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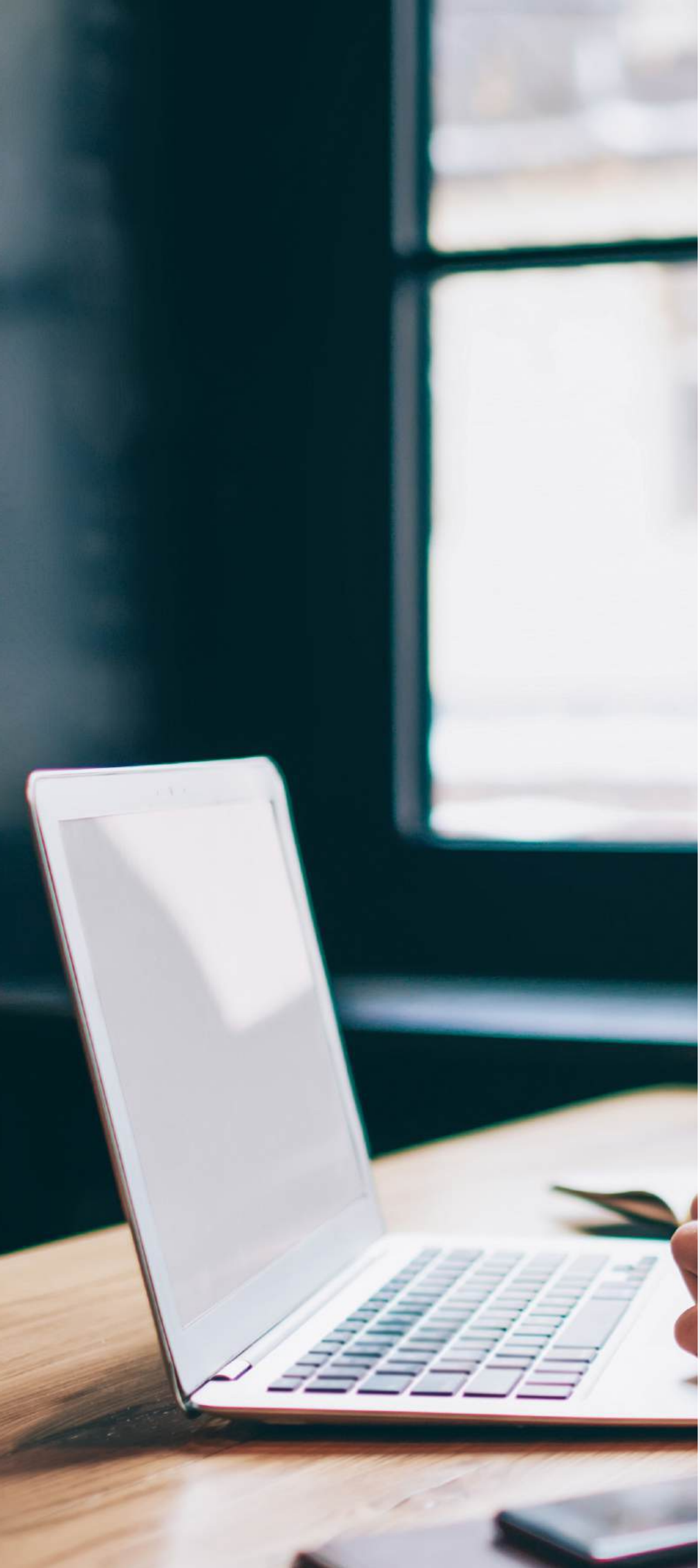
THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

VOL. 79, NO. 1 (SPRING 2025)

PUBLISHED BY DIVISION 16 OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



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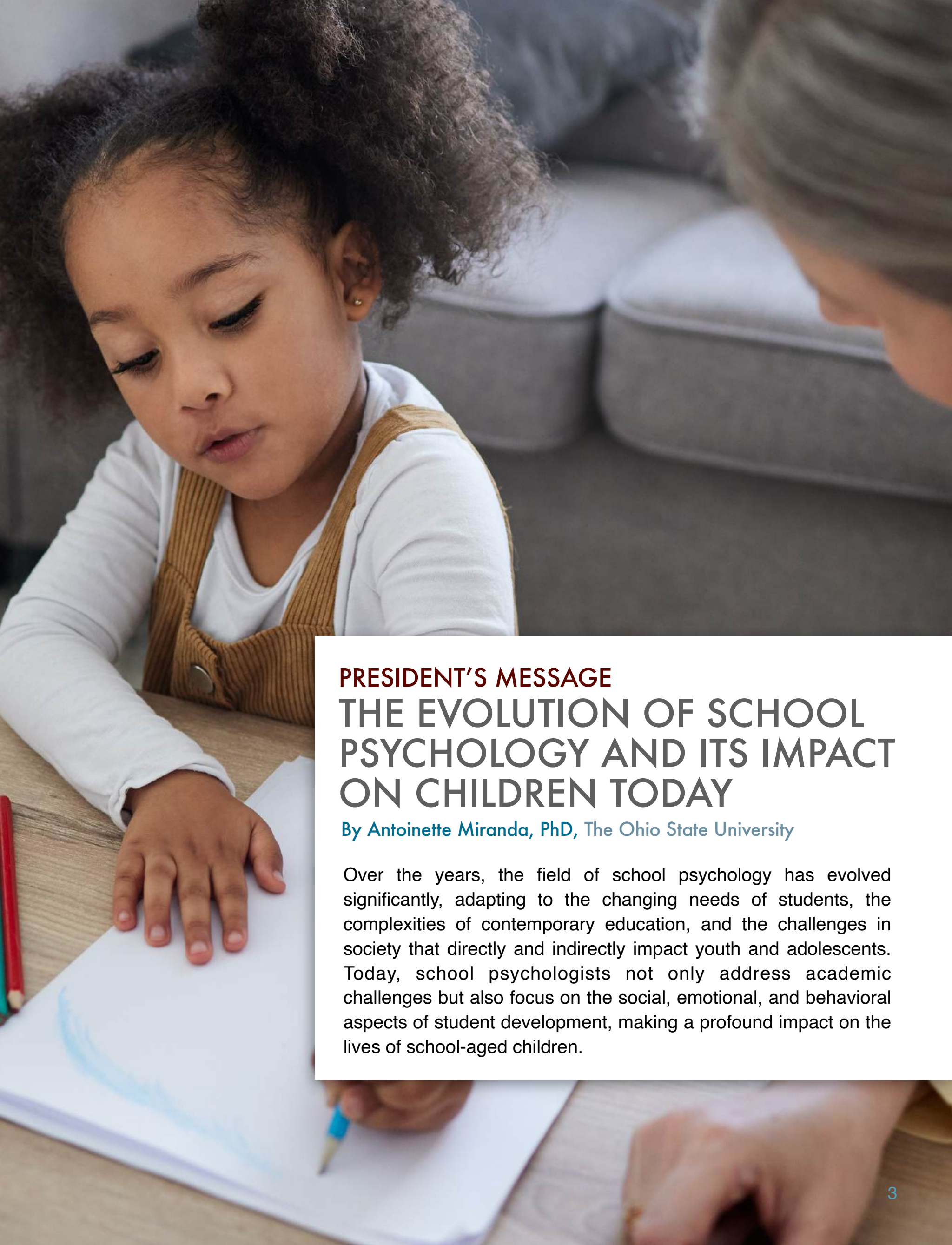


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE EVOLUTION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN TODAY

By Antoinette Miranda, PhD, The Ohio State University

Over the years, the field of school psychology has evolved significantly, adapting to the changing needs of students, the complexities of contemporary education, and the challenges in society that directly and indirectly impact youth and adolescents. Today, school psychologists not only address academic challenges but also focus on the social, emotional, and behavioral aspects of student development, making a profound impact on the lives of school-aged children.

"The field has embraced innovative practices and evidence-based interventions that have been developed to address a wider range of student needs, from academic support to social-emotional learning."

Having been in the field for over 40 years, it has been truly inspiring to be witness to school psychology researchers contributing to advancements in assessment and intervention, crisis intervention and trauma informed practice, multi-tiered systems of support and cultural competence to name a few. We have been leaders in recognizing the importance of mental health in education with school psychologists becoming more integral to school systems. The role of school psychologists has continued to expand beyond assessment and intervention, into areas such as advocacy, policy development, and community engagement. The field has embraced innovative practices and evidence-based interventions that have been developed to address a wider range of student needs, from academic support to social-emotional learning. For years, I consulted with districts on how to implement culturally responsive practices to meet the needs of their diverse students. A body of research has emerged in school psychology championing diversity, equity, and inclusion in education. Despite the challenges inherent in this work-such as navigating entrenched biases, limited resources, and varying levels of institution support-these researchers remain committed to advancing DEI principles.

This work is important in highlighting the impact of cultural competence on student outcomes, demonstrating that inclusive practices lead to better academic and social-emotional results. There has also been an

important shift of moving from a deficit-based model to a strength-based model when working with students of color because it fundamentally shifts how we view their identities, experiences, and potential. When we shift from a deficit-based view to a strength-based view, we honor the rich cultural wealth that students of color bring into our schools. We stop asking, 'What's wrong with them?' and instead ask, 'How can we amplify their brilliance?' This shift isn't just pedagogical — it's an act of justice. A growing diverse body of researchers have been dedicated to this line of scholarship and have made significant strides toward a more equitable educational landscape, proving that, although the path may be challenging, the commitment to DEI is both essential and transformative.

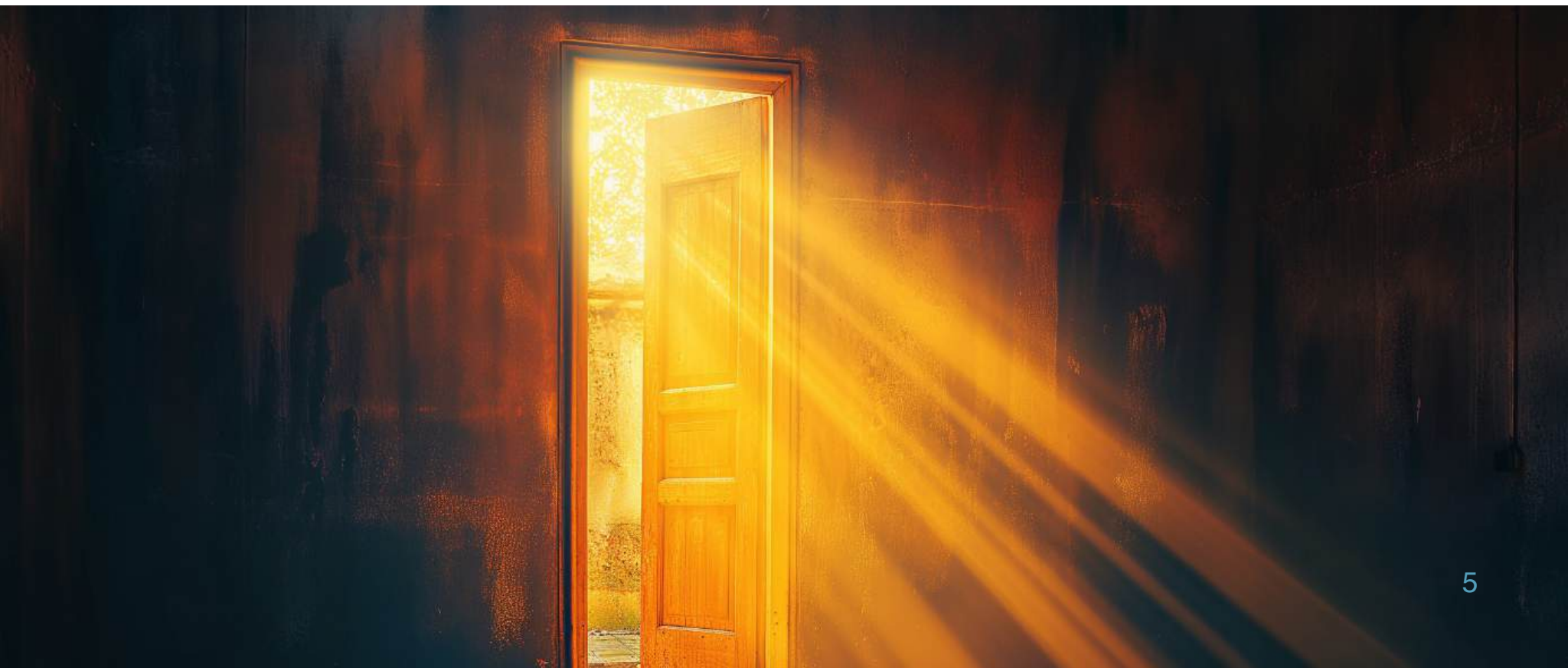
We also must credit school psychology training that has expanded significantly over the years, reflecting the evolving needs of students and education environments. School psychology accreditation bodies have ensured programs have broadened curriculums, research integration emphasizing evidence-based practices, expanded opportunities for hands-on training, interdisciplinary collaboration and cultural perspectives. This expansion of training not only enhances the skills and competencies of school psychologists but also positions them to better address the complex needs of today's students and educational systems.

