

**\*\*\*NOTE: There was an error in the Save the Date information in the original newsletter. The corrected newsletter is below. The dates for Fall Conference are October 17-18, 2019. We apologize for any inconvenience!**



## WVSPA Member Spotlight: Levi Naylor



**Employment Location:** Levi Naylor is a school psychologist who works in the northern panhandle in Hancock County. Hancock County is the most northern county in West Virginia and is also the smallest in the state.

**Interests and Hobbies:** Outside of the school environment, Naylor loves spending time with his wife, two daughters, and their Bernese mountain dog, Bucky. Naylor also loves spending his time working on and restoring old Dodge trucks. He humbles himself on keeping his vehicles running as long as possible and still drives his 1999 Chevy Cavalier daily, which currently has 322,000 miles on it and is his first car that he purchased in high school for \$1500.

**Job Highlights and Obstacles:** Naylor considers his favorite aspect of his job to be testing and interacting with children. However, he pointed out that the sheer number of students who need assistance can be trying given the lack of school psychologists in his district. The recommended student to school psychologist ratio is 500-700:1 based on the NASP Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services, yet Naylor is one of two school psychologists working with about 4,100 children total.

Special Expertise: Naylor has much expertise in the area of digital assessment. He was a panel discussant for the Q Interactive WISC-V practitioner conversation session at the WVSPA spring conference (2016), which focused on the benefits and challenges of transitioning to digital assessment. Naylor explained that assessment batteries, in general, have become more comprehensive, thereby allowing the school psychologists to identify disabilities more accurately.

Advice to Preservice Candidates: Naylor provided a plethora of advice for aspiring school psychologists. His most prominent advice was for students to ask practicing school psychologists as many questions as possible. If they have any free time, they should try to shadow across as many different school settings as possible. He also said that experiences go a long way and allow a future school psychologist to consider what their professional role may be. Since this is a field that emphasizes lifelong learning and evidence-based practices, Naylor also mentioned that staying abreast on all aspects of school psychology is important. According to Naylor, maintaining organization and learning time-saving computer skills are also important in this field.

Unforeseen Duties: Naylor believes that the most unexpected duty of a school psychologist consists of unforeseen administrative duties. Included in these duties are things like teaching new principals and administrative staff the “ins and outs” of special education, and serving as the mediator in meetings when working with parents and the employees of the district.

Commitment to the Profession: Naylor is clearly passionate about being a school psychologist. When asked where he saw himself in 10 years, he “imagines that he will still be a school psychologist, because he loves what he does.” He said that when he began, he replaced Mr. Bob Burns, a 78-year-old school psychologist who started special education in their county in 1974 and worked in Hancock County schools for nearly 50 years. When he is able to retire, he plans on doing the same as Burns- stepping back to let the next generation step in.

*This article was written by Ashley Coffey, Alysha Humbles, Elizabeth Sutfin, & Jackie Stevens as a course requirement for SPSY 601.*

## SAVE THE DATE

### [NASP 2019 Summer Conferences](#)

July 8-10, 2019, Phoenix, AZ

July 22-24, 2019, Hartford, CT

### **WVSPA Fall 2019 Conference**

The Resort at Glade Springs, Daniels, WV

October 17-18, 2019

### **WVSPA Spring 2020 Conference**

Four Points by Sheraton, Charleston, WV

April 2-3, 2020

## **A Magnificent Teacher Turned School Psychologist: An Interview with Britainey Cooper**

In the field of school psychology, experienced teachers are always a welcome addition. Teachers' experiences across general and special education settings provide their colleagues with new perspectives in terms of reality in today's classrooms. Ms. Britainey A. Cooper of Lewis County Schools is no exception. Cooper started her career as a general and special education teacher. Her educational background includes Secondary English Education, K-12 Special Education, and Elementary Education. Cooper first became interested in the field of school psychology after attending eligibility meetings and IEP meetings for her students. After some additional encouragement from a friend, she embarked upon her school psychology education at Marshall University. For the final three years of her five-and-a-half yearlong teaching career, she worked on her M.A. and Ed.S. degrees.

