

# PSI PARADIGM®

A PSI Communique for the Educational Community

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## PSI Matters!

### Editor's Note:

PSI will be periodically publishing issues of *Paradigm* focusing on the three tenets that encompass its name: **P= Partners**, **S= Success**, **I= Innovation**.

We are proud of these three facets that truly describe our mission and the standards and goals to which we continually aspire. This issue will focus on the important relationships PSI has with its various Expert Partners such as Tim Rasinski, PhD and Scott Poland, EdD. They provide PSI and its partner schools with immediate access to the latest information in their fields through consultation, training and education. Also included will be school and/or staff success stories on innovative programs in which they are involved.

We hope you join us in honoring these efforts as we all work toward the goal we have in common: to provide the very best for our students as we assist them in **learning, thriving and growing**.

**P = Partners    S = Success    I = Innovation**

## P=Partners

### Dr. Tim Rasinski Brings Reading Fluency to Life

- Jessica Nave, Educational Specialist

**Reading Fluency**, which is a critical but often neglected goal of reading programs, was brought to life by [Dr. Timothy Rasinski](#) during a recent PSI professional development session. Rasinski, best-selling author and professor at Kent State University, provided participants with a model of reading instruction, and he stressed the importance of foundational reading skills in children, expressing that the ultimate goal of reading, comprehension, cannot be achieved without these foundational skills.

Fluency instruction is one of these foundational skills. Fluency is the ability to read accurately, quickly, expressively while using good phrasing and achieving comprehension. Rasinski focused his session on these components of effective fluency instruction: **Accuracy with Words, Modeling Fluent Reading, Assisted Reading, Practice, Phrasing, and Synergy**.

Rasinski provided plenty of examples of activities that could be incorporated into the classroom immediately to assist with improving students' reading fluency. Rasinski suggests harvesting words.

"Whenever reading to your students, reciting a poem, singing a song, or playing a word game in your class, if you or your stu-

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## Bringing Reading Fluency to Life

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dents notice any interesting words, have them call out the words at the end of the read aloud. Write the words on a daily word wall and talk about the meaning of the words and begin to use the words in your own oral language over the next several days. Encourage your students to also use the words in their oral and written language,” Rasinski said.

If a teacher is able to harvest five or six words per day, the students will be exposed to 900-1,180 new words over the course of the school year. Rasinski also stressed the importance of teaching Latin and Greek roots to students. Creating a root wall and brainstorming words with the root of focus can help increase word comprehension and fluency.

Assisted reading was also discussed as a component that can be used to teach reading fluency. “Assisted reading refers to the notion that what a person cannot read fluently on his or her own, he or she can develop fluency when reading orally with another reader who is more fluent,” Rasinski said.

There are many forms of assisted reading, including choral reading, paired reading, audio-assisted reading, and captioned video text. Rasinski said you can create your own audio-assisted reading files using online programs like Audacity, and captioned video text practice can be achieved through the use of karaoke machines and captioned television shows.

Another component addressed was repeated reading. When students are ready to practice and incorporate phrasing into their reading, Rasinski suggests repeated reading. Rasinski said repeated reading works best and is most authentic when readers are given an opportunity to perform the texts they practice. This can also increase the confidence levels of the readers. Besides confidence, repeated reading can provide another benefit.

“When readers practice a passage, they improve on the passage on which they practiced. However, improvement is also apparent on passages readers have not yet read,” Rasinski said. When repeating reading of authentic texts, teachers can use readers theater, poetry, song lyrics, speeches, chants, monologues, dialogues, and letters.

Participants in Rasinski’s workshop left with ideas that can be incorporated immediately into their classrooms, plenty of resources, and a renewed energy for teaching fluency to students!

## Keep Schools Safe

*Planning plays a key role in preventing School Violence*

*Scott Poland, Ed.D.  
National Expert on Suicide Prevention*

**V**iolence in school is a widely misunderstood issue that breeds contention and fear in educators, parents, and the community. School violence is rare: FBI data shows that students are far safer in schools than they are even at home. However, when horrific tragedies occur, school officials, parents, and the community tend to do one of two things: **Underreact or Overreact.**

Underreacting comes from the mindset of “this couldn’t happen here” and suggests complacency. Overreacting leads to calls for excessive security measures, including a movement to arm teachers. I’ve been responding to school crisis and violence for 30 years and have personally responded to 15 school shootings. I’ve found that balanced plans that prepare students and staff for emergencies while avoiding traumatizing them are the ones that keep schools the most safe.