But we are challenged by recent federal and state legislation and Executive Orders. This chaos has influenced the field of psychology, introducing changes that affect practice scope, access to care, workforce diversity, and ethical considerations. These legislative developments underscore the dynamic nature of the psychology field, emphasizing the need for practitioners to stay informed and adaptable to continue providing effective and ethical care. It is imperative that we push forward, even amid chaos, because children's lives depend on it. We know the policies being handed down today will have a lasting impact on future generations. That's why this is not the time to acquiesce to top-down mandates. It's a time to advocate boldly for evidence-based, locally informed decisions that truly serve our students.

As we push forward in what often seems like challenging and chaotic times, I think of a quote by Amanda Gorman that brings optimism:

> *"There is always light. If only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it."*

Take a moment to reflect, recharge, and celebrate all you've accomplished. We will persevere as a discipline and come out stronger on the other side.

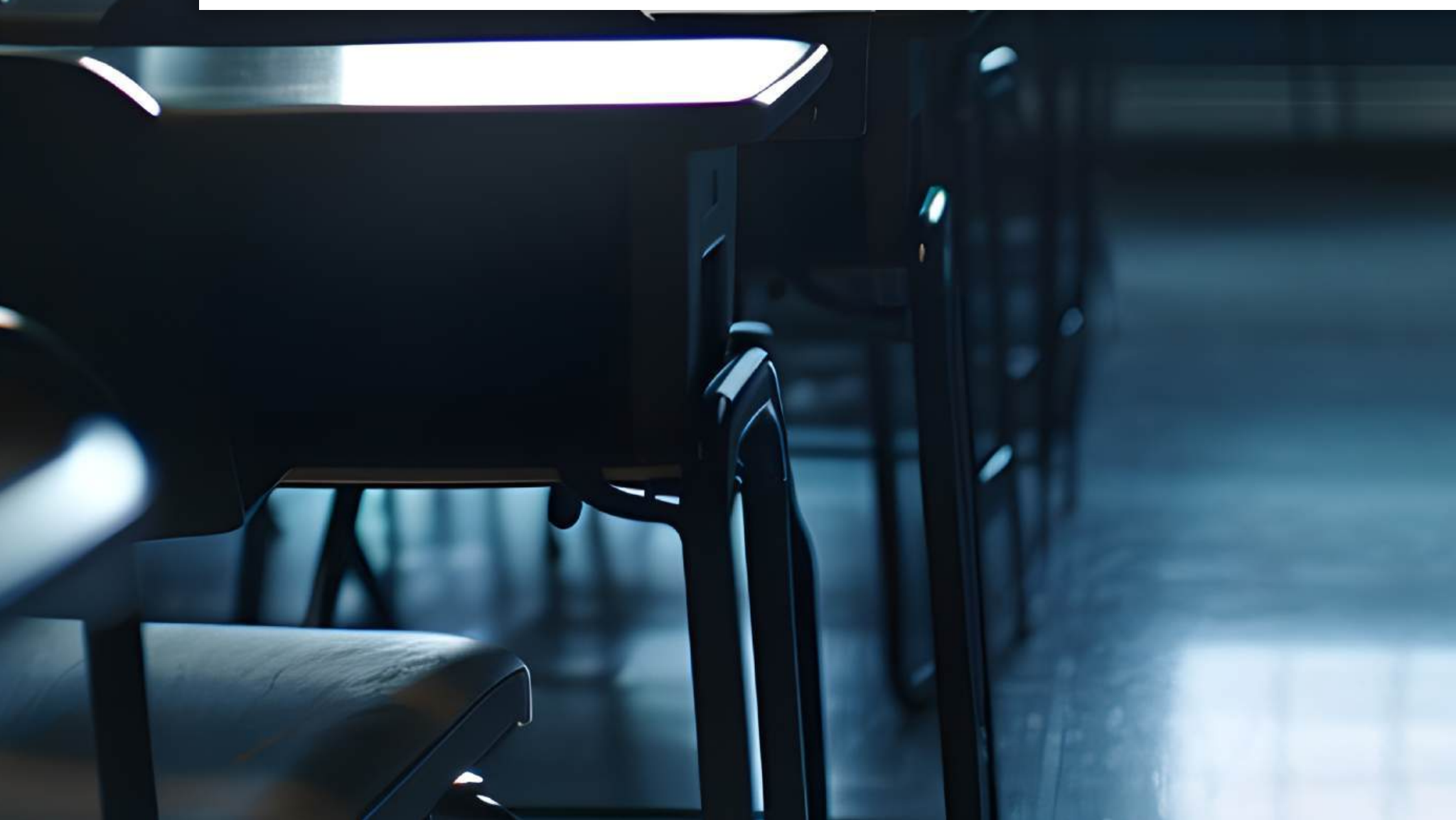


PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES IN K-12 SCHOOLS

A STUDY OF SCHOOL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

By Joshua A. Hendrix, PhD, Terri Dempsey, MA, Becky Durocher, BA, & Lisa McCaskill, LMFT
RTI International

Every student, teacher, and school staff member is entitled to a safe and equitable learning environment. In many ways, schools are safe institutions, and there is evidence to suggest that they have become increasingly safe over the last 25 years (Fox & Fridel, 2018; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019a, 2019b; Zhang, Musu-Gillete, & Oudekerk, 2016). Nonetheless, emergencies can and do happen in schools. Nearly 1,000 shootings or firearm-related incidents occurred at American K-12 schools between 2000-2001 and 2021-2022 school years, 39% of which involved at least one death of a student or staff



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member (NCES, 2023). In the 2021-2022 school year alone, there were 327 documented K-12 gun-related incidents, more than twice as many as any previous year, and more than half of which involved at least one casualty. Gun violence jeopardizes school connectedness, engenders a school climate characterized by fear and distrust, and has devastating physical, emotional, and psychological consequences for students and staff (Beland & Kim, 2016; Goldstein, Young, & Boyd, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2004; Muschert, 2007; Palinkas et al., 2004). Beyond gun violence, other threats to school safety also exist. For example, local fire departments collectively respond to thousands of school structure fires each school year, nearly half of which are intentionally started (Campbell, 2020). Past waves from the National Center for Education Statistics' School Survey on Crime and Safety have also found that annually, thousands of schools (approximately 8% of all schools) experience disruptions due to death threats, bomb threats, or chemical, biological, or radiological threats (NCES, 2008).

The persistent problem of school violence and other threats to safety has made emergency preparedness a top priority at local, state, and national levels. For example, schools have made extensive efforts to enhance safety and security over the last few decades, including investments in surveillance technology, multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams, anonymous reporting tip lines, mental health supports, and numerous other strategies to better prevent and respond to emergencies (Carlton, 2021; NCES, 2022). More than ever before, they are also expected to have comprehensive emergency operations plans (EOPs) that document protocols, roles and responsibilities, and other critical details for responding to a wide range of emergency situations—from natural disasters to active shooter scenarios (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The percentage of public schools with a written response plan for active shooter incidents has increased steadily over time, with 96% of schools having such a plan in the 2019-2020 school year (NCES, 2022). Additionally, at least 90% of schools reported having written plans for natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, tornados), bomb threats, and suicide threats or incidents in 2019-2020. Although less common, many schools have also developed plans for pandemic diseases (52%), hostage scenarios (53%), and chemical/biological, or radiological threats/incidents (74%). And while most schools regularly conduct drills for core emergency procedures, a larger percentage of schools reported conducting lockdown drills (96%) in the 2019-2020 school year than evacuation (93%) or shelter-in-place drills (83%).

Although it is encouraging that EOPs have become ubiquitous in American schools, the utility of these plans is at least partially

dependent on students and staff being knowledgeable of and capable of enacting procedures that have been established within them. Because EOPs contain sensitive information, schools typically do not share them with outside parties. For that reason, researchers have had few opportunities to study them, or staff and student knowledge of their content, firsthand. Some research has suggested that comprehension and mastery of emergency protocols may be a problem in schools (see Department of the Interior, 2010; Winicki, 2010), but also that focused training efforts can improve implementation of emergency protocols (see Dickson & Vargo, 2017; Schildkraut & Nickerson, 2020; Schildkraut, Nickerson, & Ristoff, 2020; Zhe & Nickerson, 2007). Notwithstanding this research, important questions remain regarding what school communities know, and do not know about their emergency protocols and the larger role that EOPs play in efforts to create safe learning environments.

Present Study

Funding from the National Institute of Justice's Comprehensive School Safety Initiative afforded school safety researchers from RTI International a unique opportunity to review school EOPs, examine the extent to which nearly 2,000 students and staff members were knowledgeable of their EOP's emergency procedures, and speak directly with students, teachers, and other staff to understand how EOPs are used and what value they have for promoting safety. In this article, we highlight several key findings and lessons learned from the study. A more comprehensive description of the study design and findings was provided in the final technical report submitted to the National Institute of Justice, which is available upon request to the first author (see Hendrix et al., 2022).

The logic of our study was based on three core assumptions. First, a school's response to a crisis can impact the outcomes of the event, including whether or not people are killed or injured, the number of casualties, and the extent of damage incurred by the school (see Dorn et al., 2013; Dorn et al., 2014; MHDHS Public Safety Commission, 2019; Safe Havens International, 2012; Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, 2015; Trump, 2013; U.S. Attorney's Office District of Minnesota & Heffelfinger, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2007, 2012). Second, proactively documenting details of the school's emergency management system in an EOP is essential, because emergencies happen suddenly and there is typically little time to develop survival strategies in the moment (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Finally, it is important that all staff and students are knowledgeable of, and comfortable enacting procedures described in their school's EOP. Emergency situations can be unpredictable and there is no guarantee that administrators or others in decision-making roles will be available to direct the rest of the school (see Dorn et al., 2013). Theoretically, any staff person—or student for that matter, could unexpectedly be in a position in which they must quickly make decisions that could affect their or others' chances of survival without administrators, law enforcement officials, or other authority figures guide them. Thus, it is critical that staff and students have opportunities to learn and practice emergency protocols and develop muscle memory for responding to crisis situations (Dorn et al., 2014). Of course, knowledge of emergency procedures does not guarantee that staff or students can enact them during an emergency or that those procedures will be effective. After all, there are few, if any, universally accepted standards in emergency preparedness and schools and districts exercise considerable discretion when it comes to devising response strategies (Jonson et al., 2020; Safe Havens International, 2012). However, our overarching rationale for examining knowledge of EOP protocols was that developing sound procedures, practicing them, and ensuring that the entire school community understands and feels confident in their roles remains one of the best lines of defense that schools have for maintaining safe learning environments.

