

A Comparison of National Certifications Across School Professionals

	NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER (NBCT)	NATIONALLY CERTIFIED SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS (NCSP)	NATIONALLY CERTIFIED SCHOOL COUNSELOR (NCSC)	CERTIFICATE OF CLINICAL COMPETENCE IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY (ASHA-CCC)	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED (OTR)
AWARDED BY	The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)	National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)	National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)	American Speech Hearing Association (ASHA)	The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT)
ABOUT	The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nongovernmental organization. It was created in 1987, with the purpose of advancing the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, and creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts	The NCSP is a credential awarded through the National School Psychology Certification System of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), which is an independent, not-for-profit professional organization who created the NCSP for the purpose of credentialing school psychologists who meet rigorous, nationally recognized standards of graduate preparation, ethical and professional practice, and continuing professional development.	The NCSC is a credential awarded through the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). The NBCC is an independent, not-for-profit credentialing body, which was incorporated in 1982, whose purpose is to establish and monitor a national certification system, to identify for professionals and the public those counselors who have voluntarily sought and obtained certification, and to maintain a register of those counselors.	The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for more than 150,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists in the United States and Internationally.	The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT) is a not-for-profit credentialing agency that provides certification for the occupational therapy profession. NBCOT serves the public interest by developing, administering and continually reviewing a certification process that reflects current standards of competent practice in occupational therapy. NBCOT also works with state regulatory authorities, providing information on credentials, disciplinary actions, and regulatory and certification renewal issues

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<p>WHY BECOME NATIONALLY CERTIFIED</p>	<p>NBPTS Certification is a way for the teaching profession to define and recognize highly accomplished practice. Teachers who achieve National Board Certification have met high standards through study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review.</p> <p>The process of applying for and earning National Board Certification through the NBCT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthens practice. 2. Helps students succeed. 3. Builds leadership skills. 4. Helps expand influence and expertise with regard to curricular decisions and policies. 5. Helps advance careers. 6. Provides portability. 7. Offers higher salary potential. 8. Enhances education. 9. Meets most states' definition of "highly qualified teacher" under NCLB. 	<p>The NCSP credential aims to promote excellence in the field of school psychology by acknowledging school psychologists who meet rigorous nationally recognized standards of graduate preparation, ethical practice, and competency.</p> <p>Specialty, national certification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advances graduate preparation and practice standards to promote best practices in service to children and youth 2. Provides uniform national standards to measure professional qualifications 3. Encourages continuing professional growth and development 4. Enhances professional opportunities for credentialed school psychologists 5. Facilitates state certification through reciprocity with states that accept the NCSP 	<p>The National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) is a specialty credential which recognizes counselors who possess a minimum of a master's degree in counseling with coursework in school counseling and who have passed a challenging national application and examination process. NCSCs have a strong commitment to the school counselling profession and to providing high quality services to students, parents, teachers and communities.</p> <p>Some advantages of this certification include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification as master's level counselling practitioners who work in school settings 2. Recognition by other mental health professionals as experts on the mental health needs of today's school children and adolescents 3. Demonstration of an ongoing commitment to high quality school counselling services through continuing education 4. Salary increases in an increasing number of states and school systems across the country 	<p>The Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) is a nationally recognized professional credential that represents a level of excellence in the field of Audiology (CCC-A) or Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP). Those who have achieved the CCC—ASHA certification have voluntarily met rigorous academic and professional standards, typically going beyond the minimum requirements for state licensure.</p> <p>Why Choose ASHA Certification?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ASHA is the nation's leading professional, credentialing, and scientific organization for speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech/language/hearing scientists. 2. ASHA initiated the development of national standards for the profession, and has been certifying professionals since 1952. 3. ASHA's certification standards are based on skills validation studies and practice analyses involving employers, leaders in the discipline of communication sciences and disorders, and practitioners in the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology. 4. ASHA provides verification of certification to state regulatory agencies. 5. You can be sure you will meet state licensure requirements because many states use the ASHA Standards for Clinical Competence as a model for their regulatory requirements 	<p>NBCOT certifications are nationally recognized symbols of quality for OT professionals. The purpose of pursuing the national credentialing process is to further affirm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The practitioners' professional achievements 2. The practitioner's credibility 3. The practitioner's meeting of all national standards by a nationally recognized certification board

