



There Is No Better Time to Consider a Career in School Psychology!

Demand for school psychologists is exceptionally strong and on the rise. As life has become more stressful, schools and communities have come under increasing pressure to provide mental health and instructional support for children and youth. Furthermore, the profession currently faces large-scale retirements and subsequent shortages of trained school psychologists to fill positions nationwide. Particularly in school systems, school psychology provides a stable career with growth opportunities and good health and retirement benefits.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY:

A Career That Makes a Difference



What Do School Psychologists Do?

School psychologists help children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. They team with educators, parents, and other mental health professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students that strengthen connections between home and school.

What Skills Do School Psychologists Need?

Whether they work in schools, mental health centers, hospital clinics, or other settings, school psychologists must have training in both psychology and education. Their broad range of skills enables them to engage in:

- Consultation with school personnel and families about students' learning, behavior, and learning environments
- Assessment of academic skills and aptitudes, social/emotional development, mental health, and eligibility for special services
- Individual, group, and organizational interventions, including counseling
- Research and evaluation to help identify and develop effective programs and strategies
- Workshops and presentations to teachers and parents to help them better understand and support students' learning, development, and mental health



Each day is different. Each situation is challenging and unique. — *Charlie Deupree, School Psychologist, Ionia, MI*

The National Association of School Psychologists represents more than 22,000 school psychologists and related professionals who serve the education and mental health needs of children, adolescents, young adults, and families.



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Where Do School Psychologists Work?

School psychologists serve all age groups from infancy through college and work in a variety of settings, including:

- Public and nonpublic school systems
- Community mental health centers
- Hospital and medical school pediatric clinics
- Public policy and public health agencies
- The criminal justice system
- University settings (training programs, research centers, student counseling centers)
- Private practice

Why Choose a Career in School Psychology?

As a school psychologist you can make a positive, lasting difference in children's lives. Schools today serve increasingly diverse and dynamic student populations. Every child brings unique strengths and challenges to the learning process. School psychologists are a vital part of the effort to unlock each child's potential for success.

When I review my career, what stands out most is helping parents of different cultures view the school as a helpful resource to successfully address the needs of their children. — *Robin Satchell, School Psychologist, Anne Arundel County, MD*

Youth have a lot of potential for improvement, and I have enjoyed being part of the change for the better. — *Phil Bowser, School Psychologist, Roseburg, OR*



School Psychology Offers an Ideal Career for Individuals Who Are Interested in:

- Addressing psychological factors that impact learning and behavior in the school context
- Helping children develop and learn to their fullest potential
- Working collaboratively with parents and teachers to support children's school experiences
- Changing school practices and policies to help children overcome impediments to achievement
- Engaging in challenging and diverse activities and flexible professional roles
- Developing strong team member and leadership skills
- Promoting appreciation and support for human diversity
- Developing good interpersonal and communication skills
- Demonstrating the highest standards for ethical and professional behavior

What Preparation Is Needed Prior to Entering Graduate School?

Graduate programs in school psychology usually require a Bachelor's degree and some coursework in general psychology, child development, and education. Some school psychology programs give preference to applicants with undergraduate majors in psychology and/or education, or may require that prerequisite coursework be completed prior to formal enrollment. Although a teaching degree or classroom experience is seldom required, these perspectives can be useful for school psychologists. Good oral and written communication skills are also important. During undergraduate study, it is helpful at least to take introductory courses in:

- Child development
- General and child psychology
- Statistics, measurement, and research methods
- Philosophy and theories of education
- Instruction and curriculum
- Special education

Be sure to obtain specific admission criteria and application procedures for any school psychology programs of interest, as they vary. Most programs will require an entrance test such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE).

What Training Is Required?

Minimally, most states require completion of a post-Master's degree graduate program (e.g., Educational Specialist). Although individual states may have somewhat different requirements for credentialing, training in a school psychology program at a "specialist" level (i.e., a three-year graduate degree in school psychology, which includes a full academic year of internship) is required by the National School Psychology Certification System, and by the standards of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

What Credentials Are Required?

It is necessary to possess a state-issued credential to practice as a school psychologist. Each state has a credentialing body, usually within its Department of Education, that regulates the practices of school personnel. Be sure to check credentialing requirements for the states where you want to work. Many states now accept the national credential (NCSP) as an alternative means of qualifying for the state credential. More information about the NCSP program is available at: www.nasponline.org/certification/ncsp_system.html

School psychology seemed the perfect career to positively impact children's learning and psychological health, and to reach those who might otherwise be missed by the mental health system. — *Sonya Lanier, School Psychology Graduate Student, University of Maryland, College Park*

What if I Already Have Graduate Work in Psychology or Education?

Many individuals with backgrounds in teaching, counseling, clinical psychology, social work, and other related fields are attracted to the profession of school psychology. Those who already have completed graduate level study may be able to have some school psychology program requirements waived. Contact school psychology programs of interest for more information.

What Is a NASP-Approved Program?

Programs that are approved by NASP meet the curriculum and training standards established by the organization, the largest national association that guides and supports the profession. NASP approves both Specialist and Doctoral programs that meet its standards. Some Doctoral programs also meet training standards of the American Psychological Association (APA).

How Do I Select a Training Program?

It is essential to select a university with a specific program in school psychology, whether it is independent or housed within a department of special education, education, psychology or child development. There are over 200 such programs in the United States. Many factors must be considered in selecting the program that is best for you, such as:



- Doctoral program vs. post-Master's (e.g., Specialist) degree program
- Consistency with national standards for training
- Faculty qualifications and specializations
- Size of program
- Location (region, type of community)
- Internship opportunities
- Specialty focus—early childhood, counseling, developmental disabilities, etc.
- Research opportunities
- Availability of financial support
- Employment rates of program graduates

A complete list of training programs and more information about NASP-approved programs and Training Standards are available at www.nasponline.org/certification/standards.html

I enjoy helping students see their individual differences as strengths that can help them be successful in school and life. — *Deborah Crockett, School Psychologist, Atlanta, GA*