

OPTIMISE School Psychologist Shortage Workgroup Recommendation #5: Award Bonuses for Credentialing to Promote Retention

Problem: It is well-documented that similar career paths outside of schools that also require Ed.S. and PhD. Surveys reveal that one of the top reasons that educators leave the field is due to low salaries/wages.

Increasing Attraction/Retention of School Psychologists:

- Provide yearly bonuses for those who hold Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credentials, the most rigorous credential in the field, to increase retention and increase job satisfaction. Holding the NCSP credential connects school psychologists to others in the field and a body of high-quality professional development as well.

How Does MI Compare?

- Five states (Colorado, Delaware, Louisiana, Nevada, and Oklahoma) offer state-funded bonuses for School Psychologists who hold the National Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential. This has helped decrease the shortage of school psychologists in these states and encouraged people to relocate to those states.
- School psychologists benefit less from district-provided professional development (DPPD) than other educators. DPPD is often aimed at teachers, not targeted at the development of school psychologists' skills and knowledge. While engaging with teachers during this time is important, school psychologists also need to develop the unique competencies that comprise the [NASP practice model](#). Current barriers to this include time and money to obtain this training, which is often only available outside the specific district in which they are employed. If time and money were more consistently available to school psychologists for professional development, this would improve both school psychologists' job satisfaction and support service delivery to students, families, and other educators.

Investing in Our Future: There are 344 Active NCSPs in MI and it is estimated that approximately 150 additional school psychologists would relocate to MI/choose to obtain NCSP certification due to this bonus. It is noted that $\$5000 \times 500 = \sim\$2,500,000$ (# of MI SPs + individuals who relocate to MI due to the bonus \times \$5000 = $\sim\$2,500,000$). An additional \$100,000 for MDE/other agencies should be allocated to address the cost of managing/providing oversight of the program.

Three primary benefits to states and schools that choose to offer ongoing stipends to school psychologists holding/maintaining the NCSP include:

1. Bonuses for NCSPs attract more highly qualified school psychologist applicants at a time when a national shortage of school psychologists is being experienced and great competition exists for qualified personnel.
2. Salary stipends demonstrate that the state and school districts recognize and acknowledge the importance of hiring school psychologists who meet national standards

for training and professional development.

3. NCSP bonuses promote higher levels of knowledge and competency; as school psychologists with NCSP credentials must engage in ongoing, meaningful, and specific continuing professional development to maintain their certification.

Process to Obtain Funding: Current school psychologists would apply for the funds through their local district to the MDE that provides oversight and support for the grant.