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<p>PRE-REQUISITE REQUIREMENTS</p>	<p>To qualify for national certification, candidates must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold a bachelor's degree 2. Have completed three full years of teaching/counseling experience 3. Possess a valid state teaching/counseling license for that period of time, or, if teaching where a license is not required, have taught in schools recognized and approved to operate by the state 	<p>To qualify for the NCSP, candidates must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours (i.e., specialist-level) in an organized program of study officially titled "School Psychology". 2. Complete a rigorous program of study including supervised practica and a culminating 1,200 clock-hour supervised internship 3. Obtain a passing score on the Praxis II@ National School Psychologist Examination administered by the Educational Testing Service (#0401). <p>Graduates of NASP approved programs have met all coursework requirements for the NCSP.</p> <p>All other applicants must provide a portfolio documenting knowledge and skills (see below).</p>	<p>To qualify for national certification candidates must complete an eligible Master's degree or higher in 1. counseling. This achievement is documented with a sealed, official transcript showing degree conferral.</p>	<p>To qualify for national certification candidates must have a:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Master's or doctoral degree with a minimum of 75 semester credit hours (at least 36 at the graduate level) from a program which was accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) 2. A minimum for 400 clock hours of supervised clinical experience in the practice of speech-language pathology. 25 hours must be spent in clinical observation, and 375 hours must be spent in direct client/patient contact (At least 325 of the 400 clock hours must be completed while the applicant is engaged in graduate study). 3. Must successfully complete a Speech-Language Pathology Clinical Fellowship totaling no less than 1,260 hours, accumulated within 48 months of the beginning date of the experience. 	<p>To qualify for NBCOT - OTR certification, candidates must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate successful completion and graduation from a post-baccalaureate accredited occupational therapy professional program recognized by NBCOT 2. Complete all fieldwork requirements (1,000 hours) 3. Agree to abide by the NBCOT Code of Conduct

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<p>The Assessment Process: Portfolio Entries Candidates are required to submit four portfolio entries. Three are classroom based, where video recordings and examples of student work serve as supporting documentation. A fourth entry relates to accomplishments outside of the classroom – with families, the community or colleagues – and how they impact student learning.</p> <p>REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION</p> <p>Assessment Center Exercises Candidates must also demonstrate content knowledge in response to 6 exercises developed for your chosen certificate area. Candidates have up to 30 minutes to complete each exercise.</p> <p>Scoring Once you have submitted your portfolio entries and assessment center exercises, your complete work will be scored by a minimum of 12 teachers who have successfully completed intensive training and have been qualified for scoring based on their understanding of NBPTS standards and guidelines.</p>	<p>Along with the requirements stated above, applicants from non-NASP approved programs must demonstrate competency in 11 domains of professional practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data-based Decision-Making and Accountability 2. Consultation and Collaboration 3. Effective Instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills 4. Socialization and Development of Life Skills 5. Student Diversity in School and Systems 6. Organization, Policy Development, and Climate 7. Prevention, Crisis Intervention, and Mental Health 8. Home/School/Community Collaboration 9. Research and Program Evaluation 10. School Psychology Practice and Development 11. Information Technology 	<p>Applicants should have completed a master's degree consisting of 48 semester hours of graduate-level credit with 2 semester hours or greater in 8 content areas listed below and at least 6 semester hours of field experience.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human Growth and Development 2. Social and Cultural Foundations 3. Helping Relationships 4. Group Work 5. Career and Lifestyle Development 6. Appraisal 7. Research and Program Evaluation 8. Professional Orientation to Counseling 9. Field Experience (in a counseling setting) <p>Applicants must also obtain: Passing score on the National Counselor Exam (NCE)</p> <p>Documentation of post-graduate counseling experience and supervisor: 3,000 hours with a minimum of 100 hours of counseling supervision—both over a 24-month post-master's period. Supervisors must hold a master's degree or higher in a mental health field. (Note: The post-master's experience and supervision requirements are waived for graduate students who have completed CACREP accredited tracks.)</p>	<p>To qualify for national certification candidates must meet the following Standards:</p> <p>Standard I: Master's or doctoral or other recognized post-baccalaureate degree. A minimum of 75 semester credit hours must be completed in a course of study addressing the knowledge and skills pertinent to the field of speech-language pathology.</p> <p>Standard II: The graduate degree must be granted by a regionally accredited IHE</p> <p>Standard III: The applicant must complete a program of study (a minimum of 75 semester credit hours overall, including at least 36 at the graduate level) that includes academic course work sufficient in depth and breadth to achieve the specified knowledge outcomes.</p> <p>Standard IV: The applicant must complete a curriculum of academic and clinical education that follows an appropriate sequence of learning sufficient to achieve the skills outcomes in Standard IV-G.</p> <p>Standard V: The applicant must demonstrate successful achievement of the knowledge and skills delineated in Standard III and Standard IV by means of both formative and summative (e.g., passing national examination) assessment.</p> <p>Standard VI: Speech-Language Pathology Clinical Fellowship After completion of academic course work and practicum (Standard IV), the applicant then must successfully complete a Speech-Language Pathology Clinical Fellowship.</p>	<p>Candidates applying for OTR certification must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have successfully completed and graduated from a post-baccalaureate accredited* occupational therapy professional program recognized by NBCOT 2. Have completed all fieldwork requirements 3. Agree to abide by the NBCOT Code of Conduct. 4. Achieve passing score on NBCOT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED OTR® Certification Examination <p>*Accredited occupational therapy programs recognized by NBCOT include education programs accredited by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of the American Occupational Therapy Association; or 2. The World Federation of Occupational Therapists <p>Foreign-educated candidates must also complete the NBCOT pre-screening requirements prior to being eligible to take the Certification Examination and complete the obligatory U.S. Department of Homeland Security requirements to be issued on a health care work Visa.</p>

