

Addressing Shortages in School Psychology Resource Guide

The vision of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is that all children and youth thrive in school, at home, and throughout life. To help direct its efforts and position highly qualified school psychologists to fulfill this vision, NASP has proposed four *key initiatives* of the association. One of those initiatives includes addressing critical shortages in school psychology. Shortages in school psychology, like shortages in other related professions, have the potential to significantly undermine the availability of high quality services to students, families and schools.

Shortages can include both an insufficient supply of qualified school psychologists as well as an insufficient number of positions to meet the needs of students. Additionally, multiple factors that contribute to shortages in school psychology highlight the complex and context-specific nature of the issue, including:

- Shortage of qualified faculty in graduate education programs
- Limited access to NASP approved graduate preparation programs in certain parts of the country
- Limited number of qualified applicants for some programs; whereas other programs may have more qualified applicants than they can accept
- Difficulty attracting graduates from some programs into areas where position vacancies are occurring consistently
- Difficulties retaining qualified school psychologists
- Shortage of approved internships and qualified internship supervisors
- Limited racial-ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity

This resource guide provides a range of suggestions or strategies for different groups or stakeholders (e.g., graduate programs, state school psychology associations, school districts) to address shortages in school psychology. The guide provides sections for strategies related to recruitment and retention.

Recruitment

Recruitment refers to strategies that help attract professionals into positions that are otherwise hard to fill or at a level where demand exceeds supply. This may include, though is not limited to, recruitment of prospective students into the field, potential graduate educators in programs with vacancies, or practitioners into hard to fill positions.

Practitioner Recruitment

Increasing the number of new practitioners entering the field involves recruiting a diverse range of individuals for graduate preparation in school psychology. In order to optimize their impact, recruitment efforts should promote early awareness of the field across several groups, including

high school students, undergraduate students, and professionals in related fields (e.g., education, clinical psychology) who are interested in re-specializing.

One especially important consideration in addressing shortages concerns the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) practitioners. The results of NASP's most recent membership survey indicated that only 13% of respondents identified as racial and/or ethnic minorities. Moreover, only 14% of members reported fluency in a language other than English, and only half of these individuals reported involvement in bilingual or multilingual service delivery (Walcott, Charvat, McNamara, & Hyson, 2015). Efforts to increase the representation of CLD school psychologists should be a critical component of national efforts to remedy shortages.

General recommendations

- Advertise the personal and professional benefits of graduating with a degree in school psychology. These benefits include competitive salaries, ample job openings, a high degree of reported job satisfaction among current practitioners, and job flexibility (with respect to scheduling and employment contexts).
- Portray school psychology as an exciting and rewarding field. School psychology graduate students perceive the broad prospects of working with children and working in schools to be the most exciting features of the job (Bocanegra, Rossen, & Grapin, under review). It is important that when promoting the field of school psychology we move beyond employment numbers and salary, but rather, try to connect with potential applicant at a personal level. People generally go into school psychology because they feel good about the potential of making a difference in children's lives, not because of the money or prestige (Bocanegra, Newell, & Gubi, 2016).
- Increase visibility of job openings. Recruiters should continue to use traditional avenues of exposure such as attending open house and job/college fairs in order to increase visibility of job openings. However, electronic media may provide another viable avenue for recruitment. Potential applicants report using internet searches and webpages as one of the primary sources of information regarding school psychology (Bocanegra, et al., under review). Recruiters could also use social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook to advertise job openings. State associations and other agencies are encouraged to make job posting boards open to the public to allow those from out of state to identify potential opportunities.
- *Put a face on the profession*. Short videos could be created to introduce potential applicants to the school psychology program and shared through social media, which has the potential to increase prospective applicants' positive affect toward the profession (Bocanegra, Gubi, & Cappaert, 2016).
- Collaborate with appropriate stakeholders to devise incentives for entering school psychology. These stakeholders may include state and federal agencies that can offer loan

forgiveness programs, competitive salaries and stipends, and comprehensive benefits packages (Ehrhardt-Padgett, Hatzichristou, Kitson, & Meyers, 2004).

