



# Who Are School Psychologists

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 1200 hour supervised internship (see an [Overview of Differences Among Degrees in School Psychology](#)). 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.

**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

**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. They 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 help coordinate community services provided in schools

### **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 child'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 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

**Why Do Children 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 feeling depressed, anxious, worried, or isolated. 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 are a highly skilled and ready resource 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, the district's central office, or locating contact information on the school or district website.

## **National Association of School Psychologists**

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