### *Preventing Tragedy*

In the aftermath of school shootings, some administrators take every necessary measure to safeguard their students. However, what seems sensible is often overzealous from an objective viewpoint. The most pertinent example is the concept of active shooter drills. I’ve seen schools stage shootings with real firearms and fake blood. One even cast two students in the role of “shooter,” an action that could trigger trauma in those students, especially those who have experienced violence at home.

What is the goal of a school violence policy? No one would say that the primary objective is to invoke fear. Unfortunately, that may be the primary takeaway for students in the face of overzealous strategies.

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## For More

For more on Timothy Rasinski, including products, resources, and references, visit his website at: [www.timrasinski.com](http://www.timrasinski.com).



## Keep Schools Safe

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Many school shootings may have been prevented with a smart, practical plan in place that routinely discusses safety with staff and students and gets their commitment to it. Oftentimes, active shooter scenarios are missing that crucial foundation.

Furthermore, a poor or unbalanced school violence protocols actually can contribute to violence in schools by failing to focus on an effective safety program's most basic criteria—student and staff involvement. For example, the University of Colorado Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence and the University of Northern Colorado's Department of Criminal Justice recently released a report on the 2013 school shooting at Colorado's Arapahoe High School.

The report said an anemic threat assessment program, poor record keeping, and a "culture of silence" were among the gaps in school policy that allowed shooter Karl Pierson to enter the school, armed with the intent to kill. The shooting spurred Colorado lawmakers to pass legislation bearing the name of Pierson's victim, 17-year-old Claire Davis. It allows lawsuits against schools in the state when there are shootings or other violence. This is a wakeup call for schools across the country. Do we think that similar legislation won't be put into place in other states? Do we want to take the chance?

### *Violence Policy Goals*

Schools need to pay attention, and the opportunity to thoughtfully and meticulously plot every step of a school violence and crisis prevention strategy is relevant now more than ever. To get started, we have to answer the central question posed earlier in this article: [What is the goal of a school violence plan?](#)

In active shooter scenarios, many schools fail to ask precisely what they expect students to learn or how students are expected to behave. Simulated gunfire, stage blood, and students cast as villains don't teach anyone anything useful. The No. 1 goal of any effective active shooter/crisis drill should be to instruct students to listen to the nearest adult and do what they say, and then to practice it. Simulating a "realistic" school shooting doesn't teach students that.

Additionally, what kinds of measurement and data collection inform this policy? For any administrator considering crisis drills, a pre-test and a post-test to find out if students feel safe in school is an essential step. Do your students feel safe in your school? Compare the data to that collected after the drill. Do they feel safer? If not, are crisis drills the right strategy? If they feel safe already, do you need to simulate one at all?

[Students and their sense of safety and recourse when threatened must be at the heart of any school violence prevention policy. Administrators need to survey their students and find out what their concerns are regarding school violence. Further, schools need to be proactive in getting them involved by committing them to safety pledges and providing them with resources they can use to safely report threats.](#)

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Scott Poland ([spoland@nova.edu](mailto:spoland@nova.edu)) is the co-director of the Suicide and Violence Prevention Office at Nova Southeastern University. He is the author of numerous books on school crisis and has written courses for Scenario Learning ([www.scenariolearning.com](http://www.scenariolearning.com)).

## PSI Provides Partner Schools with Opiate Crisis Information

[There is a growing opiate crisis in our country, and Ohio leads the nation in overdose deaths.](#)

How can we work to protect today's students? Nancy Pommerening, executive director of Drug Awareness and Prevention, Inc. recently led a webinar for PSI about the current drug crisis and prevention education. According to Pommerening, the United States, which makes up 5 percent of the world's population, uses over 60 percent of the world's illegal drugs and over 80 percent of the world's prescription opiates. Drug abuse, Pommerening said, costs the United States \$180.9 billion annually through societal and medical costs. Problems with prescription drug abuse are relatively new.

Pommerening said that there are many causes of this new drug crisis, including overprescribing medication, pharmaceutical company profits, and self-medicating. Especially noticeable is the drastic increase in fentanyl-related deaths in Cuyahoga County beginning in 2013. Fentanyl is especially dangerous because it is used to "cut" powdered heroin and is 50-100 times as strong as heroin. In Cuyahoga County in 2016, fentanyl caused 375 of 663 fatal overdoses.

So what can be done about this current crisis? Pommerening's mission is to lessen the demand for illicit drugs through education and prevention strategies. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers six key strategies in prevention: information dissemination, prevention education, alternative to use, community-based process, problem identification and referral, and environmental strategies. Examples of individual and environmental risk factors include early aggressive behavior, poor social skills, lack of parental supervision, substance abuse, drug availability, and poverty.