Our study had four primary goals. The first goal was to gain access to EOPs for 10 schools and examine their appearance, layout, and content. Our second goal was to assess access to emergency planning efforts and perceptions of emergency preparedness, including to what extent different types of staff members have read and received training on their school's EOP, serve on emergency planning or school crisis response teams, and believe that their school has prepared them for a violent event. Our third goal was to assess staff and student comprehension of emergency protocols and concepts and identify areas of high and low comprehension and individual- and school-level correlates of comprehension. Our fourth and final goal was to understand from the perspectives of administrators and regular staff, students, and other stakeholders how EOPs and emergency preparedness efforts could be improved.

Methodology

School Sample

Our study was conducted in three phases. In Phase 1, we recruited a purposive sample of 10 schools. Collectively, the schools were located in seven states: Washington, West Virginia, California, New York, Colorado, Ohio, and Georgia (see Table 1). Five schools educated only high school students (i.e., grades 9 to 12 or

grades 10 to 12), four schools educated only middle school students (grades 6 to 8), and one school educated both elementary and middle school students (i.e., kindergarten to grade 8).[1] Based on data from the National Center of Education Statistics, all the schools were non-magnet, non-charter, regular public schools and located in rural remote, rural fringe, distant town, distant rural, midsized suburban, or large suburban locales. Four of the schools enrolled more than 1,000 students, three enrolled between 500 and 1,000, two enrolled between 150 and 500, and one enrolled fewer than 150 students. On average, schools educated a student body that was 78% White and 22% racial minority and 43% of students were eligible to participate in the Free Lunch and Reduced-Price Lunch Program under the National School Lunch Act of 1946.

TABLE 1: SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS (N=10)

School	State	Type of School	Urbanicity	Number of Students	Percent Racial Minority
1	WA	High school serving grades 10 to 12	Town	<1,500	<50
2	WV	Middle school serving grades 6 to 8	Rural	<500	<20
3	CA	School serving Kindergarten to 8	Rural	<250	<60
4	NY	Middle school serving grades 6 to 8	Rural	<1,000	<10
5	NY	High school serving grades 9 to 12	Rural	<1,000	<10
6	WA	Middle school serving grades 6 to 8	Suburb	<1,500	<50
7	CO	High school serving grades 10 to 12	Suburb	<1,500	<20
8	OH	Middle school serving grades 6 to 8	Town	<500	<10
9	OH	High school serving grades 9 to 12	Town	<1,000	<10
10	GA	High school serving grades 9 to 12	Suburb	<2,000	<33

EOP Review

One of our first objectives was to gain access to each school's site-level EOP and create comprehension surveys that could be administered to students and staff to assess how familiar they were with their school's emergency procedures. However, collecting and reviewing EOPs was a more challenging task than we anticipated. Although a few schools quickly sent us their EOPs, others struggled to understand exactly what we were asking for. In many cases, we received a compilation of district and school-level materials, often not organized into a unified plan and sometimes missing key pieces of information (at least according to guidance on developing quality EOPs put forth by the U.S. Department of Education, 2013). An administrator from one school did not realize for several months that they had sent us the wrong EOP—an outdated version no longer in use. Another reached out to us several months into the project, requesting that we send them our copy of their EOP because they were unable to locate theirs.

[1] Our study focused only on middle school students and staff in the school that educated both elementary and middle school students.

Aside from these early challenges, the EOPs we received also varied dramatically in presentation as well as the level of information they provided. Some of them were hundreds of pages long, well organized into a single and navigable plan, and meticulously detailed within an extensive array of sections on threats and hazards, procedures, and special considerations. Others were substantially shorter, totaling to only a handful of pages, and providing only a broad overview of a few core procedures (e.g., lockdown, evacuation). For example, one plan included 12 separate documents and 33 written pages of material, consisting of 5,223 words. Alternatively, another plan written in a single document included more than 400 pages of material consisting of nearly 100,000 words. The other plans ranged from 57 to 256 pages.

Staff Comprehension Surveys

In Phase 2, we developed and administered comprehension surveys to more than 2,500 students and staff to assess their familiarity with and knowledge of critical details documented in their school's EOP. Our original study design involved developing surveys with the same questions across all 10 schools, with different answer choices corresponding to specific EOP information for each site. However, the vast diversity in EOPs made it impossible to develop a single set of questions that could apply to each school. In fact, we found few instances in which content, terminology, or procedures were alike in any two schools. Accepting this reality, we designed surveys that were specific to each school to ensure that the language and procedures we referred to were consistent with what each school community was familiar with.

All staff members were emailed a link to a web-based survey. Prior to beginning the survey, staff members were asked to read consent language that described the study, explained that participation was voluntary and that information provided would be kept private by the research team, and that deidentified summary data would be presented in the study's final report and other scholarly products and archived at the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. After reading this language, respondents who agreed to participate in this research (by selecting "Yes, I agree to participate in this research") were provided access to the remainder of the survey. They were then asked to provide background information, including their sex, number of years employed at the school, and their title. They also reported whether they had read their school's EOP, how recently they had received training to use the EOP, whether they had served on any of their school's emergency planning or crisis response teams, and whether they believed their school had prepared them for a violent event (e.g., an armed intruder or active shooter situation).

The comprehension section of the staff survey began with two open-ended questions that asked staff to describe the courses of action specified in their school's EOP for specific emergency procedures. One of these asked staff to describe actions to take for a lockdown. It was possible to ask all staff this question because each EOP described explicit, bulleted steps that should be taken for a lockdown (e.g., lock the doors, turn off the lights, cover the windows, hide in a blind spot in the room). The other open-ended question asked about courses of action for either evacuation or shelter-in-place, depending on which procedure was covered sufficiently in the EOP and was suitable for an open-ended question format (i.e., the EOP described one set of clear and explicit actions that needed to be taken for that type of emergency).

The remaining comprehension questions (approximately 35 questions) also related to

policies, protocols, or concepts associated with various emergency management topics, but were close-ended and used true/false, multiple choice with a single correct answer, or "select all that apply" formats. The goal was to present questions that collectively represented the material covered in each school's EOP, with the most appropriate answer response format based on the information in each school's EOP. For example, if an EOP described a threat as activating one specific response, the question was developed using a multiple choice with single answer format. Alternatively, if it described multiple procedures, the "select all that apply" format was used. True/false questions were used to measure understanding of a specific school directive within the EOP (e.g., "True or False: You should turn off the lights during a lockdown"). Table 2 presents examples of questions within four major topic areas: lockdown, evacuation, shelter-in-place, and matching protocols to threats.

TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FROM COMPREHENSION SURVEYS

Topic	Example Questions
Lockdown	How might a lockdown be announced at your school?
	How do you know when a lockdown is over?
Evacuation	Where are your school's primary onsite and offsite evacuation locations?
	How do you know when it is safe to reenter the school after an evacuation?
Shelter-in-place	What is the purpose of the shelter-in-place procedure?
	What actions are taken for a shelter-in-place for severe weather?
Matching protocols to threats	Which type of threat requires you to move to a hiding place?
	Which emergency response is appropriate for a bomb threat?

Five hundred and eighty-five staff members completed comprehension surveys (a total response rate of 63%). The majority of the sample was represented by White, non-Hispanic female teachers or other staff employed at their school for an average of 9 years (see Table 3 on following page).

Student Comprehension Surveys

The research team worked with a coordinator in each school to randomly select six to eight distinct classrooms (i.e., classrooms with unique compositions of students such as homeroom) that would collectively provide a sample of at least 100 students per school. All schools chose to implement

TABLE 3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STAFF SURVEY SAMPLE (N = 585)

Staff Background Characteristics	%
Title	
Teachers	54
Teaching assistants and paraeducators	10
Principals and assistant principals	3
Front office administrators	5
Counselors, psychologists, and school nurses	15
Food service staff	9
Custodial	4
Years Employed at This School	
Less than 1 year	2
1 to 5 years	39
6 to 10 years	27
11 to 20 years	23
21 or more years	9
Sex	
Female	72
Male	28
Race	
White	97
Non-White	3
Hispanic Ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic	99
Hispanic	1

passive parental permission forms; therefore, the research team administered a letter to each child's parents or legal guardians that explained the nature of the study and asked them to sign and return the form only if they refused to allow their child to participate. In each school, we oversampled the number of classrooms to account for both student absences on the day the parental forms were sent or on the day of the survey and to account for parental refusals. Field coordinators from the research team then visited each school on a prearranged data and administered surveys in person to eligible students using pencil and paper bubble sheets. Prior to completing the survey, students were also asked to read a brief assent form that provided an overview of the study, explained that their parents or legal guardians had been informed about the study, that participation was voluntary, and that all responses they provided would be kept private by the research team and reported and archived only in summary form. The assent form also included a list of hotline numbers and resources that students

could reference if they became distressed while taking the survey.

Student surveys included approximately 25 comprehension questions relating mostly to evacuation, shelter-in-place, and lockdown procedures. Because students do not have access to their school's EOP, questions were developed only from information that students could be reasonably expected to know (based on direct consultation with school administrators). Each survey began with three open-ended questions assessing students' knowledge of actions to take during various emergency scenarios (i.e., lockdown, evacuation, and/or shelter-in-place). The other approximately 22 questions asked about emergency procedures within multiple choice, select all that apply, or true/false formats. Students also provided information about their sex, grade level, race and ethnicity, primary language, academic grades, and their perceptions of safety, climate, and membership at the school. Three statements were posed to measure perceptions of safety ("I feel safe at my school"; "Violence is a problem at this school"; and "A serious violent incident will probably happen at this school"). Five statements were posed to measure perceptions of school climate and membership ("I feel proud of belonging to my school"; "I am treated with as much respect as other students"; "I feel very different from most of the other students at my school"; "The teachers at my school respect me"; and "There's at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem"). Students rated each statement as completely or mostly true, sometimes true, hardly ever true, or not at all true (see Goodenow, 1993).[2]

The final sample included 1,326 students (a response rate of 79%). Table 4 (following page) displays descriptive statistics, showing an even split between male and female students and with a relatively equal distribution of grade level. Most students identified as White and Non-Hispanic, and most reported speaking English at home.

Site Visits

In Phase 3, the project team conducted virtual meetings with administrators and other safety leaders to discuss results of the comprehension surveys. Later, we conducted in-person site visits with four of the 10 schools to learn more about emergency planning and preparedness efforts via interviews with students, school employees and other key stakeholders (e.g., district staff, local police or sheriff's department). Ultimately, we conducted 40 individual and group interviews with a total of 162 students, school and district staff, and local first responders and heard about their perceptions of their school's emergency protocols, their vulnerability to emergencies, and how emergency planning efforts could be improved. Prior to each session, all interview respondents were read consent language by the project team that described the voluntary nature of the study and how results would be summarized and deidentified prior to any reporting or data archiving. Respondents were asked to provide verbal consent before participating in the interview.

Analytical Approach

We analyzed student and staff survey data using descriptive statistics for individual items as well

[2] Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to inform the creation of a unified index measuring perceptions of safety, climate, and school membership. The items loaded on one factor (Eigen=2.8), with individual loadings exceeding 0.50 with the exception of one item ("I feel very different"). That item was dropped and a factor score was calculated for each student using the remaining seven items (alpha=0.80). The factor score was recoded into three groups representing low, medium, and strong sense of safety, climate, and membership.

