Achieving Policy Solutions with Effective Grassroots Advocacy

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“If you are not at the table, you are on the menu…”

--Author Unknown
Types of Advocacy Important to Ensuring Equitable Education for All

• Professional
  – Helping people know who you are, what you do, and why it matters
  – Demonstrating value through actions

• Direct/Legislative
  – Communicating with decision makers about a specific issue
  – Asking a lawmaker to support or oppose a specific piece of legislation

• Social Justice Advocacy
  – actions to change “what is” to “what should be”
Understand the Legislative Process

How a Bill Becomes a Law

**New Bill**
- Introduced by member
- Numbered and printed
- Sent to committee

**Committee considers bill and...**
- Recommends that bill pass (with or without changes)
- Recommends that bill does not pass
- Holds bill

If recommended favorably

**House of Representatives**
- Debates bill
- Amends bill
- Votes on bill

If bill passes, goes to

**Senate**
- Reviews bill using similar process
- Reaches agreement with House*

Bill goes to

**Governor**
- Signs bill and it becomes a law
- Takes no action and bill becomes a law
- Vetoes bill, which dies unless overridden by 2/3 vote of General Assembly

* Both houses must agree to identical versions of the bill. If they can't, a conference committee may be set up with representatives from both houses to resolve disagreements.

Role of Federal Law in Education

- Requires specific actions in order to RECEIVE Federal funds
- Requires specific actions in order to AVOID monetary or other penalties
- Determines how Federal funds MAY or MAY NOT be used
- Determines HOW MUCH Federal funding is available.
- Ensures due process protections for protected classes of students
Regulatory/Implementation Process

**LAW**- What must be done.

**Regulation**- How it can be done

**State Rules** - What all districts and schools must do

**Implementation/Local Policy** - What it looks like in practice

**Example**

IDEA 2004, Response to Intervention, and IDEA LAW

Federal Regulation

State Rules

Actual Practice
Role of State/Local School Boards

- Significant influence over how state will implement federal/state law
- Influences school finance decisions
- Can create state/district policy
  - Particularly important in absence of state/federal law
  - e.g., bullying/harassment/discrimination policy
Good communication is essential to all types of advocacy.
Becoming an Effective Advocate

Follow the plan and never forget for whom you are really speaking.
Key Components of Effective Advocacy

1. Know What You Want
2. Recognize Opportunity to Act
3. Build Strategic Relationships
4. Gather Evidence (Research, Data, Examples)
5. Use Consistent, Effective Communication
6. Engage and Evaluate

Positive Change in Policy & Practice
1. Know what you want

*Identify how the world should be.*
How we want the world to be.

All children and youth thrive in school, at home, and throughout life.
Reality vs. The Way You Want the World to Be

Pair/Share

Describe your vision for an education system that is fair and equitable for all students.

(2 minutes)
More Concretely

All students should be held to high expectations within a rigorous well-rounded curriculum, and have access to the supports they need to succeed.
2. Recognize Opportunity to Act
Assess the Situation/Set An Agenda

• What are the current priorities of your state/district school?
  – How do they align/conflict with your goals?
• Consider current policies and practices in your district/state?
• Are there adequate resources available?
• Examine existing legislation/policy
• Where do you need to focus your efforts?
  – Legislators, federal/state agencies, state local school boards?
Integrate Local, State and National Agendas

Current National Education Priorities

• Closing the achievement and discipline gap
  – Improved accountability and indicators of school quality

• Addressing resource inequity
  – Improving school psychology ratios

• Educating the whole child
  – Comprehensive school psychological services

• Creating safe and supportive learning environments for all students
  – Preventing bullying, harassment, discrimination

How does this align with issues important to your state departments of education, state school board, or local school districts?

How can you use the national conversation to advance your state or local agendas?
Gather Information

• What data do you have/need to collect to highlight the need for change?

• What is the cost of NOT solving the problem?

• What counter-arguments may you encounter from naysayers?
Understand Your Value

• What specific training, skills, expertise and experiences make you relevant?

• You need to be able to communicate:
  – Who you are and what you do
  – Why you are specifically qualified to do this work
  – HOW you directly contribute to improving student and school success
You are on an elevator and strike up a conversation with another passenger after they notice your nametag identifying you as a [insert your role here]. They ask...

“What factors are contributing to disparate outcomes for certain groups of students and what can you do to help?”

You have one minute to respond.
3. Build Strategic Relationships
(Key Decision-Makers, Allied Partners/Coalitions, Grassroots, Grasstips)
Key Decision-Makers

- Have significant control/influence over policy, practice, priorities, resource allocation, decision making
- Can be building, district, community, state leaders
- And/or practitioners/professionals, elected officials, advocates
- Broad in relevance or specific to an issue or goal
- Relationships may be new or ongoing
Allied and Strategic Partners

• Individuals, member/professional associations, or organizations.
• Partners share your vision, understand the challenges, and are relevant to implementation.
• Help you make progress with diverse and important stakeholders.
• Have long-term, relevance to your work/goals and natural relationships that should be nurtured on an ongoing basis.

