

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM FOR 2017-2018 AND 2018-2019

The California Association of School Psychologists (CASP) is a statewide professional organization that represents the more than 5,000 school psychologists working in California public, private and charter schools, as well as Licensed Educational Psychologists. School psychologists use their training and skills to collaborate with and support educators, parents and other professionals to ensure that every child overcomes barriers to learn in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.

CASP Vision and Mission Statements

***VISION** – The Vision of the California Association of School Psychologists is to foster the social, emotional and academic well being of all students by collaborating with families, school staff, and the community to ensure that students are educated in schools that support equity, access, and respect for all.*

***MISSION** – The Mission of CASP is to provide high quality educational and leadership programs that maintain high standards of practice for school psychologists through legislative advocacy, professional development, communications, publications, ethics guidelines, and direct services to members, to enable the growth and development of the profession, and to ensure safe, healthy, and successful outcomes for the children, schools and communities we serve.*

CASP Legislative Priorities for 2017-2018

The purpose of the 2015-2017 Legislative Platform is to support the Vision and Mission of CASP by establishing the Association’s legislative agenda for the upcoming legislative sessions. CASP has established six critical priority areas for 2015-2017.

1) Ensure appropriate psychological, social-emotional, and mental health services in the school setting, including universal school-wide prevention and education such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports for students in need of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions.

Recent statistics indicate that 20 percent of school-age youth experience a mental health disorder during their K-12 education. In contrast, less than one percent of pupils are identified to receive special education and related services under the classification of Emotional Disturbance. These numbers suggest a need for school-based prevention and intervention for behavioral health services. Threats to student and staff safety in schools across the nation also point to the continued need for policies and actions that that promote positive and safe school climates and social emotional wellbeing for all students.

CASP believes that policy-makers must continue to provide resources to develop and expand programs that emphasize prevention and early intervention, within a multi-tiered framework of student support that includes school-wide positive behavioral interventions and support, restorative justice, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practice, and cultural competency. In addition, local districts must have the resources and personnel to provide crisis intervention and counseling should a violent or

tragic event occur on or off campus. School psychologists are the frontline mental health professionals for the students of California. Students learn best in a safe, responsive, and predictable school environment where they feel that adults care about them. Factors such as poverty, family and community violence, substance abuse, and lack of access to wellness promotion and health/mental health treatment can increase stresses on children, families, and teachers. When students think of harming themselves or others, school psychologists are there to work with administrators, other support staff, parents, and community members to provide assessment, early intervention, crisis counseling, and referral to necessary treatment. Legislation should reflect the provision of appropriate social-emotional and mental health services in schools by trained professionals including school psychologists. “It is now becoming widely recognized that social and emotional learning in schools can be as important as or even more important than cognitive gains in explaining important developmental and life outcomes” (Belfield, Bowden, Klapp, Levin, Shand and Zander. February, 2015. *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning*. p. 3). Students need both academic and social-emotional-behavioral education and supports.

2) Ensure adequate funding for K-12 education, special education and related services, and evidence-based interventions that prepare students for college, career, and life.

High expectations, academic rigor, and safe, supportive school environments require adequate funding of both public school programs and also personnel to meet students’ diverse needs, especially those with special needs and those at-risk. Interventions that foster students’ engagement in learning contribute to more positive, orderly classroom environments, increase the time students are engaged in learning, and increase school attendance and graduation rates. In recent years we have seen a drastic reduction of funds available to California schools. As a result of these reductions, class sizes increased and many supportive services to students and teachers were cut. Too many students leave school without the skills to effectively enter the workplace or complete a two- or four-year college program on schedule, with significant increases to the cost of higher education. Funding for high-quality and engaging Pre-K-12 academic programs with caring teachers and staff should be part of the effort to ensure that students have access to multiple pathways for learning and career and college readiness opportunities. CASP is committed to supporting the Common Core State Standards, which will aid students as they prepare for college, career, and life. CASP supports adequate funding for both general and special education programs run by school districts and County Offices of Education. Additionally, CASP supports development of additional revenue streams through federal, state, and private partnerships. CASP believes there is a need to maintain separate special education funding, and that special education dollars should not be rolled into the Local Control Funding Formula.

3) Achieve equity and access to high quality educational programs for all students; reduce disproportionality in discipline practices and special education identification and placement.