- Develop a comprehensive and creative public campaign to raise awareness about the profession. Utilize resources from NASP's annual School Psychology Awareness Week. Additionally, consider ways to increase the profession's presence in social media outlets as well as campaigns that directly target high schools and undergraduate institutions. Finally, efforts should be made to establish recruitment pipelines among high schools, undergraduate institutions, graduate education programs, and public schools. Stakeholders within these institutions could present and mentor potential applicants and help to ease transitions along the career development pipeline (Bocanegra, Newell, & Gubi, 2016; Castillo, Curtis, & Tan, 2014).
- Provide incentives and support for graduate program development in areas that are most affected by the shortage. State Departments and local school psychology organizations and education programs should consider possible incentives and supports that could be implemented to help mitigate school psychology shortages. These incentives may include increased pay and other monetary incentives, the creation of formal respecialization programs, availability of distance learning, development of internship programs, and monetary incentive for relocation to high need area.

Recommendations for recruiting secondary/high school students

- Incorporate school psychology in AP Psychology classes. This involves presenting school psychology as an appealing career option. School psychology may be integrated in course units pertaining to mental health. Additionally, AP Psychology teachers may invite site-based practitioners and graduate students/faculty from local universities to deliver informational presentations on the profession.
- Increase the visibility of the school psychologist's role within the district. This may involve practitioners visiting classrooms in their respective schools to introduce themselves and to describe the supports they provide to students (Davis et al., 2004). Students should have clear and accessible means for reaching out to their school psychologist(s).
- Provide scholarships and other forms of recognition for high school students through state associations. For example, the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists presents an annual scholarship award to a high school student who demonstrates a commitment to pursuing graduate preparation in school psychology.
- Offer career mentorship programs that can introduce students to the profession. Site-based practitioners and graduate students can mentor high school students who are interested in a career in school psychology (Bocanegra, Newell, & Gubi, 2016). These programs may allow students to shadow professionals while taking college-level coursework.

• *Encourage early involvement in professional organizations*. Offering high school students membership in state and national school psychology organizations (at discounted rates) may encourage them to utilize resources through these organizations. View NASP's membership categories and rates.

Recommendations for recruiting undergraduate students

- *Increase exposure to the profession through undergraduate advising*. Academic advisors in Psychology, Education, and general university advising departments should be equipped with the <u>appropriate knowledge</u> and <u>promotional materials</u> to present school psychology as a viable career option.
- Increase exposure to the profession through <u>undergraduate coursework</u>. School psychology may be discussed in both introductory-level psychology and education classes as well as in separate coursework dedicated to careers in psychology (Grapin, Bocanegra, & Schilling, 2016; Schilling, Grapin, & Hyson, 2016). Sample syllabi are available through the Graduate Educators <u>Community</u> on the NASP website.
- Encourage early involvement in state and national professional organizations. Undergraduate students should be afforded discounted rates for professional memberships and conference registration. They should be encouraged to present at professional conferences with graduate faculty and students in school psychology programs (SPPs).
- Advocate for an increased presence of school psychology in undergraduate textbooks. The most recent investigations of undergraduate introductory psychology texts suggest that school psychology is relatively less discussed than other applied psychology fields (e.g., clinical psychology; Haselhuhn & Clopton, 2008). The inclusion of school psychology in introductory texts would allow for greater early exposure to the profession among undergraduates.
- Provide opportunities for undergraduates to complete internship experiences in school psychology. The School Psychology Undergraduate Recruitment (SPUR) Program at Montclair State University is an example of a program that offers school psychology internships for undergraduates. This program requires students to complete a 45-hour internship in which they shadow a school psychologist and meet for bimonthly group supervision with a graduate faculty member in school psychology. For more information about this program, please contact Sally Grapin at grapins@montclair.edu.
- *Encourage undergraduate involvement in school psychology research.* Undergraduates should be encouraged to join research teams led by school psychology faculty members.
- **Deliver school psychology presentations to undergraduates.** Graduate students may be invited to give brief informational presentations on school psychology in introductory psychology and education classes and in related extracurricular group meetings (e.g.,

Psychology club and Psi Chi meetings). NASP provides a <u>downloadable</u>, <u>adaptable</u> <u>PowerPoint presentation</u> to use for such presentations.

