

THERAPIST'S CORNER • WHO KNEW FOUR LETTERS COULD BRING SUCH PRIDE? • BY MATTHEW PRIVETTE, COVT

When I started my journey as a vision therapist in 1996, I never envisioned it becoming my career. I originally wanted to be a sports broadcaster. After graduating from college, I had the opportunity to travel across the country singing Southern Gospel music. On the few days per week I was not traveling, I started working as a part-time optometric vision therapist under Dr. Nancy Mackowsky in Raleigh, NC. Not only did I enjoy learning from and working with Dr. Mackowsky, I loved the interaction with the patients. It wasn't too long until this part-time position turned into a full-time position and my singing days were over.

Several years later, Dr. Mackowsky was going through the process of becoming a Fellow of COVD, and it was her desire to have her therapists become certified as well. She explained the process and the work involved and asked us to think about it. After much thought, it was at this time I truly felt vision therapy would be my career. I knew by going through the certification process I would learn so much more about vision therapy and understand in greater detail how it makes such an impact on someone's life. I was excited, but also a little nervous, to get started on the path to certification.

The first part of the process was to provide answers to questions that covered many aspects of vision therapy. I remember having many conversations and continuing education sessions with Dr. Mackowsky on the ten topics we were required to write about. This part of the process helped me understand and grow in learning the principles and foundation of optometric vision therapy more than any of the other steps. It's amazing what you can learn when your doctor politely asks you to rewrite your thoughts to a particular question over and over. Even to this day, when I need a good laugh, I'll take out a folder that contains my first drafts for each of those questions. Fortunately, once the final drafts were completed and sent, it wasn't long until I was informed I was ready to continue to the next step.

Several years had passed since I had taken a written exam. I wasn't too nervous about this part of the process, for I felt Dr. Mackowsky had done a wonderful job getting me prepared for the kinds of questions that were going to be asked. Let's just say I was happy knowing she wasn't going to have anything to do with putting together the questions for the test! Again, fortunately, it wasn't too long until I heard back from the committee that I had passed the written exam and was now ready for the last step in the process – the “evil” oral interviews.



Matthew demonstrates a way to develop an awareness of the ability to relax and stimulate accommodation.

There's an old saying that goes something like, “The greatest fear is the fear of the unknown.” Not only did I not know what was going to be asked, I didn't know who was going to do the asking. Out of all the parts of the process, I dreaded this one the most. We therapists know our doctors have their own specific vision model they believe in and teach. I drove myself crazy thinking what if the vision model I've been taught is completely different from the model believed in by these other doctors. Now I don't know if I was lucky or what, but I couldn't have asked for a nicer set of doctors for my interview. They immediately put me at ease. Our time together was not so much of a question and answer format, as it was just a discussion about vision therapy. They wanted to know how I got started in vision therapy, the kinds of patients I enjoyed seeing, and some of the hard cases I had encountered and the protocol followed. They also gave me certain scenarios and asked how I would go about treating that patient. If I ever suggested something that wasn't quite what they were looking for, and you can bet I did, they were wonderful in leading me down a path towards the right answer.

As of October 2000, I have had the honor of being a certified optometric vision therapist. To be named the 2010 COVT of the year is truly overwhelming and beyond anything I ever imagined when I started on this journey back in 1996. If you haven't started your journey to certification yet, start now! If you're somewhere in the middle of the process, don't stop! Who knew four letters after your name could bring such pride?

Mathew Privette is a Certified Optometric Vision Therapist who works at The Mackowsky Visual Learning & Rehabilitation Clinic with Dr. Nancy Mackowsky.