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Syracuse City School District, Syracuse, New York

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Describe the site where you work and how you decided on this type of placement.

I work at a pre-K–8 building in the Syracuse City School District in Syracuse, NY. The building has almost 1,000 students, and I work primarily with scholars in grades 6–8. Our district is extremely ethnically and linguistically diverse, as Syracuse is a sanctuary city. We work with many refugee families, as well as families from low-income households. I graduated from Syracuse University in 2013 and have known since I started graduate school that I wanted to move back to Syracuse once I finished. The Syracuse community is so unique in that, even though it's a city, it has the vibe of a small town.

What are your areas of expertise at this point in your career?

I really enjoy working on our school's MTSS and climate teams. Our district has secured a school climate transformation grant that will help expand our MTSS process. I work with our school's data team to identify potential data sources, and to organize and disaggregate the data so it can be used by the climate team to design school-wide interventions.

Describe your engagement in the local community and how this impacts your work.

I live right in the city where I work, so I often see our kids walking around in the community. I find that the best way to engage in the community is by living in the community itself. Because of the pandemic, I try to limit potential exposures, so I do a lot from home. However, the Syracuse community has a lot of really amazing virtual opportunities that I attend whenever possible. For example, the Friends of the Central Library has hosted an author series over Zoom that I've enjoyed attending. Most recently, I attended a lecture by Dr. Ibram X Kendi. The focus of these lectures is

often on issues related to social justice, which furthers my learning about students from marginalized communities.

Describe a challenge you have faced in your career and how you handled it. What advice do you have for others with similar challenges?

Being in a large district definitely has some bureaucratic challenges. I have had many experiences where I've been advised that the district's "red tape" would get in the way of my attempts, or that efforts to support a student "wouldn't be worth it." It can be easy to grow cynical in a district with as many obstacles as we have. I've found that the best way to combat this cynicism is to try anyway. If it works, great! If it doesn't, then you try again. I've found that if I'm willing to dig through the weeds, someone will see that I'm serious about my students and I will get the support that I need.

What aspects of NASP membership have benefited you thus far? Why is membership in NASP important to you?

In graduate school, we have an ample supply of research at our fingertips with all the libraries and databases. Once you graduate, all of that goes away. I love having access to *Communiqué* and *School Psychology Review*. When I'm providing consultation and I face dissent from a staff member who says something won't work, it's really validating to be able to find research articles to pass along that support my stance. I also love attending the NASP convention and am super excited to be able to attend again once the threat of the pandemic is better contained.