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Spokane Public Schools, Spokane, WA

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

This is my second year working in the public school setting as an early childhood and elementary level school psychologist. I was born and raised in Spokane and attended school in the very district I now work. My interest in working for Spokane Public Schools stemmed from my desire to give back to a community that supported me throughout my education.

Your nominator mentioned your social justice work in Washington state. How do you get involved with leadership and social justice work at the state level?

When I heard my state association was forming a social justice task force, I knew this was a great opportunity to take my passion for leadership and advocacy and start working towards change. I am the cochair of the task force and am fortunate to work alongside many talented and experienced individuals. As a group, we listen to the needs of our state and support our school psychologists in forming more equitable practices for students and families.

What recommendations would you have for other early career school psychologists who would like to better promote social justice and equity in their workplaces?

I would recommend for other early career school psychologists to get involved with their state associations as I did and to join a social justice committee/task force or a government and public relations committee. This helps to connect you with other professionals so you can learn about the work being done in your state. Another recommendation is to start looking inward at your own district, building assignment, or even within your own practices to see where changes could be made to promote social justice and equity.

Describe a challenge that you have faced early in your career, and how you handled it. What advice do you have for others with similar challenges?

It was challenging entering a large district as a new school psychologist, where at times it felt difficult to find a sense of belonging and confidence in my knowledge and skills. In order to overcome this obstacle, I found it critical to put my efforts into building positive and supportive relationships with school staff, students, and their families. When I took the time to do this, I became part of the team and my role became more collaborative. Thus, my advice is to focus on relationships and take the time to get to know the students you serve and their families. Additionally, do not be afraid to advocate for yourself when you need support such as a mentor in a similar role.

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

It is empowering to be a part of a community where I can learn from and connect with other school psychologists. I follow the work of professionals, such as Dr. Charles Barrett and Dr. Celeste Malone, and I challenge myself to learn from them to ultimately make a greater impact in my role.