

Considering a Career as a School Psychologist in Canada? Role, Training, and Prospects

Role

What do School Psychologists Do?

1. Psychoeducational Assessments

- School psychologists assess the cognitive, academic, social, emotional, and behavioural functioning of children and adolescents using observations, interviewing and standardized tests to provide a broad-based understanding of their functioning including:
 - Describing their strengths and adaptive skills
 - Describing their difficulties
 - Describing the environmental factors that facilitate and impede their learning and adjustment
 - Provide a diagnosis
- School psychologists provide recommendations for the student, families, teachers, and other professionals to implement including:
 - Placement and support of students with exceptionalities/disabilities
 - Evidence-based interventions that prevent or remediate learning difficulties and teach learning strategies
 - Instructional, environmental, and assessment accommodations
 - Adaptive behaviour and social skills
 - Behaviour management in home and school
 - Psychotherapy
 - Further assessment and treatment
 - Transitions to postsecondary and work environments
 - Career selection and training
- School Psychologists clearly communicate the results of assessment findings in face-to-face meetings and in written form to the students themselves, parents, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals, and follow-up with them to support the implementation of the recommendations. This involves establishing a trusting professional relationship with these individuals.

2. Case, Classroom, and System Consultation

- School psychologists consult with teachers and school administrators to support them in the implementation of interventions for individual students with learning, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. These consultations often include developing behavioural programmes that are implemented by teachers and parents/caregivers (conjoint behavioural consultation).
- School psychologists consult with teachers to support them in the implementation of class-room wide interventions that address the learning, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties of their students.

- School psychologists provide system-wide consultation including:
 - In-service education for teachers, school administrators, and other professionals
 - Development and evaluation of new programmes (e.g., prevention programmes for mental health problems)
 - Communication and collaboration with community stakeholders such as other health practitioners, community mental health centres and hospital clinics, government agencies, professional groups, and parent-support groups
- School psychologists are typically members of school teams (different jurisdictions use different terms for these teams including In-School Teams, School-Support Teams, Multi-Disciplinary Teams) that enable them to identify needs and to provide both informal and formal consultation

3. Prevention and Intervention

- Psychologists collaborate with individual teachers, school administrators, and school system staff to develop and evaluate prevention programmes including:
 - Primary or Tier 1 prevention programmes that involve all staff and students that foster the learning and mental health of students (e.g., evidence-based literacy and numeracy education in primary classrooms; prevention of bullying; social-emotional learning)
 - Secondary or Tier 2 prevention programmes that are delivered to students who are at-risk students for learning or mental health difficulties
 - Tertiary or Tier 3 academic, behavioural or psychosocial interventions for students with diagnosed disabilities or mental health disorders

4. Supervision, Professional Training, and Leadership

- School psychologists who are licensed/registered provide supervision to practicum students, interns, and school psychology department staff who are not licensed/registered in the jurisdiction they are working.
- School psychologists provide professional training workshops and courses to graduate students and to others in the field both through university professional training programmes and through inservice training programmes.
- School psychologists assume leadership positions in the school system and other organizations including Chief or Coordinating Psychologist, and executive positions in provincial and national associations.

5. Research

- School psychologists who do research typically work in university settings, or collaborate with university researchers or the research departments of school districts. They conduct research on many topics relevant to the profession including:
 - Typical and atypical cognitive and psychosocial development
 - Cognition and learning
 - Developmental psychopathology
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse children, adolescents and families
 - Prevention and interventions for learning, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties
 - Psychometrics

- Knowledge dissemination

The following document provides more detailed information about the role of the school psychologist in Canada: *Canadian Psychological Association: Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Canada*

<http://www.cpa.ca/cpasite/UserFiles/Documents/publications/CPA%20Practice%20Guide.pdf>

Where do School Psychologists Work?

Most school psychologists are employed by publicly-funded school districts/boards but some work in private and faith-based schools, postsecondary disability/accessibility service centres, children's/community mental health centres, hospital clinics, private practice, and university professional training programmes.

Training

What Credentials do I need to become a school psychologist in Canada?

Professional psychologists who work in Canadian schools typically have a master's (MA, M.Ed, MSc) or doctoral (PhD, EdD, PsyD) degree from a school psychology training programme in the faculty of education at a Canadian university, or from a university in other countries. Although the master's degree has been sufficient for licensing (some provinces use the term registration or certification) as a psychologist in the past, most provinces are moving toward a requirement of a doctoral degree. Many school districts also employ licensed clinical or counselling psychologists in their psychology or special services departments.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Professional Training Programmes that are accredited by CPA?

