EDUCATIONAL AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY
SECTION OF THE CPA
CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE PSYCHOLOGIE
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JOINT NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue 2014

In This Issue

Words from the Educational and School Psychology – Section Chair

Greetings from the Chair!

Welcome to the fall issue of the CPA Educational and School Psychology Section/CASP newsletter. I hope you noted our new Section name, which was made official in June 2014. We believe that this new name better represents who we are and what we do, and is more inclusive of school psychologists. Many have questioned the need for 2 organizations representing school psychologists in Canada. We'd like to see more collaboration between the CPA Section and CASP, and ultimately a unified advocacy voice for school psychology practitioners and their educators. The profession would be much stronger with a single voice. We will be looking carefully at options for more joint efforts between the two organizations this year. If you have any suggestions, please be in touch!

One of the key initiatives implicated in such a single voice is the newly created "Policies and Issues Committee" within the Section. Developed at the request of CPA Head Office following the termination of the 3 year mandate of the Publicly Funded Psychology Task Force, in which the Section participated, the role of the new committee will be to identify key issues in school psychology/education and collaborate with CPA Head Office to work towards public policy advocacy/change. We are excited about this opportunity! If you are interested in joining us, please let us know at cpa.ed.section@gmail.com

Speaking of the CPA Task Force, the Section's main accomplishment was a position paper on school psychology, which was developed following a national survey of school psychologists, and with the hard work of a very committed group of psychologists across the country. The paper, which we hope will promote the professional practice of school psychology in Canada, can be found on the Section/CASP website at

School Psychology, Chair, CASP Membership Coordinator

Donald Saklofske, Ph.D., CASP Vice President, CPA Board Member

Joseph Snyder, Ph.D., CASP President & Past Chair CPA Educational and School Psychology

Judith Weiner, Chair Elect, CPA Educational and School Psychology

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The Section will be working this year on the completion of the by-laws revision underway. Hopefully we'll have a sound, updated version ready for adoption in June in Ottawa. Which brings to mind the program for the Section at the CPA Convention! We are looking for submissions and ideas, so please be in touch. In particular, if you have an idea for a keynote speaker, we need to hear from you - very soon!

Our main vehicle for communication within the Section has been the distribution list. CASP has set up a similar list. We'd like your feedback on how you feel about this as a means of discussion. Other Sections are using distribution lists for sharing articles, posting news, and sharing ideas. At present, all members are anonymous (i.e., bcc'd on any posts), and will remain that way unless they choose to allow their name to be attached to comments shared. We are also hoping to move to electronic voting in the future, and the distribution list will give us that ability since not everyone can attend the Convention, and there may be issues that arise during the year that can be addressed in a timely fashion.

Troy Janzen will be working on developing criteria for Section awards and a scheme for evaluation of the contributions of potential recipients. I'm sure he'd like to hear your thoughts on possibilities to encourage and recognize participation in the Section.

I'm looking forward to working with you and hearing from you! Let's have an exciting year!

Juanita Mureika, Chair **cpa.ed.section@gmail.com**

Message from the CASP President

On behalf of the members of CASP, I am very pleased to welcome Juanita Mureika as the Chair of the Educational and School Psychology section of CPA. We have worked well together in the past so I am sure we hold similar views leading to some ideas for the continuing future of school psychology in Canada.

Let us raise a figurative glass in a toast to the health, happiness, and betterment of daily living made possible by psychological knowledge mobilization/translation.

Joseph Snyder PhD, NCSP
President of CASP
Past Chair of the CPA section, Psychologists in Education

Message from the Editor

I always think of fall as the true new year for those of us working in schools or educational settings. This issue is filled with some very valuable articles for school psychologists. First, Simon Lasaingo and Laurie Ford offer an independent and early look at the new Woodcock Johnson IV Cognitive Tests. Stay tuned as a review of the WJ-IV Tests of Achievement is slated for the Winter Issue. Also, we have a book review that will be of interest to our readers and their clients. Finally, Alexandra Carter takes a look at family-school partnerships. Overall, this is another quality issue and I hope you enjoy it.

Cheers!

Troy Janzen, Ph.D., R. Psych. (AB)
Joint Newsletter Editor
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FEATURE ARTICLES

Part I: A First Look at the Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities

By Simon Lisaingo and Laurie Ford, University of British Columbia

The Woodcock-Johnson IV (WJ IV) is the most recent revision of Woodcock-Johnson assessment battery. With many things familiar to the experienced WJ user, there are also new features designed to enhance the diagnostic capabilities of the test. Perhaps the most notable change is the organization, now three distinct, co-normed batteries: Tests of Cognitive Abilities (COG), Achievement (ACH), and Oral Language (OL). A goal of this review is to provide a first brief look at some of the structural, theoretical, and interpretive revisions to the WJ IV COG for practitioners already familiar with the WJ III. A future article will examine revisions to the WJ IV ACH and OL.

