

How to Advocate During ... National School Psychology Week (NSPW)

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Describe a time when you advocated as part of NSPW (previously School Psychology Awareness Week).

I participated in program activities for School Psychology Awareness Week in the fall of 2018 and fall of 2019. Our student organization held a bunch of different kinds of activities to try and raise awareness on campus. One of my favorites was when I and another cabinet member from our student group went and spoke to one of the introduction to psychology classes about school psychology.

I'm really passionate about this because I want to help kids, and I think one of the best and most effective ways to do that is through the school system. Growing up, I loved school because that's where I felt most supported. It's important to me that the students I serve feel the same way. Even if they don't like school that much, I want them to know without a doubt that there is at least one person in their building who cares and who they can turn to if they need something.

I want to make the school system better and be a force of positive change in my state/district/individual schools. I think it's important that others understand our role and how vital it is to special education but also to the student population in general. We are trained in so many different areas, and some people may have a very narrow perception of what we can actually do because they aren't familiar with our training. If we can get our ratios down to NASP standards, we could do so much more in our buildings and districts to help students thrive. In order to get those ratios though, we have to increase our numbers and address the shortage.

What advice would you give to individuals just starting their graduate careers on how to advocate during NSPW?

Get involved however you can. Raising awareness about what school psychologists do and why we are important is one of the most important things we can do at this point to bring more attention to our profession.

What advice would you give individuals in the middle of their graduate careers on how to advocate during NSPW?

Even if you're tired and feel like you have a ton of things to do, find a way to get involved, even if it seems small. Post on social media, talk to someone about your career, or pass out information.

What advice would you give individuals toward the end of their graduate careers on how to advocate during NSPW?

Stay the course. You are often your own best advocate. Take responsibility for advocating for what you will need as an early career professional.

What is the main thing you want readers to know about advocating during NSPW for the field of school psychology?

A lot of people don't understand this profession or have misconceptions about what it is. Meet these with patience and grace and take the time to educate rather than shutting down. It can feel like an uphill battle, getting people to understand what you do. It is worth the time and effort to be seen and heard.