

PHYLLIS PARO

State Delegate Candidate: Vermont

Statement 1

What are your qualifications that make you a strong candidate for delegate?

I have been a practicing School Psychologist for 26 years and an active member of the VASP and NASP for the majority of my career. I served two terms as President of VASP, continue to be active on the Board as a Past President, have worked closely with our current State Delegate on a number of issues impacting our association and state, and was an essential team member as VASP constructed a plan for growth with the help of NASP's Aid to States Team. Additionally, I have attended a number of Regional Leadership Meetings and NASP's yearly conferences, networked with a variety of NASP leaders, and have demonstrated a willingness to ask for help from NASP when it was needed for Vermont.

What is the most pressing issue in your state? As NASP Delegate, how do you see your role in working with your state association to address this issue?

Vermont is currently in the process of revamping Act 173 and though the changes will be widespread, the most pressing changes for us will be those proposed for the eligibility determination process; particularly impacting adverse effect and SLD identification. I have a number of concerns in relation to both of these as I truly do not feel that our schools are prepared for them.

If they do away with adverse effect, I fear that a lot of emphasis will end up being placed on schools to prove the "need for specialized instruction" and in districts/schools where Tier 1 or 2 services are not very robust or are being implemented without fidelity, it could open the flood gates to Special Education. It is interesting that the AOE is considering removing this gate from the Special Education determination process despite the fact that in order to implement a plan under Section 504, you are required to demonstrate that a disability is significantly impacting a life function.

As for SLD identification, I know we need to do better than the discrepancy model, but I believe that assumptions are being made that schools are already practicing MTSS with fidelity. As for PSW, outside of School Psychologists, who do we have that are trained to administer the type of cross-battery assessments that should be utilized? Many of our Special Educators are trained in one specific cognitive measure and not much else (certainly very few are trained in the Wechsler measures, the Kaufman, or the Stanford-Binet). Given that School Psychologists are already understaffed in most of our schools (yet another issue impacting our state), this could become an evaluation nightmare (if it isn't already for many of us).

As NASP Delegate, I would continue to work with our outgoing NASP Delegate, the VASP Board, and NASP (for guidance) to help strengthen our ties with the AOE. Additionally, I will assist in the planning of professional development opportunities that will support our members in more clearly understanding these and other pertinent issues.