



Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania

Promoting best practices in school psychology

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Local Educator – Pennsylvania School Psychologist Recognized as 2023 National School Psychologist of the Year

Each year, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recognizes one school psychologist who exemplifies the role of a school psychologist and demonstrates outstanding commitment to the field. This year's recipient of the School Psychologist of the Year award is Pennsylvania's own Jason Pedersen, Ph.D., NCSP. Dr. Pedersen is proud to serve the Derry Township School District as the school psychologist at the Hershey Early Childhood Center and Hershey Middle School in Hershey, PA.



Dr. Pedersen's commitment to the students, families, and schools that he serves as a school-based practitioner is outstanding. His excellence in leadership is evident in his district's adoption of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) frameworks for both behavior (school-wide positive behavioral interventions and support; SWPBIS) and academics (RTI). These frameworks are crucial to students' success in that they provide for strategies that promote students' behavioral and academic successes and intervene to prevent problems as needed. Dr. Pedersen continues to support the implementation of these frameworks, in part as a member of the Hershey Elementary and Middle School PBIS Committee. Dr. Pedersen also prioritizes students' mental health and social-emotional learning. He developed a comprehensive K-12 curriculum to foster and promote resilience, he is one of the Derry Township School District SEL Team Leads, and he is a Safe Crisis Management trainer. Most recently, he co-developed an emotional support plan for bringing students back to school after the COVID-19 shutdown. With Dr. Pedersen's leadership and vision for school psychological service provision in his district, he was integral to Derry Township School District being awarded one of NASP's inaugural Excellence in School Psychological Services (ESPS) awards in 2020.

Dr. Pedersen's leadership and advocacy skills are also evident in his work at the state and national levels. Dr. Pedersen served on the ASPP Executive Board for fourteen years, with three of those years served as president of ASPP. During his tenure as Advocacy Chair, there was a push by APA to reserve the term of psychologist for only individuals with doctorates. Dr. Pedersen secured a letter of support for the role, function, certification and name of school psychologists from the Secretary of Education as well as support from PPA in maintaining the school psychology credential at the specialist level. As president, he

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worked with the School District of Philadelphia's school psychology department and Dr. Julia Szarko to coordinate a response to prevent the administration's plan to cut their school psychology staff in half. Dr. Pedersen continues to support ASPP by advocating for school psychologists to expand their roles to more comprehensive service provision, by recruiting new school psychology trainees, and by mentoring future leaders of school psychology in Pennsylvania. At the national level, Dr. Pedersen just completed a term as Pennsylvania's NASP delegate and as a member of NASP's board of directors.

Dr. Pedersen's contributions to school psychology extend beyond his excellence as a practitioner and advocate. He provides training and mentorship to school psychology trainees annually. Dr. Pedersen also contributes to school psychology literature to inform best practices. He co-authored a book on the use of data-based decision making in schools, a chapter in *Best Practices in School Psychology* (6th edition), as well as several articles in peer-reviewed journals. He has also delivered numerous presentations at local, state, and national conferences, and he presents at state-wide trainings for Pennsylvania educators. Dr. Pedersen's work to prepare new school psychology trainees and his scholarship will have a lasting impact on the field.

Dr. Pedersen continues to be committed to serving the Derry Township School District community and is a truly exemplary school psychologist. Please join ASPP in recognizing and sharing Dr. Pedersen's achievement as NASP School Psychologist of the Year.