• Encourage collaboration among psychology, education, and other related departments/schools. Increased collaboration may allow SPPs to enhance their visibility among students with related professional interests (e.g., social work, teacher education, counseling, etc.).

Recommendations for increasing cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD) in graduate programs ${\bf r}$

Designing robust and attractive graduate programs

- *Incorporate multicultural coursework in the curriculum*. School psychology programs should offer a course devoted to multicultural studies, and multicultural topics should be infused throughout the curriculum (Newell et al., 2010; Proctor, Simpson, Levin, & Hackimer, 2014).
- Ensure that multicultural research is represented in faculty scholarship. At least one faculty member should be actively conducting multicultural research. This research should be included on a faculty webpage. Encourage graduate student involvement in this research (Smith et al., 2016).
- Address social justice issues throughout coursework and program requirements. Social justice issues may be addressed through coursework, service learning experiences, and community projects (Briggs, McArdle, Bartucci, Kowalewicz, & Shriberg 2009).
- Create graduate preparation environments that welcome and value diversity. School psychology programs must foster a learning environment that clearly values and welcomes diversity. These values must be pervasive and authentic and must move beyond surface-level efforts to promote diversity (e.g., mission statements that are not backed by robust plans for implementation). Grapin, Lee, and Jaafar (2015) present a multilevel framework for supporting diverse students in SPPs. Recruitment materials (e.g., brochures and website content) should emphasize and reflect the program's commitment to diversity. For example, program faculty may include a link to NASP's Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy on their program websites, or note that the program supports the policy.

NASP also maintains a directory of <u>Multicultural and Bilingual School Psychology</u> <u>Graduate Programs</u> that demonstrate a commitment to diversity,

• Incorporate field experiences that center on working with CLD individuals. These opportunities should be available in both practica and internship (Rogers, 2006). Make this focus apparent on the program's website, which often serves as an important recruitment tool.

• Ensure that program faculty represent a range of CLD backgrounds. CLD students are represented in larger numbers in programs in which at least one faculty represents a racial/ethnic minority background (Rogers, 2006).

Recruiting a diverse graduate student body

Emphasize that school psychology is a profession that values diversity. A commitment to diversity should be evident in the program's coursework, research, faculty and student bodies. For most programs, passive diversity recruitment will not be sufficient for making significant progress in the diversity of student body. Hence programs should make an active effort to recruit diverse students (e.g., Grapin, Bocanegra, Green, Lee, & Jaafar, 2016). NASP is firmly committed to increasing diversity in the profession, and general recommendations are provided in NASP's position statement on the Recruitment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse School Psychologists.

- Foster relationships with institutions that traditionally serve racial and ethnic minorities (e.g., Historically Black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions). Outreach efforts should be provided at those institutions and graduate students from those institutions should be included in the recruitment efforts (Chandler, 2011; Graves & Wright, 2007; Rogers & Molina, 2006).
- *Make direct and personal contact with CLD applicants*. Direct, personal contact should be made with applicants in order to assure them of program fit. Such direct contact is particularly important for CLD students who may have concerns about fitting into the program. Ideally, this personal contact should be made by a faculty member or graduate student from a CLD background or involved in CLD issues/research (Chandler, 2011).
- Offer funding opportunities through the institution and through external grants. For some CLD graduate students, funding opportunities may be critical for ensuring program completion. Hence, the potential for graduate funding is likely to increase the effectiveness of graduate student diversity recruitment efforts (Chandler, 2011).
- Implement admissions procedures that yield a highly qualified and diverse student body. These procedures may emphasize applicant interviews, review of personal statements, and letters of recommendation while de-emphasizing components such as Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores (Chandler, 2011).
- *Invite prospective students for on-campus visits*. This may allow them to establish more personal connections with faculty and students. Interpersonal interaction with a school psychologist has been found to be a significant predictor of entering the profession (Bocanegra, Newell, & Gubi, 2016).
- Acknowledge that <u>all</u> program faculty have a role in recruiting a diverse student body. University faculty are often very busy with numerous competing obligations. Thus,

