



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM
FOR 2020-2021

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 2020-2021

The purpose of the 2020-2021 Legislative Platform is to support the Vision and Mission of CASP by establishing the Association’s legislative agenda for the upcoming legislative session. CASP has established six critical priority areas for 2020-2021.

- **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 (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) for students in need of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions.**

Twenty percent of school-age youth experience a mental health disorder during their K-12 education. And a 2019 report on America’s Health Rankings found that teen suicides among California youth between the ages of 15 and 19, had increased 34% over the past three years, significantly higher than the national increase of 25%. 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 promote positive and safe school climates and social emotional wellbeing for all students.

Policy-makers must continue to provide resources to develop and strengthen 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.

- **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 public school programs and personnel to meet students’ diverse needs, especially those with special needs and those who face greater challenges. School environments and interventions that foster students’ engagement in learning contribute to more positive classroom environments, increase the time students are engaged in learning, and increase school attendance and graduation rates. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) are based upon comprehensive approaches that recognize the need to address the range of factors that promote students’ learning and development. 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 a variety of 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 improving coordination and expansion of access to available federal funds through the Medi-Cal Billing Option Program, the School-based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities Program, and the federal Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefits. 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.

- **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, the foundations of LCFF. 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 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.

- **Expand Access to Quality Early Childhood Programs for California’s young children and families.**

CASP supports expanding preschool programs for California’s young children with efforts to ensure access to quality programs with teachers, staff and administrators who are trained and adequately compensated. Research shows the short and long term effectiveness of children’s participation in quality early childhood programs in delivering better education, health-related behavior, social and economic outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children (James J Heckman, Early Childhood Education: Quality and Access Pay Off).

- **Reduce the shortage of school psychologists by increasing school psychology graduate programs and reducing barriers to Out of State School Psychology Interns.**

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, Department of Education, Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and the public to ensure that there is awareness of the School Psychologist shortage and the barriers that exist. 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. CASP will work with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Legislature to break down the barriers that currently exist when an out of State trained School Psychology Intern would like to complete their Internship in California.

- **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. CASP will support efforts to ensure that additional resources are available for school districts to provide professional development and ongoing training for school psychologists and Licensed Educational Psychologists.