Cooper's role in Lewis County Schools is unique. Lewis County has both a school psychologist and mental health specialist, and recently the two positions began to blend. This has enabled Cooper with additional opportunities to provide services other than psychoeducational evaluations. For example, she presently provides a variety of group and individual therapy services, facilitates monthly school counselor collaborative meetings, and networks with regional agencies to bring resources to schools. As one can imagine, serving seven schools (including a religious private school and Alternative Learning Center) keeps Cooper quite busy! When asked about a typical day for her, she says that there is no "typical" day for a school psychologist. Throughout her day, she prioritizes timelines and scheduled meetings, and then manages to fit everything else in as needed. Outside of the school environment, Cooper is engaged within the Lewis County community as a part of her job. She oversees the implementation of a mentorship program, sits on the Parents as Teachers Executive Board and the Lewis County Board of Health, and attends Family Resource Network Community Collaborative meetings. In her free time, Cooper also enjoys kayaking, hiking, camping, snowboarding, making craft beer, learning to knit and is even dabbling in mountain biking. There is hardly a moment where Cooper is not doing something!

On top of an already busy schedule, Cooper is currently engaged in the Diversity and Social Justice Activities with the West Virginia School Psychologists' Association. These types of

activities focus on ensuring that the educational needs and rights of marginalized groups are protected. School psychologists, including those in the WVSPA can promote social justice through culturally responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities and systems that ensure equality for all children and youth in West Virginia. Cooper's list of goals for these activities range from monthly meetings, to yearly events, to one-time projects. Her "ideas focus on networking and strengthening lines of communication between school psychologists and encouraging those difficult conversations." Some specific projects she has in mind include book studies, conference movie nights, a statewide database of resources that can be used by everyone, and topic ideas for graduate student theses and program evaluations. The motivation behind this project is looking at personal issues through an "objective and unbiased lens."

Despite her feelings of still being new to the field of school psychology, one change that she has noticed in the field is "despite an ever-growing need, [the] numbers [of school psychologists] are not increasing as much as one would hope." She hopes that "as demand increases, more are drawn to this field so that [they] can provide much needed support to [their] students." She also faces many challenges in her day to day work. Being in a rural district, she faces obstacles with limited funding and a minimal tax base. To overcome this challenge, networking has been a crucial part of her career, especially the support her district receives from the Family Resource Network

As a school psychologist, Cooper emphasized that we are faced with difficult decisions every day. She reminded future school psychologists that it is okay not to have all of the answers. According to Cooper, one should not be afraid to say, "Let me do some research," but also recognize that some decisions need to be made immediately. In terms of communication, another obstacle she has faced is learning how to communicate outside of an analytical perspective. When asked about this, she stated "you can be the most brilliant school psychologist and solve the toughest problems, but you have to foster strong relationships for people to want to try your suggestions."

Cooper has had many memorable experiences while working as a school psychologist. However, her most profound memories are not linked to one specific experience. Some positive experiences in her career have included when a student who struggled with self-control waves her down to brag about how well their year is going, when a parent cries because they are grateful to have answers, and when a teacher thanks her for listening to their frustration. Even something as simple as crossing something off her to do list is something that Cooper considers memorable. She is most proud of the trusting relationships she has built with students, teachers, staff and parents.

When asked about advice for up and coming school psychologist, Cooper suggested that prospective school psychologists should stay informed and interested, go to trainings, and try new roles. She recommended making every day unique, developing a love of problem-solving, and being personable. Also, future school psychologists should take nothing personally and genuinely care about every parent, child, teacher, and staff member they encounter. Her final recommendations include saying "thank you" a lot and getting used to saying "please put that in an email. After all, according to Cooper, "the fewer tasks you can keep from fogging up your working memory, the better!"

*The article was written by Savana Earnest, Savannah Nelson, and Autumn Wells as a course requirement for SPSY 601.*