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ABSTRACT

This paper describes several expanded roles and models for school psychologists to consider when seeking employment. The skills that psychologists acquire in master's and doctoral programs range beyond the K-12 setting. Four roles in which these skills can be taken collectively or individually and used by part-time faculty include: teaching, student advising, mentoring, and supervising. A personal reflection on the experience and skills gained while seeking a part-time faculty position is offered. This paper describes the benefits of school psychologists becoming part-time college faculty, which include skills to advise students and parents about post-secondary options, professional development in knowledge and skills in content area, possible research topics, and economic benefits. (JDM)

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**Involvement as a Part-Time Faculty Member:  
Further Expansion of School Psychologists' Roles  
into the 21st Century**

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**Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference (April, 1999) in Las Vegas, Nevada.**

## **Introduction**

Over the past 20 years School Psychologists and private practice Psychologists have expanded beyond their traditional roles. In a recent issue of the NASP Communique Alex Thomas (1998) stated: "Overall, our context today is ripe with possibilities. Schools value our services: the more services we offer, the more we will be valued." In a recent issue of The APA Monitor Rabasca (1999) writes about leaving traditional private practice roles in order to find individual "niches" within the application of psychological principles in new applied settings.

This expansion has been seen from a global perspective in the ever widening range of articles in the three edition series of Best Practices in School Psychology (Thomas and Grimes, 1985; Thomas and Grimes, 1990; and Thomas and Grimes, 1995). These editions are often referenced in "state-of-the art" papers and presentations. The series is also an integral part of the school psychology training programs offered. It is equally noticed on a more individual basis. Federhar (1979) wrote about branching out from psychometric-only services as well as expanding the role of School Psychologists into the community at both national (Federhar, 1995) and state (Federhar, 1988) conferences for School Psychologists.

One stimulating area of recent change is taking place within the expanded participation of School Psychologists in post-secondary institutions. This paper will present a number of roles and models for School Psychologists to consider if they are interested in this type of affiliation. Direct and indirect benefits as well as caveats of such role expansion will be presented.

### **Part-Time Faculty Roles**

The skills that are acquired in a traditional or non-traditional Master's or Doctoral program range beyond the K-12 setting. There are four roles where these skills can be taken individually or collectively by part-time faculty members. Teaching, student advising, mentoring and supervising are all valuable extensions.

Teaching can range from an entry level class such as Introduction to Psychology at a community college to advanced doctoral level classes. These classes can fall under many different departments (School Psychology, Psychology, Rehabilitation, Special Education, Early Childhood Education, and Education to name a few). Community college class run through the sophomore level with a variety of topics (Developmental, Social, Testing, Abnormal, Child, Adolescent, etc.). Four year colleges and universities continue to present at the Junior and Senior levels. With a Master's the School Psychologist can teach some post-graduate professional development classes for teachers and counselors. With a Doctoral degree classes throughout the graduate range can be taught. School Psychologists can work with their post-secondary schools to teach a wider variety of existing classes, team teach with a full-time faculty, or develop new classes to expand current programs.

Advising students as a faculty member brings much needed information to the post-secondary student as well as a sense of what it is like in the eyes of "practitioner" rather than an instructor. School Psychologists can be easily updated to do class and program advising. Presentations to groups or classes about career descriptions, choices and options come with a good deal of face validity as the School Psychologist sees these on a daily basis. Insights into what one would have done differently in one's career may be invaluable. These advising times can occur in traditional office settings or in "guest" appearances in classes, colloquia, and student organized "get-to-gether" sponsored by a department. School Psychologists can sit on graduate committees as formal advisors too.

Mentoring others who are at a variety of professional development levels is a third possible role. Mentoring can begin as early as with a high school student on independent studies, doing behavioral research for the science fair, or taking a high school psychology class. Undergraduate students are often looking for a mentor for learning about real world experiences in research or independent studies. Graduate students can often use a mentor the first year when they take the "tag-a-long" class when offered. Students may want to continue with the same mentor or experience a variety of mentors as they proceed through their program, practicum and internship. This mentoring can even extend into first year help when hired.

Traditionally, School Psychologists have been involved with supervising practicum and internship students as a part of their roles within a school district. As many graduate programs have limited full-time faculty contact during these times professional supervision is critical. Granting the supervising School Psychologist part-time faculty status is beneficial for all three parties (Student, School Psychology Department and School Psychologist). Students get verifiable field supervision from both a school district and their training institution. Students may also get earlier access to emerging jobs. The School Psychology Department develops closer ties with the local school districts. This can establish institutional-administrative lines for student training, possible research access, and School Psychologists for possible full-time faculty positions. The School Psychologist also benefits by having their current level of professional skills recognized as well as gaining professional development while they supervise (from full-time faculty members, literature articles, library research, etc.).

### **Becoming a Part-Time Faculty Member**

This paper will now relate some the methods used by the presenter to obtain part-time faculty positions over the past 20 years. Many communities have a number of post-secondary options. Some options, as major name universities are obvious. Other options, like small optional private schools, school extension campuses or educational centers on military bases may not be so obvious to members of the community.

This first step to be taken is one of doing a community search. You can: look in the phone book; contact nearby military bases and ask for their education office; talk with other School Psychologists, Psychologists, Teachers and Principals about where they get their certification and continuing education classes; and do a web search.

