

Domain 5: School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning

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Introduction

Domain 5 from the Professional Standards of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning. Compared to Domain 4, Domain 5 is a systems-level service versus a student-level service. Understanding this is key to the domain, since it is a more widespread practice rather than individual ones. It is important for school psychologists to understand systems' theory, organization, and structures. Additionally, knowledge of special and general education programming is imperative. Implementation is another skill that school psychologists must have, along with knowledge of evidence-based school-wide practices. These practices should promote learning, mental health, and positive behavior. By working with other professionals, school psychologists develop and put forward strategies and practices that can nurture a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment for school staff and students alike.

Discussion

Within the range of school-wide practices, school psychologists must use evidence-based strategies and analyzing. Evidence-based strategies are the groundwork for the design, implementation, and evaluation of practices and policies. Examples of the areas in which the practices and policies play a role include grading, staff training, home-school partnerships, discipline, program evaluation, and instructional support. While being useful in these areas, evidence-based strategies also aid in the implementation of transitioning periods for students, such as from school to school, program to program, grade to grade, or from higher education to work. This natural flow from one area to the next is essential to the success of the new environment, and using evidence in this process will help to weed out strategies that may not be

effective and steer school psychologists in the right direction for which strategies would be most effective. Analyzation takes place on the systems-level when it comes to identifying factors that influence behavior and learning. School psychologists also aid other school professionals in evaluating the outcomes of the classroom, building, and system initiatives. Lastly, school psychologists help in designing and starting universal screening procedures. These screening procedures help determine if there is a need for additional behavioral or academic support services. Additionally, the screening procedures function to monitor systems to ensure they promote well-being and successful learning.

Aside from working with evidence and analyzing patterns of behavior, school psychologists work as part of a community and collaborate with other professionals. By working collaboratively with other school personnel, school psychologists can create and sustain a multi-tiered system of services. These services work to support every student, and keep their social-emotional, academic, and behavioral goals at the forefront of the pursuit. In addition to collaborating with other professionals, school psychologists focus on the needs of the learning community by developing and measuring the effectiveness of school improvement plans. The school improvement plans affect services that are available to students and families. By conducting needs assessments, school psychologists are able to help select programs that reflect the needs of the community. Lastly, school psychologists are team players by providing training, professional development, and ongoing coaching on various topics with the intent of helping school staff and guardians understand the developmental needs of children better. With this understanding, parents and guardians can more fully understand the need for positive classroom management practices, effective instructional strategies, and the cultivation of supportive working relationships.

Another skill that school psychologists embody is the ability to create a positive environment and pleasant atmosphere for students and school staff alike within the building. With the knowledge of systems theory and organizational development, school psychologists are able to promote supportive and respectful atmospheres. Staff members, parents/guardians, and students are all aided by the school psychologist to resolve conflicts respectfully and peacefully. An additional key element of a positive school climate is support for resilience and academic growth, reducing negative influences on behavior and learning, and promoting high rates of academic engagement and attendance.

Reflection

For my future career as a school psychologist, school-wide practices to promote learning are key for having consistent steps taken to aid student growth, improve the environment, and maintain relationships with other professionals in the school. By using evidence-based practices and analyzing methods and outcomes, school psychologists can use their best judgment to implement and justify various practices. By working as a community and a collaborative team, school psychologists gain the trust of those personnel around them in the school, as well as the trust of the parents/guardians and the students. In doing so, wonderful relationships will be created and the communication and teamwork between all parties will blossom. Lastly, creating a positive environment for children, staff, and parents is crucial to keep the school enjoyable, safe, and effective. Keeping all these factors in mind will aid my role as a future school psychologist.