



## **CASP Invitation to Psychologists**

You are a psychologist, with all the knowledge and understanding of child development, cognition, perception, emotion, relationships, psychosocial adjustment, and mind-body connections that your training in psychology has afforded you. AND, you are in a position to use those broad skills with a wide audience, at an early age, in both intervention and prevention-based models. You have universal access to a population of children, families, and those who influence their development and can make a difference, because you go to them and are with them – they don't have to come to you! You have the ability to both promote emotional health and to forestall future dysfunctions. You are a school psychologist!

The opportunities for health promotion and early intervention that a school psychologist has are huge. No other branch of psychology has such access to such a large population at such an early age. Schools are the first legally mandated service that a child will encounter, so everyone from 5-18 years becomes your client, along with their parents, families, and teachers. In some provinces, publicly funded programs are beginning at pre-school and extending to university clinics, making the access even broader! Because you work in the system, you are on-call, in the mix, and constantly teaching, coaching and modeling measures to promote positive classroom and school climate, engage in activities to strengthen the community, and help parents and teachers better understand the children in their care.

You have the tools to identify problems, and because you are in the system, this identification can be early enough to allow for prompt intervention, which might avert later problems, academic or emotional/behavioural. Because you are in the system, as well, you can respond promptly to concerns in a positive and pro-active approach in the natural environment. Without this early intervention, problems grow and become chronic and possibly disabling. It is acknowledged that mental health issues are among the most serious challenges facing school-aged students, and if not addressed in a timely way, more serious involvement will be required to turn around or maintain status quo, as the problem persists or evolves, with its interference of functioning.

The role of a school psychologist is unique among psychologists in that it is not strictly pathology-based. While we have a role in 'fixing what is broken', we are in the best possible position to identify strengths in our children and youth ... and support and build

on them. As Jeff Grimes wrote in the National Association of School Psychologists' *Communiqué* (1997), "There needs to be a shift in focus from diagnosing how a learner is *disabled* to diagnosing how a learner can be *enabled*".

With that in mind, the possibilities for intervention are extensive and include wrap-around services in the family, school and community. Some of the most exciting initiatives today are developing bullying prevention programs, leading social skills and stress management sessions, teaching suicide awareness, parenting training and teacher professional development, all of which have wide appeal and far-reaching impacts on the mental health of a school population. And, of course, school psychologists are trained to understand the curriculum, learning process, and teaching methodology, and to apply evidence-based interventions for learning problems when they occur.

However, Canadian school psychology and school psychologists from the largest boards to most remote areas of Canada are facing some of the most serious challenges in our history. The Mental Health Commission of Canada has targeted children's mental health as a priority. We know that 20% of the population suffer from diagnosable mental health conditions, and most mental health problems arise during school years. Teachers are not trained to identify or intervene with these issues – but school psychologists are! Teachers rely on school psychologists to help them serve these troubled students. However, many boards are cutting psychology positions in a dangerously misguided attempt to balance budgets. Clearly, this is an era of exciting opportunities and possibilities that we can and must address to ensure the continuation of the critically important role of school psychology in all areas of education.

Now is the time to work together to promote our profession. School Psychologists need a national voice to protect and promote the essential services they provide in schools. The **Canadian Association of School Psychologists (CASP)** is more than 25 years old and is experiencing a much needed revival and growth. CASP is fully committed becoming truly representative of school psychologists in Canada.

**We invite you to join CASP** to become a member of school psychology's national representation group and to become a part of the proactive and dynamic initiatives currently underway to raise the profile of our profession and to serve the students, teachers, parents, and schools of Canada.

**... And here are some good reasons:**

- CASP is strategically placed to be a strong voice for Canadian school psychology to professionally support and advocate for school psychologists nationally and locally

- CASP and the Psychologists in Education Section of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) have a close reciprocal relationship that includes the joint publication of our *Newsletter*, providing updates on Canadian issues and activities as well as input from members.
- CASP members participate in various key local and national initiatives such as the CPA task force on publicly funded psychology positions in Canada, with the aim of securing positions and improving working conditions for psychologists who work in public service.
- CASP members are involved in all areas of school psychology from research to teaching, administration to practice.
- CASP is an Affiliate Member of the *International School Psychology Association*, allowing us the opportunity to work with psychologists in other countries to promote the profession globally. CASP members receive the newsletter of the ISPA, as well.
- CASP has established an electronic discussion board to enable members to exchange ideas, research articles, and concerns with the larger group – our attempt at a cross-country check-up and dialogue. Please post your views and information of interest to : <http://canschoolpsych.wordpress.com/>
- CASP members receive the print version of the *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, published by SAGE 4 times a year. *A very special issue on school mental health is in the works.*

This is the best time to join CASP, or renew a membership, and to grow with the association and with school psychology across Canada as you pursue your career. Attached is the 2013 CASP membership form. Student membership price is **\$50**; regular membership is **\$65**. We look forward to welcoming you as a member of your national professional school psychology association!

Best wishes,

Juanita Mureika L. Psych. (NB)

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