

Excellence in School Psychological Services (ESPS) Recognition Program: ESPS Application Tip Sheet

The NASP Excellence in School Psychological Services (ESPS) recognition program seeks to acknowledge school districts proactively working to implement comprehensive school psychological services. The purpose of the ESPS recognition program is to (a) support implementation of the organizational principles defined in the NASP Practice Model standards and (b) acknowledge the progress and success that districts make in meeting the standards. As more ESPS applications have been received and reviewed, common patterns of successful artifacts and practices, as well as errors and omissions have emerged. This document is designed to assist applicants in proactively addressing some of the difficulties and accomplishments observed.

GENERAL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Applications should be filled out by a minimum of 2 to 3 people who are familiar with the school psychology program and practices and with district policy and procedures.
- When citing a section of a document as evidence, use specific references to the item line, quotes, and page number in the artifact so that the reviewer can quickly and easily review the item.
- Documentation—such as photos, screenshots from websites, excerpts from letters, brochures, pamphlets, meeting notes, meeting agendas—as sources of evidence supportive of narrative descriptions is encouraged. However, use the narrative as a road map to guide the reviewers on what to look for within those artifacts.
- Student and school-wide systems data supporting student and school outcomes is encouraged. Only redacted documents should be submitted.
- Provide evidence that demonstrates systemic trends across the local education agency (LEA) or district versus the individual students and schools.
- Use the scoring rubric to guide the evidence submitted in support of the application. Specific examples of acceptable evidence are offered throughout the document.
- Reference individuals by job titles and describe specific roles when offering their work as evidence rather than listing a specific person's name.
- Using a narrative voice while describing the evidence will be helpful for the reviewers.
- Although the response matrix only requires the name of the lead person submitting the application, it may be helpful to indicate the name, professional title, and role of each contributor.
- Provide a glossary for acronyms used.
- Some documents may support more than one organizational principle. Make sure to include the document in the appropriate folder for each organizational principle every time the document is referenced.
- Make sure that all electronic links provided as evidence of different standards have appropriate public access so that the blind review team can open the documents and review each submission. No credit will be given for artifacts that cannot be accessed or reviewed.

COMMON ERRORS OR OMISSIONS

- Only responding to the item in the district-completed response matrix and not providing any evidence or documentation supporting the principle or subprinciple in the associated folder.
- Overrelying on one piece of evidence.
- Including artifacts in folders without any accompanying narrative explaining how that artifact is representative of the standard (e.g., submitting a 90-minute video of a Board of Education meeting without highlighting which section to view with time stamps, or how it meets the standard).
- Referencing demonstration of a program without citing evidence of implementation. For example, a district provides multiple training PowerPoints but does not also show participation by school psychologists in the training and application of the acquired skills (e.g., attendance sheets, evaluation feedback, meeting minutes, implementation records, or other forms of evidence of actual implementation).
- Using outdated evidence without any indication of current status of an organizational principle.
- Providing a document or resource without description of how it links to an organizational principle. While some forms of evidence will appear to clearly link to a principle without any further clarification, some clarification is typically needed to explicitly make the connection.

SPECIFIC TIPS FOR SELECTED PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE: 1.1(A): Evidence provided of systematic, system-wide needs assessment of student academic and mental behavioral health. Please provide evidence of assessments used or data that have been collected.

- **Common Errors:** No systematic survey is completed, or results only focus on academic or mental health needs, but not both.
- **Tips:** Surveys should show use with varying ages or educational levels. Questions need to focus on mental and behavioral health, as well as academic needs.
- **Special Considerations:** Only redacted data or summary reports of surveys should be submitted. The privacy of individual survey respondents should be protected.

PRINCIPLE: 1.1(B): Use of a strategic plan that specifically guides the delivery of school psychological services.

