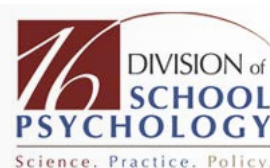


# School Psychology: From Science to Practice to Policy



## In this Issue of *FSPP*

Greetings SASP members from the entire SASP Executive Board! This issue of *FSPP* begins with a message from SASP President, David Cheng, in which he reflects on the continued growth and progress of SASP during 2014 and encourages those interested to apply for membership on the 2015 SASP Executive Board. Featured in this issue is outstanding graduate student research and writing examining teacher receptivity to the use of mindfulness practices in the classroom, as well as the critical intersection of public policy and education. World-renowned autism researcher, Dr. Lynn Koegel from the University of California at Santa Barbara, shares her thoughts and insights related to school psychology and autism. Also in this issue we are pleased to announce and congratulate the 2014 Diversity Mentorship Program scholarship winners. This issue's Spotlight shines on the exemplary SASP chapter at Kent State University.

## SASP Student Research Award

This year we will be awarding \$250 for the most outstanding student research manuscript accepted for publication in any 2014 issue of *FSPP*. The deadline to submit is December 19, 2014. The prize will be awarded subsequent to publication of the Winter 2014 issue. The winning manuscript will be selected based on the following criteria as determined by a panel of experts:

- Potential for increasing the well-being of children by advancing the field of school psychology
- Degree to which the research and/or findings add to extant evidence-based literature
- Practical applicability for school psychologists (i.e., potential for bringing science to practice to policy)
- Quality and fit of research design (i.e., statistical methodology, analysis, interpretation)
- Quality, clarity, and completeness of the manuscript (i.e., readability, grammar, punctuation, references, structure, adherence to *FSPP* guidelines)

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## Message From the Board

*David Cheng, President*

Greetings SASP Members!



As yet another academic semester has commenced for many, I cannot help but take this time to reflect upon the year of 2014. As graduate students, it is difficult not to use academic semesters as markers and milestones in our lives. Along those lines, I believe that each semester offers us an opportunity to reflect upon our progress thus far, as well as peek into our futures and dream of our professional lives and the impact we can and will make. I encourage you to review the semesters that you have completed, while also looking forward to those to come!

I cannot help but look back on what has been a very productive year for SASP. I have been fortunate to come into the Board during a period of great success and accomplishment. For that success, the board members of previous years deserve acknowledgement, as they worked to establish the strength and importance of SASP. The growth and development of our programming and scholarship is something that continues to impress the Division 16 Executive Committee. Initiatives across APA, such as cross-divisional programming, have been adopted by SASP and will continue to emphasize our leadership potential and academic achievement. This has allowed for our recognition and reputation to grow amongst many divisions of APA. In comparison to many other divisions, SASP is a large and well-organized student group with a highly structured Board that allows for each year to improve upon the last.

As we enter November, I am able to look at the current directions of SASP and predict that the organization will continue to grow and prosper. In keeping with the spirit of looking forward, I encourage all to submit applications for the 2015 SASP Executive Board. SASP will continue to grow, much in part because of the high quality of applicants that apply each year to join the Executive Board. Our Executive Board offers a wide range of positions that may fit your interests and allow you to grow as a leader, professional, and academic. For those interested, nominations will be accepted until November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and can be sent to Cait Hynes at [cahynes@fordham.edu](mailto:cahynes@fordham.edu). All are strongly encouraged to submit applications!

David Cheng  
2014 SASP President

The purpose of *School Psychology: From Science to Practice to Policy (FSPP)* is two fold and includes disseminating student scholarship pertaining to the study and practice of school psychology and circulating news relevant to the Student Affiliates of School Psychology (SASP). SASP is a student-led organization appended to Division 16: School Psychology, of the American Psychological Association (APA). *FSPP* is prepared by Editor, William Rime ([wrimed@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:wrimed@education.ucsb.edu)), and by Editor Elect, Ashley Mayworm, ([amayworm@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:amayworm@education.ucsb.edu)). The content and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect or infer the positions of SASP, Division 16 of APA, or of APA itself. For more information about SASP or *FSPP* please visit <http://www.apadivisions.org/division-16/students/index.aspx>.

## Luminaries in the Field

*Interview with Dr. Lynn Koegel –*

*Clinical Director, Koegel Autism Center, University of California at Santa Barbara*



Lynn Kern Koegel, Ph.D., is the Clinical Director of the Koegel Autism Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She has been active in the development of programs to improve communication in children with autism, including the

development of first words, development of grammatical structures, and pragmatics. Dr. Koegel is co-author and co-editor of major textbooks on autism and positive behavioral support and is co-author of the bestselling book *Overcoming Autism: Finding the Answers, Strategies, and Hope That Can Transform a Child's Life* (Penguin, 2004). In addition to her published books and articles in the area of communication and language development, she has developed and published procedures and field manuals in the area of self-management and functional analysis that are used in school districts throughout the United States and have been translated in most major languages used throughout the world. Dr. Lynn Koegel is actively involved in providing support and intervention services in school districts, both locally in California and throughout the United States. Dr. Koegel and her husband Robert were awarded the first annual recipient of the Sesame Street Children's Television Workshop Award for brightening the lives of children. She has also been featured in news reports on television stations throughout the United States and has appeared on episodes of

the internationally broadcast ABC television series *Supernanny*. Dr. Koegel can be contacted at: [lynnk@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:lynnk@education.ucsb.edu)

### **How did you become interested in autism research?**

I started doing autism research as an undergraduate student. Another undergraduate student and I were working with a child with autism and we used to take breaks and run around outside. We noticed that after the breaks the child was much more attentive and engaged. So, we designed a study to systematically look at behavior before and after jogging. We found that after jogging the children had lower levels of repetitive behavior and higher levels of on-task responding. After that I designed a few more studies on the same topic. We showed that the exercise had to be vigorous (playing ball didn't have much effect) and that the positive changes only lasted about 45 minutes to an hour. We also found that it was easy to incorporate the physical exercise into the school day. That was my start in research, and I've been doing it ever since. When I worked in the public schools we got a grant to implement self-management programs. After I had my own children (two wonderful daughters who are now adults) I decided to work at the University Autism Center with my husband where my hours could be a bit more flexible. At UCSB I've had a research appointment, so a good part of my day is focused on research. I love to write - I find it super relaxing, so that is helpful, too.