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## PSI Provides Partner Schools with Opiate Crisis Information

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Protective factors to help reduce the risk of addiction include self-control, positive relationships, parental monitoring and support, academic competence, anti-drug use policies, and strong neighborhood attachment. One such program working to decrease deaths caused by overdose is **Project DAWN** (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone), a community-based overdose education and naloxone distribution program. Project DAWN works to prevent the number of drug-related deaths due to opiate overdoses through the use of naloxone, which blocks or reverses the effects of opiate drugs.

Pommerening says that prevention to target early use is the biggest key to prevent addiction as age of first use is the most significant risk factor. She says that if possible, school-based prevention programs should be integrated into the school's academic program. These programs, she says, can be infused into the core curriculum. Besides the end-goal of reducing the number of addictions and overdoses in the future, Pommerening also says that science-based drug prevention programs lead to increases in science achievement test scores.

One such prevention program is Brain Power. The program aligns with science and technology standards in today's curriculum. The program can be incorporated into science and health classes so there is no daily schedule interruptions for teachers (it will take five to ten hours each year to complete the program). The cost-effective program also includes a parent newsletter, supplemental worksheets, games, DVDs, posters, trading cards, and extension activities. Presented using multimedia and interactive lessons, the program meets the needs of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.

Brain Power uses age-appropriate lessons that target stages of development for students in Kindergarten through grade 12. For example, grade 1 students learn about scientists and how to keep their brains healthy, grade 3 may be learning about how the brain sends and receives messages and how drugs can affect the brain, while grade 5 learns about how the brain functions with the human body and how drugs can affect the brain, nervous system, and body.

For more information on the Brain Power program and how you can bring it to your school, visit: <http://ow.ly/yIqK30c7aYx>.

For access to the webinar, visit: <http://ow.ly/ssL530c7b6M>.

## Special Needs Success Stories

Now at her second year at PSI, **Ms. J Quinones, an LPN in Special Needs Nursing**, works with her client at Luis Munoz Marin School in Cleveland. Currently, she spends three days a week with one student by way of curbside service. This means she meets the student at home, spends three days a week with the student and then returns to the student's home eight hours later via school transportation.

The student with this need is still part of the class despite having a much lower performance level. For example, a child who is seven or eight might only be able to do what a child of twelve months can. The teachers and the nurse work with the student on a one-on-one basis. The term 'special needs' can apply to any number of disabilities. "The reality is that such students won't learn as other children would," Ms. Quinones says. It is extremely challenging work!

During a typical school day the nurse will pay close attention to the student's behavior, check vital signs, use catheters, monitor tube feeds, attend to matters of personal hygiene, take care of basic needs, note any signs of wounds or abrasions, accompany the student to special intervention classes (art, gym, music, media, Spanish), assist in helping with academics, and engage in sensory integration activities.

An LPN has many types of work to choose from. For this nurse, working with children who have special needs, the choice has been easy. She is in it for the long run!

For more information contact Paula Harris, Special Needs Manager, at [paulaharris@psi-solutions.org](mailto:paulaharris@psi-solutions.org).



Walsh Jesuit High School Students prove success along with their **PSI Mandarin teacher, Hui-ying Lee**. The National Chinese Honors Society Induction ceremony was recently held at Walsh for six new inductees. Congrats to all!

# Ensuring Success

*How to Get Your Special Needs  
Child a Quality Education*

*Jenny Wise  
PSI Educator and Parent*

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“Special needs” is a broad term that encompasses many different (and sometimes, coexisting) needs or conditions. Children might have a physical disability, a mental illness, ADHD, or simply difficulty learning. Whatever the case may be, there are special education systems in place to support special needs children in their continued success.

As a parent, of course you only want the best for your child. This includes his or her education. When seeking special education services and resources for your child, it is important to remember that not all schools are equipped to teach all types of [special needs](#).

Here are some questions to ask for ensuring a quality education for your child, regardless of his or her condition, abilities and unique needs:

- Is the class inclusive, instructing a combination of special needs, disabled and abled children or is it specifically a special education classroom?
- Is the classroom well lit?
- Does it seem to be safe and nurturing?
- Does it promote diversity and inclusion?
- What is the student-to-teacher ratio?
- How many teachers are present in the classroom?
- If there is a regular education teacher, is a special education teacher also available to co-teach?
- Is this school equipped to handle the specific special education needs of your child?

