MICHAEL D. WATSON II
State Delegate Candidate: Arkansas
Statement 1

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

I feel there are many qualifications that make me a strong candidate for the Arkansas NASP Delegate. However, I will focus on three of the qualifications. The first qualification is my combined 20 plus years of experience working with children, families, in public/private schools, hospital, and residential settings. This experience has given me a micro and macro view of problems in schools, communities, and the state as it relates to systems that support our educators, families, and communities. Twelve years of my experience has been working as a school psychologist. My time in the field as a school psychologist has provided me with insight into the day-to-day grind and the demand of working in schools. Another qualification that makes me a strong candidate is my experience as president of our state school psychology association. I was the first African-American male to serve in the role. I was also president during the height of COVID. I took office a week after my grandmother died from COVID-like symptoms. She was living with us at the time to help with my newborn and to receive her cancer treatments in Little Rock. Our organization was constrained because we had not held any conferences virtually. I was able to pivot the organization to a fully functioning virtual platform and we held two conferences virtually and saw one of our largest revenue growths. My last qualification is my experience working in the Arkansas Department of Education. My role in the department of education is working in districts that are currently in state takeover. I get to analyze systems within the districts and determine the problems, dig for antecedents, and determine ways to help the system sustain without state assistance to prevent recidivism. Possessing these qualifications gives me a vantage point that will help me as the Arkansas NASP Delegate determine the best way to help guide our state towards a model that supports school psychology specialists that are out in the field and the families and educators they serve.

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?

In Arkansas we currently have 12% of students receiving special education services under the category of Intellectually Disability compared to the national average of 6%. As the NASP delegate, I plan to bring all stakeholders (Arkansas School Psychology Association [ASPA], Arkansas Department of Education [ADE], Higher Education Programs) together to collect data, examine practices and come up with a plan for possible trainings or forms of remediation. Another pressing issue in the state is the shortage of school psychologists in the state. In my role as the NASP delegate I plan to work with the School Psychology Programs and ASPA to examine recruiting practices and alternative paths to the degree for other licensed professionals. I will also work with the Arkansas Association of Special Education Administrators and the Arkansas Department of Human Services to look at ways for school psychologists to bill for services like psychoeducational reports and counseling services which will make them more marketable. I also want to change our names to school psychologists.