

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) embraces the critical importance of accurate, high-quality, and reliable personnel evaluation for the purpose of enhancing professional practices and improving related student achievement, behavior, and social–emotional outcomes. Over the last two decades, a variety of federal initiatives (e.g., No Child Left Behind, 2001; School Improvement Grants, 2010; Race to the Top, 2012) prompted new attention to the processes used for the evaluation of teachers and school administrators. While these federal initiatives provided much of the impetus for these reforms and even delineated some definitions and expectations, the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) signaled a new federal direction by eliminating the “highly qualified teacher” definition and related evaluation requirements and transferring back to the states the primary responsibility for defining and constructing personnel evaluation systems. The only exception in this shift was for state education agencies (SEAs) receiving a Title I Part A grant. These states must have a state plan to prevent low income and minority populations from being disproportionately served by ineffective, out of field, or inexperienced teachers and identify the measures that will be used for teacher evaluation. While specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), including school psychologists, were not specifically mentioned with teachers in this section, many SISPs fall under teacher contracts and therefore under local educational agencies (LEAs) and SEAs are also tasked with addressing the evaluation practices for these groups. Central to these conversations is the relevance of developing evaluation tools that capture student and professional growth accurately and fairly, are sufficient in scope to evaluate the broad-based services of each profession, account for the unique skills and training of the professional, utilize proven evaluation methods, and provide a uniform system common to all professionals.

The *Professional Standards of the National Association of School Psychologists* (2020) include the *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*, also known as the NASP Practice Model, which provides a foundation for the development of an evaluation tool specific to the roles of school psychologists. The *NASP Practice Model* represents NASP’s official policy regarding the delivery of school psychological services and provides a framework and a common language for defining school psychological services. The NASP Practice Model outlines a range of competencies and can serve as a framework for personnel evaluations. Identified areas for improvement can be addressed through clinical supervision, mentoring, and professional development.

The NASP Practice Model delineates the professional services that can reasonably be expected from school psychologists across 10 domains of practice and the general framework within which services should be provided. The domains are organized around three broad areas:

Practices That Permeate All Aspects of Service Delivery

- Domain 1: Data-Based Decision Making
- Domain 2: Consultation and Collaboration

Direct and Indirect Services for Students, Families, and Schools

- Domain 3: Academic Interventions and Instructional Supports
- Domain 4: Mental and Behavioral Health Services
- Domain 5: School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning
- Domain 6: Services to Promote Safe and Supportive Schools
- Domain 7: Family, School, and Community Collaboration Services

Foundations for Service Delivery

- Domain 8: Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations
- Domain 9: Research and Evidence-Based Practice
- Domain 10: Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice

In addition to these 10 domains of practice, the NASP Practice Model includes six organizational principles that describe the necessary systems and supports that should be provided by the organizations that employ school psychologists. Effective personnel evaluation will be embedded within systems that promote high-quality school psychology services and implemented with consideration for the extent that these principles are met.

1. **Organization and Evaluation of Service Delivery**
Comprehensive school psychological services are coordinated and seamlessly delivered in response to student need by appropriately licensed or credentialed school psychologists who have received graduate preparation consistent with the NASP professional standards.
2. **Climate**
The professional climate facilitates both mutual respect for all parties and effective service delivery that allows school psychologists to advocate for and provide appropriate services.
3. **Physical, Personnel, and Fiscal Support System**
Physical, personnel, and fiscal systems support appropriately trained and adequate numbers of school psychologists and provide adequate financial and physical resources to practice effectively.
4. **Professional Communication**
School systems ensure that policies and practices exist that result in positive, proactive communication among employees at all administrative levels of the organization.
5. **Supervision, Peer Consultation, and Mentoring**
All personnel have adequate levels and types of supervision, peer consultation, and/or mentoring to facilitate professional growth and ensure the provision of effective and accountable services.
6. **Professional Development and Recognition Systems**
Individual school psychologists and school systems create professional development plans annually that are both adequate for and relevant to school psychological practice and the service delivery priorities of the school system.

Figure 1. The NASP Practice Model



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

NASP recommends that the following foundational principles be considered and incorporated within a comprehensive evaluation system for school psychologists.

Principle 1: Use the NASP Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services (NASP Practice Model) as the overarching framework for personnel evaluations.

