



NASPO HEA Reauthorization Recommendations: Shortages of Pupil/Related Services Personnel

NAPSO strongly believes that language should be included in the Higher Education Act addressing recruitment and retention of pupil/related services personnel, in addition to that included for teachers. Pupil/related services personnel are critical in assisting teachers with the many challenges they face in today's classrooms. These challenges include helping students meet higher academic standards, improving test scores, managing classroom behavior, implementing effective discipline strategies, addressing diverse learning styles and special needs in the inclusive classroom, and addressing academic, physical, emotional, and behavioral barriers to learning. Pupil/related services personnel also are vital to ensuring that schools provide safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Pupil/related services personnel are specially trained to address these challenges. Teachers should not be expected to possess this specialized knowledge..

If schools are to be successful in recruiting more teachers to high needs school districts and to special education, there also needs to be an adequate supply of qualified school-based pupil/related services personnel to assist meet the challenges of teaching. Schools must be prepared to provide teachers and other school staff the types of ongoing support and in-house expertise offered by qualified pupil/related services personnel.

There is a well-documented, chronic and severe nationwide shortage of qualified special education personnel. On average, every local district has at least seven special education vacancies per year.¹ In fact, when pupil/related service providers are included, special education personnel rank among the country's top labor shortage areas.² In 1997-98, there were substantial shortages of special education diagnosticians (8%), speech-language pathologists (7%), special education paraeducators (7%), district special education supervisors (6%), and school psychologists (5%).³ While notable shortages of subject area teachers such as science and mathematics also exist, the lack of special education teachers *and pupil/related services personnel* is particularly acute across the nation.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, 23rd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2001).

² U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, DC (2003).

³ Sindelar, Paul T. and Brownell, Mary T. A Framing Paper for the National Summit on the Shared Implementation of IDEA, Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (June 2001).