**What are your current and past research interests, and how have these changed over time?**

One thing that was really helpful has been watching the kids grow up. Being in the field for a long time gives you some advantages! At one point in time we decided to look at videotapes of preschoolers that were then adolescents or adults. We chose a group that had poor outcomes and a group that had really great outcomes. Since their treatment was similar, we were confused as to why their outcomes would be so different. We found that the kids that had the best outcomes were the ones that initiated social interactions so we started a line of research that systematically taught the children how to initiate. This made a huge difference. Also, we have focused a lot on motivation. When I first started working in the field in the late 70s there was a lot of punishment going on and the kids really wanted to escape the teaching situations, so it was a vicious circle. We did some research and found that if we used specific procedures to motivate the children they didn't engage in the escape-motivated behavior. Motivation was the first "pivotal" area we found (that had lots of positive effects on untreated areas) so we called our approach "Pivotal Response Treatment". This makes the treatment so much more fun for the kids (and the therapists, too) compared the old, boring, drill techniques. Now we've focused our research on finding more pivotal areas since we really want to speed up the habilitation process and help the kids catch up. Additionally, inclusion has really made a difference. When I started in the field, almost all children with autism were institutionalized and the remainder segregated in special education schools and classrooms. Now most live at home

and many are able to participate in regular education classes. When society changes like this everything changes - target goals, settings where we do our research, who we work with. Inclusion has been such a positive change for children with autism.

**What is one topic or change related to the field of school psychology, with regards to children with ASD, you would like to see more attention paid to?**

Teacher and aide training is a huge issue. Many students with ASD are not receiving optimal or even minimal support in schools, which results in detrimental outcomes. Aides, who often spend the whole day with a child with autism, report that they receive little to no specialized training. But, we're finding that just a little bit of training and some on site supervision can make a huge difference. This is especially important with social goals. Untrained staff can interfere with socialization while trained staff can prompt and teach socialization. Further, most typical kids are great helpers if they are taught to assist. Bullying and victimization is really high for students with ASD, but proper training of typical kids can make a huge difference. Education is super important. If typical kids are recruited to help and are taught to understand disabilities they can develop great empathy. We've seen so many typical children become really supportive and helpful once they understand that their classmate has a disability. In fact, we did an educational program at a high school recently for a student with ASD that was repeatedly bullied. One of the typical students approached us afterward and said he felt horrible because he thought some of the behaviors were annoying so he was

mean to the student with ASD. He confided that now that he understood the disability he would never be mean to him again, but would do everything he could to help. Again, education can make a big difference.

**What advice would you give to current school psychology graduate students?**

I'm so impressed by the competence and quality of current school psych students that there isn't much I can offer here, but maybe just to do what you love to do, be a team player, listen to everyone because you never know who will have important things to offer, and try not to let politics get in the way of doing the right thing.

**What texts or books would you assign, or recommend, every school psychology student read?**

Well, in the area of autism I'd have to say "Overcoming Autism" which I wrote with the mom of a child with autism. We tried to put both the parent and clinician perspective in there. Also, the PRT Pocket Guide that I wrote with my husband is a great book. I think the National Standards Report by the National Autism Center and the National Academy of Sciences Educating Children with Autism are also great resources. It's always helpful to keep up with the research, too. They say it takes 10-20 years from the time a discovery is made until it is used in everyday practice. That's way too long. Keeping up with the research through professional conferences, journals, and University websites can be really advantageous for the kids so that they get state-of-the-art interventions.

## 2014 SASP Diversity Program Scholarship Recipients

*Compiled by Samara Montilus, Diversity Affairs Chair*

### Diversity Program Scholarships

SASP and APA are aware of the financial pressures that graduate students experience and thus, through generous support from APA, Division 16, the Diversity Scholarship Program was created to provide monetary support to aid students from diverse cultural backgrounds entering the field.

The *Incoming Student Diversity Scholarship* consists of two annual awards of \$500 which are given to masters/specialists or doctoral students who will be entering their 1st or 2nd year of graduate training to help defer some of the costs acquired through graduate study. This year's winners are **Alondra Canizal Delabra** and **Lana Mahgoub**. Our sincerest congratulations to these two amazing individuals!

**Alondra** received her bachelor's from Northwestern University in Journalism and her



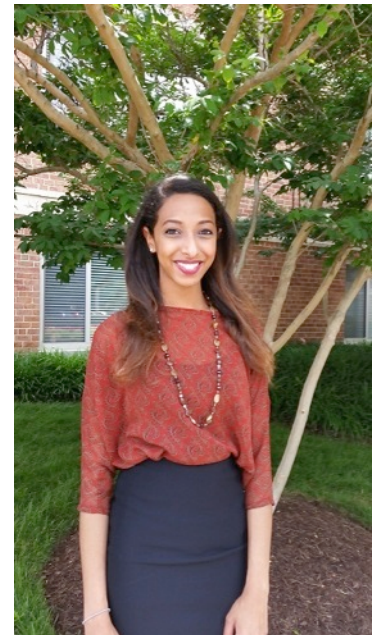
Master's in Prevention Science and Practice from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In the fall she will be entering her second year as a doctoral student at the University of Oregon. Her research activities have included the implementation of school-

wide positive behavior supports and interventions for alternative and high-risk

settings, as well as research examining the policies school districts have in place to address equity and discipline disproportionately.

