

Benefits of a school psychologist



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Abstract

For many children and students school can be a daunting task that they must face daily for a minimum of 12 years. A school psychologist can make those once tough times seem more manageable. A school psychologist is there to assist with mental, social, and emotional needs that student may be dealing with. School psychologists are very well trained and may hold doctorates or have specialized training in a specific field of school psychology. Dating back to the late 1800s, school psychologist would begin to emerge as those that could help those with special needs and make sure they are best set up for success. A school psychologist is an integral part of a schools daily function and a can be vital for a student's success.

Psychology is the study of the human mind and its functions, one field that is very important to the world is school psychology. Students from all walks of life converge on a school daily from the age of 3 years old up to 18 years old. While there they may run into many different issue throughout a school year and even during the day. Teachers, though very valuable, can't always get down to the root of an issue. That is why many schools and school districts employ a school psychologist. The school psychologist can help meet a student or students' needs privately or in a group setting. Their job is to make sure that the student is equipped educationally, emotionally, and socially. The job of a school psychologist is not just to work with the students, they also work side by side with teachers and parents to make sure that they are trained in the best possibly way to meet the needs of the student in the classroom or child at home. Living in a world with so much violence and strife a child has a good chance to experience it and have those

terrible things affect them daily. A school psychologist's day is incredibly busy with meetings, counseling, and training. Having a busy schedule to a school psychologist means that they are taking the steps in seeing to it that a child has everything they need to succeed not only in school but in their daily life.

History of School Psychology

1890 would be the beginning of the "Hybrid Years" for school psychology. By 1900, social reform would take place and compulsory schooling would begin. Children would then be required by law to attend school, thus making the need for a school psychologist would be important. Children being required to go to school would bring all walks of life together in one central location. It was hard times in the early 1900's and many children would come to school in poor health or with special needs that would cause them to learn at a slower pace than their classmates (Fagen, n. d.). With all of the diverse backgrounds in a school, physical and mental evaluations became necessary for a school to perform before placing a child in a class (Fagen, n. d.). Almost a decade later, special education or special services began to form. The result of the special services would be a desire for an "expert" to aid in the selection and placement of children for special education or special services (Fagen, n. d.). The school psychologist would be the "gatekeeper" for special education (Fagen, n. d.).

Lightner Witmer and G. Stanley Hall would be the first that would put their efforts into school psychology. Each would have different techniques and approaches toward students in need. Witmer would focus on the individual

student and what their needs are, while Hall would focus more on testing to find the intelligence level and what would best suit the student. These two techniques would eventually be combined to create the foundations of school psychology (Fagen, n. d.). The testing movement would come to the forefront and it would be led by psychologist Alfred Binet. Binet, with the assistance of fellow psychologist Theodore Simon would develop a testing movement that would debut the first practical intelligence test battery, which assessed higher cognitive skills and produced specific correlations regarding measures of school achievement (Fagen, n. d.).

In 1925, New York University would be the first university to offer a school psychology training program. By the 1930's, a doctorate would be obtainable in school psychology and states would begin giving certifications for those qualified in school psychology (Fagen, n. d.). Between 1930 and 1969 many organizations would form in support of psychology. The American Psychological Association or the APA would only accept membership if you had a doctorate in psychology. That would spark the birth of the American Association of Applied Psychologists or the AAAP. The requirements of the AAAP would not be as tough leading many school psychologists to join (Fagen, n. d.). The final year of the “ Hybrid Years” would see the National Association of School Psychologist or NASP formed. This would bring a “ Stable and strengthened identity” (Fagen, n. d.) to school psychology.

