

Spring 2018 Member Spotlight

Mr. Matthew (Matt) Kamins

Matt first entered the field of education in 1971 as a classroom teacher, and later became an academic and behavior support leader, then school administrator. Through working with students struggling with significant academic, emotional, and behavioral difficulties, Matt recognized he had an aptitude for designing and implementing effective problem-solving interventions. Matt then discovered that a career in school psychology offered multiple opportunities to employ his problem-solving skills for positive student growth and outcomes.

Matt's school psychology career with MCPS began in 1989 at the Upcounty Field Office (UFO). Matt's four-school assignment included Seneca Valley High School and three elementary schools, Capt. James E. Daly, Lake Seneca, and Southlake. As a member of the first MCEA/MCPS Liaison committee, now known as the Joint Collaboration Committee for Psychological Services (JCCPS), Matt helped lay the foundation for staff to have an equal voice and representation with managers to resolve matters of mutual interest.

In 1999, Matt transitioned from a field office psychologist to become the MCPS Psychological Services Specialist. The newly appointed superintendent of schools Dr. Jerry Weast charged Matt with updating and improving outdated Educational Management Team (EMT) procedures. Matt led a work group of school psychologists, school counselors, PPWs and administrators, and judiciously borrowed from effective problem-solving approaches (such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) models) to create the Collaborative Action Process (CAP). The work group also authored Thinking CAP: A Practitioner's Guide to Understanding and Implementing the Collaborative Action Process in Montgomery County Public Schools. CAP was the precursor to and basis for Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) processes and Documentation of Intervention (DOI) practices now used in all MCPS schools.

MCPS upgraded the Psychological Services Specialist position and Matt was named Supervisor of Psychological Services. During Matt's tenure as supervisor, the federal government created the Safe Schools Healthy Students (SSHS) grant initiative. Matt led the team that authored and submitted MCPS's first SSHS grant proposal. Funding was not granted the first time, which refortified Matt and team to rewrite and resubmit the grant proposal. Their persistence paid off because the subsequent year, MCPS was awarded a \$6,00,0000 grant to put into place Kids First Alliance (KFA), of which Matt became the principal investigator. The KFA initiative allowed

expansion of the CAP problem solving model, implementation of the *Stop-and-Think Social Skills Program*, enhanced parent-community partnerships and child behavioral supports for families, and reduced KFA psychologists' assignments to one school (for the duration of the grant). The grant also helped fund the development of the Montgomery County's Collaboration Council's mental health web-based services locator – *Info Montgomery*, which is still in use today. During Matt's term as supervisor, he was selected to co-chair the MCPS Mental Health Task Force alongside Ms. Ronnie Biemans, special projects manager with Behavioral Health and Crisis Services of Montgomery Department of Health and Human Services. The Mental Health Task Force promoted system-wide anti-bullying awareness, increased access to social emotional interventions, supported CAP, and recommended expanding Linkages-to-Learning. In response to growing national interest in tiered instructional support (such as RTI), Matt was designated Montgomery County's representative on the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) task force that authored A Tiered Instructional Approach to Support Achievement for All Students Maryland's Response to Intervention Framework. At the end of Matt's 10-year term as supervisor, he returned to a full-time position as a school psychologist servicing Matsunaga, Mill Creek Towne, and Strawberry Knoll Elementary Schools. Additionally, Matt is co-chair of JCCPS, continues to volunteer and participate on committees within MCPS, and regularly shares information with students and their families, professional colleagues, elected officials, and community members.

Matt has a fulfilling personal life, which began as a son of second-generation immigrant parents from Poland and Russia, who reared him in New York. Matt was born and spent his early years in Brooklyn, then Forest Hills (Queens) before the family settled in Oceanside (Long Island). Matt's "*best-thing-that-happened-to me*" wife Jodie, whom he met when they were undergraduates at American University, is from Cherry Hill, New Jersey by way of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Matt and Jodie have two awesome sons, Seth and Michael, both of whom are graduates of Wheaton High School, and alumni of Slippery Rock University and Salisbury University, respectively. Matt and Jodie's family now includes two wonderful daughters-in-law, Judith and Sarah, and four absolutely fantastic grandchildren – Delilah, Elorah, Brooks and Isaiah ages 9, 4, 3 and 10-months – and of course, Hank, Matt and Jodie's Great Pyrenees. Matt is also an entrepreneur and former owner of Endeavor Learning Center and a more traditional camp, Discovery Day Camp – "*A fun camp day, every day.*" Currently Matt and Jodie own Atlantic Coast Café, located on Hatteras Island on the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

Matt's college experiences all took place in Washington, DC and suburban Maryland. American University is Matt's alma mater, where he completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Distributed Sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, and psychology). Matt's seven-month stint in optometry school was a mismatch, therefore he returned to American University and completed a Master's of Education Degree in Special Education: Learning Disabilities. From there, Matt attended the University of Maryland, Counseling and Personnel Services department, where he earned an advanced graduate specialist certification in School Psychology. Subsequently, Matt completed his administration training and certification at Trinity College. In addition to the MSDE certification in School Psychology, Matt maintains his certifications in Special Education K-12, and Administration and Supervision.

Of all Matt's professional experiences in MCPS, he is most proud of hiring and learning from "...*some of the best interns and psychologists in the state of Maryland and across the United States*", sharing knowledge and resources, and developing the CAP and KFA models. Matt reflects on a statement heard early in his career from a keynote speaker at a NASP conference: "*You must give away what you know to those that need to know what you know.*" "*That statement defines me, it is fundamentally related to why I regularly share (give away) things I have learned.*"

For the school psychologists new to MCPS as well as those who have been around for a while, we hope this window into Matt's professional (and personal) life inspires you to get to know him, if you have not already done so, because he is a terrific person who embodies wisdom and a wealth of knowledge and experiences that has helped us all become better practitioners in our profession.

***Thank you, Matt, for your dedication and tireless contributions to all of us.
We appreciate you!!***