

Fall 2017

# Psych Perspectives



*A publication of the West Virginia School Psychologists Association*

## Jet-Setting to Teamwork



### *An Interview with Katie Hamm*

Katie Hamm is a relatively new addition to West Virginia's school psychology community. She joined Calhoun County Schools in August 2016 and already has made significant professional contributions to her new professional home. Her dedication and impressive professional background make her an asset to any district. Hamm graduated with her Bachelors of Arts in Psychology at Salve Regina University, located in Rhode Island. There, she developed strong interests in the areas of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). She played an essential role in creating an ABA program at Salve Regina, while also dedicating her time as a teacher at the May Center in Brockton, Massachusetts. At the May Center, she focused her work on TBI and was introduced to the multidisciplinary teams involved in the intervention process and growth of their clients.

Among all the May Center professionals, Hamm interacted most with the school psychologist. During the interview, she elaborated on the fundamental job responsibilities of the school psychologist and explained how the school psychology practitioner is vital in facilitating positive academic and social-emotional outcomes for students. They ask the questions "how?" and "why?" and then analyze the information to develop a plan for each client. This interaction and observation is what inspired Hamm to enter the profession of school psychology. She then attended Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, where she obtained her Ed.S. During that time, she also served as a private therapist for students with ASD. From there, she travelled to New York to complete her culminating internship to become a certified school psychologist.

After receiving her school psychology certification, Katie Hamm attended an international teaching fair in hopes of expanding her interests and practice on a global scale. She accepted a position at the American School of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, ranked as a Top 10 International School, where she remained for four years. The school's well-established team of special educators and counselors was one important reason why she selected this job opportunity. As a new addition to the American School of Dubai's special education team, she had the opportunity to create her own role based upon her vision of comprehensive school psychological services. Although this opportunity had numerous advantages, there were some inevitable challenges. She faced hurdles related to lack of educational mandates, as well as limited resources and services provided for students and families. However, she devoted her time to implementing consistent education plans for students in need. She focused on establishing reliable documents that would follow the child throughout his or her educational career and creating support systems for students and their families. She emphasized the importance of the faculty's communication and working as a team to develop an appropriate plan for a child in need and has carried this outlook with her throughout her career.

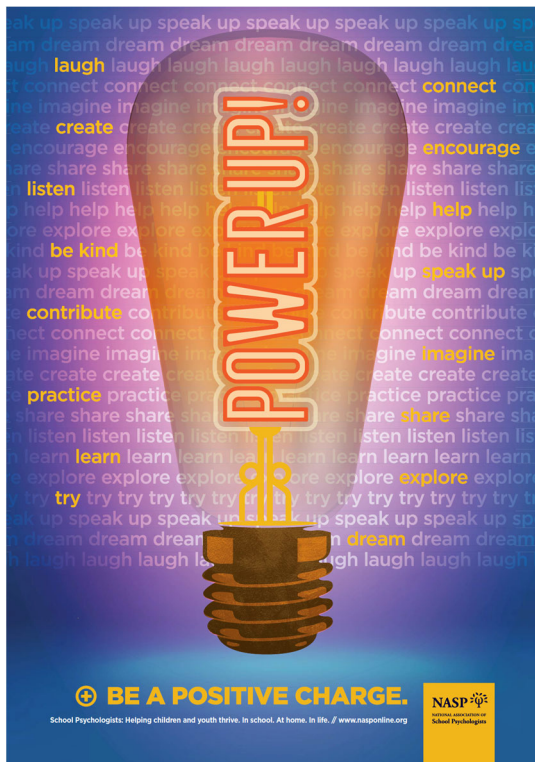
In addition to discussing her career path, Hamm provided excellent advice for future school psychologists who encounter teachers who are not receptive to recommendations. Hamm suggested approaching the situation with patience and trust building. In difficult situations, no one wants to be wrong and work with someone who says, "I told you so," or "Just listen to me." She recommended spending time observing in the classroom and then modeling with routine follow-up. She also emphasized effective communication, focusing on teachers' personal strengths, and creating a connection to help the teacher adhere to the student's IEP.