When you meet your child’s teacher for the first time, be sure to ask questions to determine his or her teaching style. Is he or she certified and trained to work with children who have special needs or disabilities? How many years experience does he or she have? Does he or she break learning objectives down into smaller, [short-term pieces](#)? If so, this is ideal for students of all learning types so students feel a sense of confidence and accomplishment as they work through learning objectives.

If you feel you have the resources available to homeschool your child, it is important to consider that homeschooling can be very tedious, difficult and sometimes even a struggle. In addition to teaching your child the required curriculum, you’ll also need the patience to handle any meltdowns, lack of confidence, strong emotions or other frustrations your child might experience during the learning process. Depending on the severity of your child’s condition, each day might be a struggle for him or her, and you will experience your child’s emotions on a greater scale if you are homeschooling.

Regardless of whether or not you homeschool your child, you may also want to consider a [service dog](#). Service dogs are individually trained to work with those in need, including children with special needs. Whether your child has autism, physical disability, or another type of special need, a service dog can be a wonderful way to support your child and transform his or her life. According to the charity [Merlin’s Kids](#), “the dogs save the kids and the kids save the dogs; it’s a match made in Heaven!”

In the end, it is up to you to decide what type of education and which resources would best benefit your child. **Remember, you are the best advocate for your child’s needs.** Your child is probably too young to advocate for himself or herself, and as a parent, you unfortunately can’t always count on the school system to advocate for you. By doing your research and coming into the situation prepared, you’ll be able to make the best possible decisions for your child’s future.



Photo courtesy of Pixabay by [Pezibear](#)

# PSI's Ashley Haas

## *Receives Kudos on Program Implementation*

This Fall I created and implemented a Coping Skills Group at Towpath Trail High School. The program sought to complement Towpath's mission of educating and supporting alternative students. It was a nine-week long small group that taught students how to effectively manage stress. The group reached out to students who were rated by staff members as currently or at-risk of experiencing high levels of stress, but it was open weekly to any student who wished to participate. It was held during each school session (morning and afternoon) and had a total of 33 participants. Weekly lessons included: education on stress and coping skills, meditation, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, mandalas, journaling, positive psychology, cognitive distortions, and anger management.

The Coping Skills Group received positive feedback from staff, as well as attendees. Interest has been raised in implementing the program in additional schools within Cambridge. Towpath has also requested that the group be taught on a continuing basis.

A second group, with focus on anger management, will be implemented this spring and will also run on a continuing basis. The length of the group is six-weeks and will feature evidence-based anger management techniques.

My name is Alexis Valley, and I am an Intervention Specialist at Towpath Trail High School. I have been working with Ashley Haas for the past year and a half and had the pleasure of co-teaching the Coping Skills Building Group that she implemented at our school this year.

Ashley approached me this past Fall with the idea of starting this group because she felt it would help educate our students and build their skills needed to cope with a variety of issues in their lives. When Ashley approached me about helping her teach it, I was truly honored and excited to be part of this new group at Towpath so we could help our students in a new way.

On a weekly basis, Ashley and I met to brainstorm ideas, complete lesson plans and discuss each week's goals. Each Wednesday, Ashley would invite students to participate in the Coping Skills Building Group and would never turn anyone away. During each session, we would have a specific topic, such as "meditation," and have several activities, discussions, and journals planned for that day. Students were actively engaged and always showed a genuine interest in coming to the session, and there were many weeks when students would approach us and tell us they could not wait for the next group session.

Personally, I felt this class was extremely beneficial to every single student who chose to come, and I truly feel it will continue to be a success. I had the opportunity to see each of these students in another light and learn about their struggles. One of my favorite aspects of the group was when students would share how they used specific coping skills in their life, skills they had learned from previous sessions.

Ashley did an amazing job planning, implementing, and teaching the Coping Skills Building Group, and I am so happy she chose to pilot this program. It is evident that Ashley's passion for educating students helps them learn these coping skills and builds their confidence in their academic and personal lives.

I am so excited to continue seeing the progress that is being made due to the group that Ashley created. In the nine short weeks and 33 students who participated in her first round of sessions, she has already made a huge difference at Towpath.

Thank you so much,

Alexis Valley  
Intervention Specialist  
440-241-5225

*In 2017, LifeAct will be commemorating 25 years of educating teens about depression awareness and suicide prevention. In 2015 alone, PSI and LifeAct instructors taught more than 25,000 middle and high school students in Northeast Ohio and 1,790 came forward to our instructors seeking additional help. We provide lifesaving programs at no cost to the schools. There is an urgent need for our program.*

## **LIFEACT and PSI SAVE YOUNG LIVES**

To register your school for AT NO COST TO YOUR SCHOOL, complete the registration form here: (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YBJG5P9>).