- program leaders should acknowledge diversity recruitment as a priority and afford adequate time and resources to contribute to recruitment efforts (Vasquez et al., 2016).
- Reach out to minority undergraduates within the institution. Due to school psychology being underrepresented in undergraduate education and students being generally unaware of the profession, presentations to racial/ethnic student organizations and undergraduate courses are recommended (Bocanegra, Gubi, Fan, & Hansmann, 2016).
- Specify objective and measurable goals for increasing student diversity. These goals should be suited to the program's individual characteristics. Specific and purposeful plans should be made to achieve these goals. Progress made towards these goals, along with data-informed modifications to recruitment plans, should be reviewed annually.
- When working with cultures that value social support from family, incorporate family in the recruitment process. Individuals from some CLD groups may strongly value family input when making decisions about career paths and programs. Including families in the recruitment process may help prospective students determine whether the program is a good fit (Chandler, 2011).
- Assist students in identifying programs with multicultural interests. Recent notable efforts from APA Division 16 have been made to create a database of faculty with multicultural interests. Prospective students should be encouraged to access the National Directory of Graduate Faculty Addressing Cultural and Diversity Issues in School Psychology at http://www.d16cema.org/.

Recommendations for recruiting faculty

- **Provide comprehensive mentoring to prospective faculty.** The prospect of navigating the university environment and tenure process can seem daunting to graduate students. Efforts should be made to mentor and prepare promising graduate students for entering and flourish in the academic environment (Daniel, 2009).
- Offer seminars that orient graduate students to life in academia and convey the benefits of this career path. These seminars should focus on the many unique components of academia the benefits of holding a faculty position (e.g., autonomy, tenure, flexible scheduling, stimulating work environments, and the potential to mentor future practitioners and researchers; Graves & Wright, 2007).
- *Highlight and model strategies for self-care to promote healthy personal lives in academia*. Current graduate faculty should model the use of self-care strategies. Graduate students should be aware that academia is a rewarding career option that allows for a satisfying work-life balance (e.g., raising a family and maintaining healthy relationships; Little & Akin-Little, 2004).
- *Prepare graduate students to be effective university instructors.* School psychology programs can provide appropriate preparation for students by offering teaching

assistantships, independent teaching experiences, and graduate seminars in teaching psychology. These types of opportunities will increase students' marketability and self-efficacy for succeeding in academia (Little & Akin-Little, 2004).

- Provide comprehensive preparation and mentorship for graduates. These types of
 supports include providing early research experiences (i.e., within the first year of the
 program), making clear assignments of research mentors early on, establishing active and
 cohesive research teams, encouraging early participation in state and national
 professional organizations (e.g., NASP), and facilitating early involvement in
 presentations and publications (Little & Akin-Little, 2004).
- Foster a positive attitude toward school psychology research among undergraduates.
 Efforts should be made to include undergraduate students into school psychology research groups. Many undergraduates may be unaware that there is a rich research base within school psychology and that many school psychologists hold jobs that are predominantly research positions.
- *Implement family-friendly policies and programs for faculty members*. These policies and programs may include paid parental leave and affordable childcare (Akin-Little et al., 2004).
- Recruit practitioners with strong research skills into academia. Many field-based practitioners have strong research skills and would be well-suited for faculty positions. These practitioners should be encouraged to learn more about non-traditional routes to academia.
- *Diversify incoming cohorts with respect to career goals*. Students' potential for scholarly work and career aspirations should be considered when selecting applicants. Furthermore, efforts should be made to pair more research-focused graduate students with research-focused faculty mentors who have similar interests.

Recommendations for increasing cultural and linguistic diversity among school psychology faculty

- Provide more opportunities for students from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds to work with mentors who are also from minority backgrounds. Minority graduate students should have access to faculty from underrepresented backgrounds who can model strategies for overcoming institutional barriers. For example, the African American Mentoring Program (AAMP) at San Diego State University (SDSU; 2016) provides African American graduate students with comprehensive mentoring.
- Model for minority students how to traverse mainstream academic settings while maintaining identity. Minority faculty should model for minority graduate students how to navigate the academic world while maintaining and asserting their respective cultural identities (Beasley, Miller, & Cokley, 2015).

