

School Psychology Leadership in Academic Intervention



Lisa Kilanowski

The dynamic nature of the practice of school psychology has long reflected changes in the school milieu, mirroring student educational needs and related imperatives stemming from societal movements, nationwide trends in student achievement, and legislation. Indeed, over the course of a mere 20 years, the discipline of school psychology has evolved from a profession dedicated almost exclusively to the assessment of children for the purpose of identifying disabilities to one positioned to both proactively and reactively address a myriad of student and familial concerns spanning social-emotional, behavioral, and academic fronts. At times, given ever broadening school psychology domains of practice and corresponding graduate-level training course sequences, it appears as though the potential roles of a school psychologist know no bounds. School psychologists, with their robust training in assessment, intervention, and counseling, matched with their corresponding knowledge of disabling conditions, are well positioned to serve in leadership capacities related to the provision of systemic and individual intervention. This chapter, in particular, seeks to illuminate the ways in which the preparation of school psychologists uniquely positions them to lead initiatives related to academic intervention planning for students with and without disabilities.

1 Pioneers of the RtI and MTSS Initiatives

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004 brought to the forefront a latent and somewhat pocketed movement in education defined by attention to evidence-based instructional practices, use of student

L. Kilanowski (✉)
Niagara University, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: lak@niagara.edu

© The Author(s) 2021
L. Kilanowski, K. Augustyniak (eds.), *Principles of Leadership in School Psychology*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84063-1_2

achievement data to drive intervention, and an overall emphasis on increasing school-wide student achievement via intervention and consultation (Tilly, n.d.). This movement, ultimately coined Response to Intervention (RtI), was successfully included in the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, highlighting the importance of proactive academic intervention as a means of limiting the overidentification of students who had not benefitted from core instruction as learning disabled. Comprised of cutting-edge practices from a wide array of disciplines, including behavioral consultation, special education, and school psychology, Response to Intervention, now encompassed under the umbrella of Multitiered Systems of Support, seeks to improve global achievement outcomes and attainment of general education standards for students with and without disabilities (Griffiths et al., 2007). Unlike reactionary approaches associated with historical trends of identifying students with disabilities, academic Response to Intervention remains a proactive approach to buttressing curricular deficits and learning gaps evidenced by children in an effort to limit the misidentification of students as learning disabled, while increasing academic outcomes of all children regardless of disability status. While Response to Intervention, theoretically, is comprised of contributions from a variety of education-related disciplines, the field of school psychology was and remains at the forefront of RtI research, development, and implementation, with many prolific school psychologists and academics providing Congressional IDEA reauthorization testimony and contributing to organizational position papers (e.g., Batsche et al., 2005) propelling its integration into special education law. To date, the role of school psychologists as leaders in the Response to Intervention movement is further evidenced by our disciplines' extensive literary contributions as related to RtI over the past 30 years. A cursory review of contributions in school psychology specific journals and other publication outlets since 2001 provides robust evidence of the degree to which MTSS-oriented journal articles appear in school psychology publications relative to other education disciplines. In regard to academic intervention-oriented contributions in particular, it is worthy to note that peer-reviewed journals in psychology, as opposed to teacher education, yield a far greater number of articles presenting evidence-based reading assessment and intervention practices, including contemporary investigations of the predictors and characteristics of learning disabilities (Kilpatrick, 2015). While it may appear counterintuitive to some in the larger field of education that school psychologists, and not educators, publish a vast amount of research related to academic intervention, further consideration of the contemporary ideology of modern-day school psychology, stemming from historical practice trends, intersecting with societal education needs, and converging with NASP training standards, provides robust insight into the emergence of school psychologists as specialists in academic intervention design, implementation, and progress monitoring.