# /= Innovation

## VirtualPSI

Online Educational Supports  
Whenever, Wherever!

*Mike Tornow, Director of Marketing/Development*  
*Chris Worthington, Coordinator of VirtualPSI*  
*Emily Logue, VirtualPSI Speech and Language Therapist*

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The enormous potential of the computer as an educational tool is just beginning to be realized. [VirtualPSI is an important step in that direction.](#) We spoke about this development with Mike Tornow and Emily Logue via PSI's online platform. Currently [VirtualPSI](#) is deployed at ten K-12 schools for students with Speech and Language needs, Occupational Therapy needs and for English Learners.

PSI began researching the efficacy of an online learning platform for special needs students over 5 years ago. This has resulted in several pilot attempts until landing on VirtualPSI in the Fall of 2016! "Students tend to focus better with online learning and our platform appears to match their learning style," says Mike Tornow. "Students who are struggling in the classroom are more focused." Tornow adds, "It is not for every child, but data shows that students progress similar to or even better than the traditional classroom model." [E-learning is an individual supplement for kids in need of these services, not a replacement for classroom instruction.](#)

With today's technology, which will only get better, VirtualPSI is easy to put into practice within a school system. Schools are equipped with headset for their students, both onsite and online support are available, and easy setup instructions; which are all part of the enrollment in the program. Students will be engaged through a live platform in 'real time' on a whiteboard or through online learning activities. Sessions can be recorded for student work samples and other team members can log in as needed. From virtual high-fives to online awards and praises, it's easy to witness the positive effect on kids in need of this new and emerging form of instruction. It's a matter of seeing is believing!

Through VirtualPSI, Emily Logue, a field Speech and Language Therapist, can reach students at different schools and in different grades without the interruptions during the school day. "There is so much good that can come for those kids that need it, I see a great future for virtual therapy," Emily states enthusiastically.

[VirtualPSI's potential is limitless!](#) Some benefits include it reaching rural communities, assisting schools when therapists or teachers are on medical leaves, and for students who not only need educational supports but who get anxious learning in a classroom setting – and what kid doesn't like being on a computer! Another plus is that no stigma is attached to online therapy, which is very private. PSI's e-learning platform is, in fact, individualized learning and it addresses the goals in the student's educational plan. By default it is a customized teacher to student curriculum, the student working at his or her own pace. Scheduling most often is a convenient and flexible matter, no waiting or downtime.

With kids seemingly always online, it is no wonder that a student who may be uncomfortable talking in person to a teacher face-to-face will likely become totally engaged through e-learning. And for the teacher it is an added channel for delivering and tailoring content, at the same time extending the reach of that content.

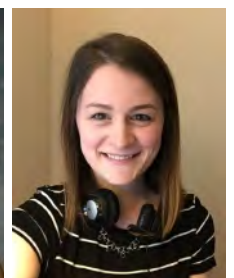
VirtualPSI is new and fast emerging. For more information, contact [Mike Tornow](#) or [Christine Worthington](#) or call PSI at 800.841.4774.



Mike Tornow



Chris Worthington



Emily Logue

## PSI's Mobile App is Coming!

PSI staff can now stay connected like never before with up-to-date PSI news and notes so they can better serve their schools. They can log into email, link to the Educational Support Services or Health websites and access their forms to save time and be more efficient.

Once it is set up this coming summer, they can scan the barcode that is applicable to their phone and follow the prompts. It will be that easy and will provide the innovation that has come to be expected from PSI! For questions, contact:

[miketornow@psi-solutions.org](mailto:miketornow@psi-solutions.org).



The graphic features a smartphone on the left displaying the PSI app interface. The screen shows a photo of a teacher and two students, the PSI logo, and contact information. To the right of the phone, the word "PSI" is displayed in large letters, followed by contact details: address, phone number, and email. Below this is a paragraph of text about the app's release. At the bottom right, there are three QR codes for downloading the app, each preceded by a platform icon: Apple, Android, and a circular logo.

**PSI**

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We are proud to announce the release of PSI's new Mobile APP! Please download our app today to stay connected to the latest news in educational and health needs for your school and for your students! PSI offers free training and educational updates for our school partners and for our extended PSI community! Connect with PSI today!

Apple Android