2022 Advocacy Academy: Speaker Bios

Chuck Archer, M.A.
NASP Government and Professional Relations (GPR) Committee Member (Central Regional Rep)
Chuck Archer is a recently retired practitioner with over 40 years of service in our field. Most of those years were spent in the Zanesville City Schools (OH) as a Research Psychologist, which included duties related to data analysis and sharing current trends in education with staff. Mr. Archer was active in his state association, the Ohio School Psychologists Association, serving as a past-president and spending over 20 years chairing their Legislative Committee. He was also NASP’s GPR Liaison to Ohio for 15 years. Chuck has recently completed a term as Delegate for the State of Ohio to NASP, and is the newest addition to the GPR Committee, representing the Central Region.

Renee Bradley, Ph.D.
Program Specialist, Research to Practice Division Office of Special Education Programs, US Department of Education
Dr. Renee Bradley has over thirty-five years of experience in special education. She began her career as a teacher of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. During those eight years she worked in a variety of settings from self-contained to an inclusion program to providing homebound services working with children preschool through high school. After working in a teacher training master’s program for non-traditional students, Renee joined the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Research to Practice Division in 1997. Among her accomplishments she has served as the project officer for the National Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions, coordinated the OSEP Attract, Prepare and Retain Personnel Initiative, the Learning Disabilities Initiative, and the Partnership Project. Renee has written and contributed to numerous publications and is a frequent presenter on special education issues. Renee has a bachelors and master’s in special education from the College of Charleston and her Ph.D. in Leadership and Policy from the University of South Carolina.

Kathy Cowan
Director of Communications, National Association of School Psychologists
Kathy Cowan is NASP’s Director of Communications. Kathy is responsible for coordinating general communications, crisis communications, and media relations for NASP, as well as supporting the communications needs of NASP programs, advocacy, and marketing. Prior to joining NASP in 2000, she was Director of Communications and Community Outreach for Crossway Community, a nonprofit residential program for homeless women and their children.

Sharon Hoover, Ph.D.
Professor, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Co-Director, National Center for School Mental Health
Director, NCTSN Center for Safe Supportive Schools
Dr. Sharon Hoover is a licensed clinical psychologist and Professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Co-Director of the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH, www.schoolmentalhealth.org). She currently leads national efforts to support states, districts and schools in the adoption of national performance standards of comprehensive school mental health systems.
Dr. Hoover has led and collaborated on multiple federal and state grants, with a commitment to the study and implementation of quality children’s mental health services.

Creating safe, supportive and resilient schools has been a major emphasis of Dr. Hoover’s research, education and clinical work. She has worked with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) to train school district and school leaders, educators and support staff in multi-tiered systems of support for psychological trauma. She has trained school and community behavioral health staff and educators in districts across the United States and internationally. In 2020, Dr. Hoover was awarded a SAMHSA grant to develop the NCTSN Center for Safe Supportive Schools (www.ncs3.org), aimed at integrating trauma-informed policies and practices in school mental health systems, with a specific focus on social justice and supporting youth of color, newcomer youth, and other marginalized students and families. Since the onset of COVID-19, Dr. Hoover has worked with education and mental health leaders across the United States as they support educators, students and their families with social, emotional and academic needs amidst the global pandemic.

Celeste Malone, PhD, MS
Associate Professor and Coordinator, School Psychology Program, Howard University

Celeste Malone is an associate professor and coordinator of the school psychology program at Howard University. She received her PhD in school psychology from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. Prior to obtaining her doctorate, Dr. Malone received her MS in school counseling from Johns Hopkins University. Her primary research interest relates to multicultural and diversity issues embedded in the training and practice of school psychology. Specifically, Dr. Malone focuses on multicultural competence, the ability to work effectively with diverse populations through the application of cultural knowledge and to demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to cultural issues. The overarching themes of her research are as follows: 1) development of multicultural competence through education and training, 2) diversification of the profession, and 3) the relationship between culturally competent practice and PK-12 student outcomes. Related to her interest in professional issues in school psychology, Dr. Malone has continuously held leadership positions in psychology professional associations. She currently serves on the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Board of Directors as the strategic liaison for the social justice strategic goal. In that capacity, Dr. Malone works closely with NASP boards and committees to develop and implement programs and activities to address social justice issues in school psychology and education. Additionally, Dr. Malone is an elected member of the American Psychological Association (APA) Board of Educational Affairs, the governance group which develops policies for education and training in psychology.

