

Utah Delegate Candidate—Rob Richardson

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?

As state delegate I would promote the professional identity of school psychologists, as described in NASP's 2010 Model, to ensure access to school psychological services by all children, families, and schools. School psychologists in Utah have enjoyed a longstanding role and are well recognized for their direct services with children and families. Much of this recognition has come from demonstrable skills in testing, facilitating special education classification, and consulting with families and teachers regarding program and intervention options. In addition, Utah school psychologists have a particularly strong reputation (locally and nationally) for their work with behavioral interventions and supports. While perhaps not as widely known, many of us are highly proficient therapists working on a daily basis with students and families. Nevertheless, many in our communities and even in our schools don't know what school psychologists do. Perhaps this is because, historically much of what we do has been behind closed doors, wrapped in confidentiality, and involves a relatively few number of students and families. The aforementioned are important services that should be promoted through NASPs advocacy mechanisms, but we have additional important roles that appear prominently in the 2010 Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services, and with these new roles come increased opportunities for helping greater numbers of students and in so doing increasing our public visibility.

Recent developments in education, which have largely come from the ranks of school psychology, have expanded opportunities to work more globally with larger groups of students. School psychologists have increasing opportunities for working not just at the individual student and family level but also at the systems level. System level practice is seen in the practice of multi-tiered systems of support and is exemplified in academics by Response to Intervention (RtI) and in behavior by Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Working at the systems level involves assisting with general classroom management, addressing behaviors in common areas, engaging in environmental engineering, promoting evidence-based instructional practices, improving collaboration structures, facilitating formulation of school goals, and designing ways of measuring progress toward those goals. Many Utah school psychologists have had less experience working at the systems level; however, working at the system level does offer several advantages including increasing visibility of school psychologists' skills among school faculty (thereby adding to job security), addressing problems early before they become more difficult to manage, and allowing school psychologists to have a broader impact on the entire school population (rather just on those few with the most severe problems).

Rossen and Charvat (2011) summarized findings from NASP's Self Assessment Tool, a survey designed to measure alignment between current practices and NASP's model for professional practice. These results suggest that the perceived domains of most need for

professional development are intervention supports (academic and behavioral) and system level support (i.e. school-wide practices to promote learning, and prevent emotional and behavior problems). Furthermore, across the 10 domains of professional practice, the greatest discrepancies between current level of implementation and the perceived importance were for system level practice. System level domains also had the lowest average ratings of current level of practice--despite the high perceived need for these practices. The same patterns emerged locally from Utah NASP members (Excel data set from NASP, 2011).

These data coincide with my own perception that school psychologists see the importance of system level support to schools; however, they lack the means to participate in school-wide efforts. Reasons for the discrepancy between current practice and perceived ideal practice are a complicated mix of expectations from administrators regarding school psychologists' role, well-established work habits, insufficient training, and lack of time to take on additional work. To overcome this discrepancy will require educating administrators of the value of school psychologists' work at the systems level, and offering professional development opportunities for systems level work. NASP is well positioned to assist through its professional development and advocacy networks.

Promoting the identity of school psychologists under the NASP model will require four major foci: 1) being aware of current needs of students, families, and schools; 2) measuring and responding to professional development needs of membership; 3) creating policies and initiatives that reflect concerns of the public and priorities of administrators and that are informed by the best science available; and 4) developing strategies to inform school policy makers, school administrators, and the public regarding the valuable services that school psychologists provide.

Rossen, E., & Charvat, J. (2011). Preliminary results from NASP Self-Assessment Tool. *Communique*, 40 (4), page 4.