

Chapter 4

Roles and Functions of School Psychologists

The book thus far has described what a school psychologist *is*. This chapter describes what a school psychologist *does*, including the most common roles for school psychologists and the specific day-to-day functions of the psychologist in the schools. It also presents and discusses the notions of roles and functions from an indirect or direct service delivery model. Much of the information in this chapter will undoubtedly be discussed and elaborated on in other classes (e.g., assessment, consultation, and intervention) as well as in practica and internships. An effort has been made to include up-to-date and relevant readings for students wishing to follow up on specific topics of interest.

Perhaps never in the history of the profession have the roles and functions of school psychologists been so diverse and so much in flux. Entire states in the United States (e.g., Iowa) have adopted practices, known as *flexible service delivery*, that are based on a problem-solving model and involve minimal traditional assessment. On the other hand, many school psychologists are still functioning in much the same way that school psychologists have worked for decades. This chapter attempts to cover the multitude of possible roles and functions while presenting a realistic picture of what current students can expect to find as they prepare to practice the profession of school psychology.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The current roles and functions of school psychologists are described and understood much better now than they were in the early part of the 20th century. Almost every year new data become available describing the typical practice of school psychologists. The earliest such study appears to have been a survey of the training and testing practices of practitioners conducted by Wallin (1914). Wallin found that most practitioners were not particularly well trained, nor were they providing a broad range of services. The role of psychometrician was considered not only appropriate but also essential, and practice often was limited to the administration of the few techniques for measuring ability and achievement that were available at that time. In this role, the school psychologist facilitated the “sorting” of children into different educational programs. The role soon expanded to include interventions, often remedial instruction or counseling, as reflected in the description in chapter 2 by Hildreth (1930). Role expansion also was observed in the discussions of

school psychology in a special issue of the *Journal of Consulting Psychology* (Symonds, 1942). Nevertheless, the role of sorter persisted as the primary role, whereas other roles and functions could be considered to fall within the framework of “repairer.” Lesser roles were in research, consultation with teachers and parents, administration, and teaching.

Discussions at the 1954 Thayer Conference focused heavily on roles and functions, especially as related to doctoral and nondoctoral training and credentialing (Cutts, 1955). The proceedings, which reported results of surveys of the early 1950s, indicated that testing and assessment functions continued to account for more than two thirds of the practitioners’ time. Cutts also reported on administrators’ and others’ perceptions of the work of the school psychologist.

The literature of the 1960s and 1970s was replete with opinions and surveys regarding the most appropriate roles and functions of the school psychologist (see e.g., Fagan, Delugach, Mellon, & Schlitt, 1985). The era was characterized by a persistent dissatisfaction with the psychometric testing role (sorter) and the accompanying limited testing functions. The preference was for interventions, especially counseling and consultation (repairer) roles, during an era of growth in training programs and curricula. For example, in her 1963 book, Gray suggested two roles for the psychologist in the schools: (a) the data-oriented problem solver who brings research competencies to bear on the problems of the schools, and (b) the transmitter of psychological knowledge and skills who helps to disseminate current research into the applied setting of the schools (1963b). Unfortunately from the perspective of this profession, the traditional sorter role has been resistant to change, with practitioners continuing to report that more than half of their professional time is spent in such activities, although they would prefer devoting more time to other activities (Reschly, 1998; Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

The 1980s and 1990s continued in much the same way. A good deal of discontent was aimed at the traditional roles, but little movement was seen toward any kind of large-scale change. The comprehensive roles and functions portrayed by the National School Psychology Inservice Training Network in 1984 and refined in 1997 (Ysseldyke et al.) have been slow to be put into practice in any widespread manner. Ysseldyke (2005) noted that although he and others have repeatedly called for change and have pointed out the lack of empirical evidence to support the traditional manner of identifying students with disabilities (particularly learning disabilities), he remains “troubled by the virtual absence of change over time in predominant assessment practices” (p. 126). The most recent data (Curtis, Lopez, Batsche, & Smith, 2006) note that school psychologists are spending considerably more time in special education–related activities overall compared with 1989–1990 but that the number of initial special education evaluations and reevaluations has declined and there are fewer 504 plans, fewer in-service programs, and fewer student groups. As discussed in chapter 1, these changes may reflect a change in roles and functions or the addition of other duties plus an increasing shortage of school psychologists. Merrell, Ervin, and Gimpel (2006) note that a struggle continues within the profession between the many things school psychologists are able to do and the few things that they are expected to do. Whether the sorter and repairer roles will remain dominant or will change in the near future remains to be seen.

Roles and functions of school psychologists have been shaped by many forces throughout the history of the profession, and these forces continue to shape new roles and functions while preserving traditional ones. In addition, just as children are influenced by many factors in their environments, the current roles and functions of individual school psychologists are influenced by numerous personal, professional, and external variables. Chapter 1 provided data on the average percentage of time school psychologists engage in various professional activities. Although such data are helpful as summaries, they do not describe the activities of any one practicing school psychologist, and it is probably safe to say that no two school psychologists spend their time in exactly the same way.

DETERMINANTS OF ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

As shown in Figure 4.1, the role of each individual school psychologist can be viewed as a combination of what the person brings to the job (e.g., personal characteristics and professional skills), job-site characteristics (e.g., job descriptions and school system expectations), and various external forces (e.g., legislative developments, social changes, and research findings). Additional discussion of determinants occurs in chapter 7. A discussion of desirable characteristics of students and practitioners can be found in chapter 6.

What the School Psychologist Brings to the Job

The school psychologist does not come to the job as a blank slate but rather with a background of personal characteristics, life experiences, and training. Although at times in the book it may seem as though school psychologists are lumped together, keep in mind that each school psychologist is a unique individual.

Figure 4.1. Variables influencing school psychologists’ professional roles and functions.

Brought to the Job	Found on the Job
Personal characteristics	Job-site characteristics
Personal background	Job description
Professional training	Needs
Reasons for choosing school psychology	Available resources
Professional interests	
Expectations	
External Forces	
	Legal and legislative changes
	Societal problems
	Research findings
	World events

Personal Factors

Students consider school psychology as a career option for any number of reasons. They may have taken an undergraduate course coincidentally taught by a school psychology faculty member who sparked their interest in the field. They may have

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worked with a school psychologist at some time during their own childhood or adolescence, or perhaps they have a child or a sibling who required the services of a school psychologist. They might be a teacher who worked with a particularly effective school psychologist. They may have stumbled across school psychology by accident or had a school psychologist as a family member or neighbor.