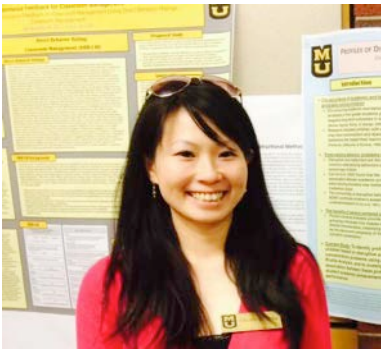
**Lana Mahgoub** recently received her bachelor's degree from Grinnell College in May 2014. She majored in psychology with a concentration in neuroscience. Lana is a Posse Scholar and leader from DC Posse 6, originally from Arlington

Virginia. She was also selected as an NSF Psychology Research Experience Scholar. The NSF research experience allowed me to build on the research skills I gained in Grinnell by allowing me to scientifically explore a specific interest of mine within psychology, children's language



cognition. I also have experience working on research projects related to student academic achievement. This fall, I will begin my school psychology Ph.D. program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have a strong interest in further researching how children process languages and multicultural issues in education, particularly in regards to ELLs in schools. I hope to conduct research projects that can help shed light on ways to enhance the linguistic and academic development of bilingual children.

The *Advanced Student Diversity Scholarship* is one annual award of \$1000 and is given to an advanced specialist or doctoral student who will be entering their 3rd, 4th, or 5th year of graduate training to help defer some of the costs acquired through graduate study and/or in preparation for internship.



Congratulations to this year's outstanding winner, **Chi-ching Chuang**.

**Gigi Chuang** is a doctoral student at the University of Missouri-Columbia

(Mizzou). In the fall of 2014, it will be her fifth year at Mizzou, as well as her fifth year in the United States. Prior to coming to Mizzou to pursue her doctoral degree in School Psychology, Gigi earned a bachelor's degree in Special Education, a master's in Educational Psychology, and was a teacher and a behavioral specialist for 6 years in Taiwan. She is also honored to be a Fulbright recipient. Currently, Gigi is working on her dissertation, which examines the effects of an evidence-based intervention on students with aggression via enhancing teachers' classroom management. In addition, she is a part-time clinician providing psychological evaluations for diverse populations at the Assessment and Consultation Clinic affiliated with the university.

## Lessons From the Field

### *Left Coast To Right Coast – And The Policy In-Between*

*Lauren N. Meyer, University of Arizona*

Every summer, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) partners with the George Washington (GW) University Graduate School of Education and Human Development to host a federal Public Policy Institute (PPI) in Washington D.C. The PPI is uniquely designed to serve a wide and diverse audience comprised of graduate students, school psychologists, school counselors, teachers, principals, and others who are dedicated to promoting resiliency and success in students and schools. The broad goal of the institute is to examine the intersection of public policy and education, and what role we, as constituents and change agents, play in the formulation and execution of educational policy. Narrowly, the 2014 agenda intended to (a) inform participants of the relationship between behavior, learning, and healthy school environments; (b) provide connections between IDEA (2004), ESEA (1965, 2013), NCLB (2002), and what role emerging national policies and current federal legislation play in student success; and, (c) engage with national leaders and experience firsthand how legislation is created and advanced on Capitol Hill. As a graduate student fresh out of my first year of doctoral training at the University of Arizona in Tucson, it was an honor to join 60 participants from all over the country for this event.

NASP and GW staff welcomed speakers from all over the country, including expert researchers from various institutions, Department of Education officials, and Congressional legislative directors. Each

presenter provided a unique perspective on the implications for public policy, and how education is shaped by decisions made at the local and national levels. Although all of the presentations varied in content, much of the information shared across presentations was driven by data, and was intended to guide participants in engaging in dialogue with their elected representatives on Capitol Hill on the final day of the PPI.

As a graduate student, I learned several valuable lessons. First, you are never alone (even when it sometimes feels that way late at night in the library – days before a life-changing exam). Engaging in conversations with others in my PPI cohort was likely one of the greatest take-aways from the experience. I had the opportunity to discuss “the way things are” in Arizona, while gaining exposure to “the way it’s done” in different communities all over the country. I spoke with school psychologists, teachers, and principals – early career and seasoned practitioners – from the Midwest, Northeast, East and West coasts, and even Hawaii. This was a terrific exercise, as the concentrated policies (e.g., IDEA, NCLB) I’ve been reading about in my texts were personified in the seats next to me, and suddenly seemed much less intimidating. (Well, maybe, they’re still a little intimidating.) I was eager to participate in these dialogues, but on several occasions found myself leaning back in my seat in awe of the collaboration occurring around me.

Secondly, I learned that data are



significant. They have the ability to inform practice and transform the way we view and evaluate policy. The NASP/GW PPI staff arranged for multiple data and behavior driven presentations. For example, I learned about The Kids Count Data Center of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2014), which provides high quality data and trend analyses using information gathered from local and state agencies. Through their evidence-based lens, they seek to raise awareness for issues affecting child and familial well being. They are in good company, of course, along side the researchers at First Focus (2014), a bipartisan advocacy organization. They are aiming to build a bridge between awareness and action through the publication of the 2014 Children's Budget, a detailed guide to federal spending. Other presenters included Dr. Beth Doll, the Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Nebraska, who discussed the importance of strengthening childhood resilience, and Dr. Renee Bradley, the Deputy Director for the Office of Special Education Programs within the U.S. Department of Education, who described effective behavior support programs for improved outcomes among students. The information I gathered from these presentations helped shape my approach to grassroots advocacy, not only in the short-term, as I entered the offices of my state representatives, but also in the long-term, as I endorse the role of an advocate as a graduate student and soon-to-be practitioner in my local community.

The third, and by far the most valuable, lesson I learned is that my voice is important. As I prepare to join other professionals in the field, I am becoming acutely aware of my proximity to the strengths and weaknesses of the system. I am in a position to report on the link between policy and practice - what is working, and what may need work. The sum of

my experiences at this summer's PPI encouraged me to be an active participant in conversations with my congressional representatives, and to take a position on legislation that will affect the populations I serve. Although each of my experiences visiting with the legislative directors for Representative Ron Barber (D - AZ), Senator John Flake (R - AZ), and Senator John McCain (R - AZ) were unique, across all of them I learned the best way to communicate my concerns regarding specific pieces of legislation (e.g., Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act, 2013; Safe Schools Improvement Act, 2013; Strengthening America's Schools Act, 2013) is to describe what I experience, and how my experiences are supported by data. My methodology did not always align with that of the representatives, but our goals appeared to be similar, demonstrating the need for ongoing dialogue between constituents and representatives. As a result, I left each office feeling humbled to participate in a campaign that provides voices for many underserved individuals.

