

My Long Days' Journey into NOW!



Deborah Peek Crockett



Birthdate: January 26, 1945

Birthplace: Atlanta, GA

Education

1983–1987	Georgia State University Doctor of Philosophy in School Psychology
1982–1983	Georgia State University Educational Specialist in School Psychology
1980–1982	Georgia State University Master of Education in School Psychology

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1977–1978	Georgia State University Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
1962–1965	Spelman College Undergraduate Studies

Employment

2008–2011	School Psychological Services Consultant Fayette County Alternative Education Program Fayette County Board of Education Fayetteville, Georgia
2006–2008	Lead School Psychologist/Graduation Coach Voluntary Alternative School Fayette County Board of Education Fayetteville, Georgia
2006–2007	Advisory Panel for LD Determination Position Statement National Association of School Psychologists
2006	Adjunct Professor Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education Georgia State University Atlanta, Georgia
2005	Guest Lecturer Department of Psychology Morehouse College Atlanta, Georgia
2003	Site Coordinator—WISC-4 Standardization Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—4th Edition The Psychological Corporation Atlanta, Georgia
1999–2008	NEA Health Information Network Advisory Board National Education Association
1998–2006	Consultant School Psychologist Fayette County Board of Education Fayetteville, Georgia
1997–2004	National Advisory Panel WPPSI-3 and WISC-4 The Psychological Corporation San Antonio, Texas
1997	Expert Panel WAIS-III Writer The Psychological Corporation San Antonio, Texas

1995–1996	Expert Panel
	McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities
	The Psychological Corporation
	San Antonio, Texas
1994–1995	Master Presenter
	The Psychological Corporation
	San Antonio, Texas
1993–1996	Part-Time Instructor
	Counseling and Psychological Services
	Georgia State University
	Atlanta, Georgia
1993–1994	Educational Consultant
	Northstar Entertainment, Inc.
	Atlanta, Georgia
1990–1993	Guest Lecturer
	Special Education Department
	Emory University
	Atlanta, Georgia
1993–1995	Instructor
	Staff Development
	Atlanta Public Schools
	Atlanta, Georgia
1990	Invited Guest Speaker
	WCLK Radio Talk Show
	Clark Atlanta University
	Atlanta, Georgia
1989–1992	School Psychology Peer Reviewer
	Georgia Department of Education
	Atlanta, Georgia
1989–1992	AIDS Trainer
	Atlanta Public Schools
	Atlanta, Georgia
1989–1991	Guest Lecturer
	Education Department
	Spelman College
	Atlanta, Georgia
1989	Student Research Paper Evaluator
	Georgia Psychological Evaluation
	Atlanta, Georgia
1988–1994	Adjunct Professor
	Clark Atlanta University
	Atlanta, Georgia
1988–1990	Trainer
	Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program
	Atlanta Public Schools
	Atlanta, Georgia

1987–1994	Guest Lecturer
	Counseling and Psychological Services Department
	Georgia State University
	Atlanta, Georgia
1987–1990	Project Evaluator
	Target Outreach Program
	Metropolitan Atlanta Boys & Girls Clubs
	Atlanta, Georgia
1987–2003	Consultant
	Carter and Associates
	Atlanta, Georgia
1986–1998	School Psychologist
	Atlanta Public Schools
	Atlanta, Georgia
1985	Invited Guest Speaker
	Reflections on Life Series
	Public Cable Television
	Atlanta, Georgia
1984–1986	Associate School Psychologist
	Cobb County Public Schools
	Marietta, Georgia
1983–1984	Associate School Psychologist
	Fulton County Schools
	Hapeville, Georgia
1982–1984	Psychometrist
	Carter and Associates
	Clinical Psychologists
	Atlanta, Georgia
1982	Psychometrist
	Cobb County Public Schools
	Marietta, Georgia

Honor/Awards

Deborah Peek Crockett Endowed Minority Scholarship (Established), National Association of School Psychologists, 2006.

Lifetime Achievement Award, Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP), 2004.

Alumnae Achievement Award for Education, Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia, 2002.

Finalist for the School Psychologist of the Year, National Association of School Psychologists, Washington, DC, 2001.

School Psychologist of the Year, Georgia Association of School Psychologists, Sea Island, GA, 2000.

