

## 2023 Fall Virtual Conference Presenters Bio



**Nathaniel von der Embse, Ph.D.**

Chri Dr. Nate von der Embse is a Professor of School Psychology at the University of South Florida and co-director of the School Mental Health Collaborative, a new research and technical assistance center. His research improves educational decision-making by identifying the influence of external policies and contextual drivers while developing novel solutions to improve the use of preventative school mental health services. Dr. von der Embse is a primary and co-investigator on over \$18 million in federal and state funded research grants that address universal screening for behavioral and mental health, teacher stress and student test anxiety, and suicide and school violence prevention programming. He received the 2018 Lightner Witmer Award for early career scholarship from Division 16 of the American Psychological Association, is a co-developer of the SAEBRS screening tools that are used in all 50 states, and the author of the recent book, Conducting Behavioral and Social-Emotional Assessments in MTSS: Screen to Intervene.



**Christine Malecki, Ph.D**

Dr. Malecki joined the Psychology faculty in Fall 1999. She served as a practicing school psychologist in Carroll, Iowa for Heartland Area Education Agency 11 for two years before coming to NIU. She is clinically licenced and is the Director of Clinical Training for the School Psychology Program. She teaches the second year of School Psychology Practicum each semester. She has authored and co-authored many peer reviewed journal publications, and has presented her research at a number of professional conferences throughout her career. Her research interests include the study of students' perceived social support and how that support is related to their adjustment and academic achievement, how social support is important for both victims and bullies, and curriculum-based measurement (CBM) in reading and written language. She is also interested in the relationship between social context and academic achievement and innovative school psychology delivery services.



**Robert J. Dixon, PhD, NCSP**

**Robert J. Dixon, PhD, NCSP, LP** has been practicing school psychology for over 30 years. In the last 20, he has been teaching in and directing the School Psychology Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. In his role as Graduate Educator, he has developed several courses that reflect his interests in Response to Intervention (RtI), Research & Program Evaluation, and Supervision. He has been a member of school improvement efforts in La Crescent, MN, La Crosse, WI and Onalaska, WI. He has served as the Chair of Continuing Professional Development for WSPA, the WSPA President, the Wisconsin State Representative to NASP as well as on the Board of Directors for NASP. He is the former chair of the APA Division 16 ethics committee. He keeps his practice current by working in a local school district and maintaining a private practice.



**Neal E. Takiff**

Neal E. Takiff is a partner with the law firm of Whitted Takiff LLC. Prior to joining the firm, he was an attorney with the Lake County Public Defender's Office and with the Cook County Office of the Public Guardian. Mr. Takiff received his law degree from New York University School of Law and earned a B.A. in political science and philosophy from Duke University.

Before becoming an attorney, Mr. Takiff was an elementary education teacher for the Houston Independent School District and was involved with the Teach for America program for three years. He was also a school board member for Community Consolidated School District 46 and currently serves on the board of directors for Turning Point Behavioral Health Center in Skokie, Illinois. He currently teaches graduate-level education law courses at both [Dominican University](#) and [Aurora University](#).

Mr. Takiff is a frequent speaker in the area of special education law, school discipline and mental health law. He is a trained mediator. Mr. Takiff follows an Elicitive Model of mediation in his practice and believes that a transformative approach to mediation is most effective in addressing the underlying cause of conflict and assisting the parties in finding resolution. His mediation practice primarily focuses on domestic relations issues, however, he has been asked to mediate other children's issues, such as school placement.

Mr. Takiff represents families and their children, in the area of special education, school discipline, school residency, post-secondary education issues, school records and confidentiality issues, bullying, adult and juvenile defense, domestic relations (in the areas of guardian-ad-litem, child representative and attorney for the child only), and guardianships.

Mr. Takiff also represents mental health providers, mental health facilities, and hospitals in the areas of mental health law and confidentiality, Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation complaints, and contractual issues and education-related labor disputes.

His practice is concentrated in the areas of special education law, domestic relations (GAL, Child Representative, Attorney for Child only) child welfare, mental health, and both criminal and civil litigation for juveniles and adults.



**Darla A. DeCarlo, LMHC,**

**Darla A. DeCarlo, LMHC, PsyS** In her role as a Regional Manager–Educational Assessments at PAR, Ms. DeCarlo provides school districts throughout the U.S. with up-to-date information on assessment issues and addresses their psychoeducational and mental health needs. She also provides proprietary product workshops for school districts and at state conventions.

Ms. DeCarlo earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in counseling psychology from Florida Atlantic University. She earned an additional Master's degree and a Specialist degree in school psychology from Nova Southeastern University.

For 35 years, Ms. DeCarlo provided professional services in a variety of settings, including county mental health facilities, hospitals, public schools, and private practice. Ms. DeCarlo is a licensed Mental Health Counselor, a certified fellow in clinical hypnotherapy, held a professional teaching certificate in Psychology, and is a Certified School Psychologist in the State of Florida. She is also a Qualified Mental Health Supervisor. She is a member of the Florida Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Psychologists.



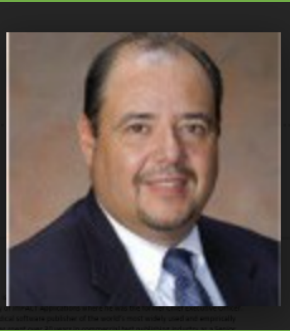
**Loren Houle, NCSP**

**Loren Houle** is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) and Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) from Bismarck, North Dakota. Loren has worked in both school and clinic settings serving students and their families. Loren serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association of School Psychologists as one of the two Central Regional Delegate Representatives.



**Lisa Kelly-Vance, Ph.D.**

**Lisa Kelly-Vance, Ph.D.** began her career as a School Psychologist in Council Bluffs, Iowa serving children birth through 21. She is a Professor of School Psychology at the University of Nebraska Omaha and a past president of the National Association of School Psychologists. Her teaching, research and applied activities have focused on early childhood assessment and interventions with an emphasis on social emotional learning.



**James S. Gyurke, Ph.D.**

James (Jim) S. Gyurke, Ph.D., is the Head of Clinical Strategy and Business Development for Riverside Insights, the parent company of ImPACT Applications where he was the former Chief Executive Officer. ImPACT Applications is a medical software publisher of the world's most widely used and empirically validated TBI software. He has spent over 30 years in commercial test publishing industry as a Senior executive in charge of Operations, Marketing and Sales, Research and Development, Sales and Customer, Business Development and Technical Support functions. Jim has successfully led product teams to produce 5 FDA cleared products, including two with DeNovo clearances. Jim completed his Ph.D. in Child Psychology at Loyola University and he also completed post-doctoral training at Northwestern's Prentiss' Women's Hospital in assessment. He had published on multiple assessment related topics including methodology, reliability and validity and clinical decision making.