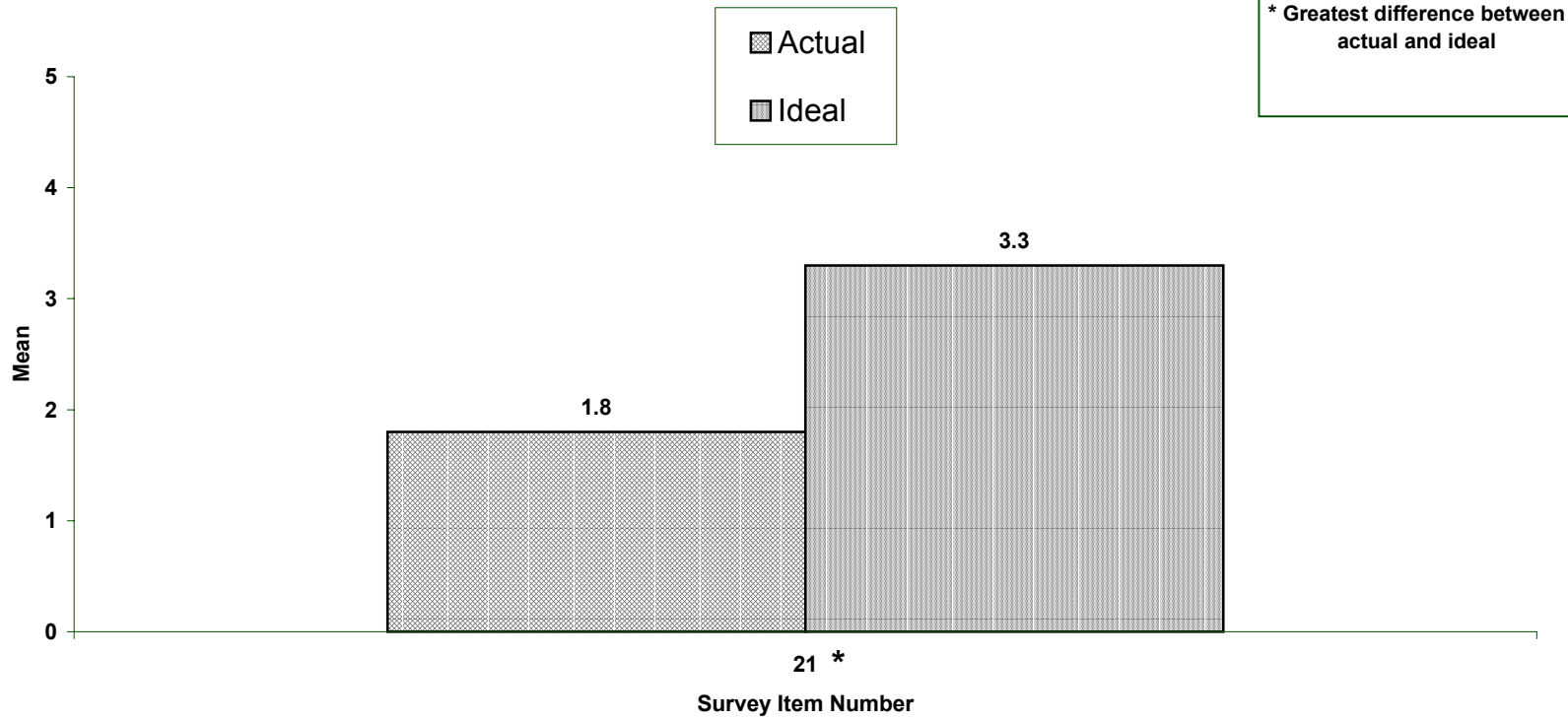
Psychological and Psycho-educational Assessment Actual Functioning/Ideal Functioning



