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Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore, MD

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

I work at two schools in an urban setting. The first school is a K–8 school with over 700 kids and a high English language learner, Latinx, and immigrant population. The second school is a K–5 school with about 200 kids, and it is predominantly African American. Both schools are in predominantly low socioeconomic status areas.

I wanted to work in Baltimore very early in my graduate school career. There is a lot of work to be done in these schools, but also a lot of great activists and educators who are mobilized. I think both the city and the schools I work in are full of potential and possibility. Additionally, as a non-White person and the daughter of immigrants, I feel connected to these families and their struggles and achievements.

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

I am still very much learning, but my areas of expertise include working with parents and families and teacher consultation. I like working on systems-level prevention programs and look forward to building more into those programs as I gain more years of experience. Additionally, I have solid background knowledge in suicide risk assessment, LGBTQ+ youth, social justice, and trauma-informed care and practices.

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

I live in Baltimore City and have been active in several advocacy groups and food distribution programs. This allows me to develop an understanding of the history of Baltimore and how the communities and neighborhoods developed. Our students are very much impacted by local policies, and as a school psychologist, I believe that it is imperative that I advocate for policies that better both the community as a whole and my students' mental and academic well-being. Additionally, I learn so much from local residents who have been a part of Baltimore for decades longer than myself. This informs my best practices and my vision for change moving forward. Additionally, I am the Legislative Committee lead for the Baltimore City Association of School Psychologists and a member of the Maryland School Psychology Association.

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

One challenge I faced early on was a parent who was very suspicious of the school system as a whole, and of me personally. I acknowledged that this parent had historical reasons not to trust the school system, and since I was new, had no reason to trust me. I worked hard to build a relationship with that parent over 3 years by making consistent phone calls, including positive updates about their child and asking what they needed during the pandemic. The advice I give other early career school psychologists is that virtual learning can be an opportunity to more closely work with parents and to get better acquainted with their needs and lives outside of bringing their children to school. Also, all relationships must be approached with a sense of humility—no parent or teacher who has not worked with you before will know exactly what you are capable of, so it is up to you as the school psychologist to show how you are a benefit and support to the person you are working with.

What specific aspects of NASP membership and involvement have impacted or benefited you in your career thus far? What is membership in NASP important to you?

I have very much appreciated NASP's continuous updates during the pandemic and current events around racism and social justice. These bulletins give me something to share with principals and other administrators, as well as giving me a starting point from which to discuss issues with children and families. NASP's information is always clear, well-written, and grounded in our ethics. Additionally, NASP membership has provided me with some important collegial relationships and connections. April Turner, the NASP Maryland Delegate, has been instrumental in helping me transition as a school psychologist to Baltimore City and finding opportunities for me to be more engaged around both Baltimore and Maryland. As someone who believes strongly in the power of many ideas, as well as the school psychologist's role in systemic change, NASP membership is important to me because NASP, as an organization, is a leader of change for schools and students.