2 School Psychologists as Leaders in Academic Response to Intervention Implementation: A Rationale

Reflection on the fabric of Response to Intervention, with interwoven elements of learning disability prevention and intervention, best practices in educational assessment, curricular knowledge, data-based decision-making practices, and consultation, is essential to understanding the importance of school psychologists as leaders in the implementation of academic interventions on a system-wide and individual level. The role most traditionally associated with the practice of school psychology, that of learning disability identification, subsumes knowledge of contemporary research surrounding cognitive, academic, environmental, and familial hallmarks and predictors of learning challenges, from which appropriate evidence-based interventions may be distilled. Indeed, the earliest reference to what has come to be known as Response to Intervention stemmed from the work of psychologists Heller et al. (1982), who postulated that misidentification or overidentification of learning disabilities could be mitigated by the implementation of academic interventions, accompanied by repeated progress monitoring, to document “response to instruction, prior to referral for special education services” (p. 62). Integral to the postulation of Heller et al. was that single point in time evaluation of learning disabilities using more traditionally supported approaches (IQ/achievement discrepancy analysis) yields false positives, while determining growth in response to instruction may more accurately identify those with substantial and persistent educational needs. School psychologists, by training, are armed with knowledge of the characteristics of learning challenges and disabilities, including data-driven assessment practices and knowledge of the diverse array of factors that impact educational achievement. Taken together, such knowledge predisposes them to ecological and intraindividual understanding of the nature of academic needs for intervention planning purposes. It is this understanding, combined with an awareness of the historical shortcomings of the ability/achievement discrepancy model vis-a-vis classification outcomes and student growth, that led to the advancement of several position papers (e.g., NASP, NASDSE, NICHD) calling for reevaluation of the discrepancy model of learning disability identification and implementation of a three-tiered preventative service model (Preston et al., 2015). Though clearly the NASP is comprised of school psychologists, it is important to note that many of the principal authors of the NASDSE paper (e.g., Batsche et al., 2005) all began their careers as school psychologists, and dedicated substantial segments of their careers training school psychologists, contributing to the professional literature, and informing organizational policy as related to academic intervention and consultation.

3 School Psychologists as Leaders in Implementing Best Practice Academic Intervention and Consultation Models

School psychologists are uniquely positioned to serve as leaders in the capacity of academic intervention developers, implementers, and evaluators on a systems and individual scale. This fact is further buttressed by increased reference to this role in the evolution of the NASP Professional Standards from 2000 through the most recent edition, published in 2020. As the contributions of school psychologists to research and policy related to the design, implementation, and evaluation of academic intervention models has grown, so too has the explicitness of reference to such work in the NASP Professional Standards, with contributions to academic intervention and consultation articulated more fully in each edition revision.

In accordance with the NASP 2020 Professional Standards, the role of the school psychologist in regard to the conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of interventions has clearly moved from a focus on individual students or students who are at-risk to one encompassing all students and systems as whole. Keystone language and conceptual differences between the NASP 2000 Professional Standards (pre-IDEA 2004) and the NASP 2020 Professional Standards with direct links to leadership in academic intervention planning are noted, including the following:

- Reference to school psychologists as “change agents” who “advocate for change at the individual student, classroom, building, district, state, and national level” (NASP, 2020, p. 4)
- Repeated identification of school psychologists as purveyors of knowledge related to the curriculum in general, with a specific emphasis on understanding and disseminating research surrounding curricular efficacy (NASP, 2020, p. 5)
- Multiple references across NASP domains to the role of the school psychologist in designing, implementing, and evaluating evidence-based academic interventions
- Multiple references to the role of the school psychologist in assisting “all students” in their attainment of academic standards (NASP, 2020)
- Imperatives for school psychologists to “create and maintain multitiered systems to support each students’ attainment of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral goals (NASP, 2020, p. 7)

Furthermore, school psychologists’ leadership and involvement in various elements of academic intervention is referenced across several domains of the NASP 2020 Professional Standards, including Domain 1, Data-Based Decision-Making; Domain 2, Consultation and Collaboration; Domain 3, Academic Interventions and Instructional Supports; Domain 5, School-Wide Practices that Promote Learning; and Domain 9, Research and Evidence-Based Practices (NASP, 2020). The framework for the involvement of the school psychologist as leaders presented below integrates contemporary best practices as asserted in the literature over the past 20 years vis-a-vis the NASP 2020 professional standards. A more expansive discussion of school psychologists as leaders in implementing MTSS initiatives is later

presented in chapter “[School Psychology Leadership in Multitiered Systems of Support](#)” and should be considered alongside of the following:

3.1 *Data-Driven Needs Assessments*

School psychologists possess multiple skillsets positioning them to conduct data-driven assessments of school and district needs as related to academic intervention (Castillo & Curtis, 2014). Evaluations of extant data sources surrounding student achievement, including state testing results, existing benchmark assessment results, and special education referral trends, are a few examples of data sources that should be quantitatively reviewed in an effort to target district needs when developing school-wide intervention protocols. Data-driven needs assessments should serve as the foundation upon which school-wide academic intervention protocols are developed. NASP professional standards and skillsets related to this critical element of academic intervention planning efforts include the following:

