Welcome to the first issue of the PREPaRE Trainer’s Newsletter. This quarterly newsletter will provide trainers with the latest information and updates regarding the PREPaRE workshops, curriculum and related topics. Each issue will feature articles from PREPaRE authors as well as other trainers from across the nation. Updated links to PREPaRE information on the NASP website and other relevant websites will be provided. Thank you for your interest and dedication.

Melissa Reeves Goes to Washington!

Melissa Reeves is currently the chair of the NASP-sponsored PREPaRE workgroup. In addition to being a PREPaRE curriculum author and workgroup chair, Melissa has made countless national and international contributions by training and consulting with school professionals in the school crisis arena. Reeves’ efforts were recognized recently as she was selected to testify on behalf of the National Association of School Psychologists before the U.S. Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee for Disaster and Recovery. This invitation was extended by U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu, D-La. The subcommittee sought Reeves’ contributions regarding school crisis response as a follow-up to the report titled “Children and Disasters: A Progress Report on Addressing Needs.”

Through her testimony, Melissa urged the federal government to provide leadership and resources for federal, state, and local agencies to coordinate school-based mental health services for children affected by a natural disaster or other school crisis. In addition, Melissa spoke about the importance of funding for schools to train school-employed mental health professionals because, for many students, schools are the only place where they are able to access services.

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Development of My Awareness of the Need for Crisis Preparedness

Stephen E. Brock, PhD, NCSP
California State University, Sacramento

June 7, 1985, was a hot California day. A day that had begun with excitement had ended in tragedy. On the way to a park, a bus chartered for a sixth-grade party had collided with a truck. The bus driver and several students were trapped in the wreckage, several students were hospitalized, and one student was killed.

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The importance of garnering the support of a school board in reference to crisis prevention and intervention through a model like PREPaRE cannot be overstated. School Crisis Prevention and Intervention: The PREPaRE Model (Brock et al., 2009, pp. 37–38) lists 13 specific strategies that may be effective in securing and sustaining the support of the administration and colleagues while developing a crisis team. Among the items listed are a few that relate to school board members.

I would like to add a few things that have been helpful to me in working with school board members and, in turn, winning their support for important initiatives, especially crisis prevention and intervention.

- **School board members have a vested interest.** All school board members are members of the community. Oftentimes they are board members and members of the school community longer than many administrators, including superintendents. In essence, when no longer in office and still living in the area, they are still part of the school community. Many times school board members have direct ties with other municipal services like government, fire, police, parks and recreation, etc. Because of this, they can be excellent resources in the development of crisis plans and might be able to help get things done efficiently in the event of a crisis.

- **School board members work closely with the school’s legal services.** One of the important roles of the school board is the development of policies. The school’s attorney works closely with the school board. Should the district make decisions regarding crisis prevention and management policies, it is inevitable for the school attorney to become involved. He or she may even develop a working relationship with you by being included on a committee formed to develop policies, procedures, and make recommendations. This is an excellent opportunity for a new venue of exposure for school mental health professionals. School board members and those who work closely with them (i.e., school lawyers) will hopefully come to appreciate the large role that school psychologists can play in developing and improving school safety policy.

- **Be visible to school board members.** This is probably one of the easiest things to do. Absent any pressing issue, school board meetings are usually not well attended. Therefore, if you make the time and attend a few meetings on a regular basis, your attendance will be noted. Districts have different policies about the manner in which employees and school board members typically work together. However, school board meetings are open to the public. Consider learning more about those who represent the community in which you work while they in turn learn, though informally, more about who you are and what you do. Your presence will show, at the very least, that you are more interested in what is going on in the district than many others who work in the school.

Gotta Have It!

ToT Participants are now required to purchase the PREPaRE book as part of their ToT training and current PREPaRE Trainers are strongly encouraged to purchase and read the book before conducting their next training.