Leadership Award, Georgia Association of School Psychologists, Atlanta, Georgia, 1998.

Presidential Leadership Award, National Association of School Psychologists, Anaheim, California, April 1997.

Presidential Leadership Award, National Association of School Psychologists, Chicago, Illinois, March 1995.

Distinguished Alumnus Award, College of Education, Georgia State University, May 1993.

Presidential Leadership Award, National Association of School Psychologists, Washington, DC, April 1993.

Distinguished Alumnus Award, Counseling, and Psychological Services Department, Georgia State University, March 1993.

Georgia Association of School Psychologists, Professional Recognition Award, April 1990.

Introduction

I retired as a school psychologist in June 2011. Retirement provided me the opportunity to rest, physically and mentally. I read my favorite genre of novels; I travel when I want to; I have lunch with old and new friends and I just breathe! I also have time to think about the children I served and hope that they were doing well and are having productive lives. At no time did I reflect on the totality of my professional life.

At the request of Dr. Carol Lidz, I was forced to look at the totality of my life. What I thought of as an “ordinary” professional life was revealed to me as a legacy. I felt very uncomfortable writing about my professional achievements. It seemed to be self-aggrandizement. My friend who read the document replied with a resounding “no”. It was clear to her that I needed to share my story with others.

My hope for this chapter is that other school psychologists will step out and stretch themselves and make their mark on the profession. However, my mantra was to help improve the lives of at least one child, parent, teacher, or school each year, grow from that annual experience and move on to the next challenge. Please enjoy my recollections.

I am a proud daughter of the south, coming into adulthood during segregation, with all of the harsh rules of Jim Crow. I entered college at a time when African Americans were demanding and fighting for the right to vote and for equality for all aspects of life. In the midst of all that turmoil, I began to wonder about the best academic course of study for me to directly impact this change in a positive way.

Given that Spelman College was a women’s school, we often talked about women and our strength from the history of slavery to the current events at that time. We spoke of the women who would have to walk to work to maintain their income. These brave women knew their lives were on the line for encouraging, supporting, and participating in sit-ins and demonstrations. The more we discussed these aspects

of the civil rights movement, the more I began to ponder the question, "What is the emotional and psychological impact on their sons and daughters of their parental participation?" It was then that I decided I wanted to understand the personality of those who would take risks and those who would not. Furthermore, I wanted to work in an environment where this kind of research was studied, evaluated, and applied.

Unfortunately, my father became ill during my sophomore year and passed at the end of my junior year. To help my mother and five younger sisters, I had to leave school and secure employment. I made a vow to return to school and complete my education. This was the most difficult decision I had to make in my life.

Seeking a job other than a cook or maid opened my eyes to how any post high school education was meaningless at most businesses. Although I had three successful years of college education, my opportunities as a woman of color were limited when compared to my White counterparts. While I felt intense disappointment and sometimes anger at my mistreatment, I decided to do my best work so that I could seriously compete or "fight" for a better job in the future. I was very good at math and was placed in an accounting department. I learned a lot about simple debits and credits, auditing, and developing simple computer programs to make my work easier and more efficient. I was promoted twice, yet I continued to feel dissatisfied with the work I was doing. More and more I was determined to try to have some impact on social issues related to women and children of color.

During my decade of absence from formal education, I became aware of several social issues impacting children and women in our society. I married and had one son. At the age of 6 months following an automobile accident, my son was diagnosed with a "mild head injury." However, as he developed, he appeared to be a normal child compared to the other children in our neighborhood, and we felt we did not need to worry about that accident any longer. He had always been energetic, played hard, and had an insatiable interest in cars, planes, and trains. He would read with me each night before bed and could accurately relate the details in the books. He attended preschool at age 4 without any problems. He enrolled in the neighborhood public school as a Kindergarten student and was successful through second grade. In third grade, he began to evidence attentional difficulties; sleepiness, and sometimes a withdrawal from academics in general. He had always been an agreeable student but began showing signs of frustration and was not doing his work in class. The pediatrician suggested I talk to the school counselor about counseling to help with his problems since he saw the problems as a bored or lazy child.

As a parent, I did not see him as bored or lazy (yes, typical mother). He was my "fixer" at home. Anything mechanical he could take apart, consult with his dad, get the needed parts and "fix" it. He would research (yes, go to the library), find the books or journals and work until it was "fixed." He would initiate this himself and his attention to detail was faultless. He continues to present these skills as an adult.