- Domain 1, Data-Based Decision-Making
- School psychologists understand and utilize assessment methods for identifying strengths and needs; for developing effective interventions, services, and programs; and for measuring progress and outcomes within a multitiered system of supports. School psychologists use a problem-solving framework as the basis for all professional activities. School psychologists systematically collect data from multiple sources as a foundation decision-making at the individual, group, and systems levels and consider ecological factors (e.g., classroom, family, and community characteristics) as a context for assessment and intervention:
 - *School psychologists collect and analyze data from multiple sources (e.g., parents/guardians, teachers, students) and levels (i.e., individual, group, system) to understand students’ needs and to select and implement evidence-based instructional and mental and behavioral health interventions and supports.*
 - *School psychologists incorporate various techniques for collection, measurement, and analysis of data; accountability; and the use of technological resources in the evaluation of services at the individual, group, and/or systems levels.*
 - *School psychologists support the use of systematic, reliable, and valid data collection procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of and/or need for modification of school-based interventions and programs (NASP, 2020, p. 3).*

The work of a school psychologist does not exclusively surround evaluation of performance data linked to individual students. In their practice, school psychologists are well positioned to observe data-driven trends in a variety of domains, including special education classification trends, general student achievement trends in reading, math, and writing, and other population-based trends within a building

or across a district. Leading the charge in the evaluation of multiple sources of data to identify areas of need within a building or district is one example of the means by which school psychologists can and should serve as leaders for change. Likewise, assisting others in the evaluation of data collection instruments and methods, including the integrity of a variety of commonly used assessment tools, encompassing validity, reliability, and content, is a powerful means by which school psychologists can lead efforts in fortifying systemic data-based decision-making. While much of the early work of a school psychologist may have centered around data assessment practices as linked to individual students, applications of leadership in school psychology extend this process to the systems level.

3.2 Development of School-Wide and Individual Academic Intervention Models

School psychologists use data derived from academic needs assessments to develop systemic and individual frameworks for the provision of academic interventions in accordance with evidence-based practices, national, and local guidance (Stoiber, 2014). Practitioner knowledge of evidence-based academic interventions, including their ability to evaluate the integrity of commercially available whole group intervention packages, as well as “standalone” instructional strategies, serves as the basis for intervention design efforts on a district (systems) and individual student (problem-solving) level. School psychologists’ understanding of the various approaches to developing academic intervention models (e.g., standard protocol, problem-solving, and related permutations) as associated with their respective strengths, limitations, and outcomes is essential to this work, alongside of their understanding of the need to monitor implementation fidelity. The specialized knowledge that school psychologists possess in terms of understanding academic needs, identifying appropriate evidence-based resources, and implementation science defines their role as leaders in systemic and individual academic intervention planning. Domain 3 of the NASP 2020 Professional Standards of Practice denotes the involvement of school psychologist as related to the development of academic intervention models as follows:

- Domain 3, Academic Interventions and Instructional Supports
- School psychologists understand the biological, cultural, and social influences on academic skills; human learning, cognitive, and developmental processes; and evidence-based curricula and instructional strategies. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, use assessment and data collection methods to implement and evaluate services that support academic skill development in children. Examples of direct and indirect services that support the development of cognitive and academic skills include the following:
 - *School psychologists use assessment data to inform evidence-based instructional strategies that are intended to improve student performance.*

- *School psychologists promote interventions and accommodations to help students enhance their capacity to be self-regulated learners, fostering their ability to set learning goals, design a learning process to achieve those goals, and assess outcomes to determine whether the goals were achieved.*
- *School psychologists, in collaboration with other school personnel, promote the attainment of academic standards and benchmarks by all children and youth.*
- *School psychologists collaborate with others to ensure that students who are not meeting benchmarks or standards receive continual progress monitoring for improvements in academic skills; they then recommend changes to instruction based on student responsiveness to interventions.*
- *School psychologists apply current, empirically based research on learning and cognition to the development of effective instructional strategies to promote student learning at the individual, group, and systems levels.*
- *School psychologists work with other school personnel to develop, implement, and evaluate effective interventions to improve learning engagement and academic outcomes.*
- *School psychologists incorporate all available information in developing instructional strategies to meet the individual learning needs of children and youth.*
- *School psychologists use culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate assessment techniques to identify and diagnose disabilities that affect development and learning. School psychologists use assessment data to select and implement evidence-based interventions that address identified learning and developmental needs.*
- *School psychologists share information about research in curriculum and instruction with educators, parents/guardians, and the community to promote improvement in instruction and student achievement.*
- *School psychologists facilitate the design and delivery of evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies that promote academic achievement in literacy, mathematics, and other content areas, through techniques such as teacher-directed instruction, peer tutoring, and interventions for self-regulation, planning/organization, and management of academic demands.*
- *School psychologists seek to maximize intervention acceptability and fidelity during the development, implementation, and evaluation of instructional interventions (NASP, 2020, p. 5).*

