



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS

Making the Most of Your Convention Experience: A Guide for Students

Deciding to attend a NASP annual convention is a wonderful step in your professional development. Given the many exciting sessions and events that vary by topic and skill level, it is hard to know how to make the most of your time at the convention. The goal of this fact sheet is to provide information about the different events and sessions at the convention and offer some tips to alleviate the confusion that some first-time convention attendees experience.

Before the Convention

Visit the NASP website and familiarize yourself with the convention planner tool. You can preview all events and sort by the time, type of session, or presenter to make a list of sessions you don't want to miss. You can also connect with fellow registrants on Facebook and Twitter before and during the convention. You can find the convention on Facebook by searching for "NASP Convention" and on Twitter by following at twitter.com/naspconvention. Share your experiences on Twitter with #NASP2011.

Convention Program

If it is your first time attending the NASP convention, you will want to make the most of all the events and activities underway. After checking in at the NASP Registration desk, you will receive a NASP convention program that contains all the information you need to know about convention. One of the first things you will notice is that the program is organized into sections. The best place to begin is the Table of Contents page. Information is organized alphabetically and can guide you through the sections of the program to find specific information related to sessions and events of interest. In addition, the Table of Contents can direct you to other helpful information related to the hotel, city highlights, and other general convention information. For example, the program always displays a hotel floor plan that can be used to help find the location of sessions.

What if I Have Questions?

One of the many positive aspects of the convention is that there is always a friendly NASP staff member or NASP leader willing to answer your questions. These folks have a wealth of information for first-time convention attendees. If you find yourself with questions, visit one of the following locations.

- ❖ Convention Registration Area: Register or check-in here for the convention.
- ❖ Student Information Center: Obtain information about graduate student-related convention events, ask questions, and meet NASP student leaders and fellow students. Show your convention spirit by picking up a student ribbon and button.
- ❖ Convention Information Center: Obtain information about the official convention hotel(s),

- ❖ room locations for convention activities, city highlights, and other general information.
- ❖ NASP Village: Ask membership, certification, and advocacy questions of NASP staff.

Review the Types of Sessions and Formats

If you haven't already done so online, you may want to begin developing your own personalized convention schedule. There is a Personal Schedule page under the Schedule-at-a-Glance section. Before developing your schedule, it is important to understand how the sessions are arranged. The Educational Sessions section is a key area in the program that provides information on the types and lengths of sessions. Sessions are categorized by the NASP Professional Practice Domains of Competence outlined in the *NASP Standards for Credentialing of School Psychologists*. In addition, each session is assigned a skill level so that convention attendees can identify the sessions that best meet their professional objectives.

- ❖ Introduction: No real background in the topic area
- ❖ Intermediate: Limited background in the topic area
- ❖ Advanced: Some theoretical/practical background in the topic area

Lastly, sessions vary in both format and time. You will note that each session lists the room location, floor, hotel tower, and time. Most sessions are provided as part of your general registration fee; others require prior registration and additional fees. Below is a brief list of the types of sessions offered.

- ❖ Diversity Sessions: Sessions address racial, linguistic, cultural, and sexual orientation issues and are marked with a "D" symbol after session numbers.
- ❖ Mini-Skills Presentations: Skill-building sessions that last 1 hour and 50 minutes.
- ❖ Paper Presentations: Instructive convention papers covering a range of topics. Sessions are 50-minute time blocks.
- ❖ Symposia Presentations: Three or more papers on a common theme that present several views on a single topic. Symposia are in 80-minute time blocks.
- ❖ Poster Presentations: Visual displays that provide an informal, interactive format for the presentation of research, data, and innovative practices. Multiple posters are displayed concurrently during 90-minute time blocks.
- ❖ Presenter Information Exchange (PIE): Not a poster, but not quite a paper presentation. Attend a 45-minute session where five thematic presentations will take place simultaneously. After a brief introduction, participants discuss the topic; movement to other tables is permissible.
- ❖ NASP Convention Workshops: Workshops provide a review of trends, research, and issues in school psychology and incorporate skill development. They vary in length (in half- and full-day time blocks) and format and require additional registration fees. \$--\$\$
- ❖ Special Sessions: Sponsored by NASP leadership, workgroups, and committees and address specific projects and priorities of the association. Sessions vary in length and format.
- ❖ Networking Sessions: Meetings sponsored by NASP Interest Groups to discuss topics of common interest.
- ❖ Special Events: Events and activities such the Children's Fund Auction, various receptions, and social events (*not professional presentations*).
- ❖ Featured Sessions: Invited presentations that reflect the major themes of the convention.

Events and Sessions You Won't Want to Miss!

Each year, NASP hosts more than 1,000 special events and sessions for convention attendees. Most sessions are designed to assist with professional development and growth, while others serve as a time to enjoy the company of colleagues and develop lasting relationships with fellow convention attendees. There are also opportunities to explore employment options and interview for job openings. Below is an introductory list of events you do not want to miss.

