Washington State Nurses Association
Resolution #2
Child Health Initiative: Registered Nurse-to-Student Ratios

Whereas,

The registered professional school nurse role (hereinafter referred to as school nurses) has grown into a recognized specialty area of nursing practice requiring additional education, experience, and competencies to meet the needs of growing numbers of children with acute and complex student health conditions, to provide health education, and to deliver preventive care consistent with the Institute of Medicine’s Future of Nursing recommendations, and

Whereas,

School nurses, through their specialized education, are uniquely qualified to conduct thousands of state and federally mandated health screenings annually, and perform complex assessments for special education students, (Puskar & Bernardo, 2008), and

Whereas,

School nurses often are the first to discover unmet and undiagnosed health needs, and facilitate early intervention and treatment to reduce health and academic disparities in the pre-K through 12 school setting, (Basch, 2011; Engelke et al, 2008), and

Whereas,

School nurses advise, direct, and guide school administrators, teachers, and other school support staff in accurately identifying and treating health problems that interfere with academic learning, and

Whereas,

The presence of specialized registered nurses in schools reduce emergency room visits, thereby improving care outcomes in a cost-effective manner consistent with health reform principles, (Baisch, Lundeen, & Murphy, 2011), reduce absenteeism in schools, contributing to improved graduation rates, (Bartholomew et al, 2006), and promote and protect population health by increasing immunization rates, (Baisch, Lundeen, & Murphy, 2011), and

Whereas,

School nurses often are among the first public health professionals to prepare, recognize, assess, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks and health and safety emergencies in schools, (Rebman et al, 2012), and

Whereas,

School nurses prevent population and school-based illness and injury by implementing and supporting a variety of educational programs for students, staff, families, and communities, (Northrup et al, 2008), And
Whereas,
School nurses facilitate the establishment and continuity of primary and appropriate specialized care for students, (Puskar & Bernardo, 2008), and

Whereas,
School nurses use their uniquely acquired clinical judgment to assess and develop individualized plans of care for increasing numbers of students with potentially life-threatening health conditions, mental health diagnoses, and developmental disabilities, (Baisch, Lundeen, & Murphy, 2011), and

Whereas,
The number of registered nurses in Washington State schools are at an approximate ratio of 1:1650 students, which is inconsistent with the recommended ratio (AAP, CDC, NASN) of 1:750 for regular education students, 1:250 for schools with a heavier percentage of high needs children, and 1:1 for some students with severe disabilities, and

Whereas,
The lack of a consistent presence and appropriate number of registered school nurses in our schools is resulting in increased efforts to delegate complex medication administration, patient assessment and clinical judgments to unlicensed assistive personnel, thereby jeopardizing student health and safety, and

Whereas,
Ongoing cuts in the Washington State educational budget have resulted in the State Auditor’s recommendation to replace the professional registered nurse in schools with licensed practical nurses,

Be It Therefore Resolved,
That the Washington State Nurses Association help establish and participate in a coalition whose purpose shall be to advocate for policy and legislative changes, including adequate funding, to ensure the recommended 1:750 nurse-to-student ratios in all K-12 schools in Washington State.

REFERENCES


*Adopted by WSNA General Assembly May 2, 2013*