



# A Framework for the Personnel Evaluation of School Psychologists Utilizing the NASP Practice Model

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) embraces the critical importance of accurate, high quality, and reliable personnel evaluation for the purpose of enhancing professional practices and improving related student achievement, behavior, and social– emotional outcomes. Federal initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant competition have prompted new attention to the processes used for the evaluation of teachers and school administrators. A wide variety of professionals other than teachers and administrators contractually fall under the classification of “instructional personnel” and thus, local educational agencies (LEAs) and state departments of education (SEAs) are also finding themselves readdressing evaluation practices of these groups. Central to these conversations is the relevance of developing evaluation tools that capture student and professional growth accurately and fairly, are sufficient in scope to evaluate the broad based services of the professional, utilize proven evaluation methods, and provide a uniform system common to all professionals.

The NASP *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (2010), also known as the NASP Practice Model, provides an ideal springboard for the development of an evaluation tool specific to the roles of school psychologists. The NASP Practice Model represents NASP’s official policy regarding the delivery of school psychological services and provides a framework for school psychologists to have a common language for defining school psychological services. It is envisioned that the NASP Practice Model will suffice as the foundation for professional conversations in determining the distinctions among different levels of proficiency. Accordingly, professional support by means of supervision, mentoring, and professional development can be differentiated per level of experience and career development.

The NASP Practice Model delineates what professional services can reasonably be expected from school psychologists across 10 domains of practice and the general framework within which services should be provided. This model also offers guidance for setting up working conditions that support the full implementation of this model. The 10 NASP Practice Model domains are organized around three broad areas:

## **Practices That Permeate All Aspects of Service Delivery**

Domain 1: Data-based decision making and accountability

Domain 2: Consultation and collaboration

## **Direct and Indirect Services for Children, Families, and Schools**

Domain 3: Interventions and instructional support to develop academic skills

Domain 4: Interventions and mental health services to develop social and life skills

Domain 5: School-wide practices to promote learning

Domain 6: Preventive and responsive services  
Domain 7: Family–school collaboration services

### **Foundations for Service Delivery**

Domain 8: Diversity in development and learning  
Domain 9: Research and program evaluation  
Domain 10: Legal, ethical, and professional practice

The following foundational principles are intended to meet the mandates of the new programs and initiatives already mentioned while also upholding the need for and importance of high quality professional evaluations as embraced by NASP.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

NASP recommends that the following foundational principles be considered and incorporated within a comprehensive evaluation system for school psychologists:

### ***Principle 1: Use the NASP Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services (NASP Practice Model) as the overarching framework for personnel evaluations.***

The NASP Practice Model should serve as the foundation for job descriptions, professional expectations, and the personnel evaluations of school psychologists. School psychologists work with students and their families to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral health. Research has shown that students who receive this type of support achieve better academically in school (Bierman et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2011; Fleming et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Welsh, Parke, Widaman, & O'Neil, 2001; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). School psychologists also work with school based teams to support the academic success of students through a variety of means including consultation and review of student performance data. Ideally, personnel appraisals would be conducted using the NASP Practice Model as the general framework and the specific examples of accompanying skills and services provided in the NASP standards as potential measurable outcomes. Furthermore, application of the NASP Practice Model to personnel evaluation systems can promote the shift toward a more comprehensive model of school psychological services that will have the effect of promoting better outcomes for all students.

### ***Principle 2: Recognize the critical importance of personnel evaluations and the essential involvement of affected professionals in creating a relevant, supportive, and instructive feedback system.***

The primary purpose of the evaluation of instructional personnel is to improve educator performance in order to improve student outcomes. School psychologists are experts in addressing barriers to educational success and are critical members of school teams. As experts in both mental health and education, school psychologists are invaluable to students, schools, and families in providing a multitude of interventions that contribute to student success (e.g., supporting academic and social–emotional learning, addressing positive school climates, enhancing academic engagement, promoting positive behavioral supports). When school psychologists are supported in practicing the

broad-based role as articulated in the NASP Practice Model and are evaluated relative to the competencies specific to the 10 domains of school psychology practice, students and schools are more likely to have access to these professional activities and student outcomes are enhanced.

Professional practitioner involvement is important to an evaluation system. Evaluation systems that succeed over time involve the professionals within a discipline in the creation of the performance appraisal systems by which these individuals are judged (Danielson, 2011; NAPSO, 2011). School psychologists are well qualified to contribute to the design of their performance evaluations. In addition to their knowledge of school psychology preparation and practice, they have expertise in measurement theory, data-based decision-making, and knowledge of a variety of applicable evaluation methods (e.g., direct observation, rating scales, surveys).

