


The School Psychologist's SURVIVAL GUIDE

- 
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 - Practical strategies
 - Covers the latest research-based assessments

REBECCA BRANSTETTER, Ph.D.

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To my husband and greatest supporter, Steven Branstetter

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About the Author

Rebecca Branstetter is both a school psychologist and a clinical psychologist in the San Francisco Bay Area. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, school psychology program with her doctorate in 2004. After graduating, she conducted her postdoctoral work at the University of California, San Francisco Autism Clinic. She has worked as a school psychologist in both the San Francisco and Oakland school districts for the past ten years. She is the founder of Grow Assessment and Counseling Services, a private practice agency that works with children and families in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Rebecca also writes the blog Notes from the School Psychologist and is the editor of *The Teachable Moment: Seizing the Instants When Children Learn* (Kaplan, 2010), an anthology about reaching the difficult-to-reach child.

Preface

When I started my career as a school psychologist ten years ago, I was ridiculously unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead of me. Armed only with optimism, pluck, and a few years of practicum and coursework, I thought I was ready to work in a large urban school district. I fancied myself the school psychologist version of Michelle Pfeiffer in *Dangerous Minds*, changing the world, one student at a time. Little did I know, there were on-the-job skills I didn't have, and I learned something new every ten minutes. I was fortunate to have a fantastic supervisor, Minoo Shah, who guided me through my traumatic first few years, when I made mistake after mistake. I felt for school psychologists who did not have the great mentoring I did. I couldn't believe all the things I was never taught in graduate school. This is not my alma mater's fault: there are some things you just have to learn when you are on the job for the first time.

One thing no one ever told me going into this profession was that it could be isolating. Even though I am surrounded by educators, children, and parents every day, I only get to see my school psychologist colleagues once a month at staff meetings. The support and input you receive from your colleagues is instrumental in preventing burnout and becoming a better practitioner. So in 2007, I began my blog, Notes from the School Psychologist (www.studentsgrow.blogspot.com), in an effort to connect with other school psychologists and share knowledge I wish I had starting out. Whether I was talking about how to deal with nasty advocates at meetings or giving advice about how not to accidentally form a gang in group therapy, I felt good about helping other school psychologists learn from my mistakes. Little did I know, my blog and subsequent Facebook page for the blog would connect me to colleagues across the country, all of whom have great information to share, insights to learn from, and emotional support I didn't even know I needed. I love hearing from colleagues about how to improve our skills, our profession, and our experience in day-to-day life as school psychologists.

I began to receive e-mails asking me to recommend a resource for school psychologists to learn the on-the-job skills needed to be successful. I knew of no such