Byron McClure, Ed.D., NCSP
Founder, Lessons for SEL

Dr. Byron McClure is a National Certified School Psychologist who redesigned a high school in Southeast, D.C. His work centers around influencing change and ensuring students from high-poverty communities have access to a quality education. Dr. McClure has extensive knowledge and expertise in mental health, social-emotional learning, and behavior. Dr. McClure has done considerable work advocating for healing-centered practices for all students, particularly, for African-American boys. He has designed and implemented school-wide initiatives such as SEL, restorative practices, MTSS, and trauma-responsive practices. As a result of this work, his school won the 2019-2020 Whole Child Award. Dr. McClure has presented across the country as a panelist, featured, and keynote speaker. He believes in maximizing everyone’s limitless potential.

Tess Melendrez
NASP GPR Committee (Western Regional Rep)

Tess Melendrez is a doctoral candidate working towards her Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration. She was a practicing school psychologist for 7 years and then moved into a position as a program specialist. Tess now supports mild/moderate programming at four secondary schools and sits on task force groups to support systemic programs related to mental health and students with disabilities. Tess’ advocacy interests are in the areas of mental health, school psychologist shortages, and leadership.
Becca Murdoch
Manager of Policy and Advocacy, National Association of School Psychologists
Becca Murdoch is the Manager of Policy and Advocacy for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). In her role at NASP, Becca works with public policy makers, educational and health professionals, and other stakeholders in education and mental health to advocate for the importance and value of school psychology, school psychologists and school psychological services. She represents NASP in the Child, Adolescent, Education Working Group of the Mental Health Liaison Group, collaborating with other organizations on efforts to improve the mental health and well-being of students. Before joining NASP, Becca served as a legislative correspondent in the office of Senator Doug Jones (AL) on a portfolio that included education, agriculture, and immigration issues. She graduated from the University of Alabama’s College of Communication and Information Sciences with a B.A. in 2017.

Kari Oyen, Ph.D., L.P., N.C.S.P.
Assistant Professor, University of South Dakota, and NASP GPR Committee Chair and Central Regional Representative
Dr. Kari Oyen is an Assistant Professor of School Psychology. Dr. Oyen earned her doctorate in school psychology from the University of South Dakota. Her primary focus of research is the identity and unique practice of rural education. Her research investigates the role of the provision of services in rural settings and how that relates to student outcomes. She also examines the impact of trauma and child maltreatment on student outcomes in rural settings. She also examines the role of advocacy in public service settings. She engages in quantitative methods to examine the role of rural education and variables that impact a comprehensive role and access to services. Dr. Oyen is the past President of the South Dakota Association of School Psychologists and the Co-Chair of the National Association of School Psychologists Government Professional Relations Committee. Dr. Oyen is on the writing team for the 2020 revision of the NASP practice model. She has published research in Contemporary School Psychology and Psychological Services.

Chavez Phelps, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Georgia State University, and NASP GPR Committee Southeastern Representative
Chavez Phelps is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. He is an assistant professor of school psychology at Georgia State University. His research interests include examining the impact of school-based trauma interventions and strategies. He has conducted several trauma-informed care workshops for school districts and educators. Before entering academia, Chavez functioned as a school-based practitioner in New Orleans, Louisiana. He also worked with the Louisiana Public Health Institute to ensure youth had access to quality community behavioral health services.

Kristin Rush, M.S.
Social Emotional Learning Policy and Program Specialist, Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, and NASP GPR Committee Western Representative
Kristin Rush currently serves as the Social Emotional Learning Policy and Program Specialist for the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, whose mission is to establish, uphold and enforce professional standards of excellence and communicate those standards to the public and educators for the benefit of Oregon’s students. Prior to serving in this role, Kristin was a school psychologist for Springfield Public Schools in Oregon for seven years. Kristin received her M.S. in School Psychology from the University of Oregon.

