

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

A Career That Makes a Difference



WHY CHOOSE A CAREER IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY?

School psychologists can make a positive, lasting difference in children's lives. They are a vital part of the effort to unlock each child's potential for success. School psychology is an ideal career for individuals that are interested in:

- Working directly with children and adolescents
- Supporting students with mental health needs by providing counseling, skill instruction, and learning and support plans
- Assessing and evaluating individual differences to identify intervention strategies
- Working collaboratively with parents and teachers to support children's success
- Changing practices and policies to improve school outcomes
- Engaging in challenging and diverse activities that change from day to day
- Using research to inform practices
- Developing strong team member and leadership skills

- Promoting appreciation and support for human diversity
- Demonstrating the highest standards for ethical and professional behavior
- Helping students thrive at home, in school, and in life

WHAT DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS DO?

School psychologists apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. They provide assessment, support, and intervention services to students; partner with families, teachers, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments; work with school administrators to improve school-wide policies; and collaborate with community providers to coordinate services for students.

WHERE DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS WORK?

The vast majority of school psychologists work in K–12 public schools. They also provide services in a variety of other settings, including:

- Private and charter schools
- Preschools and other early childhood settings
- School district administration offices
- Colleges and universities
- School-based health and mental health centers
- Community-based day treatment or residential clinics and hospitals
- Juvenile justice programs
- Independent private practice

WHAT CREDENTIALS ARE REQUIRED TO PRACTICE?

One must hold the proper state-issued credential to practice as a school psychologist in any given state or territory. Specific requirements vary across states. Be sure to check credentialing requirements for the states where you want to work, and use NASP's resource for state credentialing information: <http://www.nasponline.org/state-credentialing-requirements>.

NASP also maintains the NCSP credential. The majority of states now recognize the NCSP as partially or fully meeting state credentialing requirements. More information can be found at: <https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/national-certification/why-become-an-ncsp>.

THERE IS NO BETTER TIME TO CONSIDER A CAREER IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY!

Demand for school psychologists is exceptionally strong and on the rise. School psychology has consistently been rated among the 100 Best Jobs in U.S. News and World Report. Awareness of the need to provide mental health and instructional supports for children and youth in schools continues to grow. Furthermore, the profession currently faces shortages of qualified school psychologists to fill positions nationwide. There is a particular need for professionals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. School psychology provides a stable career with growth opportunities, good health and retirement benefits, and an opportunity to positively impact youth and families.

WHAT EDUCATION IS REQUIRED TO BECOME A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST?

States typically require a graduate degree and supervised experience in school psychology to work as a school psychologist. Specific admission criteria and application procedures for graduate programs in school psychology vary, although they often require a Bachelor's degree with a major in psychology, child development, sociology, or education. At a minimum, it is helpful to have introductory courses in one or more of the following:

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

School psychology programs may also give preference to applicants with previous experience working with youth in settings that include recreational camps, classrooms, mentor programs, day care centers, or after school programs. Although seldom required, a teaching degree or experience can sometimes improve the potential for admission. Applicants interested in respecialization (e.g., current mental health professional or educator looking for a career change) should contact graduate programs of interest for information.

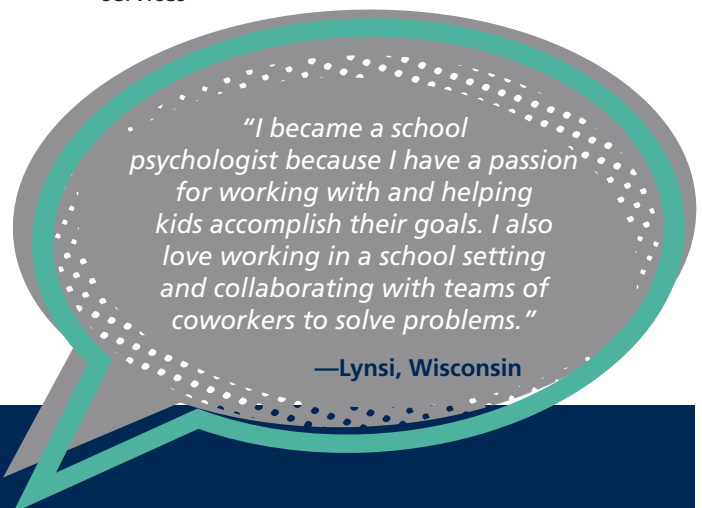
WHAT DEGREES ARE OFFERED?