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COST	<p>The cost of the NBPTS National Board Certification is \$2,500.00 with an additional \$65 non-refundable application processing fee, and a nonrefundable \$500 initial fee. There are federal, state, and local funding sources as well as scholarships from corporations and organizations that will reimburse up to \$2000</p>	<p>Initial certification fees range depending on membership status and whether the applicant graduated from a NASP-approved program.</p> <p>NASP-approved program graduate fees for initial certification are \$60 (student, 1st year, leave of absence), \$85 (2nd year in practice), \$110 (full member), \$210 (nonmember).</p> <p>Fees for graduates from non-approved programs pay are \$160, \$210, \$260, and \$360 respectively for the categories listed above.</p> <p>The examination fee \$130 (\$50 one-time registration fee plus \$80 test fee) payable to ETS.</p>	<p>Application fee of \$295.</p> <p>The NCSC application and examination fee may vary depending upon postmark date and exam status. Please check the website for the most up to date information.</p> <p>NCSCs must adhere to the NBCC Code of Ethics, and must pay, on a yearly basis, the annual maintenance fee of \$100 for NCE and \$30 for NCSC.</p> <p>There is also an Examination fee.</p>	<p>The fees for certification are:</p> <p>Membership + Certification = \$511 Non-members = \$455 Recent Graduate = \$461</p> <p>A yearly maintenance fee is also required: Certified members = \$225 Graduate Student = \$135 Non Certified Member = \$84 Certified Non Member = \$199</p> <p>There is also a fee for taking the Praxis.</p>	<p>There is a total fee of \$540 for online application and exam fees</p>

