



North Carolina
School Psychology Association

February 2023

North Carolina School Psychology Association

2023-24 Legislation Agenda

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

School Psychologists are uniquely trained to help accomplish the State's critical goals for students:

- A. Prevent and intervene in the most complex **student mental health** crises, such as a student's imminent threat to self or others, including threats of suicide or school violence.
- B. Implement preventative **school safety measures and behavioral threat assessments**. School Psychologists triage those who need immediate grief counseling, provide family support services, and conduct district level crisis response plans. We can lead and support school-wide implementation of evidence-based crisis prevention and response models, such as PREPaRE (e.g., Preventing and Preparing for Psychological Trauma).
- C. Utilize the *Science of Reading* to support evidence-based interventions, such as interpreting a child's progress monitoring data, formulating evidence-based reading intervention plans, and explaining the data to parents and other educators to ensure improvement.
- D. Abate NC students' learning losses and measure the progress for all students, both at the student and full district level including students with disabilities. School Psychologists collaborate with school-based teams to focus on the whole child and their family to address specific needs.

The Problem: Tragically, North Carolina's teen suicide rate is at an all-time high. Suicide is now the second-leading cause of death among 10-17 year-olds in North Carolina (second only to homicide). According to the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data presented to the NC Child Fatality Task Force¹:

1. Over 20% of NC's high school students seriously considered attempting suicide
2. 18% made a plan of how they would attempt suicide
3. Nearly 10% attempted suicide
4. 57 died by suicide in 2021²

This must stop now – and the tragedies are avoidable, with the right help at the right time by the right person. State leaders have the power to stem the horrific tide of our children committing suicide in unprecedented numbers.

NC School Psychologists are uniquely qualified to conduct the most complex student behavioral threat assessments. In 2022, 26 of our school systems do not have even 1 full-time employed School Psychologist: that's roughly 72,439 students without access to the dire mental health services they need today.

¹ <https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/72555>

² Data from the Child Fatality Task Force (<https://www.wral.com/nc-child-suicides-continue-to-rise-state-data-shows/20483088/>)



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North Carolina students do not have access to nearly enough School Psychologists in order to address their urgent mental health needs. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1:500 – 1 School Psychologist to 500 students – Currently, **North Carolina's ratio is 1:1,943**, which is nearly four times the national recommendation.

The Solution: Immediately recruit and retain both in-state and out-of-state School Psychologists to North Carolina. Ensure compliance with your 20212 State Law that requires at least one School Psychologist in every North Carolina school system. N.C.G.S § 115C-47(67) (SL 2021-180).

The Steps to get there:

1. Increase salaries for School Psychologists by **at least \$6,500 more** and work toward North Carolina offering competitive and attractive pay when compared with other states in the Southeast region. Thank you for the beginning boost of \$3,500 in 2021 for every School Psychologist in NC!
2. Enact a **12% Salary Supplement for Nationally Certified School Psychologists** (comparable to teachers' and school counselors' supplement for National Board Certifications).
3. Fund your 2021 "School Psychologist Recruitment and Retention Grant Program" (at \$1.7M) with **recurring dollars** as it will take many years to reach a goal of 1 School Psychologist in each NC school.
4. Make sure that your new 2021 School Psychologist Allotment remains strong and is not watered down by the creation of exceptions to the rule. State leaders created that Allotment for the specific purpose of filling chronic School Psychologist vacancies, not for any other purpose. Please maintain the State's current law NCGS §115C-316.5.
5. Use recurring dollars to ensure that mandatory School Psychologist internships are **paid** and provide **stipends** for field supervisors to guarantee a pipeline of School Psychologists. DPI and the State Board of Education are requesting \$5 Million in 2023.
6. Ensure that DPI's new "School Psychologist Recruitment and Retention Coordinator" (School Psychology Consultant) – SL 2021-180, s. 7.8 (a) is immediately hired and further supported by additional state funds to effectively recruit from other states with training surpluses of School Psychologists, such as New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and others.