I decided to ask my son questions about school. I wanted to know what a day in school was like for him. I noticed that he seemed reluctant to answer. I continued to attempt to get answers from him until one evening he exploded and told me the teacher did not like Black boys and was mean to them. I was shocked! I was shocked on two fronts: I did not want to believe that teachers were openly hostile to young

Black boys, but I knew my son would tell me the truth. I usually went to parent conferences and, since our son was passing classes as a B student and did not have any behavior problems, his teacher presented him as a quiet worker. He did not have any discipline problems and was not failing any subjects.

As a "grade parent volunteer" for my son's teacher, I was in the classroom weekly and also observed the differential treatment of students of color, especially males. I asked for a meeting with her to discuss this delicate problem. Given that there was no extensive internet or an abundance of self-help books for parents, I proceeded to discuss my observations without revealing what my son had said to me. I even prepared a data report with notations such as the teacher frequently called on White male students ignoring Black male students. She always gave positive feedback to White male students, while for the Black male students she would add information to their answers, as though it was incomplete. She would tell Black male students they needed to speak the "kings" English rather than "Black" English. In conversing with her, she became angry with me about evaluating her teaching style, since I was not a teacher. I would try to explain to her that the Black students were not trying to participate any longer because their responses were not being positively reinforced. As a result of this conversation, she said she would try to do better.

The following day I received a phone call from my son to come and get him from school. He was crying and very upset. I asked if he was hurt and he said no. Upon arrival at the school, six Black males from his class were waiting for their parents to arrive. The principal asked me to step into her office. I was informed that the teacher had the six Black males go to the board, take a marker and write "Black boys are dummies." The boys refused and she sent them to the principal for refusing to follow a teacher's order. I asked the principal (also White) how she planned to handle this injustice to the Black male students. She replied that they needed to learn to follow orders and put their feelings aside. I was livid! I thanked her for her comments, signed the six boys out of school, as I was their back up ride) and went directly to the Board of Education Office. The school was located on a dead-end street, and I waited for the other mothers to arrive so that we could go in together. We departed for the board office where we were immediately seen by the assistant superintendent. We allowed the students to tell what had happened and how they responded. She did not comment and told us to go home, as she was going to the school and would contact us later in the evening. Within the hour all of the fathers were also waiting at my home. The assistant superintendent decided to come to my home to discuss the results. She did not give any details, but she did report that the teacher and principal chose to retire and that a new classroom teacher and principal would be in place the next day. She also thanked us for professionally handling this.

All the parents decided to meet the new principal and classroom teacher the next day to see how our children would react to the new employees. The entire fifth grade seemed happy with their new teacher by lunchtime. The class had been assigned a first-year teacher, full of energy to teach a bunch of young boys (there were more boys than girls in the class). The school year progressed without further problems.

My road to School Psychology began with a need to understand what was happening with my son and his school. Also, I wanted to know what the Black youth and parents were experiencing in other schools across the country with these racial implications and complications. While I remember feeling angry and confused, I also wondered what was the best educational profession to pursue that would help me answer some of the questions. Then I had following the school episode.

I started to aggressively save money to return to college as soon as possible. I knew I could not return to Spelman due to tuition costs, so I began to explore programs at Georgia State University, which had recently been desegregated. I met with a student counselor who was extremely helpful in asking me about my interests. I answered that my concern was how Black males maintain their positive self-concepts in a world that does not always see their potential to make positive contributions. My other concern was how I could assist teachers and parents in learning ways to ensure the success of their students/children in school and life. She strongly suggested that I consider a major in Developmental Psychology. She also indicated that, following completion of my undergraduate degree, I should consider a graduate school with a major in school counseling or school psychology.

I began my studies in Developmental Psychology and loved the coursework! I was particularly fascinated with cognitive and social-emotional development and the measures for evaluating these behaviors. I was also curious about racial differences in the scales.

