Policy Recommendations for Implementing the Framework for Safe and Successful Schools

Implementing the [Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](#)[1] requires policies and practices that support ongoing efforts to establish comprehensive school safety programming. Following are policy and practice recommendations to consider when developing your action plan. Some recommendations may appear in multiple sections.

Integration of Services and Initiatives

- Provide ongoing, high quality, relevant, and job embedded professional development to all school staff.
- Encourage the use of professional learning communities or other structured avenues to foster collaboration among school staff.
- Ensure that district and school building teams have representation of diverse stakeholders, including principals, teachers (general and special education), parents, school security professionals and school resource officers (SROs), school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists), and other specialized instructional support personnel.
- Engage in resource mapping to better understand available resources and how they are utilized through the school or district to support:
  - Instruction
  - Organization and management
  - Learning supports (e.g., mental and behavioral health services)
- Develop a process for regular examination of school initiatives to improve student outcomes.
  - Are any initiatives redundant?
  - Are all initiatives directly related to the school improvement plan?
  - Do you have staff buy-in?
- Effectively engage parents and families in school improvement and school safety efforts.

Related Resources

- [Assessing School Level and District Level Needs](#)
- [Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Guiding Principles for Effective Schools & Successful Students](#)
- [Ensuring High-Quality, Comprehensive and Integrated Student Supports (NASP Position Statement)](#)
- [NASSP Position Statement on Safe Schools](#)
- [NASP Online Learning Center](#)
- [NASP PREPaRE Training Curriculum](#)
- [Leading Success Module on Safe and Healthy School Environments](#)

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[1] Cowan, K. C., Vaillancourt, K., Rossen, E., & Pollitt, K. (2013). A framework for safe and successful schools [Brief]. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Implementation of Integrated Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

- Establish a process for universal screening for academic, behavioral, and emotional barriers to learning.
- Implement high-quality, rigorous curricula that address core academic competencies, social–emotional learning principles, mental and behavioral wellness, and positive behavior.
- Establish a process for regularly reviewing student data (both behavioral and academic).
  - Require a multidisciplinary, data-based decision-making team comprised of diverse stakeholders, including principals/administrators, teachers (general and special education), parents, school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists) and other specialized instructional support personnel.
- Ensure access to a range of high-quality, evidence-based interventions to address the comprehensive needs of students.
- Build upon existing district and state initiatives related to MTSS (e.g., response to intervention and positive behavioral interventions and supports).
- Embed time for planning and problem solving into the staff master schedule.
- Explicitly include MTSS efforts in the school improvement plan.
- Braid available funding streams to scale up existing efforts.
- Embed MTSS principles into all relevant professional development.
- Leverage existing technical assistance available from state, regional, and national centers.

Related Resources

- Leveraging Essential School Practices, ESSA, MTSS, and the NASP Practice Model: A Crosswalk to Help Every School and Student Succeed
- Integrated Model of Academic and Behavior Supports (NASP Position Statement)
- The School Counselor and MTSS
- ESSA and Multitiered Systems of Support
- ASCA specialist trainings/PD opportunities

Access to School-Based Mental Health Supports

- Examine existing ratios of school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors.
  - Work with district and state leaders to develop a long-term plan to achieve recommended ratios of *each profession.*
- Develop and implement a process for parents, teachers, and students to refer themselves or others for mental health support.
- Provide annual (or biannual) professional development to all school staff in mental health first aid, the appropriate referral process, suicide prevention, and other relevant mental and behavioral health topics.
  - Utilize existing school-employed mental health professionals in the development and delivery of this professional development.
  - Provide additional professional development to school-employed mental health professionals on current evidence-based practices.
- Develop policies and procedures for conducting suicide risk and threat assessments.

- ▪ Require involvement of the school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker.
- Conduct a needs assessment to evaluate existing and needed supports.
  - ▪ Examine availability of services in all tiers (prevention/early intervention, targeted support, intensive support).
- Implement universal screening for mental and behavioral health concerns.
- Ensure availability of evidence-based mental health supports for students identified as being 'at-risk' in universal screening measures and other referral processes.
- If your school or district maintains formal partnerships with community agencies who provide mental and behavioral health, establish clear expectations for communication and collaboration among school-employed mental health professionals and community-employed providers.
- Braid available funding streams to scale up existing efforts.