Personnel evaluation is central to accountability, and when designed and used properly, improves performance and guides practice. Personnel evaluations are most meaningful when relevant feedback is provided and both the evaluator and those being evaluated have opportunities for input. Furthermore, personnel evaluations can serve to reward exemplary practice as well as to identify specific areas and personnel in need of improvement. When evaluation systems are aligned with job descriptions, accountability is enhanced and clear expectations for practice are reinforced.

***Principle 3: Use measurements that are valid, reliable, and meaningful.***

NASP recognizes that the growing interest in promoting school reforms that have real and positive effects on student achievement has resulted in both federal and state policy mandates that require the consideration of standardized student test scores as a measure of educator effectiveness. NASP supports the intended positive consequences of these efforts, including improved teaching and instruction, higher achievement for all students, higher standards for students who have struggled to overcome low expectations, and increased access to the general education curriculum for all students. However, NASP must also acknowledge the potential for unintended negative outcomes of large-scale assessment applied to both systemic and individual student decisions. (See NASP position paper on *Using Large Scale Assessments for High Stakes Decisions*, 2003). Thus, NASP recommends that valid and reliable methods with proven effectiveness form the cornerstone of personnel performance evaluation policy and practice.

Evaluation of school psychologists should be based on multiple measures. According to the Personnel Evaluation Standards compiled by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (Gullickson, 2009), a variety of data gathering methods (observation checklists, interviews, products) and tools should be used to help ensure comprehensive and consistent indicators of performance. Waldron and Prus (2006) identify four key elements that are critical to a credible performance evaluation system: (a) the use of multiple measures, including at least one measure of impact on student outcomes; (b) reliability and validity, with validity anchored to the NASP standards for professional practice; (c) utility for distinguishing different levels of proficiency; and (d) linked to professional development and improvement. As a result, performance measures that are limited to high-stakes test scores or that simply count activities performed by school psychologists are strongly discouraged. Research supports that performance assessment systems are most reliable when evaluators utilize multiple measures for the evaluation of professional performance as opposed to narrow indicators such as single-shot student standardized test scores. Other measures such as visual observation, student progress monitoring data, psychological reports,

examples of student’s work before and after interventions, and surveys of interactions with families, community, peers, and staff, contribute to a more reliable measure for professional performance. When services are primarily delivered collaboratively, a team’s assessment of student progress should be considered as a component of the multifaceted personnel performance evaluation.

Evaluation standards and corresponding rubrics should encompass the broad and comprehensive range of services provided by school psychologists. While the NASP Practice Model is intentionally comprehensive and broad in scope, it is aligned with the range of knowledge and skills school psychologists receive in NASP-approved graduate training. A cornerstone of the NASP Practice Model is that “school psychologists integrate knowledge and professional skills across the 10 domains of school psychology in delivering a comprehensive range of professional practice that result in direct, measurable outcomes for children, families, schools, and/or other consumers.” Those developing evaluation rubrics in districts often restrict evaluation components to only a few domains, thereby limiting the evaluation of all important school psychological activities. When school psychologists are assigned to serve special populations or projects, such as prekindergarten, multicultural assessment services, behavioral centers, and crisis teams based on the needs of the school district, community, and existing resources, the 10 domains of practice remain relevant to these services. A comprehensive personnel evaluation system should encompass all domains within the Practice Model, thereby enabling the evaluation of the varying roles and activities of school psychologists while not penalizing those who, by virtue of their roles, do not have the opportunity to provide all domains of practice. When developing rubrics, it is therefore important to distinguish between those whose assignments exclude specific activities versus those who have been assigned roles but do not fulfill the responsibilities as assigned.

When determining the impact of the school psychologists’ performance on student, school, and/or district outcomes, standardized test score gains and value-added models are discouraged. While test score gains and value-added models (VAM) are components of numerous evaluation systems, NASP strongly discourages their use for the evaluation of school psychologists and all other personnel where the use of these scores in personnel evaluation has not been validated. To date, there is no empirical evidence that applying student standardized academic testing scores to the individual performance evaluations of school psychologists is a valid or reliable method for personnel appraisal. School psychologists, in large part, are providers of both direct and indirect services to children, and often provide these services to multiple schools, grade levels, and populations. Therefore, outcome measures should be sensitive to the overall growth of students and stakeholder benefits as a result of receiving these direct and indirect services. For example, improvement in social–emotional functioning, behavior, academic engagement, and family involvement are areas correlated with student learning outcomes that can and should be monitored for growth in response to direct services delivered by the school psychologist.