The years to come would be recognized as the “ Thoroughbred Years” from 1970 to present day. This time you would see an expansion of training programs, organizations, literature, rules and regulations, and more people practicing. In 1975, Public Law 94-142 would be passed by congress and this

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law would be known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This would be an important milestone, not only in education but in the world of psychology. The law would require schools to provide students no matter the disability or disorder to a free appropriate education (Fagen, n. d.). When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed it created a surge in numbers for those practicing school psychology. The numbers would more than double in a decade going from 5, 000 in 1970 to 10, 000 plus by 1980, then it would jump even more by 1988 to 20, 000 (Fagen, n. d.). This would mean that more students were being cared for on not just an educational level but also on a mental and emotional level as well. More and more states would begin to acknowledge school psychologists and would expand to create state associations. The number of state associations would nearly triple expanding from 17 in 1970 to 48 by 1989 (Fagen, n. d.). One organization that would play a major role would be the National Association of School Psychologist or NASP. The NASP would begin to put more emphasis on qualification standards and how school psychologist should function. The would push to make a move from a “ reactive model” that took advice and information from outside organizations to a “ proactive model” where they were making the decisions and/or influencing those other organizations (Fagen, n. d.). By the 1980’s the look and functions of a school psychologists were shifting from making assessments and selecting placements to choosing preferential assessments and interventions (Fagen, n. d.). These changes throughout the years would benefit everyone from the students, to the teachers, and the parents.

A Day as a School Psychologist

The normal day of a school psychologist can be a busy one, moving from counseling sessions with a student to IEP meetings, to training a teacher on a student that is in their class. A school psychologist must tap into their knowledge of how the human body and mind works and with a need to know how disorders or disabilities can affect a person in their daily life (“ Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). Having this knowledge can make a decision about services or accommodations much easier. A school psychologist knows that special services or counseling’s are not a one-time thing, they will change periodically and many times may change out of necessity. Therefore, they must be prepared to handle any curveball that a day may throw at them and handle a situation promptly and efficiently.

If a student begins to exhibit issues in the classroom or at school, one thing may happen is a teacher or administrator may send a referral to the school psychologist to be evaluated (“ Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). This does not mean that the student has a disability it simply means that the student is struggling in one area of their life and may need guidance on a deeper level to figure their situation out. The evaluation that occurs will not necessarily mean a test or an interview a school psychologist may elect to observe the student in a classroom or school setting (“ Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). Observing a student in their classroom setting can provide inside on how a student interacts with other students and the teacher. The school psychologist can watch to see if the student is staying on task and paying attention or are they allowing things to distract them. When

working on an Individual Education Plan or IEP this can be very informative in setting up the student with the best possible way to succeed.

An Individual Education Plan or IEP is an important tool for students that may be struggling in school or a classroom. The IEP is for a student that is eligible for special education services (Jan Baumel MS, 2014). A group made up of teachers, administrator, special education teachers, school psychologist, and many times parents work together to come up with an IEP (Jan Baumel MS, 2014). A school psychologist will work closely with the student's IEP and make sure that the student on staying on track (" Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist," 2018). The school will reconvene once a year to check the progress of the student and how their time in the classroom is going. The school psychologist will report their finding along with others who may work with the student on a regular basis. The school psychologist will not only see to it that the student is progressing in the classroom but they will want to see progress in the emotional and social realms as well (Jan Baumel MS, 2014).

A school psychologist not only wants the student to succeed in making good grades they also want to see the student make strides in making friends and being a part of the school community. If a student is struggling with social interaction, the psychologist may meet with the student to work on social skills and teach them tips and tricks that they can use to become more comfortable with interacting with classmates and teachers they see every day. They will set goals and use positive reinforcement to encourage the student and will create role-playing scenarios in order to show the student

the appropriate behaviors (“ Day in the Life – 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018).

As a school psychologist there are going to be times throughout your day when a student wants to talk to you about something or you will have to step in and speak with them first. School psychologists may even develop interventions to address a need of a student (“ Day in the Life – 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). Whether it be one on one or in a small group a school psychologist can have an opportunity to speak with students about not only their academic needs but their social and emotional needs (“ Day in the Life – 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018).