- More in-depth and specific information
- Expanded foundational knowledge
- Additional references
Specific feedback was provided on the importance of schools being involved in crisis planning, preparedness, intervention, and recovery, of having clear policies that recognize the importance of schools in disaster and crisis response, and funding to train school staff in developing comprehensive crisis plans and teams that balance physical and psychological safety. She hopes the subcommittee’s report will lead to clear policies that recognize the importance of schools in disaster and crisis response. Ideally, the policies would give schools the mandate and funding to develop crisis plans and teams, train school staff, strengthen the school’s capacity to deliver short- and long-term mental health services, and sustain these supports over time.

“Schools need an adequate number of school-employed mental health professionals, such as school psychologists, who can provide the ongoing expertise and support before, during and following a crisis,” Reeves said. “These are the professionals trained to link services and interventions to learning, not just in the event of a major disaster, but through daily challenges that affect children’s academic achievement and well-being.” She firmly believes that when children's mental health needs are addressed on a daily basis, students will be more available for learning, and research shows academic achievement to be higher.

Her testimony can be found at:


Shortly after Melissa’s testimony, Senator Landrieu introduced the bill titled “The Child Safety, Care & Education Continuity Act.” A brief overview of the bill can be found at http://landrieu.senate.gov/media/Children_In_Disasters_Backgrounder.pdf. If you would like a copy of the full bill, please email Melissa Reeves at mereev@aol.com to request a copy. NASP continues to work with Senator Landrieu’s office and other professional organizations to further mental health services in schools.

A special thanks to Melissa for her hard work and dedication.

Survey Research

Thanks to your help in administering pretests, posttests, and workshop evaluations at each training, the PREPaRE workgroup has gained valuable information about the extent to which workshop objectives are met. The preliminary results are very positive, in that participants have shown increased knowledge in content related to workshop objectives, more positive attitudes about providing crisis prevention and intervention services, and high satisfaction with the workshops. With just a couple of exceptions, these results hold up across trainers (whether or not the workshops were conducted by curriculum authors or nonauthors), supporting the viability of the Train-the-Trainer model.

Beyond these immediate gains in knowledge and satisfaction with the workshops, it is very important that we also investigate what participants do with the training in their day-to-day work. If there are barriers to making change, we want to know about them so that we can do what we can to link participants to support and resources for implementing these crisis prevention and intervention strategies in their work. Therefore, we are sending out two surveys: one to a random sample of PREPaRE participants and another to contact people who have sponsored a PREPaRE training. Surveys will be used to document our success and inform future efforts in implementing PREPaRE principles. Please be on the lookout for these and complete them if they come your way!
Development of My Awareness of the Need for Crisis Preparedness

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On the day of this bus accident, I was looking forward to a summer vacation away from my career as a school psychologist. Suddenly, however, my attention was refocused on my profession as the first reports of this tragedy were received. As this crisis unfolded, school psychologists were portrayed as playing a critical role in helping families, students, and staff cope with this event. It was at this point that I realized that I could someday be placed in a similar position. This realization heightened sensitivity to school crises and I became aware of the fact that they occurred frequently. For me, this awareness generated anxiety as I encountered some unsettling questions. How does one conduct a crisis intervention? What does the school crisis response involve? What was the school's role during times of crisis? The reality of these questions soon became a personal reality for me.

My first crisis response occurred after an accidental shooting. One day after school, two elementary grade boys began to play with a loaded rifle at home. One of the boys was holding the rifle on his lap when it discharged into the head of his friend. The wounded child’s life was threatened and initially there were fears that he would not survive. Fortunately, he eventually made a complete recovery. However, in the meantime, each of the classrooms at the boys’ school was very upset. Both were popular students, and many classmates considered each their friend. Rumors ran rampant. Issues of blame, questions of the intentionality of the shooting and punishment of the shooter were common. Students needed assistance dealing with this reality. They also needed help with how to respond to the student who had fired the rifle when he returned to school.

This first crisis intervention was unsettling. I knew that I needed to intervene. However, I was not exactly sure how to proceed, as these events are not routine. Although I had given some consideration to crisis response, neither I nor my school district had engaged in any formal crisis preparedness efforts. Additionally, I felt very much on my own, as there were no school or district resources that I could turn to for guidance and support. Looking back on these crisis responses, I felt that I did an adequate job. However, as I realized that I could have been much better prepared, the importance of crisis preparedness became clear.