Fortunately, my enthusiasm was not left at the Ronald Reagan Airport. After investing two weeks in the development of my advocacy skill set, I returned to the desert eager to remain active and have encouraged my peers to do the same. I have continued to connect with my representatives through their local offices, sending electronic and standard mail describing my concerns, and why they deserve their attention. I have continued to track various legislative acts, and remain cognizant of where each item is in the process. Finally, I continue to engage in conversations with my peers and mentors while exploring opportunities to close the gap between my voice as a constituent and the ears of my representatives.

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*Lauren Meyer is a second year doctoral student at the University of Arizona pursuing a Ph.D. in School Psychology and a minor in Rehabilitation Counseling. She teaches undergraduate psychology and developmental mathematics at Mesa Community College. She has worked as an advocate for multiple organizations at the local and national levels promoting suicide prevention, sexual assault and domestic violence awareness, and treatment alternatives to high-risk behaviors among students. Her research interests include crisis response and intervention, positive psychology, as well as emotional and behavioral concerns, specifically how they intersect during the high school to college transition.*

## Student Affiliates of School Psychology Chapter Spotlight:

*Kent State University*

*Jennifer Worthington, M.Ed. & Noell Adkins, M.Ed.*

### **Who are we?**

We are the Kent State University Chapter of the Student Affiliates in School Psychology. The field of school psychology has a rich history with beginnings near and dear to us in Northeast Ohio. This has provided our SASP organization with the opportunity to make multiple connections in the community and learn from those who have set the stage for leadership in the field. In addition, Kent State University has the largest school psychology program in Ohio, which has granted SASP at Kent State the chance to receive even more input on how to grow and improve our organization. Our constant focus is making connections within our program, department, university, and community to advocate for school psychology and the importance of mental health for daily living.

### **Connections within KSU and Our Professional Organizations**

The KSU SASP chapter is very involved in campus life. From walking in homecoming parades to holding representation in the student senate, we love being a part of the vibrant community that is Kent State University. Because of Kent's long history with the field of school psychology, we have several professional organizations available to us at the regional, state, and national level. Almost all of our students hold membership in at least one professional organization. Because of this, our members have access to ongoing professional development while still attending classes. Several of our members have had the

opportunity to attend and present at state and national conferences. Perhaps the best illustration of how SASP works within the university and professional organizations is School Psychology Awareness Week. It is one of our biggest events of the year. SASP members from every level of our program promote the field by presenting to undergraduate students and holding events throughout campus. This year, SASP is planning to reach out to a wider variety of undergraduate students by partnering with KSU Career Services. Students will get the opportunity to learn about the field of school psychology, the application process, as well as "ins and outs" of the profession. We have decided to also host a supply drive for one of our local schools. Our members will be working to market the drive to the entire university in the hopes of collecting a generous donation for our local schools.

### **Connections within the Community**

SASP at Kent State University strives to make a variety of community connections to, both, assist in advocating for incredible organizations as well as to help us as students gain valuable experience for training and future careers. One example of such experiences is assisting with a depression screening on Kent State campus for students and community members. This event allows us to use skills gained through coursework to score and interpret questionnaires that may identify students as at-risk for depression, PTSD, or anxiety disorders. It also aids in efforts to

provide students with resources available on and off campus for support if they are identified as being at-risk. Similarly, SASP at Kent State has connections with the American Foundation for Suicide Awareness through our involvement in the *Out of the Darkness Walk* on Kent campus. Last year we were awarded second place on campus for raising funds for resources that educate students, support research in the field, and provide screening tools to assist in identification of at-risk students. Because of the efforts of our program as a whole last year, our program was provided the opportunity to plan the event this year with assistance from the SASP organization. We look forward to preparation and working together with the community for such a significant event. A new event for our organization that we will be fundraising for and participating in is the Stark County Autism Speaks 5K. We are excited to be a part of an event that raises funds for autism research and advances awareness about the increasing prevalence of autism.

SASP's work in the community is focused on advocating for school systems and students, as well. For example, SASP routinely participates in progress monitoring in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to practice this skill and assist the district with collecting data to support students. Another instance of our community connections to schools occurred last year when we visited Happy Days School, a school for developmental disabilities in Ravenna, and spent time making holiday crafts with the students. We are fortunate to have the chance to engage in all of these community connections. Because of our focus on community involvement and volunteerism with multiple events and organizations, we were awarded the 2014

Service Excellence Award from the Kent State University Center for Student Involvement. We are honored to receive the award and we are determined to continue and to expand our community involvement in the future.

The motto at Kent State University is "Excellence in action." Our SASP chapter works to keep this tradition alive. By connecting to our school, professional organizations, and the community, we hope to leave our mark on an institution steeped in the history of school psychology.

*Jennifer Worthington, M.Ed., is a second year doctoral student in school psychology at Kent State University. She has been a member of SASP for two years and currently serves as the chapter's Chair. She received her BA in Psychology from Marietta College in 2013 and her M.Ed. from Kent State University in 2014. Her current research interests include methods of teaching social skills to high functioning children with autism and comparisons of the effectiveness and feasibility of universal social emotional programming at the elementary level.*

*Noell Adkins, M.Ed., is a second year education specialist student in the school psychology program at Kent State University. She currently serves on the SASP board as the National, State, and Local Liaison. She graduated from The University of Akron in 2013 with her bachelor's degree in psychology and from Kent State University in 2014 with her Master's of Education. Her professional interests include systematic and individual interventions for externalizing behavior.*

## Research Review

### *Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom: Examining Teacher Receptivity in Urban and Suburban Elementary Schools*

*Geoffrey S. Brown & Ramón E. Colón Morales  
Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology*

#### **What Is Mindfulness?**

There are many definitions of mindfulness found throughout the literature on the topic. Although the word has made its way into many fields of study, as well as popular culture, mindfulness is most notably at the heart of Buddhist meditation practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). However, the practice of mindfulness is not a religion or an ideology. In fact, meditation practice is simply a mindfulness training in which one develops the skill of being present and fully aware of moment-to-moment experience (Nairn, 1999). There are very specific methods and instructions for practicing mindfulness that have been developed for thousands of years (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001) and the skill development can be compared to that of learning a musical instrument or playing a sport (Jones, 2011).

