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Capital School District, Dover, DE

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Describe the site where you work and how you decided on this type of placement.

I work primarily with elementary students (3-year-olds to fourth grade) at two schools within Capital School District in Dover, DE. Capital School District serves culturally and racially diverse suburban, urban, and rural communities. Some of the district-based programs include: Spanish immersion, Intensive Learning Center, 21st Century Community Learning Center, Advanced Placement, Career and Technical Education, and Gifted and Talented Education. Capital School District has also received a multimillion dollar grant for mental health services for supporting students and staff mental health. At one of my schools there is a Spanish Immersion program in place for grades K–4.

I transferred to Capital School District for the 2020–2021 school year after working for the Hawaii Department of Education as a school psychologist. I chose Capital School District because of the large amount of support for school psychologists in the district. The administration and staff truly value the expertise of school psychologists and their contributions to the schools. The Capital School District staff and my school psychologist colleagues have been extremely supportive of me since starting in my new position. The district staff has provided continuous professional development and has been supportive with initiatives for change as well as our passions and areas of continued interest. I have enjoyed my experience at Capital School District as well as working with colleagues who are passionate about the success of our students and meeting the needs of the whole child.

What has been your experience like developing programs for areas of need in your work setting?

My experience has been positive thus far. This past year I worked on developing a program called “Let’s Talk” within the district to engage my colleagues in open and honest discussions about systemic racism. One thing I made sure to do when introducing the program to the district and my colleagues was to be flexible with ideas and open to collaboration with others with a shared passion. I have been able to collaborate and expand this initiative to larger groups within the district with much positive feedback as well. I’m hoping to expand this program further in the next school year.

What is your area of expertise? How have you developed skills in this area?

I would say at this point in my career I don’t have an area of expertise. I’m still working on my craft and finding my passions within the field. I continuously work on developing skills in many different areas that I work closely with, such as English language learners, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and low socioeconomic status populations. In working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, I collaborate with professionals in my district and throughout the field in general to gather more information and techniques for working with such diverse students. For me, continuing to ask questions and collaborating with others who are more knowledgeable in this area is a key component to developing the skills needed for success. I also have collaborated and connected with a few professionals that I have met through NASP, who have encouraged continuous education and provided exposure to various viewpoints.

How do you build relationships with colleagues when broaching difficult topics like systemic racism?

Developing relationships with colleagues is a key component to a successful and efficient work space. I always try my best to be an active listener when developing relationships and ensure I hear the other person’s points of view.

As mentioned above, last year I developed a program called “Let’s Talk” as a safe space for my colleagues and me to engage in dialogue around systemic racism. My goal was to ensure that the conversations I facilitate remain safe, welcoming, and diverse, as well as productive and positive contribution our schools. Before each session of “Let’s Talk,” I reviewed ground rules to ensure everyone was on the same page throughout the session. I told my colleagues to try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgement, understand we are all learning, and listen with respect to others. This created a safe space for individuals in the group to feel comfortable to speak up and be heard safely. I also practiced my own ground rules that I try to go by in my everyday life that include allowing others to be heard, being present in the conversations, and appreciating everyone’s input and questions. I continuously found new resources to share with the group and was always willing to learn. The group has been successful, and my goal for the group is to reach teachers within the entire district to engage in these conversations and for staff to engage with our students in these conversations as well.

What specific aspects of NASP membership and involvement have benefited you in your career thus far? Why is membership in NASP important to you?

My NASP membership and involvement have benefited me by enabling me to connect with a number of individuals that I have been able to collaborate with and learn from. I have also been able to use

many handouts and resources supplied by NASP to help educate and advocate for school psychologists within my district.