



The WCPA News

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The Quality Staff of Comprehensive School Services

By Mary Fitzgibbons, Ph.D., Director

West County Psychological Associates has existed since 1985. In the beginning, we were a traditional mental health private practice, providing high-quality therapy and psychological testing services. However, over the years I realized that schools were often in need of the kind of support and intervention that we were providing in the office to our individual clients. As a result, Comprehensive School Services (CSS) was developed approximately ten years ago.

The primary goal of CSS is providing exceptional quality services to schools. One of the ways that we accomplish this is through the expertise and philosophy of the therapists associated with the program. In order to be a part of the Comprehensive School Services program, therapists are first trained by more experienced CSS consultants, in order to become more aware of the issues and needs of today's schools. They also participate in weekly professional consultation meetings, wherein specific school problems are presented and discussed. I believe this training results in highly effective, school-focused services.

In this newsletter, I am pleased to share my own history, as well as that of the therapists working in the program. They are listed alphabetically, and as you will see, have varied backgrounds and specialties. I believe that the diversity of our staff lends to our strength. As always, please let me know if you have any questions about the CSS program.

Mary Fitzgibbons, Ph.D. is the Director of West County Psychological Associates. Dr. Fitzgibbons created Comprehensive School Services and works extensively with many public and private school systems in regard to dysfunctional families and at-risk children. Before beginning her career as a psychologist, Dr. Fitzgibbons was in education for 20 years, in both elementary and secondary levels, in public, private and parochial schools. She was formerly a counselor and guidance director at Lafayette High School and an adjunct professor at Webster University. Dr. Fitzgibbons has been the psychological consultant for Catholic Family Counseling, in St. Louis, Missouri, since 1987. She is now an adjunct professor at St. Louis University and lectures frequently to schools and organizations, in addition to providing presentations to local, state and national professional groups on issues of children and families.

Carrie B. Eidson, M.Ed., Sp.ED., Ed.D received her Master's degree in education/counseling at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has a Specialist degree from SIUE and an Education Doctorate from St. Louis University. Dr. Eidson has been counseling children and adolescents, along with being a principal in K-12 schools, for the past 17 years. She has also developed and administered an alternative school for at-risk students in grades 8-12. Dr. Eidson currently teaches graduate counseling and special education courses at Missouri Baptist College. She gives presentations on working with at-risk students, behavior management, learning disabilities, and integrating service learning into the school curriculum. Dr. Eidson is also a Psychological Examiner, performing risk assessments for potentially aggressive students and psycho-educational evaluations for learning disabilities or mental retardation.

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Tips for Teachers: Boundaries in the School

Our Philosophy

We believe that
individuals and systems:

- Are capable of permanent change
- Function best with clearly defined authority that stems from a family systems hierarchy
- Are accountable for both positive and negative aspects of behavior
- Achieve success by conscious choices that lead to strength and development of personal responsibility
- Control their environment by establishing boundaries that are consistent with their values

WCPA promotes
change and growth by:

- Helping to establish order within the environment
- Meeting consistently in a collaborative relationship to achieve identified goals
- Helping to identify and process significant issues
- Aiding in resolving issues as they arise

The result for the system or individual is the development of a strong sense of identity and boundaries that allows for the achievement of goals.

A boundary is a “personal property” line that marks those things for which we are responsible. It defines who we are and who we are not. It defines who is responsible for what in any given system. Knowing our boundaries means knowing what is our job and what isn’t.

How do we define our boundaries? First, we listen to our feelings. Healthy situations generally bring about feelings of contentment and fulfillment. When we feel angry, resentful, or frustrated much of the time, it is often a clue that our limits and boundaries are not in balance. Second, consider what is best for the whole system. In the long run, what is best for the whole system (the school) is best for the individual (the student). Therefore, we have rules in our schools that contribute order to the system and create ready-made boundaries for teachers and their students.

The goal of setting personal boundaries is control. We may not, and do not, want control over the other person, but we always want to be in control of ourselves. For example, imagine that your school’s weekly staff meeting is supposed to start at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays. Every Tuesday, you, your principal, and most of the staff is ready and waiting at 3:30. Several teachers, however, always seem to be running late. A poor sense of school boundaries might result in those who are on time waiting and waiting for the late teachers, failing to confront them on their tardiness, or excusing their lateness as “OK.” A healthy boundary system in the school results in the meeting beginning on time, (for which the on-time teachers do not feel guilty,) and the principal addressing the issue in private with the individual late teachers.

Teachers who have the most problems with boundaries can be called “The Compliant,” “The Avoidant,” and “The Controller.” The Compliant has a strong need to please. He/she is afraid to say “no,” for fear of losing the relationship, not being liked, being seen as selfish, or making someone angry. The Avoidant is a procrastinator. She/he finds it easier to walk away from a problem than deal with it. These teachers spend their school years avoiding problems and hoping they’ll just go away. The Controller is unable to be told no. These are teachers who don’t respect others’ boundaries. They use different means of manipulating in order to get others (students, colleagues, administrators) to do what they want them to do.

