

FASP 2010 PLATFORM

Provide Reasonable Access to Services for Students

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

School Psychologists are certified/licensed professionals with specialized training in both psychology and education. School Psychologists collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. School Psychologists play an integral role in helping schools to implement problem-solving and Response to Intervention (RtI) initiatives, reduce disproportionality in Exceptional Student Education, and draw down IDEA/Medicaid funds. Nationally, the recognized School Psychologist to student ratio is 1 to 1000 while in Florida the ratio for School Psychologists to students in 2008–2009 was 1 to 1870. Historical program cuts being made to all public education in the state for 2009–2010 will make this problem much worse unless the Legislature provides the strong leadership necessary to reverse this trend. Without access to the types of services that School Psychologists provide, children's academic and behavioral difficulties may go unrecognized and remain as barriers to successful learning and school completion. Furthermore, School Psychological services are instrumental in helping Florida's schools to meet the high standards of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and IDEA.

ACTION NEEDED

Provide funding for school districts to hire additional School Psychologists as a cost-effective means to improve student performance and strengthen the quality of Florida's schools. Moving toward the nationally recommended School Psychologist-to-student ratio of 1:1000 will assist Florida in meeting the high standards of NCLB and IDEA.

Alternatives to Retention and Social Promotion

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

Retention is mandated for most children who score poorly on the FCAT. However, retention and "social promotion" are frequently discussed as the only two options for these struggling learners. Neither retention nor social promotion is an effective method for assisting children with academic difficulties. Rather, more emphasis should be placed on preventing the failure from happening. Early identification plays a critical role in preventing school failure, as does the universal application of scientifically validated curriculum and instruction. Children who continue to struggle will require intensive, empirically-supported interventions. Retaining or socially promoting a student in the absence of these interventions is ineffective.

ACTIONS NEEDED

Effective, evidenced-based interventions should be mandated instead of grade retention or social promotion.

Recognition of Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSP)

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

The Florida Excellent Teacher Program rewards public school teachers who have attained a demonstrable level of expertise and experience, as evidenced by national teacher certification, with a salary supplement determined by the state. The purpose of this salary incentive is to help alleviate the teacher shortage by retaining excellent teachers in the state, attracting accomplished teachers to work in the Florida public schools, encouraging teachers to demonstrate expertise and competence beyond the state requirements for teacher certification, enticing high quality students to enter teaching as a career, and recognizing teachers who have high quality skills. School Psychologists who have attained a demonstrable level of expertise can apply to receive the NCSP recognition from the National School Psychology Certification Board. The level of training and expertise required for the NCSP is at least as rigorous as that for national teacher certification and requires a higher level of continuing education.

ACTION NEEDED

Include Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSP) in the Florida Excellent Teacher program.



FASP 2010 PLATFORM

Access to a Full Continuum of School Psychological Services in Educational Settings

- Promote increased access to School Psychological services for all children, not just those in special education or those in public schools.
- Promote increased access to Medicaid funding for behavioral health services.
- Ensure that all those who provide School Psychological services are appropriately credentialed.
- Support continued credentialing of School Psychologists by the FL Department of Education.

Prevention and Intervention Services

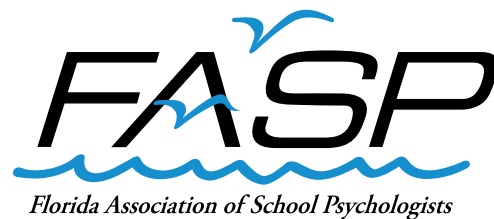
- Implement suicide prevention programs in every Florida public and charter school.
- Replace corporal punishment with interventions that have been proven effective in promoting desirable behavior.
- Increase early identification of and treatment for students' mental health problems.
- Assist students and their families with their mental health needs during difficult economic times.
- Provide support for families and community initiatives to promote readiness for kindergarten.
- Encourage interagency collaboration to address mental health needs of children and families.
- Give priority in funding to programs which are researched-based and which demonstrably improve collaboration between parents and schools.

Safe Schools and Safe Communities

- Fund additional student services personnel to implement violence prevention and school safety programs in every public school.
- Form cooperative violence prevention teams which include School Psychologists, School Social Workers, and School Counselors.
- Promote constructive alternatives to external suspension and expulsion for all students.
- Provide interventions to increase school attendance and to improve graduation rates.

Access to School Psychological Services in the Private Sector

- Continue exceptional standards of legislative regulation of School Psychologists under Chapter 490, F.S. to maintain a high degree of professionalism, safety, and cost effectiveness for the public.
- Promote insurance laws which provide third party payments for School Psychological services.
- Provide for Licensed School Psychologists to become Medicaid providers.
- Provide for Licensed School Psychologists to become qualified evaluators for the Department of Children and Families.
- Clarify that Licensed School Psychologists who have requisite training are qualified to be court appointed as child custody evaluators.
- Provide parity in insurance coverage for mental health services.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of FASP is to promote and advocate for the mental health and educational development of Florida's children, youth and families in educational systems and communities; and to advance the profession of School Psychology in the state.

Florida Association of School Psychologists (FASP)

First organized in 1957, FASP is one of the largest state School Psychology associations in the nation. Although the vast majority of the members live, work, or attend school in Florida, FASP also has members in sixteen other states and four foreign countries.

Legacy Award for Distinguished Service to Children

2009 – Senator Eleanor Sobel

Recent FASP Outstanding Legislator Recipients

2009 – Senator Stephen R. Wise

2008 – Representative Nick Thompson

2007 – Senator Carey Baker
Representative Hugh Gibson

2006 – Representative Joe Pickens

2005 – Senator Evelyn Lynn
Representative Eleanor Sobel

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