



North Carolina School Psychology Association 2021 Legislative Agenda

Thank you for your help in 2020: your \$32 Million in COVID-19 relief funding for more School Psychologists and instructional support positions (\$10M) and Exceptional Children Services (\$22M), among other emergency relief, was right on time! Expansion of our NCDPI licensure through SB 113 ([SL 2020-49](#)) increased access for more students across district lines and into charter schools: this made a huge difference at a time when students, parents, and educators desperately needed more School Psychologists. These desperate needs continue even more so into 2021-22.

The Needs

1. COVID-19 has posed a debilitating risk to special student services required by state and federal law under both [ChildFind](#) and children's "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) with the immense backlog of special education evaluations and services for students with disabilities. School Psychologists are the only school personnel qualified to conduct psycho-educational evaluations and therefore to expedite students' access to the specialized instruction they need immediately.
2. Significant Learning Loss as a result of COVID19; basic needs, especially mental health needs, must be met for learning to occur. School Psychologists (SPs) are the best problem-solvers for students, parents, and educators in preventing learning loss and otherwise mitigating learning losses as we work our way out of this pandemic.

The Solutions

The State's funding for more SP **positions** is greatly appreciated; however it is clear that **without significant and targeted recruitment incentives**, NC **cannot** adequately fill those newly-funded positions. Our urgent requests, in order to triage students' immediate emergencies and to fulfill the intent of the funds you generously dedicated for more School Psychologist positions, are as follows:

1. Immediately Enact your 2019 and 2020 proposed legislation, "School Psychologist Compensation and Recruitment" [SB 382/HB 482](#) and this [edition of SB 113](#).
 - a. School Psychologist **Recruitment and Retention Program/Incentives** and a **DPI Recruitment and Retention Coordinator** for SPs, especially those from diverse backgrounds, are imperative to fill open positions. NC's current School Psychologist:Student ratio is among the worst in the nation at 1:1916. NC needs approximately **2,200 more SPs**. This new DPI Coordinator and Program will hold the State accountable for immediate, measured progress. For every 1 NC School Psychologist currently, we need almost 3 more to reach the nationally-recommended ratio of 1:500 students.

- b. Rural and poor schools and systems have the fewest number of SPs: with 29 of 115 school districts having **less than One (1) full-time School Psychologists employed**. See next page for a color-coded map of these districts.
 - c. NC can immediately recruit from states with SP Training Surpluses (NY, PA, TX).
2. Implement **Salary Increases/Incentives of at least \$10,000** (e.g., for 750 NC School Psychologists = \$7.5 Million recurring cost). We risk losing our own home-grown School Psychologists every year because of a \$10,000+ pay differential in our neighboring states alone. NC School Psychologists' top state-funded salary ([\\$64,020](#); p.9) is **\$14,180 BELOW** the national median ([\\$78,200](#)).

NC must move a long-range plan into short-term actions by incentivizing School Psychologists to support our most vulnerable school children. We need a hiring frenzy of more School Psychologists - we can only do this with your immediate help.

School Psychologists are the Psychologists who know the most about Education and the Educators who know the most about Psychology.