For a school psychologist the daily environment is a school and its students but those are the not the only responsibilities they have. They will also work closely with teachers to assist them throughout their time in the classroom with students. They make sure that the school is following the state’s standards and that the classrooms are functioning with proper teaching practices and other procedures (“ Day in the Life – 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). They will also work with parents. If a child is struggling with a certain situation and they discover that its stemming from something that is occurring at home then a school psychologist may make a phone call to speak with someone at home to discuss the behavior of the student (“ Day in the Life – 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). Speaking on the phone and having in person conferences is just another form of communication that a school psychologist must have with parents of students. Depending on the situations that are shared with them

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the school psychologist may also be able to set up trainings for parents and teachers that would equip them with the necessary tools and techniques to address a student that may be having an issue (“ Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018).

A school psychologist has to wear many hats during a school day. They may have to be the consoling shoulder that a student needs then shortly after that they must be a disciplinarian. They may be called in many times in hopes of making the situation calmer. If multiple students are involved in a dispute or are disrupting school, the school psychologist will be asked to come in to act as mediation. They will be the “ go between” to ensure that they dispute or disagreement is handling in a safe and efficient manner (“ Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). A school psychologist must also be prepared if a tragedy occurs. If something tragic happens at school, at home, or in the community the school psychologist is the first person that a school or districts look to in order to be there for the students (“ Day in the Life - 10 Responsibilities of a School Psychologist,” 2018). It would be their job to make sure that they understand the situation, whatever that may be, and help them find any kind of closure so that they may be able to move on with their daily life. This may not be a one-day visit or even a week long, this type of counseling could go for weeks or months depending on the involvement of the student with the event. The day of a school psychologist can be hectic and possibly heartbreaking at times but if the passion for helping students is there then it can be a rewarding career.

Becoming a School Psychologist

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Before you can begin changing lives in the world of school psychology you must be willing to obtain specific education requirements. Throughout the United States there are approximately 240 institutions that offer psychology graduate programs (“ Becoming a School Psychologist,” n. d.). When deciding on an institution, the National Association of School Psychology or the NASP approves many universities that are APA accredited. To become a school psychologist, you will need to either have a specialist level degree for designed for school psychology or a doctorate (“ Becoming a School Psychologist,” n. d.). Some graduate programs that offer degrees for school psychology may require that a student not only completes academic work but also has supervised field work and possibly an internship that would equip you with the knowledge, skills, and the learning experience for working every day as a school psychologist (“ Becoming a School Psychologist,” n. d.). During your graduate program you may be required to do a practicum or an internship. This will allow you to work closely with a trained school psychologist and begin to discover what you will face when you have completed your training. Once you have completed the required schooling for this career you will need to become certified and depending on the state that you work in will determine if you have the requirements needed. Each state it different on what is required but the National Association of School psychologist or NASP require a minimum specialist-level training (“ Becoming a School Psychologist,” n. d.). The work and training need to become a school psychologist can be daunting but it can pale in comparison to the issue that a student endures and the sheer idea that you can assist the student with their matters can make the process worth it and rewarding.

School Counselor or School Psychologist?

It can be confusing when thinking about the role of a school psychologist, especially when you compare them to a guidance counselor. A guidance counselor, who is very important to the everyday functioning of a school and students, focuses more on getting a student through their school career academically and if the student wants to attend a college they see to it that the student is equipped for the transition (“ What Is The Difference Between A Guidance Counselor And A School Psychologist? – Best Masters in Psychology,” n. d.). Both occupations are important to a school’s function and at times go hand in hand but it is what a school psychologist is able to do that makes them vital. The school psychologist is able to work with a student on a much more personal level and find out what is making them tick or what may be troubling them on a deeper level. The school counselor many times works with the student and their issues and how it pertains to their education. There are times that the guidance counselor is looked upon to serve the students in both arenas and the same goes for the school psychologist. The guidance counselor is more than likely going to have opportunities to counsel and work with a student especially if they form a relationship with that student, but depending on the situation or issue that is occurring it is in the best interest of the student for the school psychologist to work with them (“ What Is The Difference Between A Guidance Counselor And A School Psychologist? – Best Masters in Psychology,” n. d.). However, it’s the individual expertise that makes them stand a part. While the guidance counselor is going over college plans and preparing transcripts for

a student the school psychologist may be having a group counseling session with students who are dealing with a specific issue.