- **Common Errors:** Lack of strategic plan specific to the role and functions of school psychologists. Submission of a district-level strategic plan without explanation for how that plan specifically informs the delivery of school psychological services.
- **Tips:** Documentation of a strategic plan for school psychological services, or annual goals for school psychological services, or a similar plan for improvement. Evidence that suggests strategic consideration for the delivery of school psychological services to students in need.
- **Special Considerations:** While some districts (e.g., rural or small districts) may not have independent psychological services departments and school psychologists' services may not be independently represented in their district strategic plan, it is important to demonstrate how the services of school psychologists work in partnership with other mental health and special education staff in the district to meet the comprehensive needs of students.

PRINCIPLE: 1.4: Contractual school psychological services are provided in a manner consistent with this model, NASP's *Principles for Professional Ethics*, and other relevant professional guidelines and standards.

- **Common Error:** Applicants misunderstand the use of the term *contractual*, or they do not address their use of contractual school psychologists or their expectations for these contractual services.
- **Tips:** If the district uses contractual services, documentation should indicate that contractors are expected to follow the same ethical rules, confidentiality expectations, and responsibilities as other staff. If the district does not use contractual school psychological services, be sure to specifically state that and provide supportive policy evidence, if available.
- **Special Considerations:** *Contractual services* in this standard refers to services provided by outside agencies or entities, not employees of the district.

PRINCIPLE: 1.5A: Evidence of systematic evaluation of services across the district using the NASP Practice Model as a framework.

- **Common Errors:** A district provides an evaluation of one dimension of school psychological services rather than the collective delivery of educational, mental health, and other student support services. For example, a district may conduct an evaluation of the district's effectiveness in completing timely assessments and IEP meetings, but not evaluate mental or behavioral health or crisis supports. The district may submit an evaluation of only one aspect of mental and behavioral health services, such as positive behavioral supports, and not address the broad needs and services delivered to students.
- **Tips:** A summary document that annually aggregates the quantity, type, and quality of school psychological services, which are aligned to the NASP Practice Model for all school psychologists in the district, is optimal. Additionally, consider submitting supporting documents that provide evidence of evaluation of different facets of school psychological services. Such documents include the district's school psychologist evaluation tool, internal evaluation documents that highlight processes and outcomes directly related to school psychological services, and any external evaluation reports that may be available. Ensure the district's evaluation of individual school psychological services aligns to the NASP Practice Model and this alignment is documented.
- **Special Considerations:** While it is not necessary to cite every single service delivered by every single school psychologist, the review team is looking for evidence representing systemic implementation of the NASP Practice Model represented by a preponderance of evidence. Consider noting how the district uses the personnel or program evaluation frameworks to better align future school psychological services to the NASP Practice Model and to advocate for additional student services. Additionally, the evaluation data do not need to demonstrate perfection; instead, the committee is looking to see that agencies are actively evaluating service delivery and using that with other tools to improve services in the future.

PRINCIPLE: 3.1(C): School or role assignments within the district are made based upon a match between school psychology competencies and needs of the student populations that they serve.

- **Common Errors:** There is no written documentation that describes how school psychologist assignments are made.
- **Tips:** It is important to look for and describe the factors that contribute to specific decisions about assignments. For example, are specific student and program needs (e.g., intensive programming, high numbers of students with specific disabilities, prevention programming desired by the school) considered and matched to school psychologists' knowledge and skills? Are the results of administrator requests or future programming plans (e.g., universal prevention programs to be implemented) considered in making assignments? It is helpful to specifically address how a district ensures that assignments and reassignments are equitable.

- **Special Considerations:** Smaller districts often have fewer written policies to guide administrative practices. While written policies or strategic plans are ideal, written descriptions in other documents can adequately describe how school psychologist assignments are made. The district or organization may wish to put unwritten policies into writing so that stakeholders are aware of how decisions are made. Using a staffing matrix that relies on certain criteria or formulas (e.g., using student population to determine the base for FTE assignments, adding FTE for special populations or 1:1 work with intensive needs populations) can be helpful.

PRINCIPLE: 4.2A: School psychology supervisors and school psychologists participate actively and collaboratively in the planning and delivery of school psychological services.

