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

I currently work as a school psychologist in Aurora Public Schools (APS) in Aurora, Colorado. APS is a large, diverse urban district of approximately 40,000. I work full-time as school psychologist at Boston P-8, a linguistically and culturally diverse Title 1 school of 400 students (I am so lucky to have this ratio!). In addition to having me as a full-time school psychologist, my building also has two full-time counselors, a part-time community based therapist, and a school social worker who provides Tier 2 interventions one day per week. I am deeply passionate about the community I work in and the students and families that I serve; APS has been a wonderful fit for me. I love that I get to work directly with so many unique, inspiring students.

I chose to work for APS because of the supportive behavioral health team and the ability to work within the NASP Practice Model. I am viewed as a mental health provider within my school/district and my job involves so, so much more than testing! In addition to conducting special education evaluations, I am also a member of my building's MTSS, Exceptional Student Services (ESS), mental health, and administration teams; I help develop tiered behavioral interventions; I provide small group and counseling services to students with IEPs; and I

consult and collaborate with teachers and staff. Because I work in a trauma-impacted community, I frequently use my training in crisis prevention, response, and intervention both at the building level and as a member of my district crisis team. I am lucky to work with a very strong mental health team in my building and to have a supportive administration that values school-based mental health. As a community, Aurora voters recently passed a Mill Levy that dedicated funds to add additional mental health support to all of our schools, so we have really wonderful ratios throughout our district. Our district behavioral health team, which is comprised of school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors, receives monthly professional development, and those who are interested have the ability to obtain mentorship, attend conferences, and receive specialized training.

Over the past few years I also have served in various part-time roles at the University of Denver. I was Adjunct Faculty from 2017–2018 and taught a legal and ethical issues in education course and one in crisis intervention to school psychology graduate students. For the past year and a half I have served as a Clinic Supervisor in the University of Denver Counseling and Education Services Clinic, where I supervise school psychology graduate students through client intake, assessment, interpretation, diagnosis, and feedback. I have really enjoyed the training aspect of my work and enjoy getting to be a part of preparing the next generation of school psychologists!

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

I would say that culturally and linguistically diverse assessment, crisis prevention and intervention, working with students on the autism spectrum, advocacy, and navigating legal and ethical issues are areas of expertise at this point in my career.

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

Most of my community engagement surrounds advocacy for systemic change—this has definitely become my passion as I've grown in the profession. This past year, I joined my local union (the Aurora Education Association) and became a member of our bargaining team. This was an incredible experience, as I was able to advocate that school psychologists and other special service providers (SSPs) receive stipends for certifications and licenses comparable to Nationally Board Certified Teachers in my district. It was an exciting moment when the district agreed to provide parity for all special service providers and

school psychologists within our district; next year, school psychologists will receive a stipend for their NCSP!

Additionally, I am a member of my district school psychology leadership team, and we work to identify the needs of school psychologists in our district. For example, we have conducted needs assessments, helped develop our job description, supported in professional development, and reviewed materials that affect our daily practice.

I also have gotten involved with my state school psychology association. Currently, I serve as the legislative chair for the Colorado Society of School Psychologists (CSSP) and monitor state legislation that affects children, families, schools, and the profession of school psychology. As part of this role I have written amendments to bills and letters to our state legislature in support or opposition of proposed bills, and I have supported in the development of CSSP's new Government and Professional Relations (GPR) committee. I have been able to collaborate with some fantastic, brilliant school psychologists through my involvement in CSSP and am really excited about what's ahead for our state.

When I first started in the field, I knew that one of my roles was to advocate for students, but I was less comfortable when it came to advocating for myself or for the profession of school psychology. My engagement with my district and state association has helped me find my voice in advocating for our profession. I've learned that advocating for ourselves is critical. To cite a favorite quote from the GW/NASP Public Policy Institute (PPI), "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu!" A lot of decision makers at the building, district, state, and national levels don't know exactly what we do or how important the field of school psychology is in supporting students; the more we advocate for the importance of our work, the more we get to be involved in policies, procedures, and laws that affect kids.

Describe a challenge that you have faced in your early career, and how did you handle it? What advice do you have for other early career school psychologists with similar challenges?

After my first year as a school psychologist, I realized that best practices and reality don't always coexist in the neat and tidy way that textbooks in graduate school led me to believe. I found myself frequently dealing with moral outrage at systemic failures that affected the students and families I was working with. Early on, I tried to combat these feelings by engaging in what I thought was self-care. I would force myself to a yoga class or take a bubble bath; however, when

I engaged in these activities they didn't help me calm down or feel restored. I needed to figure out what was restorative to me, and it took a period of trial and error to figure out what worked and what didn't. Over time, I learned that an essential part of my self-care was engaging in advocacy efforts to help change the things about the educational system that I felt was having a negative impact on the community that I worked in. When I feel like I can contribute to change at the larger level, it helps me manage my feelings of frustration when working with a student who is being negatively affected by a law, policy, or procedure of which I have no direct, immediate control. In addition to advocating, I realized how much I value spending time outdoors and how restorative it feels to hike in the Colorado Rockies or to explore a new place. The balance I've struck between advocacy and spending time outdoors has proved successful for me in preventing burnout. One of my recommendations for any early career psychologist is to be sensitive to the very real risk of burnout and to identify what personally works for you to help you feel restored and empowered.

Additionally, I cannot emphasize enough how thankful I am for the incredible mentors and colleagues who have supported me throughout my career so far. Having a network of colleagues to consult with on difficult cases, provide guidance through ethical dilemmas, and offer fresh perspectives when faced with a challenging scenario has been invaluable. Another piece of advice for new practitioners is to utilize your network of colleagues and mentors and stay in touch with former professors and supervisors. NASP and some state associations offer opportunities for mentorship for new practitioners, so there are lots of ways to connect with other professionals in the field!

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

I have NASP to thank for my passion for advocacy—I attended PPI in graduate school and have been hooked ever since! I felt so inspired and empowered by this training and brought many of the things I learned back with me to my state. Since initially attending PPI, I have gotten involved with NASP by serving as a Western Regional Representative on the NASP GPR committee. In this role, I have been able to support public policy and advocacy-related activities on a national scale and learn from incredibly inspiring colleagues. I currently am the Interest Group Coordinator of the NASP Advocacy and Public Policy Interest Group and have had the opportunity to support states and practitioners around the country with their advocacy efforts. I also am the GPR state liaison for Colorado and help activate advocacy efforts within my state when needed.

NASP membership is important to me because of how many excellent resources that it provides. The fact sheets, infographics, position statements, and articles have proven useful time and time again in my daily work. When advocating for NCSP parity within my district, I was able to pull from resources that NASP had already created on the topic. When my school community is faced with a crisis, the NASP resources on trauma are helpful for our school staff and families. The breadth and depth of information and resources provided through NASP makes my membership well worth it.