Future of School Psychology

So, what does the future hold for the world of school psychology? The education realm will always be in existence but to what extent? Technology is always evolving and growing and that means there will be more and more opportunities for students to engage in specialized learning. Alternative setting may become more prominent, such as home schooling and online/internet based schools (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). This type of learning will suddenly become the normal way of educating. The future of school psychology and educating and training new psychologist is vital. In the year 2000 the recommended ratio of students to school psychologists was 1000: 1 (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). That would be mean roughly one school psychologist per school in a school district. The ratio also depends on the types of services that are being provided to the students by the school psychologist (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). Some students may never come into contact with their designated school psychologist but there are many that need the services provided in order to be successful in the school career. In 2000, a call was made to see a shift in how a school psychologist approached their day. An ecological perspective was requested so see a change in how children were approached (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). It was felt that a school psychologist could have more of an impact on a child's life if moved away from the old style and focused on the making sure that the child had a healthy environment (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). Shifting the

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focus this way would also adapt to the shortage of the school psychologists in an area. Making use of families, school, individual and group settings would show genuine involvement for all who are involved in a child's life (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). The role and involvement of a school psychologist is where the question comes into the picture. With the home schooling option becoming more popular a school psychologist will have to be more consultative and train more problem-solving skills when working with those adults (parents, teachers, administration) involved in the home schooling (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 1998). School psychology is extremely important to a school and its daily function. As previously stated a school psychologist can be involved very heavily in a student's day and can be vital to their success.

Issues for School Psychologist

The day for a school psychologist is not always an easy one. Each day they could be present with stressful anxiety filled moments that would make many not envious of their career choice. School psychologists have a heart for helping and want nothing more than to see a child succeed not only in the classroom but in the real world as well. One glaring problem that the world of education is facing is that there is not enough funding in some parts of the country to hire a school psychologist. If they currently have one, there is a good chance that there are steps being taken to slowly eliminate that position (Weir, 2012). Schools are looking for ways to save money and have taken measures to eliminate "nonessential" school personnel and programs (Weir, 2012). In 2009, School Psychology International reported that there were an estimated 32, 300 school psychologist in the nation and they are <https://assignbuster.com/benefits-of-a-school-psychologist/>

tasked with servicing more than 6.5 million public school students (Weir, 2012). Having this much difference in the two numbers it creates more of a work load for the school psychologist. According to the National Association of School Psychologists the ratio for psychologist to student is 1 to 500-700, but unfortunately it is much higher and in some special cases can be close to 1 to 3,500 (Weir, 2012). With numbers being so low, it forces school psychologists to work longer hours and many times take their work home.

All careers have issues and all schools and places of education have problems but it's how the issues are handled and by whom. In 1995, The American Academy of School Psychology was founded to prepare and train those to deal effectively with problems or issues that stem from learning and/or human behavior (Cassel, 1999, p. 584). A school psychologist can be the most valuable person on your staff to deal with issues and problems when they pop up (Cassel, 1999, p. 584). That is why it is so important that funding for these positions continue and don't dwindle.

Importance of a School Psychologist

It can be difficult to place a level of importance on any career, but a becoming a school psychologist is choosing a career where you could make a major impact. In the educational system, the ultimate satisfaction is seeing a student succeed not only during your time with them but watching them succeed outside of school. Unfortunately, each child or student is different and require different approaches. Something that may bother or cause a problem for child A may not cause the issue for child B. Understanding what you are facing is key for a school psychologist. The National Center for

Children in Poverty or the NCCP states that one in five children from the ages of birth to 18 years old has a diagnosable mental disorder (Stagman & Cooper, 2010). The School Psychologist must evaluate and create a plan of action for each unique as they arise and see to it that the student has the best available services. Life at home for a child is not always the best situation and it is beyond their control. The NCCP reports that fifty-seven percent of children and youth with mental health issues come from homes living at or below the federal poverty line (Stagman & Cooper, 2010). Students with special needs and/or mental disorders need someone that will advocate for them and has a desire to see breakthroughs and success at all levels.

Resources

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