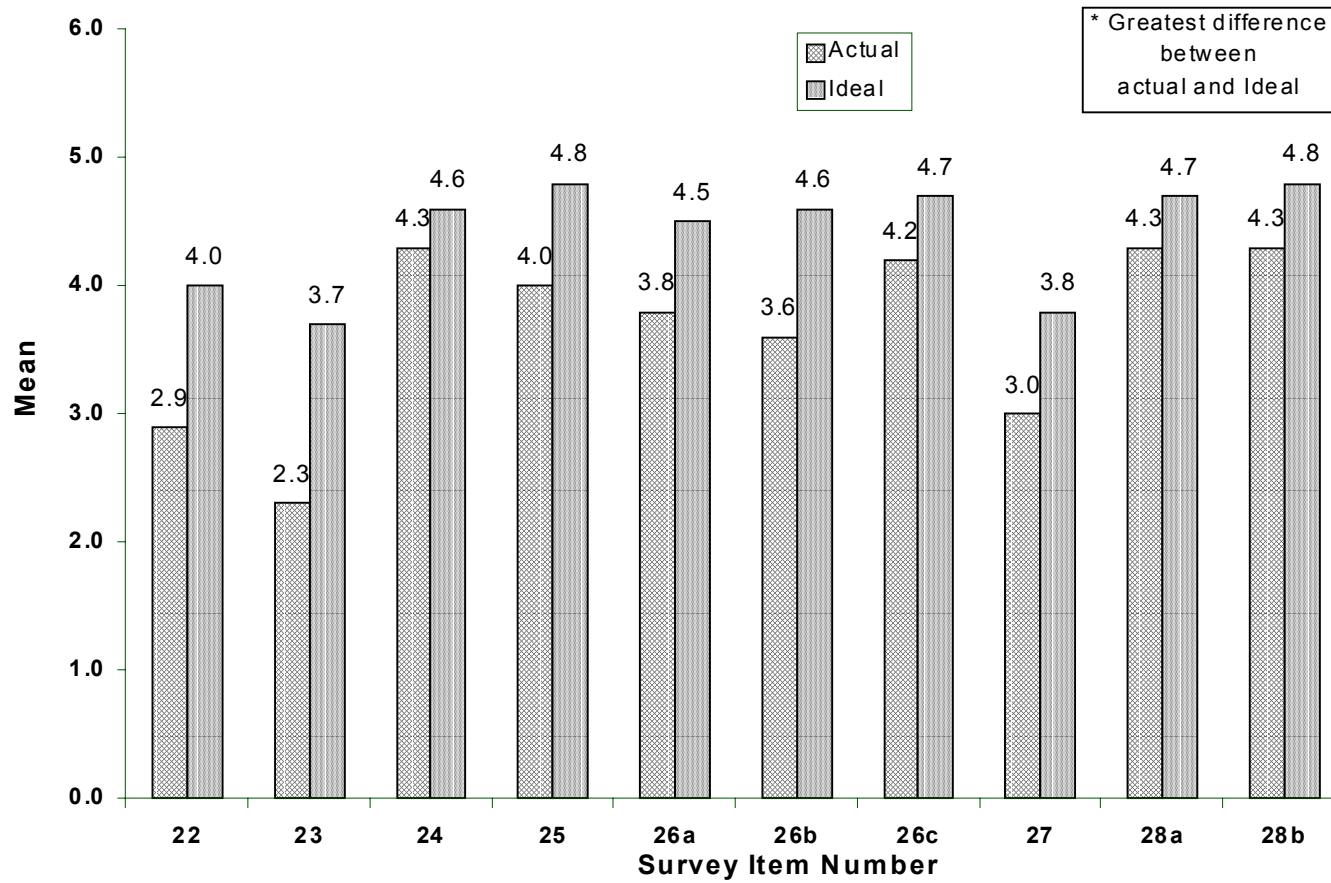
Direct Service
Actual Functioning/Ideal Functioning