#### **The Benefits of Mindfulness Training**

Research on mindfulness has been gaining an increasing amount of international attention as empirical evidence for its desirable effects have become more widely known. Studies have shown benefits in many areas of psychological and physical health. Since the current study seeks to examine the utility of mindfulness in schools, the literature review will focus on studies most relevant to socio-emotional and academic functioning: attention, self-regulation, affective experience, working memory, and executive functions.

**Attention.** One area of research in

mindfulness has been on its effects on one's ability to sustain and control attention. MacLean et al. (2010) tested the effects of a three-month intensive meditation retreat on the attention abilities of 30 adults and found significant increases in perceptual sensitivity and improved vigilance in sustained attention tasks. The study demonstrated the effects of long-term meditation on the participant's ability to sustain attention. In a similar study involving 17 adult participants training over a three-month intensive retreat, Lutz et al. (2009) confirmed findings in the MacLean study but went further, revealing some of the underlying neuroscience that explains such improvements in attention and supports previous findings that meditation training has significant effects on brain function.

In another study investigating the neuropsychological effects of brain functioning in meditators, fMRI was used to monitor brain activity during alternating periods of meditation and rest (Brefczynski-Lewis, Lutz, Schaefer, Levinson, & Davidson, 2007). In this study, however, the comparison was not made before and after a retreat. Instead, comparisons were made in a laboratory setting between the brains of experienced meditators and novices without meditation experience. Experienced meditators showed more activation in brain areas related to attention.

Intensive retreats and regular practice have been related to improvement in the

meditator's capacity to sustain attention. Considering the level of effort, dedication, time, and resources needed to undertake a sustained meditation practice or an extended meditation retreat, questions may arise about the accessibility of these practices to the general population. This is especially warranted since the preliminary body of research demonstrating the benefits of meditation has been mostly with adults and over longer periods of sustained practice. What about the effects of shorter-term practice periods of less intensity? This question was partially addressed through the research of Chambers, Lo, and Allen (2008), which showed that mindfulness meditation had a similar effect on sustained attention on a 10-day retreat as well. It seems that even short periods of practice can produce results. In fact, significant improvements in performance on tasks of executive attention were present even in a five-day study in which Chinese undergraduate students practiced for only 20 minutes per day (Tang et al., 2007). Tang et al. (2009) went on to investigate the underlying neural mechanisms in the 2007 study and found that the participant's nervous systems were altered even within the short time frame. More research is needed to corroborate and duplicate these findings, but studies thus far have shown promising results for even shorter-term programs.

**Self-regulation.** Another area of interest for mindfulness researchers is self-regulation. Experienced meditators have increased activity in brain regions associated with response inhibition and decreased activity in areas associated with discursive thoughts and emotions (Brefczynski-Lewis, 2007). This finding suggests that long-term, consistent

mindfulness practice increases one's ability to control emotional responses to stimuli. Improvements in self-regulation were also found in shorter-term studies. Tang et al. (2007) saw significant improvements in self-regulation after a five-day trial with only 20 minutes of training per day. Wenk-Sormaz (2005) found that meditation reduced habitual responding in a study with Yale undergraduate students even after a single 20-minute session. It appears that the effects of mindfulness training on self-regulation are significant with even a modest amount of intervention time.

**Affective experience.** In addition to the positive effects of improved attention and self-regulation, there have been a number of studies conducted that show positive effects of mindfulness training on mood. Jha et al. (2010) conducted a study of military personnel during the stressful pre-deployment interval. Those who partook in the mindfulness training showed an increase in positive affect while those who did not participate in the mindfulness training showed decreased positive affect as deployment drew closer. Chambers, Lo, & Allen (2008) saw similar results in their study of participants on a 10-day meditation retreat. Pre and post-tests revealed significant increases in self-reported mindfulness, as well as decreased depressive symptoms and decreased rumination (Chambers, Lo, & Allen 2008). In a comparative study between experienced meditators and a non-meditating matched group, Baer, Lykins, & Peters (2012) found that mindfulness was a strong predictor of overall psychological wellbeing.

**Working memory and executive functions.** Research on mindfulness training

has also shown significant effects on memory and executive functioning. Jha et. al (2010) conducted a study in which the experimental group received 24 hours of mindfulness training over the course of eight weeks and a one-day silent retreat. Those who received the training showed an increase in working memory capacity and those who reported higher levels of mindfulness practice time showed more pronounced effects (Jha et al., 2007). Over a 10-day retreat period, Chambers, Lo, & Allen (2008) found that those who completed the mindfulness training showed significant improvement in performance on measures of working memory. Lykins, Baer, & Gottlob (2012) conducted a study of long-term meditating adults and non-meditating demographically matched adults and found that meditators scored significantly higher on measures of short and long-term memory.

### **Mindfulness Interventions for School-Aged Children and Adolescents**

Much of the existing literature on mindfulness includes adult samples. However, the growing body of evidence emerging from the research has drawn the attention of school-based mental health researchers and several programs have been created and implemented in schools. Although the present body of research is just beginning to grow, preliminary results are very promising.

In a mindful awareness program for 2nd and 3rd graders in which participants received two 30-minute sessions of mindfulness training per week for 8 weeks, the students demonstrated gains in behavioral recognition (self-regulation), metacognition, and overall executive control for those students with low baseline executive

functioning (Flook, 2010). In a similar intervention program that also incorporated yoga, 4th and 5th grade students of an urban school district saw a positive impact on problematic behavioral responses to stress including rumination, intrusive thoughts, and emotional arousal (Mendelson et al., 2010). In addition to these promising results, Mendelson et al. (2010) collected data investigating the feasibility of such a program and found that the intervention was attractive to students, teachers, and school administrators. In a follow-up study, Gould et al. (2012) investigated possible mediating effects of the Mendelson intervention and found that baseline depressive symptoms may differentiate urban youth who benefit most from the program. This data could be quite helpful in future interventions if school-wide participation is not an option because a screening would reveal at-risk students who would benefit most.

