1 Broadening the Focus of School Psychology Practice

Frank C. Worrell, Tammy L. Hughes, and Dante D. Dixson

Broadening the Focus of School Psychology Practice

> Whatever worthwhile is happening in psychology – whatever are the new theories and research findings and popular ideas – will find their way into the schools, with school psychology serving as one of the major means by which these ideas and approaches can enter into the conduct of public education.   (Bardon, 1990, p. x)

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (n.d.), the role of the school psychologist is to "support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach" by "applying expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally." Thus, the school psychology specialty draws from the scientific knowledge base in both psychology and education, with the twin goals of (a) alleviating "cognitive, behavioral, social and emotional problems encountered in schooling" (American Psychological Association, n. d.) and (b) promoting optimal development and well-being. Not surprisingly, then, school psychology is important across the lifespan, although much of school psychology practice focuses on the preschool years through the end of compulsory schooling at the high school level.

Given the goals for school psychology put forward by the major associations serving our specialization, how has school psychology been doing? In 2011, Kehle and Bray provided one answer to this question: "An obvious, but rarely publicly discussed, observation is that children are not appreciably better educated nor better behaved than they were 50 years ago" (p. 3). This assessment may seem harsh, but it accords with data showing the lack of any appreciable increase in reading, mathematics, and science scores in the last decade (McFarland, Hussar et al., 2018). Moreover, we would argue that our schools are still not serving *all* children well. At the same time, there is a projected shortage of school psychologists (Castillo, Curtis, & Tan, 2014), a trend in keeping with the need for more psychologists and other behavioral health professionals in society (Health Resources and Services Administration National Center for Health Workforce Analysis [HRSA], 2015). And although this increase in the need for psychological services in schools provides welcome assurance of the growing recognition of the importance of school psychology as well as jobs for school psychologists in the future, it also suggests that the

practice of school psychology is not keeping pace with the growing numbers of issues that need to be addressed.

What Is the Purpose of Education?

There is a simple answer to the question "What is the purpose of education?": to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. A more complicated answer involves preparing children and youth to be competent adults and productive citizens. One high school student from an underrepresented group argued that the purpose of education is to ensure that individuals "are equipped with the skills that they need to be critical of society" (Worrell, 2016, p. 341). However, achieving these aims is far from simple. For education to live up to these goals, we need committed teachers, effective teaching strategies, motivated learners, supportive families, and well-resourced schools, and all of these factors are affected by the behavioral, social, and emotional well-being of students, teachers, and families, and the values and operationalized commitments of school districts, communities, and state and federal policy makers. We begin with a brief review of statistics on educational disparities and then turn to an overview of the organization of the book and the topics covered in the chapters.

Who Is Not Benefiting from Education?

> We face a complex set of achievement gaps – implicating both K–12 and higher education. These gaps are nested in unequal schools, in a country with shifting demographics (more ethnic minorities, greater income inequality, an aging population) but fewer supports (a shrinking safety net), and in a global world of ever-rising academic expectations.   (Weinstein & Worrell, 2016, p. 10)

Disparities in education are closely related to disparities in income and education levels and affect children from the very beginning of schooling. For example, 54% of children whose parents have a graduate or professional degree are enrolled in kindergarten – not a high percentage – and these percentages decrease for those with bachelor's degrees (41%), associate degrees (35%), some college (37%), a high school diploma (33%), and less than a high school diploma (30%; McFarland, Hussar, et al., 2018). There are also disparities in preschool attendance by ethnic/racial subgroup, although the differences are not as stark, ranging from 45% for Asian Americans to 34% for Hispanic Americans. Four-year-olds in African American, Hispanic, and Native American households are more likely to live in single-parent households and households with incomes below the poverty threshold.

Four-year-olds in African American, Hispanic, and Native American households as well as those from the bottom 20% of the income distribution obtain lower scores than the national average on reading, vocabulary, mathematics, color knowledge, and fine motor skills (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018), and these gaps persist as students move through the school system (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; de

Brey et al., 2019). Although the adjusted cohort high school graduation rate – that is, the number of students who graduate from high school within four years of starting 9th grade – is at its highest, there are still substantial ethnic/racial (Asian/Pacific Islander students [91%], Native American/Alaska Native students [72%]) and geographic disparities (Iowa [91%], District of Columbia [69%]; McFarland, Hussar, et al., 2018), and substantial disparities on the basis of socioeconomic status (McFarland, Cui, et al., 2018). And these high school graduation rates translate into meaningfully higher college enrollment rates for individuals from families with higher incomes and certain ethnic/groups and meaningfully lower rates for low-income students and many students of color.