In terms of her favorite assessment batteries for referral, the WISC-V and the Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement are her "go-to" assessments. She expressed that the WISC-V is a great tool to observe a student's thought process and hands-on thinking, but the WJ-IV aligns with what the students are asked to do every day. These tests provide very different results to provide an overall picture about a child's learning capabilities. Lastly, Hamm stressed the importance of storytelling when writing a report about a child. She admitted that numbers are important, but the child's confidence and drive is essential. Her rule of thumb is to ask herself "If I had to read the report aloud to the child, would I be proud to have the child listening?" She believes in creating reports that are easy to follow for teachers and parents and to have her words be used to establish confidence and motivation in the student.

During Katie Hamm's career as a school psychologist, she has seen a major shift in pre-referral intervention services, allowing for more effective team collaboration. She described the importance of not jumping into testing students right away, but instead first discussing the challenges that a student faces with their support team. Hamm explained how understanding what is occurring in all areas of a student's life leads to a successful team approach when addressing the needs of the student. This understanding creates a necessary relationship between the student, the teachers, the school psychologist, the family members, and the community members. The approach demands teamwork and partnership, which Hamm has always been an advocate for, and because of this interaction, she predicted our field will be utilized more for the expertise that we have. With this approach, she sees the field of school psychology being involved with things such as a student's curriculum, classroom design, and PBIS programs to truly establish a

preventative” approach. Hamm has focused on the multidisciplinary approach throughout her career and sees continual progress in this area each year. In the future, Hamm will remain dedicated to utilizing a preventive approach to problem-solving to maximize students’ academic, socioemotional and behavioral outcomes. Her ultimate goal as a school psychologist is to help provide the best possible learning environment to improve students’ overall wellbeing through a team work approach. (Katie Hamm, personal communication, September 11, 2017)

*This article was prepared for the West Virginia School Psychology Association Newsletter by Nicole Alessio, Tiffany Smith, and Jeanette Mangus as a course requirement for SPSY 601 in Marshall University’s School Psychology program.*



### School Psychology Awareness Week: Power Up! Be a Positive Charge

November 13-17, 2017

"This year's theme is "Power Up! Be a Positive Charge." Our goal is to highlight how taking a small positive action can create momentum for positive change. The idea is that a small spark—a new skill, a piece of knowledge, an extra effort, a kind gesture—can create the connections necessary for students to develop critical academic and social–emotional skills. Sparks can include action words such as dream, laugh, connect, imagine, create,

## Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities



NASP 2018 Annual Convention in Chicago, February 13–16, 2018. Registration opens on October 2, 2017, Registration and hotel information can be found online at [www.nasponline.org/NASP2018](http://www.nasponline.org/NASP2018)

NASP also offers [online webinars](#) and an [Online Learning Center](#) where members can access NASP and APA approved CPD.

encourage, share, listen, help, explore, try, and speak up. Students can be both the recipients and conduits of a positive charge that generates personal achievement, growth and resilience, and sense of belonging and community. "

NASP resources for SPAW can be found [here](#).

Pearson offers frequent free webinars.

To see a list of upcoming training opportunities through Pearson [click here](#)

## Marshall University School Psychology News

By Lanai Jennings and Jori Williams

**Field Supervisors Assist in NASP Accreditation Process:** In August 2017, field supervisors from several counties including Clay, Jackson, Kanawha, Harrison, and Lewis participated in two stakeholder workdays. They worked with the Marshall University School Psychology faculty to improve the assessment process for candidates. Field supervisors provided input on the content of both the practicum and internship assessments to ensure sufficient depth and breadth in the key competency areas. Several discrete assessment items were added to better gauge candidate performance in counseling, crisis intervention, data-based decision making, and consultation. The stakeholders additionally assessed the degree to which the items represented the appropriate developmental sequence from beginning practicum student to first year beginning school psychologist, as well as alignment between the two assessments.



Field supervisors similarly examined the candidate dispositions. Dispositions are the key personal and behavioral characteristics of candidates, such as punctuality, adaptability, and initiative, which play an important role in candidate success in addition to their knowledge base and skill level. Finally, the field supervisors recommended expected performance criteria for each assessment and piloted the new assessment items, along with other peers across the state. NASP feedback on the new instruments and the overall accreditation review is anticipated in February 2018 and the final CAEP accreditation visit will be held in the Fall of 2018.