Whichever of these possibilities applies, the reason they were attracted to school psychology training may influence their eventual on-the-job performance. Variables such as age, gender, race, marital status, socioeconomic status, the type of community in which they were raised (e.g., urban, suburban, or rural), and the type of schooling they received (e.g., public versus private schooling, enrichment programs versus regular education) also may influence a potential practitioner’s professional role. Personality characteristics likewise influence their professional role (Itkin, 1966). For example, outgoing, assertive, and gregarious individuals may be more apt to enjoy consultation, staff development, and public speaking activities. School psychologists perceived to be warm, friendly, and nonjudgmental may be more sought after by teachers for advice about classroom management, crisis intervention, or other work-related problems.

Professional Training Factors

Professional training also has a major impact on the way school psychologists function on the job. Even when two school psychologists possess identical academic transcripts, they may have vastly different orientations, depending on when their training occurred, the theoretical orientation of the faculty with whom they studied, and the experiences they had at the particular schools they attended. In addition, even within a given training program, faculty members may move on, go on sabbatical, or retire, creating a very different program for the next group of students. In the same way, the other students going through school at the same time may influence the thoughts and feelings of their peers. A group with one or more slightly older,

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nontraditional students who have taught or have children of their own creates a different learning atmosphere than does a group of students who are all 22 years old and right out of college. Likewise, the diversity of students in terms of gender, professional experience, and cultural background provides a unique blend with a strong impact on the individuals in the program.

The type of graduate degree obtained also may influence professional functioning. As described in chapter 6, currently the specialist level of training (a minimum of 60 graduate semester hours spread over a 3-year period and including practica and internship experiences)

is nationally acknowledged as the appropriate minimum entry level for school psychologists. Beyond that entry level, practicing school psychologists are expected to continue to upgrade their knowledge and skills through a variety of continuing education options and opportunities.

School psychology training programs, particularly doctoral programs, often emphasize one area of specialization over others (e.g., behavioral consultation, individual and group counseling, or psychoeducational assessment). Graduates of such programs are well prepared for positions emphasizing these specialized skills in addition to possessing basic practitioner competencies. Other programs (including most specialist-level programs) attempt to provide more generalized training so that students can adapt to a variety of professional environments. Chapter 6 provides an in-depth look into differences between doctoral and specialist-level training.

The geographic location (state, province, or country) in which a practitioner's training is received, the practicum and internship requirements fulfilled, the research interests of faculty members involved in training, and even (or perhaps especially) the interpersonal dynamics of the faculty members contribute to the practitioner's role. The administrative issue of whether the program is in a department or college of education, a department of psychology within a college of arts and sciences, or a department of educational psychology administered jointly by education and psychology may influence the type of training and the trainee's eventual role as a school psychologist (see chapter 6 for a discussion of this topic). The balance of psychology courses and education courses in the training program, and the balance of other students—whether from other psychology graduate programs or in education-related areas including special education or school counseling—also have an effect.

Some graduate programs, particularly those in larger metropolitan areas, may attract a large number of part-time students who work on their school psychology degrees while concurrently holding jobs or taking care of families. Other programs are composed primarily of full-time students who complete all academic requirements in 2 years and go immediately into internship positions. The latter types of programs may have nearly all of their classes during the day, and all of the students admitted in any particular year may take all of their coursework together. Programs in large urban areas may offer more night and weekend classes, and students may be taking only one or two classes each semester over an extended number of years. Increasingly, prospective students are inquiring about opportunities to meet some or all of their academic requirements through nontraditional means, such as distance learning.

Many training-related issues are settled more by chance than by plan. Students choose to apply to specific graduate programs for a variety of reasons, not necessarily because of the quality or reputation of the program. Their spouse may have been accepted to a graduate program there. They plan to live with their parents to keep expenses down. Maybe they continued at a school because they went there as an undergraduate and already know their way around.

Other students may not have much choice as to the program they attend. "Place-bound" students, for example, are those who are unable to move somewhere to attend graduate school, usually because of family or financial circumstances, and they must choose between attending a local program or not attending graduate

school at all. Also, with increasing numbers of applicants and a constant number of slots, the choice of program may be based mainly on where or if the prospective student gets admitted.

The availability of financial assistance is another important determinant. All other factors being equal (e.g., quality, length, and reputation of the program), most students will choose the program that offers them the best deal financially in terms of tuition waivers, additional stipends, and duties or hours of work required to earn assistantship funding.

Typically, the decision-making process about graduate schools is different for students contemplating a master's or specialist-level training than for those contemplating doctoral training. Doctoral training traditionally is more specialized than predoctoral training, and prospective students (particularly those who have already completed a master's or specialist training program) generally are more aware of the need to match their own professional interests with the emphasis of a given doctoral program (Erchul, Scott, Dombalis, & Schulte, 1989). Although geographic, financial, and personal variables still may influence the prospective student's choices of doctoral institutions, other factors, such as the reputation of the program, the research interests of faculty members at an institution, and the accreditation status of the program, take on added importance for many candidates. Doctoral programs generally have more stringent entrance requirements than predoctoral programs; therefore, a prospective student's choice of a doctoral-level institution may be dictated more by whether or not the student is accepted into a particular program.

Job-Site Characteristics

Just as no two school psychologists are alike, no two job sites are identical. Job sites may vary on numerous characteristics from the supportiveness of coworkers and administrators to the community's awareness of the school psychologist's role.

Number of Pupils Served

The more students that school psychologists are expected to serve, the more time they will need to spend in assessment-related activities dealing with the identification, diagnosis, and placement of children with disabilities. Some school psychologists find it difficult to meet the demands of their assessment responsibilities and to participate in decisions on appropriate educational interventions for children with disabilities. School psychologists who work with fewer children may choose to, and may be expected to, expand into one or more additional roles, such as teacher consultant, individual or group counselor, staff development planner, group testing coordinator, or educational researcher.

Other Job-Related Factors

Many other job-related factors influence a school psychologist's professional practice. Some school psychologists work only in elementary schools, some only in secondary schools, and others in a combination of elementary and secondary schools. Secondary schools differ from elementary schools not only in the ages of the

students but also in structure (e.g., different teachers for each subject and standardized instructional periods). The role of the school psychologist in each setting reflects these age and structural differences.