Domain 9 of the NASP 2020 Professional Standards also addressed contributions to the development of school-wide and individual intervention approaches as follows:

- Domain 9, Research and Evidence-Based Practice
- School psychologists have knowledge of research design, statistics, measurement, and varied data collection and analysis techniques sufficient for

understanding research, interpreting data, and evaluating programs in applied settings. As scientist practitioners, school psychologists evaluate and apply research as a foundation for service delivery and, in collaboration with others, use various techniques and technology resources for data collection, measurement, and analysis to support effective practices at the individual, group, and/or systems levels. Examples of professional practices associated with research and evidence-based practice include the following:

- *School psychologists evaluate, interpret, and synthesize a cumulative body of research findings and apply these as a foundation for effective service delivery.*
- *School psychologists advocate for the use of evidence-based educational practices in instruction, social-emotional learning, and positive behavioral supports at the individual, group, school, and district levels.*
- *School psychologists apply knowledge of evidence-based interventions and programs in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the fidelity and effectiveness of school-based intervention plans.*
- *School psychologists provide assistance for analyzing, interpreting, and using empirical foundations to support effective school practices.*
- *School psychologists evaluate, select, and interpret evidence-based strategies that lead to meaningful school improvement through enhanced school climate, academic achievement, and sense of safety.*
- *School psychologists communicate their knowledge about statistics and measurement principles to inform practices and decision-making.*
- *School psychologists understand principles of implementation science and program evaluation and apply these in a variety of settings to support other school leaders in developing, implementing, and monitoring programs that improve outcomes for all children and youth (NASP, 2020, p. 9).*

Orientation as a leader as related to the development of academic intervention models involves the critical first step of “speaking up” and identifying ineffective or deleterious educational practices undermining the needs of children. While this may be an intimidating notion for novice school psychologists, preparation in leadership theory and professional consultation may instill confidence among practitioners so that they may gracefully negotiate such challenges using data and research as the driving force. School psychologists, with robust training in research and evaluating the integrity of educational practices, are ideally suited to lead initiatives related to the design and implementation of intervention for *groups* of students, not merely individual students. They are knowledgeable in practices associated with implementation science and fidelity monitoring and possess consultative skills enabling them to educate others in the implementation of large-scale initiatives.

3.3 Implementation of Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring Systems to Evaluate Response to Intervention and Impact on Student Learning

School psychologists' knowledge of the psychometric properties of assessments is central to their role in identifying measures to be used for the purposes of benchmarking and progress monitoring of academic skills. In the school setting, school psychologists are assessment experts with advanced training in the differences between commonly found school-based assessments, many of which lack specificity and sensitivity for the purposes of determining present levels of functioning and growth in response to intervention. Likewise, school psychologists possess a high level of training in determining best practices in analyzing academic growth and progress as part of the course of intervention delivery (Hixon et al., 2014). Given the wealth of available benchmarking and progress monitoring offerings available to school districts, school psychologists should regularly assist district staff in understanding the differences between psychometrically sound benchmark measures, particularly between progress monitoring measures that are sensitive to small increments of growth and those that are subjective and qualitative measures of student achievement. By virtue of their training in assessment and intervention, school psychologists are situated to serve in leadership capacities in data teaming and problem-solving efforts to identify rates of improvement and make decisions regarding changes in the nature and intensity of academic interventions. Again, this role is one which allows for contributions on a systemic level in terms of overall district academic intervention planning design via MTSS, as well as individual contributions in terms of analyzing growth of individual students. Assisting in the design of universal data teaming procedures and protocols for buildings and the district at large serves as a potent means of applying leadership tenets in the practice of school psychology (Kovaleski & Pederson, 2014). NASP represents school psychologists' contributions in the domain of benchmarking and progress monitoring as follows:

- Domain 1, Data-Based Decision-Making (expanded definition presented above)
 - *School psychologists incorporate various techniques for collection, measurement, and analysis of data; accountability; and the use of technological resources in the evaluation of services at the individual, group, and/or systems levels.*
 - *School psychologists use data to monitor academic, social, emotional, and behavioral progress; to measure student response; to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions; and to determine when to modify or change an intervention.*
 - *School psychologists provide support for classroom teachers, school staff, and other stakeholders in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting universal screening and progress monitoring data to inform decision-making about the instructional, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students.*

- *School psychologists assist with the design and implementation of assessment procedures to determine the degree to which recommended interventions have been implemented, and they consider treatment fidelity data in all decisions that are based on intervention response and progress.*
- *School psychologists support the use of systematic, reliable, and valid data collection procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of and/or need for modification of school-based interventions and programs.*
- *School psychologists use information and technology resources to enhance data collection and decision-making (NASP, 2020, p. 3).*

3.4 Program Evaluation

In all renditions of the NASP Professional Standards since their inception, program evaluation has been conceptualized as a key role of the school psychologist. Given advanced training in statistics, research methods, and analysis of student growth, contributions that school psychologist can make from an evaluative perspective are immense and arguably better defined than those of other school professionals. Though many in the school environment may have historically viewed school psychologists as evaluators of individual students, the training imparted by graduate programs in school psychology affords them knowledge of research design methodologies, means of analyzing group performance data, and quantitative methods, positioning them to pioneer large-scale evaluations of academic intervention efficacy at the building and district level (Castillo, 2014). Given their knowledge base, which deviates substantially from other disciplines engaged in school operations, practitioners should seek to lead program evaluation efforts at the building and district level as related to the implementation of academic intervention programming, providing continuous feedback to administration and teachers so that model elements may be adjusted as needed to foster student growth. When combined with practitioner knowledge of evidence-based intervention approaches, school psychologists exemplify leadership potential in the design and evaluation of large-scale academic intervention models.

- Domain 9: Research and Evidence-Based Practice (expanded citation presented above)
 - *School psychologists understand principles of implementation science and program evaluation and apply these in a variety of settings to support other school leaders in developing, implementing, and monitoring programs that improve outcomes for all children and youth (NASP, 2020, p. 5).*

From a leadership perspective, the systems-level emphasis of NASP Domain 5, School Wide Practices to Promote Learning, encapsulates the leadership involvement of the school psychologist, given its emphasis on a systems-level scope of practice, organizational culture, and school-wide initiatives. In order to fully engage

in the efforts explicitly referenced in Domain 5, school psychologists must possess and apply not only consultative skills, but tacit leadership skills and knowledge of the ways to guide systemic initiatives.

- Domain 5: School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning
- School psychologists understand systems' structures, organization, and theory; general and special education programming; implementation science; and evidence-based school-wide practices that promote learning, positive behavior, and mental health. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, develop and implement practices and strategies to create and maintain safe, effective, and supportive learning environments for students and school staff. Professional and leadership practices associated with school-wide promotion of learning include the following:
 - *School psychologists, in collaboration with others, incorporate evidence-based strategies in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and practices in areas such as discipline, grading, instructional support, staff training, school improvement activities, program evaluation, and home-school partnerships.*
 - *School psychologists provide professional development, training, and ongoing coaching on a range of topics that help staff and parents/guardians to better understand the developmental needs of children and youth in schools and that promote the use of effective instructional strategies, positive classroom management practices, and the cultivation of supportive working relationships.*
 - *School psychologists use their knowledge of organizational development and systems theory to assist in promoting both a respectful, supportive atmosphere for decision-making and collaboration and a commitment to quality instruction and services.*
 - *School psychologists help staff members, students, and parents/guardians to resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully.*
 - *School psychologists are actively involved in the development and measurement of school improvement plans that affect the programs and services available to children, youth, and families. School psychologists assist in conducting needs assessments to help select school-wide programs based on the needs of the learning community.*
 - *School psychologists incorporate evidence-based strategies when developing and implementing intervention programs to facilitate the successful transition of students from one environment to another (e.g., program to program, school to school, grade to grade, and school to higher education and/or work).*
 - *School psychologists work with others to develop and maintain positive school climates and learning environments that support resilience and academic growth, promote high rates of academic engagement and attendance, and reduce negative influences on learning and behavior.*
 - *School psychologists participate in designing and implementing universal screening procedures to identify the need for additional academic or*

behavioral support services, as well as progress monitoring systems to promote successful learning and well-being.