The major goals of the WJ IV COG revision were to provide a more up to date measurement model of cognitive abilities, extend the theoretical foundation in a more contemporary application of CHC theory, and provide new and useful options for assessment and interpretation. The result is a battery with several enhanced diagnostic features for psychologists working with clients preschool through senior adult age.

The WJ IV COG consists of 18 tests, with core tests 1 through 7 used to obtain a General Intellectual Ability (GIA) composite. The organization of the test and has seen significant changes with six new or modified tests and others from the WJ III COG relocated on the OL. For example, the new Oral Vocabulary test comprises subtests of synonyms and antonyms from the WJ III Verbal

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Comprehension test; Visual Matching from WJ III COG has been re-named Number-Pattern Matching (and a Letter-Pattern Matching test has been added); and, Story Recall from WJ III ACH is now the primary measure of *Glr*. All 7 core tests that comprise the GIA have some change.

CHC broad and narrow ability constructs have also been revised. For instance, the broad ability of Short-term Memory (*Gsm)*, in the WJ III has been changed to Working Memory (*Gwm)*, to be more in line with current neuroscience research; working memory is considered a broader and more complex construct than short-term memory with greater diagnostic utility. The development of the WJ IV has focused on assuring a continuum of tests that range in cognitive complexity (i.e. a test is more cognitively complex if it measures more than one narrow abilities or it requires greater cognitive demands). This has resulted in significantly higher *g* loadings of tests across the battery. Notable is the new *Ga* test (Phonological Processing) with a loading on GIA similar to the *Gc* test (Oral Vocabulary) and higher than the core measure of *Gf* (Number Series). Emphasis for the narrow abilities is on those that have greater diagnostic utility.

Along with the now familiar GIA and BIA scores, *Gf-Gc and* Scholastic Aptitude (Reading, Mathematics, Writing) composites have been added. The *Gf-Gc* composite, composed of the two most complex abilities (four tests), is intended to provide a better estimate of academic potential and is a useful alternative when lower level processing abilities impact the GIA score. Scholastic Aptitude (Reading, Mathematics, Writing) composites appear to represent a greater effort to connect scores with practical applications such as the identification of students with specific learning disabilities. Due to changes in cluster composition and new scaling procedures, users are cautioned in comparing composites across the WJ III and WJ IV and they should allow time to familiarize themselves with these changes when developing an assessment plan.

Testing materials have remained the same with similar formats and layouts: two testing easels, test record, response booklet, and examiners manual. The technical manual and audio recordings are on a CD. One notable change is that scoring is now only available online and users must obtain passwords from the publisher for access. While promoted as a positive change that will allow for easy updates and new features over time, it will no doubt cause some frustrations as users make this transition and loose some of the flexibility and freedom when changes are needed to a given students record as changes to the raw score cannot be made after 30 days for a given test record.

The normative sample consisted of sample of 7,416 individuals ranging in age from 2 to 90+ years in the US. No Canadian norms are provided which is a drawback for use its use in Canada. However, communications with representatives of the test publisher indicate that there is a strong desire to conduct a Canadian validity study in the future. As with previous versions of the WJ, the test continues to demonstrate strong psychometric properties using the most current methods for determining reliability, validity, and item scaling. Of

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note, reliability data is missing for some tests below the age of 5, indicating, as with previous editions that some tests may not be appropriate for use with very young children (see Tusing, Maricle, & Ford 2003). External validity correlations between the WJ IV GIA and other cognitive test composites are high (.83-.86 with WISC IV FSIQ; .74-.84 with WAIS-IV FSIQ; .71-.77 with the KABC-II Fluid Crystallized Index; and .79-.82 with the SB-5 FSIQ). Average reliabilities for the clusters are generally .90 or higher and .80 or higher for the individual tests.

The majority of the changes made in the WJ IV have been in its theoretical foundation and interpretive features. Practitioners will appreciate more streamlined testing options for determining strengths and weaknesses in cognitive abilities; however, for better or for worse, test administration remains largely the same. While an effort has been made to make interpretive features more practical, guidance on how to make decisions about which interpretive features to use and when is limited. These reviewers wonder if, while promising, the limited guidance on interpretation might hinder the use of the new features intended to enhance the test. For practitioners concerned about learning a new test, there are more things that remain the same, especially in the administration of the test, than has changed which makes for an easy transition. Hopefully with time and use examiners will also grow to appreciate and use the new tests, clusters, and interpretive features.

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***Note:** Authors have no current affiliations with WJ IV test authors*.

