



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGISTS

Alternative Careers & Additional Training for School Psychologists

School psychologists traditionally choose careers within the public school setting, generally serving children from pre-school through the twelfth grade. In addition to this traditional setting, there are a number of other employment settings and training opportunities available where school psychologists can apply and expand their expertise. This fact sheet highlights some of these additional and alternative possibilities.

Upon completing graduate coursework, field-based experiences, and internship, school psychologists may elect to seek specialized training in order to explore alternative career possibilities or expand their skill set. Certified and/or licensed school psychologists often have the credentials required to perform roles beyond those associated with public school settings, but in some cases, school psychologists will need to gain additional experience, training, or credentialing before pursuing an alternative career path. In addition, the degree requirements of many positions may vary at the state, district, or organizational level. For more information, visit NASP's National School Psychology [Certification and Licensure Online Resource List](#).

School Psychology University Faculty

Some individuals that choose school psychology as a profession decide to educate future school psychologists. The roles and functions of a university faculty member include teaching graduate level courses, conducting research in areas of interest to the field, supervising school psychologists in training, and actively participating in local, state, and national associations.

Tenure-track (assistant, associate, and full professor) – To obtain a tenure track position in academia, a doctoral degree is required. The majority of university faculty members hold the PhD, although the EdD and PsyD are also awarded by some school psychology departments, and would meet the minimum degree requirements to enter an academic position. In addition, most programs seeking faculty members require individuals to have graduated from a NASP-approved and/or APA-accredited program. Programs that incorporate or offer research experiences and require familiarity with higher statistical methods would best prepare an individual for a graduate-level school psychology faculty position.

Part-time instructor – Doctoral and specialist-level school psychologists may obtain university-based positions as adjunct instructors or clinical faculty members for the purposes of teaching school psychology courses and providing supervision to graduate students. This allows for the

practitioner to partake in a more “traditional” role in schools during the day, while teaching in the evening or working part-time in both roles.

As a faculty member I am able to work with school psychologists in training and shape their work with both children and adults in schools. What an amazing impact an academic career can have! In addition, an academic career allows me to engage in many things I love at once including teaching, supervising, scholarship (e.g., writing, presenting), and practice.

*–Daniel Newman, PhD, NCSP
Assistant Professor, National Louis University, Chicago, IL*

Administration

After gaining school-based experience, some individuals seek administrative positions within school systems. While some positions may not require further degrees, certifications, or licensures, additional training such as an administrative credential or doctoral degree are needed for others. State education agencies or departments of education can provide guidance for such career paths. Some examples of common administrative positions are listed below; however, many of these positions and their responsibilities may overlap depending on district.

Director of Psychological Services – Supervises a large number of school psychologists. Must be knowledgeable in state policy, procedures, and regulations of special education.

Director of Student (or Pupil) Services – Supports the academic, organizational, and social-emotional development of students through different curricular programs. Assists families and school team members in addressing the unique needs of students.

Special Education Supervisor/Director – Supervises teachers of special needs students. Participates in regular meetings regarding student service delivery. Monitors compliance with individual student education plans.

Director of Intervention and Support Services – In close coordination with teachers and administrators, implements research-based intervention curricula (e.g., Response to Intervention) tailored to individual students.

As a school psychology administrator, I am able to work with interns, newly minted, and seasoned school psychologists to assist in the continuing growth of their professional skills. My position requires me to provide clinical supervision and professional development activities for them, which ultimately leads to outstanding services for children and families. As a building based consultant, I am also fortunate to help the staff, children, and families throughout my school system. This unique position has a direct impact on staff and an indirect impact on students. It truly is an amazing career alternative!

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Private Practice

In most states, in order to obtain licensure to practice privately you need a doctoral degree, a year of postdoctoral supervision by a licensed psychologist, and passage of the Examination for Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP). However, depending on the state, if you do not have a doctoral degree, you may still be able to practice privately, either under the supervision of a licensed psychologist or in a limited role working with students on school-related issues. When engaging in private practice, school psychologists typically conduct psycho-educational evaluation and provide interventions for the prevention and treatment of educationally-relevant problems. Services could also include consultation with parents, teachers, and administrators who affect the student's education program to ensure proper service delivery. Finally, when working outside of the school setting it is important for practitioners to use the approved title for their position. Typically psychology licensing laws provide for the exemption of the use of the title "school psychologists" for unlicensed psychologists only when they are working within a school setting.

Licensed Psychologist – In practice, psychologists work with individuals, couples, families, or other groups in a variety of settings such as private practices, hospitals, mental health agencies, and correctional facilities. The focus of service is typically to provide psychological testing, diagnosis, psychotherapy, counseling, and consultation over a range of emotional, behavioral, or personal concerns.

Psychology Associate/Assistant (or other title for supervised individuals) – Practitioners that fall under this category assist in a licensed psychologist's practice, albeit under that psychologist's direct clinical supervision. Individuals holding these titles might be non-doctoral individuals, as well as doctoral level practitioners working toward post-doctoral requirements.