The NASP Practice Model should serve as the foundation for job descriptions, professional expectations, and the personnel evaluations of school psychologists. Personnel appraisals should be conducted using the NASP Practice Model as the general framework with specific examples of accompanying skills and services provided in the *Professional Standards of the National Association of School Psychologists (2020)* as potential measurable outcomes. Furthermore, application of the NASP Practice Model to personnel evaluation systems can support a comprehensive model of school psychological services that will have the effect of promoting better outcomes for all students.

Principle 2: Recognize the critical importance of personnel evaluations and the essential involvement of affected professionals in creating a relevant, supportive, and instructive feedback system.

The primary purpose of the evaluation of instructional personnel is to improve educator performance in order to improve student outcomes. When school psychologists are supported in practicing the broad-based role as articulated in the NASP Practice Model and are evaluated relative to the competencies specific to the 10 domains of school psychology practice, students and schools are more likely to have access to a multitude of interventions that contribute to student success (e.g., supporting academic and social–emotional learning, addressing positive school climates, enhancing academic engagement, promoting positive behavioral supports).

Professional practitioner involvement is important to an evaluation system. Successful evaluation systems involve professionals within a discipline in the creation of the performance appraisal systems by which these individuals are judged (Danielson, 2011). School psychologists are well qualified to contribute to the design of their performance evaluations. In addition to their knowledge of school psychology preparation and practice, they have expertise in measurement theory, data-based decision-making, and knowledge of a variety of applicable evaluation methods (e.g., direct observation, rating scales, surveys).

Personnel evaluation is central to accountability and, when designed and used properly, improves performance and guides practice. Personnel evaluations are most meaningful when relevant feedback is provided and both the evaluator and those being evaluated have opportunities for input. Furthermore, personnel evaluations can serve to reward exemplary practice as well as to identify specific practice areas and personnel in need of improvement. When evaluation systems are aligned with job descriptions, accountability is enhanced and clear expectations for practice are reinforced.

Principle 3: Use measurements that are valid, reliable, and meaningful.

NASP recommends that valid and reliable methods with proven effectiveness form the cornerstone of personnel evaluation policy and practice. The evaluation of school psychologists should be based on multiple measures. According to the Personnel Evaluation Standards compiled by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (Gullickson & Howard, 2009), a variety of data gathering methods (observation checklists, interviews, products) and tools should be used to help ensure comprehensive and consistent indicators of performance. Key elements that are critical to a credible performance evaluation system include: (a) the use of multiple measures, including at least one measure of impact on student outcomes; (b) reliability and validity, with validity anchored to the NASP standards for professional practice; (c) utility for distinguishing different levels of proficiency; and (d) linked to

professional development and improvement (Morrison, 2013; Waldron & Prus, 2006). As a result, performance measures that are limited to high-stakes test scores or that simply count the frequency of certain activities performed by school psychologists are strongly discouraged. Other measures such as visual observation, student progress monitoring data, psychological reports, case studies, examples of students' work before and after interventions, and surveys of families, community, peers, and staff, contribute to a more reliable and robust measure for professional performance. When services are primarily delivered collaboratively, a team's assessment of student progress should be considered as a component of the multifaceted personnel performance evaluation.

Evaluation standards and corresponding rubrics should encompass the broad and comprehensive range of services provided by school psychologists. While the NASP Practice Model is intentionally comprehensive and broad in scope, it is aligned with the range of knowledge and skills school psychologists receive in NASP-approved graduate training. A cornerstone of the NASP Practice Model is that "School psychologists integrate knowledge and professional skills across the 10 domains of school psychology practice as they deliver a comprehensive range of services in professional practice that result in direct, measurable outcomes for students, families, schools, and/or other consumers" (p. 2). Those developing evaluation rubrics in districts often restrict evaluation components to only a few domains, thereby limiting the evaluation of all important school psychological activities. When school psychologists are assigned to serve special populations or projects (e.g., early childhood, multicultural assessment services, behavioral centers, crisis teams) based on the needs of the school district or community, the 10 domains of practice remain relevant to these services. A comprehensive personnel evaluation system should encompass all domains within the NASP Practice Model, thereby enabling the evaluation of the varying roles and activities of school psychologists while not penalizing those who, by virtue of their roles, do not have the opportunity to engage in all domains of practice. When developing rubrics, it is therefore important to distinguish between those whose assignments exclude specific activities versus those who have been assigned roles but do not fulfill the responsibilities as assigned.