School psychologists' roles and functions also may vary depending on whether the school or schools are in an urban, suburban, or rural district. Some of these differences were discussed in chapter 3 and include the number of students served, the amount of time spent driving between schools, whether the office is located in an administrative building or in one of the schools, and who the practitioner's immediate supervisor is and what that person's professional training is. A supervisor with training in school psychology or in special education may have different expectations than a supervisor without that training or background. Sometimes a school psychologist's job is largely related to his or her predecessor's role. If the predecessor was perceived as competent and was well liked, then the newly hired school psychologist will be expected to function in much the same way. If the predecessor was perceived as incompetent, unpopular, or both, the newly hired school psychologist may be able to do almost anything as long as it is considered an improvement.

Oakland and Cunningham (1999) conceptualize the forces that affect the role of the school psychologist as being dependent upon the amount of external control the profession exercises. For example, variables such as licensure and certification, professional associations, and training are controlled largely by those in the field of school psychology. Variables such as financial support for the schools, state and federal statutes, and technology are influenced, at least to some extent, by school psychology practitioners and organizations. Other variables such as the political climate, the changes in society, and the history of certain situations are out of the control of the field of school psychology. Oakland and Cunningham suggest further that sources of tension that exist may need to be resolved before the profession of school psychology can move forward. The tensions discussed include unity versus plurality in school psychology, brevity versus completeness of professional preparation, thoroughness versus economy, services needed versus ability to deliver them, remediation versus prevention programs, special education versus general education, and traditional versus emerging assessment practices.

Shortages of School Psychology Practitioners

Shortages among school psychologists have a tremendous impact on professional practice. What happens when a school district or cooperative cannot find enough school psychologists to meet its needs despite all of its best search efforts? Obviously schools have some needs that must be met, such as students needing services for academic or behavioral difficulties and teachers requiring consultation about a problem with a student in the classroom. If no school psychologist can be found, what do school districts do? Among the strategies employed are increasing the load of the school psychologists on staff, hiring other staff members to perform some of the duties of the school psychologist, hiring retired school psychologists or those not wishing to work full-time on a contractual basis to work a certain number of days or complete a set number of case studies, hiring school psychologists who work full-time for

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another district to work evenings and weekends, paying someone to attend graduate school in school psychology with the understanding that the individual will come back to the district as a school psychologist for a given number of years (or repay the district for the training), and offering bonuses to interns if they agree to continue working in the district following the internship.

The Presence of Related Personnel

School psychologists' day-to-day functions may be influenced by the presence or absence of other related professionals. Some school districts, for example, hire school social workers who are responsible for obtaining social and developmental information about children from parents or for conducting individual and group counseling in the schools, or to do both jobs. Some school districts employ paraprofessionals or other personnel to perform some of the assessment duties often expected of school psychologists. Paraprofessionals are individuals who are not actually members of a given profession (in this case school psychology) but who receive sufficient training to be able to assist professionals with some tasks. Still other districts may employ school counselors, speech and language clinicians, occupational and physical therapists, psychiatrists, and other psychologists. The presence or absence of such professionals in the schools may dramatically influence the role of the school psychologist.

External Forces

School psychologists do not operate in isolation from society in general. Anyone who believes that public schools operate autonomously has not seen the impact of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Legislative and sociocultural changes have a huge influence on the practice of school psychology.

Societal Changes

Today's school psychologists do not operate in the same way as the school psychologists of the 1990s, 1980s, or before. Society has changed, and these changes have had a dramatic effect on children in the schools and consequently on the professional role of the school psychologist. In most classrooms nationwide, the children who live in intact two-parent homes are in the minority. More than 70% of mothers of school-age children work outside the home. Most of these women are employed at least partly out of economic necessity. Because few households have at least one stay-at-home parent, many children, even elementary school-age children, are left at home, unsupervised, for long periods. These so-called latchkey kids are of great concern to educators as well as to parents who feel that there are no available or affordable alternatives. Parents of junior high and high school students often worry about leaving their teenagers home without supervision in an era of substance abuse and sexual experimentation. Some school districts provide before-school and after-school programs, but recently, governmental budget cuts have put such programs at risk.

Most children in kindergarten today have been enrolled in preschool or day care either within the public school system or in privately run programs. This in itself represents a vast change from children starting school 25 or 30 years ago. In

addition, critical events such as unemployment, poverty, or substance abuse in families and in society generally may influence school psychologists' professional practice. The societal context of schooling has changed, which in turn has influenced the need for school psychology services and the types of services required in the changing educational system.

Legal Cases, Legislative Acts, and Ethical Issues

Two of the most influential factors that have shaped school psychology over the years have been legal and ethical issues. Although students will become thoroughly familiar with these issues in their classes and in their readings, for example, of books such as *Ethics and Law for School Psychologists* (Jacob & Hartshorne, 2007), the following brief discussion covers some of the legal cases, legislative acts, and ethical issues that have most directly influenced the roles and functions of school psychologists.

In terms of legal issues, school psychologists often are involved in many facets of the legal system, particularly in court cases surrounding assessment-related issues. Legal issues that are most relevant to school psychologists can be divided into two major categories: (a) legal cases that result from the application of psychological assessment (i.e., cases in which assessment practices themselves are being challenged), and (b) legal cases that introduce psychological assessment as evidence or support (i.e., cases in which psychological assessment results are used to substantiate or refute a claim).

Cultural bias in testing. The court cases that have focused on the relationship between educational tests and cultural biases have had the greatest influence on the roles and functions of school psychologists (Bersoff, 1981). The fundamental question posed by legal challenges in such cases is, Are traditional psychological tests in educational settings fair for all students regardless of race, ethnic background, and gender? A second and more subtle question is, What happens to children as a result of testing in the schools? (Reschly, 1979).

The first case was *Hobson v. Hansen* (1967), in which a disproportionate number of African American children in the Washington, DC, public schools were placed in lower-level classes on the basis of their scores on group-administered tests. The primary issue in *Hobson v. Hansen* revolved around the question of whether the results of such group tests actually reflect a student's "innate abilities." In that case, the court found that the group tests that were used were not sufficient to justify placement in low-ability level classes.