The Canadian Psychological Association accredits doctoral programmes in school psychology, counselling psychology, clinical psychology, and neuropsychology. Graduation from a CPA-accredited doctoral programme is not a requirement for registration as a psychologist in most provinces or typically an essential requirement of employers. There are both advantages and disadvantages to studying in a CPA-accredited programme.

Advantages

- Students who study in a CPA-accredited programme can be confident that their professional training meets most of the standards that CPA has established as requirements of accredited programmes http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Accreditation/Accreditation_2011.pdf
- In some provinces, students who graduate from accredited programmes receive 'fast-track' credential reviews by regulatory bodies. <http://www.cpa.ca/accreditation/whatis/>
- Graduation from an accredited programme may facilitate mobility - the credentials of students who graduate from CPA-accredited programmes are recognized in all Canadian provinces and U.S. states.

Disadvantages

- CPA only accredits doctoral level programmes, which typically involve a 7-year commitment post-bachelor's degree
- There are only 4 CPA-accredited school psychology doctoral training programmes in Canada which means that it may be necessary to move to a different city or province
- CPA-accredited programmes typically have very high admissions standards

Where in Canada can I obtain professional training in School Psychology? (East to West)

CPA Accredited Programmes (only the doctoral programmes are accredited)

School/Applied Child Psychology (MA, PhD)

McGill University

Montreal, Quebec

Initial Accreditation 2014-15

Next Site Visit Due 2019-2020

<https://www.mcgill.ca/edu-ecp/programmes/schoolpsych>

School & Clinical Child Psychology (MA, PhD)

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) - University of Toronto

Toronto, Ontario

Initial accreditation 2008-09

Next site visit due 2019-20

http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/aphd/Prospective_Students/Programmes/School_Clinical_Child_Psychology/

School & Clinical Child Psychology (MEd, PhD)

University of Alberta

Edmonton, Alberta

Initial accreditation 2015-16

Next site visit due 2018-19

<http://www.edpsychology.ualberta.ca/GraduateProgrammes/School%20and%20Clinical%20Child%20Psychology/PhD%20Programme.aspx>

School Psychology (MA, PhD)

University of British Columbia

Vancouver, British Columbia

Probationary Accreditation

Initial accreditation 2012-13

Next site visit due 2015-16

<http://ecps.educ.ubc.ca/school-psychology/>

Non-CPA Accredited Programmes

School Psychology (MA)

Mount St. Vincent University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

<http://www.msvu.ca/en/home/programmesdepartments/education/graduateprogrammes/schoolpsychology/default.aspx>

Psychologie en éducation (PsyD)
Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM)
Montreal, Quebec

<http://psychologie.uqam.ca/departement/corps-professoral/par-section/54-psychologie-en-education.html>

Doctorat en psychologie (PhD)
Cheminement intervention en enfance et adolescence
Université de Sherbrooke
Sherbrooke, Quebec

<https://www.usherbrooke.ca/programmes/fac/sciences-humaines/3e-cycle/doctorats/psychologie/#c9563>

Doctorat en psychopédagogie (PhD)
Université Laval
Quebec, Quebec

<https://www.ulaval.ca/les-etudes/programmes/repertoire/details/doctorat-en-psychopedagogie-ph-d.html>

School and Applied Psychology (PhD)
Western University
London, Ontario

<http://www.edu.uwo.ca/graduate-education/programme/phd/applied-child-psychology.html>

School Psychology (MA)
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

<http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/psychology/graduate/programmes/school.html>

School and Counseling Psychology (MEd)
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

<http://www.usask.ca/education/departments/epse.php>

School and Applied Child Psychology (MEd, MSc, Ph.D.)
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

<http://werkklund.ucalgary.ca/gpe/school-amp-applied-child-psychology>

Prospects

School psychology is an exciting career with many opportunities. The licensing/registration requirements and procedures vary provincially with some provinces requiring individuals applying for registration to explicitly state their areas of competence (e.g., school psychology, clinical psychology) and the populations (e.g., child, adolescent, adult, families, organizations) they have been trained to work with, and others providing more generic licensing. In most school districts, psychologists are well-paid and have good benefits and pensions. Furthermore, in several provinces school districts find it challenging to find school psychologists, and almost constantly have contract and permanent job openings.