Both types of relationships require intentionality to be effective regarding advocacy.
Relationship Structures

- Organic, collegial, regular shared experience (e.g., work and professional colleagues)
- Planful, organized (e.g. professional associations and coalitions)
- Networks (e.g., grassroots, advocacy membership organizations)
- Leadership (e.g. organizational leaders/grasstops)
Relationship Strengths/Opportunities

- Shared planning and workload
- Opportunity to convey ideas, influence views/decision-making
- Ability to receive/provide trusted feedback
- Ability to activate/motivate
- Ability to create common voice

All of which improves effectiveness and outcomes
Importance of Coalition Building

Coalitions consist of a group of diverse stakeholders/groups who come together to advance a shared goal.

National Safe Schools Partnership (Long term, legislative focus.)
• Members include education, civil rights, and faith based groups

National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (Long term, issue/professional focus)
• Members include school psychologists, counselors, social workers, administrators, SLP, OT, PT

Committee for Education Funding (Long term, funding focus)
• Members include colleges, universities, research organizations, professional associations, unions etc.

Title IV Coalition (Short term, funding focus)
• Members include businesses, tech companies,
What Makes a Good Advocate?

- Knowledge and interest in public policy and understanding of:
  - Legislative process in your state
  - Regulatory process and role of state agencies
  - Jurisdiction of state/local school board
- Basic knowledge of advocacy strategies
- Positive, enthusiastic and friendly
- Good at listening and communicating
- “Visionaries”
- Committed to act
- Responsible with good follow-through
- Able to represent the profession/your issue with balanced perspectives
Grassroots Advocates

• “Grassroots” refers to a network of people who seek to raise awareness or advance a specific “ask” at the federal, state and/or local level
  – Rely on the general public and specific constituencies
• Grassroots can be mobilized to build support for a specific issue
• Grassroots can be activated by organizations in order to respond to a specific issue
• Grassroots can spur an organization to act on a specific issue

Incredibly powerful and effective! NASP grassroots helped shape ESSA.
Grasststops Advocates

• Members/leaders of an organization who maintain relationships with key decision makers
• Activists or public figures who care about your issue
• Strategically reinforce grassroots efforts
• Reinforce credibility of your position
• Carry message of the grassroots to targeted decision makers

Most effective when coordinated with grassroots efforts
NASP’s Long-Term Advocacy

- Built network of **key partners** overtime (NASISP, NAESP, NASSP)
- Developed relationships with key congressional staff; **reputation for expertise and ability to provide timely, quality resources**
- Established and utilized **grassroots network**
- Maintained and **repeatedly conveyed key messages** (adapting to audiences and circumstances) overtime
Leveraging the School Safety Framework

Opening for Change

Convening Allies & Partners

Dissemination

Garnering Support

Taking Collective Action

Impact
Don’t Forget

• Offer value
• Don’t wait until you need help
• Collaborate
• Avoid “turf battles”

For effective relationships
Hallway Conference

What 2 steps can you take to develop strategic relationships to address disparities in your state/district?

5 minutes
4. Gather Evidence (Research, Data, Examples)
Support Your Point/Refute Their Point

• Data
  – national, state, local
  – scope of problem, barriers, available resources

• Use social math

• Research
  – How we know what works

• Put a face on the issue
  – Real stories about kids, families, and educators affected
5. Developing Key Messages and “Ask-Fors”
Know Your Stakeholders’

Risks/Concerns

Goals/Hopes
Key Message Goals

• Get their attention
• Connect to a priority
• Minimize suspicion/reactive rejection
• Engage discussion
• Be easy to remember

• Key messages can’t convey everything
You have to identify the most important:

- Why
- What
- WOW!

...factors.

Why does this matter to them?
Generally 3 Core Messages is Optimal

(It’s hard for people to remember more than 3 things at a time.)
Effective Message Structure

- Problem statement
- Action/solution
- Benefits

- Benefit

- Easy for People to Grasp

- Action

- Problem
http://traumasensitiveschools.org/

The Problem

1 Many students have had traumatic experiences.
2 Trauma can impact learning, behavior and relationships at school.

The Solution

3 Trauma-sensitive schools help children feel safe to learn.

How We Get There

4 Trauma sensitivity requires a whole school effort.
5 Helping traumatized children learn should be a major focus of education reform.

“The teachers tell me I’m smart. They say I’m just not trying.”
READ MORE...
In conversations on the Hill…

Problem: Many of our students are too stressed—even traumatized—to learn.

