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

I am a less traditional early career school psychologist. I graduated from my specialist program at Tufts University in 2010 and then worked as a school psychologist in the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) for 5 years. MPS taught me so much, and I will always be grateful for my time there. After 5 years, I decided to pursue my doctoral degree to focus more on expanding my skill set in systems consultation, policy, and research. I was lucky enough to train with the Boston Public Schools' (BPS) Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model (https://cbhmboston.com) during my doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where I was able to focus on learning more about systematically implementing and evaluating a continuum of preventive and responsive supports. The work of the BPS school psychologists is truly amazing, and I would encourage you to check out the CBHM website to learn more. The faculty, staff, and other graduate students at the social justice-oriented school psychology program at UMass Boston supported me in developing my skills in research and systems-level intervention to target the systemic barriers I observed in my clinical practice.

I am currently completing a postdoctoral fellowship at UMass Boston, where I am the project manager of the Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children Project, led by Dr. Melissa Pearrow at UMass Boston and Dr. Sara Whitcomb at UMass Amherst (https://www.umb.edu/birch/about). We are focused on some exciting projects related to developing a statewide, school-based behavioral health technical assistance center in collaboration with stakeholders across our state and related to recruiting and retaining a more representative behavioral health workforce. I also provide some direct services, engage in systems consultation, and support the research and evaluation team with BPS. My hope is to continue to combine direct service delivery, systems consultation, teaching, and
research. I feel very lucky to get to engage in statewide and districtwide work while also working with individual students, families, and school staff.

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

I hope to use my research to elevate and prioritize the voices of those who have been historically marginalized to inform the adaptation of evidence-based interventions to be more culturally and contextually relevant. Since people are undoubtedly the experts on their experiences, I hope to be a facilitator in some capacity to seek input from stakeholders that can inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions. I am particularly interested in Tier 2 interventions (both implemented class-wide or in small groups depending on feasibility and needs identified) addressing the risk for internalizing concerns in elementary school settings. I was able to conduct my dissertation research in this area.

How do you serve as an advocate for students?

I know I am still learning the best ways to be an advocate for students, but my goal is to speak up and advocate for comprehensive school behavioral health systems that are equitably funded and supported by state-level infrastructure to improve outcomes for students and the adults who care for children across settings.

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

NASP has always been a critical support for me in my professional practice. The NASP website is typically the first place I visit when I am in need of resources. In my teaching, I share with my graduate students that they can find a community in NASP, and there are so many different ways to engage with NASP through professional development, resource sharing, online engagement, and opportunities to participate in policy development and advocacy. I will always be a NASP member, and I continue to attend NASP conferences to learn and share resources with the school psychology community. During times of increased stress, NASP helps me remember that there are so many amazing and dedicated professionals out there working to develop better systems and promote the well-being of all!