A recent special issue of the *Canadian Journal of School Psychology* (2016, Volume 31(3)) has articles describing school psychology in each of the Canadian provinces and territories.
<http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/cjsa/31/3>

Below are links to provincial licensing/registration bodies and associations that include school psychology:

Newfoundland and Labrador

- Registration at the Master's or PhD Level: Newfoundland and Labrador Psychology Board (NLPB): <http://nlpsychboard.ca/>
- **Professional Practice Guidelines:**
http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentssupportservices/s_and_p/Ed_Psych_standards_Oct_3_2014.pdf

Prince Edward Island

- Registration at the Master's (Psychological Associate) or PhD Level: The PEI Psychologists Registration Board: <http://www.peipsychology.org/peiprb/>

Nova Scotia

- Registration at the Master's or PhD Level: The Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology: <http://www.nsbep.org/>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia: <http://apns.ca/>
- **Professional Practice Guidelines:**
http://www.nsbep.org/downloads/Binder_Standards_Legislation_Guidelines.pdf

New Brunswick

- Registration at the Master's or PhD Level: College of Psychologists of New Brunswick: <http://cpnb.ca/>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: New Brunswick Association of School Psychologists (NBASP) – NO WEBSITE.
- Professional Practice Guidelines:
http://www.cpa.ca/documents/Guidelines_School_Psychologists.pdf

Quebec

- Registration at the PhD Level: Ordre des Psychologues du Québec/Order of Psychologists of Quebec (OPQ): <https://www3.ordrepsy.qc.ca/en/index.sn>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: School Psychology Association in French Quebec: Association Québécoise des Psychologues Scholaires: <http://aqps.qc.ca/>
- Code de Déontologie des Psychologues (Ethical Code for Psychologists): <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/pdf/cr/C-26,%20R.%20212.pdf>
- Code des Professions: <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/pdf/cr/C-26,%20R.%20221.pdf>

Ontario

- Registration at the Master's (Psychological Associate) or PhD Level: College of Psychologists of Ontario: <http://www.cpo.on.ca/>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) – Section on Psychology in Education: [http://www.psych.on.ca/About-Us/OPA-Committees-Taskforces-and-Sections/Section-on-Psychologists-in-Education-\(SecPE\)](http://www.psych.on.ca/About-Us/OPA-Committees-Taskforces-and-Sections/Section-on-Psychologists-in-Education-(SecPE))
- The Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards: <http://www.acposb.on.ca/>
- **Professional Practice Guidelines:** <http://www.psych.on.ca/OPA/media/Public/OPA%20Guidelines%20and%20Reviews/professional-practice-guidelines-for-school-psychologists-in-ontario-2013.pdf>

Manitoba

- Registration at the Master's or PhD Level: Psychological Association of Manitoba (PAM): <http://www.cpmb.ca/>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: Manitoba Association of School Psychologists (MASP): <http://www.masp.mb.ca/>
- Professional Certification: Manitoba Department of Education's Professional Certification and Student Records Unit (PCSRU): <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/profcert/index.html>

Saskatchewan

- Registration at the Masters or PhD level: Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SKCP): <https://www.skcp.ca/>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: Psychology Association of Saskatchewan: <http://psychsask.ca/index.php>
- Professional Practice Guidelines: <https://www.skcp.ca/pdf%20files/PROFESSIONAL%20PRACTICE%20GUIDELINES%20May%2017-10%20FINAL.pdf>

Alberta

- Registration at the Masters or PhD level: College of Alberta Psychologists: <http://www.cap.ab.ca/>
- Organization Representing Psychologists: Psychologists Association of Alberta, School Psychology Resources: https://www.psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/site/school_psychology_resources

British Columbia

- Registration at PhD level: College of Psychologists of British Columbia (**CPBC**)
<http://www.collegeofpsychologists.bc.ca>
- Certification at MA level: British Columbia Association of School Psychologists (**BCASP**)
<http://www.bcasp.ca>

Nunavut

- Professional Licensing for Psychologists contact:
Registrar, Professional Licensing, Nunavut Health and Social Services
Government of Nunavut Box 390
Kugluktuk, Nunavut, X0B 0E0
Telephone: 867-982-7668

North West Territories

- Professional Licensing for Psychologists: <http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/professional-licensing/psychologists>

Yukon

- There is currently no licensure or registration requirements for Educational Psychology
- Educational Psychologists in Yukon are directly employed by the territorial government