



*Launching young readers!*

# Reading Rockets

## What Is a School Psychologist?

By: [National Association of School Psychologists](#)



School psychologists are highly trained in both psychology and education to help children be successful academically, socially, and emotionally. Learn more about their role and the kinds of support and services they offer.

### Who are school psychologists

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 post-Master's degree program that includes a year-long internship and emphasizes preparation in mental health, child development, school organization, learning styles and processes, behavior, motivation, and effective teaching.

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 school psychologists do

School psychologists work to find the best solution for each student and situation and 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 regarding effective teaching and learning strategies, effective techniques to manage behavior at home and in the classroom, working with students with disabilities or with special talents, 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.

## Where school psychologists work

The majority of school psychologists work in schools. However, they can practice in a variety of settings including:

- Public and private school systems
- School-based health centers
- Clinics and hospitals
- Private practice
- Universities
- Community and state agencies, and other institutions

## Growing up is not easy

All children and adolescents face problems from time to time. They may:

- Feel afraid to go to school
- Have difficulty organizing their time efficiently
- Lack effective study skills
- Fall behind in their school work
- Lack self-discipline
- Worry about family matters such as divorce and death
- Feel depressed or anxious
- Experiment with drugs and alcohol
- Think about suicide
- Worry about their sexuality
- Face difficult situations, such as applying to college, getting a job, or quitting school
- Question their aptitudes and abilities

School psychologists help children, parents, teachers, and members of the community understand and resolve these concerns. The following situations demonstrate how school psychologists may typically approach problems.

### Family Problems

The teacher noticed that Carla, an able student, had stopped participating in class discussions and had difficulty paying attention. The school psychologist was asked to explore why Carla's behavior had changed so much. After discovering that Carla's parents were divorcing, the school psychologist provided counseling for Carla and gave her parents suggestions for this difficult time. Carla's behavior and self-esteem improved, and she felt more secure about her relationship with her parents.

*School psychologists can be trusted to help with delicate personal and family situations that interfere with schooling.*

## Reading Problems

Tommy's parents were concerned about his difficulty in reading. They feared that he would fall behind and lose confidence in himself. In school the teacher noticed that Tommy understood what was presented in verbal form, but that he needed the help of his classmates to do written work. After observing Tommy and gathering information about his reading and writing skills, the school psychologist collaborated with his parents and teachers to develop a plan to improve his reading and writing. The plan worked, and both Tommy's reading and his self-esteem improved.

*School psychologists can help prevent future problems when they intervene with learning problems early on.*

## A Potential Dropout

David was a high school student who often skipped class. He had very poor behavior and had been suspended from school on various occasions for fighting. After establishing a relationship with David, the school psychologist taught him simple techniques to relax and to control his aggressive behavior. David's mother and his teacher worked together on a plan designed by the school psychologist to establish limits and to improve communication.

*School psychologists recognize that changes in the school environment and at home can improve the quality of life for children and their families.*

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"You may have tangible wealth untold. Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold. Richer than I you can never be — I had a mother who read to me." — Strickland Gillilan