- *School psychologists work collaboratively with other school personnel to create and maintain a multitiered system of services to support each student's attainment of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral goals.*
- *School psychologists analyze systems-level problems and identify factors that influence learning and behavior. They help other school leaders evaluate outcomes of classroom, building, and system initiatives, and they support shared decision-making practices designed to promote teacher leadership, include student voice, and meet general public accountability responsibilities (p. 6–7).*

4 Leadership Theory

Leadership theory as related to the practice of school psychology remains undeveloped, despite consistent reference to the importance of leadership in the NASP Blueprint for Training and Practice, NASP conference strands, and numerous other initiatives in the field of school psychology (Augustyniak, 2014). Given such, integration of established themes in educational and global leadership theory, combined with research findings related to the identification of leadership approaches most associated with the work of school psychologists (e.g., transformational leadership), serve as the basis upon which school psychologists should seek to serve as leaders in the implementation of academic interventions in the schools (Augustyniak et al., 2016). As asserted throughout the body of this chapter, perhaps the most important contribution that school psychologists can make as related to academic intervention planning in schools is that of knowledge. While the dynamic components of the development of academic intervention models are rooted in a wide array of disciplines, ranging from applied behavior analysis, special education, consultation, and school psychology, school psychology as a practice is the one discipline in which all elements of academic intervening systems consistently coalesce as a discrete skillset inherent to our work as professionals. While elements of MTSS and academic intervention planning are present in teacher preparation programs, universal standards for the acquisition of knowledge related to all elements of academic intervention planning, including needs assessment, academic intervention development, data collection, progress monitoring systems, and program evaluation efforts, as an integrated set of skills, are only evident in the graduate training standards of school psychologists. Given such, as potential purveyors of knowledge, school psychologists are situated to enact the change they wish to see in school environments by first availing themselves in an instructional capacity, whereby they are positioned to lead by disseminating knowledge. In accordance with principles of transformational leadership, creating change first requires that stakeholders perceive a need for change (Bass, 1985). School psychologists can leverage their knowledge of the unique elements of MTSS as related to academic intervention services to appeal to colleagues and those in positions of authority, identifying the

need for change via targeted needs assessments and other data-driven methodologies. As school psychologists are responsible for “inspiring commitment” among a diverse group of professionals whose “roles and objectives” may significantly differ from their own (Augustyniak, 2014, p. 23), using their knowledge of academic intervention service planning, by first conducting needs assessments as the impetus for school reform efforts, aligns with tenets of transformational leadership, specifying that leaders inspire change and goal-directed behavior by meeting a challenge (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). As there is perhaps no greater challenge facing many school systems than variability in student achievement on an individual and systems level, school psychologists have the ability to use this shared challenge in development of a common goal.

With the identification of a shared goal, school psychologists may advance the need for modifications to existing intervention structures and make available their aforementioned expertise across the essential domains of academic intervention planning. As de facto experts in intervention design, monitoring, and evaluation, school psychologists serve an invaluable role in designing district-wide academic intervention models, assisting others in understanding evidence-based intervention practices, providing instruction in evidence-based approaches to documenting student growth, and evaluating both the fidelity of the model and global model outcomes. By asserting their knowledge across such domains, conducting needs assessments, and establishing a common goal, practitioners may then develop model elements with school-based stakeholders via shared strategic planning employing elements of distributed leadership. In accordance with distributed leadership theory (Ritchie & Woods, 2007), an academic intervention steering committee, comprised of education stakeholders across representative disciplines, may be developed to conceptualize district or building plan elements across keystone domains (e.g., evidence-based interventions, progress monitoring, and so on). With the guidance of the school psychologist, shared decision-making and distributed responsibility for the implementation of strategic planning elements may then occur. In cultivating a vision that is appealing to constituents (inspirational motivation), mentoring and supporting teachers and other providers (individualized consideration), and providing knowledge, instruction, and insight into various elements of academic intervention model development, while also eliciting feedback from stakeholders (intellectual stimulation), school psychologists embody each of the critical elements of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Augustyniak et al., 2016). Throughout this process, the school psychologist should be attuned to the importance of utilizing their knowledge base, as well as their understanding of the “capacity of others,” including the structure of the organization and school climate, the latter of which are asserted to be critical factors related to leadership roles of school psychologists, often coming without formal designation as a school leader via administrative status (Augustyniak, 2014, p. 21).