Since *Hobson v. Hansen*, a number of other cases have been adjudicated that focused on individual intelligence testing and the resulting overrepresentation of minority group members in special education classes, especially classes for the mildly or "educably" mentally retarded. Such cases include *Diana v. California State Board of Education* (1970); *Guadalupe Organization, Inc. v. Tempe Elementary School District No. 3* (1972); *Larry P. v. Riles* (1984); and *PASE v. Hannon* (1980). (Additional information on specific cases can be found in Bersoff, 1982a, 1982b; Jacob & Hartshorne, 2007; Reschly, 1983; and Reschly, Kicklighter, & McKee, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c.) One difficulty that has transcended all of these court cases involves defining and measuring the construct *intelligence*. Traditional definitions of

intelligence may in reality be more closely related to a person's ability to function within a predominantly white, middle-class, public school system than to any innate general cognitive ability. Reschly (1979) suggested that every time IQ test results are included in a report or in a student's file, such results should be accompanied by a warning like the surgeon general's warning for cigarettes:

IQ tests measure only a portion of the competencies involved with human intelligence. The IQ results are best seen as predicting performance in school, and reflecting the degree to which children have mastered middle class cultural symbols and values. This is useful information, but it is also limited. Further cautions: IQ tests do not measure innate-genetic capacity and the scores are not fixed. Some persons do exhibit significant increases or decreases in their measured IQ. (p. 224)

More recent legal cases in which assessment practices have been challenged have switched the focus from the ambiguous notion of a student's innate intelligence to the more straightforward evidence of a student's actual level of achievement in the classroom setting (Reschly et al., 1988c). In one such case cited by Reschly et al. (*Marshall et al. v. Georgia*, 1984, 1985), students had been divided into instructional groups based on their mastery of specific skills within an established curriculum, not on their IQ score. The students' progress was closely monitored in each subject. Students were not simply placed into a certain level and left there without regard to their successes or failures. Even though a disproportionate number of black students were in the lowest classroom group in the *Marshall* case, the judge found in favor of the schools. As noted by Reschly et al., this probably was because the type of curricular-relevant assessment used, called curriculum-based assessment (CBA) or curriculum-based measurement (CBM) in the literature, was found to be directly related to positive learning outcomes. For more information about curriculum-based assessment and curriculum-based measurement, see Gickling & Rosenfield, 1995, and Shinn, 1995. Such cases have a direct impact on the everyday assessment and intervention practices of school psychologists.

How test results are used as evidence. The second group of legal cases includes those in which psychological tests have been introduced as evidence to substantiate or refute a claim. Cases in this group have not received the attention given to the cases cited in the first group; however, many school psychologists over the years have been summoned to testify about psychological tests. Some of the more controversial cases are those involving special education versus regular education placement decisions. For example, a child's test scores, classroom performance, and other data are used to determine if the child would be better off in a residential program, in a regular classroom, or in a special education classroom. Child custody decisions concerning children who have been evaluated by a school psychologist are also controversial.

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School psychologists also may become involved in other types of legal issues or cases. They may be asked to work with students who have been victims of or

witnesses to crimes. Likewise, they may be asked to work with students who have committed crimes. As addressed later in this chapter in the discussion of crisis consultation, school psychologists may be asked to perform a more indirect role in some instances by working with teachers whose students are facing crises.

Legislative influences. The influence of legislation on school psychology can be seen most clearly in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA; Pub. L. 94-142), the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) Amendments of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-476), which became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (Pub. L. 105-117). Although originally slated to be updated in 2002, amended IDEA regulations were finally published in August 2006.

As noted in chapters 2 and 7, the original EAHCA legislation in 1975 mandated that all handicapped children be identified, diagnosed, and placed in the least restrictive educational environment. That is, *all* children are entitled to an education at public expense and in the most “normal” program possible. Although school psychologists often are involved in the identification, diagnosis, and placement of handicapped children, the diagnostic responsibilities set out in EAHCA are often the most time-consuming for the psychologist in the schools. The EHA and IDEA have reinforced and expanded on EAHCA by extending the principles to infants and young children, including expanding provisions for assistive technology, and emphasizing the need for family involvement in educational planning.

Ethical issues facing school psychologists. As described in some detail in chapter 7, school psychologists operate under a variety of ethical guidelines through their national and state associations. (The APA and NASP ethical codes appear in appendixes C and D.) Although many ethical issues are clear-cut, others are more ambiguous and can be decided only after careful consideration of all the facts in a given situation. Throughout this chapter, information about legal and ethical issues is provided as it applies to the various roles and functions of the school psychologist. (Jacob & Hartshorne, 2007, provide a comprehensive discussion of legal, legislative, and ethical issues that have an impact on school psychologists.)

BASIC SKILLS USED BY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Although many factors influence the precise roles and functions of individual school psychologists, there are commonalities of training and practice. Most school psychologists have been trained in certain basic skills, which they will use to a greater or lesser extent depending on the factors described above. There are a number of different ways of conceptualizing these basic skills. Current students are probably most familiar with the following list of domains from the National Association of School Psychologists standards for school psychology training programs (NASP, 2000c). These 11 domains are commonly regarded as the basis for training and practice of school psychologists.

1. Data-based decision making and accountability
2. Consultation and collaboration
3. Learning and instruction
4. Socialization and development of life skills
5. Student diversity in development and learning
6. School and systems organization, policy development, and climate
7. Prevention, crisis intervention, and mental health
8. Home/school/community collaborations
9. Research and program evaluation
10. School psychology practice and development
11. Technology standards

What specific skills do school psychologists need to address each of the 11 domains and how do they acquire those skills? Each training program uses a unique combination of coursework and field experiences to make certain that students are competent in each domain. They may not have a course that corresponds with each domain name, but they will be expected to have addressed each one in some depth prior to certification. For example, the Introduction to School Psychology class is directly related to school psychology practice and development (Domain 10), although the course will probably cover material regarding data-based decision making and accountability (Domain 1), school and systems organization, policy development, and climate (Domain 6), and so forth. Likewise coursework in research and statistics, as well as a final research project or thesis, will provide many of the skills needed under Domain 9 on research and program evaluation. Technology standards (Domain 11) are probably infused through a number of classes that require students to be familiar with PowerPoint presentations, Internet searches, e-mail, word processing, computer scoring of standardized tests, and more.

The remaining pages of this chapter present information on the actual roles and functions of school psychologists. Unlike the previous two editions of this text, this edition presents an overview of the traditional roles of the school psychologist and that of the new or emerging roles of the school psychologist. It begins with descriptions of some of the most common functions of psychologists in the schools. After these descriptions, scenarios are presented to demonstrate how school psychologists may combine these functions into a typical day's schedule.

