



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
4340 East West Highway, Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: 301-657-0270
Fax: 301-657-0275 • TTY: 301-657-4155
Web: www.nasponline.org

Enhancing the mental health and
educational competence of all children.

Overview of *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Excellence in Education in the 21st Century*

The National Association of School Psychologists is pleased to present our education policy recommendations, *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Excellence in Education for the 21st Century*, for inclusion in the national debate over how best to help all of America's children achieve their fullest potential.

NASP represents over 25,000 school psychologists who work with students, educators, and families to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, and mental wellness of all students, especially those who struggle with barriers to learning. School psychologists are typically credentialed by State Departments of Education, employed by school districts, and have special training and expertise in the integration of education, learning, child development, and mental health. We hope to collaborate with President-Elect Obama's new education team to make it a national priority that U.S. education meets the needs of the whole child.

Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach outlines five principles necessary to ensure excellence in education by reducing barriers to learning and strengthening effective teaching. Too often, students of all ages come to class struggling with life challenges that can interfere with instruction, impede achievement, and undermine the school climate. Preventing or remedying such barriers is critical to school success. Teachers cannot do this alone and it is counterproductive to expect this of them. In fact, teachers cite student behavior and attitudes, lack of student motivation, poor school climate, and lack of adequate support among the top reasons for leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2001).

School psychologists and other specialized instructional support personnel enable teachers, administrators, and parents to know how best to ensure that students are ready and able to learn. These include both specific academic and social-emotional-behavioral interventions. A recent longitudinal study provides strong empirical evidence that interventions that strengthen students' social, emotional, and decision-making skills also positively impact their academic achievement (Fleming et al., 2005). School psychologists also help to select evidence-based interventions to guide progress monitoring and implement accountability measures that inform better instruction and provide a comprehensive picture of student and school achievement.

Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach calls for providing:

1. Comprehensive curricula matched with individualized instruction;
2. Sufficient student support services to address barriers to learning for *all* students on a continuum of care that engages families and community providers;
3. Comprehensive accountability and progress monitoring measures that provide a valid picture of student and school functioning;
4. Professional development and supports for teachers and other educators necessary for instructional excellence; and
5. Federal leadership and school-based research to promote effective services that support the whole child in the learning context.

These principles align with many of President-Elect Obama's recommendations for education reform and the outcomes he hopes to achieve. We share the belief that ensuring quality, genuinely accessible education for all children is our nation's most important responsibility and wisest investment. Services that reduce barriers to learning are not ancillary to this mission; rather, they are central to the supportive educational process necessary to prepare all of America's children for academic success, healthy development, and responsible citizenship.

NASP looks forward to supporting President-Elect Obama's efforts and those of our nation's leaders to craft education policies that will achieve excellence in education and a positive future for all children for the 21st century. The full *Ready to Learn* document and additional information on student support services are available at <http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/readytolearn.aspx>. Please feel free to contact Stacy Skalski, Director of Public Policy at 301-657-0270 with questions and comments.