Inherent to the ability of school psychologists to lead any initiative, academic intervention in orientation or otherwise are soft skills associated with the ability to assert oneself as a leader. Knowledge of the capacity of ones’ constituents, the ability to effectively consult, read, and interpret verbal and nonverbal cues, and

understand organizational phenomena, are skills that oftentimes may not easily be instructed but may be selected for or reinforced through enhanced instruction in consultation. At the conclusion of this volume, proposed approaches to increasing the pool of school psychology graduate candidates prepared to engage in leadership roles are discussed and are presented alongside of recommendations for more expansive instruction in consultation. Apart from innate abilities germane to leadership of school initiatives, explicit instruction in leadership models infused into school psychology graduate training programs, as also discussed in the concluding chapter, is essential. Given the ever-increasing scope of responsibility placed upon school psychologists, as well as the degree to which school psychologists, can, should, and already function as leaders of school-based initiatives, ensuring that practitioners are equipped to successfully navigate organizational charges for the betterment of children is of paramount importance.

References

- Augustyniak, K. (2014). Identifying and cultivating leadership potential in school psychology: A conceptual framework. *Psychology in the Schools, 51*(1), 15–31.
- Augustyniak, K., Kilanowski, L., & Privitera, G. (2016). Leadership practices of school psychologists: Views of multiple stakeholders. *School Psychology Forum, 10*(4), 371–385.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004).
- Batsche, G., Elliott, J., Graden, J. L., Grimes, J., Kovaleski, J. F., Prasse, D., Reschly, J., Shrag, J., & Tilly, W. D., III. (2005). *Response to intervention: Policy considerations and implementation*. National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- Castillo, J. (2014). Best practices in program evaluation in a model of response to intervention/multitiered systems of support. In A. Thomas & P. Harrison (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology: Foundations* (6th ed., pp. 329–342). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Castillo, J., & Curtis, M. J. (2014). Best practices in systems level change. In A. Thomas & P. Harrison (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology: Systems-level services* (6th ed., pp. 11–28). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Griffiths, A. J., Parson, L. B., Burns, M. K., & VanDerHeyden, A. M. (2007). *Response to intervention: Research for practice*. National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- Heller, K. A., Holtzman, W. H., & Messick, S. (Eds.). (1982). *Placing children in special education: A strategy for equity*. National Academy Press.
- Hixon, M. D., Christ, T. J., & Bruni, T. P. (2014). Best practices in the analysis of progress monitoring data and decision making. In A. Thomas & P. Harrison (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology: Foundations* (6th ed., pp. 343–354). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Kilpatrick, D. A. (2015). *Essentials of assessing, preventing, and overcoming learning disabilities*. Wiley.
- Kovaleski, J. F., & Pederson, J. A. (2014). Best practices in data analysis teaming. In A. Thomas & P. Harrison (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology: Data based and collaborative decision making* (6th ed., pp. 99–120). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 17*, 201–227. Retrieved from EBSCOhost: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/nses20/current#.UoVcmxUo5y0>

- National Association of School Psychologists. (2020). *NASP model for comprehensive and integrated school psychological services*. Retrieved online from <https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/nasp-practice-model>
- Preston, A. I., Wood, C. L., & Stecker, P. M. (2015). Response to intervention: Where it came from and where it's going. *Preventing School Failure, 60*(3), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2015.1065399>
- Ritchie, R., & Woods, P. A. (2007). Degrees of distribution: Towards an understanding of variations in the nature of distributed leadership in schools. *School Leadership & Management, 27*, 363–381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701563130>
- Stoiber, K. C. (2014). A comprehensive framework for multitiered systems of support in school psychology. In P. L. Harrison & A. Thomas (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology: Data-based and collaborative decision making* (pp. 41–70). National Association of School Psychologists.
- Tilly, D. W. (n.d.) Who founded RtI? Retrieved online from <https://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/255-who-founded-rti?tmpl=component>