TABLE 4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDENT SURVEY SAMPLE (N = 1,326)

Student Background Characteristics	%
Sex	
Girl	49
Boy	51
Grade	
6th	16
7th	15
8th	17
9th	7
10th	16
11th	14
12th	15
Hispanic Ethnicity	
Hispanic	14
Non-Hispanic	86
Race	
Non-White	32
White	68
Language Spoken at Home	
Language other than English	7
English	93
Academic Grades	
Mostly As	44
Mostly Bs	39
Mostly Cs	14
Mostly Ds or Fs	3

as for overall comprehension grades (i.e., points earned/points possible*100), along with random intercepts models predicting comprehension grades by respondent (e.g., title, years employed, history of serving on a safety team) and school-level characteristics (e.g., student enrollment size categorized into three groups, urbanicity, middle or high school level). We analyzed qualitative data using a structured process, beginning with a stage of familiarization in which analysts read transcriptions and discussed initial thoughts about the data (Srivastava & Thompson, 2009). We then developed a code list and coded the data to identify patterns, expanded and refined codes as needed to ensure that nuances were captured, and organized data segments into thematic clusters. Finally, we synthesized and analyzed data from thematic clusters to yield substantive findings.

Results

In this section, we provide an overview of key findings from the project.[3] We begin by discussing findings from the staff and student surveys, and then turn to lessons learned from speaking directly with administrators, regular staff, and students across multiple site visits.

Training and Familiarity with the EOP

Table 5 shows that most staff (94%) had read at least some of their school's EOP, and most (96%) had received training on it at some point. Thirty-eight percent had been involved in at least one emergency planning or crisis response team at their school. Most staff (66%) also believed that their school had mostly or completely prepared them to respond to a violent emergency, with only 2% reporting that their school had not at all prepared them.

TABLE 5. STAFF EXPERIENCES WITH AND PERCEPTIONS OF EMERGENCY PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS (N = 585)

Measures for Staff Training and Familiarity with EOP	%
Have you read your school's EOP/school safety plan?	
No	6
Yes, I've read parts of the EOP	53
Yes, I've read the entire EOP	41
Have you received training on your school's EOP (not including emergency drills conducted at the school)?	
No	4
Yes, 1 year or more ago	10
Yes, more than 6 months but less than 1 year ago	18
Yes, in the past 6 months	69
Are you on any of your school's teams related to emergency planning or crisis response? (select all that apply)	
Number of teams	
Zero	62
One	33
Two or more	5
Do you feel like your school has prepared you for a violent emergency (e.g., armed intruder)?	
Not at all	2
Somewhat	32
Mostly	48
Completely	18

[3] A comprehensive description of study design, methodologies, and findings can be found in the final technical report submitted to the National Institute of Justice. This report has not been made publicly available but is available upon request to the first author.

Table 6 displays results from random-intercept logistic regression models (with respondents nested within schools) predicting the odds that staff had read part of or their entire EOP. The odds that teaching assistants and paraeducators had read at least some of the EOP were 66% lower than the odds for teachers. Stated otherwise, the odds of never reading any of the EOP were three times greater for teaching assistants and paraeducators than for teachers. Model 2 shows that the odds that principals and assistant principals had read the entire EOP were 2.5 times higher than for teachers. Staff who had been employed at their school for many years were more likely to have read the entire

TABLE 6. RANDOM-INTERCEPT LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS PREDICTING THE ODDS THAT STAFF HAVE READ PARTS OR ALL OF THEIR SCHOOL'S EOP (N = 585)

	Predicting the Odds That Staff Have Read			
	Model 1: Parts of or the entire EOP (versus never read the EOP)		Model 2: Entire EOP (versus read none or parts of the EOP)	
	Odds Ratio (SE)	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratio (SE)	95% Confidence Interval
Respondent (Level 1) Characteristics				
Title				
Teachers (reference category)	—	—	—	—
Teaching assistants and paraeducators	0.34*(0.16)	[0.13, 0.87]	0.64 (0.20)	[0.35, 1.17]
Principals and assistant principals	1.45 (1.57)	[0.17, 12.15]	2.45* (1.07)	[1.03, 5.79]
Front office administrators	0.39 (0.21)	[0.13, 1.15]	1.10 (0.34)	[0.60, 2.01]
Counselors, psychologists, nurses	1.13 (1.22)	[0.14, 9.27]	0.51 (0.24)	[0.21, 1.26]
Food service staff	0.44 (0.48)	[0.05, 3.83]	0.86 (0.47)	[0.29, 2.53]
Custodians	0.21 (0.24)	[0.02, 2.03]	1.16 (1.01)	[0.21, 6.44]
Years employed at school (five categories)	1.23 (0.25)	[0.84, 1.82]	1.29** (0.12)	[1.08, 1.53]
Serves on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team (versus no membership)	0.81 (0.34)	[0.35, 1.86]	1.80* (0.41)	[1.14, 2.81]
School (Level 2) Characteristics				
Student enrollment number (three categories)	0.66 (0.30)	[0.27, 1.62]	0.79* (0.19)	[0.49, 1.27]
Rural schools (versus town and suburban schools)	0.47 (0.39)	[0.09, 2.35]	1.19 (0.60)	[0.44, 3.19]
High school (versus middle schools)	1.98 (1.29)	[0.55, 7.12]	1.72* (0.46)	[1.02, 2.91]

*Note: * p<.05 **p<.01*

EOP than newer staff, and the odds that staff had read the entire EOP were 1.8 times higher among staff who served on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team than staff who did not. High school staff were more likely to have read the entire EOP than middle school staff, and staff from larger schools were more likely to have read the entire EOP than staff from smaller schools.

Table 7 shows results from a regression model predicting receipt of EOP training in the past 6 months. The odds of teaching assistants and paraeducators receiving EOP training were 62% lower than the odds for teachers, and the odds for food service staff were 92% lower. The odds of training were four times greater for staff who served on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team than those who did not. Additionally, staff with more years of experience working at the school were more likely than newer staff to have received EOP training.

TABLE 7. RANDOM-INTERCEPT LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODEL PREDICTING THE ODDS THAT STAFF HAVE RECEIVED EOP TRAINING IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS (N = 585)

	Predicting the Odds That Staff Have Received EOP Training in the Past 6 Months (versus longer than 6 months ago or never at all)	
	Odds Ratio (SE)	**95% Confidence Interval**
Respondent (Level 1) Characteristics		
Title		
Teachers (reference category)	—	—
Teaching assistants and paraeducators	0.38** (0.13)	[0.20, 0.73]
Principals and assistant principals	0.57 (0.29)	[0.21, 1.57]
Front office administrators	0.52 (0.19)	[0.25, 1.07]
Counselors, psychologists, nurses	0.60 (0.32)	[0.21, 1.69]
Food service staff	0.08** (0.06)	[0.02, 0.34]
Custodians	0.17 (0.16)	[0.03, 1.11]
Years employed at school (five categories)	1.27* (0.14)	[1.02, 1.59]
Serves on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team (versus no membership)	4.28*** (1.27)	[2.40, 7.65]
School (Level 2) Characteristics		
Student enrollment number (three categories)	1.21 (0.52)	[0.51, 2.83]
Rural schools (versus town and suburban schools)	1.04 (0.68)	[0.29, 3.76]
High school (versus middle schools)	1.64 (1.03)	[0.48, 5.59]

*Note: * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001*

Table 8 presents the results from a regression model predicting the number of emergency planning or crisis response teams that staff were involved with. On average, principals and assistant principals, front office administrators, and counselors, psychologists, and nurses served on more teams than teachers. A supplementary model showed that the odds of serving on at least one team were 64% lower for teaching assistants and paraeducators than teachers, whereas the odds were at least two times greater for principals and assistant principals, front office administrators, counselors, nurses, and psychologists. Additionally, staff who had been employed at the school the longest (21 or more years) had more than 4 times the odds of serving on at least one team than staff who had worked at the school for less than one year.

TABLE 8. RANDOM-INTERCEPT LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL PREDICTING THE NUMBER OF EMERGENCY PLANNING OR CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS TO WHICH STAFF BELONG (N = 585)

	Predicting the Number of Emergency Planning or Crisis Response Teams to Which Staff Belong (zero, one, two, three or more)	
	Coefficient (SE)	**95% Confidence Interval**
Respondent (Level 1) Characteristics		
Title		
Teachers (reference category)	—	—
Teaching assistants and paraeducators	-0.15 (0.08)	[-0.30, 0.00]
Principals and assistant principals	1.03*** (0.11)	[0.81, 1.24]
Front office administrators	0.33*** (0.08)	[0.17, 0.50]
Counselors, psychologists, nurses	0.36** (0.12)	[0.13, 0.58]
Food service staff	-0.13 (0.15)	[-0.43, 0.16]
Custodians	0.09 (0.23)	[-0.37, 0.55]
Years employed at school (five categories)	0.04 (0.02)	[-0.01, 0.09]
School (Level 2) Characteristics		
Student enrollment number (three categories)	-0.10 (0.07)	[-0.24, 0.05]
Rural schools (versus town and suburban schools)	-0.16 (0.24)	[-0.63, 0.31]
High school (versus middle schools)	0.00 (0.08)	[-0.15, 0.15]

*Note: **p<.01 ***p<.001*

Table 9 presents results from a regression model predicting the odds that staff feel like their school has mostly or completely prepared them for a violent event. The odds were 70% smaller for food service staff than for teachers. The odds were two times greater for staff who had received EOP training in the past 6 months (compared to staff who had not), and 2.2 times greater for staff who had read the entire EOP (compared to those who had not). Supplementary models indicated that the odds were nearly six times higher among staff who had read at least some of their school's EOP compared to those who had not. Staff from rural schools were less likely to feel that their school had prepared them than staff from suburban or town schools.

TABLE 9: RANDOM-INTERCEPT LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODEL PREDICTING THE ODDS THAT STAFF FEEL LIKE THEIR SCHOOL HAS MOSTLY OR COMPLETELY PREPARED THEM FOR A VIOLENT EMERGENCY (N = 585)

	Predicting the Odds that Staff Feel Like Their School Has Mostly or Completely Prepared Them for a Violent Emergency (versus somewhat or not at all)	
	Odds Ratio (SE)	**95% Confidence Interval**
Respondent (Level 1) Characteristics		
Title		
Teachers (reference category)	—	—
Teaching assistants and paraeducators	1.14 (0.35)	[0.62, 2.09]
Principals and assistant principals	1.53 (0.74)	[0.59, 3.96]
Front office administrators	1.09 (0.37)	[0.55, 2.14]
Counselors, psychologists, nurses	1.44 (0.69)	[0.57, 3.66]
Food service staff	0.30* (0.17)	[0.09, 0.92]
Custodians	0.51 (0.44)	[0.10, 2.75]
Years employed at school (five categories)	1.12 (0.12)	[0.91, 1.38]
Serves on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team (versus no membership)	0.84 (0.21)	[0.51, 1.37]
Received EOP training in the past 6 months (versus did not)	2.02** (0.46)	[1.30, 3.15]
Has read the entire EOP (versus has not)	2.21*** (0.46)	[1.47, 3.33]
School (Level 2) Characteristics		
Student enrollment number (three categories)	0.87 (0.21)	[0.54, 1.39]
Rural schools (versus town and suburban schools)	0.25** (0.13)	[0.09, 0.69]
High school (versus middle schools)	0.65 (0.23)	[0.32, 1.30]

*Note: * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001*

"The PA will go off, 'lockdown, lockdown!' but we don't know if it's a drill or not. Being in the loop would be nice because sometimes it's like, 'oh right!, you guys exist!'"

