

Kristine Raymer (elementary school) and Karly Trovarelli (middle/high school) are the two school psychologists here in the Clayton Public Schools. Kristine and Karly recently sat down with Supervisor of Child Study Team Greg Esposito to talk about how they started in the school psychology field, why they love their jobs and what they enjoy doing for fun. Read our interview to get to know our school psychologists better! Note: the following interview was edited for clarity and length.

Greg Esposito: Hi Kristine and Karly! Let's start with your educational background. Can you tell me about that?

Kristine Raymer: I have my bachelor's in business with a concentration in marketing from the University of South Florida (USF) and then I went to Rowan University for my master's in school psychology and my educational specialist degree.

Karly Trovarelli: I received my bachelor's in psychology from Seton Hall University. I also attended Rowan University for my master's in School Psychology and my educational specialist degree.

GE: What is your professional background?

KR: I was in sales for about five years for a distribution company of electronic components for Lockheed [Martin] and Boeing. I moved into a management position there and then switched to school psychology. I did my practicum [in school psychology] here in Clayton and my internship in Hopewell Township. I worked in the Bridgeton Public School district last year [2017-2018] with student in early intervention through 8th grade and was involved with I&RS, PBSIS and crisis counseling, and implemented a social thinking curriculum in kindergarten classes for behavior management. I also worked for Apple Counseling providing intensive in-home therapy for LGBTQ adolescents.

KT: I completed my practicum at Schalick High School and my internship in Glassboro. I was the graduate assistant for NASP (National Association of School Psychologists). When people were applying for their National Certification in School Psychology, I organized the applications and made sure they were all completed and filled out. I would also send the applications to the reviewers for grading. We would then send out letters to the applicants about their status. I was also a student representative for NJASP (New Jersey Association of School Psychologists).

GE: What made you choose a career in school psychology?

KT: Since I started college, I knew I wanted to go into school psychology.

GE: How'd you hear about the field?

KT: My dad is in business and said, "I know somebody who's in psychology and they work in a school." I was like, "That sounds like just what I would want to do!" I looked it up and it did seem like what I wanted to do. I talked to the people at Seton Hall about their school psychology program. When I was little I always wanted to be a teacher and I knew I wanted to go into the psychology field.

KR: In undergrad I took a lot of psychology classes and was always passionate about that field. After working in the corporate world for a few years, I realized I wanted to pursue a more rewarding career. After doing a lot of volunteer work at a psychiatric unit in a hospital, the Born to Read program and mentoring, I realized I wanted to work with children and discovered the field of school psychology. I felt

what better way to make a difference than to advocate for children and assist in educational planning in order to ensure their success in school and beyond.

GE: How would you describe school psychology to someone who doesn't know anything about the field?

KR: School psychologists are professionals who provide direct support and interventions to students and consult with teachers, families and other mental health professionals, as well as administrators and community members, to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally. They are members of school teams who support students' abilities to learn and teachers' abilities to teach and apply expertise in mental health, learning and behavior to make schools a healthier place for all students. A lot of people may think school psychologists just test and identify kids for services in special education, but the field is moving more towards response to intervention and prevention to support students with diverse learning needs.

KT: When I describe it, the easiest way to tell a person what we do is we are the people working with students in special education. I'm not necessarily a psychologist who you would sit there and tell all of your feelings to, I'm working more with their academics and educational programming.

GE: What does a typical day look like for you?

KR: Every day is different. We wear many different hats. Throughout the course of the day, you can work on consulting with teachers and parents, evaluating a student through face-to-face sessions and observations, analyzing data, recommending ideas for intervention and prevention, conducting meetings, counseling students either individually or in group settings and serving as part of I&RS/PIRT. We also work closely with guidance, administrators and behavior analysts.

KT: I always say I don't like this question because there is no typical day. For instance, last Thursday I broke up a fight and then went and donated blood. So, there is no typical day! Usually you are consulting with parents, students, teachers and administration. I don't think I've gone a day where I didn't talk to one of those four.

GE: What is your favorite thing about this job?

KT: That I can work with adults and students. You can switch from one thing to the next. I like that I don't know what my day is going to be like. Because we're so busy, the days fly by.

KR: The fact that we wear many hats and do different things throughout the day. Helping students overcome their challenges and seeing students making positive changes and blossom is very rewarding. I enjoy solving the mystery of why a student may have difficulty learning and doing the detective work to determine their strengths and weaknesses and make suggestions based on those strengths to help them learn and succeed. I also enjoy collaborating with other professionals and having the opportunity to give back to the field.

GE: What hobbies do you enjoy? What are your favorite outside-of-school activities? What makes you a whole person and not just a school psychologist?

KR: Quality time with family, playing with my dog, going running, hiking, yoga, reading, volunteer work and working as a member of the NJASP executive board.

KT: I like to be outside. Anything outside like going for a walk, going to the beach, going to the lake. Anything outside is relaxing for me. I also like trying new restaurants. So eating and being outdoors.