

## 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.

*The National Association of School Psychologists represents more than 25,000 school psychologists and empowers school psychologists by advancing practice to improve students' learning, behavior, and mental health.*



4340 East West Highway, Suite 402  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
866-331-6277 or 301-657-0270  
[www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)



# 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

“BEING A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST IS THE  
**BEST JOB I’VE EVER HAD.**

I GET TO IMPROVE CHILDREN’S LIVES

*and support appropriate education for all. It’s a great feeling to know you’re making a positive impact on the future.”*

—Susan, Maine



# “I LOVE THE VARIETY

*in my job. I do assessment, counseling, consultation, direct academic and behavioral intervention, staff support and training, and crisis response;*

**NO DAY IS EVER THE SAME!**

—Jaimi, Texas

## 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>.