Anastasia (Stacy) Kalamaros Skalski, Ph.D.
Director, Professional Policy and Practice, National Association of School Psychologists
Dr. Anastasia (Stacy) Skalski is Director of Professional Policy and Practice for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), where she works collaboratively with national policy makers, state leaders, educational and health professionals, and elected officials to advocate for expanding school-based mental health services for children and youth. Dr. Skalski has thirty years of experience as a school psychologist practitioner, professor, school administrator, and advocate for children’s mental health. Prior to joining the NASP staff in 2005, Dr. Skalski served as Coordinator of Mental Health Services for the Douglas County School District (DCSD), Castle Rock, Colorado; as Assistant Research Professor in School Psychology and Initial Teacher Preparation at the
University of Colorado at Denver; and as a school psychologist for the Douglas County and Cherry Creek School Districts. Over the last two decades, she has written numerous articles and delivered hundreds of professional presentations, trainings, and in-services across the USA on legal issues, advocacy, assessment, behavior planning, school violence prevention, crisis intervention, response to intervention, and professional issues in school mental health. Dr. Skalski received her BA in psychology from Hanover College in Indiana (1985), her MA in educational psychology from the University of Denver (1986), and her PhD in school psychology from the University of Denver (1991).

Shlon Smith  
**Student Member, NASP GPR Committee Student Member**

Shlon Smith is a current school psychology Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia and the exiting NASP GPR Committee Student Member. Shlon’s research interests center around addressing the academic and mental health needs of students in low-income and urban communities. Her research focuses on effective and comprehensive policy development and implementation that specifically addresses the health and wellness needs of vulnerable populations who may experience food insecurity, lack of access to health care, and other adverse childhood experiences. Shlon’s school psychology training and advocacy background, which focus on the academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of students, makes her uniquely qualified to examine the lack of mental health services primarily in schools serving low-income, diverse populations and its effects on student outcomes.

Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach, Ph.D., N.C.S.P.  
**Director of Policy and Advocacy, National Association of School Psychologists**

Dr. Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach is the Director of Policy and Advocacy for the National Association of School Psychologists, where she works collaboratively with public policy makers, educational and health professionals, and elected officials to advocate for the importance and value of school psychology, school psychologists and school psychological services. She also represents NASP on a number of coalitions working to advocate for public policies and practices that support NASP’s mission and serves on the Board of Directors for the Committee for Education Funding and the Title-IVA coalition. Prior to joining the NASP staff in 2011, Kelly spent seven years practicing as a school psychologist in Loudoun County Public Schools (VA). Dr. Strobach has developed, authored, and coauthored numerous articles and resources, including NASP’s *Framework for Safe and Successful Schools* and has presented nationally on issues related to school safety, school mental health, effective discipline policies, and the relationship between education policy and school practices. Kelly earned her BA in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, her MA and Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) in School Psychology from Appalachian State University, and her PhD in Education Policy at George Mason University.

Julia Szarko, Ph.D, N.C.S.P.  
**School Psychologist and NASP GPR Committee (NE Regional Rep)**

Dr. Julia E. Szarko is currently a school psychologist in the Central Bucks School District in Doylestown, PA. Julia completed an MS and PhD in School Psychology from The Pennsylvania State University in 1996 and 2000, respectively. She has a background in testing performance and behaviors of children with autism and related developmental disabilities, and she has extensive experience in student and system level intervention and support. Julia joined Central Bucks School District in 2005 after spending 8 years practicing as a school psychologist in Virginia. She has served on the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP) legislative board since 2007, including positions of Legislative Chair, President, Secretary, and organizer for the association’s annual conventions. Julia was selected as the 2021 School Psychologist of the Year for her commitment to the profession through her advocacy work addressing not only the needs of the children, families, and schools she works with, but for also working on improving systems to better schools and the profession.

Nate von der Embse, Ph.D.  
**Associate Professor, University of South Florida and NASP GPR Committee Past-Chair**

Dr. Nathaniel P. von der Embse is an Associate Professor of school psychology at the University of South Florida and former Chair of the Government and Professional Relations Committee for NASP. Dr. von der Embse serves as an associate editor for the Journal of School Psychology, and his research interests include universal screening for
behavioral and mental health, teacher stress and student test anxiety, and training educators in population-based mental health services. He received the 2018 Lightner Witmer Award for early career scholarship from Division 16 of the American Psychological Association.

Valerie C. Williams  
**Director, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEL), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the U.S. Department of Education**

Valerie Williams serves as the director in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the U.S. Department of Education. In this role, she is responsible for overseeing administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which authorizes formula grants to states under IDEA Part B and to lead agencies for the infants and families program under IDEA Part C. IDEA also authorizes discretionary grants under IDEA Part D to institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations to support grants for state personnel development, technical assistance and dissemination, technology, and parent training and information centers.