

Today in School Psychology

VOLUME 2

this is why a day without direct
contact with students is wasted

charles a. barrett

TODAY IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

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Charles A. Barrett

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DEDICATION

To the children—

No one was more affected by this year than you.

I am proud of you for how hard you've
worked and for your courage.

You are the real MVPs and inspire me every single day.

First Grade

Would we go to school? No one knew.
Google Meets began, that's all we could do.
Then back and forth, to school we went
Two days a week, you were sent.
Finally, in school, we were back for four
We celebrated each day, even more.
All day long, you would wear your mask
That was not, an easy task.
Six feet apart, went down to three
We all were patient, we had to be.
We washed our hands, many times each day
To be sure the virus, would stay away.
Our smiles, seen only through our eyes
Showed we had fun, that was no surprise.
We made the best of our time together
Although it was hard, the time we'd treasure.
No one could guess, how the year would go
Despite it all, you sure did grow!
I am amazed at how much you have learned
Every star and smiley face, you have earned.
I want to be sure, that you can see
You will always mean, the world to me!

Written by Lisa Roth

Dedicated to Malcolm, Mohamed, Nevaeh, Leo,
Ashby, Danna, Michaella, Zara, Alydia, Sofia,
Sebastian, Patrick, CJ, Zarina, Anna, Haider,
Chase, Matthew, Layla, and Weston

Dominion Trail Elementary School
Ashburn, Virginia

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am excited to share more than 75 entries in the second volume of *Today in School Psychology*. Although their names aren't always mentioned, I would like to recognize some of the individuals who are featured in these powerful stories and memorable encounters. If *Today in School Psychology* was a movie, they would be its lead actors and actresses. And if it was a Broadway play, they would be the thespians whose artistry would captivate our attention. Some of them are children, and others are, in the words of a Howard University graduate student, big students. While some are teachers, others are award-winning principals who still possess the heart of a teacher. From parent liaisons, educational diagnosticians, speech pathologists, student assistance services specialists, and eligibility coordinators, to university professors, undergraduate and graduate students, and recent high school alumnae who are forging their own paths as young adults, not only am I proud to know them as friends and colleagues, but I have tremendous respect for who they are and the invaluable lessons they have taught me about serving children.

**School Psychology
Graduate Students**
Appalachian State University

Emily Avendano
Parent Liaison
Forest Grove Elementary School

Susan Book
Speech Pathologist
Loudoun County Public Schools

Jennifer Colsey
Teacher
Guilford Elementary School

Suzanne Elbeze
Teacher
Guilford Elementary School

Lisa Flores
Teacher
Guilford Elementary School

Barbara Fromal
Eligibility Coordinator
Loudoun County Public Schools

**School Psychology
Graduate Students**
George Mason University

Global Majority Collective
University of Colorado, Denver

Alec Hall
School Psychology
Graduate Student
University of
Massachusetts, Boston

Dr. Kamonta Heidelberg
Assistant Professor
Counseling, School, and
Educational Psychology
The State University of
New York at Buffalo

**School Psychology
Graduate Students**
Illinois State University

Heather Jones
Teacher
Forest Grove Elementary School

Daniel Lani
Principal
Evergreen Mill
Elementary School
2021 Recipient,
Wendall T. Fisher Award
Loudoun County Public Schools
Minority Student Achievement
Advisory Committee

Rhonda Lopez
Assistant Principal
Guilford Elementary School
Loudoun County Public Schools

Undergraduate Students

Northern Virginia
Community College

Weini Ogbagiorgis

Park View High School
Class of 2017

Daysi Oscategui

Parent Liaison
Guilford Elementary School

Python Advisory Council

Evergreen Mill
Elementary School

Cooper Reilly

Park View High School
Class of 2020

Keith Robinson

Student Assistance
Services Specialist
Loudoun County Public Schools

Lisa Roth

Teacher
Dominion Trail
Elementary School

Valerie Schwinger

Retired Speech Pathologist
Freeport Public Schools

Shontel Simon

Principal
Forest Grove Elementary School
2021 Principal of the Year
Loudoun County Public Schools

Kaitlyn Sweger

Teacher
Guilford Elementary School

Amy Turner

Teacher
Forest Grove Elementary School

Consuelo Velez (d. 2021)