Educational disparities result in income disparities in the adult population, with serious consequences for children and families. In 2017, although 39.7 million people (12.7%) lived in poverty in the United States (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018), 73.8 million (22.7%) qualified for Medicaid (Statistica.com, n.d.), which is intended to serve low-income families. Income disparities are also clearly tied to race, with the poverty level being twice as high for African Americans (21.2%) and Hispanics (18.3%) than for Asian Americans (10%) and European Americans (10.7%). It is also important to recognize that these educational and income disparities have major health consequences for individuals and for society (Hahn & Truman, 2015; Zimmerman, Woolf, & Haley, 2015). School psychologists deal with both educational and mental health issues as part of their practice, but in supporting educational attainment they are also contributing to the general public health of society. Moreover, in this rapidly shrinking world, the benefits of school psychology practices are being used all over the globe, in part due to the work of the International School Psychology Association[1] and publications on school psychology practices in different countries (e.g., Hatzichristou & Rosenfield, 2017; Jimerson, Oakland, & Farrell, 2007; Thielking & Terjesen, 2017; Worrell 2014). The organization of the text considers the role school psychology plays in comprehensively addressing the needs of children for their educational success.

Organization of the Book

In addition to this introductory chapter, this book has eight sections as well as a concluding chapter. Part I, labeled Individual-Level Academic Interventions, has four chapters. Chapter 2 addresses the issue of reading motivation. In this chapter, Zibulsky and Schwartz argue that both reading motivation and reading skills are important contributors to students becoming engaged readers, and provide strategies for developing engaged readers and intervening when students are disengaged or struggling readers. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on mathematics. In Chapter 3, Skinner, Wright, and McCallum tackle the issue of motivation in mathematics and provide strategies related to response effort and reinforcer strength that can lead to students *choosing* to engage in mathematics activities. McKerracher addresses learning disabilities in mathematics in Chapter 4, and provides recommendations for interventions with students who are exhibiting deficits in number sense and

working memory. In Chapter 5, Riccio and Castro address deficits in executive function; these authors provide summaries of the major meta-analyses in the field and summarize the evidence related to interventions that lead to increases in executive function.

Part II, Teacher- and System-Level Interventions, focuses on strategies at the classroom, school, and district levels. In Chapter 6, Gelbar and Theodore review the move toward universal schooling and the legal mandates to serve students with special needs as an historical backdrop to discuss the increased emphasis on evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions in school contexts. Progress monitoring is the focus of Chapter 7. In this chapter, Burns, Aguilar, and Taylor review progress monitoring and discuss how it can be used preventatively and in the context of providing interventions. Reddy and Lekwa tackle the issue of working with teachers in Chapter 8; they provide an evidence-based coaching model that can be used with teachers working at Tier 1. The final chapter in Part II introduces the Academic Support Index, which was developed to allow schools and districts to identify students in need of support from the time they register in school. In this chapter, Stevens describes how the index can be used between and within schools to help understand student data and address opportunity and achievement gaps.

Part III, Interventions from Educational and Social/Personality Psychology, introduces areas not traditionally covered in conventional school psychology training programs. The first two chapters focus on interpersonal relations. In Chapter 10, Perez, Lee, and Mendoza-Denton examine the concept of belonging and describe three interventions that increase belonging in schools; in Chapter 11, Graham and Kogachi review school-based interventions shown to increase cross-race/ethnic friendships. The next three chapters address psychosocial constructs shown to be related to school achievement. Cleary, Callan, and Pawlo focus on self-regulated learning in Chapter 12, and Bembenutty discusses delay of gratification in Chapter 13, a specific instantiation of self-regulation. Dixson addresses the construct of hope in Chapter 14, which he describes as an overarching construct affecting motivation and adaptive functioning.