Action/Ask for: Schools can help mitigate these stressors with proper training and mental health resources. Key provisions in ESSA support this work.

Benefit: Students can learn, behave, and be safer when they have access to school-based mental health services and teachers who understand how to support them.
In conversations on the Hill…

Problem: *Many of our students are too stressed—even traumatized—to learn.*

- Students in higher poverty communities are at greater risk for adverse experiences, such as abuse, violence and neglect, linked to mental and behavioral health problems that can interfere with learning.

- School staff often misinterpret behavior resulting from stress or trauma, such as poor concentration, acting out, absenteeism

- Some responses, such as excessive discipline, can actually make the problem worse, not better.
In conversations on the Hill…

Action/Ask for: *Schools can help mitigate these stressors with proper training and mental health resources.*

- Fully fund Title IV Part A to increase investments in comprehensive school mental health services.

- Support efforts to improve staffing ratios for school-employed mental health professionals to ensure all students have access to services.

- Promote effective school-community partnerships that improve coordination and collaboration between schools and communities.
In conversations on the Hill…

**Benefit: Students can learn, behave, and be safer when they have access to school-based mental health services.**

- Teachers who receive training related to students struggling with trauma can more effectively respond, provide support, and make appropriate referrals.

- Better coordinated school-community partnerships improve efficiency and effectiveness of services.

- Students feel safer and more connected, are able to get direct supports more easily, and are able to control their behavior, concentrate and learn.
Connect With Your Audience

• Appeal to emotion as well as intellect.
• Use a story to put a face to the issue
• Avoid overly technical language
• Be a good listener.
• Clearly articulate your “ask”
6. Engage and Evaluate

*Identify and implement strategies; assess their effectiveness*
Three Types of Strategic Communications & Advocacy

- Crisis Management
- Action Request
- Proactive Outreach Communications
- Crisis
- Targeted
- Universal
- Urgent/in the moment
- Resolving a problem
- Sharing information
Time for Staff Lounge Problem Solving

Pick a stakeholder group (elected officials, administrators). Think back to the factors influencing disparate outcomes you identified earlier. What are the 3 key messages most important to this stakeholder group?
The Basics to Remember

• Follow the identified path
• Find allies
• Stick together
• Tap your strengths
• Get to know the man behind the curtain
• (And always be prepared for flying monkeys)
Preparing for the Hill Day
Tips from Key NASP Advocates

• Be **mentally prepared** in advance for lack of interest/disagreement with the priorities being presented.
• Just like we **build rapport** with our students, take a few minutes to build a rapport with the staff member/elected official. A few minutes of informal chat can be valuable in not only building a relationship, but also getting a sense of their priorities, interests, etc.
  – what are their key issues, do they know a school psychologist, an educator, etc. Use their name, ask them questions (we are there to convince them of anything), know what are their priorities, passions, etc..
• **Bring your issue to life with a story**! It is important for the staffer to be able to get a “feel” why this issue/bill is so important.
• Share your story, (successes, roadblocks, needs) your experience working within the schools, be yourself, and be **student focused**.
Tips from Key NASP Advocates

• **Identify 3 key messages** you would like to focus on (if you were talking to your grandmother about what's important about your work and passion what would you say), don't feel like you have to convince them, ask them questions.

• The aides in each office are there to take important messages back to their boss. **Don’t underestimate their influence and ability to help enact change.**

• Be prepared to **leave your contact information** in a professional manner
Hill Meeting
Fishbowl
Remember: Leveraging PPI to Create Change

For each presentation/activity….

Note the:

• The big ideas (1-3) that resonate with you
• Points of data that seem most compelling
• Key points relevant to reality back in your state or district

Consider:

How might you convey these ideas and examples in simple terms to someone else
Effective Advocacy: The School Psychologists’ Lens

Preparing for Hill Day Part II
NASP Priorities 3-5 Years

• **School Mental Health Services**
  (Advancing the role of school psychologists as mental and behavioral health providers.)

• **NASP Practice Model**
  (Expanding implementation of the NASP Practice Model; release of the *Implementation Guide.*)

• **Shortages in School Psychology**
  (Addressing training and outreach to ensure adequate numbers of school psychologists and school psychologist positions.)

• **Leadership Development**
  (Developing school psychologists’ leadership skills at the local, state and national levels.)
Strategies for Effective Advocacy: Disseminating Information and Taking Action
Three Types of Strategic Communications & Advocacy

- **Crisis Management**
- **Action Request**
- **Proactive Outreach Communications**

Crisis

Targeted

Universal
Proactive Outreach
(You offer something. No strings.)

