



# Missouri Association of School Psychologists

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## 2021 Legislative and Policy Platform

### **Policy objectives addressing school psychology shortages:**

*Remedy the personnel shortages of school psychologists in Missouri*

#### **Annual Collection of School Psychology Data**

MASP supports the collection of annual statewide data on the number of school psychologists who hold the state certification of School Psychology and are providing school psychological services. Accurate statewide data that is collected by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) annually will provide necessary information to stakeholders about the current shortage of school psychologists in the state of Missouri.

#### **School Psychology Loan Forgiveness**

MASP supports the forgiving of student loans to school psychologists that have worked in high needs districts for at least 5 years.

#### **School Psychology Internship Funding for High Needs Districts**

MASP supports secure financial compensation for Missouri school districts to apply for and use towards the funding of school psychology interns, especially in rural and underserved school districts.

### **Policy objectives that ensure equitable outcomes for students:**

#### **Access to Mental Health**

MASP supports equitable access to quality and comprehensive mental health services needed to support student success in school. There is a growing unmet need for school mental health services to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. Early intervention and ongoing supports, as part of the general education program, are critical to positive learning outcomes and a safe school environment. MASP supports innovative and collaborative initiatives designed to increase access to school mental health services from qualified providers, including certified school psychologists and master's level school social workers.

#### **School Voucher, Scholarship, and Private School Expansion**

MASP opposes efforts to expand funding for nonpublic educational institutes (i.e., vouchers to private schools) at the expense of their public school counterparts. Research has shown that this type of program has not led to increased academic outcomes and would only provide additional educational opportunities to a subset of Missouri children that are typically developing and are financially stable.



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## **Mandatory Retention**

MASP opposes legislation that would mandate student retention, especially when based on arbitrary factors such as standardized test scores. Research indicates that retention does not result in positive achievement or adjustment outcomes for students and some research demonstrates negative outcomes such as increased drop-out rate for students who have been retained. Missouri schools should make retention decisions based on local policies coupled with individual student considerations, including multiple achievement measurements, the potential positive and negative impact of retention for an individual student, and other relevant factors. These individual student considerations are especially important for students with disabilities and other students with special needs.

## **Policy objectives that ensure schools are safe and supportive environments, including when responding to crises:**

### **Statewide School Safety Task Force**

MASP supports and promotes legislation that introduces a state-wide Safety Task Force if school psychologists and other school-based mental health professionals are explicitly included in the said task force.

### **Promoting Positive School Climate and Culture**

MASP supports state-wide legislation and initiatives that promote comprehensive school safety efforts that emphasize both physical and psychological safety and allocate resources to help implement evidence-based, school-wide policies and practices that reduce bullying, harassment, violence, and discrimination for *all* students regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, language proficiency or immigration status.

### **Promotion of Gun Sense Safety**

MASP supports the advancement of gun sense safety legislation at the state level.

### **Systemic Discrimination**

MASP opposes efforts that seek to systematically discriminate against children or youth on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identification, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability status, language proficiency, or immigration status.

## **Policy objectives that improve outcomes for students with disabilities:**

### **Updating Special Education Criteria**

MASP encourages MO-DESE to revise the current eligibility requirements for Young Child with a Developmental Delay.



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## **Recording of IEP meetings**

It is the position of MASP that, in general, recording of IEP meetings has a limiting effect on discussion and deliberation, and may actually result in less parent participation in the outcomes of the meeting. Further, any recording that is in the possession of or completed by the public school becomes an educational record. The fiscal cost and effort required to maintain these records add to regulatory requirements for special education which are already excessive and detract resources from instruction and support for students with disabilities.

## **Seclusion and Restraint**

MASP supports efforts to prohibit the use of seclusion, chemical restraints, and mechanical restraints and to restrict the use of physical restraints to instances when there is a threat of imminent danger to students or staff.

## **Policy objectives that increase access to comprehensive mental and behavioral health services and comprehensive learning supports provided within an integrated service delivery system (e.g., MTSS):**

### **Statewide School-Based Mental Health Task Force**

MASP supports and promotes legislation that introduces a state-wide School-Based Mental Health Task Force if school psychologists and other school-based mental health professionals are explicitly included in the previously stated task force.

### **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

MASP encourages legislation and Department of Education initiatives that promote funds to be used to implement MTSS and other tiered systems of support. This includes access to quality and comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral supports within multi-tiered systems of support in order to support student success.

### **Early Childhood Education & Intervention**

MASP supports efforts to expand access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities in the state of Missouri.

### **Comprehensive School Psychological Roles**

MASP supports efforts to elevate the role of school psychologists as mental and behavioral health providers in the state of Missouri.