

## What is a school psychologist?

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

School psychologists are highly trained in both psychology and education. They must complete a minimum of a Specialist-level degree program (60 graduate semester credits) that includes a 1200-hour internship and emphasizes preparation in the following: data-based decision making, consultation and collaboration, effective instruction, child development, student diversity and development, school organization, prevention, intervention, mental health, learning styles, behavior, research, and program evaluation. School psychologists must be certified and/or licensed by the state in which they work. They also may be nationally certified by the National School Psychology Certification Board (NSPCB).

### | What does a school psychologist do?

School psychologists work to find the best solution for each student and situation; they use different strategies to address student needs and to improve school and district-wide support systems. School psychologists work with students individually and in groups. They also develop programs to train teachers and parents about effective teaching and learning strategies, techniques to manage behavior at home and in the classroom, working with students with disabilities or with special talents, addressing abuse of drugs and other substances, and preventing and managing crises.

In addition, most school psychologists provide the following services.

#### *Consultation*

- Collaborate with teachers, parents, and administrators to find effective solutions to learning and behavior problems.
- Help others understand child development and how it affects learning and behavior.
- Strengthen working relationships between teachers, parents, and service providers in the community.

#### *Evaluation*

- Evaluate eligibility for special services.
- Assess academic skills and aptitude for learning.
- Determine social-emotional development and mental health status.
- Evaluate learning environments.

### *Intervention*

- Provide psychological counseling to help resolve interpersonal or family problems that interfere with school performance.
- Work directly with children and their families to help resolve problems in adjustment and learning.
- Provide training in social skills and anger management.
- Help families and schools manage crises such as death, illness, or community trauma.

### *Prevention*

- Design programs for children at risk of failing at school.
- Promote tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of diversity within the school community.
- Develop programs to make schools safer and more effective learning environments.
- Collaborate with school staff and community agencies to provide services directed at improving psychological and physical health.
- Develop partnerships with parents and teachers to promote healthy school environments.

### *Research and Planning*

- Evaluate the effectiveness of academic and behavior management programs.
- Identify and implement programs and strategies to improve schools.
- Use evidence-based research to develop and/or recommend effective interventions.

Resource:

The National Association of School Psychologists

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Bethesda, MD 20814;

(301) 657-0270;

[www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)

NASP represents and supports school psychology through leadership to enhance the mental health and educational competence of all children.

*This handout was developed by Arlene Silva, University of Maryland school psychology graduate student intern at the NASP office (summer 2003), with contributions from NASP staff and leadership.*