



# AATA's Role in School-Based Prevention and Intervention Services

AATA

The National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel ([NASISP](#)) is a coalition of organizations of professionals working in schools to support student success. The American Art Therapy Association is pleased to be one of NASISP's 20 member organizations. This important affiliation enables the AATA to make a difference in school-age children's lives. NASISP aims to empower professionals, including art therapists, by encouraging multidisciplinary collaboration, and affirming our role in education's best practices and involvement in school improvement efforts.

AATA's volunteer representative to NASISP is Rachel Albert, MA, MS, ATR, an art therapist and art teacher with 16 years of experience in the public school system. Rachel meets monthly at the American Psychological Association headquarters in Washington, DC, along with representatives from other member organizations, such as the American Counseling Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American Dance Therapy Association, and the American Music Therapy Association. The NASISP coalition is invested in impacting government policies that affect services to school-age children. There is power in numbers – together, NASISP's 20 member organizations represent over one million school-based professionals!

Another benefit to AATA's affiliation with NASISP includes a development related to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This past year, Congress approved the long awaited revisions to the ESEA. In a previous version, the ESEA was referred to as "No Child Left Behind." The newly adopted legislation is referred to as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As a direct result of the work of the NASISP coalition, the ESSA now uses the term **specialized instructional support personnel (SISP)**, defines the term, and refers to it deliberately and strategically in the law. In the past, different pieces of legislation have used different and more confusing terms such as *pupil services personnel* and *related services personnel*.

A small portion of ESSA now reads: "*States and local educational agencies are charged with conducting 'timely and meaningful consultation with... specialized instructional support personnel.'*" Among other amendments, the ESSA made changes to state and local funding plans, and in what manner federal funds can be used. The changes give greater latitude to local

school leaders in terms of funding programs and professionals, including art therapists, within schools.

In February, 2016, along with our fellow NASISP member organizations, the AATA signed on to a letter urging Congress to adequately fund Title IV, Part A of ESSA, for FY2017. The President's budget had significantly cut the requested funds for Title IV in the ESSA bill. Signing on to this letter was an important opportunity for the AATA, as the funds would allow schools/systems to provide grants for independent projects to support student learning, and could impact art therapists who seek funding.

In early March, 2016, the AATA signed on to a letter through NASISP to request increased funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) within the FY2017 LHHS-Education appropriation. IDEA requires that plans for special education and related services provided by instructional support personnel must be designed to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. It stipulates that schools must work with parents and medical/mental health providers to develop plans that will help these children function at the highest possible level in a regular school environment. IDEA funding supports part of the cost of providing these services. Increases in federal IDEA funding would thus benefit art therapists and other support personnel, either by expanding the services available to students with disabilities who currently receive supportive services, and/or by expanding services to additional numbers of disabled children.

NASISP also keeps a pulse on issues related to Safe and Secure Schools, Bullying Prevention, Special Education and IDEA legislation (not yet updated to include SISP terminology and definition), and Higher Education issues related to our fields. If you are a school-based art therapist, **you are a SISP** and the work of NASISP is relevant to you! Be sure to "Like" the [NASISP](#) page on Facebook to receive regular updates, and check the [NASISP website](#) for detailed information about legislation and current issues. The AATA will keep readers apprised of developments related to the outcomes of the sign-on letters, as well as our affiliation with NASISP, in future issues of *Art Therapy Today*.



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Rachel Albert is one of many AATA volunteers who contribute to the furtherance of the art therapy profession. Our affiliation with NASISP is one of the ways in which the AATA meets our mission, and reflects the importance of your support of the AATA. A special thanks to our members, who help ensure that AATA has a voice in the various milieus that impact policy, and ultimately, the ability of art therapists to provide services to those who need us most.