Retired Principal
Caroline G. Atkinson School

School Psychology

Graduate Students
University of Wisconsin, Stout

School Psychology

Graduate Students
University of Wisconsin,
Whitewater

Elizabeth Waiter

Educational Diagnostician
Loudoun County Public Schools

Bellen Woodard

Crayon Activist
Founder, More Than
Peach Project
Finalist, 2020 TIME
Magazine Kid of the Year

ABOUT TODAY IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY, VOLUME 2

You made it. If you're an educator and reading this book, you are on the other side of one of the most challenging years of your career. From learning a variety of online platforms to managing student behaviors and keeping them actively engaged, you made it. Whether modifying evaluation practices that were appropriate for virtual settings or supporting students' social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health functioning, you made it. Were you instrumental in meeting the basic needs of children and families? Did you work to provide WIFI and other technology so that students could remain connected to instruction? Whatever your role, you rose to the occasion and did what was best for children.

An ode to the unusual and unprecedented school year that was 2020-2021, the second volume of *Today in School Psychology* offers a glimpse into the amazing work teachers were doing in their distance learning and hybrid classrooms. It also highlights the resilience of children and incredible strength of families as fierce advocates for their very best—the ones that they entrust to us every day. And although we likely never want to live through anything like this again, it's important to celebrate everything that we've come through. As difficult as it was, children and adults learned a lot, and we should remember these lessons in the post-COVID era. Whether you're an experienced educator

or preparing to enter the field, this collection of funny stories and anecdotes that illustrate weightier concepts is helpful for our service to children, families, schools, and communities.

Today in School Psychology also recognizes graduate students who will be the next generation of educators. Though earning a highly specialized degree is challenging enough, I am especially proud of them and the sacrifices they've made to continue their education amidst the uncertainty of a pandemic. From students who are trailblazers and history makers to those whom I've met through guest lectures and other informal dialogues, the future of school psychology and education is bright.

Personally, this volume punctuates a transition in my career. Having served students as a school psychologist for 13 years, I will embark upon a new role as Coordinator for Diagnostic and Psychological Services. Though I will remain with Loudoun County Public Schools, this chapter will look differently. Nevertheless, the core of my professional identity will always be that of a school psychologist: one who values direct contact with students.

Whether you read this book beginning with its first entry, or choose a random story on any given day, I hope that you will take a few moments to rest, relax, and recharge. And as you reflect on the wisdom and eloquence of children, wrapped in their innocence and simplicity, I hope that you are encouraged and inspired, as I have been, to continue promoting positive outcomes for young people.



April 9, 2020

CONVICTION, COMMITMENT, CHANGE

The effects of COVID-19 have been nothing short of devastating. And like other significant events in American history (e.g., Hurricane Katrina, the Great Recession), the most marginalized among us bear the brunt of the burden. Recent reports show that Black people (and other minoritized groups) are dying at disproportionate rates—not because they are contracting COVID-19 more than others, but their risk for having a preexisting condition (e.g., obesity, asthma, diabetes, hypertension) makes them less healthy and more susceptible to death. As I shared during a recent session with school psychologists, COVID-19 further illustrates why socially just practices, which lead to equitable outcomes, are really about changing how we think about all people and the manner in which we serve them in our respective disciplines. Social justice begins with personal conviction and is followed by commitment to change. Anything less perpetuates the existing narrative and renders our rhetoric hypocritical.

April 27, 2020

MILK AND COOKIES

These quarantine days have reminded me of life's simple pleasures: WHOLE milk and cookies. I've been enjoying this afternoon/evening snack for several days. I feel like I'm 7.



May 1, 2020

PIZZA DELIVERY

Lisa ordered pizza for dinner tonight. I went to the door and the delivery man was there with his daughter. I asked her if she was working with her dad and if she was getting paid. She smiled and gave me the receipt. Much respect to her father for providing meaningful life and learning experiences for his daughter. Although she's not one of my students, she looked like many of them and reminded me how much I miss direct contact with children. It's been seven weeks and I miss them more every day. I never thought that a simple pizza delivery would be the perfect end to my week.

Stay safe, be well.

May 6, 2020

GOOGLE MEET

Today started with talking to one of my guys via Google Meet. He's a Forest Grove Falcon and one of the coolest students ever! It was great to see him and hear what was on his mind. We talked a little about Google Classroom and quarantine (his words, not mine). I also learned a lot about origami and Yokai and Pokémon cards. Thanks for reaching through the screen and giving me a virtual hug! His younger brother also made a guest appearance. Special thanks to his mother for allowing me to spend a few moments with them. I really miss my students.