CASP is committed to providing equity in education and opportunity for all students. As such, CASP is a strong advocate for fair and equitable discipline practices in schools to reduce the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of minority youth. School-wide practices including Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and restorative justice are just two of the practices that have been shown to improve student conduct, reduce discipline events, and increase respectful treatment of all students. “Improving student academic and behavior outcomes is about ensuring all students have access to the most effective and accurately implemented instructional and behavioral practices and interventions possible” (www.pbis.org). School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support and restorative justice each provide an operational framework and a set of sustainable school-wide practices for achieving positive academic and behavioral outcomes for students. CASP actively advocates for equity and social justice in educating all

students.

Another of the most persistent and controversial issues in education is the over-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education programs. Unfortunately, geographic and economic factors are barriers for some students, especially students of color and English Learners, in accessing the best-trained teachers and schools with high academic achievement due to inequitable resource allocation. CASP encourages the State to legislate and fund measures to improve access to an academically rigorous education and social-emotional supports for students in high-poverty schools. School psychologists in California are also concerned about the inequitable access to comprehensive and research-based assessment processes for African-American students referred for special education evaluation. CASP supports culturally competent education and training for school psychologists, and the use of appropriately normed and researched assessment methods for all students.

4) Provide funding, to include teacher training and credentialing, for preschool education for all four-year-old children.

Expanding high-quality universal preschool programs is a proven means for closing the achievement gap, increasing parent involvement, and giving students in high-poverty areas an “even start.” Children in quality preschool programs are less likely to repeat grades, need special education, or get into future trouble with the law (Abecedarian Project). In order to provide low-income and at-risk students with early learning opportunities and help parents prepare their child to be “ready by five” for kindergarten, public funding for high quality early childhood education programs is needed for all four-year-olds in California. Readiness for preschool and a high quality early education involve improving the training and increasing the compensation for teachers in publicly funded preschool programs. Public schools should be the primary providers of preschool programs, in collaboration with Head Start and community preschools. Additional funding must be allocated to finance public preschools in the same manner as K-12 schools.

Children in state-supported, high-quality early childhood programs were less likely to be placed in special education, according to a recently released study (Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis). Early identification and provision of special education and related services for children with developmental delays and other special needs, including at-risk infants, toddlers and preschool children may prevent the exacerbation of disabilities and reduce the need for special education in K-12. Assessment and early intervention approaches should take into account unique attributes and variability of young children and the influence of home, family and cultural factors. CASP supports a continued emphasis on early and timely assessment and intervention to prevent or reduce more serious developmental trajectories. A broad spectrum of options should be available for early intervention and collaboration among agencies providing these services. CASP also endorses mandatory Kindergarten, as a way to ensure that all children in California receive the early education needed to be successful in school.

5) Reduce the shortage of school psychologists by increasing school psychology graduate programs.

There is a critical shortage of school psychologists in California. Over the past four years, multiple CSU graduate programs in School Psychology and at least one UC training program have reduced faculty and consequently reduced the number of admissions for school psychology specialist training. Working with the Pupil Services Coalition, CASP will engage key stakeholders in the Governor’s Office, state legislature and Department of Education and the public to ensure that there

is full awareness of this problem. Additionally, CASP will work with institutions of higher education to expand training for the school psychology and other service credentials. CASP will advocate for programs that ensure that school psychology students receive the highest training possible. California school psychology programs should strive to meet all professional standards and obtain accreditation by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in addition to CTC.

6) Enact professional development requirements to renew the clear credential for all school psychologists.

School psychologists must engage in ongoing professional education to develop and remain current with best practices in the prevention, evaluation, and intervention of academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health disorders for students of all ages. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), which issues and governs Pupil Personnel Services (School Psychology) credentials, eliminated the requirement for professional development for renewal of all CTC clear credentials in 2007. “Beginning January 1, 2007, verification of professional growth requirements will no longer be a requirement for the renewal of professional clear credentials” (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, November 14, 2006). CASP believes that strong training and professional development requirements are key components and a priority of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP). With the significant changes to educational practice, including the use of technologies, implementation of Common Core State Standards, new assessment tools and practices, and periodic changes in special education legislation and case law, ongoing professional development is each psychologist’s responsibility. The CASP Code of Ethics (2012) I, B, 1 states, “School psychologists engage in continuing professional development. They remain current regarding developments in research, training, and professional practices that benefit children, families, and schools. They also understand that professional skill development beyond that of the novice practitioner requires well-planned continuing professional development and professional supervision.” CASP will support efforts to ensure that the Local Control Accountability Plan for school districts will include funding to provide professional development and ongoing training for school psychologists and Licensed Educational Psychologists.

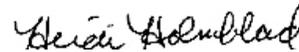
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