

## **PATRICIA L. LANDERS-SANTIAGO**

**State Delegate Candidate: Puerto Rico**

*Statement 2*

**NASP Leaders have adopted five strategic goals that guide the association's work. In your state, what are some gains being made in school psychology practice related to these goals, and what are some pressing challenges?**

One of the major gains in the school psychology practice in Puerto Rico has been the creation of school psychologists' positions in the Department of Education (SG #1). For 18 to 20 years, the School Psychologists Association in Puerto Rico (PRSPA) has been addressing the need for school psychologists in every public school. Law 170, to assign a school psychologist at every public school in Puerto Rico was approved in the year 2000. The assigned funds were used for other uses making it impossible to carry on with what the law stated. So, for twenty years, one of the pressing challenges for PRSPA has been the lack of availability of school psychologists in school settings to meet students needs. As of 2019, federal funds have provided the means to create school psychologists' positions in every school around the island. After so many advocacy efforts, this has been one of the greatest achievements as an association.

Still, school psychologists assigned to public schools need support and opportunities for professional development in order to identify and carry out the best available practices (SG #5). PRSPA has focused on creating valuable and accessible professional development opportunities for school psychologists. Some of these opportunities have been possible through the support of NASP presidencies and other resources. Amidst the efforts of PRSPA, the role of school psychologists is still somewhat misunderstood and/or undervalued in Puerto Rico. Sadly, it is still a pressing challenge for PRSPA to have lawmakers and education leaders understand the importance of school psychologists to ensure children and youth's rights, advocate for inequities in school environments and promote the best practices available.