I completed course requirements for the undergraduate degree and decided to apply for the school psychology program master's program and was accepted. I determined that I needed additional training to address the issues that were most important to me. I received a diverse education in both research and application. My mentor, Dr. Clifford Carter, taught and questioned me about the appropriate use of standardized tests, about the merits of observation in classrooms and with parents, and the impact of these on student performance in schools. By the time I completed my doctorate, I was beginning to see the paths I wanted to follow. I wanted to address the lack of diversity in the field, specifically concerning Black, Hispanic, Indigenous American, and Asian/Pacific Islander school psychologists. The second path was to encourage professional associations to make a policy statement regarding Racism, Discrimination, and Prejudice.

At the time I entered school psychology, the major professional organization, National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), was discussing the use of individually administered intelligence tests and whether they should be used for minority students. Other topics included the scarcity of Black male school psychologists in the profession, the cost of graduate training, as well as the overrepresentation of minority students in special education.

I became active in the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP) by joining the Multicultural Affairs Committee in both organizations. Both organizations are dedicated to ensuring that school psychologists are well trained, work under conditions that promote the most appropriate educational services for all children in schools, provide support for parents, and have schools that have diverse service providers.

Professionally, I began to see the path I wanted to take as a practicing school psychologist. First, I wanted to continue to work at the school level. As a Black School Psychologist, I felt a professional responsibility to be available to minority communities, their families, and their children to assist them with any referrals about school performance. I also wanted to partner with other services in the community that could help families. Working with my assigned schools, I had an opportunity to work with school staff and leadership, school counselors, school social workers, Juvenile Court Probations officers, and other advocates to address specific academic and behavioral challenges and change the perception that something is wrong with the student.

As previously noted, I was pleased to work with Fulvia Franco, a school psychologist from Utah to complete a position statement on Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination. What was most satisfying about the project were the heated discussions we had and finally reaching resolutions! Fortunately, Fulvia and I could speak from the research literature and add to the discussion as to how these social elements as a Black woman and a Hispanic woman impacted our lives. We were able to get the paper passed within 1 month. The position statement has been updated several times but the spirit remains. Many NASP affiliates adopted and used the paper as justification to search for minorities to meet the needs of their school populations.

The next issue that I wanted to tackle was the low number of Black males in school psychology graduate programs. I contacted Dr. Mike Curtis of the University of South Florida who had documented school psychologists on several variables; including gender, race, place of employment, degree held, and work setting. There was an additional study that indicated that minority students did not pursue a doctorate degree because of the high cost. They mentioned the debt they had accrued to obtain a Master's or Specialist Degree and indicated that they could not afford to begin doctoral studies. I shared this information with the Multicultural Affairs Committee and was told a subcommittee was working on how to address this issue. I immediately volunteered to work with the committee because I had ideas to share.

The Multicultural Affairs Committee met twice annually, once at the summer delegate assembly and once at the annual national convention. Since I volunteered at the annual convention, I really wanted to begin the work right away and present a proposal at the summer meeting. I thought it was time for NASP to have a competitive scholarship to assist with the recruitment of promising students at the Specialist level and work with the Trainers of School Psychologists (TSP). This would be an important mechanism to develop ways via their universities to help students receive some financial assistance for those seeking entry-level and doctoral degrees. My personal motto became "think, think, think." How can we do this? None of us had the experience on how to get the money, but we kept studying. Three former NASP presidents, Peg Dawson, Howard Knoff, and Kathy Durbin introduced themselves to me and told me to go for it! I was shocked that they knew who I was and that they wanted to support me. I began to try to determine who might want to work on this project.

The Summer Delegate Assembly was fast approaching and all I had to submit was a one-page plan regarding what “we” (the subcommittee) were in the process of developing as the proposal for the committee. I indicated that we were working without a budget and had no donor prospects at the moment. I stepped away from the microphone and was met by Dr. Abby Gottsegen who said, “let’s pass an envelope” and ask the delegates to make a start-up donation immediately. As she was a delegate, she could make the motion. We collected more than \$700 that day! As the saying goes ... the rest is history.

The scholarship was established (1995), and currently, 77 students have been awarded a \$5000 scholarship. The endowment fund now has a \$1.2 million balance. All students completed their studies and have received their school psychology degree. The students represent all ethnic minorities and genders. Some students have returned to the school to complete their doctorates. The first scholarship was awarded in 1998 to Dr. Sherrie Proctor. She is currently a tenured professor at Queens College in New York. I was elected President of NASP in 1996. My presidential year was 1997–1998 and the first scholarship awarded during my presidential year continues to be the highlight of that year!