In Chapter 15, Rubie-Davies and Flint review the extant literature on teacher expectations and describe the practices that distinguish teachers with high expectations from those with low expectations; they then provide examples of interventions and practices that teachers need to engage in to create classrooms where there are high expectations for *all* students. In Chapter 16, Froiland pivots toward parents, describing parental autonomy support and ways to help parents provide autonomy-supportive parenting to adolescents. The final two chapters in this part focus on two well-known social-psychological phenomena. In Chapter 17, Crosby describes ways to prevent or minimize stereotype threat in K–12 settings, while in Chapter 18, Gonzalez, Oh, and Baron address implicit gender bias in the classroom and review interventions to increase young girls' engagement in mathematics classrooms.

The focus of Part IV is Behavioral and Social-Emotional Interventions. In Chapter 19 Kamphaus, Walden, and Carrizales-Englemann review the prevalence and profile of internalizing disorders and provide guidance for their treatment and prevention. Chapter 20 addresses suicidal behavior in schools, with Mazza and Miller providing

guidance on the appropriate responses to decrease the probability of suicide contagion, and in Chapter 21, Hughes, Tansy, and Pask contrast emotional disturbance and social maladjustment and highlight how the latter label can preclude students in need from accessing mental health services. In Chapter 22, Pask and Hughes discuss the need to train individuals involved in the justice system about autism spectrum disorders so that individuals with this disability are not misclassified as offenders. Swearer et al. review bullying prevention and intervention strategies aimed at bullying and other forms of school-based violence in Chapter 23. Gregory and Skiba examine the issue of school discipline in Chapter 24, and provide suggestions for eliminating race and gender disparities in disciplinary actions. In the last chapter in this part, DiPerna, Frey, and Hart review current assessment strategies for social-emotional learning and provide some guidance for intervention and future directions in this area.

Part V comprises four chapters related to Health and Pediatric Interventions. In Chapter 26, Wodrich reviews a model that is useful in dealing with chronic pediatric illnesses; Bray, Root, Howell, and Bilias-Lolis discuss asthma in Chapter 27; and in Chapter 28 Yu and Sussman review substance use. This part concludes, in Chapter 29, with advice from Golden and DuPaul on coordinating services with nonschool providers, an important concern when dealing with medical conditions, asthma, and substance use.

Part VI focuses on Family Connections and Life Transitions. This part begins with Minke and Woodford's discussion of parent–teacher relationships and the role that school psychologists can play in facilitating positive and productive connections between home and school (Chapter 30). Chapter 31 addresses the transition from high school to college. In this chapter, Kaufman and Øverup discuss the role of identity development in this transition, as well as the opportunities and challenges that this transition brings, and they highlight the importance of preparing students with disabilities and their parents for dealing effectively with the move to college. In the final chapter in this part (Chapter 32), Schmitt, Yarbrough, and Hennessey turn their attention to the transition from high school to the workforce for students with disabilities. They discuss the legally mandated role of the school to prepare a transition plan for students with disabilities and provide guidance on how the school should evaluate the effectiveness of the plan – a crucial step that is often not taken.

Part VII focuses on Special Populations. In Chapter 33, Alfonso, Ruby, Wissell, and Davari discuss the role of school psychologists in early childhood settings and how that role has evolved over time as society has come to recognize the crucial role of early learning experiences. Chapter 34 by Olszewski-Kubilius, Worrell, and Subotnik focuses on gifted and talented youth: they present a talent-development framework intended to broaden the range of students served in these programs. The next two chapters speak to the role of psychologists with groups of youth that are not typically included in the purview of school psychologists. In Chapter 35, Andretta reviews the history of the juvenile justice system and how it has paralleled and affected public schooling; he introduces a model to facilitate working with youth involved with juvenile justice and provides recommendations for school

psychologists working within this system. In Chapter 36, Teja and Worrell discuss the substantial increase in refugee youth around the world and the need for schools to be able to respond to the psychoeducational needs of this population. After providing a brief overview of the conditions associated with preflight, flight, and resettlement experiences, these authors summarize the evidence on school-based mental health interventions for this group and propose guidelines for effective school-based service delivery. Part VIII contains the final chapter in the book, and provides some recommendations for the field of school psychology.

