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 first strategic goal focuses on the implementation of the NASP Practice Model. One way to determine how well Maryland is doing with implementing the Practice Model is to see how many school districts have received Excellence in School Psychological Services (ESPS) Recognition. Currently, only one of Maryland’s 24 school districts has received ESPS Recognition. While this may have to do with the relatively new status of ESPS Recognition, there are barriers to implementing the Practice Model in Maryland, including psychologist ratios, shortages, and ongoing trauma recovery needs of students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, school psychology stakeholders, such as the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association (MSPA) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), could promote the use of the ESPS rubric for school districts to reflect on what they are doing well with respect to implementing the Practice Model and what steps they could take to improve their areas of weakness.

The second goal is associated with solutions to workforce shortages. One of the positive things to occur in Maryland in recent years has to do with increased attention to the shortages issue in education. There have been a number of legislative bills proposed to the Maryland General Assembly. MSDE put forth a bill in 2023 to establish a school psychologist recruitment program. There were also two bills that addressed funding and/or reimbursing the costs associated with training, recruiting, and retaining behavioral health professionals. These are clear efforts by legislators and others at the state level to address the recruitment and retention of school psychologists. The challenge facing the work in this area is a lack of graduates entering the field. It is my hope that, with collaboration among training programs, school districts, and MSDE, there may be a workable solution to capitalize on the bills that have been presented and increase the number of school psychologists produced.

NASP’s third strategic goal involves Social Justice and the idea that school psychologists must be aware of personal biases, conscious of social injustices, and engage in advocacy to protect the rights of all students to receive a high-quality education, especially those from marginalized communities for whom access has historically been denied. Racism and white supremacy have a long history in Maryland and there are socio-political divides, as there are geographical divides, within the state. The most forward-facing work that MSPA tackled associated with social justice occurred as it took on the task of developing core values. These core values included a concept called “equitability” or the idea that school psychologists “should work towards creating equitable and positive school climates for all individuals in the schoolhouse, including those marginalized and disenfranchised.” This represented both a gain and a challenge, as the committee tasked with drafting the core values, mirrored by some members of the larger association, could not agree to the concept of “social justice”. This is a challenge that is battled every day in Maryland by our students, their families, and our colleagues from historically marginalized communities.