Describe your current work setting and role.

I am one of several school psychologists in my school corporation—the same corporation that I attended when I was younger! It's so rewarding to be a part of the same community that helped shape me into the person I am today. I serve as the school psychologist for two elementary schools, as well as our corporation's early childhood assessment team. Within my role, I complete psychoeducational evaluations and reevaluations for elementary-age and early childhood students; consult with teachers, administrators, and special education staff to support both general education and special education students; and serve on the academic and behavior intervention teams within my buildings.

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

While I would not say I have an area of specialty or expertise, my several years of experience in the profession thus far have been conducive to growing my general evaluation skills, including assessment knowledge and administration, report writing, and using obtained data to not only make sound eligibility decisions, but also to support programming and planning for a student's individual needs. While much of this has been focused on elementary students, I've also had the opportunity to serve on numerous early childhood assessment teams, which has allowed me to have more experience with preschool students and development than the typical school psychologist might. Early childhood evaluations, assessments, and special education programming looks much different than elementary and secondary. It was a bit of a learning curve for me initially, as my graduate studies and training did not necessarily focus on this aspect of the job. I spent a lot of time studying best practices, discussing with mentors, and learning new assessments to prepare myself for the role. However,
being a part of multidisciplinary evaluations; sharing ideas with speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists; and analyzing student needs together has been a huge contributor to my skills and knowledge in this area. I feel so grateful for the past and current opportunities with early childhood experiences, and I love that it is a part of who I am as a school psychologist!

**How do you build relationships with others in your schools as an early career school psychologist?**

One thing I love about this job is the number, and the variety, of people we have the opportunity to connect with on a daily basis! I am blessed to work alongside outstanding teachers, administrators, therapists, and other staff members in both the elementary and early childhood settings. While it is easy, and often necessary, to be a hermit in your office to get the never-ending to-do list complete, that’s not ideal for forming real, meaningful relationships with coworkers. At the beginning of the year, before the chaos ensues, I find it helpful to introduce myself at the opening staff meetings and individually connect with new staff members who may not know me. While email is a convenient, saving grace, and is often the only option for communicating with staff, when possible, I try to have conversations and discuss matters face to face throughout the school year. Not only are in-person discussions more enjoyable and personable, but they are also much more effective for successful collaboration.

**How do you develop confidence in your skills when so much is required of school psychologists newly entering the field?**

I don’t think I am alone in saying that the transition from graduate school, to internship, to entering the field as a new and practicing school psychologist is quite the humbling experience. I wouldn’t say confidence and certainty in yourself come easily that first, or even second, year in the field. Arguably the most important contributors to developing confidence are simply time and experience. My confidence in my skills, knowledge, and expertise increases with every month that passes. With every case, consultation, professional development opportunity, and interaction, there is some degree of growth. In addition to time and experience, I am very fortunate to have an amazing supervisor and mentor (shout out to Mike Manis, also our Indiana NASP Delegate!), as well as excellent leadership within my school corporation. These people, including my school psychologist colleagues, have and continue to provide valuable feedback and guidance which also foster increased confidence and assurance in my abilities.

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

One of the best things I did, and that I would recommend any early career school psychologist do, is become a NASP member as soon as possible. Given the nature of the job, and the fact that there is typically one school psychologist for several buildings, the role can be a little isolating at times. Therefore, I feel it is so important to have access to a community, even if it is primarily online, of like-minded individuals, with common objectives and plentiful resources to ensure you are feeling a sense of belonging and support at all times. My NASP membership and the resources it provides have allowed me to feel just that. In addition to learning so much at the one NASP convention I have been able to attend, I love having the Communiqué, resource library, member exchange digest, and all things NASP has to offer available to me at the click of a mouse!