- Cafeteria staff member

Taken together, these findings indicate that certain types of staff—namely teaching assistants, paraeducators, custodians, and food service staff were less likely to have reviewed any of their school's EOP, to have received recent EOP training, or to have been included on a safety planning committee. Some of these staff, and especially staff those newly employed, were also less likely to feel prepared to respond to an emergency. Later, during site visits, we gained insights that helped to contextualize these findings. Through group interviews, we learned that non-instructional staff, such as food service or other support staff often felt "left out" of emergency planning altogether. They did not know when drills were scheduled or what their responsibilities were during an emergency, and they often felt out of the loop when a policy or procedure had changed. Nonetheless, they wanted to feel included in planning and training efforts, clear on the right procedures to follow, and more confident that they could protect the students if something were to happen.

Staff Comprehension of EOP Concepts and Procedures

On average, staff answered 50% of all comprehension questions consistently with the information in their school's EOP. Within specific categories of questions, staff were most able to answer questions consistently with their EOP when asked to match protocols to types of

threats (average grade = 65%) and when asked about procedures, roles and responsibilities, and other details about lockdown and active shooter protocols (average score = 51%). Average scores for questions about shelter-in-place and evacuation procedures were below 50% (see Table 10).

Across schools, staff could often identify the correct emergency procedure for specific types of emergencies (e.g., lockdown for an armed intruder; shelter-in-place for severe weather), their school's primary evacuation location, and the signals for when an emergency procedure is initiated or concluded. They exhibited lower levels of knowledge when asked about specific roles and responsibilities within select procedures (e.g., who has the authority to initiate a lockdown?); special considerations for enacting procedures (e.g., what actions must be taken to assist visually impaired students during an evacuation?); and procedures that schools may not practice routinely (e.g., offsite evacuation, reverse evacuation, family reunification).

TABLE 10. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STAFF AND STUDENT EOP COMPREHENSION GRADES

Comprehension Areas	Staff Mean %	Student Mean %
Total Comprehension Grade	50	36
Matching Protocols to Threats Subgrade	65	51
Lockdown Subgrade	51	30
Shelter-in-Place Subgrade	36	19
Evacuation Subgrade	41	38
Open-Ended Lockdown Grade	40	28

Table 11 (following page) presents the results of a regression model predicting staff comprehension grades. Teaching assistants, paraeducators, and food service staff scored an average of 9 percentage points lower than teachers. Staff who served on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team scored an average of 5 percentage points higher than staff who did not. Additionally, staff who had read at least some of their school's EOP scored an average of 3.5 percentage points higher than staff who have never read their plan (whereas staff who had read the entire plan scored an average of 7 percentage points higher than staff who had never read any of the EOP). Staff employed at rural schools scored an average of 10 percentage points lower than staff from town and suburban schools, and high school staff scored an average of 4 percentage points lower than middle school staff.[4]

[4] Results were similar when subgrades were regressed on the same set of respondent- and school-level characteristics. For example, teaching assistants scored an average of 9 percentage points lower than teachers on the open-ended question related to lockdown, and food service staff scored an average of 37 percentage points lower. Findings also did not change meaningfully when non-respondents were removed (i.e., respondents who left open-ended questions blank) (N = 10), or when additional school-level variables were controlled for—including total number of lockdown/evacuation/shelter-in-place actions listed in the EOP, number of days since the school's last drill, EOP size (i.e., page number or word count), or percentage of true/false, multiple choice, or select all that apply question formats.

TABLE 11. RANDOM-INTERCEPT LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL PREDICTING STAFF COMPREHENSION GRADES (N = 585)

	Predicting Total Comprehension Grades	
	Coefficient (SE)	**95% Confidence Interval**
Respondent (Level 1) Characteristics		
Title		
Teachers (reference category)	—	—
Teaching assistants and paraeducators	-9.35*** (1.70)	[-12.69, -6.02]
Principals and assistant principals	-3.78 (2.47)	[-8.63, 1.06]
Front office administrators	0.36 (1.84)	[-3.25, 3.97]
Counselors, psychologists, nurses	-3.06 (2.55)	[-8.05, 1.93]
Food service staff	-9.36** (3.38)	[-15.98, -2.73]
Custodians	-3.75 (5.14)	[-13.82, 6.32]
Years employed at school (five categories)	0.40 (0.54)	[-0.66, 1.46]
Serves on at least one emergency planning or crisis response team (versus no membership)	5.05*** (1.34)	[2.42, 7.68]
Recency of EOP training (four categories)	0.01 (0.74)	[-1.44, 1.46]
Read the EOP (three categories)	3.47*** (0.97)	[1.57, 5.37]
Prepared for violent event (four categories)	1.22 (0.77)	[-0.29, 2.73]
School (Level 2) Characteristics		
Student enrollment number (three categories)	2.13 (1.53)	[-0.87, 5.12]
Rural schools (versus town and suburban schools)	-10.02* (3.96)	[-17.78, -2.26]
High school (versus middle schools)	-3.61* (1.64)	[-6.82, -0.39]

*Note: * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001*

Student Comprehension of EOP Concepts and Procedures

Our analysis of 1,326 completed student surveys showed that students exhibited lower levels of EOP comprehension than staff, answering about one-third of questions consistently with the EOP. Like staff, students were most able to identify which emergency procedures corresponded to threats, but they were less likely to know about specific procedures, policies, and other details specific to lockdown, evacuation, and shelter-in-place (see Table 10). In some ways this is to be expected because students do not have access to their school's EOP and so may not be familiar with many of its details. Yet, even

without access to the EOP, we would expect them to learn about those procedures via drills and other training exercises.

Table 12 presents the results of a regression model predicting student comprehension grades. Primarily English-speaking students scored an average of 3 percentage points higher than students who speak another language. Students who reported earning mostly As and Bs that school year scored an average of 5 percentage points higher than students who earn mostly Cs, Ds, or Fs. White students scored an average of 4 points higher than non-White students, and girls scored slightly higher than boys. Additionally, comprehension grades were slightly higher among students with stronger perceptions of safety, climate, and school membership. Students from rural schools scored an average of 7 points lower than students from town and suburban schools. Additionally, a 1 percentage point increase in staff comprehension grades was associated with a 0.8 percentage point increase in student comprehension grades.

TABLE 12. RANDOM-INTERCEPT LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL PREDICTING STUDENT COMPREHENSION GRADES (N = 1,326)

	Predicting Total Comprehension Grades	
	Coefficient (SE)	**95% Confidence Interval**
Respondent (Level 1) Characteristics		
Primarily speak English at home (versus do not)	3.38** (1.22)	[0.99, 5.78]
Academic grades (5 categories)	2.72*** (0.38)	[1.98, 3.47]
White students (versus non-White students)	3.46*** (0.84)	[1.80, 5.12]
Male students (versus Female Students)	-1.26* (0.62)	[-2.48, -0.05]
Sense of safety and school membership (3 categories)	1.51*** (0.40)	[0.73, 2.29]
School (Level 2) Characteristics		
Student enrollment number (3 categories)	-1.41 (2.14)	[-5.61, 2.79)
Rural schools (versus town & suburban schools)	-7.10* (2.98)	[-12.93, 1.27]
High school (versus middle schools)	0.35 (2.77)	[-5.08, 5.79]
Average staff EOP comprehension grade	0.84*** (0.19)	[0.46, 1.22]

*Note: * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001*

Lessons Learned from Open-Text Responses

In open-ended questions in which respondents recalled actions to take during emergency procedures, most students and staff identified locking the door as a critical action for lockdown. They were less

"In a real emergency we are going to be in heightened stress and most importantly I want everybody to know the parts of it they need to execute. I want them to know who's in charge and where to find that person. I want them to know the basics so that it is easy to ground ourselves in a moment of stress. They've seen it beforehand, we've drilled, and now stress happens, but we know where to go to find our touchstone materials."

- Principal, on the value of EOPs

likely to mention more secondary procedures identified in their EOP such as covering windows or hiding out of sight. A subset of respondents in each school also described specific actions that were not documented in their school's EOP. Sometimes, these actions were logical and may have been learned through in-person trainings (e.g., barricading the door), but other times they directly contradicted the EOP (e.g., the misguided use of placards to signify safety status). Moreover, in every school, a handful of respondents wrote in that they did not know what they were supposed to do during an emergency procedure, or they provided generic answers (e.g., "I don't know," or "Keep everyone safe"). Many students and staff also confused or used interchangeably the procedures for lockdown, lockout (i.e., hold in place), evacuation, or shelter-in-place. Interestingly, we also found several instances in which a school's EOP used terms that respondents were not familiar with (e.g., "I have never heard of shelter-in-place").

Communicating Survey Results to Administrators

When we reported survey results back to schools, we sometimes heard acknowledgement by school safety leaders that the language used in the EOP was not consistent with what was used in drills. For example, one school's EOP used color codes (e.g., "code red") to rank the severity of threatening events and to organize corresponding

"In person trainings are much more important than the written plan because nobody has time to read it; they have five other things to think about and people learn by practicing and being taught. You are taught and then can go back and reference it."

- Principal, on the importance of in-person trainings and the role of the EOP

emergency procedures. However, respondents from that school seemed generally unfamiliar with any color codes, and we were later informed by administrators that they no longer employed that system to categorize emergency situations (i.e., the EOP was outdated). In another situation, we learned that a school had pivoted to training students and staff to quickly evacuate their classrooms from an opened window and "run to a safe place" during an armed intruder event, even though their EOP instructed them to implement more traditional lockdown methods (i.e., retreat to a room that can be locked, hide out of sight, and wait until local law enforcement releases them).

Lessons Learned from School Site Visits

Speaking directly with 162 students and staff members during in-person site visits further revealed that the study of EOPs, what they represent to staff, and how they are used is different and more complex than what we initially understood. Indeed, administrators and other staff who had led emergency planning efforts recognized the importance of the EOP as their "touchstone" they could always refer back to when thinking through emergency plans. They believed that knowledge and mastery of

EOP protocols was paramount for protecting the school, and they emphasized the importance of involving both students and staff in planning efforts as a way of building buy-in and efficacy. But, in many cases we heard that EOPs were not always disseminated to staff in their latest and most updated form (or at all), nor was there an expectation that staff would review them. A more common viewpoint was that people learn through drills, tabletop exercises, and other activities better than they do by reading protocols, and the EOP itself is more of a way to document details rather than use as a training resource.

Consistent with the challenges we encountered at the beginning of the project when we requested EOPs, talking directly with staff uncovered that it was not always entirely clear to them what exactly constituted the EOP. In fact, a nontrivial number of staff we spoke to believed that handouts, protocols printed on classroom posters, or other more supplementary materials represented their school's entire plan. Some were not sure if they had ever seen the actual, formalized EOP—but they also doubted that they would ever have the time to engage with it even if they had.

Summary of Findings

In this section, we summarize three major takeaways from our study. First, access to and engagement with the school's emergency management system is important for understanding emergency procedures and feeling safe at school. Staff who served on an emergency planning or crisis response team were more likely to have read their school's EOP and to have received EOP training. In turn, staff who had read the EOP were more likely to believe their school had prepared them for a violent event and exhibited higher levels of EOP comprehension. Additionally, higher EOP comprehension among students was associated with marginally higher perceptions of safety, climate, and school membership.

Second, although most staff reported that they had read at least parts of their school's EOP and had also received training at some point, there was not always agreement or understanding about what materials constituted the EOP, where to find it, how it should be used, or even why it was useful. In some cases, the EOP was perceived as necessary for documenting the details of the emergency management system and as a resource that could be leveraged in high-stress emergencies, but not for training or preparing people to respond to emergencies proactively (largely because staff may not have time to read EOPs). Rather, attending in-person trainings was often viewed as more realistic and effective than expecting staff to review the EOP on their own time. Moreover, the information contained within EOPs was not always consistent with the language or directives used in in-person trainings; thus, reviewing a school's EOP would not necessarily guarantee that a staff member would be up to date on the school's actual procedures. These observations helped to shed light on our findings related to EOP comprehension. Specifically, because EOPs were generally not perceived to be a resource that people use to become knowledgeable about their school's emergency procedures, and because EOPs were not always up to date or widely disseminated, it is not surprising that many staff and students struggled to answer questions consistently with the information in their EOP.

