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*Baltimore City Public Schools
Baltimore, Maryland*

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Please tell us where you work and how you decided on this type of placement.

I work for Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), an urban school district in Maryland. This district serves approximately 80,000 students. Student demographics consists of 78.6% African American, 11.3% Hispanic, and 7.8% White. Fifty-two percent are low income, and 7.2% are English Language Learners. I currently work at two school sites: an elementary school and an all girls middle/high charter school. I decided on this placement because I wanted to gain experience working in public schools. More importantly, I wanted to work for Baltimore City as this is one of the school districts I attended as a child.

What are your areas of expertise at this point in your career?

At this point in my career, I feel that my area of expertise would be in suicide prevention. I've become comfortable and more efficient in administering suicide risk assessments with middle and high school students. I have been able to educate teachers and school staff on the risk factors and warning signs of youth suicide, as well as encouraging teachers to complete Kognito. Kognito is an online, avatar-based program for school districts that teaches adults how to

recognize and address psychological distress in youth. Additionally, I've been able to develop a protocol on how to refer students who present with suicidal ideation.

Please tell us about your engagement in your local community and how this impacts your work.

For the past two years, I have volunteered or attended my charter school's parent-teacher conferences, performances, and other school events. This has helped me to build community and rapport with administrators, teachers, students, and families. Despite being at this school only three days each week, I feel I am a part of the school community.

In addition to attending events at my school, I am engaged in community service, providing food, clothing, and shelter to the homeless in Baltimore. I participate in annual charity walks and 5Ks for domestic violence, autism, suicide, Type 1 diabetes, and mental illnesses. Each of these impacts the lives of many of the students I work with daily. I have been able to gain a wealth of community resources, which I am then able to share with students and families when needed.

Describe a challenge that you have faced in your early career, and how did you handle it? What advice do you have for other early career school psychologists with similar challenges?

One of the challenges that I have faced in my early career was experiencing an administrator who doubted my skills and abilities as a school psychologist because of my age. The administrator would often disagree with the results of my psychological evaluations and was not receptive to academic and behavior interventions for students who would not qualify for special education services. I was able to handle this challenge by meeting directly with the principal throughout the school year to address concerns and to find solutions. I have also had to consult with my supervisor on several occasions on how to best address each issue. My advice for other early career school psychologists with similar challenges is to always be confident in yourself and your training. At IEP meetings, you are the expert in the room. Do not allow anyone to make you feel inferior or that you are not competent in conducting psychological evaluations because of your age or because of your experience level. I would advise them to always remain calm, respectful, and professional when disagreements do occur in meetings. Lastly, I would advise early career school psychologists to consult with their supervisor when experiencing challenges at their school. I am fortunate

to have a supervisor who is a school psychologist and can provide best practices and insight as needed.

What aspects of your NASP membership and involvement have impacted or benefited you in your career thus far? Please tell us how NASP membership is important to you.

My NASP membership has allowed me to network with other school psychologists and to find mentors within the field that have different areas of expertise. Another benefit of NASP membership is having access to current research and information on a variety of topics (e.g. NASP position statements and the *Communiqué*). I've been able to share handouts with teachers and families on anxiety, ADHD, and suicide. Lastly, NASP membership has allowed me to develop my leadership skills. I was a NASP Student Leader in graduate school and am currently on a core team for the African American subcommittee. Having leadership opportunities within NASP has inspired me to take on leadership positions within my school district's psychology association.