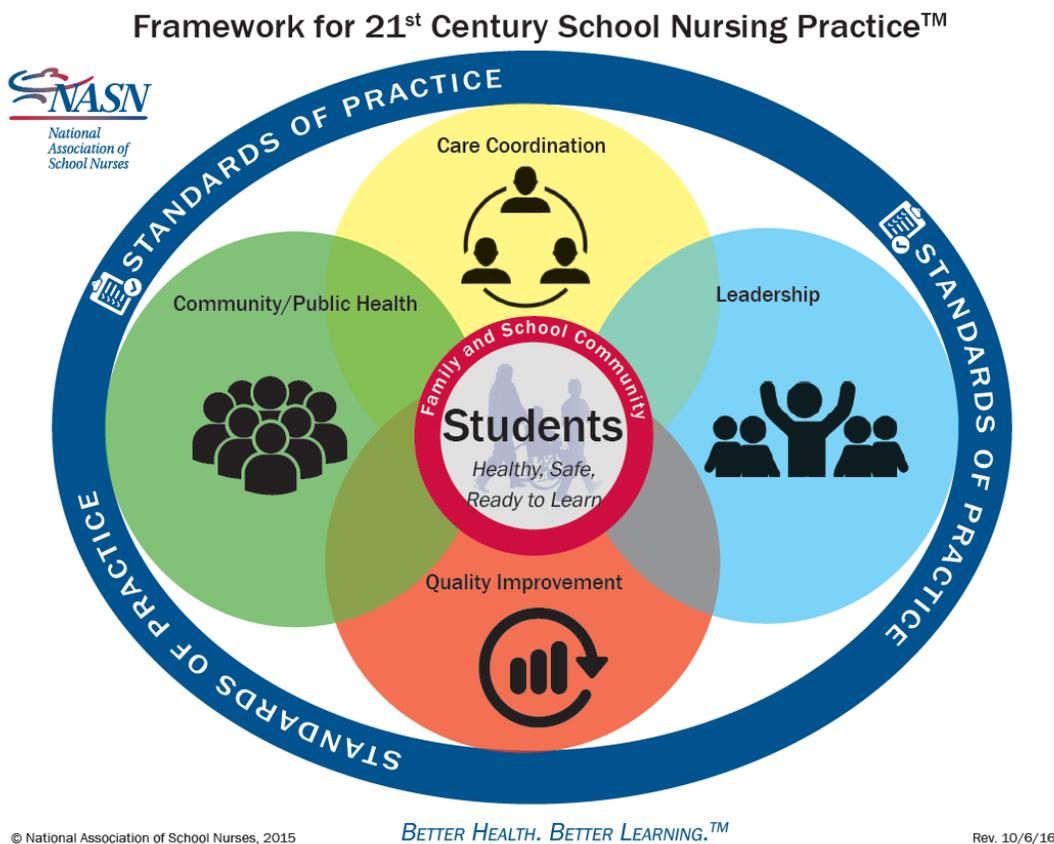


Roles and Responsibilities of the School Nurse

As the role of the school nurse has evolved, so have the position statements describing that role. In 2017, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) defined school nursing as:

School nursing, a specialized practice of nursing, protects and promotes student health, facilitates optimal development, and advances academic success. School nurses, grounded in ethical and evidence-based practice, are the leaders who bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potential. *Adopted by the NASN Board of Directors February 2017.*

NASN created the [*Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice*](#) to further define the practice of professional school nursing to include four major components: Leadership, Community/Public Health, Care Coordination and Quality Improvement.



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Competencies in School Nursing Practice

The components of nursing practice in North Carolina are defined and regulated by the North Carolina Board of Nursing as documented in 21 NCAC 36.0224, *Components of Nursing Practice for the Registered Nurse*. As mentioned in Section C, Chapter 1, NASN, together with the American Nurses Association (ANA), have developed professional standards for school nursing practice that well reflect Board of Nursing requirements. *School Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice, 4th Edition* (ANA & NASN, 2022) includes a list of competencies that support each standard.

School health programs and school nursing roles should be based on these sources. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics also issued a policy statement in 2016 regarding school nursing roles, [Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services](#). School nurse competency expectations and validation are an important part of self and employer evaluations for school nurses.

Supervision and Evaluation of School Nurses

Nursing is viewed as an independent practice profession in North Carolina. The North Carolina Board of Nursing states, “RN practice encompasses the full scope of nursing and includes caring for all clients in all settings. The RN scope of practice in all steps of the nursing process is independent and comprehensive. RN practice does not require assignment or supervision by a higher-level health care provider” (North Carolina Board of Nursing, 2017).

In the school setting the registered nurse is often organizationally placed under an administrative supervisor, such as the Director of Student Services. This relationship allows supervision of position requirements that pertain to all employees but does not allow for an evaluation of professional nursing practice-related requirements. As stated by the National Association of School Nurses, “In the school setting, it is important to distinguish non-clinical nursing supervision and evaluation.” Additionally, “when school nursing clinical practice competency is supervised or evaluated, it must be done by a professional nurse (RN) with knowledge about school nursing” (NASN, 2023). Employee performance examples for non-clinical supervision include hiring and firing activities, salary adjusting, compliance with district policies and procedures, use of leave time, punctuality, etc.

All staff benefit from regular evaluation to foster professional growth and program development. To this end, school nurses also benefit from the opportunity for professional development that is provided by practice review and evaluation. Ensuring student health and safety as well as continual improvement in individual school nurse practice is the ultimate goal of evaluation. Such review should be formalized and occur at regular intervals. Those nurses who are supervised by a registered nurse can have an evaluation of their nursing practice incorporated into the overall performance evaluation. School nurses without a registered nurse supervisor can still obtain nursing practice review through other means. Nurses who work with a peer group may utilize a peer review process. This is consistent with the Board of Nursing requirement that the supervision and evaluation of a registered nurse’s practice only be completed by another registered nurse.

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During the summer of 2013, the NC State Board of Education approved a School Nurse Evaluation Process. It includes a rubric based on requirements of the NC Board of Nursing, Scope of Practice and Professional School Nursing Standards, as well as the competencies for school nurses. The evaluation process is written in its entirety as a [User's Guide](#) that may be found at the following NC Department of Education site: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/ncees-information-and-resource/support-staff/school-nurses>. This document reinforces evaluation by another registered nurse within the school system or through peer review. This tool was written for school nurses employed by LEAs in North Carolina. However, other agencies employing school nurses may adapt it for their use.

Use of the standards for school nurses can provide the focus for schools and districts as they support, monitor and evaluate their school nurses, and guide school nurses as they move forward in the 21st century, in maintaining the competence and knowledge needed.

References

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