



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS

Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Excellence in Education for the 21st Century

Guiding Principles for Effective Education

The following is excerpted from National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) policy paper, *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Excellence in Education for the 21st Century*. School psychologists 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. Ensuring quality, genuinely accessible education for all children is our nation's most important responsibility and wisest investment. Services that lower barriers to learning and effective teaching are not ancillary to this mission but rather central to the supportive educational process necessary to prepare all of America's children for academic success, healthy development, and responsible citizenship.

The five *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach* principles call for providing:

1. Comprehensive curricula matched with individualized instruction—Combine high expectations for achievement with appropriate individualized instruction across curricula that reflect the knowledge and skills required to succeed in the 21st Century and that provide truly equal educational opportunities for all students.

Key Objectives:

- a) Maintain high expectations and provide academic rigor across the spectrum of academic and life skills curricula.
- b) Ensure access to high quality instruction that meets the individual learning needs of all students.
- c) Ensure that instruction, assessment, and interventions are responsive to students' individual backgrounds and circumstances, including culture and language.
- d) Monitor individual student progress frequently and over time to ensure learning and to make decisions about appropriate interventions.
- e) Align and ensure the consistency of related principles in IDEA and ESEA/NCLB.

Primary Alignment With *Breaking Ranks II*

Cornerstone Strategies: #1 Core Knowledge, #4 Adapting to Differences, #6 Flexible Use of Time; and Core Area 1: #1, #4, #6; Core Area 2: #10, #13, #14, #16; and Core Area 3: #19, #20, #21, #26, #29.

2. Sufficient student support services to address barriers to learning for *all* students—Provide sufficient student support services to meet the needs of the whole child in order to promote healthy learning and development.

Key Policy Objectives:

- a) Ensure access for all children to support services to address the spectrum of barriers caused by health, behavioral, psychological, and environmental problems that can prevent students from being ready and able to learn.
- b) Provide appropriately trained professionals to help lower barriers to learning and to provide support needed by teachers.
- c) Promote research-based alternatives to grade retention and social promotion
- d) Extend supports to include high quality early childhood and after-school programming for at-risk children and youth.
- e) Coordinate services across a continuum of care that integrates schools, families, and community providers.

Primary Alignment With *Breaking Ranks II*

Cornerstone Strategies: #2 Connections with Students, #3 Personalize Planning, #4 Adapting to Differences; and Core Area 1: #3, #5, #6, #7; Core Area 2: #10, #12, #13, #14, #16, #18, and Core Area 3: #24, #25, #26, #28.

3. Comprehensive accountability and progress monitoring measures—Expand accountability systems to reflect a comprehensive picture of students' and schools' performance rather than relying primarily on high-stakes testing.

Key Policy Objectives:

- a) Broaden accountability measures to include multiple indicators of student achievement, including those related to behavior, physical and mental health, and wellness.
- b) Ensure that measures are adapted to be valid and reliable for all student subpopulations.
- c) Use ongoing accountability measures to inform instruction, intervention, and school-wide improvement efforts.
- d) Include rates and effectiveness of home–school–community collaboration as part of school accountability measures.
- e) Base high-stakes decisions only on the use of multiple methods of data collection that have been validated for the intended purposes.

Primary Alignment With *Breaking Ranks II*

Cornerstone Strategies: #3 Personalized Planning, #4 Adapting to Differences, #6 Distributed Leadership; and Core Area 1: #1, #2, #3, #9; Core Area 2: #12, #15, #16, #18, and Core Area 3: #20, #21, #25, #26, #28, #29, #30.

4. Professional development and supports for teachers and other educators necessary for instructional excellence—Build the capacity for instructional excellence that empowers teachers to teach creatively and effectively.

Key Policy Objectives:

- a) Create smaller classrooms and improved student/staff ratios based upon research data, which specify how these are directly linked to meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for all students.
- b) Provide professional support personnel to help lower barriers to learning and teaching.
- c) Invest in rigorous, career-long training that includes opportunities for all educators to receive continuing professional development across a spectrum of learning objectives and areas of professional functioning.
- d) Promote strong, supportive school leadership and opportunities for peer-to-peer consultation, problem solving, assessment, and intervention.

Primary Alignment With *Breaking Ranks II*

Cornerstone Strategies: #2 Connections with Students, #6 Distributed Leadership, #7 Continuous Professional Development; and Core Area 1: #1, #4, #5, #6, #7; Core Area 2: #11; and Core Area #3: #21, #25; #26, #28, #29.

5. Federal leadership and school-based research to promote effective services that support the whole child in the learning context— Provide federal leadership that facilitates evidence-based practice and well-coordinated, fully funded federal policies.

Key Policy Objectives:

- a) Fully fund educational mandates such as IDEA and ESEA/NCLB.
- b) Strengthen emphasis on *school-based* research to identify evidence-based practices that are effective and efficient in the dynamic and multifaceted context of schools.
- c) Promote sharing of knowledge and effective practices across states, encouraging policies that promote equity and innovative as well as exemplary programs.
- d) Establish leadership at the federal level for advancing specialized instructional and student support services.

Primary Alignment With *Breaking Ranks II*

Cornerstone Strategies: #4 Adapting to Differences, #7 Continuous Professional Development; and Core Area 1: #2, #4, #5; Core Area 2: #12, #15, #18; and Core Area #3: #20, #25, #26, #28, #29, #30.

For more information visit www.nasponline.org. Download *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach* at <http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/2008educationpolicydocument.pdf>.