• Increase your visibility (with staff, parents, and administrators).
• Raise awareness and comfort level on an issue.
• Get more involved/be accessible.
• Improve collaboration.
• Disseminate useful information, especially in times of crisis.
• Create environment for decision-maker “buy-in.”

• Strategies: school newsletters, parent handouts, brown bag discussions, website content, “good to know” updates for district administrators/school boards.
Improving mental health in schools

Raising awareness of the many children who come to school with mental health issues and then treating them appropriately is the best way to ensure they achieve their potential in school and life.

By Eric Rossen and Katherine C. Cowan

“My son’s access to in-school counseling has been our door to hope that Cameron will have a successful life at home and at school.”

—Parent statement on the Mental Health in Schools Act (Franken, 2013).

Every school has students who are struggling with mental health problems. Many face temporary challenges like conflicts with peers, divorce, deployment, or a death in the family. Some are dealing with chronic stressors that can cause psychological harm including poverty, community violence, homelessness, or abuse. And still others are coping with emerging or chronic mental illness such as depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and emotional-behavioral disorders.

Students struggling emotionally or psychologically cannot thrive or learn to their potential. Addressing student mental health is a prerequisite to learning and achievement, not an add-on or extracurricular luxury. In most cases, mental health problems don’t simply go away on their own but often become worse if they are not identified or if they are left untreated. The near-term consequences range from quiet misery and academic struggles to more serious behavior and safety risks. The long-term consequences contribute to our most intractable problems, including unemployment, civil disengagement, incarceration, substance abuse, lost productivity, and poor health (World Health Organization, 2003).

Raising awareness of the need for improved school-based mental health services is a central focus of our work at the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). Our 25,000 members, like other school-employed mental health professionals — counselors, social workers and nurses — work side-by-side with teachers and administrators to address the learning, behavioral, and mental health needs of students. Schools are both ground zero for the effects of mental health problems in children and youth and critical players in provid-
Active Shooter Training Guidance

- Delineates risks, multi-level options of training and critical role of MH.
- Outlines developmental considerations.
- Emphasizes EXTREME caution when doing full-scale drills.
- Recognizes local decision-making.

Notes from the School Psychologist

I loved school when I was little. I loved it so much I played “school” on the weekends. I work with kids who hate school. This is my blog.

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 2015

5 Things for School Psychologists to Do this Summer

5 Things for School Psychologists to Do this Summer

About Me

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Dr. (Bell) Branstetter is Child and Adolescent Psychologist and School Psychologist in the San Francisco Bay Area. She specializes in psychoeducational assessment and therapy with children, adolescents, and young adults.

View my complete profile

You Want This.

The School Psychologist’s Survival Guide (... Rebecca Branstetter...

$21.70
School Refusal: A Significant Challenge

As the first quarter ends, most students have settled into the school routine of friends, teachers, and classes, and look forward to learning new things. However, for a number of youth, attending school can create high levels of anxiety and they may begin to avoid school or refuse to attend. This newsletter will explore what is termed “school refusal” and offer some strategies for parents.

School Psychology Services offers periodic newsletters on topics of interest to parents throughout the course of the school year. If you need help, see your school psychologist. Have a great 2015-16 school year.

Your School Psychologist

Signs of School Refusal

- Tearfulness before school or pleas to remain at home.
- Numerous complaints of illness such as stomach aches, headaches, dizziness, or fatigue.
- Tantrums, clinginess, stalling, or running away prior to school.
- Frequent unexcused absences from school.
- Recurrent lateness to school.
- Repeated requests to visit the school clinic.
- Frequent requests to call a parent or go home during the school day.
- Absences after school breaks and weekends or during significant days including tests, speeches, or physical education class.

“Standing up straight”

www.fcps.edu/dss/lps/psychologists/index.shtml
School Psychology Awareness Week
2nd Week in November

www.nasponline.org/communications
HAPPY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AWARENESS WEEK!
November 9-13, 2015

Sponsored by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the 2015 School Psychology Awareness Week theme is “Connect the Dots and THRIVE!” This theme focuses on building connections between students and school communities that enhance their skills, improve their well-being, and set them up to thrive in school, at home and in life.

Effective schools connect the dots and help students thrive by:
- Promoting personal achievement, growth and resilience
- Creating school climates where students feel connected, accepted, and respected
- Having engaging teachers and caring adults who believe in the greatness of every child
- Increasing family engagement and investment in helping their students achieve their best
- Fostering positive relationships in the community
- Ensuring students have access to the academic, social-emotional, mental, and behavioral health supports they need to be successful

School Psychologists are uniquely qualified to help students and schools thrive by:
- Applying expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally
- Providing social, emotional, mental and behavioral health supports for all students
- Creating safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments
- Consulting with teachers and families to develop strategies to support students
- Helping develop and implement school-wide multitiered systems of support
- Improving school-wide assessment and accountability systems
- Supporting diverse learners

Policy makers can help students and schools thrive by supporting policies that:
- Promote implementation of multi-tiered systems of support
- Increase access to school psychologists, school counselors and school social workers
- Improve school climate, safety, and student social-emotional learning
- Promote effective, evidence-based discipline policies
- Create schools free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination
Action Request: Targeted
(You need and offer something.)