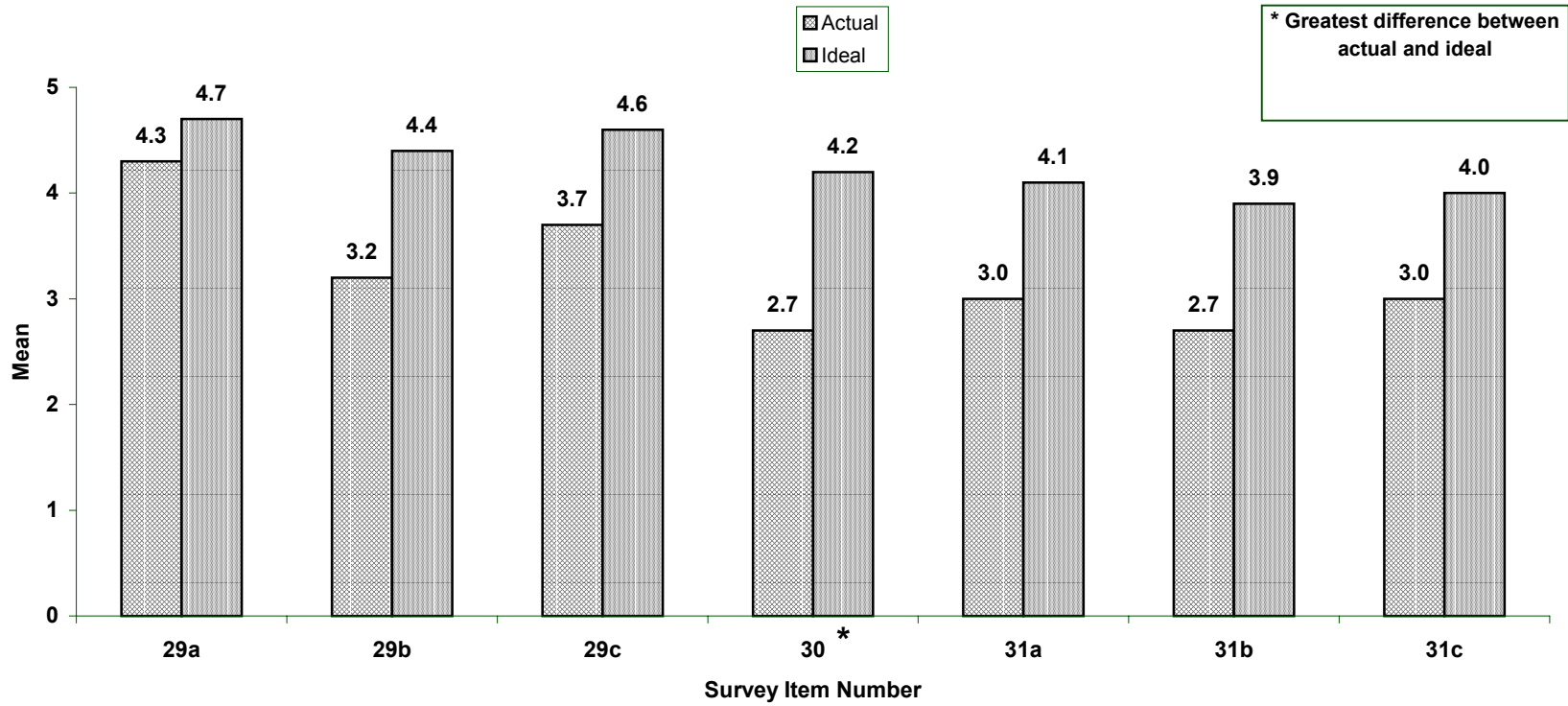
Research
Actual Functiong/Ideal Functioning



Program Planning and Evaluation Actual Functioning/Ideal Functioning



Accountability Actual Functioning/Ideal Functioning



Appendix F – Selected Responses to Open Ended Questions

1. Reducing the testing load:

“Growing number of re-evaluations restrict the ability to expand the role of the school psychologist from testing to intervention.”

“Too much testing. Not enough opportunity to expand other roles (consultation, groups, etc.)”

“Many school systems see school psychologists as ‘testers’ and therefore the job description is very narrow and the burn out rate high.”

“There is often not enough time to do all that we ‘should’ do because of heavy testing loads.”

“Use the reduce testing requirements under IDEA 1997 to expand services.”

2. Increasing the number of school psychologists

“More school psychologists are needed if services are to be expanded.”

“Find a way to provide funding for additional positions.”

“Mandated lower ratio of students to psychologist to enable us to provide more of the services, outside of assessment, that are needed.”

“There is a shortage of school psychologists. Increase the number.”

3. Expanding involvement with the intervention/pre-referral process

“The more involved we can become in early intervention/prevention, the more likely it is that many kids will never need to be referred for special education/juvenile services.”

“Provide more assistance with developing interventions, collaborating with parents and agencies, and following up of strategies.”

“Preventive services and interventions (academic and behavioral) can be provided by school psychologists.”

“School psychologists need to sit in pre-referral meetings, but where’s the time?”

4. Decreasing the variations of services between counties

“Even though we follow the same ethical guidelines and state procedures, each county is very different in how they practice, how they use evaluation results, and how we communicate with each other.”

5. Raising salary

“N.C. needs to offer better financial incentives (we should be on a higher pay scale than speech therapists).”

“Competitive salaries needed.”

6. Improving job satisfaction

“I feel the school psychologists are underutilized in terms of knowledge, unappreciated for their talents, and greatly overworked.”

“While we have always advocated for a broader role, I fear our county’s administration is now looking at us and wondering what we ‘do’ when we test <100 students a year!!”

