

2009 OSPA School Psychologist of the Year

The Ohio School Psychologists Association selects one practitioner each year as the Ohio School Psychologist of the Year. Nominations are submitted through the regional associations. The Ohio School Psychologist of the Year is a member of OSPA who demonstrates current excellence in the delivery of school psychological services to students, families, and teachers typically within a school setting. A school psychologist must spend 75% of the time in direct service delivery in order to be eligible for this award. The Ohio School Psychologist of the Year is nominated by OSPA in the following year for the NASP School Psychologist of the Year Award.

OSPA believes it to be an honor to be nominated by the regional association and we would like to recognize three nominees for 2009.

Nominee and Winner from Cleveland Regional: Dr. Linda M. Neiheiser

Dr. Linda Neiheiser is current President of the Ohio School Psychologists Association and Past-President of the Cleveland Association of School Psychologists. She serves on ten boards in Northeast Ohio, including the Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital Leadership Board, University Hospitals Case Medical Center's Psychiatry Advisory Board, Kent State University's Foundation Board of Directors, the Gilmour Academy Board of Trustees, and the Diocese of Cleveland Stewardship Committee. She is also Chairman of the Board of Directors of Cornerstone of Hope, a grief and bereavement center in Ohio. Previously, Dr. Neiheiser served as the appointed psychologist on the Governor's Ohio Adoption Task Force, which provided recommendations for change in Ohio adoption law, and was appointed to the Monitoring Committee for the *Adopt Cuyahoga's Kids* Initiative.

An Adjunct Professor of School Psychology at Kent State University and full-time Practitioner in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Dr. Neiheiser began her career in Cleveland schools as a Visual Art teacher, followed by Department Chair. After earning her first Master's Degree in Guidance Counseling, she implemented a desegregation-based program in dozens of Cleveland schools before becoming Coordinator of the Internal Suspension program. She earned additional licensure in areas of Pupil Personnel, Educational Administrative Specialist, Supervision, and Administration, and completed her practicum work in these areas. She served on several Superintendents' Task Forces and traveled nationally to recruit minority candidates for employment in Cleveland schools.

After earning a second Master's and a Ph.D. in School Psychology, Dr. Neiheiser served in numerous capacities in CMSD's Division of Psychological Services, including Supervisor of Interns, Practicum students, and Psychiatry Fellows, Chair of the Psychology Research Committee, and Liaison to the University Hospitals Kinship Adoption Project. She has worked in multiple school settings and presently provides psychological services to Cleveland students in day- and residential-treatment facilities in four counties.

Since 1990, Dr. Neiheiser has presented dozens of symposia and papers on various school psychology topics and is a regular invited presenter at the National Association of School Psychologists conventions and at the International School Psychology Association. Her

published works include government policy reports, book chapters, and handbooks. A researcher on adoption issues, her findings have recently been presented at NHSScotland, a national health service in the UK. She also developed and is the Coordinator of the NASP Adoption & Foster Care Interest Group, and serves as Mentor to NASP first-time attendees

In addition, Dr. Neiheiser performs global outreach work in Honduras annually, working in a clinic and performing manual labor at Nuevo Paraiso, a Catholic orphanage. She has presented Kent State University with a significant gift to support its School Psychology program, and underwrites an annual NASP/APA travel award for deserving scholars, a scholarship for Ph.D. students, and an adoption conference that draws national speakers to Kent State. She also serves on Kent State's School Psychology Advisory Board.

Dr. Neiheiser's positive attributes do not end with her scholarly achievements. Comments provided to the CASP Awards Committee described her as optimistic, respectful, versatile, hard-working, generous, innovative and inspiring. Dr. Neiheiser has dedicated her outstanding career to advocating for children with the best resources available, and continues to be a valuable asset to the field.

On behalf of the Ohio School Psychologists Association, the Awards Committee bestows the Ohio School Psychologist of the Year Award for 2009 to Dr. Linda M. Neiheiser.

Linda Neiheiser's remarks:

I love quotes. Everyone else speaks far more eloquently than I. So here are a couple of apropos quotes:

The late comedian Jack Benny once said, "I don't deserve this award. Of course, I have arthritis and I don't deserve that, either."

The English actor, Peter Ustinov, said, "To refuse awards is another way of accepting them with more noise than is normal."