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Book Review – "How I Learn: A Kid's Guide to Learning Disability"

Reviewed By: Samantha Chen and Anjana Balakrishnan, University of Western Ontario

"How I Learn: A Kid's Guide to Learning Disability" is a 32 page resource created and disseminated by Magination Press, a publication arm of the American Psychological Association. The authors of the book, Brenda Miles and Colleen Patterson, are both Canadian psychologists with extensive backgrounds in clinical and school psychology, and have particular interests in understanding learning challenges or differences within the school setting. The book illustrator, Jane Heinrichs, has received acclaim for her past work. Young children ages 4-8 years are the main audience for this book which will provide them with foundational knowledge about learning disabilities in an uncomplicated and supportive manner. The secondary audience composed of parents, caregivers and professionals may also find this book to be a good aid when working with children with learning disabilities.

How I Learn serves as a guide to explain learning disabilities to a child from the perspective of a child who struggles with a particular learning problem. The story starts out by inviting the child to consider his or her personal strengths. They are then introduced to the three learning domains that children commonly struggle with: reading, writing, and mathematics. The narrative discusses the challenges associated with these three areas and encourages the reader to identify and reflect upon the particular domains he or she experiences difficulties with. A simple explanation is then provided for why some children struggle, introducing the concept of a learning disability. Various types of "smart strategies" that children can use to help them through the learning process (e.g., asking questions, seeking extra help, using assistive technology, etc.) are provided next. The story concludes by encouraging students to explore new strategies for supporting their academic achievement. Included at the end is a "Note to Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals," in which the authors provide suggestions to guide discussion of learning difficulties with children, and offer additional techniques to reinforce their child's learning process.

A number of positive themes related to learning disabilities appear throughout the story of How I Learn. While learning disabilities can make school challenging, the story provides significant reinforcement that children with learning problems are "smart," "capable," and "work hard," but "they just learn in a different way." Furthermore, the language of the book continually emphasizes that "it's OK" for children to learn differently. Another related theme that is highlighted throughout the narrative is the normalization of learning disabilities. There is continual emphasis that many children struggle at school, and that everyone encounters tasks that are challenging for them. *How I Learn* reassures readers that there are other children out there who experience similar learning difficulties. The importance of reducing negative stigma

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associated with learning disabilities is well presented and reinforced throughout the story. In addition, practical suggestions effectively drawn from the authors' evidence-based training and experience along with the use of "smart strategies" are well discussed.

The book encourages children with learning problems to seek help and to use creative problem-solving to develop strategies for learning that will help them complete their tasks. Furthermore, parents, caregivers, teachers, and mental health professionals are also provided with a two page guide of specific techniques that they can employ to help children with learning disabilities. By providing a guide to adults about how to read or go through this book with children (e.g., pausing to ask children questions and provide encouragement), the authors make the understanding of learning disabilities a collaborative effort. Moreover, strategies such as "measure ingredients when baking" are supported by explanations of the merits of each strategy, e.g., "to reinforce math concepts and number sense by having fun." The use of such strategies to support learning and academic achievement provides children and those involved in their care with a positive outlook on their learning experiences. These strategies can also be beneficial to parents who may only have limited knowledge of learning disabilities but are still eager to assist in their child's learning process. The final nugget of wisdom offered by the authors is that this book is just one step which can be taken and long-term planning and ongoing open discussions with children are recommended as important follow up activities.

There is a dynamic interplay between the content and supporting graphic material. Children using this resource are immediately given a way to decipher subject matter by linking the words to a matching image. Not only are the illustrations appropriate, but they are also engaging. The book makes use of vibrant colors and simple scenes to capture the interest of young children. Furthermore, the illustrations make the book very friendly and accessible to children from all cultural groups. Commendable effort is made to demonstrate cultural sensitivity through the illustrator's character representations of children from various cultures. Lastly, the artwork effectively employs a wide range of expressive illustrations to capture the emotional experience of a child with learning disabilities, including depicting initial emotions of confusion and frustration with academic work, as well as emotions such as enthusiasm and self-confidence which develop over time as "smart strategies" for success have been learned.

How I Learn will serve as an important resource for children in helping them understand their experiences with a learning disability. The language used is appropriate, supportive, and friendly, and will make this story very approachable and readable for its intended child audience. Children will also appreciate the engaging illustrations that accompany the written content. Moreover, *How I Learn* facilitates personalized discussions by directly encouraging children to identify and reflect on their own strengths and challenges. Feelings typically

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associated with learning problems are also addressed, with consideration given to the sensitivity that students with learning disabilities may feel in regards to what they can and cannot do compared to their peers. This supportive and positive story reassures young readers that they are capable, and can use "smart strategies" to help themselves learn. This book is a most welcome addition to others written specifically for children from Magination Press.