• **Need (examples)**
  – Protect role/positions.
  – Program support or implementation.
  – Reallocation of funding for new or expanded programs.

• **Offer (advocacy through action)**
  – Improved collaboration/realignment of support services.
  – Crisis support for students and teachers.
  – Participate in planning/program design.
  – Conduct needs assessment/data collection and evaluation.
  – Conduct in-service training.
Ligonier Valley school psychologist proposes mental health program

By Nicole Chynoweth

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2014, 9:00 p.m.
Updated 13 hours ago

Ligonier Valley School District is looking into starting a mental health program at its high school.

At the school board's meeting Monday night, school psychologist Rachel Clark described a "coping with stress program she hopes to implement to target youth at risk for mental health issues like depression as a "preventative measure."

"With the increasing concerns with adolescent mental health, I think it's important to possibly address this throughout our adolescent youth at the high school," Clark said.

"We focus so much attention and funding and treatment options on children who are already diagnosed and in the process," she said.

Coping strategies, problem-solving strategies, resiliency skills — like how to rebound from stressors — would be the main focuses of the program, which Clark would facilitate.

Throughout the program, Clark would measure its effectiveness by collecting data on characteristics of depression, like changes in students' eating, sleeping and behavioral habits.

At the board's September meeting, Superintendent Dr. Chris Oldham gave the board some statistics from the 2013 Pennsylvania Youth Survey, which showed some students experienced symptoms of depression or antisocial behavior.

There is an Excela Health program available at the school for diagnosed students. Clark's proposed program would be geared more towards preventing mental health issues.

A small group of students, maybe eight students, would meet once a week for eight to 10 weeks for the program. To avoid taking students out of the same class during the program's run, the program would rotate through the various periods during the high school class schedule.

Oldham said the addition of the group would be a minimal cost to the district since it would only have to pay for the book Clark would use in the group.

Parental consent would be required for a student to participate. Students could be referred through the district's Student Assistance Program, parents, teachers or staff.

"If we can prevent one adolescent suicide, I think that would be awesome," said board member JoAnn Thistlethwaite.

"Everything really is reactive when you're dealing with student behavior," Oldham said. "There's very little that is proactive at this point. I think that what it will do is it will give some kids that might be at risk for becoming depressed or experiencing anxiety to be able to learn some skills that will help them to deal with those feelings better, rather than waiting for a kiddo to be in crisis and now we're reacting to it or now they're in a full-blown situation where they're needing more constant mental health services or medication. This will help to alleviate some of that."

The board will likely vote on the matter next month, Oldham said.

In other business, the board approved allowing administrators to apply for a $25,000 Safe Schools Targeted Grant for school safety equipment, such as additional security cameras and new door locks.

The board heard from teacher Adam Storey, who teaches STEAM for sixth and seventh grade, about the success of the STEAM class that was added this year at the middle school. Seven female students gave a presentation on their class' recent wind energy project, for which they worked in groups to design and build their own wind turbines.

The next meeting will be held 7 p.m. Nov. 10 with a planning session at 6 p.m.

Nicole Chynoweth is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. She can be reached at 724-850-2862 or nchynoweth@tribweb.com.
Burrillville High School, RI
The Little School Psychologist That Could

I think I can, I think I can, I think I can....
Creating Systems Change, High School

School psych noticed increase in student mental health problems

Communicated need to the principal, using data,

Principal advocated with the superintendent

Based on research, SP recommended school-wide social-emotional screening

Identified obstacles/challenges to implementation

Established a representative implementation team

Used data to communicate needs/benefits with staff.

Communicated informally, formally in staff meetings, and through multiple methods to establish buy in (particularly teachers) with full support of implementation team and school leadership.
Assessing School-Level & District-Level Needs

You can position yourself well for aligning your role with the NASP Practice Model by school or district. An initial step in this process is identifying needs and priorities by reviewing the improvement plan. Your review should look carefully at how you and the other district support staff activities of the school improvement plan.

You cannot realistically meet all of the identified needs of the school by yourself. How can you use this schema for identifying the services you can provide to address those identified needs? This is the nature of this work. A school psychologist within a district can work together with other school support personnel to ensure that the full range of necessary services is provided.

Recommended Steps for Completing a Needs Assessment

A comprehensive needs assessment can serve numerous purposes, including identifying district and helping prioritize areas of concern. Needs assessments can be specific (e.g., perceived safety among students, discipline data, reading fluency among students) and must work collaboratively with school leadership in this process, while demonstrating the ability and priorities using your expansive skillset.