So, attempting to be less noisy, I humbly accept this award -- simple and to the point.

I am grateful to my former professors; to my colleagues in Cleveland; to my fellow OSPA volunteers; to my students in the Cleveland schools and my graduate students at Kent State University; to my friends and family, parents, husband and children...from whom I have learned so much of what I know.

I am grateful to win this award from an organization that I admire so very much. "Thank you" to the Awards Committee, especially Kristen Prough and Rebecca Dingeldein, for all that they do for OSPA.

And a special note of gratitude to Dan Dean, former Pete Gross Best Practice Award winner and current CASP Regional Representative, for his generous and kind words in the nomination process.

Nominee from Central Ohio Regional: Dr. Eric Pickering

Dr. Eric Pickering is the nominee for the 2009 School Psychologist of the Year from the School Psychologists of Central Ohio. In their opinion he possesses not only the technical and professional skills for this nomination, but also the personal and interpersonal skills. Eric is described as a good listener, who is respectful to others, and shows initiative and leadership. Above all, he keeps the needs of his students as his priority.

During his ten years as a School Psychologist in Grandview Heights City Schools, Eric has taken on many diverse roles and has made many contributions to students and programs within the district. Overall, he has expanded the role and function of school psychologists, and has demonstrated the greater impact for the children, staff, and parents in the Grandview Heights City Schools Community. He has served as an Intervention Assistance Team coordinator, Project SOAR district consultant, Mental Health Specialist for the ED program, and Supervisor for the ED program, all while performing his “typical” duties. Eric is very active in overall staff development. He is also a trained district data specialist in both Project SOAR data and the State of Ohio Achievement Data. His expertise is noted in both the academic and mental health realms.

Eric is highly regarded as a professional within his district. No matter what role he fills, he brings initiative, creativity, expertise, and a highly professional approach to his duties. One of his principals noted that he appreciates Eric’s thoroughness, follow through, and clarity in explaining the particular needs of a student and how to best help that student. Additionally, parents appreciate the information and counsel he shares with them regarding their child.

Both staff and parents place a great deal of trust and confidence in Eric.

Congratulations, Eric, on your nomination for School Psychologist of the Year by your colleagues in Central Ohio! They regard you as an extremely competent professional and admire your personal and professional qualities. You are known for your dedication to helping students learn, and to meet with success in all aspects of life.

Nominee from Kent/Akron Regional: Mrs. Aimee A. Kirsch

The Kent Akron Association of School Psychologists nominated Aimee A. Kirsch for the 2009 School Psychologist of the Year award. She has been a full time school psychologist for Akron Public Schools for the past 10 years. During that time she has expanded the traditional role and function of the school psychologist to include broad based assessment and intervention with several thousand students across one of the largest school systems in Ohio.

Over half of Aimee’s tenure in Akron Public Schools was devoted to providing comprehensive school psychological services through the Pupil Adjustment Program. She coordinated assessment, counseling, intervention, alternative program placement, and other supports for referred students. Her efforts in this regard were recognized in 2003 by OSPA’s *F. Peter Gross Best Practice Award*.

For the past several years Aimee has served as the district's Pyramid Coach, where her initial responsibility was to analyze systems and provide in-service training to school based teams on how to reduce problematic behavior and decrease the suspension rate. In this role, she has researched the best models of RTI, then compiled and synthesized the information into a unique system, the "Pyramid of Learning." In order to bring her ideas into practice, Aimee authored a comprehensive training manual for use by a variety of school-based practitioners. This program is now fully operational in every one of the approximately 55 buildings across the district, and delivers positive outcomes to diverse and challenging populations of elementary, middle, and high school students.

Aimee also serves in the following capacities: liaison to the School Improvement Leadership Team, Value Added specialist, and district rep to the Building Leadership Teams. She has provided training and consultation to a variety of school districts and State Support Teams. Additionally, Aimee is an adjunct professor at Ashland University, and recently completed her training in school neuropsychology.

Aimee has been a ten year member of Kent Akron School Psychologists Association, serving as treasurer and president. She is currently their regional representative to OSPA. Congratulations Aimee on your nomination for School Psychologist of the Year by your colleagues in the Kent Akron School Psychologists Association.