Related Resources

- [NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide](#)
- [Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Children and Adolescents (NASP Position Statement)](#)
- [Shortages in School Psychology Resource Guide](#)
- [School Psychologists: Qualified Health Professionals Providing Child and Adolescent Mental and Behavioral Health Services](#) (NASP White Paper)
- [NASSP Position Statement on Mental Health](#)
- [The School Counselor and Student Mental Health](#)
- [Community Schools White Paper](#)
- [School–Community Alliances Enhance Mental Health Services](#)

Integration of School Safety and Crisis Preparedness Efforts

- Require establishment of a dedicated safety/crisis response team that includes, at a minimum, school principals/administrators, school employed mental health professionals, school security professional/SROs, community stakeholders, parents, and other school staff as appropriate. Convene this team on a regular basis.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with school security agency/local police department with clear articulation of specific roles and responsibilities of school security personnel or the school resource officer.
- Examine existing ratios of school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors.
  - ▪ Work with district and state leaders to develop a long-term plan to achieve recommended ratios of *each profession.*
- Develop an emergency response plan with procedures for regular review.
- Provide ongoing staff development on the school safety and crisis plan that includes regularly scheduled practice and coordination with community responders.

Related Resources

- [Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#)
- [School Violence Prevention (NASP Position Statement)](#)
- [NASP PREPaRE Training Curriculum](#)
- [NASP Online Learning Center](#)

Balance of Physical and Psychological Safety

- Ensure annual (at least) collection and review of school-wide climate and school safety data.
    - Data collection should include teacher, parent, and student perception of school climate and safety.
- Include explicit goals related to school climate and school safety in the school/district level improvement plan.
- Regularly examine the use and effectiveness of extreme physical security measures (e.g., metal detectors, armed security).
    - Examine the use of these measures in conjunction with student perception of school safety.
- Develop and implement procedures (including anonymous reporting) for students, staff, and families to report potential threats or other concerning behaviors.
- Promote mentoring programs and other efforts to ensure that all students have a positive relationship with at least one adult.
- Develop and implement a process for parents, teachers, and students to refer themselves or others for mental health support.
- Provide annual (or biannual) professional development to all school staff—and students as appropriate—in mental health first aid, the appropriate referral process, suicide prevention, and other relevant mental and behavioral health topics.
- Ensure availability of evidence-based mental health supports for students identified as being 'at-risk' in universal screening measures and other referral processes.

Related Resources

- [School Security Measures and Their Impacts on Students (NASP Research Summary)](#)
- [ESSA and School Climate](#)
- [Best Practice Considerations for Active Shooter and Armed Assailant Drills](#)
- [School Safety: What Really Works](#)

Use of Effective Discipline Practices

- Create and communicate clear behavioral expectations for staff and students.
- Clearly articulate, and consistently enforce, consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Routinely teach students appropriate behavior, and make sure that staff model appropriate behavior.
    - Reinforce the display of appropriate behavior.
- Establish a process for regularly reviewing student discipline data (in conjunction with other available data sources).
    - Require a multidisciplinary, data-based decision-making team comprised of diverse stakeholders, including principals, teachers (general and special education), parents, school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists) and other specialized instructional support personnel.
- Prohibit the use of zero tolerance policies.
- Establish enumerated antibullying and harassment policies.
- Establish procedures for responding to all reports of bullying and harassment.

Related Resources

- Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools (NASP Position Statement)
- Corporal Punishment (NASP Position Statement)
- NASSP Position Statement on Corporal Punishment
- NASSP Position Statement on School Discipline
- A Framework for School-Wide Bullying Prevention and Safety
- Effective School-Wide Discipline

Please cite as: NASP (2017). Policy recommendations for implementing the *framework for safe and successful schools* [Brief]. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Available online at *www.nasponline.org/schoolsafetyframework*.

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