Subsequently, I have invested significant time reading and writing about crisis theory, attending and providing numerous crisis intervention workshops, and listening carefully to accounts of how other school psychologists have helped their schools cope with crises. From these experiences, I have come to realize that it is not only possible to prepare for school crises, but that it is preferable to do so. Having a crisis response plan in place significantly lessens anxiety about intervening. By providing a clear sense of direction, a crisis plan results in a more effective response. Systematic preparedness also helps to minimize the amount of trauma students may experience, and maximizes the likelihood they will adapt successfully to crises. The culmination of this realization was my participation in the development of the PREPaRE curriculum. With PREPaRE, I hope that the anxiety generated by school associated crises is lessened for school psychologists as they become better PREPaREd to respond to all types of critical incidents.

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PREPaRE workshops have been conducted in 36 states and 4 countries outside the United States!
NASP 2010 Annual Convention Chicago

PREPaRE UPDATES

- By now you should have received an e-mail highlighting and detailing recent PREPaRE curriculum updates. If not, please contact the PREPaRE Coordinator at NASP at prepare@naspweb.org.

- PREPaRE workshops 1 & 2 will be offered at the NASP summer conference in Denver, CO, July 12 (WS#1) and July 13–14 (WS#2). PREPaRE workshops have been selling out, so early registration is highly recommended. To register for the summer conference, please visit http://www.nasponline.org/conventions/summerconf.aspx

- PREPaRE Training of Trainers (ToT) will be held at the NASP summer conference in Nashville, TN, on July 26–28. To register, please visit: http://www.nasponline.org/conventions/summerconf.aspx

- Don’t forget! A school district or state conference can always make a request for one or both workshops and/or ToT workshops.

- There is a new journal article regarding PREPaRE in preparation for publication by the Journal of School Violence—Keep an eye out for this in 2011.

- There are new PREPaRE documents on the NASP website if you haven’t checked there lately. http://www.nasponline.org/prepare/index.aspx

- Workshops 1 & 2 were sold out at the Chicago convention!

Graduate Course Instructor?

If you teach PREPaRE workshops within a graduate class, you can download sample syllabi for use within your course. Find out how other instructors are incorporating PREPaRE workshops and the PREPaRE book as the designated text within their courses.

http://www.nasponline.org/prepare/preparesyllabi.aspx
Haiti Resources

A big thanks to all those who developed resources after the earthquake in Haiti. We know that many people will have benefited from these high quality resources that were developed with lightning speed. These resources are available at http://www.nasponline.org/resources/

PREPaRE Curriculum Revisions

The PREPaRE workgroup is in the early stages of the revision process for both PREPaRE workshops. Feedback will be obtained from PREPaRE trainers and possibly a random sample of workshop participants. Mid-to late 2011 is the earliest possible target date for revision completion. An e-mail has been sent out soliciting feedback and ideas for revisions. Your contributions will help shape the next edition of PREPaRE!

PREPaRE Summary Documents

New PREPaRE summary documents have been posted to the NASP PREPaRE website that can be utilized to write grant applications and garner support and funding for PREPaRE trainings. These documents provide an overview of how PREPaRE is evidence-based and integrates with educational initiatives, provides program evaluation data, summarizes PREPaRE referenced journal articles and books, and provides statistics regarding the number of professionals and locations where training has occurred. These documents can be found at http://www.nasponline.org/prepare/addlddocuments.aspx.

American Red Cross Training

Ted Feinberg, PREPaRE workgroup member, cemented a relationship with the American Red Cross earlier this year. School psychologists can now take ARC classes to become American Red Cross disaster volunteers. This is a golden opportunity for those who want to become involved on a local and national basis with the American Red Cross. Call your local ARC chapter to sign up for a training course.

PREPaRE FACT

PREPaRE instructors have trained over 5,000 participants across the nation (and other countries).