



2020 Legislative Platform and Priorities

The mission of the New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP) is to serve children, their families and the school community by promoting psychological well-being, excellence in education, and sensitivity to diversity through best practices in school psychology. NYASP is committed to ensuring that all students—whatever their race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender (including identification and expression), sexual orientation, disability status, language proficiency or immigration status—are included in a high-quality public education. Furthermore, NYASP is dedicated to ensuring that all children have positive, safe, supportive environments that promote learning and are free of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and violence that promotes student learning and well-being.

Critical to this effort is ensuring adequate and equitable access to school psychologists and culturally competent, comprehensive school psychological services including: consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, and administrators to support student learning; development and delivery of interventions and support to facilitate student’s academic achievement, social–emotional learning, and mental and behavioral health; school-wide practices to promote a safe and supportive learning environment; and crisis prevention, intervention, and response.

This 2020 Legislative Platform and Priorities represents overarching policy goals and recommendations that support the mission of NYASP. Further, this platform outlines policy objectives designed to help advance the NYASP strategic goals. It also includes specific legislative goals for the 2020 NYS Legislative Session. NYASP commits to working with the NYS Legislature and Governor to accomplish mutual goals of improving educational opportunities for all children and youth, as well as helping them thrive socially, emotionally, and behaviorally in life.

I. Ensure school and community environments are safe and supportive for all students.

Key Policy Objectives:

- Promote standardized school suicide prevention and response policies and procedures, such as those outlined in *A Guide for Suicide Prevention in New York Schools*, for school districts across New York State.

- Oppose efforts that seek to systematically discriminate against children or youth on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identification, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability status, language proficiency, or immigration status.
- Advance legislation that extends existing antidiscrimination and harassment protections to explicitly include real or perceived gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.
- Continue the existing efforts of the NYSED and other relevant agencies to designate resources to help implement evidence-based, school-wide policies and practices that reduce bullying, harassment, violence, and discrimination for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender (including identification and expression), sexual orientation, disability status, language proficiency or immigration status.
- Support evidence-based efforts to prevent child abuse and human trafficking and provide trauma-informed and gender-responsive care to victims.
- Work with relevant state and federal agencies, as well as national organizations to promote policy and best practices to support evidence-based threat assessment policy and practice; mental health evaluations and re-entry plans, including ongoing mental and behavioral health support for students identified as being of imminent threat to themselves or others; and enhanced student access to mental health supports in schools and communities.
- Support funding for high-quality, evidence-based, and job-embedded professional development for educators, specialized instructional support personnel, and other relevant staff in areas including but not limited to: antibullying, harassment, and discrimination efforts; evidence-based threat assessment and management procedures; suicide awareness and prevention; school-based violence prevention; and positive discipline strategies.

II. Increase access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services.

Key Policy Objectives:

- Re-establish Medicaid reimbursement funding for psychological services provided by school psychologists through the School Supportive Health Program.
- Advance legislation that increases access to comprehensive school *and community mental health services and reduces disparities in mental health service delivery, especially among underserved populations.*
- Promote appropriate ratio of school psychologists to students (1:500-700) to provide comprehensive psychological services in schools.
- Promote efforts to implement Mental Health First Aid and other relevant professional development for educators to identify students with potential mental health concerns and refer them to appropriate school-employed mental health service providers and facilitate referrals to appropriate community-based service providers to support a comprehensive continuum of care.
- Support efforts that require evidence-based suicide prevention training for school staff and evidence-based, developmentally appropriate suicide prevention programming for students.

- Advance efforts to increase funding to support evidence-based, trauma-informed practices in schools.
- Support investments to help schools and school districts implement evidence-based universal screening for mental and behavioral health concerns.
- Ensure school psychologists are properly recognized as qualified providers of mental and behavioral health in statute, regulation, and credentialing policy.
- Elevate the role of school psychologists as mental and behavioral health providers in relevant materials published by the NYSED, relevant agencies, state funded technical assistance centers, and publications by state and national organizations.

III. Ensure all students have equitable access to comprehensive learning supports provided within an integrated service delivery system (e.g., MTSS).

Key Policy Objectives:

- Promote efforts that provide funding and technical assistance to help schools and districts establish and maintain a positive school climate.
- Support efforts to expand access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities.
- Direct the NYSED to release guidance for schools and districts about how to utilize school psychologists and other specialized instructional support personnel to help support the needs of all students, improve school climate, and improve school and student success.
- Promote efforts to improve intra-agency collaboration that facilitates systemic collaboration at the state and local levels.
- Advance efforts that facilitate the education of the whole child.
- Ensure that school psychologists and other specialized instructional support personnel are explicitly mentioned in legislation and other specific grant programs intended to address literacy, social–emotional learning, school climate, and other factors that promote student learning.

IV. Promote evidence-based comprehensive school safety and crisis response efforts.

Key Policy Objectives:

- Promote comprehensive school safety efforts that emphasize both physical and psychological safety.
- Allow for blended, flexible use of funding streams in education and mental health services at the federal, state, and local levels to support effective school safety.
- Reject efforts to overly harden schools or require physical security measures that do not increase actual or perceived safety.
- Support efforts that promote a comprehensive, whole-school approach to effective school safety through integration of school climate, effective discipline, social–emotional learning, positive

behavior, mental health, and academics through a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) and problem-solving model.

- Ensure school mental health services, including social–emotional learning, mental wellness, resilience, and positive connections between students and adults, are an essential component of any comprehensive school safety effort.
- Support investments in training, planning, and professional development to encompass ongoing prevention and early intervention efforts as well as response and recovery plans in the event the unpreventable occurs.

V. Improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Key Policy Objectives:

- Support initiatives that seek to engage parents and community members to develop meaningful, ambitious, and comparable indicators to measure the progress of students with disabilities.
- Support efforts to ensure that students with disabilities are educated within the least restrictive environment as is appropriate for their specific needs.
- Ensure that any legislation/regulation intended to improve student outcomes promotes the use of evidence-based methods for the early identification of students with disabilities.
- Support increased investment in early intervention and prevention programming that will reduce the number of students identified with disabilities, thus saving later resources and optimizing student outcomes.

VI. Remedy the access to school psychological services in rural and underserved communities.

Key Policy Objectives:

- Increase access to funding for Behavioral Health Workforce Grants, administered by HRSA, which provide financial support for school psychology interns with a specific focus on those serving in rural or underserved communities.
- Advance legislation that provides funds to help the state increase access to fully certified school psychologists, especially in high need and hard to staff districts.
- Work with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to pilot a grant program to create university-district partnerships that help recruit and train school-employed mental health professionals and create a pipeline to high need districts.

Support for Specific Legislation

In furtherance of NYASP’s stated mission of commitment to enhancing access to vital mental health services, we ask that the Legislature give thoughtful considerations to related legislative proposals, including:

- **A. 1182 (Rosenthal)/S .4340 (Carlucci)** – providing for licensure of school psychologists;

- **A. 5373 (Ortiz)/ S. 4217 (Jackson)** – requiring school mental health services in all districts; and
- **A. 9032 (Lentol)/ S. 7138 (Hoylman)** - enacts the student suicide prevention act

For further information about NYASP's Legislative Platform and Priorities, please contact Pamela Madeiros, Greenberg Traurig, LLP at 518.689.1412.