

Message from the President

In my first message as President, I want to be sure to communicate to all fellow school psychologists that I am honored to represent our profession in Rhode Island, and I am committed to helping make the next two years fulfilling ones for RI school psychologists. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge all the hard work by our now past President, Elizabeth A'Vant. Liz has put a tremendous amount of time and energy into RISPA over the past years, while also balancing work and family life. She is an incredible leader and is now representing school psychologists on a national level as co-chair of NASP's Multicultural Affairs Committee. Congratulations, Liz... and thank you for everything you have done (and continue to do) for RISPA!

While I plan to continue where Liz left off (e.g., there are several projects that have already begun, including strategic planning and pursuing licensure), I have a few new goals that I have set for myself and the direction of RISPA for the next two years. First, I am hoping to help increase membership and involvement by other school psychologists, including more active involvement of graduate students and new school psychologists who are just starting out. I recall my first two to three years being the most difficult of all, and I feel that RISPA should be able to step up and help those who are still "green". (For those of you who are current grad students or brand-new to the practitioner world, see also my "Real World" School Psychology piece in this newsletter for some helpful, lighthearted tips.) Second, I would like to improve communication between the RISPA Board and its members by developing an active listserv. This listserv could function as a way to communicate with each other about important events and issues in school psychology as well as a forum to ask questions and seek assistance. Finally, I would like RISPA to be used more as an opportunity for networking and socializing with colleagues; we all have something to learn from each other, and support from colleagues is invaluable in a profession such as ours where we often do not have a department (or a school psychology supervisor) to lean on. Above all, I want to hear from YOU. What can RISPA do to help you in your schools? How can RISPA "give back" to the school psychology community? Please feel free to email me with ideas at kpristawa@cox.net.

Times are changing for school psychology: more and more emphasis on Response to Intervention, significant budget cuts across the state, and changes to Medicaid billing are just a few of the issues currently impacting Rhode Island school psychologists like never before. Even if you graduated from your school psychology program just a mere five years ago, chances are the profession looks a lot different. Despite these changes, it is a very exciting time to be a school psychologist in Rhode Island. Some highlights:

- The NASP convention this year is right in our own backyard: Boston, MA from February 24th to 28th. Take a look at the many workshop offerings on NASP's website (www.nasponline.org) and consider attending, even if just for a day.
- RISPA is currently looking into the possibility of legislative action to obtain licensure for Rhode Island school psychologists. Our legislative committee has been working hard to research the history of Medicaid changes across the country and devise a plan on how RI should act. Consequently, we are looking to move forward with pursuing licensure for school psychologists *within the school setting* so that our services can continue to be

reimbursable by Medicaid. Many states across the country already have this provision for school psychologists. Hopefully, many of you were able to attend our Annual Fall Conference on October 16th and learn about the changes to Medicaid billing and RISPA's response. If not, see the legislative update article in this newsletter for more information.

- RISPA has applied to become a NASP-Approved Provider of professional development. Once we gain this status, our conferences will be NASP-approved and will count towards the 25 NASP- or APA-approved (out of 75 total) credits needed to renew your NCSP. For more information regarding changes to the NCSP renewal process, see the handout from your NCSP committee inside this newsletter.
- One of our brand-new committees, Trainer-Practitioner Connections, has worked to recharge RISPA with energy by organizing networking/social events. For example, we held an end-of-the-year awards event last May and plan to continue this annual gathering in years to come. The committee is also planning upcoming mini-workshops to help build trainer and practitioner relationships.

In closing, we always welcome our members to become more involved with RISPA – as you can see from the above information, we have many active committees. Also know that if you have an I-Plan through the RI Department of Education or need continuing education credits for your NCSP, involvement on the RISPA Board and its committees can satisfy many of these requirements. RISPA board meetings occur on the second Wednesday of every month (except July and August) at Winman Junior High School in Warwick, but you do not need to attend board meetings to help out with RISPA work! Should you be interested in getting more involved with RISPA or would like to learn more about opportunities available through RISPA, please feel free to email me (kpristawa@cox.net). I look forward to meeting and working with many of you over the next few years!

Have a productive and enjoyable school year,

Kim

Kim Aguiar Pristawa