



## Official 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session Platform

Approved by the TASP Executive Board 1/30/2021

The vision of the Texas Association of School Psychologists (TASP) is that school psychologists are partners to ensure all children succeed in school, at home, and throughout life. The mission is that TASP is a professional organization that supports and advocates for school psychologists having a positive impact on school systems to improve academic skills, social-emotional functioning, and mental-behavioral health for all students.

Individuals seeking additional explanation are encouraged to contact the TASP Executive Board members or Amanda Afifi – TASP Government and Public Relations Chair ([govtrelations@txasp.org](mailto:govtrelations@txasp.org)).

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### **Increase Access to Comprehensive School Mental and Behavioral Health Services to Improve School Climate and Student Outcomes**

#### **Background/Rationale**

Across the country there is growing recognition of the importance of meeting the mental and behavioral health needs of children and youth, and the critical role of schools in doing this work. Comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services in schools improves students' ability to learn. The best solutions for ensuring that schools remain safe is to create a culture and climate in which students feel connected enough to responsible adults in the building to report any concerns that may arise.

#### **Actions Needed**

- **Support adoption of specific and comprehensive Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) benchmarks to be added to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and mandate districts to adopt a SEL curriculum.**
- **Advance legislation that increases access to comprehensive school *and* community mental health services and reduces disparities in mental health service delivery, especially among underserved populations.**
- **Direct the Texas Education Agency and other relevant state agencies to provide incentives, guidance, and technical assistance for school districts to prioritize the implementation of a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) framework that includes both academic and mental and behavioral health services (including trauma-informed practices, evidence based universal screening, and social-emotional learning). This guidance should emphasize the importance of access to school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors) who can provide indirect consultative services to staff and families as well as a comprehensive range of services within the school context, ranging from direct individual-level services to systems-level wellness promotion, and prevention and intervention services.**
- **Elevate the role of school psychologists as mental and behavioral health providers in relevant materials published by the Texas Education Agency, relevant agencies, state funded technical assistance centers, and publications by state organizations.**

## **Improve Access to School Psychologists to Better Support Students, Families, and Staff**

### **Background/Rationale**

High school psychologists to student ratios and shortages prevent school psychologists from providing mental health support all children need. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist for every 500 students in order to allow for the delivery of a full continuum of school psychological services. The national ratio is 1 school psychologist for every 1,382 students. In Texas, the ratio is 1 school psychologist for every 2,752 students. Additionally, numerous rural counties have one school psychologist or none in the area. Many parents and educators are unaware of school psychologists due to the requirement of professionals to use the title of “Licensed Specialist in School Psychology.” The title of LSSP confuses the general public and reduces the visibility of professionals critical to ensuring the success of all students.

### **Actions Needed**

- **Approve a change in title from Licensed Specialist in School Psychology to School Psychologist to better identify and recognize school-based psychological practitioners in Texas.**
- **Request that legislators codify the national practice model as identified by the National Association of School Psychologists into the Occupational Code and Education Code of Texas to uphold best practices related to school-based psychological services.**
- **Ensure the Texas Education Agency and other relevant agencies prioritize technical assistance and guidance to support state and district efforts to recruit and retain school psychologists. This includes a long-term and sustained commitment to align staffing ratios with recommendations generated from national professional organizations.**
- **Increase funding for grants/scholarships to train school psychologists, especially school psychologists that match an increasingly diverse student population**
- **Ensure state loan forgiveness programs include licensed specialists in school psychology.**
- **Provide funding and support for the re-specialization of closely related professionals to meet state credentialing requirements to practice as school psychologists.**

## **Promote Best Practices for Safe and Supportive Schools**

### **Background/Rationale**

Schools play a critical and irreplaceable role in keeping students safe and supporting mental health. Efforts to prevent violence must align with efforts to improve school climate, overall safety, and learning. These are not separate endeavors and must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach.

### **Actions Needed**

- **Promote comprehensive school safety efforts that emphasize both physical and psychological safety.**
- **Reject efforts to overly harden schools or to require physical security measures that are not evidence based or that do not increase actual or perceived safety.**
- **Reject legislation that seeks to allow anyone other than a commissioned school resource officer (SRO) to be armed on school grounds.**
- **Support policies that prohibit school resources officers (SROs) and other school-based law enforcement from having any role in student discipline.**
- **Ensure school mental health services, including social–emotional learning, mental wellness, resilience, and positive connections between students and adults, are an essential component of all comprehensive school safety efforts.**
- **Support elimination of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure in school settings.**

## **Advance Social Justice to Ensure that Every Student Succeeds**

### **Background/Rationale**

School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting non-discriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally-responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth.

### **Actions Needed**

- **Support funding for high-quality, evidence-based, and job-embedded and discipline specific professional development for educators, specialized instructional support personnel, and other relevant staff in areas including but not limited to: implicit bias, antibullying, antiharassment, and antidiscrimination efforts; evidence-based threat assessment and management procedures; school-based violence prevention; positive discipline strategies; and restorative justice practices. All professional development should be culturally responsive.**
- **Support legislation, regulation, and policies that promote the use of effective, positive school discipline that is not overly punitive (e.g., zero tolerance).**

Some items adopted from: National Association of School Psychologists. (2020). Federal Public Policy and Legislative Platform for the 116th Congress (2019–2021) [Policy platform]. Bethesda, MD: Author.