The Attention Academy Program is a 24-week intervention program in which mindfulness training is taught in bi-weekly 45-minute sessions. In a trial administered to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade students, the experimental group showed an increase in selective attention ability, anxiety reduction, and reduction in ADHD behaviors (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). A shorter intervention was implemented by Robert Wall, in which mindfulness training was mixed with Tai Chi. Students participated in a one-hour session for 5 weeks and reported increased calmness, relaxation, improved sleep, less reactivity, and increased self-awareness (Wall, 2005). Wall went on to publish another paper where he reviewed the literature on the teaching of mindfulness based stress reduction and tai chi to children and outlined a clear plan for delivering these interventions to the young population (Wall, 2008).

A study by Huppert & Johnson (2010)

investigated effects of a short trial of mindfulness training with adolescent boys in a classroom setting. Although the differences between control and experimental groups failed to reach significance, there were two important results that emerged: a) There was a positive correlation between the amount of individual practice time spent outside of the classroom and improvements with student mindfulness and psychological wellbeing, and b) The majority of students reported that they enjoyed the training and would like to continue practicing mindfulness in the future (Huppert & Johnson, 2010).

### **Implications of the Literature**

Research on mindfulness practices has shown positive effects on attention, self-regulation, affective experience, working memory, and executive functions. Much of the research has been conducted on adults and for long-term meditation, but a growing body of research is emerging showing that these effects do indeed generalize to children and adolescents, and even with short-term interventions. Trials of mindfulness training in schools have proven to be both feasible and therapeutic. In her review of the literature on mindfulness-based approaches for children and adolescents, Burke (2010) concluded that feasibility has been established for interventions, but that more research needs to be performed in this relatively new field of study with larger samples and more controls to demonstrate empirically the level of effectiveness. There is clearly a need for more research to replicate and corroborate these preliminary findings.

### **Current Study**

Although several school programs incorporating mindfulness practices have been

designed, these programs will only be effective if teachers embrace and implement them, confident in their abilities to teach the skills. To embrace a program fully, teachers must also be confident of its usefulness in their classroom. In the current study, the authors' hypothesize that teachers' reception to and interest in integrating mindfulness practices into their classroom curriculum will depend on the extent of their knowledge and experience with mindfulness practices. The purpose of the study is to better understand teacher perceptions, level of familiarity, and attitudes towards the implementation of Mindfulness Practices in the classroom. Our hope is that insight into the "current state of affairs" with regard to teacher perceptions may allow practitioners to anticipate possible challenges and inform implementation approaches.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants were 34 teachers from two public elementary schools in New England (one inner-city school and one suburban school). In the inner-city school, 277 students were enrolled at the time of the study and 14 out of 24 teachers completed the survey (response rate of 58%). In the suburban school, there were 334 students enrolled at the time of the study, and 20 out of 24 teachers completed the survey (response rate of 83%). The demographics of the two schools were very different from one another. The student population in the urban school was largely comprised of non-white students (minority) and many were of low socio-economic status (SES), whereas the suburban school was predominantly white and high SES. The special education population at both schools was approximately the same. Table 1 below



shows approximate population percentages for comparison. Data was collected from the Department of Education website (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012).

Table 1

*School Population Comparison*

	Urban	Suburban
Minority Student Population	90%	25%
Minority Teacher Population	30%	1%
Low-Income Population	70%	10%
Special Education Population	15%	15%

**Instruments**

A questionnaire was designed by the authors to gather the following information from teachers: 1) previous knowledge of mindfulness, 2) previous experience with mindfulness practices, and 3) attitudes about implementation in the classroom (see the Appendix for the complete questionnaire).

The questionnaire was created based on information from the present body of literature on mindfulness, with the researchers' hypothesis guiding the selection of items. To determine if the questionnaire was appropriate for the population, the researcher conducted an interview/consultation with the school's principal to review the content and format of the questionnaire. To pilot test the questionnaire prior to administration, three elementary school teachers (from different districts in New England) filled out samples. These teachers offered feedback about clarity, wording, presentation, and content.

**Procedure**

The researchers distributed hard copies of the questionnaire to teachers at each school. Surveys were returned to the researchers and data was compiled into an electronic spreadsheet document. The original surveys were destroyed to ensure confidentiality of data submitted by participants. The subsequent data analysis searched for correlations between teacher knowledge, experience, and receptivity to implementation of mindfulness practices into the classroom, as well as differences between urban and suburban respondents.

To increase participation and improve response rate in the suburban school, the researcher offered an incentive of raffling a CD of relaxing instrumental music. The school's principal also endorsed the questionnaire, emailing the entire teaching staff and encouraging participation in the study. To encourage participation in the urban school, the researcher approached teachers individually to increase likelihood of survey completion.

**Processing of survey data.** Data collected from the survey falls into 4 categories: teacher information, knowledge of mindfulness (items 1-8), experience with mindfulness (items 9 and 10), and classroom implementation (items 11-15). To facilitate meaningful data analysis, information collected on certain items were grouped in particular ways in order to make comparisons and identify correlations. These processes are described below.

Since item 1 allowed for a free response, all surveys were examined and keywords were selected based on response frequency. Any responses that were submitted by 3 or more participants were used to create a category. There were 3 activities that showed

up with some regularity across respondents: meditation (9 respondents), yoga (7 respondents), and breathing (6 respondents).

On items 2-7, data was collected to assess participant beliefs about the benefits of mindfulness based on their previous knowledge. On item 8, participants were asked about activities into which mindfulness may be incorporated. The only modification to data collection in these items was that if a respondent checked both the "I DON'T KNOW" box and other responses, the other responses were rejected and the "I DON'T KNOW" choice took precedence.