In her new role as field coordinator, Dr. Lucas is working to arrange a virtual field supervisor meeting for Thursday, November 9, 2017 for mentors and field supervisors of practicum candidates to discuss implementation of these changes among other agenda items. Please mark your calendars and know that we deeply value your continued input and support as field supervisors!!!

**Graduate Candidate News:** All 11 graduates from May/August 2017 have secured positions as school psychologists. Megan Edwards, Ashley Matheney, Ashleigh Dotson, and Meghan Guz secured jobs in Ohio. Kaitlin Frymier (Gilmer), Ashley Atkinson (Kanawha), Charles Cooper (Jefferson), Nicole Stinespring (Berkeley), and Jennifer Downward (Braxton) are working in West Virginia. Liz Robinson and Andrea Nunn accepted positions in Kentucky



and North Carolina, respectively. Kristin Trimboli has additionally obtained a school psychologist position in New Orleans and is working toward a December 2017 graduation. Please join us in congratulating our beginning school psychologists and welcoming them to the field!

The interns for the 2017-2018 academic year are off to a strong start! Seven are placed in Ohio, four in West Virginia, and four others accepted internships in North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky. Two in particular are obtaining invaluable experiences in crisis intervention. Annette Proehl assisted her school and community in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in Florida, while Emaleigh Stevens has provided crisis support to teachers and children following a tragedy impacting her school near Ironton, Ohio.

The majority of the advancing second year candidates were trained in the NASP PREPaRE Workshop 2 during their summer Prevention and Crisis Intervention course. PREPaRE Workshop 2 is an evidenced-based training, which is focused on mental health crisis intervention and recovery (<https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum/about-prepare>). All second year candidates additionally participated in a substance abuse training as part of Practicum I. The training, entitled Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) was coordinated by Aliyah Mickey (SBIRT GA and Second Year Candidate) and Lyn O'Connell (Marshall University SBIRT Trainer). The training was well received by all and, subsequently, Beth Lovell (also a second year candidate) helped plan and coordinate a more condensed version of the training for the West Virginia Legislators on October 17, 2017. The presentation, "Understanding the Opioid Epidemic," was delivered at the Capital Complex and is available to all at the following link: <http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00289/Harmony/en/View/RecentEnded/20171021/-1>.

In Practicum I, the second year students are also deepening their understanding of achievement and cognitive assessments and are regularly putting their skills into practice in their respective adoptive schools. The first year graduate students are learning about the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists. As part of their coursework, they have interviewed Beverly Winter, Stephanie Oberly, Katie Hamm, and Catherine Bailey and developed articles highlighting their careers and advice for future school psychologists. These articles will be published in *Psych Perspectives* throughout the 2017-2018 school year. First year students are additionally learning about rating scales, functional behavioral assessments, and curriculum based measurements. As faculty, we look forward to working with them over the next three years!

**Recruitment:** As a training program, we are still unable to meet demand and fill a number of open school psychology positions in the tri state area. We are working hard to increase recruitment efforts and to include more online participation methods for our prospective candidates. If you would like to present to an undergraduate training program or a high school in your district, we have a PowerPoint and brochures for dissemination. This would be an excellent School Psychology Awareness Week activity and a way to "grow" more interest for the discipline in your area.

**Faculty News:** Dr. Catherine Bailey, NCSP, joined the School Psychology Program as an adjunct faculty member in August 2017. She is currently a Family-Focused Positive Behavior Support Trainer with the West Virginia Autism Training Center but will also teach our Introduction to Schools (SPSY 601) and Consultation (SPSY 617) courses. We are thrilled to have a professional with her expertise join our faculty.

Dr. Lucas participated in a grant writing collaborative along with the Marshall University Psychology and Counseling Program, Medical School, and Student Health Services. The

collaborative was awarded funding to support candidates who provide mental health supports in underserved areas. Up to four school psychology practicum students or interns who work in school-based primary care clinics will receive monetary stipends in coming years. Dr. Lucas hopes these funds may assist districts with limited funds to attract interns.

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