

A Blueprint for Training and Practice III

A NASP Convention Special Session

The new Blueprint III is completed and can be downloaded on the NASP website by clicking on “New at NASP.” Blueprint II was published nine years ago to provide a guide to practice and training in school psychology, as well as to serve as a point of discussion regarding future directions for the profession. The panel presentation to discuss the changes in Blueprint III also focused the future directions for our field and included many national leaders in school psychology. The Blueprint III Task Force members included Jim Ysseldyke, Matthew Burns, Peg Dawson, Brenna Kelly, Diane Morrison, Sam Ortiz, Sylvia Rosenfield and Cathy Telzrow.

There have been many changes in the past nine years since Blueprint II was published. NCLB was enacted and IDEA was reauthorized. World events changed the focus of schools to emphasize safety above all else and the ability to respond to crises. In 2002, the Conference on the Future of School Psychology was held, which suggested new directions in the field, as well. In addition, we became increasingly aware of the shortage of school psychologists. These changes in the training and practice needs in school psychology made it necessary to update the Blueprint to incorporate these new issues, challenges and directions in education.

It was the intention of the Blueprint III Task Force, however, to maintain the value of the ten domains identified in Blueprint II. Those domains, plus technology, are reviewed in Figure 1 below.

Figure I

Blueprint II Domains of Competence in School Psychology

1. Data-driven decision making and accountability
2. Interpersonal communication, collaboration, and consultation
3. Effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills
4. Socialization and development of life competencies
5. Student diversity in development and learning
6. School structure, organization, and climate
7. Prevention, wellness promotion, and crisis intervention
8. Home/school/community collaboration
9. Research and program evaluation
10. Legal, ethical practice and professional development
11. Technology

Blueprint III incorporates several important changes and concepts. The bottom four competencies listed in the Blueprint III domain chart below are considered the foundation of training and practice, clearly focusing on the principles of psychology and education and the scientific method. Along with the four functional skill sets, the eight domains are referred to as the Domains of Competence. These competencies are not seen as individually independent domains to be taught or practiced, but as an integrated set of competencies that will require life-long learning. It is no longer assumed that graduate students demonstrate full competence in all of the Blueprint areas. It is new that a distinction is made between competence at a *novice* level during graduate school, a *competence* level in at least one area following internship, and an *expertise* level of competence after 5 to 10 years in practice. Finally, there are two outcomes specified: (1) to build capacities of systems and (2) to increase the competencies of all students. These outcomes are new and help focus this document on the overarching goal of student success, which includes the critical academic as well as the mental health aspects of schooling.

In discussing the role of the “instructional psychologist,” the new focus in training should include all three levels of the commonly used pyramid; i.e., universal level, targeted students, and intensive design of instruction. The second arena of emphasis is that of mental health. NASP President Bill Pfohl, who ordered the Blueprint Task Force, is a strong believer in a prevention focus, which is also emphasized throughout the Futures Conference summary documents.

In the panel discussion presented at the spring NASP convention, it was apparent that a somewhat different kind of student should be recruited to fit this national agenda. A desire to work with individual students has become secondary to working with systems, analyzing data for school districts and the ability to lead problem-solving groups, such as site-based councils. This last role requires strong consultation and group leadership skills, which is quite different from individual case consultation. We are also well aware by now of the increased focus on instructional outcomes and accommodations, which will require far greater skill understanding classrooms and working directly with teachers to change their instructional methods to meet the needs of all students. Within Arizona, we continue to need school psychologists to work with all three “tiers” of students. Our work to obtain Supervisory Certification through the Department of Education should also fit nicely with the national goal of our serving in leadership roles. One issue not addressed in the panel discussion, however, was how to gain acceptance of these newly suggested roles for school psychologists, and how changing our role would impact other student services providers in school systems.

The Blueprint III was written to stimulate discussion and change by school psychologists and to guide university training. It can be used to develop coursework and practical experience at both pre-service and continuing education levels. It can also be used by professional associations, such as AASP, to facilitate strategic planning to assist in revising standards for practice, training and credentialing.

“School psychology as a field has matured from its roots in educational assessment and psychology to a broad-based model of service delivery and system change, within a prevention-focused context.”

Bill Pfohl, PsyD, NCSP
NASP President 2005-2006

Blueprint III Domains

Functional Competencies

Enhancing the Development of Wellness, Social Skills, and Life Competencies

School psychologists should be the leading mental health experts in schools who are knowledgeable about development in social, affective, and adaptive domains and are able to identify and apply sound principles of behavior change within these domains in order to help design and implement prevention and intervention programs to promote wellness and resiliency.

Enhancing the Development of Cognitive and Academic Skills

School psychologists help schools develop challenging but achievable cognitive and academic goals for all students, taking into account the need to adjust expectations for individual students, or to implement alternative ways to monitor or assess individual student progress toward goal or standards accomplishment.

Systems-Based Service Delivery

School psychologists should provide leadership in developing schools as safe, caring, and inviting places in which there is a sense of community, in which contributions of all persons are valued, in which there are high expectations of excellence for all students, and where home-school-agency partnerships are valued.

Data-Based Service Delivery

School psychologists should be good problem solvers who collect information that aids in understanding problems, making decisions about appropriate interventions, assessing educational outcomes, and making accountability decisions.

Foundational Competencies

Professional, Legal, Ethical, and Social Responsibility

School psychologists should be prepared to practice in ways that meet all appropriate ethical, professional, and legal standards in order to enhance the quality of services and protect the rights of all parties, and should maintain certification or licensure while attending continuing education functions as necessary and required.

Technological Applications

School psychologists should be able to apply technology to improve outcomes and to support all other domains.

Diversity Awareness and Sensitive Service Delivery

School psychologists must be able to recognize when issues of diversity affect the manner and nature of interactions with other people and organizations and must have the ability to modify or adapt their practices in response to those being served.

Interpersonal and Collaborative Skills

School psychologists should demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, the ability to work effectively and collaboratively with people and agencies, and characteristics such as the ability to listen, adapt, tolerate ambiguity, and be patient in difficult situations.