***Principle 4: Evaluation of school psychologists should be embedded within an administrative structure that ensures meaningful feedback and offers resources in support of continuous improvement.***

The evaluation of school psychologists should be conducted by professionals credentialed in school psychology. For more than 3 decades, NASP policy has promoted the professional supervision of school psychologists by school psychologists at all levels of practice as a means of ensuring effective

practices to support the educational success of all children (NASP *Standards for the Credentialing of School Psychologists*, 2010; NASP Position Paper on *Supervision in School Psychology*, 2011). Similarly, the NASP Practice Model Organizational Principle 5: Supervision and Mentoring (2010) recommends that the evaluation of school psychologists be conducted by credentialed school psychologists with a minimum of 3 years of experience and with a thorough knowledge of professional expectations, responsibilities, supervision, and personnel evaluation processes. While other instructional evaluators may have knowledge of the role of school psychologists (e.g., principals, directors of special education) and have valuable feedback to share pertaining to professional conduct, school systems, and educational practices, the depth and breadth of the field necessitates a credentialed school psychologist to evaluate the technical and professional skills of school psychologists in order to differentiate accurately between levels of performance.

Recognize and address needs for ongoing professional development. Central to a comprehensive personnel evaluation system is the recognition that skills evolve over time. The NASP Practice Model (2010) Organizational Principle 6 on Professional Development and Recognition Systems emphasizes the critical importance of continuing professional development that addresses the specific needs of individual practitioners. As a result, an evaluation system should be sensitive to professional growth and promote a continuous improvement model. Early career professionals as well as veteran school psychologists need to have the support, mentoring, and supervision needed to grow in their professional competence over time. Furthermore, quality professional development opportunities (such as those offered or approved by NASP or state school psychology associations) should be supported, made available and aligned with the areas targeted for evaluation so that opportunities for growth and improvement are readily accessible.

When evaluating school psychologists, the evaluation should take into account if the district has sufficient personnel necessary to provide broad and comprehensive services. The NASP Practice Model contains standards to guide both the professional practices of the school psychologist as well as organizational principles designed to act as workplace recommendations for employing school districts. These principles address issues related to things like caseload, professional conduct, supervision, and general working conditions. Organizational Principle 3 of the NASP Practice Model (2010) recommends that when a school psychologist is practicing the broad-based role described in the model, the ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 to 700 general education students is recommended. Additionally, when school psychologists are primarily assigned to settings with students with intensive needs, then smaller ratios should be considered so that accessibility to high quality services can be achieved. If ratios far exceed these recommended standards, fewer services are able to be offered and the delivery of school psychological services becomes compromised. In order to provide a meaningful evaluation, every effort must be brought forth to ensure the appropriate working conditions including the recommended school psychologist to student ratios. Performance expectations should reflect the degree to which the working conditions and the role of the school psychologist reflect adherence to the model's professional and organizational standards.

Similarly, consideration should be given to the number of school psychologists who are to be evaluated by the supervising school psychologist. The ratio of supervising school psychologist to supervisees will vary according to the responsibilities assigned to the supervisor. Reasonable ratios of

supervisor to school psychologists should be ensured so that ample opportunities exist for meaningful supervision, feedback, modification of practices if needed, and professional growth.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND NEEDS

While evaluation systems develop as a result of policy and practice, school districts and state departments of education would be wise to evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation systems on improving performance and outcomes. Universities and professional organizations should be active participants in these discussions as research-based evidence of efficacy should drive future policy consideration and training. Furthermore, much as an evaluation system for individual performance should be driven by a continuous improvement model, LEAs and state departments of education should commit to revisiting evaluation systems and revising policies and practices as needed to reflect best practice and emerging research. As importantly, school psychologists must be at the table when schools are being reformed to ensure that students have expanded access to much needed mental health services, social-emotional learning is infused in every public school, and our nation's youth are provided a continuum of supports to foster their academic competence and emotional/behavioral health.

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### **Additional Resources**

- National Association of School Psychologists <http://www.nasponline.org>
- NASP Practice Model Resource Page <http://www.nasponline.org/standards/practice-model>
- NASP Professional Standards (2010) <http://www.nasponline.org/standards/2010standards.aspx>
- National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality <http://www.tqsource.org>
- Marzano Teacher Evaluation Framework <http://www.marzanoevaluation.com>
- The Danielson Group: Promoting Teacher Effectiveness and Professional Learning <http://www.danielsongroup.org>