

# Positive School Climate, Student Wellness, and Improved Academic Outcomes: Bringing Out the Best in Students and Schools

Opening and Closing Remarks  
Susan Gorin, NASP Executive Director  
November 10, 2009

Did you know that learning and development are directly linked to the mental health of children?

Did you know that sound psychological practices are critical to proper instruction and learning, social and emotional development, prevention and early intervention, and support for a culturally diverse student populations?

Did you know that school psychologists are a unique, essential, and valuable part of the school team?

And, did you know that in today's tough economic climate, school psychologists are a potentially untapped resource to help solve academic and behavior problems, prevent AND handle crises, help to reduce the number of demands on teachers and administrators, promote culturally responsive practices, and support families—especially military families?

Welcome to this special briefing, thank you for attending, and Happy National School Psychology Week.

I'm Susan Gorin, Executive Director of the National Association of School Psychologists and I'll be your host for the next hour or so. Please feel free to continue eating your lunch while we are speaking.

Our purpose today is to two-fold. First, we want to highlight the importance of positive school climate and student wellness to academic achievement—and what schools can do to promote these factors in school success. Second, we want to acknowledge the vital role of school psychologists in the effort to bring out the best in all students and schools.

As I hope you will learn, school psychologists—and I emphasize the title school psychologist—have very specific training that is different from that of a clinical psychologist or behavior specialist and that directly supports the mission and purpose of schools. Our training brings together expertise in children's learning, development, and mental health with knowledge of teaching and instruction, school and family systems, and school improvement. We also have extensive skills with regard to assessment, research, and use of data to support student and school improvement and accountability.

I know it's a mouthful... so while you're digesting this (and your lunch) please know that school psychologists do NOT do our work alone. We highly value our colleagues—many are represented here today—who are school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, and community mental health providers—with whom we work to make sure that ALL children and families are supported IN SCHOOL, AT HOME, and IN LIFE.

We have several people we need to thank. Our elected officials who are supporting the briefing today have been wonderful. They are:

Senator Blanche Lincoln (AR) and Senator Thad Cochran (MS),  
Representative David Loebsack (IA-2) and Rep Vernon Ehlers (MI-3)

With other co-sponsors, they were also our lead sponsors of the Senate and House Resolutions—S-210 and HR-700—that recognize this week as National School Psychology Week.

Special thanks go to their terrific staffs, who assisted us in the development and passage of the resolutions as well as the arrangements for this briefing:

In Sen. Lincoln's office: Tony McClain and Emily Hildebrand  
In Sen. Cochran's office: Will Todd  
In Rep. Loebsack's office: Kara Marchione and Joe McAndrew

In Rep. Ehler's office: Rachel Fenton

And we want to thank Senator Lincoln and Senator Cochran for sponsoring our room today in this beautiful visitor's center.

In the NASP office, special thanks to our Advocacy team:

Allison Bollinger, Manager of Professional Relations  
Jeff Charvat, Director of Research  
Kathy Cowan, Director of Communications and Marketing  
Mary Beth Klotz, Director of IDEA Projects and Tech Assistance  
Deitra Reiser, Public Policy Fellow  
Stacy Skalski, Director of Public Policy

And a final thanks to our Government and Professional Relations committee who work tirelessly to get our messages out in their local communities and states.

Before I introduce our panel, a bit of background with 4 quick points:

1. NASP is just over 40 years old yet the profession of school psychology is much older than that.
2. We have 25,000 members and estimate that there are 35,000 school psychologists practicing in schools.
3. To be a school psychologist, I would have to complete at least 60-70 hours of graduate school which includes a one-year supervised internship—half of which is in a school setting.
4. Many school psychologists serve more than one school building each week so they invest many miles and smiles with a great many colleagues, students, and families.

One such traveling school psychologist is our first presenter, Terry Molony. Dr. Molony serves three elementary schools in the Cherry Hill NJ Public Schools. In a previous incarnation, she was a licensed clinical social worker who worked in schools, hospitals, and private practice. In addition to working with teachers, parents, and principals such as our second panelist, to her right, Terry teaches graduate school part time AND serves the profession as a member of the volunteer leadership of both the NJ Association of School Psychologists and NASP. Terry...

Our second presenter is Mr. Kwame Morton, Sr. He is the principal of Kilmer Elementary School in Cherry Hill and before this role he was a principal in Philadelphia's school district as well as an assistant principal in Philadelphia and Brooklyn—where he began his education career as a teacher. Mr. Morton is trained as a school turnaround specialist which is a program out of the University of Virginia. He is also pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership and I hear is both a super principal and a super dad. Mr. Morton...

Like Terry Molony, Kathleen Minke is a nationally certified school psychologist and since working in schools, has spent almost 20 years as a professor of school psychology at the University of Delaware. Currently, Dr. Minke is acting director of the School of Education at U Del. She has published articles, co-edited three books, and taught many courses on topics such as family-school collaboration and solution oriented strength-based counseling. I am pleased to say that Kathy will be president of NASP, beginning in July. Kathy...

Our fourth and final presenter is Anastasia (Stacy) Skalski. Dr. Skalski is the NASP director of public policy and, like Terry and Kathy, has been a school psychologist and a university professor. She has also coordinated mental health services in Colorado, where she was called on during the tragedy at Columbine High School. Like the others, Stacy writes, presents, consults, and works hard to advocate for the mission of NASP, which is to enhance the mental health and education of all children and youth. Stacy...

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We have given you much information that we hope will be useful. Please visit our website for a great deal of public-service information or contact Stacy Skalski, if we may assist you.

Thank you for coming!