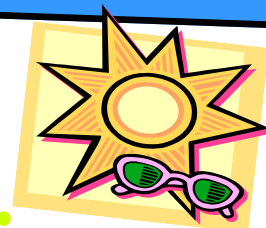




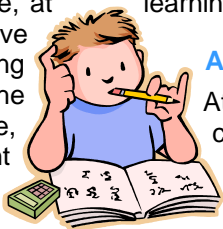
Student Assistance Programs Help Achieve No Child Left Behind Goals



One of the most common refrains of Student Assistance Professionals these days is, "While the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has admirable goals, getting there is another story...and just having our Student Assistance Program (SAP) remain intact may be the biggest challenge of all." Perhaps never before, at least in recent memory, have there been more pressing issues than trying to raise the bar for academic performance, staff development and student accountability while still maintaining a high presence to reach students in need of a SAP. SAPs remove barriers to learning for students, and the argument put forth by SAP practitioners goes something like this, "If students are not ready to learn and come to school without a feeling of safety, better trained teachers, smaller classrooms, and more remedial help will fall far short of their intended impacts. We must put first things first, to use an old AA phrase. We must support our students to be safe and drug-free, intervene where necessary, and continue to put human and financial resources where this can happen."

It is the position of the National Student Assistance Association (NSAA), as spelled out in this Viewpoint, to establish that an effective comprehensive Student Assistance Program can be a key for any school's successful compliance to the standards set by NCLB. As schools begin to look for

ways to improve attendance, grades, and behavior, it becomes clear that it will take more than serious conversation, new laws, or revised standards. Raising the achievement bar sets the mark, which is important. Removing barriers that keep achievement from improving is priceless. SAPs do just that - remove barriers to learning.



A New Set of Standards

At the turn of the last century, six-percent of American students graduated high school. By 1948, almost half of the student population graduated. Today, teachers are being asked to do what has never been done before - to graduate 100% of the students. Schools are expected to effectively accommodate every student, regardless of language proficiency or academic abilities. Schools are mandated to improve attendance so that routinely 97% of the student body is in attendance. All schools are expected to be drug-free and completely safe from violence. Unquestionably, these goals are worthy and every effort should be devoted to make them a reality. However, without the right tools, compliance with No Child Left Behind will be a steep challenge.

Complying With No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Using Student Assistance Programs

Can a comprehensive Student Assistance Program help schools comply with **No Child Left**

Behind? The answer is an absolute "Yes!" A SAP can help in many ways. But first, what is NCLB requiring of schools? A general answer is that it is requiring schools do a better job of teaching all children. In a more specific fashion, NCLB has established the following performance goals:

- By 2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum, attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics
- All limited English proficient (LEP) students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum, attaining proficiency or better in language arts and mathematics.
- By 2006, all students will be taught by a "highly qualified teacher".
- All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.
- All students will graduate from high school (100%).

Clearly, this law is well intentioned and established as a desire to ensure American students can compete in a global market. NCLB is an attempt to raise the bar so that all students have the opportunity to receive a quality education. Accountability is a dominant theme of NCLB, and schools are held responsible for certain measurable outcomes, including Adequate Yearly Progress.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Each state will set its own standards that determine if a school

is meeting its AYP. In a general sense, AYP might include student reading proficiency, attendance rate, drop out rate, incidents of drug use and violence, etc. Based on how well a school is meeting its Adequate Yearly Progress, a report card is issued for public scrutiny. This report card reflects how well the school is complying with the acceptable standards. This card is issued by the state and refers to the entire district. The district then issues a card for each school.

Information on Annual State School Report Card

- Safety/Discipline Data
- Results of standardized testing performance
- Percentage of each group of students not tested
- Graduation rate and other achievement indicators
- District's AYP performance, including number and names of schools needing improvement
- Professional qualifications of teachers
- Student subgroup achievement such as those with limited English proficiency, disabilities, major racial/ethnic and low-socio-economics groups

Schools have two years in which to correct any deficiencies in this report card. Consequences for not showing improvement in the Adequate Yearly Progress become more severe the longer it takes to correct the deficiencies. If after four years no improvement is demonstrated, certain faculty may be replaced along with an entirely new curriculum. After five years, the district must initiate plans for restructuring the school. This may include reopening as a charter school, replacing the entire faculty, or turning over operations to the state or a private company.

Barriers, Problems and Trauma

While NCLB holds schools to a higher set of standards and accountability, there is a phenomenon occurring that must be recognized for what it is. Many students come to school every day with personal problems severe enough to interfere with learning. In most cases, these problems have little to do with school, but they run havoc with grades, attendance and behavior. Trauma results from a myriad of events or situations, and unless it is dealt with appropriately, learning suffers, behaviors are affected and the entire school environment is damaged. When parental divorce, chemical dependency, sexual and physical abuse, neglect, isolation and severe depression are considered, we know that every classroom has students dealing with trauma. On any given day, students arrive at school carrying feelings such as hurt, sadness, betrayal, loneliness, rage, insecurity, inferiority, violation, and shame. When harbored inside, these feelings tend to fester and rot. These negative feelings interfere with available attention and result in poorer performance. In spite of efforts put forth, the grades drop resulting in further disappointment.

SAPs result in early identification of students who are experiencing a drop in grades, patterns of absenteeism, or an increase in acting out behavior. It begins a paper trail that relies upon timely documentation of all pertinent faculty observations. Without labeling, the nature of SAP is to be solution-focused. By utilizing a systematic problem-solving process, the team can find ways to assist the student. This process includes parent involvement and potential collaboration with the community. Research shows that schools see an 80% increase in students

getting connected to proper resources with SAP (Fertman, Tarasevich, Helper, 2003).¹ Without SAP, communities are notorious for not connecting young people to the appropriate services.²



By 2014, schools should have a 97% attendance rate. A high school with 5% of the population alcohol dependent may have a hard time complying because of some very common symptoms. What is needed is a way to identify, screen and intervene with students. SAP can provide a powerful vehicle for recovery. Sober students have excellent attendance rates. High attendance is a goal of No Child Left Behind and an outcome of student assistance.

Removing the barriers to learning, improving the school environment, ensuring safety are all anticipated outcomes from implementing SAP. We know the academics don't exist in a vacuum. The connection between emotional well-being and academic performance is so obvious - it is almost self-evident. SAPs help students reach their potential. No Child Left Behind requires schools to be the best that is possible. SAP and No Child Left Behind are accentuating the same message.

For further information on NCLB and SAPs, contact the National Student Assistance Association (800) 257-6310, or via email at info@nsaa.us

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¹Retrospective Analysis of the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Outcome Data: Implications for Practice and Research Retrieved from www.nsaa.us.
²US Surgeon General (2000) Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, Retrieved from www.nsaa.us, Retrospective Analysis of the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Outcome Data: Implications for Practice and Research