• Take measures to improve university climate. These measures may include remedying potential salary discrepancies and emphasizing the value of multicultural scholarship, graduate preparation and service (Turner, Gonázlez, & Wood, 2008).

Respecialization

Professionals working or holding a graduate degree in related fields with interest in seeking graduate preparation and credentialing as school psychologists through respecialization could bolster the efforts of addressing the current shortage of school psychologists. While the definition and route of respecialization may vary among programs, respecialization generally refers to a process by which an individual with experience or graduate preparation in a related field expands their current knowledge and skills through formal school psychology programming in order to achieve a degree or credential as a school psychologist. A school psychology program would apply "systematic evaluation procedures and criteria to grant recognition of candidates' prior courses/field experiences and to identify additional graduate courses and experiences necessary for candidates to meet school psychology program requirements." (NASP, 2010, p. 4)

Many certified teachers, school counselors, school administrators, social workers, mental health counselors, clinical psychologists, and other psychology and education-based professionals have foundational knowledge in one or of the NASP Domains of Practice. While many of these working professionals express interest in becoming school psychologists, the key to their transition, their respecialization from their current career to that of a school psychologist, can be wrought with concerns around accessing quality programing, scheduling conflicts, logistical challenges, and interference with family commitments. Effective and accessible respecialization pathways consider times, locations, and modalities that attend to a working professional's schedule and unique needs.

Additionally beneficial, respecialization programming could recruit professionals with comparable training and prior experiences in regional areas of high need, including rural areas. This practice offers greater likelihood of those individuals staying in communities where other qualified candidates might be less likely to relocate due to regional isolation. Respecializing is feasible in many areas of our nation where school psychology programs are not easily accessible.

- Encourage practicing school psychologists to reach out to related professionals in their district. Practitioners should be encouraged to educate others in their respective districts about the benefits of respecializing in school psychology. They should be prepared to provide information, support, and mentorship to colleagues interested in pursuing this career path.
- Encourage school psychology programs to capitalize on technological innovations (e.g., online and distance learning) that increase access to graduate education. This may allow prospective students who are not proximal to institutions with school psychology programs to pursue graduate coursework. Graduate educators also may

capitalize on local mentorship by providing remote consultation to field supervisors who are available in the student's immediate environment.

- Encourage school psychology programs that offer flexible options for completing graduate preparation. These options may include evening classes and summer courses that allow for daytime employment during the academic year as well as streamlined program requirements for individuals who already have graduate degrees in related fields.
- Cater to individuals in fields that are experiencing overproduction. For practitioners in fields that are experiencing overproduction (e.g., clinical psychology), respecialization may be a viable and logical option.

Retention Strategies

Retention refers to ensuring that qualified individuals stay in their position to avoid gaps, empty positions, transience, and burnout.

- Encourage or develop mentorship/induction programs. New employees or early career
 professionals should have access to a structured and organized mentorship or induction
 program that provides peer support during career transitions. This applies to practitioners,
 new faculty, and any other positions that school psychologists may take. NASP provides
 Guidance for Postgraduate Mentorship and Professional Support and is currently
 developing a mechanism to facilitate the development of peer mentorships.
- Implement a comprehensive role that aligns with the NASP Practice Model. A significant barrier to retention is burnout, and the dissonance between one's expectations and skills developed during graduate preparation, and the realities of a position with a narrow focus (e.g., special education evaluation and compliance). School psychologists that are more integrated into a school system are likely to have a more comprehensive role and are less likely to burn out (Proctor & Steadman, 2003). To help facilitate a more comprehensive role, NASP has created the NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide with a range of strategies to work towards implementation of a role and ratio that aligns with the Model.
- Provide both professional and administrative supervision. Supportive supervision that allows school psychologists to individually determine the appropriate services necessary can increase retention. Supervision includes both professional (clinical) supervision as well as administrative supervision. Professional supervision involves the oversight of professional practice and requires discipline-specific knowledge and skill (Harvey & Struzziero, 2008) and helps practitioners to align their practice to NASP professional standards. Professional supervision is noted to play a critical role in fostering professional growth, reducing stress and burnout, and enhancing practice. Administrative supervision allows school psychologists to understand the logistics of service delivery as supervisors provide leadership, conduct performance evaluations, and recruit and support newly hired

school psychologists. NASP's <u>Position Statement on Supervision in School Psychology</u> provides an excellent resource.