“We are discouraged from asking questions or giving input by our Special Education administrators. They do not seem to want to address our program concerns and will not respond to our bringing up serious legal and ethical problems which result in substandard education for resource students.”

7. Providing additional in-service opportunities

“There needs to be regular regional meetings to discuss relevant issues. Training programs should sponsor these.”

“A regional meeting should be provided for the psychologists of N.C. at least every fall and spring to update current issues and provide in-service training.”

“Provide adequate training and continued professional development in all areas of expertise and those areas which we need to expand our services.”

“More in-service as to how we can supply educators with more practical interventions, suggestions as to learning styles/classroom interventions, curriculum based suggestions for students.”

Sara Catherine Metcalf

155 Longleaf Drive East ♦ Pinehurst, North Carolina 28374 ♦ (910) 255-0142

EDUCATION:

Ph.D., Education, 2001

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA

Concentration: *Curriculum & Instruction/Educational Psychology*

Certificate of Advanced Study Psychology, 1988

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

Master of Arts, 1988

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

Bachelor of Arts, 1986

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

Major: Psychology; Minor: Special Education

RESEARCH:

Community needs assessment for new Sandhills Community College North Moore Satellite campus

Needs assessment of North Carolina school psychological services

Evaluation of Roanoke City pre-schools as part of a Virginia State Department Grant

Studied effects of class size and mix in special education through extensive interviews and record reviews. Study was part of a Virginia State Department Grant

Case Studies on Behaviorally-Emotionally Disabled students in Montgomery County Schools, VA

PRESENTATIONS:

Metcalf, C. (1997). *Needs Assessment in North Carolina School Psychology: Moving Toward the Ideal*. Research data presented to a panel of school psychology experts with the goal to make an action plan for improving psychological services.

Metcalf, C., Bickley, P. (1993). *A Psycho-educational Intervention in an Inclusive First Grade: Teaching a Down Syndrome Child to Write*. Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Annual Conference, Washington, DC

Keith, T.Z., Keith, P., Metcalf, C., (1993). *Effects of Class Size and Mix in Special Education: Implications for School Psychologists*. Poster presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Annual Conference, Washington, DC

Metcalf, C., (1992). *Who Am I? What Am I Doing Here?: A qualitative developmental study of a college freshman*. Paper presented at the Eastern Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Sarasota, FL

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- North Carolina School Psychology Association Conference, (NCSPA) - annual
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) – 1993, 1995, 1996

Workshops Conducted:

- Administration and Scoring the Woodcock Johnson – III, 2001
- Building Effectiveness of Student Assistance Teams, 1999-2001
- Identification of Exceptional Children, 1995 – present, annual

Continuing Education Workshops and Conferences:

- Children at Risk: Working with Children with a Dual Diagnosis: DD/MI, 10/6/00
- Exceptional Education Procedures and Compliance, 5/1/00
- Intermediate MS Access, 2/29/00
- Beginning MS Access, 2/28/00
- Turning Students Oppositional Behavior Into Self Control, 2/23/00
- Presentation Software – MS PowerPoint, 2/11/00
- Internet, 2/4/00
- Spreadsheets – MS Excel, 1/21/00
- Coordinated School Health Program, 1/20/00
- Word Processing – MS Word 1/4/00
- Legal Issues in Special Education, 10/4/99
- Computer Skills Development Program, 3/19/00, 3/1/99, 2/12/99, 1/29/99
- Understanding Grief: Helping yourself & others heal, 2/4/99
- Leiter-R Training Seminar, 11/13/98
- Seminar on Special Education Law, 10/21/98
- Reading Inservice, 8/5/98
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy, 4/1/98
- North Carolina Augmentative Communication Association Conference, 3/6-7/97
- Interventions for Difficult Behaviors, 8/6/96
- Traumatic Incident Debriefing, 4/19/96
- Interpretation of the WISC-III and Advanced Workshop on Interpretation of the WISC-III, NASP, 3/15/96
- Developing Responsible Behavior in School, 1/22/96
- Behavioral Problems of Pre-School Children, New Direction in Conceptualization, Assessment and Intervention, NASP, 3/25/95

SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Conversational Spanish Class – Moore County, NC - 2000

- Initiated and organized a Conversational Spanish class for teachers, nurses, and community personnel working with Hispanic populations

NCSPA Conference Planning Committee – 1996

- Organized and conducted silent auction for the annual fall conference

Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title VI, Federal Grant

- Analyzed 1995 Moore County School System budget
- Established 1996 projected budget of \$70,000 in regard to staff development and educational materials inclusive of 20 schools incorporating elementary through high school and 3 parochial schools for county
- Grant approved including health care insurance, a half position Social Worker and entire operating budget

