

Pursuing a Career in the Psychology of Teaching and Learning

ALL ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

In studying how people learn, psychologists have found we don't all do it the same way. Some children may need to hear the ABC song to remember the order of the alphabet, while others need to see the letters written out. Even as we age, some of us will learn better by seeing, while others learn through doing.

Teaching and learning psychologists dissect these differences, studying not only how people learn, but how they retain and remember new information.

The learning process is also affected by the learning, family and social environment, genetic inheritance and rate of development. These factors translate into variations in intelligence, creativity, cognitive style, motivation and the capacity to process information, communicate and relate to others.

Teaching and learning psychologists develop and apply theories of human development to understand individual learning styles and inform the instructional process. They work with people who are gifted and people who have learning disabilities. Their skills are critical as schools work harder to ensure academic success.

The psychology of teaching and learning helps us understand the social, emotional and cognitive processes that constitute learning throughout the lifespan.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Many teaching and learning psychologists conduct research that is relevant to education. They may look at how well people learn in certain settings with certain types of instructions and certain types of instructors. This research helps develop improved teaching techniques that can bolster student outcomes and school performance.

Teaching and learning psychologists also evaluate and analyze teaching methods, testing them in schools, community organizations and learning centers. With their training in educational psychology, these psychologists can pinpoint flaws or problems that may make it difficult for some people to learn. Such problems can range from the pace of instruction to textbook organization.

Teaching and learning psychologists may also take the same psychological principles and apply them to government, industry and the private sector. Since people never stop learning, psychologists can use their scientific research to help students of all ages learn new skills in varied environments.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

With a four-year bachelor's degree, a person seeking a career in educational psychology or teaching and learning psychology often begins with a position that becomes a pathway job to more education and a job with more responsibility.

A master's in educational psychology (MEd) is the next step for many.

A doctorate in educational psychology or school psychology opens the door to more career possibilities, including positions at universities or with the government. This degree usually requires a four- to six-year commitment.

Educational and teaching and learning psychologists are typically employed in such settings as schools or testing companies. Many work in universities training future teachers and other school personnel.

WHAT YOU CAN EARN

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, teaching and learning psychologists earned a median annual salary of \$72,540 in 2010. Those who worked in elementary school settings earned a median annual salary of \$71,070, while those in individual and family services earned a median of \$69,540.

Find out where psychology can take you at WWW.PSYCHSCIENCEACTION.ORG.