Step 1: Identifying and Engaging the Appropriate Stakeholders
Be sure to include school administration/leadership and other specialized instruction to be sure that the identified target areas are aligned with the school's priorities and needs.

This article in NASP's *Communique* offers general guidance on initiating conversations around assessment. Additionally, the IDEA Partnership has created a *collection of resources* and value of specialized instructional support services and personnel. This collection...
Crisis Management Goals

• **Professional crisis**
  ▪ proposed cuts to school psychologist positions

• **Legislative crisis**
  ▪ change in Medicaid rules excluding SPs from billing

• **Public relations crisis**
  ▪ bad press coverage, editorial

• **Crisis involving school, district, or community**
  ▪ school shooting, suicides, natural disasters, etc.

Integrated part of response; rapid response; regular communications with “home base”; designated spokesperson; media (proactive, provide experts, materials, op-eds).
School Safety & Crisis

NASP has made these resources available to the public in order to promote the ability of children and youth to cope with traumatic or unsettling events. You may use all or any portion of the school safety and crisis documents on this webpage solely for educational, non-commercial use, provided you do not remove any trademark, copyright or other notice contained in such document. Additionally, the integrity of the content must be maintained and NASP must be given proper credit. No other use is permitted unless otherwise expressly permitted by NASP.

War & Terrorism
Scenes of war and violence around the world played out on the news can have a negative impact on all children—particularly those who have suffered personal loss from or been exposed firsthand to terrorist or military actions, and those whose parents are members of the military, active duty reservists, law enforcement, or emergency response. … more

Preventing Youth Suicide
Youth suicide is a serious problem, but is preventable if the right people know the warning signs and how to get help. … more

Threat Assessment at School
Threat assessment represents an important component of a comprehensive approach to school safety that gives schools an alternative to zero tolerance discipline policies that have proven to be ineffective and counterproductive. … more

Addressing Grief
School-based support and increased understanding are essential when a student experiences the loss of a family member, close friend, or other significant person. … more

Related Resources

Helping Children Cope With Terrorism: Tips for Parents & Educators
Share this handout with parents and teachers with information on how to help children feel safe and secure in the face of fears and anxieties surrounding current events.

Promoting Compassion & Acceptance in Crisis
Adults can help children understand the importance of treating all people with dignity and respect, not judging entire groups of people for the actions of a few.

Policy Priorities
Letter: Schools Need Psychologists

Published: Friday, July 10, 2015 at 12:01 a.m.
Last Modified: Thursday, July 9, 2015 at 10:04 p.m.

I am writing to express my concern about a recent decision made by Polk County Public Schools to eliminate eight school psychologist positions for the coming school year. As a retired supervisor of school psychologists in our district, I am very much aware of the critical services they deliver.

School psychologists provide students with individual and group counseling, data collection, and assessment services, among other important roles. The decision to eliminate these positions will undoubtedly impact the well-being and success of our students. I strongly urge the school board to reconsider this decision and maintain the necessary support for our students' mental health and educational needs.
Participate in Social Media
REMINDER: Key Message Goals

- Get their attention
- Connect to a priority
- Minimize suspicion/reactive rejection
- Engage discussion
- Be easy to remember

*Key messages can’t convey everything*
The purpose of the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association:

Our Vision
All students will thrive in school, at home, and throughout their lives.

Our Mission
MSPA promotes and advocates for best practices in school psychology to improve learning, behavior, and mental health for all students, families, and schools.

MSPA partners with professional organizations, family advocacy groups, and state agencies on be-

Maryland School Psychologists’ Association: Helping All Students Thrive

Our Vision:
All students will thrive in school, at home, and throughout their lives.

Our Mission:
MSPA promotes and advocates for best practices in school psychology to improve learning, behavior, and mental health for all students, families, and schools.

MSPA Works to Enhance Collaboration:
MSPA collaborates with professional organi-

About MSPA:

- Celebrating more than 50 years of providing services to children and their families.
- Over 600 members strong.
- Representing over 75% of School Psychologists employed by the Public School Systems in Maryland.
How do School Psychologists make a difference in schools?

All children and adolescents face problems from time to time. They may:

- Feel afraid to go to school
- Have difficulty organizing their time efficiently
- Lack effective study skills
- Fall behind in their school work
- Lack self-discipline
- Worry about family matters such as divorce and death
- Feel depressed or anxious
- Experiment with drugs and alcohol
- Think about suicide
- Worry about their sexuality
- Face difficult situations, such as applying to college, getting a job, or quitting school
- Question their aptitudes and abilities

School psychologists help children, parents, teachers, and members of the community understand and resolve these issues.

