

# New TAESE Specialist Honored As A School Psychology Advocate | CPD Blog

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Frank Podobnik, who is new to the Center for Persons with Disabilities, was recently recognized by the National Association of School Psychologists for his work as Montana's Special Education director. He held that position before joining the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education, part of the CPD at Utah State University.

NASP gave him the Outstanding Advocate Award for contributing to policy in education and mental health services in Montana. He addressed a shortage of school psychologists in his state by improving training, providing mentorship and starting a stipend program so that trainees could receive some compensation while they were receiving training.

He also helped schools better understand school psychology as a field. "I was working with the school psychologists in Montana to increase the awareness among families and school administrators and staff about the many skills school psychologists have," he said. He focused especially on their role in providing mental health services to their children.

He brought that award-winning expertise with him when he joined the CPD. After seven years as the state director in the Montana Office of Public Instruction, he is now a technical assistance specialist who works with state-level administrators to develop guidelines on how services should be provided to schools—ultimately ensuring that children with disabilities are included with their peers as much as possible. He brings his own experience as an administrator into that role.

"All of that work funnels down to how a teacher interacts with a student," he said. "The work that we [at TAESE] do often influences policy decisions at the state level, and training that is provided to the staff.

Congratulations and welcome, Frank!