Once a curriculum vita is written, make an appointment with the appropriate person at each potential institution. Introduce yourself and what you want to do as well as what you have done. Be as inclusive of your activities (graduate teaching, teacher supervision, learning styles recommendations, behavioral planning etc). Ask them what they might need from someone of your background and skills. Ask for a catalog of their program and if they you could have a follow-up meeting after you have a chance to familiarize yourself with their program.

If there seem to be possibilities, try to meet other faculty, talk with alumni, and ask to sit-in on a class or two. Find out from the educational director what their class planning and faculty assignment timeframe is. Do ask if it is okay for you to recontact them at a potentially advantageous time. The more familiar you can become with how that institution operates the better you can plan.

Once you've been given a class you have to treat this professional assignment like your first School Psychologist assignment. Make sure you use correct format on the syllabus, attend all faculty meetings, ask the director for feedback on your role, etc.

### **Skills Gained**

The School Psychologist gains many skills while acquiring and providing part-time faculty services. One's professional role is constantly being reassessed. Marketing skills are developed. A life-span developmental model for a career is gained.

As the world evolves so do the humans occupying the world and their roles. Thus part-time faculty assignments are expected to change. One should expect constant feedback from the employer including assessment, reassessment, and upscaled training of the teaching techniques used at that institution. School district employees may find your advise (now that you are a faculty member) to be more "worldly" and authentic. Students will find your teaching content more digestible with real world examples from your career. Students you teach will gain first-hand information with regard to how school psychology issues fit within a large number of daily life activities in the real world.

Through your institution work to gain professional development by attending teaching conferences, obtaining journals at work, building a professional library, or utilizing the resources at that institution. If you are at a small extension campus find ways to go to the main campus (in person, by phone, or by internet) for more support. Do not hesitate to ask for library materials or video-tapes, etc. for supplements for your class. Get to know the main campus support personnel by name and thank them.

One's marketing skills will also develop as you "sell" others on how their program is improved with your input. Oftentimes smaller post-secondary institutions interact by sharing faculty or doing joint professional development activities. Thus contact at one institution may open doors at another post-secondary setting in a similar or different context.

As one goes through these developments one obtains a better sense and skills from a developmental perspective. There are skills that come at different stages in this secondary career. The first stage (Initial Faculty Development) is mostly filled with one's own teaching skills as a faculty member acquisition. One learns to development better syllabi, class assessment instruments, and class activities. The second stage (Becoming an Interactive Faculty Member) adds another layer because it is one of integrating one's faculty role within the bigger institutional picture. When one finds how their piece of the puzzle fits into the large "degree" picture, one can mold the class to fit that context. This includes intentional overlap with other classes and joint planning for course content with other instructors. The third stage (Large Scale Faculty Involvement) adds an additional layer and is one of a "macro-systems" approach. In this stage one focuses on issues as: faculty mentoring; joining institutional faculty committees; being a developmental role model for students and other staff; advising; post-secondary placements for students; post-secondary institutional development; and staff recruitment (faculty and staff).

### **Benefits and Caveats**

Working as a part-time faculty member has provided far more benefits than caveats. These outcomes will be presented from a multitude of perspectives. What follows is only a partial list.

There are many benefits of adding School Psychologists at part-time faculty members. Some of these (in no particular order of importance) are:

1. gaining skills to advise one's K-12 students, teachers and parents about post-secondary options for regular and special education;
2. professional development in knowledge and skills in content areas;

3. possible research topics, subjects, etc.;
4. verifiable field supervision for practicum and intern options as their field supervisor is a representative of the institution;
5. access to "soon-to-graduate" students for possible hiring;
6. access to institutions for possible career changes;
7. professional development for NCSP certification (supervision, teaching a new class, workshops, etc.);
8. potential self-esteem benefits (title, role, etc.); and
9. economic benefits (paycheck, faculty discounts, etc.)

The caveats of such career changes are few. The ones I have experienced deal with interactions with other professionals. This type of development takes one away from the "safety" of the traditional role for which we are trained. Some school colleagues might feel threatened when one branches out and they do not do so. Full-time faculty have been known to feel threatened. They do not need to worry about maintaining their jobs, but can feel that part-time faculty are out to replace them or that the institution may go with more of the less-expensive part-time faculty. Full-time faculty who don't "venture out into the real world" may have concerns about what practitioners' perspectives or experiences. Practitioners may bring a new focus to the education of students that faculty who stay on campus may not be able to provide. These ideas may be more realistic for students who are looking for non-university teaching careers.

### **Miscellaneous Comments**

Throughout this paper the presenter's experiences have been organized to demonstrate one possible way of expanding the role of the School Psychologist into the 21st century by becoming a part-time faculty member. The more integral our roles become in daily activities and expectations the more we can move from a tertiary treatment format with one child (or one class or one school at a time) into primary and secondary prevention formats with teachers (counselors, administrators, etc. over their lifetimes of working in the educational arena). Thus our effectiveness can increase and we can gain a better sense of having a meaningful role within the world we occupy.

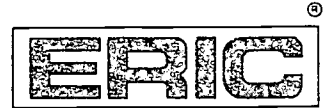


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