A school psychologist's ultimate professional goal is to help children. There are many ways to attain this goal but not all ways are appropriate in all situations with all children. Some authors (e.g., Elliott & Witt, 1986b) have conceptualized the roles and functions of school psychologists in terms of the services school psychologists possess in their professional repertoires and the ways they deliver these services. In this *service delivery* model, roles are viewed as helping students directly (e.g., counseling), indirectly

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(e.g., consultation with teachers), or somewhere in between, on a continuum of services (e.g., assessment of an individual student, design of interventions that teachers or parents will implement).

The roles and functions described in this chapter are not necessarily unique to the practicing school psychologist working within a public school system. These roles may also be applied to nontraditional settings (see chapter 8). Some of the roles and functions of school psychologists are similar to the activities of clinical and counseling psychologists (e.g., counseling and some types of assessment), whereas other roles and functions seem more unique to the profession (e.g., planning school-based interventions or participating in multidisciplinary staffings). Overall, in order to help children, school psychologists must be able to conceptualize problems, support their ideas with data about the problems, work with others to help solve the problems, and evaluate outcomes.

Overall, in order to help children, school psychologists must be able to conceptualize problems, support their ideas with data about the problems, work with others to help solve the problems, and evaluate outcomes.

TRADITIONAL ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST—ASSESSMENT

The traditional practice of the school psychologist involves three basic roles: assessment, intervention, and consultation. The three roles are described here as if they were mutually exclusive, but the truth is that they are always combined to some extent. It would be difficult to imagine the purpose of an assessment in which results were not conveyed to those asking for the assessment (consultation) or in which the assessment was not linked by the psychologist, the teacher, and the parent to some sort of action for improvement (intervention).

The traditional role of the psychologist in the schools revolves around the assessment of individual children. This *child study* role remains a major one for the school psychologist. A brief review of the assessment process is presented here as an introduction to the later in-depth discussions of assessment and practicum (field experience) courses.

First some definitions are necessary to distinguish between the terms *assessment* and *testing*. These terms should not be used interchangeably. As defined by Cohen, Swerdlik, and Phillips (1996), psychological assessment can be seen as “the gathering and integration of psychology-related data for the purpose of making a psychological evaluation, accomplished through the use of tools such as tests, interviews, case studies, behavioral observation, and specially designed apparatuses and measurement procedures” (p. 6). Psychological testing, according to the same authors, refers to “the process of measuring psychology-related variables by means of devices or procedures designed to obtain a sample of behavior” (p. 6). In this book, the term *assessment* is used to refer to a complex problem-solving or information-gathering process. The reason that school psychologists assess individual students is to understand the difficulties a child is experiencing in order to intervene and ultimately help the child. Although administering psychological tests may be a part of this

assessment process, such tests should be administered only when necessary to understand a child's difficulties and should not be automatically administered in every case to every child.

The Referral Process

Assessment occurs in the context of a referral process. The assessment of an individual child begins with a referral form, which is usually completed by the child's teacher and signed by a parent or guardian. A sample referral form is shown in Figure 4.2. The types of children referred and the difficulties they experience were explored in a national survey of school psychologists who serve elementary and secondary school settings (Harris, Gray, Rees-McGee, Carroll, & Zaremba, 1987). Harris et al. suggest that nearly two thirds (62%) of referrals are for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The researchers found that referrals most often were the result of a teacher's concerns (57%), although sometimes referrals are made by parents or are self-referrals. Boys were 3.5 times as likely to be referred for services as girls; elementary school students (i.e., kindergarten through fifth graders) were more likely to be referred than older students; and students with poor academic performance or with social-emotional difficulties constituted more than 80% of the referrals.

A more recent study found that 57% of total referrals to school psychologists in the study's sample were for reading difficulties (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002). Other frequent reasons for referrals in the Bramlett et al. study were for written expression (43% of referrals), task completion (39%), mathematics (27%), conduct (26%), and motivation (24%), with some referrals for more than one category. Reasons cited as receiving between 10% and 20% were defiance, peer relationships, listening comprehension, oral expression, and mental retardation. Reasons given that represented between 2% and 9% of the total included truancy, violence, depression, anxiety, shyness or withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts, as well as low-incidence behaviors such as autism and traumatic brain injury. Racial differences have also been found in referrals by teachers (Andrews, Wisniewski, & Mulick, 1997). What this means is just as boys are referred more often than girls, students of one race may be referred more often than students of another race.

The range of referrals found in the studies suggests that children in schools often need instructional as well as psychological assistance. A Canadian study produced similar findings (Cole, 1992). One study examined differences between high referring and low referring teachers (Waldron, McLeskey, Skiba, Jancaus, & Schulmeyer, 1998). Results indicated that some teachers tend to use referral to the school psychologist as a last resort after trying a large number of interventions (*low referring*). High-referring teachers, on the other hand, use referral to the school psychologist as a first step in solving a problem a student is experiencing. Increasingly schools are using a process known as *prereferral assessment*, which arose from a desire to reduce or at least to focus the large number of referrals received by school psychologists. The process involves a team problem-solving approach to diagnose difficulties that are occurring in the classroom and to intervene early, if possible, bypassing the more traditional referral process (Brandt, 1996).

Figure 4.2. Sample referral form.

I. Personal Information

Name of child	Date of request	
Home address	Date of birth	
Home telephone	Age	Grade

II. Family Information

Name	Education	Occupation
Father		
Mother		
Ages of siblings		
Is this child	<input type="checkbox"/> adopted or stepchild?	<input type="checkbox"/> foster child?
	<input type="checkbox"/> living with only one parent?	<input type="checkbox"/> living with both parents?
Primary language of home:	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)	

III. School Information

Name of school	
Address	Phone
Principal's name	Teacher's name
Grades repeated	Years in present school
Services presently offered to the child	
Attendance record	
Previous schools attended	

IV. Health Information

Date of last physical examination

Doctor's name

Results of last physical examination

Is the child on medication? If so, what?

Date and results of last vision screening

Date and results of last hearing screening

General physical health

During the last two years has the child experienced any medical problems?
If yes, please explain.

V. Reason for Referral

Why are you referring this child for psychological evaluation at this time?

What questions would you like to have answered?

Is there anything about the child's home or family environment that you believe might have a bearing on the child's attitude and behavior? If so, please explain.

What types of interventions have already been tried to address the child's difficulties?

