

# **Comments on the Model Licensing Act**

**Bob Woody, PhD, ScD, JD  
University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**As a candidate for APA President-Elect, I am receiving a steady stream of inquiries about my stance on the elimination of the exception for school psychology from the Model Licensing Act (MLA).**

**I have not been privy to the deliberations that led to the decision. Also, it seems that most of those folks contacting me take a strong position on one side or the other.**

**To date, I do not believe that I have adequate information about the “full story.” So anything that I say here is subject to change from additional information. I will offer my comments for this point in time.**

**First, let there be no misunderstanding—throughout my entire career, I have been involved with school psychology, both as a practitioner and a trainer. I received an Ed. S. in school psychology. I have directed the school psychology training programs at the University of Maryland and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. My teaching and research relevant to school psychology led to a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the U. S. Office of Education that allowed me to earn a Doctor Science (University of Pittsburgh) that emphasized family-school-community relationships—it only took forty years for the idea to become commonplace. I am, of course, a Fellow of the APA Division of School Psychology. All of this is a way of saying that I am prepared to represent and advocate the professional interests of all school psychologists, regardless of their level of training or employment context.**

**On the issue of licensure of school psychologists, if the government is going to regulate the mental health professions by licensure, my personal opinion is that school psychologists, who wish to be licensed should be eligible for licensure. I have heard no good reason why they should not be licensed like other psychologists.**

**As for current discourse about the MLA, I remember full well the regrettable situation that occurred in Ohio in the early 1970s (about that time, I was a Professor at Ohio University). I hope that sort of "battle" between school psychologists and other psychologists never happens again.**

**In retrospect, the “sunsetting” of the Ohio licensing law that occurred because of the schism between school and other psychologists may well have caused a lasting detriment to psychological services of every ilk, at least in the State of Ohio (and perhaps elsewhere). Rivalries and disputes between members of the same profession should be avoided. Debate, persuasion, and diplomacy make far more sense than “warfare,” including for the MLA-related issues.**

**The impact of this widely publicized dispute has plagued school psychology for the last forty-plus years. I remember a 1967 face-to-face conversation with two of the founders of NASP, who openly acknowledged that negativity towards APA was the primary motivating force. I was pleased with the formation of a task force, around 1980, involving the APA Division (16) of School Psychology and NASP. Consequently, in the intervening years, I have monitored the efforts of the group, but have been chagrined about the seeming lack of rapprochement. I would like to see more professional cooperation between NASP and APA.**

**On a more positive note, perhaps the debate of whether school psychology should or should not be included in the MLA will bring some unity between Division 16 and NASP, assuming both parties approach the situation with open-minds. There are dogmatic arguments on both sides. One side says, “We should be called ‘psychologists’ because we have had the title since the founding of NASP and Division 16.” The other says, “School psychologists without a doctorate will lessen the status of licensed psychologists in the public mind and take money out of our pockets.” I have heard these specific one-sided arguments from both sides, and neither accomplishes anything worthwhile. We need a scholarly analysis of the facts and issues, and a good faith effort to achieve an amicable, mutually supportive unification of all psychologists, again regardless of level of training or employment context—and commitment by all concerned to do what will benefit society.**

**It is my understanding that the leadership of Division 16 is vigorously studying the matter, and as is stated on the Division 16 website: “The Executive Committee of Division 16 requests that the Task Force [on MLA] reconsider its decision about removing the exemption for the good of Division 16, APA, and the children, youth, and families that school psychologists serve diligently.”**

**The bottom line is that a simplistic stance by both groups accomplishes very little. Additional study and good faith efforts to resolve differences will be essential to establish the most logical viewpoint, as will benefit both school and other psychologists and most certainly society.**

**Cordially, Bob Woody**

**[www.BobWoodyHelpsPsychology.com](http://www.BobWoodyHelpsPsychology.com)**