

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Association of School
Psychologists of Pennsylvania
Promoting best practices in school psychology.

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ASPP Statement Supporting Social Justice and Anti-Racism

The murder of George Floyd and the homicides of unarmed Black people by police have sparked feelings of outrage, anger, and disillusionment with law enforcement around the world. The nationwide domestic protests have initiated protests abroad as the world has come to a level of violence and unrest not seen since movements related to civil rights, women's suffrage, LGBTQ+ rights, and the war in Vietnam. School psychologists are trained to promote safe and supportive schools for all students through equitable and evidence-based practices for diverse student populations. In support of the National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) *Call for Action to End Racism and Violence Against People of Color*, the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP) is committed to continued action for social justice to address the impact of racism and violence against people of color.

School psychologists define social justice as, "...action to address systemic barriers, such as long-term issues of poverty, inequity, prejudice, racism, and violence." In order to proactively address the needs of students and staff, NASP encourages school psychologists to strengthen their social justice efforts by (a) thinking critically about structures, systems, and policies that continue to marginalize underrepresented groups; (b) recognizing and challenging practices that perpetuate White privilege, as well as implicit and explicit bias; (c) recognizing and addressing acute levels of stress and traumatic responses among students and staff who continue to experience and be vulnerable to racism; (d) teaching and modeling nonviolent approaches to impact policy, attitude, and behavior change; and (e) modeling and providing opportunities to engage students, families, and community members in conversations and activities that focus upon common goals, rather than labeling and stigmatizing groups of people.

ASPP is committed to the ongoing work of supporting school psychologists across the Commonwealth to engage in the following activities to address issues of social justice:

- Attend and provide ongoing training around anti-racist educational practices
- Examine of school curricula carefully in a continuing effort to determine whether curricula meet standards for social equity
- Reduce disproportionality by race and ethnicity in school discipline by carefully examining school behavior data and reducing ambiguity in the definition and management of problem behavior in schools
- Attend and provide ongoing training on implicit and explicit bias, and examine how these biases impact staff and student interactions

- Foster collaboration between school- and community-based mental health professionals, school resource officers, and law enforcement to implement evidence-based practices in the routine discipline of students, including students with disabilities, consistent with trainings provided by the National Association of School Resource Officers
- Implement frameworks and interventions designed to manage the impact of trauma on schools and communities experiencing racism
- Facilitate dialogue and cross-community interactions among students, school staff, and communities who typically interact at minimal levels with students and families of color in order to prepare students and staff to engage and interact within an increasingly diverse, 21st century workforce and national community
- Recruit Black students to school psychology graduate programs to build a more diverse school psychology workforce that is more representative of student populations
- Support and encourage school boards and school administrators to improve existing anti-discrimination policies and procedures, and monitor for the consistent application of those policies and procedures
- Provide social justice professional development opportunities for school staff

The activities identified above are the beginning of a call for action by ASPP to better meet the needs of all children and families across the Commonwealth. ASPP recognizes that schools play a very important role in children’s development as they learn and develop expectations for social norms. It is our responsibility, both now during remote learning and also upon the return to physical school settings, to help children and youth see adults as individuals who can help keep them safe and can work to fix the problems that may threaten children’s well-being.

As NASP and so many have identified, it is not enough to be angry. We can and must do better through our words and our actions. This is our collective responsibility for the benefit of our children. ASPP’s call for action is a first step in an ongoing effort for school psychologists to realize the goal of social justice, to end racism, and to provide safe, effective learning environments for all of our children.

For additional resources related to social justice and anti-racist practices, please visit the ASPP website (www.aspponline.org).