Third, access to the school's emergency management system was not equally distributed across staff members. Teaching assistants, paraeducators, food service staff, and newly employed staff all showed signs of being less connected to emergency planning efforts at their

school (e.g., serving on a team, reading the EOP or receiving training, comprehension of EOP content). A subset of staff showed extreme disengagement with the system—exhibiting very low levels of understanding of EOP concepts and procedures and having no history of serving on safety teams, receiving EOP training, or reviewing the school's written protocols. During interviews, many staff acknowledged that they lacked a sufficient understanding of emergency operations but believed it was critical for them to become more integrated into the system.

Discussion

Emergency preparedness is a considerable undertaking for any school in the 21st century. For any given emergency response, schools must proactively consider and document numerous details and possible scenarios so that they are prepared to mitigate and recover from the potentially harmful effects of a threatening event. In most cases, the schools in our study had engaged in extensive efforts to ensure that they had a written plan to keep their school safe. However, we also found that despite the effort invested in developing them, EOPs did not have a central role in how most staff prepare for emergencies. In retrospect, it makes sense that staff comprehension levels were strong when survey questions measured knowledge of basic concepts and procedures (e.g., those listed in handouts or that are likely to be covered during drills) but lower regarding questions about more advanced or specialized procedures that were documented in the larger EOP but not in quick-reference materials.

Whereas we began with the assumption that the EOP is a clearly defined, accessible, and revered document that is required reading for all staff because it codifies the procedures the school's emergency procedures, what we learned is that access to the EOP varies, an EOP can be long and complex, staff have discretion on the extent to which they wish to engage with it, and they do not always perceive it as useful. More importantly–it is not always an accurate portrayal of how the school plans to respond to a crisis. This is not to say these schools were not prepared or were not making adequate attempts to prepare—we heard extensive insights from students and staff about their school's safety strategies, what worked, what needed improvement, and other details that reflected their investment in safety. But it is noteworthy that in our study, many schools had put tremendous effort into developing materials that are not integral to the way people learn about or enact emergency protocols.

Although we now understand that EOPs are oftentimes not used in schools the way we initially believed, we maintain that EOPs have value in educational settings. The process of developing an EOP allows a school to coordinate with local agencies and organizations, think through all the moving parts involved with their plans, identify gaps and areas that need additional consideration, and it can act as a reference against which the outcomes of drills and emergencies can be evaluated (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, 2013). It also ensures that there is a plan in place, and that the school's emergency management system can be sustained even if champions of emergency planning efforts leave the school.

Additionally, while we recognize drills and other in-person training activities as essential practices, we also recognize that they are time-consuming, require a great deal of planning and coordination, and can be disruptive to the school day and psychologically impactful (ElSherief et al., 2021; Jonson et al., 2020). Treating the EOP as a training resource is a low-cost, low-burden

strategy that schools can use in addition to drills, tabletop exercises, regular debriefing, and other activities to standardize language and procedures and ultimately to create a well-rounded system for helping people learn. Of course, for it to be an effective resource, it must be treated as a living document that is continuously updated, and administrators must ensure that it is accessible to all staff and reflects the terminology and procedures the school uses in everyday practice.

RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING A SCHOOL EOP

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, *U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Health Students*

Key Terms in School and Higher Ed Emergency Management and Planning, *REMS TA Center*

EOP ASSIST tool for creating and updating school EOPs, *REMS TA Center*

Sample EOP Annexes and Other Resources, *REMS TA Center*

School crisis prevention and intervention: The PREPaRE model (3rd ed.), *National Association of School Psychologists*

Recommendations

Based on the results of our study, we offer the following recommendations, organized by three topic areas: EOP Planning and Development; Training; and Creating an Inclusive Culture.

EOP planning and development

- **Consult publicly available resources to develop or update a school EOP.** Numerous resources are free for schools to use to support their emergency preparedness efforts. For example, *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans,* from the U.S. Department of Education offers step by step guidance for schools when developing an EOP, from the planning process, to developing EOP content, as well as special considerations (e.g., accommodating students and staff with disabilities and other accessibility needs and complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act). The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center also offers several resources, including sample EOP sections and a suite of interactive tools to support emergency planning. For example, the EOP ASSIST tool prompts users though a six-step process and generates a customized school EOP that is consistent with federal guidelines.
- **Develop one customized, comprehensive plan** that consolidates and reconciles all emergency operations and management material into one easy to navigate document. This approach will ensure

that all critical information is housed in a central location that can easily be stored and shared with internal and external stakeholders as necessary. District-level EOP materials can be used for guidance but should be adapted to school and building levels.

- **Use basic learning principles to communicate important information.** This includes implementing a functional, clickable table of contents that enables users to quickly navigate through the document; using bolded, underlined, or highlighted text to bring awareness to critical concepts, procedures, and other details; and including charts, diagrams, infographics, and pictures to help users comprehend complex information. Once a comprehensive and consolidated EOP has been developed, it may also be worthwhile to develop quick-reference guides that are derived explicitly from the larger EOP and that describe staff- and location-specific protocols for a variety of situations.
- **Conduct a rigorous review of the EOP** to ensure there is a logical flow of content, consistent use of terminology and guidance, no unnecessary duplication of sections or details, and that a user can find all the information they need about a given topic in a single section rather than having to patchwork bits of information together. An editable version of the plan should be retained to allow for future modifications.
- **Consider EOP development to be an ongoing process**. Adopt a model of continuous improvement and remain committed to uncovering and incorporating new information that can make the EOP more accurate and effective. This information might come from talking with students and staff, learning from emergency situations at schools elsewhere in the country, or incorporating insights learned from recent drills. Update EOPs immediately after protocols change or new ones are added to establish a sustainable emergency management system even amidst changes in leadership.

Training

- **Enhance training efforts for teaching assistants, paraeducators, food service, and other support staff.** This may include holding special training sessions in which basic EOP protocols are discussed along with responsibilities that are specific to their position (e.g., leading a lockdown in the cafeteria). Dedicating special times and resources for training these staff members may help signify that their involvement and knowledge of core emergency procedures are critical to the success of the overall emergency management system.
- **Increase efforts to educate students on the school's emergency procedures.** Because students typically do not have access to the EOP, administrators should consider creative ways to disseminate information to students outside of regular drills. For example, this may include creating mini-EOPs tailored to include "need-to-know" information for students and that utilize basic learning principles to promote comprehension. These efforts might also include making emergency preparedness a more perennial part of their curriculum by reserving special times to involve students in discussions about safety (e.g., during homeroom), or debriefing with students after drills to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the class's response.
- **Ensure that the information students and staff are taught during in-person trainings is consistent with what is written in the EOP**. This includes actions that must be followed for specific protocols, as well as the terminology that is used across these platforms. Ensuring this consistency will safeguard against confusion when emergency situations arise and will help to promote a coordinated school-level response. It is also imperative that EOP terminology is specific and intentional so that staff have a clear understanding of which procedures are necessary for different events. For example, schools may consider using terminology that clearly distinguishes between shelter-in-place for severe weather and shelter-in-place for a biological or chemical agent. Schools should consult available resources as well as local partners (e.g., police and fire department) when deciding on specific terminology to use. For example, the REMS TA Center has produced a detailed glossary of key terms in school emergency management and planning.
- **Clearly define what materials constitute the EOP and then train staff to understand what it is, why it is valuable, and how they are expected to use it**. Communicate the importance of all staff having basic knowledge of emergency response and that emergency preparedness is everyone's responsibility—a system only as good as its weakest link. Ensure that staff have access to an up-to-date and well organized EOP and understand that it is an important resource that can be used alongside drills and other training efforts to help the school prepare.
- **Consider incorporating more scenario-based training opportunities for all staff and students**, because many believe this is what they need to feel fully prepared. If possible, manipulate the circumstances of drills (e.g., the timing of a drill or the location of students at that moment) to assess where gaps are and where more support is needed. Schools might also consider developing scenarios during tabletop exercises and documenting them in the EOP or in a "emergency scenario handbook" that staff can utilize as a training resource.

Creating an inclusive culture

- **Involve a variety of staff** in leadership roles and provide them opportunities to serve on safety teams, develop plans and policies, and learn additional skills. Including staff of varying positions in

planning efforts may help to build investment in school safety, increase exposure to core procedures, foster confidence, and better prepare individual actors within the system.

- **Talk about safety issues with students and staff.** Solicit feedback about what helps them feel informed and prepared. Students and staff have insights about unsafe spaces on campus, gaps in security, and challenges associated with specific procedures. Create formal channels of communication that students and staff can use to express their thoughts about safety and emergency planning. Those insights can be used to improve security and enhance the usefulness of EOP materials, drills, and other training efforts. Consider making short debriefing sessions with students mandatory immediately after drills to ensure there is a safe space where students can ask questions and share ideas.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by Award No. 2017-CK-BX-0011, awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and under no circumstances were schools required to cooperate with our many requests. They participated, which undoubtedly was demanding at times, because each was committed to continuous improvement and to making their school, and schools throughout the nation, as safe as possible. Top administrators allowed us into their schools because they wanted objective feedback and to uncover areas in which they could improve. They wanted to know whether staff and students were knowledgeable about the concepts and protocols described in their EOP and whether there were gaps in knowledge that could inform future training needs. And they wanted to know what ideas their students and staff had for making their school less vulnerable and more prepared to manage a critical incident. Stated otherwise, they were open to learning, even if that meant receiving information would necessitate devoting even more time and resources to emergency planning. Trusting the project team and being open to this feedback took great courage and signifies an exemplary commitment to safety and the wellbeing of their students and staff.

It is also imperative to acknowledge that although we make several recommendations that are predicated on the findings of each data collection activity—emergency preparedness—and safety, more broadly—was a top priority in each school throughout the study period. Granted, these efforts did not look entirely the same, but each school has taken substantial action over the years to prepare and protect themselves while simultaneously ensuring core educational needs were being met. They built safety and emergency planning committees to develop, review, and refine safety procedures according to best practices. They navigated, and often reconciled, an extraordinary amount of federal, state, and local guidance and mandates to develop their EOPs—an activity in which few educators have received formal training or possess relevant background experience. In many cases, they had consulted with law enforcement officials, local emergency managers, or other external stakeholders to develop protocols for exceedingly complex events or receive feedback on their written procedures.

Additionally, they each built a system for disseminating EOPs, or at least critical components of them, to their staff, and devised creative ways to educate students on their responsibilities during a variety of

emergency situations. This included keeping flip charts or displaying quick-reference guides in classrooms, reviewing emergency protocols during tabletop exercises, assemblies, or intercom announcements, and conducting an assortment of emergency drills to help students and staff build muscle memory. In other words, each of these schools engaged with the topics of school safety and emergency preparedness in innovative ways. They demonstrated this commitment to safety concurrently with limited staffing resources and countless competing demands. Given all of this, our appreciation for, and admiration of these 10 schools, and all schools throughout the country committed to the challenge of creating safe and secure environments, cannot be understated.

We would also like to acknowledge our two project consultants, Michael Dorn and Linda Kanan, for sharing their boundless wisdom and expertise in school violence prevention and emergency preparedness. The insights they brought to the project were invaluable.

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CONGRATULATIONS

Dr. Janine Jones, University of Washington

Dr. Janine Jones of the University of Washington and former APA Division 16 Vice President of Professional Affairs was recently featured in an article from APA. The article features the perspectives of Dr. Jones, and her husband, Dr. Brent Jones, who is the superintendent of Seattle Public Schools. The article details the challenges that both Dr. Janine Jones and Dr. Brent Jones see in supporting students' mental health in schools, as well as their perspectives on where more research is needed, and why they feel hopeful about the future of addressing school mental health.