Conclusion

Bardon (1990), in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, contended that what is happening in psychology affects what happens in schools. We would say that this perspective does not go far enough, and contend that what is happening in society affects what happens in schools. In this book, we tackle some of the topics commonly associated with the practice of school psychology (e.g., reading, mathematics, social and emotional development), but we also engage with topics that are not seen in the traditional school psychology literature (e.g., belonging, cross-ethnic friendships, implicit bias, refugees). It is our hope that the chapters in this volume will provide *useful* information to help school psychologists to meet the lofty goals of our specialty. Education is a public health issue (Agarwal, 2019) that affects everyone in society, and school psychologists can, do, and should play a critical role in helping everyone gain this public health benefit.

Notes

1. See www.ispaweb.org/

References

Agarwal, P. (2019, April 11). The relationship between education and health. *Intelligent Economist*. Retrieved from www.intelligenteconomist.com/education-and-health/

Aud, S., Fox, M., & KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups* (NCES 2010–015). US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

Bardon, J. I. (1990). Foreword. In T. B. Gutkins & C. R. Reynolds (Eds.), *The handbook of school psychology* (2nd ed., pp. ix–xii). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Castillo, J. M., Curtis, M. J., & Tan, S. Y. (2014). Personnel needs in school psychology: A 10-year follow-up study on predicted personnel shortages. *Psychology in the Schools*, *51*, 832–849. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21786

De Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J. et al. (2019). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups* 2018 (NCES 2019–038). US Department of Education.

Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf

Fontenot, K., Semega, J., & Kollar, M. (2018, September). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2018* (Current Population Reports, P60-263). Washington, DC: US Census, US Government Printing Office.

Hahn, R. A., & Truman, B. I. (2015). Education improves public health and promotes health equity. *International Journal of Health Services*, *45*, 657–678. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731415585986

Hatzichristou, C., & Rosenfield, S. (Eds.). (2017). *International handbook of consultation in educational settings*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Health Resources and Services Administration National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Office of Policy, Planning, and Innovation. (2015). *National projections of supply and demand for behavioral health practitioners: 2013–2025*. Rockville, MD. Retrieved from https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhw/health-workforce-analysis/research/projections/behavioral-health2013-2025.pdf

Jimerson, S. R., Oakland, T. D., & Farrell, P. T. (Eds.). (2007). *The handbook of international school psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kehle, T. J., & Bray, M. A. (2011). Introduction: On such a full sea and we continue to flounder. In M. A. Bray and T. J. Kehle (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of school psychology* (pp. 3–5). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McFarland, J., Cui, J., Rathbun, A., & Holmes, J. (2018). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 2018* (NCES 2019–117). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019117.pdf

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., Wang, X., et al. (2018). *The condition of education 2018* (NCES 2018–144). Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics.

National Association of School Psychologists. (n.d.). *Who are school psychologists?* Retrieved from www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-school-psychologists

Snyder, T. D., de Brey, C., & Dillow, S. A. (2018). *Digest of education statistics 2016* (NCES 2017–094). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education.

Statistica.com. (n.d.). *Total Medicaid enrollment from 1966 to 2018*. Retrieved from www.statista.com/statistics/245347/total-medicaid-enrollment-since–1966/

Thielking, M., & Terjesen, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Handbook of Australian school psychology: Integrating international research, practice, and policy*. Zug, Switzerland: Springer.

Weinstein, R. S., & Worrell, F. C. (Eds.). (2016). *Achieving college dreams: How a university-charter district partnership created an early college high school*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190260903.001.0001

Worrell, F. C. (Ed.). (2014). Developing international partnerships: American school psychologists consulting in other countries. [Special issue]. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *24*(4).

Worrell, F. C. (2016). Talent development – The forging of an academic identity. In R. S. Weinstein & F. C. Worrell (Eds.), *Achieving college dreams: How*

a university-charter district partnership created an early college high school (pp. 317–344). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Zimmerman, E. B., Woolf, S. H., & Haley, A. (2015). Understanding the relationship between education and health. *Population Health: Behavioral and Social Science Insights*. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (pp. 347–384). Retrieved from www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/publications/files/population-health.pdf