How can we all improve our boundaries in school? Remember:

- We all have the right to take care of ourselves and meet our own needs first.
- Setting personal boundaries gives us a sense of self-respect, and makes us respectable to others.
- Limits and boundaries put order into classrooms, and there can be no learning without order.
- Students grow intellectually and emotionally when they are expected to fulfill their responsibilities.
- The principal is in charge of the school. The teacher is in charge of the classroom. The student is in charge of his/her own learning. When anyone fails to carry out his/her responsibilities, there must be a consequence.
- Being liked by our students, or even our colleagues, is not our ultimate goal. Our goal is the safety and effectiveness of the school and our classrooms.
- Consistency with boundaries is hard in the short run but reaps big rewards in the long run.

If this topic interests you, more training is available for the professionals at your school. Call the office, at (314) 275-8599 for more information.

School Services Staff (Continued)

Catherine Bull Hasler, Ph.D. received her M.A. and Ph.D. in clinical psychology with a specialization in working with children, adolescents, and families from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She completed her predoctoral internship at the University of Chicago Hospitals and Clinics in the Department of Child Psychiatry. Dr. Hasler is licensed to practice as a psychologist in the state of Missouri. She has worked in a variety of schools as a consultant and crisis counselor. Dr. Hasler was trained at the University of Chicago in the differential diagnosis of attentional problems in children. She specializes in diagnosing the causes of attentional problems, which can include depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, family systems problems, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Dr. Hasler also has a special interest in the treatment of depression and anxiety in children and parenting skills training for adults.

Michael Mahon, M.A. received his undergraduate degree from St. Louis University and his Master's degree from Webster University. He has worked in the fields of addiction for over 13 years. Mr. Mahon has extensive experience working with both adolescents and adults with chemical dependency and dual diagnosis. Most recently, he has worked as a counselor at Hyland Behavioral Health. Mr. Mahon works within the West County Psychological Associates' Chemical Dependency Program, providing substance abuse assessment and treatment to individuals and groups, providing at-risk groups and treatment groups on-site at schools, and providing consultation and training to schools and organizations with needs related to substance abuse. In addition, Mr. Mahon is active in providing mental health therapy to adolescents and their families.

Amy Maus, M.S.W., L.C.S.W. received her Master of Social Work degree from Washington University, and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in both Missouri and Illinois. Her background experience includes clinical work with severely behaviorally and emotionally disturbed children and adolescents, along with their families, in outpatient, inpatient, and residential settings. She also has an extensive background in crisis intervention and court advocacy with women and their children, and currently sits on the Board of Directors of the Violence Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois. In addition, Ms. Maus has a specialization in management, with education and experience in non-profit financial and personnel management, grantwriting, policy-making and program development. She currently provides training and consultation within the Comprehensive School Services program, and mental health therapy.

Tom Michler, M.Ed. is a Master's level therapist, currently pursuing licensure for LPC through the State of Missouri. His background includes 10 years experience as a marriage and family therapist, with an emphasis on working with adolescents and youth. Mr. Michler has worked within Comprehensive School Services for years, leading principals' consultation groups, consulting with faculties and Care Teams, and providing training on mental health and behavioral issues. His work experience also includes 16 years of management experience at United Parcel Service. He consults with a wide range of organizations regarding organizational development issues. Specifically, he addresses areas of hiring practices, staff development, long-range planning and visioning goals, conflict resolution and group facilitation. A cornerstone of Mr. Michler's work is a significant emphasis on spirituality.

Brett Newcomb, L.P.C. has been a classroom teacher for thirty one years. He has taught grades seven through twelve in a large suburban high school, in addition to junior college, college and graduate courses. For the last thirteen years, Mr. Newcomb has been an adjunct instructor in the graduate program at Webster University in Webster Groves, Missouri. Besides his classroom experience, Mr. Newcomb has been a Licensed Professional Counselor and has had a private practice since 1982. He works with adolescent and adult individuals and families. Mr. Newcomb is also a workshop and seminar presenter. He has presented workshops for Monsanto Corporation, Ralston Purina Corporation, the Archdiocese of Jefferson City, and multiple large school districts within Missouri.

Clark Triplett, M.Div., Ph.D. is a licensed professional counselor with 25 years of experience working with individuals, couples, and families. Dr. Triplett has been involved in higher education for over 30 years and is currently Professor of Psychology and Human Services and Dean of the Graduate Studies Program at Missouri Baptist College. He is also an ordained minister and has taught pastoral counseling in seminary and led numerous workshops on pastoral counseling and multicultural counseling in the United States, Canada, and South Korea. In addition, Dr. Triplett is the Past President of the Missouri Mental Health Counselors Association.

Holly Watson, M.S.W. received her Master of Social Work degree from St. Louis University. Ms. Watson's previous experience includes serving as a Substance Abuse Counselor within the Illinois Department of Corrections - Juvenile Division. She has also worked for TASK, Inc., conducting substance abuse evaluations with those convicted of drunk driving offenses, domestic violence and/or other charges, within both the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. In addition, Ms. Watson specializes in work with conduct disordered and/or gang-affiliated adolescents. She currently provides training and consultation within the Comprehensive School Services program.