Rowan County Schools, Salisbury, NC – 1990

- Started local chapter of Children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ChADD)
- President of ChADD

Henderson County Schools, Hendersonville, NC – 1988

- Developed crisis intervention plan for the Henderson County Schools

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

6/95 – Present Moore County Schools, Carthage, NC

School Psychologist, 6/97 – present

- Consultation and intervention with classroom teachers, special teachers, principals and parents
- Liaison with local and state agencies to coordinate services for children
 - Individual counseling of students
- Completion of comprehensive psychological evaluations
- Participation in administrative placement committees
- Field supervisor for UNC school psychology externs
- Coordinator of Psychological Services, 3/96 – 6/97***
 - Provided supervision to and allocated services of school psychologists
 - Primary supervisor of school psychologist interns
 - Assisted in support and supervision of ICP psychologists
 - Arranged contract psychological services; coordinated evaluation efforts/needs
 - Assisted in the filling of school psychology vacancies
 - Fulfilled School Psychologist duties in addition to Coordinator requirements
 - Implemented monthly meetings to address current concerns and issues in question with Guidance Counselors

School Psychologist, 6/95 – present

- Duties included required guidelines as stated above

8/91 – 6/95

Special Office Assistant/Graduate Assistant

Dean's Office, College of Education – Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

Excellence in Education Awards Conference Coordinator

- Handled all correspondence with nominees and award winners
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- Conducted review process for nominations, book conference facilities
 - Scheduled presentations, booked keynote speaker, and coordinated publicity
 - Wrote conference registration and program
 - Arranged reception and awards banquet
- Co-Editor, Virginia Tech College of Education Alumni Newsletter***
Editor, Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Newsletter
Assistant to the Dean during college restructuring
- Served on Steering Committee; logged and distributed committee's minutes
 - Devised filing system to archive restructuring data; participated in restructuring video
 - Planned and helped in implementation of college picnics, faculty receptions and Oktoberfest

8/93 – 12/93

Instructor, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
College Success Strategies

- Course for at-risk college freshmen about success, personal development and quest for excellence.
- Focused on specific attitudes, skills and strategies for pursuing academic success

Summer 1992

Instructor, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
Appraisal in Counseling

- Course assisted teachers and counselors in developing an understanding of and familiarity with various types of appraisal techniques.
- Focused on psychometric fundamentals mental ability and aptitude measures, achievement tests, and interest surveys

8/88 – 5/91

School Psychologist, Level II, Rowan County and Rowan-Salisbury Schools, Salisbury, NC

- Contact coordinator with local and state agencies in regard to services for children and families
- Consultant and liaison to initiate intervention with principals, special teachers and classroom teachers and parents
- Individual counseling of students
- Completion of comprehensive psychological evaluations
- Administrative placement committee participant
- Intensive evaluations for Cerebral Palsy children in preparation for setting up a classroom for orthopaedically impaired
- Instigated local chapter of national organization of Children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ChADD)

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

- 3/00 - 7/00 Sandhills Community College, Pinehurst, NC**
Instructor College for Kids, 6/00 -7/00
- “Book Mania,” book club for kids
 - “You Gotta Have Friends,” social skills class
- Coordinator North Moore Satellite Campus, 3/00 - 4/00***
- Conducted surveys and focus groups to investigate community needs
 - Coordinated classes according to needs
 - Scheduled classes including enlisting instructors

CERTIFICATIONS:

North Carolina School Psychologist, Level II, 1988 – present
Nationally Certified School Psychology, 1988 – present
Virginia School Psychologist, Level II, 1991-1994

MEMBERSHIP:

Teacher Assistance Committee, Moore County Schools, 1995 – 1996

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

National Association of School Psychologists
North Carolina School Psychology Association

CHAIRS:

8/94 – 6/95 Chair of Student Committee on Restructuring (Virginia Tech College of Present Education)

4/92 Session Chair – Commonwealth Outstanding Dissertation and Faculty Research Conference, Virginia Tech

2/92 Session Chair – Eastern Educational Research Association, Sarasota, FL

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- First Baptist Church Southern Pines Sanctuary choir
- First Baptist Church Southern Pines 1st grade choir director
- Jubilate Bells handbell choir
- President of Christian Singles Network
- Volunteer for Special Olympics
- Moore Buddies United Way program for at-risk students