STUDENT'S VOICE

Supporting students with mental health concerns through engaging in family-school partnerships

By Alexandra Carter
Pre-doctoral intern / doctoral candidate; UBC School Psychology Program

A high prevalence of children and youth struggle with mental health concerns in elementary or secondary school and are at risk for a host of poor outcomes from poorer achievement, high school dropout, to mental health concerns in adulthood (Esler, Godber, & Christenson, 2008; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000; Waddell, McEwan, Shepherd, Offord, & Hua, 2005). As it has been suggested that fewer than 25% of these children will receive specialized treatment services in the community, it is critical that children and youth receive appropriate intervention and supports through the schools to reduce the prevalence of these negative outcomes (Rones & Hoagwood, 2000).

> "Establishing partnerships with families not only may benefit the student, but families are more likely to report a child's needs are being met if they are involved in collaborating with service planning"

Supporting students mental health concerns in schools can take many forms, such as having prevention oriented universal social-emotional learning programs in the primary grades. Another way to support student mental health is through engaging in family-school partnerships (Esler et al., 2008). Partnering is an ecological approach that focuses on establishing collaborative relationships between parents and service providers, focusing on family strengths, and encouraging family choice and involvement in decision making (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004). The goal of family-school partnerships is to enhance the academic and social-emotional outcomes of all

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children (Esler et al., 2008).

A few decades of research on family-school partnerships has demonstrated that the partnership improves student outcomes in areas such as attendance, academic achievement, morale, and parent's satisfaction with their abilities to support their children (Esler et al., 2008). Establishing partnerships with families not only may benefit the student, but families are more likely to report a child's needs are being met if they are involved in collaborating with service planning (Koren, Paulson, Yatchmonoff, Gordon, & DeChillo, 1997). Families are more likely to view the school as being part of their support network and often have increased access to resources and services (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004). Joint planning between school and home enhances schools' effectiveness to support students as well as contributes to parents supporting and reinforcing school practices at home (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004).

The recommended best practice for school psychologists is to adopt a multi-tiered family-school partnership framework, in which students receive support based on their individual needs (i.e., students with high needs, such as those with a diagnosed mental health concern, receive intensive intervention (Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011). So what does this approach look like for students and families?

Tier 1 supports are targeted to all students, with the expectation that this level of support will be sufficient for approximately 80% of students. This may include universal screening for academic skills or social-emotional health. Data may be obtained on student's academic progress (e.g., achievement test scores or students grades, 2) engagement in learning (e.g., attendance, homework completion), 3) social-emotional health (e.g., rating scales, observations, suspensions, risk assessments; Lines et al., 2011). Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs can also be implemented as a universal prevention initiative. Most SEL programs are targeted to students in the primary grades, and focus on helping children develop skills to understand and recognize feelings, solve problems, manage anger, and develop and maintain friendships (Lines et al., 2011). Many of these programs also have a family component.

At the universal level, schools can also look at establishing partnerships with families. This involves taking steps to create a welcoming school environment, having regular two-way communication with families, and engaging parents in their child's education process; for example, through discussing homework expectations with families and how they can support learning at home (e.g., study habits and routines, accessing resources). Cultural sharing is a value emphasized in family-school partnership initiatives, which may involve honouring unique traditions, understanding beliefs, expectations, and experiences with educational systems (Lines et al., 2011). Implementing family-school teams or involving parents on school committees is another way to increase family involvement and build partnerships at the universal level

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(Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). A partnership framework suggests that teams move from being advisory, to emphasizing collaboration and shared decision making. For example, Epstein (2001) recommends developing a family-school-community "action team" that works to assess student and family needs, develop and implement goals, and evaluate outcomes.

It is important for warm relationships with families to be established prior to signs of student difficulty, as these relationships facilitate the intervention-oriented problem solving that is the basis of response-to-intervention (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Developing strong partnerships creates a cushion that supports intensive tier 2 and 3 interventions. At these tiers, the intensity of collaborative efforts and problem solving activities between families and educators increases. A variety of family-school partnership interventions are available across the tiers, and some resources are provided below. The goal of family-school partnering is to enhance student outcomes and competence, and this can be accomplished by families and educators sharing information and working collaboratively. At tiers 2 and 3, students receive intensive small group and individual interventions, and parents are collaborative partners, engaged in this process and empowered to support their child at home by carrying out some intervention.

Some good resources on family-school partnering include:

- **http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/**
- **http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/**
- **http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement**

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  Presented by Dr. Matthew K. Burns
  Date: Friday 14th November, 2014
  Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
  Location: University of Calgary, AB
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  http://www.psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/ieadmin/files/2_General_Outline_-_Matthew_Burns.pdf
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