Informed Consent

Once a referral is initiated, parents or guardians must give signed consent for an assessment. In fact, EAHCA and its reauthorizations as IDEA take parental consent a step further and address the issue of *informed consent*. Not only must the school give parents the opportunity to consent to assessment, but it also must make a reasonable effort to notify parents that an assessment is being recommended and to ensure that they understand what an assessment is, why it is being suggested, and what might result from the assessment. This requirement is usually straightforward. Occasionally, though, securing informed consent requires finding an interpreter, when the parents' primary language is not English, or tailoring an explanation to parents with limited education or ability so that they understand it.

Referral Questions

When the referral form has been completed and informed parental consent has been obtained, school psychologists often translate the request for assessment into one or more referral questions. For example, what does the teacher, parent, or student want to know? What is the nature of the problem? The clarification of referral questions helps to define the problem and is an important part of the assessment process. Elliott and Witt (1986b, p. 21) observed that, "Behavior and learning problems of children are functionally related to the setting in which they are manifest." In other words, the child exists within particular school and home contexts. What one teacher or parent perceives as a problem may not necessarily be perceived as a problem by another teacher or parent. Also, conditions in certain classrooms or homes may cause or intensify a child's problem behavior. Such environmental factors deserve careful consideration throughout the assessment process.

Data Collection Procedures

Referral questions can be addressed using a number of data collection or assessment procedures. School psychologists use a *multifactored* approach to assessment, which often includes testing, although not automatically. No single source of data addresses all aspects of a referral question so multiple sources must be used.

Questions for Collection of Data

Assessment should be done with a purpose in mind, and Salvia and Ysseldyke (2007) suggest that, within school settings, assessments be conducted to help make four types of decisions about students using the following questions.

1. Prereferral classroom decisions: Does the student need some sort of help beyond what is currently being done in the classroom? Should the child's difficulty be discussed by a teacher assistance team or an intervention assistance team? Is there something the teacher can do within the classroom to help the student? What other intervention options are available?

2. Entitlement decisions: Are the student's problems serious and persistent enough to warrant a referral to the school psychologist and other child study team members? Assessment procedures enhance the abilities of school personnel to identify students who are significantly above or below average in general abilities, in academic achievement, or in social or behavioral skills. In addition, assessment results are used by multidisciplinary teams in deciding whether an individual child qualifies for and might benefit from special instructional services.
3. Postentitlement classroom decisions: Assessments are conducted to provide information about an individual child's or a group of children's academic strengths and weaknesses. Such information should be applied within the classroom environment and be helpful in developing an individualized instructional plan for a child or in making curricular modifications across the classroom, building, or district.
4. Accountability and outcome decisions: Assessments provide additional information to teachers, parents, and children themselves regarding how much benefit individual children are deriving from their classroom placements. On a broader scale, assessments can help provide information as to how well educational programs in general are achieving their goals.

Initial Contact With the Referral Source

The school psychologist's first step in the assessment process often involves meeting with the individual who made the referral to determine specific referral questions. Even at this early stage, the psychologist begins to formulate initial hypotheses about the child's difficulties. This process of hypothesis formation is one of the most difficult steps for school psychology students, because such hypotheses tend to be hunches based on professional experience and training.

Although the teacher most often is the person responsible for filling out the referral form, it is critical to meet with the parents as well as the teacher to gain an understanding of the problems the child is experiencing. The parents may have additional concerns or insights to share prior to testing. The parents also have information about the child's health history, educational progress, and developmental milestones that may not be available from other sources. On the other hand, if the parents have made the referral, meeting with the teacher provides much additional information about the child's academic, social, and behavioral progress. Teachers also have the advantage of seeing how the child compares with others of the same age within the classroom. If the parents initiate a referral and the school psychologist is working outside of the school setting (e.g., in private practice or a mental health center), then parental permission is needed before the teacher or anyone else may be contacted concerning the child.

Teachers also have the advantage of seeing how the child compares with others of the same age within the classroom.

Classroom Observations

Following discussions with teachers and parents regarding the clarification of the referral question, many school psychologists begin to gather firsthand

information about the referred child by completing one or more direct observations. Several standardized systems and computerized systems exist for completing such observations (e.g., Sattler, 2002), although some school psychologists report that their classroom observations center on a number of rather specific questions:

1. What was the child doing? What were other children doing?
2. What was the child supposed to be doing?
3. Where did the observation occur: classroom, playground, or elsewhere?
4. When and for how long did you observe?

According to Sattler, classroom observations give the examiner the opportunity to observe and to systematically record the child's behavior in a natural setting. Data collected from observations can be compared with reports from the child's teachers and parents. Data from naturalistic observations (i.e., observations in settings familiar to the child) also can be helpful when compared with observations of the child's behavior during the more structured and less familiar standardized testing setting if such testing is conducted. Along the same lines, Elliott and Witt (1986) note that "a primary goal of psychoeducational assessment is to determine what a child does and does not know, and how the child learns best so successful interventions can be designed" (p. 21). Seeing the child in the natural habitat of the classroom can provide a perspective on the child that would not be gained in the one-to-one setting in which most psychological testing occurs. In addition, Hintze and Shapiro (1995) state that in cases of problematic classroom behavior, systematic classroom observations allow us to observe "the behavior of interest in the settings where the problem actually has been happening. As such, the data are empirically verifiable and do not require inferences from observations of other behaviors" (p. 651).

Increasingly, school psychologists are trained not to limit their observations to the individual child in question and to observe and assess instructional environments. As Ysseldyke and Elliott (1999) note, there has long been an interest in instructional environments, but only recently has technology advanced to the point that such environments can be described using standardized measurement procedures. The variables considered in assessments of instructional environments include use of classroom time, motivation techniques, and opportunities provided for practice of skills, among others.

Examination of School Records

A great deal of information can be gleaned from school records, although school personnel should first be asked about their policies and about who has access to what records. The school psychologist will want to determine the child's current grade placement, previous schools attended, school history (i.e., has the child ever been retained, accelerated, or received any kind of special services?), group test results, attendance record, and previous assessments, if any. Information about health history and results of vision and hearing screenings also may be found in school records. Such information is critical in understanding the difficulties the child is experiencing. Checking the child's date of birth and age is often

advisable as well, because individuals filling out referral forms have been known to make mistakes and because results of testing are often based on the child's chronological age.