- Align evaluation systems with the NASP Practice Model. Advocating for an evaluation system that more closely aligns with the practice model can help support delivery of a more comprehensive range of services. NASP has developed a Framework for the Personnel Evaluation of School Psychologists using the NASP Practice Model. Additionally, you can listen to a podcast by the main authors of the framework. More information on how to implement and advocate for the use of this framework can be found in Section IV of the NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide.
- **Provide opportunities for obtaining high quality professional development.** Providing opportunities for professional growth and development can support retention in the field, and even within a district or state. This can come in the form of:
 - School districts
 - Provide funding or professional leave to attend professional conferences
 - Generate professional development opportunities in the district that have relevance for school psychologists (i.e., not forcing school psychologists to participate in trainings designed for teachers).
 - Allow opportunities to network with other school psychologists and related professionals in the district or even in neighboring districts
 - Enable collaborative professional development where teams (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, SROs, teachers) can learn and participate together
 - Apply to become a <u>NASP-Approved Provider</u> of Continuing Professional Development, which would allow credits to be applied to meet specific recertification/licensure requirements
 - Provide opportunities for advancement or leadership, such as supervising
 practicum or internship students, serving on district councils, or becoming
 mentors or lead school psychologists.
 - Allow school psychologists to have professional leave time to become active leaders in their state or national association.
 - Participate in live webinars or access recordings and materials from the <u>NASP</u> <u>Online Learning Center</u>.
 - State associations
 - Provide more opportunities for practitioners, interns, and students to present or participate at state conferences
 - Provide opportunities for association leadership positions
 - Provide networking opportunities at state conferences
 - Provide multiple opportunities, formats, topics, and degrees of intensity when delivering professional development
 - Provide scholarships for early career school psychologists to become state association members or attend conferences.
- *Advocate*. Advocacy, both at the local and state levels, can significantly improve conditions that increase retention:
 - Advocating for NCSP stipends or NCSP parity

- Advocating for and communicating about the value and role of school psychologists
- Advocacy steps for promoting the NASP Practice Model, improved workloads, and appropriate ratios as found within the <u>NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide</u>.
 Implementing a comprehensive role will likely reduce burnout and increase retention.
- Develop recognition/awards programs. State associations, districts, and individual
 schools can support retention by acknowledging and recognizing the work and dedication
 of colleagues. This can be done through award ceremonies, luncheons, thank you notes,
 or other opportunities to demonstrate gratitude and recognition. NASP also provides
 resources for recognizing others through the Gratitude Works program, Partner Awards,
 and Student POWER Awards.
- Consider working conditions. Districts can improve retention by providing sufficient infrastructure and working conditions for school psychologists. School Psychologists with more positive working environments are more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction and less likely to report burnout (DeLunzio, 2013). As mentioned in the organizational principles of the NASP Practice Model (Organizational Principle 3.4):

"School systems provide staff with access to adequate clerical assistance, appropriate professional work materials, sufficient office and work space, adequate technology support (e.g., e-mail, computer), and general working conditions that enhance the delivery of effective services. Included are assessment and intervention materials, access to private telephone and office, clerical services, therapeutic aids, and access to professional literature."

Opportunities to meaningfully participate in and contribute to collaborative professional activities may also improve one's working conditions. Such activities might include consultation with teachers, team-based problem solving, school-community partnerships, and providing student services with a colleague. Although sometimes challenging to achieve, collaborative school cultures have been noted to promote trust and respect among colleagues and increase professional satisfaction (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

• Make concerted efforts at retaining culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) graduate students and faculty

Graduate preparation programs can:

- Ensure diverse social and professional activities that foster a sense of belongingness for ethnic minority students throughout their academic careers.
- Provide specific funding and financial aid streams for CLD students
- More CLD faculty improve the recruitment and retention of CLD students
- Give faculty opportunities to develop multicultural competency
- CLD faculty members often receive higher than typical service requirements, as they are often asked to serve as a diversity representative on numerous committees. This often comes without a reduction in other expectations, causing additional stress.

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