



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

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June 5, 2009

American Psychological Association
750 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002-4242

Dear Members of the Board of Educational Affairs and Model Licensure Act Task Force:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of the American Federation of Teachers to urge the board to continue the exemption for school psychologists that is included in the American Psychological Association's (APA) Model Act for State Licensure (MLA). The AFT is a union representing teachers, healthcare professionals and other public employees across the nation. Within our membership are thousands of school psychologists who provide valuable services to children every day.

The AFT has a long and proud history of advocating for the highest standards for all professionals who work in our schools. We believe that protecting professional certification standards is an important cornerstone for promoting the best services for children. Therefore, we sincerely appreciate and understand the APA's efforts to promulgate standards that promote a high degree of rigor and professionalism. However, in the case of the standards for school psychologists, we are very concerned that the broad array of important services provided by school psychologists will be greatly diminished if you disallow the current exemptions.

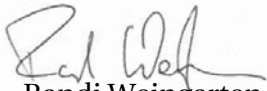
School psychologists have had extensive training, including lengthy practicum experiences and internships, in working specifically with school-age and preschool-age children. They have met rigorous university standards and state certification requirements. State and university standards for school psychologists have been established for more than 30 years. These standards are rigorous and based on the recommendations of the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Council on the Accreditation of Teachers. The training they receive and the standards they must meet focus on critical skills needed for student learning and behavior, classroom management, crisis intervention, teacher and parent consultations, and meeting the mental health needs of our students.

School psychologists are especially valuable to special education programs in our schools, since they stay abreast of federal, state and local laws, regulations, rules and policies regarding the implementation of IDEA, and are able to help schools implement best practices in special education. School psychologists work daily to improve outcomes for students, schools and families.

The proposed change to the MLA standard would actually harm children and schools by exacerbating the current shortage of school psychologists. This certainly would be detrimental to our schools, educators, families and especially the students who attend our schools. We are confident that the intent of the APA is not to have an adverse impact on the many children who desperately need these services.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on these important proposed changes. We urge you to not adopt the proposed changes to the MLA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Randi Weingarten
President

RW: JM: mbw opeiu#2 afl-cio