Testing

Throughout the interviews with teachers and parents, the classroom observations, and the examination of school records, the school psychologist attempts to gain a clearer picture of the child and his or her difficulties. The use of a variety of test instruments is often helpful at this point to gather more information about the child. Testing, although sometimes portrayed as the albatross around the neck of the school psychologist, actually has many direct and indirect benefits. Not only do tests provide quantifiable data about an individual child, but they also give the school psychologist the opportunity to work with the child on a one-to-one basis. Skilled examiners often learn as much or more about a child through their observations during testing as they do through the computation of test scores. In addition, children often enjoy the opportunity to work one-to-one with an adult at school. In keeping with the notion of a multifaceted assessment, some or all of the following types of tests may be administered as part of a test battery:

1. Cognitive ability tests: Tests that traditionally have been called intelligence tests or aptitude tests.
2. Academic achievement measures: Tests that assess a child's performance in one or more academic areas (e.g., reading comprehension, spelling, or math).
3. Perceptual tests (visual, auditory): Tests that examine a child's perceptual abilities (e.g., hearing differences between words with similar sounds or seeing hidden figures).
4. Tests of fine and gross motor abilities: Tests that look at a child's coordination, including everything from drawing and handwriting (fine motor abilities) to tossing a beanbag or walking a balance beam (gross motor abilities).
5. Behavioral, personality, and adaptive behavior measures: Such measures typically are outside the realm of academic tasks. Instead, they address children's behavior in various settings, their overall level of adjustment, and their non-school-related skills (often called self-help skills).
6. Curriculum-based assessment techniques: As mentioned earlier with respect to recent legal cases, curriculum-based assessment (CBA) is specifically geared to the academic tasks the child is expected to master. Such assessments usually look at tasks the child has already mastered, tasks the child is on the verge of mastering, and tasks that are beyond mastery at the time of testing. Such assessments may also allow comparison with the performance of the student's peers.

Interviews

Parents, teachers, and others (e.g., physicians, reading specialists, speech and language therapists, social workers, and extended family members) often are quite aware of the difficulties a child is experiencing. Talking to these individuals early in

the assessment process helps to provide a more complete picture of the child. In many cases, children themselves are quite aware of their own difficulties, and even young children can be fairly candid about the reasons for these difficulties. Maintaining confidentiality under such circumstances can raise ethical questions. Sattler (1998) has devoted an entire book of more than 1,000 pages to the important skill of interviewing children and families.

Compilation of Assessment Results

Once all of the assessment procedures have been completed, the results are compiled, organized in relation to the referral questions, and shared with others. Presentation of the results usually takes two forms: (a) a written report designed to be read by school personnel and placed in the student’s permanent record, and (b) an oral recounting of the results in conferences with parents or teachers or in multi-disciplinary staffing sessions, or both.

Report Writing

Psychological or psychoeducational reports can have many formats (e.g., Ross-Reynolds, 1990; Sattler, 2002; Tallent, 1993). Ideally the psychological report should take the reader logically and chronologically through the process of assessment. Reports should be written clearly, be as free of technical jargon as possible, and reflect the consumers of the report by presenting the information that would be most helpful to them. The goal of explaining the test results so that someone with little background in psychological assessment will understand them is vital to the assessment process. Every effort should be made to relate the information in the report to the referral questions. There is no need to include in the report everything that is known about the youngster. All of the data accumulated during the assessment process cannot possibly be contained in a single report. Rather, the psychologist must find the most effective ways to synthesize all of the data and to communicate effectively the most important points and how they lead to recommendations for intervention. Ownby (1991) emphasizes that the psychologist’s report should shape the thinking and the beliefs of those reading the report and perhaps even modify the behavior of the reader.

If a test battery has been administered to the child, then the report should describe the individual test results as well as describe how the various tests and subtests relate to each other. Integrating test results will point out any apparent inconsistencies in the child’s performance.

The report should address qualitative or behavioral aspects in addition to quantitative test results. Did the child initiate conversation or merely answer questions? How did the child respond to praise or frustration? Were there particular behaviors exhibited on all of the tests that seemed to indicate low self-esteem? Comments about the child’s behavior should include specific examples. Instead of saying “Leta was very anxious during the testing,” the report should include a description such as

Ownby (1991) emphasizes that the psychologist’s report should shape the thinking and the beliefs of those reading the report and perhaps even modify the behavior of the reader.

“She bit her nails throughout, rarely made eye contact with the examiner, and never initiated conversation.”

There is a growing controversy about computer-generated psychological report writing. Although many school psychologists will gratefully use computer programs to score results of psychological tests, they are usually less comfortable or confident in allowing computer programs to interpret the test results and write reports. Several different types of computer reports are available (Cohen et al., 1996). *Simple scoring* reports provide test scores. *Extended scoring* reports expand the data by providing more complex statistical analyses, such as noting significant differences between subtest scores. Neither of these scoring report programs, however, attempt to interpret test scores.

According to Cohen et al., interpretive reports can be broken down further into descriptive reports, screening reports, and consultative reports. Descriptive reports provide brief comments about the various test scales. Screening reports highlight certain more unusual test results, bringing them to the attention of clinicians as areas on which to follow up. Consultative reports are designed to provide technical information to be shared among professionals. Finally, and of most concern to professionals, are integrative reports. As the name implies, integrative reports attempt to integrate information about the person being assessed, pulling together information from a wide variety of instruments and observations, summarizing that information, drawing conclusions, and even suggesting interventions or strategies.

Although the use of computer-assisted software with testing instruments has many advantages, test scoring and test interpretation of most psychoeducational assessment instruments are, in part, subjective processes for which extensive training is needed. The interpretation of assessment data by a program designed by an individual is no better or worse than the interpretation done by any other individual. Practitioners just starting out in the field may choose to view computer-generated reports and to select portions of the reports that seem accurate and valuable. One should never assume, however, that the report is accurate just because of its appearance or because it is marketed. Tallent (1993) notes that “computerized testing is a still-emerging technology . . . with the potential to have influence on many lives” (p. 206). Tallent cites the *Guidelines for Computer-Based Tests and Interpretations* (American Psychological Association, 1986) as establishing critical rules for those using such report-writing systems. Psychology students and practicing psychologists are responsible for everything in their reports. If reports contain errors in scoring or interpretation, even if the computer program was in error, the psychologist is accountable for the content of the report.