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<p>National board certification is valid for a period of 10 years. NBCT holders can only renew certification in the original certificate area, and can only formally begin working on certification renewal as early as year eight of the certification period.</p> <p>Renewal applicants must currently hold a valid teaching license in the state they are working, and must demonstrate their Pre-k-12 teaching experience.</p> <p>The total fee for certificate renewal is \$1,250.00, which includes a \$300.00 nonrefundable application fee.</p>	<p>NCSPs must engage in activities designed to maintain, expand, and extend their professional training and skills</p> <p>Specifically, each NCSP must be renewed every three years with 75 contact hours of continuing professional development (CPD) activities. 10 of the 75 CPD hours must come from NASP- or APA-approved providers. NCSPs must also accrue 3 hours of CPD regarding ethical practice and/or the legal regulation of school psychology</p> <p>The renewal fees are \$99 for NASP Members, or \$199 for non-members.</p>	<p>National Certified School Counselors are required to provide documentation to completion of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual maintenance of \$30.00 during each 5-year certification period 2. 100 contact clock hours from the 10 approved content areas of continuing education over the five year period. <p>Or, NCSCs can take and pass the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certified (NCE) again.</p>	<p>Annual maintenance fee</p> <p>Certification renewal every three years which requires 30 contact hours of professional development activities during each 3-year maintenance interval</p>	<p>Certification renewal occurs every three years, and requires 36 Professional Development Units (18 must be directly related to service delivery and the remainder can be obtained from activities related to the delivery of occupational therapy services)</p> <p>The fee for the 3-year renewal cycle is \$65.00. If "inactive," the late fee is \$50.00 for a total of \$115.00 due to renew.</p>



NATIONAL
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Supporting Student Success: Remedying the Shortage of School Psychologists

There is a growing need for school psychological services. Students come to school with complex and diverse learning and developmental needs that often create barriers to learning. Family issues, poverty, peer conflicts, disabilities, stress, grief and loss, domestic and community violence, substance abuse, and mental health problems all affect a student's ability to focus and learn in school. The U.S. Surgeon General (1999) reported that one in five children and adolescents will experience a significant mental health problem during their education years. Because of this link, as well as educators' daily access to children and their families, schools have come to play a crucial role in promoting students' mental health as well as achievement. If we are truly to raise the bar, close the achievement gap, and ensure that no child is left behind, there must be an adequate supply of personnel who can address both the individual needs of students and the systemic needs of schools and districts.

School psychologists play a vital role in students' success in school. They provide:

- Assessment and intervention services that help identify student learning and behavioral needs.
- Mental health prevention and intervention services including counseling, behavioral supports, and skill development that promote students' healthy social, emotional, and behavioral development and lower barriers to learning.
- Individual, classroom, and school-wide consultation and prevention strategies that improve classroom climate, reduce risk behaviors and violence, improve crisis response, and contribute to safe, positive school environments in which all children can learn.
- Culturally competent services that meet the learning and mental health needs of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations and their families.
- Research-based practices and evaluation skills that enhance intervention efficacy, school accountability, and improved student outcomes.
- Support to families in accessing school and community resources necessary to meet student needs.

School psychologists work in both the general education and special education environments. Although historically most school psychologists have worked with students in special education, their assessment, prevention, intervention, and consultation services are employed increasingly in general education as well. The expanding role of school psychologists encompasses school climate issues, classroom management, violence prevention and crisis response, staff training, pre-referral interventions, counseling, and program evaluation. This expanded role is made more critical with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), both of which emphasize accountability, student achievement, the implementation of early intervening services, and the need to provide comprehensive research-based interventions that are accessible to all students.

Schools need adequate numbers of highly trained school psychologists and other pupil service personnel. Teachers are the foremost professionals in students' school experiences. However, school psychologists, social workers, and counselors provide services that enable teachers to teach and students to learn more effectively. Even the most gifted teacher may struggle to effectively serve students with learning disabilities; to support students experiencing emotional crises that disrupt learning; to decrease disruptive classroom behavior; or to help a homeless student access food, shelter, and basic health care. At these times, the expertise of school psychologists and other pupil service/student support personnel is crucial.

There is a shortage of school psychologists serving student and system needs. This shortage includes both a diminishing pool of trained school psychologists to fill existing positions (supply and

demand) and an inadequate number of school psychology positions in many states and school districts. Supply and demand data from the American Association for Employment in Education indicate that school psychologists have consistently had "considerable" or "some" shortage over the last 10 years. The current crisis is complicated by the fact that about 4 out of 10 current school psychologists are predicted to retire between 2003 and 2010, more than half by 2015, and 2 out to 3 by 2020 (Curtis, Grier, and Hunley, 2004). In addition to the supply versus demand shortage, there is a shortage of positions, creating high case loads for practitioners and making it difficult for school psychologists to offer the necessary comprehensive academic and school mental health services or the prevention services that ultimately reduce the needs of individual students. While NASP recommends a maximum student-to-school psychologist ratio of 1,000 to 1 in the general population, a recent study revealed a national average of 1,653 students per school psychologist. Similar shortages exist for school counselors and social workers. The attached table provides a state-by-state comparison of student to school psychologist ratios.