Responses on items 9 and 10 of the questionnaire were used to group respondents into three levels of experience with mindfulness. Qualitative information provided in item 11 was also used in rating respondents' experience since implementation (with qualifying keywords) is evidence of experience. The following groups were created: (a) "Formally Trained": Participants in this category have either 1) been trained in meditation practice through retreats, a teacher, a workshop, or by using books, videos, or audio recordings, 2) taken at least 10 yoga classes, or 3) indicated some kind of formal/structured training in mindfulness; (b) "Informal Practice": Participants in this category have either 1) practiced meditation on their own without any formal training or guidance, or 2) included a qualitative response that indicated some activity related to a qualifying mindfulness practice (keywords: breathing, meditation, yoga, contemplation, calming, awareness); and (c) "No Experience": Participants in this category had no prior experience with mindfulness practices.

Item 11 assessed the previous implementation of mindfulness practices in the

classroom by participants. To ensure that teachers were indeed implementing mindfulness practices in the classroom, a qualifying activity must have been supplied in the qualitative response beneath the "YES/NO" portion of the question. Acceptable answers were yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, body awareness/movement, or reference to a specific program widely recognized for mindfulness components. Two respondents checked "YES" and indicated that they incorporated mindfulness practices in the classroom, but their response did not qualify, so were included with the NO group.

Items 12-15 assessed participant beliefs about benefits to students, obstacles to implementation, and level of interest in a professional development program to learn about mindfulness activities for the classroom for stress reduction. A semantics flaw in the survey was discovered after the fact on items 14 and 15. The answer choice "sign me up!" was intended to mean "very interested." Some teachers reported that they weren't certain if there was actually a professional development program being offered or not and didn't want to formally commit to a program but that they were very interested. Because of this error, the authors conservatively grouped all respondents who replied "interested" and "sign me up!" into a single group called "interested."

## Results and Discussion

### Key Findings

Findings suggest that the majority of teachers have had some degree of formal exposure to mindfulness practices through workshops or classes. This was true across

both urban and suburban settings, with the suburban teacher population receiving more formal training (urban = 64%, suburban = 80%). The most frequent training activities cited were meditation and yoga. Responses indicating training that did not fall into these two categories varied considerably but either involved a structured program for schools (i.e. Tools of the Mind, Open Circle, etc.) or training with body relaxation and/or breathing techniques.

In both schools, teacher perceptions were overwhelmingly positive with regard to the benefits for students, with the majority of teachers in both schools believing that mindfulness practices could help students with Depression, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Anxiety, and ADHD. Depression was selected by 68% of the participants (n = 23), Oppositional/Defiant was selected by 59% of the participants (n = 20), Anxiety was selected by 77% of the participants (n = 26), and ADHD was selected by 53% of the participants (n = 18).

Implementation of mindfulness practices in the classroom was far more common in the suburban school, with 60% of respondents indicating previous implementation. In the urban school, only 23% had previously implemented some type of mindfulness activity in the classroom.

In the suburban school, the most commonly endorsed responses for abilities that mindfulness improves were: emotional regulation (80%) and stress reduction (75%). In the urban school, the most common responses were the same, with similar endorsement rates: emotional regulation (85%) and stress reduction (69%).

With regard to interest in a professional development program for mindfulness, teachers generally were more interested if the

program was directed towards the alleviation of student stress, rather than teacher stress. All (100%) of the teachers in the suburban school firmly indicated interest in a program to help reduce stress in their students, whereas only 64% of urban teachers expressed the same level of interest (the remainder of the teachers indicated they were "mildly interested").

Table 2

*Summary of Teacher Responses - Key Findings*

Teacher Characteristic	Total Sample (n=34)		Urban (n=14)		Suburban (n=20)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Received Formal Training in Mindfulness	25	74	9	64	16	80
Believe Students with Depression Benefit	23	68	8	57	15	75
Believe Students with ODD Benefit	20	59	8	57	12	60
Believe Students with Anxiety Benefit	26	77	10	71	16	80
Believe Students with ADHD Benefit	18	53	7	50	11	55
Implemented Mindfulness Practices in Classroom	15*	45	3*	23	12	60
Believe Mindfulness Improves Emotional Regulation	27*	82	11*	85	16	80

Believe Mindfulness Reduces Stress	24*	73	9*	69	15	75
Interested in Professional Development Program	29	85	9	64	20	100

\*One respondent skipped this item on the questionnaire, reducing the sample size by 1

### Limitations

The authors acknowledge the limitation of a small sample size (N=36). For results to generalize to other schools and parts of the country, a much larger and diverse sample would be preferable. Additionally, the survey design could be improved for more focused data collection and to make clear correlations between teacher experience and attitudes towards implementation. Correlational data analysis proved to be challenging due to the nature of the survey used in the present study.

### Implications

The descriptive statistical data collected showed that there were differences between the two schools. Teachers in the more affluent suburban school district had much more experience with mindfulness and had implemented mindfulness practices in their classrooms with greater frequency. In general, data showed that interventions would most likely be well-received in both schools. However, practitioners in urban schools may meet more resistance. It is possible that the degree to which interest declines in the urban school is correlated with the experience teachers have with the practices, although correlation analyses would have to be run to explore this statistically. The authors suggest, therefore, that some preliminary teacher education/exposure (i.e. mindfulness

programs offered for teachers as professional development) may increase teacher receptivity towards implementing mindfulness interventions for their students in the classroom. Furthermore, a key area of further investigation would involve the offering of a professional development workshop in both urban and suburban settings. Survey data should be collected at three times: pre-intervention, post-intervention, and a delayed follow-up. Such a study would allow for a more thorough analysis of teacher receptivity and the evolution of attitudes as experience deepens.

