

School Psychologist

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Please describe the area of psychology you practice. For example, what does your day-to-day schedule look like?

I am a school psychologist by training- which means, one of the things I am trained to do is work in schools with children, educators, caregivers, and the community to support the mental health of children in K-12 classrooms. My program and internship provided me clinical training in academic and behavior intervention and assessment for neurotypical and neurodiverse children. Those skills have helped numerous families who needed those services for their children and also helped me obtain a 2 year postdoc position. Currently, I work at the leadership level with fellow school psychologists and other mental health providers to set up and coordinate mental health programs in K-12 schools and supervise mental health trainees who provide services in those programs. I simultaneously manage mental health research that the trainees carry out, write grants to secure funding for training and mental health programs, and directly work with schools to provide consultation and training to improve their MTSS.

Were there specific factors that led you to choose this area of psychology? Was there a critical moment that changed your career trajectory?

I enjoy working in the schools, and all participants within a school's ecosystem. I worked as a teacher in an elementary and middle school in Sri Lanka for 2-3 years and deeply enjoyed the interactions with students and their families. Those experiences helped me realize that I want to continue working with children, but in more ways than teaching. After speaking to a few of my peers who were then in graduate school completing psychology programs, I learned that school psychology was a good fit for me. Since school psychology is a field that does not exist in Sri Lanka, I looked to the United States for academic programs that match my interest.

What advice would you give to an ECP who wants to pursue a position or additional training opportunities in this area of psychology?

When I joined graduate school, I was keen on becoming faculty/ joining academia because I was passionate about training future professionals. However, I believe there are more ways to be involved in the training aspect without becoming faculty. For example, a practicing school psychologist in the schools may have interns or practicum students who need the training and supervision. Additionally, the school psychology field is very small which means there are plenty of opportunities than there are people to fill those. I would recommend joining listservs to make sure you are receiving regular notifications of training opportunities, jobs, grants, awards, etc.



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