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?

The NASP strategic goals are timely and relevant to the field and future of the profession. I would be honored to promote these initiatives at the state level.

In Kentucky, the Association of Psychology in Schools (KAPS) is dedicated to promoting the NASP Practice Model through annual conferences and committees that focus on its ten areas of practice.

Kentucky has made progress in supporting school psychologists. In 2019, the School Safety and Resiliency Act was passed, requiring mental health professionals, including school psychologists, to report their activities related to student and family support. The state also established a goal of a 1:250 mental health provider-to-student ratio, and KAPS successfully advocated for school psychologists to be included in this count, enhancing our visibility and expanding our role.

However, addressing these goals is hampered by a statewide shortage of school psychologists. The closure of a state training program, school psychologists transitioning to non-traditional roles, and an aging demographic have contributed to this shortage. To tackle this issue, a task group was formed in 2021, actively recruiting school psychologists, exploring new training options, and engaging with students through shadowing and outreach.

Challenges include a shortage of trained professionals and a lack of understanding and respect for the school psychology profession, leading districts to fill positions with other professions. For example, in some districts, Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) have been paid more than school psychologists, despite having lower educational requirements.

At the state level, Kentucky is addressing social justice through a committee dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion within KAPS. Efforts include developing tools for evaluating practices with an equity lens, focusing on linguistic diversity resources, and equity in disability identification. This commitment to equity is reinforced in my own district, where a department oversees Diversity, Equity, and Poverty issues, and initiatives are filtered through a Racial Equity Analysis Protocol (REAP). Using this tool, school psychologists have expanded the conversations around cognitive and adaptive assessments and their limitations with certain groups.

NASP's goals to move away from discrepancy models of identification are exciting, but challenges persist. Kentucky's regulations changed to include Response to Intervention (RtI), but the scrutiny districts faced led them back to discrepancy models to avoid corrective action. Silos between the special education and general education
departments have caused a disconnect in teaching, intervention strategies, and state discrepancy tables. Building relationships at the state level is crucial to ensure our voices are heard as this relates to equitable practices.

Additional challenges to social justice initiatives in Kentucky are rooted in the conservative House and Senate, where representatives may struggle to understand diversity due to the homogeneity of their districts. This has resulted in insensitive bills that neglect the needs of students with disabilities, racial and gender diversity, and cultural differences.

As a potential NASP delegate, I am dedicated to serving as a conduit for Kentucky in advancing these strategic goals.