The NASP Leadership Assembly has adopted three 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?

NASP’s three strategic goals guide our association’s work. In Georgia, work toward these goals is continual, and our state organization Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP), has much to do with this. In 2014, GASP released the GASP-Services Evaluation Instrument or GASP-SEI as an option for supervisors to evaluate school psychologists and for practitioners to reflect on their growth. Its basis is the 10 standards of NASP Practice Model, and it reinforces the school psychology practice exemplars. Our State Department of Education has shown an interest in reviewing the GASP-SEI in greater detail as a viable statewide professional evaluation instrument. The last state-approved evaluation instrument was developed before the 1980s and it does not fully reflect the extent of a present-day school psychologist’s role or the NASP Practice Model. Such conversations will allow increased awareness and advocacy for our profession at the state and local level. Use of the professional evaluation instrument could inspire school psychologists to embrace the NASP Practice Model more fully through its structure and by its constructive feedback, goal-setting and self-reflection. Active application of the NASP Practice Model promotes high-quality service. High-quality service yields positive data trends for students, which is attractive to stakeholders. Stakeholders desire and obtain more high-quality school psychological services.

Nonetheless, the challenge is setting the stage in which all school psychologists across Georgia can consistently provide high-quality, model services that meet the diverse needs of students despite shortages and funding. Staffing shortages and high funding ratios reduce school psychologists to the sole task of evaluation, omitting the much-needed behavioral mental health services, intervention development for SEL and academic achievement, and supportive services for school staff. This reduced role makes the Georgia workplace less desirable, with fewer prospective school psychologists to meet the basic demand.

This challenge can be tackled, but it must be timed strategically and continued religiously for the long term. In our school psychology practice, we honor the importance of building relationships with students, parents, teachers and colleagues. We teach students how to foster and maintain positive relationships with each other. We consult with parents about family dynamics and relationships. This is our time to build positive relationships with our district leaders such as superintendents, human resource directors and finance officers. This is our time to meet and know our local and state legislators by name, and for them to know each of us by name and as school psychologists. It is the time to show up to town hall meetings, senate study committee meetings, or board of education meetings. In doing so, we talk and teach others about our profession, and what we do for students, families and communities. This lays the foundation so we can ask for reduced funding ratios and incentives for school psychology internships, and be heard.