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 strategic goals outlined for 2022-2027 continue to have a place at the cornerstone of service delivery that impacts decision making within the field of school psychology. In Illinois, the implementation of NASP’s practice model, addressing critical workforce shortages, and infusing social justice into everyday daily routines has been met with gains and challenges.

Far too often, School Psychologists are perceived as “assessment givers”. This mindset stems from what can be referred to as an old way of thinking. I have worked in some areas in Illinois where this mindset was generally accepted, and I have worked in some areas in Illinois where School Psychologists are able to implement the NASP Practice Model as intended with sustainable and measurable results. Our state association is making gains providing the necessary training to ensure schools psychologists are prepared to assume the roles of mental and behavioral health leaders across various settings. Time continues to be a limitation as School Psychologists are already stretch to capacity as resilience is always of concern.

I believe that critical workforce shortages have hovered for so long it could be considered the norm. Workforce shortages in the field of school psychology are never the norm. Even though the state may currently have nearly 100 open positions, there were more positions open 5 years ago when I entered the field. As professionals, it is important to compensate appropriately for this role. While some school districts may offer increased salary and incentives (NCSP stipend, psychoeducational report quarterly stipend, etc.) other areas in Illinois are not. Consistency is key when ensuring incentives and ongoing exposure to school psychology become the norm statewide.

As School Psychologists, if social justice is not deeply embedded into service delivery, then an injustice is occurring. Illinois has made strides in ensuring a wealth of resources are available to utilize. By providing adequate resources, School Psychologists hold information to engage in and advocate for those who are the most vulnerable, the student. We are the voice for those who may not be able to voice for themselves what is needed to receive high-quality educational access, opportunities, and experiences. The true challenge comes with asking the question, “Is engaging in and advocating for social justice really happening across varied settings”. Yes, this is still a challenge in Illinois in 2022. The impact of not systematically implementing practices that understand students’ developmental, cultural, and social influences for so long, now has us playing catch-up with addressing these concerns. The root causes of why barriers still exist for all students’ educational rights should be the concern of everyone.

I see all three of NASP’s strategic goals as a dynamic circle working together. Gains are being made, as we seek to support and empower School Psychologists in Illinois. However, as Illinois is demonstrating progressiveness on
several fronts, there is still much work to do. I welcome all opportunities to roll up my sleeves and collaborate with the state to meet NASP’s strategic goals.