

Resolution Supporting Efforts to Reduce the Harmful Effects of Climate Change on Children and Youth

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is a nonpartisan association committed to helping all children and youth to thrive, at home, at school, and throughout life. NASP's ethical standards require school psychologists to prioritize the welfare of children, to speak up for the interests and rights of students and families, and to advocate for safe and healthy environments for children (NASP, 2020a). In reaffirming its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), NASP asserts that school psychologists have the responsibility of promoting and protecting the rights of children (NASP, 2020b). The work of NASP is guided by research and grounded in our ethical responsibility to protect children.

According to findings from the U.S. Global Change Research Program, rising global temperatures due to climate change continue to result in a variety of environmental impacts, including, but not limited to, an increase in air pollution, extreme heat conditions, and extreme weather events (Crimmins et al., 2016), all of which have negative physical and mental health implications for children and youth. Further, research shows that children, youth, and adults who engage in climate advocacy efforts may experience an increase in adaptive coping and a reduction in anxiety related to climate change (Clayton, 2020; Mah et al., 2020). NASP seeks to promote professional policies, practices, and research that will lead to a reduction in harm from climate change and an increase in safe, healthy, and equitable learning environments.

WHEREAS, NASP is committed to improving the capacity of school psychologists to provide school-based mental and behavioral health services and to advocate for schools, communities, and systems that ensure equitable access to safe environments (NASP, 2017); and

WHEREAS, global climate change due to human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases is a scientific consensus (Cook et al., 2016; NASA, 2019; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2014); and

WHEREAS, children's health is at particular risk from the environmental impacts of climate change, given their physiological vulnerability (Salas et al., 2019); and

WHEREAS, reduced air quality (Howe et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019), an increase in the number of wildfires (Tinling et al., 2016), and extreme heat conditions (Salas et al., 2019) result in increases in childhood illness and disease; and

WHEREAS, air pollution results in increased rates of cognitive and psychiatric disorders (Allen et al., 2017; Oudin et al., 2016; Siddique et al., 2011); and

WHEREAS, increased extreme weather events attributed to climate change (e.g., flooding, wildfires, hurricanes) continue to expose greater numbers of children and youth to potentially traumatic events, contributing to increased rates of posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression (IPCC, 2014; Kessler et al., 2008; Lowe et al., 2013; Perera, 2017); and

WHEREAS, in keeping with its commitment to social justice and antiracism, and recognizing the efforts of other groups, including, but not limited to, the Black Lives Matter movement and Indigenous peoples, to elevate environmental justice and climate change advocacy, NASP is concerned that climate change has resulted in disproportionately negative impacts on low income and economically marginalized populations, students of color, and the schools and communities that serve these students and their families (Bekkar et al., 2020; Institute for Southern Studies, 2019; NAACP, 2017; NASP, 2020c); and

WHEREAS, adding to inequities already present, problems associated with climate change, such as increased rates of displacement, extended school closures, and fewer available resources for recovery, make mitigation more challenging for minoritized and marginalized groups. (Furr et al., 2010; U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2018); and

WHEREAS, NASP believes that all children have the right to be treated equitably regardless of their background, origins, beliefs, or personal characteristics (NASP, 2020b), and school psychologists are called to advocate for systemic change to address inequities experienced by minoritized and marginalized youth (NASP, 2017);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, NASP is committed to supporting professional policies and practices that help mitigate the negative mental health and educational effects that climate change has on children, youth, and school communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NASP recognizes and appreciates the efforts of individual school psychologists as they advocate together with youth and other school and community leaders to both increase awareness of the harmful effects of climate change and increase climate justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NASP supports the continued pursuit and dissemination of research on climate change and its impact on the learning and mental health of children and youth as well as on practices that will mitigate its negative effects.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NASP's efforts as described above are enacted through a social justice framework, affirming the rights of all children and youth to attend schools in safe and healthy environments that are conducive for learning and well-being.

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