There are a variety of factors contributing to the shortage of school psychologists. Some of the key reasons for personnel shortages include:

- Budget cuts to pupil service programs due to a need for school districts to meet the growing expenses associated with implementing the NCLB mandates.
- Lack of funding for programs designed to help remedy shortages such as loan forgiveness programs and personnel preparation grants that provide direct assistance to students and incentives for universities to create new innovative and alternative programs.
- Limited capacity of existing training programs to meet the demand for new professionals due to increasing higher education costs and the limited capacity of universities to expand existing programs due to the shortage of qualified faculty.
- Personnel attrition in special education and related services in the first five years of employment due to poor supervision and mentoring programs, poor working conditions, and growing pressures on teachers and other professionals due to the NCLB penalties levied on schools failing to meet all of the requirements of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- Personnel attrition due to retirement rates exceeding the supply of new university graduates eligible for employment.
- Limited supply of qualified professionals willing to work in certain communities (rural, high poverty, high crime) or with specific populations (minorities, socially or economically disadvantaged) due to the personal and professional risks.
- Restrictive roles (e.g., testing for special education eligibility) that limit school psychologists' ability to use their expertise to address systemic issues (such as low achievement and bullying) that in the long run reduce the need for one to one services.

Elected officials can help address the shortage of school psychologists through public policy that supports personnel allocations and comprehensive services that remove barriers to learning and promote student success. Recommendations include:

1. Provide loan forgiveness and tax credits for people who successfully complete accredited training programs and then agree to work in communities with demonstrated shortages (rural, low income).
2. Fully fund the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program that allows local school districts to use program funds to hire new school psychologists, counselors, and social workers.
3. Restore full funding to the Safe and Drug Free Schools program that seeks to provide comprehensive mental health supports for students.
4. Create innovative, flexible grant programs that improve student outcomes associated with the services of professionals experiencing chronic shortages
5. Create programs that recruit graduate candidates from specific under-represented and under-served populations for future work in those communities or with those populations (such as inner city, rural, and minority populations).
6. Provide incentives for universities that expand their school psychology training programs, as well as incentives for individuals who elect to take teaching positions in areas with shortages.

**Estimated Number of School Psychologists by State in 2004
and Comparison of Ratios of Students to School Psychologists by State in 1999 and 2004**

State	2004 Certified/ Licensed School Psychologists ¹	2004 School Psychologists in Public Schools ²	2004 Students per School Psychologist ³	1999 Students per School Psychologist ⁴	Percentage Change from 1999 to 2004
Total	37,893	29,367	1,653	1,816	-9%
AK	165	128	1,047	1,486	-30%
AL	191	148	4,940	3,384	46%
AR	228	177	2,572	2,660	-3%
AZ	700	543	1,866	2,014	-7%
CA	4,336	3,360	1,909	2,480	-23%
CO	900	698	1,086	1,518	-28%
CT	1,375	1,066	542	844	-36%
DC	80	62	1,259	3,206	-61%
DE	112	87	1,356	1,283	6%
FL	1,652	1,280	2,021	2,407	-16%
GA	727	563	2,702	2,655	2%
HI	60	47	3,949	8,252	-52%
IA	475	368	1,307	1,500	-13%
ID	278	215	1,170	1,666	-30%
IL	2,006	1,555	1,351	1,531	-12%
IN	498	386	2,620	2,287	15%
KS	800	620	759	1,166	-35%
KY	353	274	2,427	2,129	14%
LA	390	302	2,408	2,611	-8%
MA	997	773	1,269	1,002	27%
MD	750	581	1,495	1,871	-20%
ME	274	212	952	1,355	-30%
MI	900	698	2,520	1,755	44%
MN	897	695	1,212	1,499	-19%
MO	208	161	5,620	2,373	137%
MS	80	62	7,960	3,505	127%
MT	215	167	890	1,929	-54%
NC	700	543	2,507	1,936	30%
ND	64	50	2,061	2,728	-23%
NE	375	291	983	1,522	-35%
NH	278	215	963	1,223	-21%
NJ	1,307	1,013	1,363	995	37%
NM	215	167	1,939	951	104%

