

Graduate Studies in School Psychology

The graduate programs in School Psychology offer a doctorate degree or a specialist degree.

Who are School Psychologists?

School psychology is the application of psychology to children's academic and social-emotional development. School psychologists draw from the knowledge bases of psychology, education, law, and professional school psychology.

School psychology is a general practice and health service provider specialty of professional psychology concerned with the science and practice of psychology with children, youth, families, and the educational process. The basic education and training prepares school psychologists to provide psychological assessment, intervention, prevention, health promotion, program development, and evaluation services with a special focus on the developmental processes of children and youth within the context of schools, families, and other systems.

School psychologists are prepared to intervene at the individual and system level, and can develop, implement, and evaluate preventive programs. School psychologists conduct assessments and intervene to promote positive learning environments where children and youth from diverse backgrounds have an equal access to effective educational and psychological services to promote development. School psychologists may counsel a child whose parents recently divorced, collaborate with a teacher to help a deaf child read, assess a child for learning disabilities, develop a drop-out prevention program, teach parents skills to work with their child more effectively, show a class of third grade students how to solve problems without violence, or collaborate with other school personnel to design a special educational program for a child with autism.

Although most school psychologists work in elementary and secondary schools, many—especially those with doctorate degrees—are employed in universities, clinics, hospitals, mental health centers, state departments of education, or in independent practice. Many go on to administrative positions, such as special education administrator or coordinator of school psychological services, or director of community or hospital based mental health services.

Preparing for Graduate Study

1. Consider including in your undergraduate program the following recommended courses: Developmental Psychology (child and adolescent or life span), Learning, Behavior Modification, Psychology of the Exceptional Child, and Behavior Disorders in Children.
2. Obtain relevant work or volunteer experiences with children such as: day care worker, day camp counselor, Big Brother or Big Sister, crisis hotline, child care worker for children with special needs, and substitute teacher.
3. [Review the list of National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\) approved Graduate Programs in School Psychology.](#)
4. Research the websites of the school psychology graduate programs in which you are interested. Then, write to the graduate programs you are interested in requesting a date to visit with faculty and current students. Many programs have "open houses" for prospective applicants.
5. Apply to 6-7 graduate programs of your choice.

School Psychology Programs in Illinois

Most of the programs listed below offer specialist degrees in school psychology (3-year programs).

Illinois State is unique in that it also offers a doctoral degree program.

- Eastern Illinois University
- Illinois State University
- Loyola University of Chicago
- National Louis University
- Northern Illinois University
- Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville
- Western Illinois University