FASP History and Mission
First organized in 1957, the Florida Association of School Psychologists (FASP) is one of the largest state school psychology associations in the nation. The mission of the Florida Association of School Psychologists is to promote and to advocate for the mental health and educational development of Florida’s children, youth, and families and to advance school psychology in the state of Florida for the benefit of all students.

Utilize Evidence-Based Strategies to Promote Safe Schools and Safe Communities
Background/Rationale
While schools remain one of the safest places individuals can work, there are increasing concerns about bullying and violence in schools. The best solutions for ensuring safe schools is to create a culture and climate in which students feel connected enough to adults in the building to report any concerns.

Actions Needed
• Mandate measurement of school climates in order to increase understanding and identification of students who are not connected to their school, who do not feel safe, or who do not have an adult in the school to whom they would feel comfortable reporting concerns.
• Increase funding for additional qualified, school-based mental health personnel (school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers) to implement violence prevention, restorative justice, and school safety programs in every public school.
• Increase access to certified/licensed school psychologists who have specialized training and skills in suicide and violence prevention, threat assessment, consultation and comprehensive problem-solving, and prevention and intervention services for all students.

Increase Mental Health Services in Schools
Background/Rationale
Academic achievement and school safety must rest upon a foundation of mental wellness, and students as well as school personnel must feel safe and welcome in schools in order to make progress. The prevention of and intervention for mental health problems must be a priority if our state expects to stop breaches in school safety, to meet educational goals, and to prevent chronic behavioral problems. Ensuring comprehensive school psychological and other mental health service provision demonstrably improves school safety, student behavior, and academic outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

Actions Needed
• Mandate universal screening for mental health problems to occur at all schools across the state. This screening is of no additional cost to school districts, and it allows schools to identify students struggling with mental or behavioral health concerns BEFORE their needs become intense and severe (and, therefore, likely require costlier interventions).
• Support a plan to increase gradually the number of school psychologists in Florida schools so that each public school has at least one full-time school psychologist.

Reduce Overreliance on Harmful and Ineffective Exclusionary Discipline Practices (e.g., Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions)
Background/Rationale
The state of Florida removes more children from school for disciplinary reasons than any other state and is, unfortunately, a national leader in the school-to-prison pipeline. Florida has the highest overall suspension rates for both elementary and secondary education students in the country and is third in the country in terms of school-based arrests. Florida is one of only seven states where the number of elementary schools with high rates of suspension far exceeds those schools with rates of suspension closer to the national average. When examining suspensions of students with disability status, over 37% of students who are suspended in Florida have a disability, although Florida's rate of students with disabilities (SWDs) is currently 13%. These harsh disciplinary practices, which are not evidence-based, disproportionately impact African-Americans, who comprise 44% of out-of-school suspensions in Florida despite being only 22% of the student population.

Action Needed
• Ban the use of out-of-school suspension for minor violations and infractions, including minor behavioral problems and defiance/noncompliance.
• Ban the use of out-of-school suspension and expulsion for ALL behavioral incidents involving our youngest and most vulnerable students in preschool and elementary school.
• Enact legislation mandating that a specified proportion of in-service training teachers and other school professionals receive each year be specific to behavioral interventions, classroom management, and evidence-based alternatives to suspensions and expulsions.
• Enact legislation to require that all School Resource Officers (SROs) be trained in differentiating criminal misconduct from misbehavior as well as in developing a broader understanding of adolescent development and crisis management.
FASP Supports Legislation that Promotes:

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Efforts to Ensure that Every Student Succeeds
Promote policies which ensure the dignity, safety, and access to opportunity of all children, regardless of their race; ethnicity; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; immigration status; socioeconomic status; primary language; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity; mental, physical, or sensory disability; or any other diversity characteristics.

• Provide resources, professional development, and support services to teachers to improve reading, writing, and math levels of all students, especially those who are achieving poorly
• Ensure that every school district complies fully with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972
• Promote evidence-based interventions to increase overall academic success resulting in grade promotion
• Require schools to develop integrated, school-wide plans to address the challenges affecting the academic and behavioral functioning of students based on their community, needed support mechanisms, and rate of growth
• Replace suspensions with more effective and evidence-based alternatives such as a restorative justice approach which involves repairing damage done by inappropriate behavior

Access to School Psychological Services in the Private Sector
Promote parity in insurance coverage for all mental health and substance dependence services
• Maintain rigorous quality standards of legislative regulation of school psychologists under Chapter 490, F.S. to ensure a high degree of professionalism, safety, and cost effectiveness for the public
• Promote insurance laws which provide third party payments for services provided by licensed school psychologists
• Provide for licensed school psychologists to become Medicaid providers to reduce costs and to increase provider options
• Provide for licensed school psychologists to become qualified evaluators for the Department of Children and Families
• Provide for licensed school psychologists to be eligible to initiate the Baker Act
• Clarify that licensed school psychologists who have requisite training are qualified to be court appointed as child custody evaluators

FASP Outstanding Legislator Awardees

2019: Senator Kelli Stargel
2018: Senator Kathleen Passidomo
2016 & 2017: Representative Gayle Harrell
2014: Senator “Bill” Montford

Legacy Award for Distinguished Service to Children

2009 – Senator Eleanor Sobel

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