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NV	198	153	2,512	2,249	12%
NY	4,600	3,565	804	817	-2%
OH	1,514	1,173	1,573	1,824	-14%
OK	248	192	3,258	2,558	27%
OR	270	209	2,635	1,733	52%
PA	1,731	1,342	1,358	2,327	-42%
RI	176	136	1,168	1,330	-12%
SC	688	533	1,311	2,022	-35%
SD	92	71	1,761	3,107	-43%
TN	447	346	2,704	2,389	13%
TX	2,131	1,652	2,623	2,320	13%
UT	230	178	2,783	1,726	61%
VA	679	526	2,265	2,343	-3%
VT	124	96	1,031	1,341	-23%
WA	826	640	1,595	1,495	7%
WI	1,101	853	1,031	1,196	-14%
WV	143	111	2,537	2,714	-7%
WY	109	84	1,035	1,432	-28%

Footnotes:

¹Based on a 2004 survey of state school psychology associations (Charvat, 2005).

²Based on the 1999-2000 survey finding that 77.5% of school psychologists work in public schools (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 2004).

³Based on the number of public school students in the 2003-04 school year (National Center for Education Statistics; <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>). Note that these ratio estimates replace those made by Charvat (2005), which were based upon data from the 2002-03 school year.

⁴This ratio is the mean of 1999 survey responses from a sample of NASP members, which includes responses from school psychologists in both public and private schools (Thomas, 2000). Note: In their 1999-2000 NASP Member Survey, Curtis et al. (2001) found a national ratio of 1,682 students per school psychologist for public and private schools.

Source:

Charvat, J. L. (2005, March). NASP study: How many school psychologists are there? *Communiqué*, 33, 12-14. Available: www.nasponline.org/publications/cq336numSP.html.



**NATIONAL
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School Psychologists: Improving Student and School Outcomes

Achieving excellence in education for the 21st Century requires that every student is ready to learn and every teacher is empowered to teach. School psychologists work with students, educators, and families to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, and mental wellness of all students, especially those who struggle with barriers to learning. School psychologists help schools and families address some of our biggest challenges in education: improving and individualizing instruction to close the achievement gap; increasing graduation rates and preventing dropouts; creating safe, positive school climates and preventing violence; providing meaningful accountability; and strengthening family-school partnerships (NASP, 2008).

School psychologists have extensive training in assessment, progress monitoring, instruction, child development and psychology, consultation, counseling, crisis response, program evaluation, and data collection and analysis. Their training is specific to applying this expertise within the school context, both general education and special education, and also includes extensive knowledge in school systems and law (NASP 2010a, 2010b).

School psychologists are a critical part of the school team that ensures quality, genuinely accessible education for all students. This is one of our nation's most important responsibilities and wisest investments. Services that lower barriers to learning and effective teaching are not ancillary to this mission but rather central to the supportive educational process necessary to prepare all of America's children for academic success, healthy development, and responsible citizenship.

NASP's *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach* (2008) foundational policy document recommends that educational policies and practices be led by a series of guiding principles. Specifically, the five *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach* guiding principles call for providing:

1. Comprehensive curricula matched with individualized instruction.
2. Sufficient student support services to address barriers to learning for *all* students on a continuum of care that engages families and community providers.
3. Comprehensive accountability and progress monitoring measures that provide a valid picture of student and school functioning.
4. Professional development and supports for teachers and other educators necessary for instructional excellence.
5. Federal leadership and school-based research to promote effective services that support the whole child in the learning context.

