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?

In Louisiana, some of our efforts that we have been working towards as a state organization, Louisiana School Psychological Association (LSPA), has been in the area of the workforce shortage solutions for school psychologists. Steps have been made to educate our profession and the state legislators about promoting the rehiring of retired school psychologists in Local Education Agencies (LEA) that are not able to fill school psychologist positions. Although this practice was passed with previous legislation, the act was repealed, and school psychologists were left off current legislation. Additionally, one of the previously inactive training programs for school psychologists in an underserved area of the state has been reactivated (the specialist level program at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette). It is my hope that this will help to train school psychologists that are local to that area and will remain in that area to serve their community.

Our state’s approach to school psychologists and systems implementing the NASP Practice Model has gotten a more mixed response. Many of the LEAs in Louisiana are using school psychologists in the more limited scope of special education testing and classification. Some LEAs use more of our skills that we are trained in that better align with two or more of the ten domains of the NASP Practice Model. Though it is the LEA’s choice in how to use school psychologists and other personnel, it is my belief that we can each play a unique role to advocate for our varied skills to be utilized more in areas that serve students directly, promote system changes at the school and district level, and help for better collaborations of families, schools, and community. The Special Education Advisory Councils that each LEA in Louisiana (including Charters) establishes are an excellent way that other school psychologists and I have been able to help bring each of these components together for the students that we serve. To date no LEA in Louisiana has been established with the Excellence in School Psychological Services (ESPS) Recognition Program. I believe that we do have some very hard-working school psychologists in our state and think that with a little encouragement and support, some of our LEAs could be recognized for their outstanding efforts through ESPS.

All students deserve to receive high quality educational access, opportunities, and experiences. As part of a focus on social justice, LSPA has worked to raise funds for the Louisiana Center for Children’s rights which provides legal defense to address children’s needs inside and outside the courtroom as well as tackling the systemic issues that criminalize mostly poor, Black youth. LSPA has also started a social justice committee and has offered book studies to school psychologists to foster conversations related to better serving children through a social justice lens. These are just the early steps that we have started as an organization that we need to better help children in a wholistic, equitable manner.