Licensed Educational Psychologist, Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) (or other title for unsupervised individuals) – There are a few states that allow the unsupervised practice of non-doctoral school psychologists, as well as doctoral-level individuals who have not completed their post-doctoral requirements. Such opportunities are generally limited to practices addressing school-related issues, typically involving assessment (cognitive, academic, adaptive, or behavioral), consultation with parents, and counseling on school-related topics.

As a private practitioner I am afforded many different opportunities, as well as pressures in comparison to school-based practice. Being my own boss frees me of some of the pressures that might impact or restrict professional practice, but that is offset by the fact that I have no guaranteed income, sick leave, or other benefits. I can take time off any day of the year, but never get paid leave! My choice of techniques and instruments is not limited by others, but only by the training I have received and the costs of different test materials. I certainly make more money than I did working for school districts, but if I were to calculate the amount I make per hour, given the increased hours I now work, I'm afraid it would be too depressing! I'm glad that I work in a small practice group, but sometimes I miss the camaraderie of working with a group of school psychologists and in a direct, regular association with teachers, principals and professionals from other disciplines.

*Fredric Provenzano, PhD, NCSP
Seattle, WA*

Test Publishing Company/Educational Research

Creating, developing, and revising norm-referenced assessments is yet another avenue by which a school psychologist can apply their expertise in a different setting. One could even apply their knowledge by developing written material to educate other school psychologists on theory and practice. To thrive as a school psychologist in this alternative setting, strong foundations in measurement, assessment, and statistics are recommended.

Assessment Consultant – An individual who markets and trains school psychologists in various locations on the administration, scoring, and interpretation of newly released assessment materials.

Educational Researcher – An individual who conducts research in different content areas of education, collecting data to support new educational theories. These individuals can work as research developers, statisticians, or writers who combine information and create publications to explain research results.

As an education researcher, I feel empowered to advance the quality and effectiveness of education on a large scale. I am challenged to think innovatively and to constantly build upon my knowledge base, while also remaining grounded in the realities of school and community-based practice. By combining my expertise as a practitioner and as a researcher, I strive to lessen the divide between research and practice, ultimately promoting the highest quality services and programs for students and educators.

*–Allison Nebbergall, PhD, NCSP
ICF International, Fairfax, VA*

School Neuropsychologist

School Neuropsychology is a hybrid field that incorporates brain behavior relationships, contemporary neuropsychological theory, assessment techniques, and evidence-based interventions. Additional training as a school neuropsychologist typically occurs after completion of graduate-level training, with certificate programs ranging from about 10 months to two years. Individuals who have had specialized coursework and supervision and who are certified or licensed school psychologists may be eligible to apply for the Diplomate in School Neuropsychology from the [American Board of School Neuropsychology](#) (ABSNP).

School neuropsychology has provided me with a fascinating perspective of learning and behavior by examining the fundamental tenets of how the brain encodes, organizes, and stores information. My evaluations are not only more comprehensive and in-depth by surveying most higher cortical functions, but also provides a scientific rationale for the selection of interventions based upon the functional integrity of specific neural pathways. There is nothing more satisfying than helping all children with the power of science.

*Steven G. Feifer, DEd, NCSP, ABSNP
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Behavioral Specialist

Practicing school psychologists may form specialty areas where their knowledge and expertise flourish. One such area related to the school psychology profession is the behavioral specialist. These individuals focus on areas of functional behavioral/analysis assessment and positive behavior support. Behavior specialists may be responsible for conducting trainings for parents and school staff, consulting with teachers, and providing direct services to children. Behavior specialists work in public and private schools, private practice settings, and county- or state-level educational settings, to name a few. Generally, the educational background requires additional or focused coursework on behavioral evaluation and intervention.

Autism Behavior Consultant – Provides treatment for autism and related developmental disorders. Applications of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) such as Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT) and Skinner's analysis of Verbal Behavior are often employed.

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) – This practitioner uses the principles of learning to address widely varying behavioral needs of individuals in diverse settings. In practice, a BCBA conducts functional behavior assessments, and develops, implements, and supervises behavioral and academic interventions. The BCBA certificate is overseen by the [Behavior Analysis Certification Board](#) and requires specific graduate-level coursework (e.g., behavioral analysis, single subject design, intervention), a year of supervised fieldwork, and passage of the board exam.

As a Behavioral Specialist, I assess the function of target behaviors and develop strategies to address these concerns by introducing preventative strategies, teaching replacement behaviors and reinforcing desired behaviors. I also have the opportunity to provide behavioral support to children in their classrooms and in small group settings. In addition, I consult with teachers and parents to provide strategies to further assist children in developing positive behavior patterns at school and at home.

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This fact sheet was prepared by Anna Peña, NCSP. It is based, in part, on the previous fact sheet titled, "Alternative Careers for School Psychologists," developed by Malissa Darbin in 2006.