

NASP Position Statement on Pupil Services: Essential to Education

Students bring complex intellectual, cultural, economic, and social backgrounds to our nation's schools. School psychologists work in union with other specialists and the nation's teachers to assure that all students, no matter what their background, achieve academic success. (These professions are variously called pupil service professions, related service professions or student support service professions.) With the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107-110, U.S. Congress, 2002), schools are increasingly being challenged to develop strategies to identify and remove barriers to achievement for all students. By providing a wide range of direct and indirect services to school administrators, educators, families, and students, pupil services specialists support academic achievement by working to meet the psychological and educational needs of students. Along with these tasks, pupil services specialists are faced with the challenges of designing programs to insure equal access and service delivery to all children in our society, and responding to a broad societal concern about the overall quality of life. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recognizes that school psychologists play a key role in the delivery of these services.

Definition of Pupil Services

The professional education team has long included specialists from various helping professions. Historically, pupil services and school populations have been shaped by community, state, and federal mandates, including the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, U.S. Congress, 1965), the amended Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, U.S. Congress, 1997), initiatives in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112; U.S. Congress, 1973), components infused into the American with Disabilities Act (ADA; U.S. Congress, 1990), and the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107-110, U.S. Congress, 2002). These changes have resulted in an increased diversity in the services that students receive, the way in which services are accessed, and the professional fields responsible for the delivery of these services. Such progress has provided fertile ground for the emergence of a variety of pupil services specializations with a corresponding mandate for effective collaboration among specialists from related disciplines.

The pupil services team is typically defined to include school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, school health professionals, and other qualified professional personnel involved in providing assessment, therapy (e.g., counseling, speech/language), educational remediation, instruction in strategies and general curriculum support, program coordination and accountability, in-service training, and other necessary services as part of a comprehensive program to meet student needs. The organization of these specialists results in highly functional transdisciplinary teams working with special and regular education teachers, families, students and community agency personnel to provide the most successful educational opportunities for all students.

Objectives for Pupil Services

The following are critical elements in design and delivery of pupil services programs:

1. Programs should be developed from identified needs of students, recognizing potential contributions from all stakeholders, including parents, special service providers, teachers, administrators, and other support personnel.
2. Effective programs necessitate a comprehensive approach, including a focus on developmental, preventative, and remedial activities which facilitate the educational process for students.
3. Effective programs recognize that learning takes place within environmental and social contexts and take steps to assist schools in maintaining safe environments supportive of teaching and learning.
4. Effective programs recognize that not all services can be provided in the school and include effective linkages with various community resources.
5. Accountability through consistent, continuing, and effective program evaluation is crucial in both development of effective programs and insuring continuing community support.

Role of the School Psychologist

The role of the school psychologist in the delivery of pupil services is unique in the provision of psychological evaluations. School psychologists are also prepared, along with other pupil service specialists, to deliver direct intervention services, case consultation, data interpretation for program planning, program service development and monitoring, and system wide preventative activities. It is essential that a coordinated team approach to the delivery of these overlapping services be instituted in all of our schools. While federal and state regulations have shaped what professional services must be provided, the boundaries between the specialty areas have often been blurred. The school psychologist in collaborative effort with other specialists is proactive in advocacy for support of programs to meet special needs of students and for coordinated delivery of such programs.

Summary

NASP supports the concept that effective delivery of pupil services is essential to education and recognizes that meeting the diversity of student needs requires a transdisciplinary team approach utilizing trust, open communication, mutual respect, and ongoing collaboration of professionals from each specialty area. Because all pupil services are related, the sometimes overlapping areas of expertise can serve to strengthen the overall program and be an ongoing resource for consultation and support. Regardless of the administrative structure employed, it is the coordination of pupil services that becomes most essential when meeting the commitment to serve this country's school-

aged youth, and enhance the communication of the critical importance of the services to the constituencies which provide financial support.

References

U.S. Congress. (1965). PL 89-10 - Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

U.S. Congress. (1973). PL 93-112 - Rehabilitation Act.

U.S. Congress. (1990). PL 101-336 - American with Disabilities Act.

U.S. Congress. (1997). PL 105 - Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments.

U.S. Congress. (2002). PL 107-110 - No Child Left Behind Act

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