How do School Psychologists Make a Difference in Schools?

School psychologists are uniquely trained to identify, evaluate, connect, and provide supports for students’ academic, cognitive, social/emotional, and mental health problems.

**School psychologists work with students to:**
- Provide counseling, instruction, and mentoring to student’s struggling with social, emotional, and behavioral problems.
- Increase achievement by assessing barriers to learning and determining the best strategies to improve learning.

**School psychologists work with families to:**
- Identify and address learning and behavior problems that interfere with school success.
- Evaluate eligibility for special education services.
- Teach parenting skills and enhance home-school collaboration.

**School psychologists work with teachers to:**
- Identify and resolve academic barriers to learning.
- Design & implement academic and behavioral interventions.
- Motivate all students to engage in learning.

**School psychologists work with administrators to:**
- Collect and analyze data related to school improvement, student outcomes, and accountability requirements.
- Implement school-wide prevention programs to help maintain positive school climates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>Psychometrist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete Functional Behavior Assessments</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and monitor Positive Behavior Intervention Plans</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling/Therapy/Consultation with School Counselors</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Interventions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret Psychiatric Reports &amp; Diagnoses</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor Mental Health Issues</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Assessments</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education &amp; Collaboration</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and monitor Academic &amp; Behavior Interventions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Academic Skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate IQ/Cognitive</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Perceptual Processing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Adaptive Behavior</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Intellectual Disability (ID)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Specific Learning Disability (SLD)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Eligibility for Other Health Impairment with medical documentation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Eligibility for Visual and Hearing Impairments with medical documentation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for ODD/Conduct Disorders</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Autism/Asperger’s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify &amp; Consult for Mental/Physical Issues</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Determination/Eligibility Paperwork (RED &amp; MEEGS)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Parent Meetings (Review of Existing Data &amp; SPED Eligibility)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise School Psychologists &amp; Psychometrists</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BPS-Fall 2014 vs Spring 2015
Site Rating by Teachers

Teacher Survey of Social, Emotional, & Behavioral Development
Fall 2014 & Spring 2015

Knowledge of Soc/Emo/Beh Research-Based Interventions

Comfort with Identifying Soc/Emo/Beh Milestones

Comfort with Implementing Soc/Emo/Beh Research-Based Interventions

Overall trend with knowledge, comfort identifying and comfort implementing….reduction in strongly disagree/disagree/neutral and increase in agree/strongly agree when comparing Fall/Spring survey results.
# 2015 Kids Count Profile

## United States

### Economic Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in poverty</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children whose parents lack secure employment</td>
<td>16,087,000</td>
<td>22,837,000</td>
<td>26,339,000</td>
<td>1,347,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children living in households with a high housing cost burden</td>
<td>worsened 2008 18%</td>
<td>worsened 2008 27%</td>
<td>improved 2008 39%</td>
<td>unchanged 2008 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2011-13</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014/12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children not attending preschool</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth graders not proficient in reading</td>
<td>4,428,000</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth graders not proficient in math</td>
<td>worsened 2007-09 53%</td>
<td>improved 2007 68%</td>
<td>improved 2007 69%</td>
<td>improved 2007/08 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school students not graduating on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW THE STRESS OF HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY IMPACTS CHILDREN’S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Half of children who are homeless are held back for one grade, and 22% are held back for multiple grades.¹

In 2008, the dropout rate for students living in low-income families was about four and a half times greater than the rate of their peers from high-income families.²

Studies indicate that children who are homeless are 2x as likely to have learning disabilities and 3x as likely to have an emotional disturbance as children who are not homeless.³

48% of students who are homeless met statewide standards in math in grades 3-8 in the 2011-2012 school year.⁴

51% of students who are homeless met statewide standards in reading in grades 3-8 in the 2011-2012 school year.⁴

Created by Seattle University's Project on Family Homelessness with data from:
1. Grothaus, Lorelle, Anderson, & Knight, 2011
   http://bit.ly/1rN5ZZH
   http://1.usa.gov/1rWKO2
3. Better Homes Fund, 1999
   http://bit.ly/1BbHZeK
4. Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, U.S. Department of Education
   http://bit.ly/1rMR6GN
The Basics to Remember

• Follow the identified path
• Find allies
• Stick together
• Tap your strengths
• Get to know the man behind the curtain
• (And always be prepared for flying monkeys)
What’s your story?

Once upon a time there was a Brave School Psychologist...
Do Not Reinvent the Wheel.

