

Nebraska Delegate Candidate—Mary Osterloh

NASP recently adopted its 2010 *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*. What steps would you, as state delegate, take to use the 2010 model to best solidify the professional identity of school psychologists and ensure access to school psychological services by all children, families, and schools?

During the last year I was lucky enough to be present at the NASP Regional Meeting where I was privy to the discussion of the NASP Practice Model. I feel that this experience prepared me to discuss how I might bring the principles of the Model to school psychology in Nebraska. I feel that I am very privileged to be able to have a working relationship with many of the individuals that make decisions for children and families. One of the main tenets of the model is to provide the information needed to affect policy on school psychological services. Through the legislative process, it was pointed out at the recent Regional Meeting, that several states had helped to create resolutions or legislation that would better reflect the scope and role of school psychology as it is described in the model. I would hope to gather key people within our state and help to create this type of legislation. By working together my hope would be that we could effectively add the NASP Practice Model and its guidelines to Nebraska legislation. In doing so, I feel that we would be in a much better place regarding defining the scope of our role and educating those that we work with regarding the role of school psychology as defined within the domains of the Model.

One of the topics presented for discussion at the Regional Meeting was that of securing jobs for school psychologists. Many states reported that, when times are tough, school districts who are not as aware of the scope of services delivered by school psychologists may look to reducing the number of individuals or doubling up on the duties of those currently employed. In doing this, some states have had to deal with reductions in the work force of school psychologists. By defining what we do within the domains of the NASP Practice Model, I feel that we are better able to advocate for our positions and to make a strong case for not only maintaining, but in some cases increasing, our numbers. The Model is a wonderful tool to help us in delineating our roles and promoting job preservation. As delegate, I would make it a priority to increase our public relations work in Nebraska and promote the Model as a means of bolstering and enhancing understanding of our many duties and responsibilities. In doing so, my hope would be to increase our public image. In turn, this should help districts to see the importance of maintaining an adequate force of psychologists as it impacts our delivery of services to children and families.

One of the greatest strengths of the Model is that it promotes consistent practice by providing a framework to define what services can be expected and provided by school psychologists. This leads to the provision of excellence in our delivery of services. By working within our state to

provide ongoing continuing professional development, I would hope to not only increase the skills of our members; but, also to increase awareness of the consistency and excellence of practice that is provided in Nebraska. One of the ideas that has recently been developed by our Nebraska School Psychology Association is that of forming a group of psychologists that are willing to speak to districts, possibly at the beginning of the school year, regarding school psychology services that are available. By increasing our continuing professional development and promoting the excellence of our work, I feel we could make strong inroads not only in moving the Model forward, but, also toward building a greater public understanding of our work.

When examining all the aspects of professional practices contained within the Model, I feel that the organizational principles that are meant to be used by those that employ school psychologists are among the most important. By outlining the organizational conditions that are required in order to ensure effective delivery of school psychological service, the Model not only helps us in school psychology. It also helps those in leadership roles to know that facets such as working climate, physical, personnel and fiscal support, and professional communication, to name a few, are vital in providing services to children and families. I feel strongly that as we roll out the Model in Nebraska we will also be making great strides to promote a better working environment for all school psychologists.