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 relate to the NASP Practice Model, workforce shortage solutions, and social justice. Kentucky school psychologists share these priorities as we strive toward excellence in the provision of school psychological services. Workforce shortages have an enormous impact on our ability to meet that goal of excellence across the state. Our school psychologists are well-trained and ambitious, but often stretched across too many schools or unrelated responsibilities to fully implement the practice model in a balanced way. Assessment and IDEA compliance continue to be the primary responsibilities for many of us; while critical, it restricts our ability to provide richer support to schools. We are aware of the limitations of existing assessment tools and strive to choose tests that minimize cultural bias; however, we have little time to expand our assessment practices beyond standardized tools and interpretations. To paraphrase the waterfall allegory, we are too busy rescuing people from the waterfall’s edge to make our way upstream and keep them from falling in to begin with. KAPS has worked to promote awareness and application of the Practice Model by aligning conference sessions with the 10 domains, leading professional advocacy efforts at the state level, and establishing statewide mental health and crisis response committees. School psychologists were specifically named in recent legislation pertaining to the need for mental health services in schools. We have several PREPaRE trainers who have trained hundreds of educators in crisis prevention and response across Kentucky. We often participate in MTSS and mental health teams, providing us with increased opportunities to expand our practice beyond IDEA assessment. We are making progress toward more equitable practice by having hard conversations about the impact of implicit biases, deficit thinking, privilege, and intersectionality of identity characteristics. While this can be challenging given the current political climate in Kentucky, we continue to effect change one situation at a time. Our training in systems and advocacy empowers us as educational leaders who can promote social justice by modifying practices that unfairly penalize marginalized people. This ability to improve outcomes for our students is contingent on our efforts to combat workforce shortages. KAPS has liaisons to the in-state graduate programs, and several districts are actively working on recruitment and retention of school psychologists. We must continue to utilize the NASP Exposure Project materials and could benefit from incentivizing practitioners to spread the word about our profession. We need to strengthen access to in-state practicum and internship positions for Kentucky graduate students, while also reaching out to those in neighboring states. NASP’s work toward developing an interstate compact may help mitigate our shortage of training programs. We also need to encourage participation in mentorship opportunities so that our students and early career psychologists feel supported and encouraged. By dedicating our energies toward improving workforce shortages, we will improve working conditions for all of us. This will decrease burnout and frustration, increase opportunities to expand our role beyond assessment, and make the field more appealing for ourselves and future colleagues.