INTRODUCING YOUR
New Editor of *School Psychology*

The APA Division 16 is pleased to announce that Dr. Pam Fenning has been selected to serve as the next editor of *School Psychology*. She will begin receiving submissions as Incoming Editor in January 2025, and serve a five-year term as Editor through 2030.

Dr. Fenning is a Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs and Research at Loyola University. Dr. Fenning earned her PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Fenning is known for her leadership in the field. She has served as the President of the Trainers of School Psychologists and the Chair of the NASP Professional Positions Committee. Dr. Fenning's research has focused on discipline policies and practices, including alternative so suspension and racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline. Dr. Fenning co-founded Loyola's School Discipline Reform program in collaboration with a colleague from the School of Law.

Dr. Fenning has a strong vision for the journal, with a strong emphasis related to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Congratulations, Dr. Fenning!

REMEMBERING WILLIAM "BILL" FARLING

FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NASP

By Tom Fagan, Professor Emeritus and Former NASP Historian, University of Memphis

William Harold Farling was born in Warren, Ohio on May 4, 1934, and died at age 90 at the Regency Care facility in Springfield, IL on December 27, 2024. Bill had suffered dementia, but no specific cause of death was given. Although the first NASP E*xecutive* ***Secretary*** was Janko Kovacevich, a close friend and colleague of Bill, the official title of Executive ***Director*** was given to Bill Farling, a position he held from 1970-1973. Some of this early history and confusion was described in Fagan (2001). The list of NASP Executive Directors includes just 10 people over NASP's history of more than 55 years.

Bill Farling, with many others mostly from the Ohio School Psychologists Association, initiated the 1968 organizational meeting that led to the founding of NASP in 1969.

His undergraduate degree was from Kent State University (1956), master's degree from Ohio State University (1957), and doctorate from Case Western-Reserve University (1964). Prior to his academic career, Bill was a teacher and counselor for the Cleveland Public Schools, an examiner at the Fort Knox U.S. Army Induction Station and spent six years in the army reserve. In the 1960s he was a school psychologist, Director of Special Education and Chief Psychologist for the Cuyahoga County Schools. He was a diplomate in school psychology of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) and was certified and licensed in Ohio. Bill was especially proud of being voted Outstanding Professor of 2000 at Webster University (of St. Louis) San Diego campus.

Bill and Kathleen Moore were married in 1971. A photo of Bill and Kathleen appears with this article. Over the years I kept in touch with Bill and his wife of many years, Kathleen. They had no children and had retired in San Diego until 2003, then to North Carolina for several years before moving to a care facility in Springfield Illinois in 2019. Family connections and health concerns motivated their moves. I spoke with him on the phone only a few times over those years, but he still had good recollections of the early years of school psychology and NASP. As his memory faded in recent decades, Kathleen would review with him old NASP leadership photos to keep him a bit sharper. She was a great caregiver despite her own health issues.

I first met Bill during my master's internship in Ohio. Bill impressed me as a leader with excellent listening skills. When others spoke with him, he maintained close and concerted attention that gave the speaker a sense of being the only

person in the room. He had a broad range of experiences at the Ohio Department of Education, academic positions and program directorships with the University of Akron (OH), Miami University of Ohio, and numerous leadership positions with NASP, APA, the Ohio Licensure Board, and editorial positions with the *Journal of School Psychology*. Bill was widely liked and respected as a colleague and no doubt as an organizational representative, especially with the APA in sometimes difficult years of policy differences.

According to his obituary, Bill is survived by his wife of 53 years, Kathleen, his sister-in-law, Maureen (Moore) Derchak; brothers-in-law, Terry (Marybeth) Moore, Denny (Suzanne) Moore, and Art McHale; and many dear nieces and nephews and their families. Memorial contributions may be made to the NASP Minority Scholarship Program, 4340 East West Highway, Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20314. There will be no funeral services. The family wishes to honor his memory in a private celebration of his life. The family is being served by Butler Funeral Home-Springfield, 900 S. 6th St., Springfield, Illinois.

Following Bill's death, Jean Ramage had the following comment: "Bill was the most amazing person. He was a leader and a model to me and other folks involved in the early days of NASP. He helped us build a framework that has allowed NASP to become the primary national professional organization for school psychologists. He helped us understand the importance of guiding policy and standards. He always helped us to focus on goals to assist children, their families, and the professionals that serve them." I am sure once his obituary is posted there will be several condolences praising his life and career. Of course, when you live to be 90, most of your supporters have already passed on and most NASP members are too young to know his seminal contributions.

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Note: The author thanks Mrs. Kathleen Farling for her contribution to this tribute.

THE STUDENT CORNER

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Student Corner seeks submissions that center graduate students' experiences and expertise in any or all of the following topics:

1. Immigration issues and experiences working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
2. Child and adolescent bullying and its impact to school safety, social media, and mental health
3. Academic interventions

Please submit papers using this form.

MEET THE SASP EDITORIAL TEAM

Laura To, 2025 Editor
California State University, LA

My goals as the 2025 SASP editor are to increase graduate student publications through outreach to master's, specialist, and doctorate programs across the nation. I strive to make graduate-level publications more accessible to school psychology students.

As the 2025 SASP editor-elect, I look forward to increasing graduate student engagement with our publication and highlighting the diverse research interests within school psychology. I also hope SASP stands as an inclusive platform where students feel comfortable to share their unique, and important perspectives.

Kate Campbell Graham, Editor-Elect
Georgia State University

THE STUDENT CORNER ACCEPTS SUBMISSIONS BEYOND THE CALL FOR PAPERS ABOVE ON A ROLLING BASIS!

Example submissions include but are not limited to book or media reviews, graduate school reflections, and discussions on current topics. Everyone and anyone are encouraged to submit their writing. Any questions can be directed to the editor (thestudentcornerSASP@gmail.com).

Tips

- Use voice-to-text to describe your thesis or dissertation progress
- Reflect on why you're called to school psychology
- Edit a class paper or literature review to fit the submission guidelines

RESOURCES CURATED BY THE SASP EDITORIAL BOARD

Natural Disaster Response Resources

Network for Enhancing Wellness in Disaster-Affected Youth	Find a Local Red Cross Chapter	Preparation Tools with Ready Kids	NASP Natural Disaster Resources

School & Community Immigration Resources

Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)	National Immigration Legal Services Directory	United We Dream	National Immigrant Justice Center

THE EARLY CAREER CORNER

LOAN REPAYMENT OPTIONS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

By Sierra Brown, PhD, ABPP, Children's Counseling Center of Hershey
& Jacqueline M. Caemmerer, PhD, University of Connecticut

Graduate students in school psychology often graduate with significant student loan debt, having borrowed money to complete their postgraduate education after also potentially accumulating debt during their undergraduate studies. While there are ways to reduce this financial burden during graduate school training—such as scholarships, grants, fellowships, and financial aid—many students still face substantial debt upon graduation. For bachelor degree completers, the average federal student loan debt borrowed as of 2020 totaled to about $45,300 per graduate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Furthermore,

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the data suggests significant racial disparities in student loan debt. Black students owed more than 105% of the original loan four years after undergraduate graduation, which was the highest amount owed across all racial and ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

The impact of attending graduate school extends beyond the amount of student loans. The financial pressure of the added costs associated with graduate education can add further stress and potentially dissuade many from pursuing careers in psychology. The increased cost of living, credit card debt, fees associated with attending school, the cost of technology, and the potential loss or limited income related to practicum training, internship interviews, and conferences can hinder a person's financial status and overall debt by the time they graduate (Wilcox et al., 2021). Additionally, the debt one takes out for graduate education far exceeds the average starting salaries of early career psychologists (Doran et al., 2016).

In 2014, APAGS completed a debt study that showed that many doctoral students graduate with significant student loan debt (APAGS, 2014; Stringer, 2016). On average, PhD graduates owe approximately $75,000 and PsyD graduates owe $200,000 in student loan debt. In 10 years, this figure has likely increased as data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) suggests that the accumulated student loan debt has increased significantly year after year (NCES, 2024). Though many doctoral students in school psychology graduate with significant student loan debt, there are some options for loan forgiveness. This article briefly reviews common options for student loan forgiveness.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)

School psychologists who work full-time for federal, state, local, or tribal government agencies or eligible non-profit (501 (c)(3) tax exempt) or not-for-profit employers can apply for federal student loan forgiveness through the PSLF program. Many settings that school psychologists work in may be considered an eligible employer. For example, public school systems, most universities, government employers, and many hospital systems may qualify. Individuals on qualifying federal student loan repayment plans must certify each year that they continue to work for a qualifying employer by submitting required paperwork to their employer and on the studentaid.gov/pslf website. Under current requirements, you must be working for a qualifying employer at the time you submit the form for forgiveness and at the time the remaining balance on your loan is forgiven.

Individuals must repay their federal student loans under an income driven plan, which means the higher your salary, the higher your monthly repayment is, but the inverse is also true. Individuals enrolled in this program can apply for forgiveness after 120 qualifying student loan payments, approximately 10 years of payments. It is important to note credit is not given for multiple payments in one month. If you have breaks between your employment, you can pause your repayments and take a forbearance. Then once you resume payments you will pick back up where you left off in terms of the number of remaining payments. It is also worth mentioning that if your income is low enough, which is often the case during internship and post-doctoral training years, monthly payments may be as low as $0 and these very low repayments count toward your 10 years of payments. Everyone's financial situation will vary, but you may decide it makes financial sense for you to consolidate your federal loans and begin repayment during internship and/or post-doctoral training years to take advantage of the low repayment amounts (not taking advantage of this option was a mistake written about in Stringer, 2016).

The PSLF program has been influenced by many changes since the program began in 2007 and most notably following the COVID-19 pandemic. Data released in 2020 suggested around 1% of applicants qualified for loan forgiveness with this program (Miller et al., 2021). The U.S. Department of Education rolled out several changes to the PSLF program to streamline the application and loan forgiveness process which led to more individuals qualifying for PSLF. Since the program began in 2007, over $68 billion in student loans have been forgiven under PSLF (U.S. Department of Education, 2024).

Under new regulations introduced by the Biden Administration, individuals may qualify for student loan forgiveness if they work 30 or more hours per week at one or multiple jobs (Federal Student Aid, n.d.). Additionally, non-tenure and adjunct faculty employed by an eligible higher education institution can also be credited at least 3.35 hours per each credit hour taught. For school

psychologists working in the schools, payments toward federal student loans will also count if you are employed for at least 8 months and the school employer considers you to be employed full-time during summer breaks.

It is important to note that there are several barriers to receiving loan forgiveness through this program. First, only federal student loans are eligible for forgiveness in this program. This means that private student loans cannot be forgiven under PSLF. Additionally, school psychologists who are employed by for-profit companies or organizations, such as in a private practice, do not qualify.

Those interested in seeking loan forgiveness through the PSLF program should be aware that aspects of the PSLF program are currently being challenged in the U.S. court system, including the 2023 Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) repayment plan. Therefore, significant changes to PSLF may occur in the future and have potential implications for PSLF applicants.

For more information about the PSLF program, please visit this page.

NIH Loan Repayment Programs (LRPs)

Another potential option to consider for loan repayment is the NIH Loan Repayment Program (LRP). The LRPs are designed to recruit health professionals who are pursuing research and faculty careers at non-profit institutions, by offsetting the cost of advanced training through loan repayment. The LRPs offer $50,000 of student loan repayment a year for a total of two years for those who are selected to participate in the LRP.