NASP has resources that can help.
Foundational NASP Documents

- Standards, Ethics, and Practice Model
- Position Papers (Official NASP policy)
- A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools
- A Framework for School-Wide Bullying Prevention and Safety
Practice Model Implementation Guide

- Realistic guidance and action steps
- Practical strategies and ideas for practitioners
- Helpful resources and adaptable tools
- Discussion and staff development questions
- Online, interactive, updated

http://www.nasponline.org/standards/practice-model/
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Implementation Resources

- Significant opportunities for school psychologists
- Emphasizes mental health, school climate and safety, MTSS, and comprehensive assessment/accountability
- Resources include handouts for SPs and decision-makers, podcasts, funding opportunity information, etc.
- SP involvement in state and district policy and regulatory decision-making is critical
Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life.

Good mental health is critical to children’s success in school and life. Research demonstrates that students who receive social-emotional and mental health support achieve better academically. School climate, classroom behavior, on-task learning, and students’ sense of connectedness and well-being all improve as well. Mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness but also encompasses social, emotional, and behavioral health and the ability to cope with life’s challenges.

Schools are an ideal place to provide mental health services to children and youth.

Unfortunately, too many children and youth with mental health problems are not getting the help they need and, when left unmet, mental health problems are linked to costly negative outcomes such as academic and behavior problems, dropping out, and delinquency. Schools, however, are ideal settings to provide mental health services. School-based professionals like school psychologists know the students, parents, and other staff. The learning environment provides the right context for prevention and intervention. And, importantly, school is where children spend most of their day.

School mental health services focus on the child within the school setting and on collaboration with families.

School-based mental health services range from prevention and skills development to intervention and evaluation, referral and collaboration, and consultation and counseling. School psychologists are trained to link mental health to learning and behavior in terms of prevention, intervention and outcomes evaluation. They team with parents, other school-based mental health professionals, and community service providers to help create a continuum of services that meet the needs of the individual child.

School psychologists provide a continuum of mental health services such as:

- Consultation with school staff and/or parents regarding the social/emotional/behavioral needs of children and youth.
- Consultation with school staff regarding classroom and/or school-wide approaches to behavior and to develop positive behavior supports and interventions.
- Screening, evaluation, identification and referral for children exhibiting emotional disturbances.
- Planning and implementing appropriate academic and other educational supports.

Improving the Lives and Learning of Children and Youth

Who Are School Psychologists? Helping Children Thrive • In School • At Home • In Life

What do school psychologists do?
School psychologists provide direct support and interventions to students; consult with teachers, families, and other school-employed mental health professionals (i.e., school counselors, school social worker) to support strategies; work with school administrators to improve school-wide practices and policies; and collaborate with community providers to coordinate needed services.

School psychologists help schools successfully:

- Improve Academic Achievement
  - Promote student motivation and engagement
  - Conduct psychological and academic assessments
  - Individualize instruction and interventions
  - Manage student and classroom behavior
  - Monitor student progress
  - Collect and interpret student and classroom data
  - Reduce inappropriate referrals to special education.

- Promote Positive Behavior and Mental Health
  - Improve student communication and social skills
  - Assess student emotional and behavioral needs
  - Provide individual and group counseling
  - Promote problem solving, anger management, and conflict resolution
  - Reinforce positive coping skills and resilience

- Create Safe, Positive School Climates
  - Prevent bullying and other forms of violence
  - Support social-emotional learning
  - Assess school climate and improve school connectedness
  - Implement and promote positive discipline and restorative justice
  - Implement school-wide positive behavioral supports
  - Identify at-risk students and school vulnerabilities
  - Provide crisis prevention and intervention services

- Strengthen Family-School Partnerships
  - Help families understand their children’s learning and mental health needs
  - Assist in navigating special education processes
  - Connect families with community service providers when necessary

www.nasponline.org
Why do **YOU** need to advocate?

- **535 members** of Congress
- More than **4.5 million teachers** (NEA/AFT members).
- 10% of NEA/AFT = an average of **421 contacts** per member of Congress.
- **25,000 NASP members**. 10% of NASP members = an average of **5 contacts** per member of Congress
- **Why should a Congressman care about our issues if only 5 of us knock on his or her door?**
Not so sure about this?
What do Gumby and you have in common?
Gumby’s Qualities

• Flexible
• Helpful
• Optimistic—all is possible
• Honest and pure
• Adventurous
• Fearless
• Loving
• Everybody’s friend
• Gumby represents the good in all of us.

—Art Clokey, Gumby’s creator, back of the Gumby package
School Psychologists’ Qualities

• Flexible
• Helpful
• Optimistic—all is possible
• Honest and ethical
• Resourceful
• Highly skilled
• Dedicated
• Caring
• Every child’s advocate
• School psychologists see the good in all of us.

Hi, what can I do to help?

Mr. Gumby, EdS, NCSP, School Psychologist
Advocating for your skills is not self-interested, self-promotion.

It is essential to doing your best for kids.
Human Resources for You!

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Final Questions or Comments?