### APPENDIX A

#### SURVEY: MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS

Please circle the grade you teach: K 1 2 3 4 5

For specialists, please indicate your position here:

\_\_\_\_\_

How many total years have you been teaching (at this school and elsewhere)? \_\_\_\_\_

#### PART I: Background Knowledge About Mindfulness Practices

1. List the first two activities that come to mind when you think of the word mindfulness.

Check here (\_\_\_) if you don't/can't think of any activities.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following abilities has mindfulness been shown to improve? Check all that apply:

(\_\_\_)Attention (\_\_\_)Emotional Regulation

(\_\_\_)Working Memory

(\_\_\_)Stress Reduction (\_\_\_)Perceptual Reasoning

(\_\_\_)Executive Functioning

(\_\_\_)Crystallized Intelligence (\_\_\_)I Don't Know (\_\_\_)None of These

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**3. Which of the following academic areas has mindfulness been shown to improve?**

Reading Comprehension    Math    Writing  
 Reading Fluency

Creative Writing    I Don't Know    None of These

**4. Consistently practicing mindfulness leads to greater happiness. TRUE/FALSE**

**5. Mindfulness practices help children to develop skills to eliminate negative thoughts. TRUE/FALSE**

**6. Mindfulness practices can reduce tension in the body. TRUE/FALSE**

**7. Mindfulness practices have been shown to benefit students with which of the following? (Check all that apply)**

Depression    Oppositional/Defiant Behavior  
 Autism    Anxiety

ADHD    I Don't Know  
 None of These

**8. Mindfulness can be practiced while doing which of the following? Check all that apply:**

Sitting    Standing    Lying Down  
 Reading    Sleeping

Walking    Breathing    Eating  
 None of These    I Don't Know

**PART II: Your Experience with Mindfulness Practices**

**9. Briefly describe your previous engagement with mindfulness activities. Please include the activity and the frequency/duration of your practice/participation. (Skip this question if you have not participated in any activities)**

**10. Please check any of the following activities that you have participated in:**

Meditation (on my own)    Meditation (with a teacher)    Meditation workshop

Meditation (using books, videos, or audio recordings as a guide)    Meditation retreat

Yoga classes (more than 10 classes) - please list styles(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Martial arts (more than 10 classes) - please list style(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**PART III: Implementing Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom**

**11. Have you implemented mindfulness practices into your classroom? YES/NO**

If yes, please describe briefly:

**12. Do you feel that mindfulness practices could benefit your students? YES/NO**

**13. Which of the following presents an obstacle for your implementing mindfulness practices in the classroom? (check all that apply)**

TIME (No time in the school day for it)

KNOWLEDGE (I don't know enough about it to implement it)

TASK LOAD (It is an extra chore to add to my already busy day)

DOUBT EFFECTIVENESS (I don't believe it will help my students)

**14. Please rate your level of interest in a professional development program for teachers to learn mindfulness activities with a focus on reducing YOUR OWN stress. (Check one only).**

Not Interested    Mildly Interested  
 Interested    Sign Me Up!

**15. Please rate your level of interest in a professional development program for teachers to learn mindfulness activities for your classroom to help your STUDENTS. (Check one only)**

Not Interested    Mildly Interested  
 Interested    Sign Me Up!

**Please use the space below if you would like to provide any additional information about your experiences or attitudes towards mindfulness practices, meditation, education, etc.**

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#### **About the authors:**

**Geoffrey Brown** is a 3rd year school psychology student at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. As an intern in the Boston Public Schools, he is currently part of a team developing a 3-tiered intervention to support executive functioning skills and is working toward developing and implementing mindfulness-based interventions for students struggling with anxiety and depression. Geoffrey is an experienced meditation practitioner and regularly attends intensive residential retreats under the

guidance of renowned teachers at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA. Additionally, he has served as a Student Leader for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) from 2012-2014, and was a presenter at the 2014 National Convention in Washington DC. Geoffrey's research interests include mindfulness, executive functioning, and neuropsychology.

**Ramón Colón** is a school psychology student completing the third year internship for his MA/CAGS at Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP). Ramón completed his BA in psychology at the Inter-American University of San German Puerto Rico, where he worked in the McNair scholar program. Previous research topics include "Risky Decisions, Decisions by Sampling", "Type D Coping" and "Historical Development of Neuropsychology at the Intern-American University". Since starting his MA/CAGS at MSPP, Ramón has garnered a broad range of experiences, including participation in the development of a Tier 1 Bully Prevention Program based on Positive Behavior Support, gained experience in the use of several assessment tools, and has implemented several evidence based classroom intervention. Ramón's research interests include bilingual students, bilingual assessments, and mindfulness.

## Report on the 2014 Annual APA Convention Student Research Forum

SASP and D16 would like to thank all of the participants and attendees that helped to make the 2014 Student Research Forum a success! This year the poster presentations were presented digitally via laptops or tablets. There were a total of nine digital poster presentations on an array of topics. The attendees networked with one another as well as with professionals in the field.

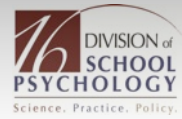
Drs. Crockett, DuCoin, and Schmidt gave a presentation on how school psychology students can be commendable candidates for a non-school-based internship site. They also provided information on the Kennedy Krieger Institute internship program. Additionally, Kennetha Frye presented about the internship program at Dallas Independent School District.

The SASP Executive Board would like to personally thank D16 for all of their help and support in putting together this event. We'll see you at the next convention!





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- Joining the Division 16 listserv to keep up to date with current trends, professional opportunities, and the on-going dialogue on school psychology matters.
- Recognizing outstanding achievements. Division 16 honors Students (e.g., APF-Paul Henkin travel awards, minority scholarships, AGS outstanding scholarship awards), Early Career Scholars (e.g., Lightner Witmer Award), and substantial contributors to the field (e.g., Fellow, Senior Scientist, Jack Bardon Distinguished Service Award, Lifetime Achievement Award).
- Becoming involved in Division 16 governance. There are many opportunities to join committees and run for executive office in the Division.

Additional benefits for student (SASP) members include:

- Links to national and international leadership in school psychology and psychology as a whole.
- Student activities at national conferences (e.g., SASP Student Research Forum at the APA Convention)
- Resources and financial supports (e.g., Division 16/SASP Diversity Scholarships and the Student Research Forum Travel Awards).
- Information on current topics pertaining to school psychology and forums to build connections with other school psychology professionals (e.g., SASP listserv, Facebook page, and website).
- Opportunities to get involved in activities that will further strengthen this discipline in the future. Opportunities to disseminate research and to share ideas through the SASP publication, *School Psychology: From Science to Practice*.
- Connections to a national network of local SASP chapters as well as guidance in building a local SASP chapter at your institution.
- Mentoring opportunities (e.g., SASP's Diversity Mentoring Program) that create relationships between students and professionals in the field.
- Opportunities to become involved in SASP governance.