- **Common Errors:** Districts describe how school psychologists participate in the delivery of school psychological services but fail to document how they participate in the collaborative planning of such services.
- **Tips:** Be sure to document avenues of active collaborative planning by school psychologists and school psychology supervisors. For example, surveys that assess school psychologist training needs, quarterly planning meetings, professional learning communities' goals and progress reports, workgroup planning and outcomes, and data analysis retreats. would typically be good sources of evidence if agendas, meeting minutes, or attendance documents provided evidence of involving school psychologists in discussions and decision making related to the delivery of services.
- **Special Considerations:** In many districts, school psychologists may be collaborating with school counselors, social workers, allied student support providers, and administrators to actively plan comprehensive mental health supports for children and adolescents. While interdisciplinary collaboration is essential in all districts, the agendas/minutes should specifically include mention of school psychological services within the interdisciplinary planning and demonstrate engagement of school psychologists in these dialogues.

Principle 5.2: School systems utilize supervision models in which supervision methods match the developmental level of the school psychologist.

- **Common Errors:** Districts frequently document the structure of supervision for school psychologists, including supervisor–supervisee pairings and credentials, but fail to illustrate how supervision is individualized and differentiated according to school psychologists' experience and skill level.
- **Tips:** Provide redacted supervision logs, handbooks, and other forms of documentation that would be indicative of topics covered in 1:1 or small group supervision sessions. This information should illustrate how first year school psychologists' supervision varies from that of more veteran school psychologists' supervision opportunities. Supervisor qualifications and credentials are also needed.
- **Special Considerations:** Supervision opportunities for individuals practicing in districts should be outlined in a handbook or procedural document, even if only veteran school psychologists currently practice in the district. This may also include partnerships with other districts or agencies to provide professional support and supervision.

PRINCIPLE: 5.4: School psychologists have an impact on student outcomes.

- **Common Errors:** District lacks data collection and reporting on the student level impact of school psychological services. Student progress on IEP goals related to the delivery of school psychological services is not observable or not operationally defined.
- **Tips:** Develop procedures and practices for the collection and dissemination of data on the work of school psychologists across the Domains of Practice. While the collection of individual student outcome

data in response to service delivery is essential in the IEP process, the ESPS program seeks system level data to demonstrate effectiveness of school psychological services. If the district does not currently collect service-level data, consider starting an annual time sampling survey of services that looks at the breadth and depth of services provided by school psychologists. Gradually move to processes that allow school psychologists to collectively provide evidence of student impact by these services.

- **Special Considerations:** Review all the sources of data that are being collected and consider how those data are used. Where data are being collected but are not useful, consider discontinuing the collection. Focus on data collection methods that are easy to collect, robust in representation, and informative in measuring student outcomes.

PRINCIPLE: 6.2(C): Supervision includes feedback to the school psychologist on new skill development and acquisition.

- **Common Errors:** Documentation often focuses on professional development offerings but does not include how skills were demonstrated or evaluated, or the information only relates to district-wide implementation and effectiveness, but not the school psychologist's skill acquisition.
- **Tips:** Make sure to include examples of what happens after professional development is offered. Offer information about how new skills are demonstrated and how are they evaluated for progress/effectiveness at an individual school psychologist level.
- **Special Considerations:** Feedback can occur in many forms (e.g., written, oral). Consider the evidence that feedback has been provided and specifically addresses skill acquisition. These are the essential elements of this standard.

RESOURCES

Communiqué Article: “Strengths-Based Supervision in School Psychology: Accentuate the Positive; Eliminate the Negative”

<https://www.nasponline.org/publications/periodicals/communiqué/issues/volume-46-issue-1/strengths-based-supervision-in-school-psychology-accentuate-the-positive-eliminate-the-negative>

NASP Position Statement: Supervision in School Psychology

<https://www.nasponline.org/x26834.xml>

NASP Supervision Resources, Including Internship and Field Supervision Guidance

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/graduate-educators>

Other NASP Position Statements Addressing Services to Students and Families

<https://www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/policy-priorities/position-statements>

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