This, friends, is exactly why a day without direct contact with students is wasted

May 11, 2020

1:29-2:13

Today was the eligibility meeting for the last student I tested, exactly two months ago, before school buildings were closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. An absolutely delightful 5th grader, we worked together for 44 minutes towards the end of the day. Because a day without direct contact with students is wasted, I'm glad that my last few moments with children were spent working with a child. And because we never know when our last time with students may be, let's be sure to make every moment count.

May 23, 2020

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

I completed my undergraduate studies at St. John's University. A Catholic institution, all students were required to take 21 credits of philosophy and religion. Out of curiosity, I took a course on Hinduism. Struggling to understand much of what was presented, I remember talking to the professor and she said something to the effect of: you can't approach Hinduism from a monotheistic point of view. Hearing this almost 20 years ago, I remembered it as I'm currently reading Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*¹. Although there is a lot that can be said about culturally responsive teaching, I am convinced that how we teach can be more important than what we teach. For me, learning about a different religion was valuable; however, the professor's methods, in my opinion, were lacking. Yes, it was important for me to stretch my thinking, especially coming from a Judeo-Christian perspective; however, a culturally responsive framework would have led the professor to adjust her methods so that I could more effectively access the content. Like anything related to socially just practices that lead to equitable outcomes, blaming students for what they're not doing or achieving should never be at the expense of interrogating and critiquing our own systemic practices. Although she gave me a C, I learned a lot—about culturally responsive teaching.

¹Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

June 1, 2020

POLICY, EQUITY, AND CHILD HEALTH

My summer class, Advanced Child Assessment, at George Mason University began today. In light of what's happening, we discussed the research of Rhea Boyd², a pediatrician who studies the effects of police violence on child health outcomes. We connected her work to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and the importance of school psychologists embedding socially just practices into their professional practice in order to promote equitable outcomes for children, families, schools, and communities. It would have been disrespectful to not acknowledge the reality of some of my students and instructional malpractice to ignore this opportunity to prepare the next generation of school psychologists to serve all children, especially those who are most marginalized by systemic injustice.

²Boyd, R. W., Ellison, A. M., & Horn, I. B. (2016). Police, equity, and child health. *Pediatrics*, *137*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2015-2711>

June 6, 2020

CHILDREN AND MUSIC

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Thanks to Kristie Crowe for sending me this photo from the Forest Grove Elementary School Annual Holiday Sing-A-Long. Without a doubt, this is one of my favorite events of the year. This was December 2014 and probably in the kindergarten and first grade hallway. Two things will forever be a part of my life: children and music. It's no coincidence that I was introduced to music by my pre-k and kindergarten teachers, John Schreiber and Ned Decker, who incorporated music (playing guitar and piano) into almost every class. It's been almost three months since school buildings were closed and it's still true: a day without direct contact with students is wasted.



June 7, 2020

DIVERSITY. INCLUSION. EQUITY.

Diversity, inclusion, and equity are not synonymous. Especially when there seems to be heightened awareness of racism, and people and organizations are talking about doing what is right for marginalized groups, it's important to recognize the central role of institutional culture in sustaining socially just practices to prevent further marginalizing people of color, specifically Black individuals.

First, diversity is representation. For example, people from different races and ethnicities comprise a group. Next, inclusion indicates that beyond their representation, diverse people are empowered to meaningfully participate in an organization. Last, equity is power, and more specifically, shared power. In other words, individuals representing the broad spectrum of diversity are afforded access and opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect systems through significant changes in policy and practice, including the redistribution of financial and human resources.

Although it could be well-intentioned, now should not be the first time that White individuals seek to engage people of color. It would be better to think deeply about how you can shift the organizational culture to not only reflect diversity, inclusion, and equity in mission, vision, and other statements, but in actions, processes, and structures.

June 10, 2020

COOP!

Today is the most unusual last day of school I've ever experienced. I miss my students and being able to see them one last time before summer vacation. But although I can't see them, I'm going to take this opportunity to recognize an outstanding young man. I'm not sure when I met a much younger Cooper Reiley, but it seems like I've known him forever. Watching him grow up and mature has been a pleasure. He's worked hard to graduate, and I want him to know that I'm extremely proud of him. *Coop, you did it! You have a bright future ahead of you. Whether skateboarding, playing guitar, or anything that you choose to pursue, I'm pulling for you and know you'll succeed.* Also, big thanks to his momma, Colin Reiley, for not only being cool, but super supportive!