School psychologists typically complete either a specialist-level degree program (at least 60 graduate semester hours and usually three years) or a doctoral degree (at least 90 graduate semester hours and often five to six years). Both degrees culminate in a year-long 1,200- to 1,500-hour supervised internship. The specialist-level degree is the national standard for entry into the field and allows for comprehensive practice and career advancement in schools. A doctoral degree is also appropriate for practicing in schools and is essential to working in academia and pursuing certain research interests. Some universities offer both degrees, allowing students in the specialist-level program to transfer to the doctoral program within the first two years of coursework.

WHAT TRAINING DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS RECEIVE?

School psychologists' training emphasizes using research-based methods, understanding both individual and environmental factors influencing learning and behavior, and individual and systems level interventions. More specifically, school psychologists develop knowledge and skills in areas such as:

- Data collection and analysis
- Assessment
- Resilience and risk factors
- Consultation and collaboration
- Academic/learning interventions
- Mental and behavioral health
- Instructional support
- Prevention and intervention services
- Special education services
- Crisis preparedness, response, and recovery
- Family-school-community collaboration
- Diversity in development and learning
- Cultural competence
- Research and program evaluation
- Professional ethics and school law



"I became a school psychologist because I have a passion for working with and helping kids accomplish their goals. I also love working in a school setting and collaborating with teams of coworkers to solve problems."

—Lynsi, Wisconsin

WHAT ARE THE CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTING A GRADUATE PROGRAM?

Applicants should apply to programs specifically titled "school psychology." There are over 300 such programs in the United States. Some factors to consider include:

- Doctoral program versus specialist-level degree program
- Program approval/accreditation status
- Faculty qualifications, specializations, and interests
- Size of program
- Location (region, type of community)
- Practicum and internship opportunities
- Research opportunities
- Availability of financial support
- Employment rates of program graduates

Find additional information about selecting a graduate program and access to our program database at <http://www.nasponline.org/become-a-school-psych>.

WHAT IS A NASP-APPROVED PROGRAM?

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) sets standards for graduate preparation, credentialing, professional practice, and ethics. NASP approves both specialist-level and doctoral programs that meet its graduate preparation standards. Graduates of NASP-approved programs receive quality preparation across all domains of practice and can have a streamlined process for applying for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential.

A complete list of NASP-approved programs is also available at: <http://www.nasponline.org/nasp-approved-programs>.

NASP 
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School Psychologists

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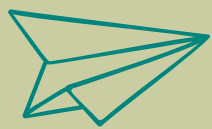
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

support students' ability to learn and
teachers' ability to teach.

THEY ARE EXPERTS IN



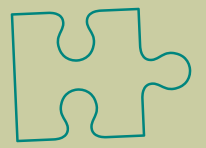
Learning



Behavior



Mental Health



School Systems

THEY PROVIDE

- Academic, behavioral, and mental health supports
- Evaluation, assessment, and data analysis
- Consultation with teachers and families
- Culturally responsive services
- Crisis prevention and response



THEY SUPPORT

- Struggling and diverse learners
- Student achievement and well-being
- Safe and supportive learning environments
- School-family-community partnerships
- School-wide data-based decision making

THEY SERVE

in schools and
other educational
and clinical settings.




RECOMMENDED RATIO

1 school psychologist per **500–700** students

**Lowering barriers to learning is critical to
children's success in school.**

Contact your school psychologist to find out
how they can help.

School Psychologists:
Helping Children Thrive • In School • At Home • In Life
www.nasponline.org

NASP 
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
School Psychologists



Who Are _____ SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS?

Helping Children Thrive • In School • At Home • In Life

WHAT DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS DO?

School psychologists provide direct support and interventions to students; consult with teachers, families, and other school-employed mental health professionals (i.e., school counselors, school social workers) to improve support strategies; work with school administrators to improve school-wide practices and policies; and collaborate with community providers to coordinate needed services.