Welcome Orientation

The Welcome Orientation is hosted on the first night of the convention and is specifically designed for new NASP members and first-time convention attendees. Speakers provide an overview of the convention and offer even more tips on how to make the most of your convention experience. The session is also a great time to meet fellow convention attendees and make new friends. Information for the session can be found under the Special Events section of the program.

For Professional Development and Growth

Keynote Address

Each year NASP hosts a keynote address presented by invited speakers. Selected topics important to the field of school psychology that align with the NASP mission and convention theme are presented. Further information can be found under the Keynote Address section of the program.

Student Town Hall

The Student Town Hall is an annual event designed for graduate students to discuss issues and hot topics that relate to students. NASP leaders share information on membership, certification, and graduate student resources. The session provides a great opportunity to meet fellow students. Information can be found under the Student Activities section of the program.

Student Development Panels

Each year the Student Development Workgroup sponsors three student development panels just for students. Topics are selected based on student needs and feedback expressed during the prior year's convention. Speakers include Student Leaders, NASP leaders, practicing school psychologists, and faculty members. Information may be found under the Student Activities section of the program.

NCSP Help Session: Preparing for the Praxis Exam

As students, many of you are preparing for the Praxis exam. At this session, speakers share helpful study tips that can assist you in your preparation for the exam. Information may be found under the Student Activities section of the program.

Documented Sessions

Some students may find themselves in need of continuing professional development (CPD) hours. All convention attendees have the opportunity to earn CPD hours by attending most convention activities included in the general registration fee. A \$5 processing fee is required for each Documented Session and seats may be reserved online prior to convention. Information on

the number of CPD hours available and the process for documenting credits is listed under the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Credit section listed on the Table of Contents in the program. \$

NASP Village

Be sure to visit the NASP Village to learn about new and ongoing NASP services and resources. Attendees can purchase special convention memorabilia to commemorate their convention experience. Information can be found under the General Information section of the program.

To Assist With Your Employment Preparations

The Professional in Transition: Getting and Keeping Your First Job as a School Psychologist

This seminar is great for students transitioning into professional practice as it provides a comprehensive warm-up for compiling an effective résumé and cover letter, developing a quality portfolio, conducting a powerful interview, and managing time, stress, and workload. Speakers share tips on how to make best use of the NASP Convention Career Services and NASP Online Career Center. A \$15 registration fee is required. Information is listed under the Student Activities section of the program. \$

NASP Career Expo and Candidate Interview Service

The NASP Career Expo and Candidate Interview Service offer training, a reception, get-acquainted sessions, and employment interviews in a friendly, businesslike setting. Nothing beats meeting face-to-face with potential employers, including representatives from school districts, private schools, agencies, regional service areas, and professional recruiting firms. Information on services can be found under the Career Service section of the program.

To Enjoy the Company of Colleagues

Welcome Party

On the first night of the convention, there is a themed Welcome Party for all convention attendees. If you are new to the convention or returning for yet another exciting year, the party is a great opportunity to socialize and enjoy the company of fellow students and colleagues. Information on this event may be found under the Special Events section of the program.

Graduate Student Outing

Each year the Student Convention Cochairs organize a Graduate Student Outing just for graduate students. This is a perfect time for students to come together and have some fun. The outing is hosted at a local venue and often includes food, refreshments, and other exciting activities. Information may be found under the Student Activities section of the program.

NASP Awards Ceremony and Reception

Each year, NASP honors a select group of individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the profession of school psychology. Attendees congratulate the recipients of the School Psychologist of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Minority Scholarship, Government and Professional Relations, Henkin Scholarship, and Student Research Awards. The ceremony and reception are a perfect time to meet and greet fellow students, professionals, and NASP leaders. Information may be found under the Special Events section of the program.

Children's Fund Auction

This special annual event is attended by a host of NASP leaders. A variety of exciting items are auctioned off to benefit children. As the convention nears an end, the auction is a great time to join fellow convention attendees in an evening of fun and philanthropy. A \$2 fee is required to attend. Information may be found under the Special Events section of the program. \$

Once You Get Home

Check back on the NASP website to access handouts from the sessions you attended or those you wish you had a chance to attend. Consider purchasing an Audio Recording Package to ensure you have ongoing access to some of the top speakers and hot topic convention sessions.

Don't Miss Out!

The convention can be an exciting and memorable experience for all students. Attending the convention is also a great way to expand your professional development while engaging in meaningful relationships with peers and colleagues. The information shared in this fact sheet only serves as an introduction for getting acquainted to convention events and activities, and upon your arrival, you will find that NASP conventions have much more to offer. We hope you will join us at next year's convention and wish you the best of luck in all your future convention experiences.

This fact sheet was developed by Janeann M. Lineman, NCSP, and Anna M. Peña, NCSP, of the NASP Student Development Workgroup, and reviewed by Mike Forcade, NASP Convention Chair, and NASP staff and volunteers. Sections of this fact sheet were developed using information from the NASP website and convention program.