While test score gains and value-added models (VAM) are components of many evaluation systems, NASP strongly discourages their use for the evaluation of school psychologists and all other personnel where the use of these scores in personnel evaluation has not been validated. In a scoping review by Müller et al. (2021), no empirical studies were identified showing the valid or reliable use of student standardized academic testing scores as evidence of the effectiveness of school psychological services. School psychologists, in large part, are providers of both direct and indirect services to children, and they often provide these services to multiple schools, grade levels, and populations. Therefore, outcome measures should be sensitive to the overall growth of students and stakeholder benefits as a result of receiving these direct and indirect services.

Principle 4: Evaluation of school psychologists should be embedded within an administrative structure that ensures meaningful feedback and offers resources in support of continuous improvement.

The evaluation of school psychologists should be conducted by professionals credentialed in school psychology. For more than three decades, NASP policy has promoted the professional supervision of school psychologists by school psychologists at all levels of practice as a means of ensuring that effective services support the educational success of all children (NASP, 2018, 2020). Similarly, the NASP Practice Model Organizational Principle 5: Supervision, Peer Consultation, and Mentoring recommends that the evaluation of school psychologists be conducted by a school psychologist with a "valid state school psychology credential for the setting in which they are employed, and ... a minimum of 3 years of experience as practicing school psychologists" (p. 13). While other instructional evaluators may have knowledge of the role of school psychologists (e.g., principals, directors of special education) and have valuable feedback to share pertaining to professional conduct, school systems, and educational practices, the depth and breadth of the field necessitates a credentialed school psychologist to evaluate the technical and professional skills of school psychologists to differentiate accurately between levels of performance. In districts or communities that employ only one credentialed school psychologist, school psychologists are encouraged to work with school leaders to identify opportunities for peer evaluation, peer supervision, mentorship, and/or peer consultation with a school psychologist outside of the district.

Central to a comprehensive personnel evaluation system is the recognition that skills evolve over time. The NASP Practice Model Organizational Principle 6: Professional Development and Recognition Systems emphasizes the critical importance of continuing professional development that addresses the specific needs of individual practitioners. As a result, an evaluation system should be sensitive to professional growth and promote a continuous improvement model. Early career professionals as well as veteran school psychologists need to have the support, mentoring, and supervision required to grow in their professional competence over time. Furthermore, relevant, high-quality professional development opportunities (such as those offered or approved by NASP or state school psychology associations) should be made available, supported, and aligned with the areas targeted for evaluation so that opportunities for growth and improvement are readily accessible.

When evaluating school psychologists, the evaluation should take into account if the district has sufficient personnel necessary to provide broad and comprehensive services. The NASP Practice Model contains standards to guide both the professional practices of the school psychologist as well as organizational principles designed to act as workplace recommendations for employing school districts. These principles address issues related to factors such as student to school psychologist ratios, professional conduct, supervision, and general working conditions. Organizational Principle 3 of the NASP Practice Model recommends a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 general education students when a school psychologist is practicing the broad-based role described in the model. Additionally, when school psychologists are primarily assigned to settings with students with intensive needs, when working in conditions disproportionately affected by poverty, trauma, or environmental stressors, or when serving in multiple schools in an itinerant role, smaller ratios may be required. If ratios far exceed these recommended standards, fewer services are able to be offered and the delivery of school psychological services becomes compromised. In order to provide a meaningful evaluation, every effort must be made to ensure that appropriate working conditions are provided, including the recommended school psychologist to student ratios. Performance expectations should reflect the degree to which the working conditions and the role of the school psychologist reflect adherence to the model's professional and organizational standards.

Similarly, consideration should be given to the number of school psychologists who are to be evaluated by the supervising school psychologist. The ratio of supervising school psychologists to supervisees will vary according to the responsibilities assigned to the supervisor. Reasonable supervisor to school psychologist ratios ensure that ample opportunities exist for meaningful supervision and feedback.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND NEEDS

While evaluation systems evolve from the intersection of policy and practice, school districts and state departments of education would be wise to evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation systems in improving performance and outcomes. Universities and professional organizations should be active participants in these discussions as research-based evidence of efficacy should drive future policy consideration and training. Furthermore, much as an evaluation system for individual performance should be driven by a continuous improvement model, LEAs and state departments of education should commit to revisiting evaluation systems and revising policies and practices as needed to reflect best practice and emerging research. School psychologists must be included when schools are engaged in reform to ensure that students have expanded access to comprehensive school psychological services.

(Author's Note: In 2012, NASP adopted a Framework for the Personnel Evaluation of School Psychologists Utilizing the NASP Practice Model in response to the work of the Personnel Evaluation Task Force. This reflects an update of the original document.)

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