Following are examples of how school psychologists support these principles, and how their services link to research and policies regarding improved outcomes for students. These examples address the priorities identified by the U.S. Department of Education for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Improved Instruction and Learning (*Ready to Learn, Guiding Principles 1 & 4*)

- School psychologists work with teachers to motivate all students to engage in learning^{1,2}, and interventions that foster students' engagement in school have been shown to reduce high school dropout (Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1998) and improve academic performance (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004; Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004).
- School psychologists work with students and their families as part of a multidisciplinary team to evaluate eligibility for special education services and to design interventions^{3,4}, and research has revealed that the strategies they employ produce substantial positive impact on student outcomes (Forness, 2001).
- School psychologists work with teachers to design and implement academic and behavioral interventions^{5,6}, and interventions using positive behavior supports have been shown to improve academic performance and decrease behavior problems (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002).
- School psychologists provide instructional consultation for other educators on strategies and interventions for remedying barriers to learning^{7,8}, and evidence has shown that supporting teacher-reflective activities enables their teaching skills to grow and, subsequently, to improve student outcomes (Rosenfield, Silva, & Gravois, 2008).

Supporting Healthy Successful Students (*Ready to Learn, Guiding Principle 2*)

- School psychologists work with administrators to design, implement, and garner support for comprehensive school mental health programming^{9,10}, and school mental health programs have been shown to improve educational outcomes by decreasing absences, decreasing discipline referrals, and increasing test scores (President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003).
- School psychologists work with students and their families to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral health^{11,12}, and research has shown that students who receive this type of support achieve better academically in school (Fleming et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Welsh, Parke, Widaman, & O'Neil, 2001; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).
- School psychologists promote development of children's communication and social skills, problem solving, anger management, self-regulation, self-determination, and optimism^{13,14}, and research has shown that children's developmental competence is integral to their academic competence (Masten et al., 2005).
- School psychologists work with parents to encourage effective parenting and discipline strategies^{15,16}, and there is substantial research evidence for the effectiveness of interventions designed to prevent the development of aggressive and antisocial behavior and related problems (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2009).

Creating Safe, Positive School Climates (*Ready to Learn, Guiding Principle 2*)

- School psychologists work with teachers and administrators to create classroom environments and school climates that are conducive to learning^{17,18}, and research has shown that improving school climate is associated with increases in student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics, both in low- and high-performing schools (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, 2004; Spier, Cai, & Osher, 2007; Spier, Cai, & Kendziora, 2007).
- School psychologists work with administrators to promote school policies and practices that ensure the safety of all students by reducing school violence, bullying, and harassment^{19,20}, and services provided by school psychologists support virtually every area of the lives of students, including school safety (Bear & Minke, 2006; Brock, Lazarus, & Jimerson, 2002).
- School psychologists work with administrators to respond to crises by providing leadership, direct services, and coordination with needed community services^{21,22}, and research has revealed that

school staff rate the crisis intervention services provided by school psychologists as very important (Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2007).

Strengthening Family–School Partnerships (*Ready to Learn*, Guiding Principle 2)

- School psychologists work with students and their families to enhance home–school collaboration^{23,24}, and research has demonstrated the power of family–school partnerships to positively impact children’s school success (Christenson, 2004) and their general well-being into adulthood (Reynolds et al., 2007).
- School psychologists work with students and their families to identify and address learning and behavior problems that interfere with school success^{25,26}, and school-based behavioral consultation has been shown to yield positive results such as remediating academic and behavior problems for children and reducing referrals for psychoeducational assessments (MacLeod, Jones, Somer, & Havey, 2001).
- School psychologists participate in early intervention programs designed to provide parents with knowledge of child development and how to keep children healthy and safe^{27,28}, and early intervention programs targeting at-risk students have been shown to reduce special education referrals and placement, suspension, grade retention, and disciplinary referrals (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000).
- School psychologists work to enhance understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures and backgrounds and to promote culturally competent practice^{29,30}, and there is considerable evidence that failing to address cultural and linguistic differences can negatively impact assessment activities and students’ performance on achievement tests (Ortiz, 2008).

Improving Assessment and Accountability (*Ready to Learn*, Guiding Principle 3)

- School psychologists work with administrators to collect and analyze data related to school improvement, student outcomes, and accountability requirements^{31,32}, thus helping schools meet legal requirements established by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.
- School psychologists work with teachers to design and implement student progress monitoring systems^{33,34}, and school staff rate as very important the assessment, consultation, counseling, and behavior management services provided by school psychologists (Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2007).
- School psychologists work with teachers and administrators to collect and analyze data on risk and protective factors related to student outcomes^{35,36}, and there is evidence that addressing these factors in schools promotes children’s well-being and resilience (Baker, 2008).

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Endnotes

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