The LRP involves a competitive application process for individuals who meet the minimum eligibility requirements which include: (1) US citizenship or permanent residency in the U.S., (2) hold a professional degree (e.g., PhD or PsyD for psychologists), (3) current qualified educational debt, (4) a two-year research commitment, and (5) qualified research within one of six different research categories. The six research categories include clinical research, pediatric research, health disparities research, contraception and infertility research, clinical research for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, and research in emerging areas critical to human health. Funding opportunities are available for those across the career continuum and across research categories.

For more information about the LRPs, please visit this page.

Health Resources & Services Administration Loan Repayment Programs

Another option for loan repayment for licensed psychologists is through the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program. Licensed psychologists in the program are eligible for up to $55,000 in loan repayment for a two-year commitment of working in an eligible site in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HRSA, 2024). The amount of repayment is based on the outstanding balance of educational loans. There is also an opportunity to receive additional repayment for additional years served at the eligible site.

For this program, applicants must have a doctoral degree from an APA-accredited graduate school, have passed the EPPP, and be independently licensed as a psychologist. Applications for the HRSA Loan Repayment program operate on an application cycle that typically opens during springtime each year.

For more information about the Loan repayment program, please visit this page.

What about school psychologist with private loans?

For school psychologists who do not work for a not-for-profit organization but have federal student loans, there are some options for student loan forgiveness after 20 – 25 years of qualifying repayment depending on the type of income driven payment plan. Those who may qualify for this type of loan forgiveness should reach out to their loan servicer for more information.

Summary and Further Resources

Graduate education for school psychologists can come with significant financial challenges, including student loan debt. While there are several loan repayment program options, including Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), NIH Loan Repayment Programs (LRPs), and the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Options, that offer viable paths to reduce federal student loan obligations, these programs may not apply to everyone. Furthermore, there are few, if any, programs that are available for loan forgiveness of private loans. As student debt continues to rise, these loan repayment programs can be crucial in alleviating financial stress and enabling school psychologists to focus on their impactful work in education and mental health.

Another useful resource for further discussion of loan repayment is a webinar that APA Division 18 Psychologists in Public Service provided in March 2022, which includes examples of success stories. Additionally, Rob Bertman (2023) wrote a helpful guide to student loan forgiveness and Heather Stringer (2016) wrote an informative piece in the *Monitor in Psychology* with links to further resources.

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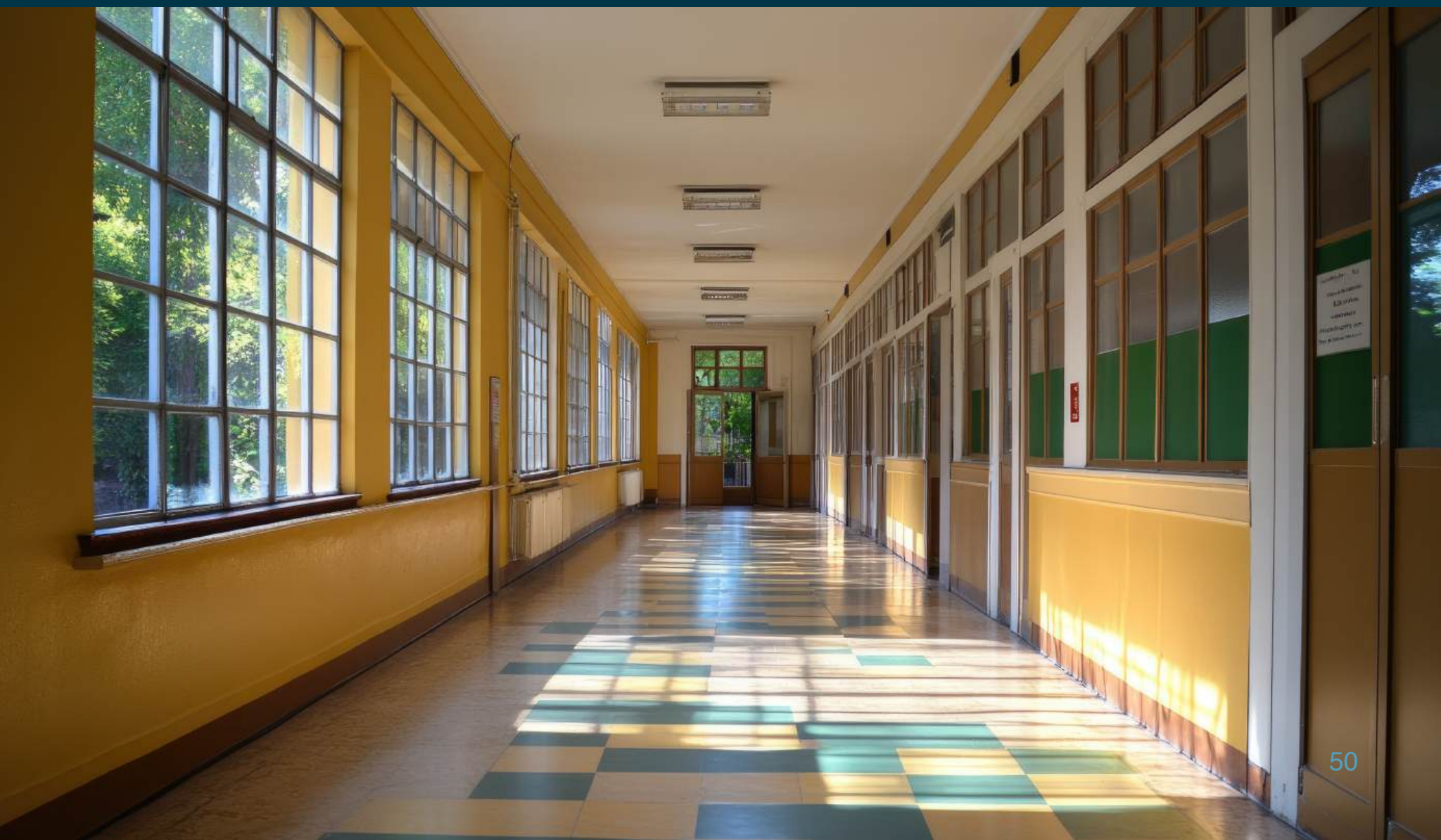
We Want to Hear From You!

We are interested in your ideas for topics to write about in The School Psychologist Early Career Corner section. We are also interested in collaborating with early career professionals who want to co-author Early Career Corner pieces. Please email your suggestions to the ECP Publications and Research Officer Amanda Kearns at **kearnsa@byui.edu**



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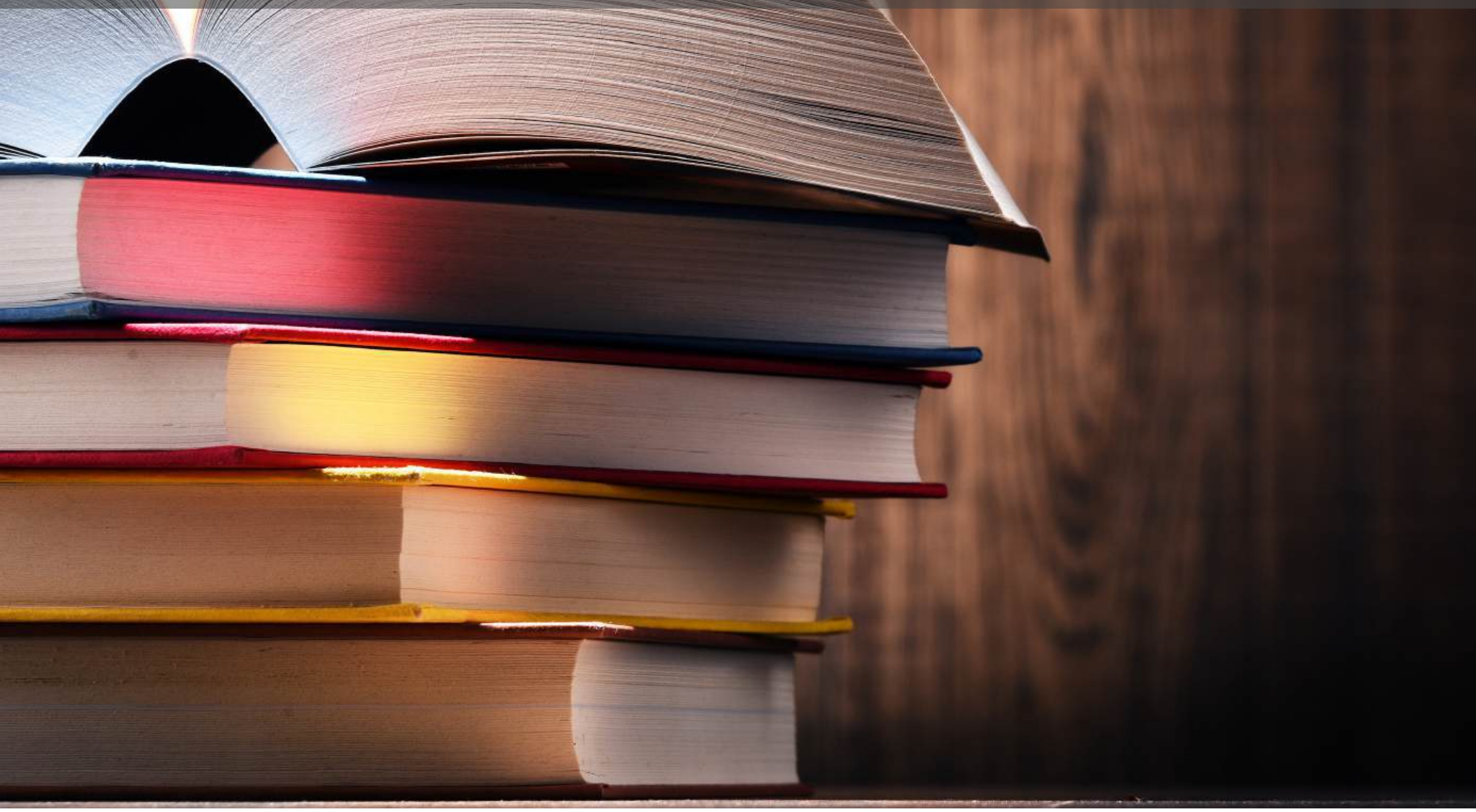

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If you have articles in mind that have greatly influenced your development as a professional, we encourage you to submit a proposal of no more than 500 words to D16TSP@gmail.com.

Proposals will include a brief summary of the article, and describe its relevance to your professional development and its influence and implications for the broader field of school psychology. Accepted proposals will receive an invitation from the editors to submit a 6-8 page manuscript for publication in The School Psychologist, which will undergo internal review with our Editor and Associate Editor.

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Division 16 of the American Psychological Association publishes The School Psychologist as a service to the membership. Three PDF issues are published annually. The purpose of TSP is to provide a vehicle for the rapid dissemination of news and recent advances in practice, policy, and research in the field of school psychology.

In light of this mission, the TSP editorial team has worked hard over the last year to streamline our internal procedures and expedite the time to publication for our authors. We have instituted a permanent email address that will stay with the newsletter; you can now reach out to D16TSP@gmail.com at any time with questions about ongoing submissions or ideas for future articles.

We are actively seeking manuscript submissions with a strong applied theme, or empirical pieces conducted in school settings and that have a strong research-to-practice linkage. Non-empirical pieces with a strong applied element will also be reviewed for potential publication. Briefer (up to 5 pages) applied articles, test reviews, and book reviews will also be considered. We particularly encourage you to submit articles that are timely to the current practice needs of school psychologists, such as collaborative efforts to support teachers and school staff, calls and actions for advocacy within schools, or the influence of technology on school psychology practice.

All submissions should be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font and emailed to the Editor. Manuscripts should follow APA format, identify organizational affiliations for all authors on the title page, and provide contact information for the corresponding author. Authors submitting materials to The School Psychologist do so with the understanding that the copyright of published material shall be assigned exclusively to APA Division 16.

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