The second highlight of my presidential year was the development of the Tolerance-in-Action Curriculum. It was designed to use social skills training for kindergarten through eighth-grade students to teach them tolerance and acceptance of students different from themselves. Several schools have used all or parts of the curriculum. The largest use was in a school in Florida under the direction Dr. Howard Knoff, a School Psychologist, and it is also being used in Arkansas.

The curriculum was used during the 9/11 attacks. There was a rush to get easily usable materials out to schools and the public. Kathy Cowan called me at home (7 p.m. to be exact) and said we need to get some of this information to the general public and schools immediately. She had pulled some sections; we agreed on the content and modified it for the general public. It went live on the NASP website, and I was told we had a million hits almost immediately. I was proud to be a member of a profession that understood the needs of people of all ethnicities and in all sections of the country, and I was also proud of how the organization can respond to an event in a way that such materials can be used without extensive preparation or revision.

Looking back on my professional life was not as easy as I thought it would be. I did not get all of the things accomplished that I wanted, but I hope I left the profession a little better by the projects that were completed and some that continue annually.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some of the people who encouraged me during my years as a school psychologist. As usual, some individuals will be omitted through error. Please note they are just as important. The individuals who encouraged me from the beginning of my career through retirement included Dr. Clifford Carter, my doctoral advisor who pushed me when I wanted to take it easier. He informed me that I could rest when I retired. He passed 16 years ago but his wisdom lives on with and in me.

Kimberly Evans, Robin Satchell, Cathy McKenzie, Dr. Arletta Brinson, Dr. Ethel Craig, Frank “Buz” Smith, Abby Gottsegen, Faye Henderson, Madonna Spencer, and Liz Avant are practitioners who supported and encouraged me.

Susan Gorin was Executive Director during most of my NASP years. She was my strength and available to support me and any of my NASP work. She always treated me with dignity and respect. She was also a great girl fun!

Howard Knoff, Jack Naglieri, Antoinette Miranda, Collette Ingraham, Sylvia Rosenfield, and Peg Dawson were trainers who worked on a variety of projects with me. I greatly appreciate their support through the years.

Finally, the corporate sponsors for the minority scholarship have been steadfast and generous. At its inception, they were on board with money and products so that students could get a start in the profession. Dr. Wayne Gressett and his staff (Psychological Corporation), Dr. Aurelio Prifitera (Pearson); Dr. Robert Smith (PAR), Dr. Jim Gyurke (PAR), and several individuals who worked for these companies have been generous donors. Thank you.

Finally, I thank all the NASP members who donate annually to the scholarship from the State Associations of Georgia, Ohio, Florida, Oregon, New York, and California.

Please forgive me if I left anyone out of the list. All of you were valuable to all of these programs.

Publications

In Process

Cultural considerations for response to interventions. In J. Jones (Ed.). *The psychology of multiculturalism in the schools: A primer for practice, training, and research*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Tolerance matters. Top skills for kids. A social skills curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight.

2004

Critical issues children face in the 2000s. *School Psychology Review*, 33(1), 78–82.

2002

Different is Good! *National Geographic World. Dare to Explore*. January/February.

1998

Literature circles: A parent guide to teach African-American history. *Pathways to tolerance. Student diversity*. Bethesda, MD: Author.

1997

Tolerance and diversity. Resources for parents, educators, and students. In A. Canter & S. Carroll (Eds.). *Helping children at home and school. Handouts for your school psychologists*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Gifted children with special needs. In A. Canter & S. Carroll (Eds.). *Helping children at home and school. Handouts for your school psychologists*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Strategic Plan Adopted! *Communique*, Vol. 25(8), June 1997.

1995

NASP Establishes A Minority Scholarship! *Communique*, Vol. 23(8), May 1995.

1993

Growing Up Scared. *Atlanta Magazine*, July 1993 (Research Only).

1992

Aftermath of the Rodney King Events: Hints for Helping. *Communique*, Vol. 20(8), June 1992.

State Associations Play a Major Role in the Recruitment of School Psychologists. *Communique*, Vol. 20(8), May.

1981

"*Junior Leaders: Service Delivers*". *How to do it*. New York: Boys' Clubs of America, 1981.

Manual for keystone clubs advisors and officers. New York: Boys' Clubs of America, 1981.