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Statement 3

The pandemic has increased inequities in academic progress and mental health services for our students. What is NASP’s responsibility in addressing these inequities and what will you do as NASP President to address these needs?

Life during the pandemic has many of us teetering between resilience and distress, with powerful emotions evoked by our societal struggles. For many of us, exhaustion and discouragement has made it even more challenging to address some of the fundamental problems that affect our world, our schools, and our students. Despite these human realities, it is crucial for us to band together and to take advantage of opportunities to transform our systems so that schools are supportive, culturally affirming, and effective for everyone. As noted in our Ethical Principles and Practice Model, we have a professional responsibility to promote equity and to advocate for socially just learning environments. While we know much about structural racism, generational poverty, trauma, healthcare barriers, and systemic disadvantages that marginalized and minoritized students face in schools, there is still much more we need to learn. It is vital that we support rigorous research that critically examines the cumulative impact of inequities faced by our students and that provides strategies for eliminating systems of oppression. It is also important to acknowledge the impacts of existing inequities on our special education processes, with increased pressure to evaluate students for services, a pressure intensified by the pandemic.

My belief is that NASP and each of us has the responsibility of continuing to educate ourselves and our field about issues pertaining to equity and social justice. The recent NASP handout about Critical Race Theory is one of many excellent examples of social justice resources produced by NASP, and my thanks go out to the generous experts who wrote and/or reviewed this and other guidance documents that educate not only us, but also the broader school community. NASP is also responsible for promoting educational processes and systems-level work that reduces inequities. It is clear that we cannot meet our students’ needs if we devote most of our time and energy to assessing and treating children one by one; transformation of our systems is needed. As school psychologists, we are equipped with the skills to not only contribute to systems change work, but to lead it; however, our shortages prevent us from doing so in many areas of the country. Thus, focused efforts on reducing our shortages are paramount. NASP’s work with allied educator groups to promote effective academic and mental health practices for all students should also be prioritized, as we cannot go at this alone.

As NASP President, I would promote a culture of listening to one another, of humility, of empathy, and of action. As I learn more about the impacts on children from such factors as racism, bigotry, economic marginalization, climate change, and opportunity gaps, I’m mindful of Maya Angelou’s quote: “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” I’m mindful of how my privilege shapes my worldview and my actions, with both the advantages and shortcomings contained therein. As a middle-class White woman, I’m mindful that I may fall prey to “niceness,” which may blunt my efficacy as an advocate, so brilliantly discussed by Dr. McKenney (2021) in *Reckoning with Ourselves: A Critical Analysis of White Women’s Socialization and School Psychology*. With this in mind, I recognize that there is no room for bending toward compliance during this unique

time; our students' needs call for bold action. Thus, my passion for equitable school psychological practices and systems change work would fuel my advocacy efforts as NASP President. My track record of leading through uncomfortable challenges has prepared me to serve. I would seek to enhance collaboration with allied partners in education and psychology toward systemic solutions that bridge silos, improve schools, and utilize community partnerships to enhance access to support services, elevating the best ideas that advance our equity goals. As a veteran in the field, I recognize the unprecedented burden on school psychologists and would advocate for better ratios, increased organizational supports, and opportunities for self-care and professional development that would lift up our workforce, all of whom are working so hard during these exhausting times. At a time when we all need inspiration, I would champion and celebrate professionals that are finding a way to challenge the status quo and to build more equitable processes and practices. And finally, as NASP President, I would promote movement on the NASP EDI Implementation Taskforce report, which calls for specific actions to be carried out by our NASP leadership and staff. These actions, when realized, will enrich NASP's voice in the quest for equity for our students.