School psychologists help schools successfully:

Improve Academic Achievement

- Promote student motivation and engagement
- Conduct psychological and academic assessments
- Individualize instruction and interventions
- Manage student and classroom behavior
- Monitor student progress
- Collect and interpret student and classroom data
- Reduce inappropriate referrals to special education.

Promote Positive Behavior and Mental Health

- Improve students communication and social skills
- Assess student emotional and behavioral needs
- Provide individual and group counseling
- Promote problem solving, anger management, and conflict resolution
- Reinforce positive coping skills and resilience
- Promote positive peer relationships and social problem solving
- Make referrals to and coordinate services with community-based providers

Support Diverse Learners

- Assess diverse learning needs
- Provide culturally responsive services to students and families from diverse backgrounds
- Plan appropriate Individualized Education Programs for students with disabilities
- Modify and adapt curricula and instruction
- Adjust classroom facilities and routines to improve student engagement and learning
- Monitor and effectively communicate with parents about student progress

Create Safe, Positive School Climates

- Prevent bullying and other forms of violence
- Support social-emotional learning
- Assess school climate and improve school connectedness
- Implement and promote positive discipline and restorative justice
- Implement school-wide positive behavioral supports
- Identify at-risk students and school vulnerabilities
- Provide crisis prevention and intervention services

Strengthen Family-School Partnerships

- Help families understand their children's learning and mental health needs
- Assist in navigating special education processes
- Connect families with community service providers when necessary
- Help effectively engage families with teachers and other school staff
- Enhance staff understanding of and responsiveness to diverse cultures and backgrounds
- Help students transition between school and community learning environments, such as residential treatment or juvenile justice programs

Improve School-Wide Assessment and Accountability

- Monitor individual student progress in academics and behavior
- Generate and interpret useful student and school outcome data
- Collect and analyze data on risk and protective factors related to student outcomes
- Plan services at the district, building, classroom, and individual levels

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS HELP STUDENTS THRIVE

School psychologists are uniquely qualified members of school teams that support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community.



WHAT TRAINING DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS RECEIVE?

School psychologists receive specialized advanced graduate preparation that includes coursework and practical experiences relevant to both psychology and education. School psychologists typically complete either a specialist-level degree program (at least 60 graduate semester hours) or a doctoral degree (at least 90 graduate semester hours), both of which include a year-long 1,200-hour supervised internship. Graduate preparation develops knowledge and skills in:

- Data collection and analysis
- Assessment
- Progress monitoring
- School-wide practices to promote learning
- Resilience and risk factors
- Consultation and collaboration
- Academic/learning interventions
- Mental health interventions
- Behavioral interventions
- Instructional support
- Prevention and intervention services
- Special education services
- Crisis preparedness, response, and recovery
- Family-school-community collaboration
- Diversity in development and learning
- Research and program evaluation
- Professional ethics, school law, and systems

School psychologists must be credentialed by the state in which they work. They also may be nationally certified by the National School Psychology Certification Board (NSPCB). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) sets standards for graduate preparation, credentialing, professional practice, and ethics. The NASP Practice Model (2010) outlines the comprehensive services that school psychologists are encouraged to provide and can be accessed at www.nasponline.org/practicemodel.

WHERE DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS WORK?

The vast majority of school psychologists work in K–12 public schools. They also provide services in a variety of other settings, including:

- Private schools
- Preschools
- School district administration offices
- Universities
- School-based health and mental health centers
- Community-based day treatment or residential clinics and hospitals
- Juvenile justice programs
- Independent private practice

WHY DO CHILDREN AND YOUTH NEED SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS?

All children and youth can face problems from time to time related to learning, social relationships, making difficult decisions, or managing emotions such as depression, anxiety, worry, or isolation. School psychologists help students, families, educators, and members of the community understand and resolve both long-term, chronic problems and short-term issues that students may face. They understand how these issues affect learning, behavior, well-being, and school engagement. School psychologists are highly skilled and ready resources in the effort to ensure that all children and youth thrive in school, at home, and in life.

HOW DO I CONTACT A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST?

Every school has access to the services of a school psychologist, although some school psychologists serve two or more schools so may not be at a particular school every day. Most often, school psychologists can be reached by inquiring at the school directly or at the district's central office, or by locating contact information on the school or district website.

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