Parent Conferences

The best approach for a school psychologist to take in a parent conference is to imagine the parents’ position, how they would want to be informed of their child’s results, and what they would want to know (Wise, 1986, 1995). Most parents identify strongly with their children. They want to hear strengths as well as weaknesses. They want to know that anyone working with their child thinks of their child as an individual, not as just another case study. Even parents who are quite aware of their child’s limitations may become emotional in the course of parent conferences. Tears as well as denial are not uncommon reactions of parents.

Parents of children with disabilities may experience feelings of guilt and grief (Murray, 1985). The guilt may arise from the notion, founded or unfounded, that something the parents did caused the disability. The feelings of grief may arise from the knowledge that certain dreams parents have for their children may not come true with this particular child. It is sad for parents to realize that a child with limited intelligence may not go to college or that a child with a physical disability may never become a great athlete. Many resources exist on the topic of parent conferences. Some of those most relevant to school psychologists include Featherstone (1980), Fine (1991), Fish (2002), Gallagher (1980), Gargiulo (1985), Hubbard and Adams (2002), Murray (1985), Seligman and Darling (1997), and Wise (1986, 1995).

Teacher Conferences

Teacher conferences present their own unique challenges. Some experienced teachers can be particularly intimidating to new school psychologists. Teachers and school psychologists sometimes seem to think of themselves as adversaries, each knowing what is best for a child. Teachers may be suspicious of a school psychologist who has never been a teacher and “wants to tell me what to do,” whereas school psychologists may view teachers as being intolerant of children who are different from the norm in any way. Of course, both positions are counterproductive to helping the child. As described below, the consultation role for school psychologists encourages collaborative problem solving between teachers and psychologists and is probably the best strategy in meeting the needs of children.

Multidisciplinary Staffings

Since the passage of EAHCA in 1975 and subsequent IDEA legislation, school psychologists and school systems generally have moved away from individual parent and teacher conferences in favor of sharing assessment results with all involved parties at the same time. The advantages of using a multidisciplinary team of school psychologists, educators, and other professionals are that each person in attendance will be able to hear all of the information presented and then will be able to participate as an equal partner in the decision-making process. The model of multidisciplinary staffing evolved as an effort to limit any one individual’s influence and to protect against decisions that may be biased against minority children (Huebner & Hahn, 1990). The disadvantages of such teams include the notions that parents may find it intimidating to face so many educators at once, that parents and others may be reluctant to disagree with recommendations supported by several trained professionals, and that parents may need time to absorb the results of testing before they are ready to think about what is best for the child (Wise, 1995).

Much of the work that school psychologists do takes place within teams of other professionals.

Much of the work that school psychologists do takes place within teams of other professionals. In decades past, school psychologists were often considered the gatekeepers of special education; that is, the data that the school psychologist presented decided whether or not a student qualified for certain programs. Now, most of

these decisions are made by a group, with each member holding a particular piece of the puzzle that, when put together correctly, should reveal the best educational placement for that student. Of course, anyone who has worked on a group project of any sort knows that sometimes groups work together in productive ways and sometimes they do not. Shaw and Swerdlik (1995) provide a discussion of topics related to team functioning. This topic is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter in the section on the emerging roles of school psychologists.

General Considerations Involved in Traditional Assessment

For the school psychologist to fulfill the responsibilities of the traditional child study role, the professional must address the issues listed below.

1. What is the established referral process?
 - a. Who decides on the referral form to be used?
 - b. Who completes the referral form?
 - c. Who secures parental consent?
 - d. What if parents refuse consent?
 - e. Should students be given a chance to refuse testing?
 - f. Who decides which children should be seen first?
 - g. Where are completed referral forms kept?
2. Who should be referred?
 - a. Are the school psychologist's services limited to children who may qualify for special education services?
 - b. Are the school psychologist's services available to any child experiencing difficulty at school or at home?
 - c. Are the school psychologist's services available to children who may be gifted or talented?
3. What are the alternatives to the "refer-assess" cycle?
 - a. Is prereferral intervention available?
 - b. Are other services available through the school (e.g., counselor, social worker)?
 - c. What community services could be used (e.g., mental health center)?
4. Should a classroom observation be conducted?
 - a. When should the observation be done?
 - b. How long should the observation last?
 - c. What observational method(s) should be used?
 - d. What might be learned from an observation?
 - e. How might the school psychologist's presence influence the observation?
5. Where and how are school records maintained?
 - a. Are records kept for life or disposed of periodically?
 - b. Who has access to student files?

6. What testing procedures should be used?
 - a. What are the reasons for testing this child?
 - b. Which tests are most appropriate based on the child's age, race, sex, native language, and presenting problem?
 - c. Are these tests readily available to the school psychologist?
 - d. What qualifications are needed to administer, score, and interpret the tests?
 - e. Will the tests help to answer the referral question(s)?
7. Who should be interviewed about the child's difficulties?
 - a. The classroom teacher?
 - b. The parent(s) or other family members?
 - c. The child?
 - d. Other school personnel (reading teachers, speech and language therapists, counselors, social workers)?
 - e. Nonschool personnel (e.g., physicians)?
8. What is the purpose of these interviews?
 - a. To gain information about the child's strengths and weaknesses?
 - b. To obtain a social, developmental, and medical history?
 - c. To find out more about the people in the child's environment?
 - d. To share information and findings?
9. When should these individuals be interviewed?
 - a. Before testing?
 - b. After testing?
 - c. Instead of testing?
 - d. Before and after testing?
10. How should these individuals be interviewed?
 - a. Separately or collectively?
 - b. At school or at the child's home?
 - c. In person or over the phone?
11. How should the assessment results be conveyed?
 - a. Orally in a parent conference?
 - b. Orally in a multidisciplinary staffing?
 - c. In the form of a written report?
 - d. Orally as well as in written form?

Legal and Ethical Issues

Specific legal and ethical issues are relevant to each of the roles and functions of school psychologists. For the assessment portion of the traditional role, the major legal issues include the following:

1. Parents and older students have a right to allow or deny consent for the assessment process based on the information they have been provided.

2. Parents, students, and school personnel have the right to assume confidentiality in all of their dealings with the school psychologist except in situations involving danger to one or more individuals. The limits of confidentiality should be explained clearly in initial interviews with all parties.
3. Students and parents have a right to their privacy and a right to not have their privacy invaded.
4. Students and parents have the right to expect competent and current assessments. School psychologists are expected to keep up with developments in the field and to provide appropriate services to their clients. At the same time, school psychologists should recognize their limitations (in terms of professional training, professional experience, and time management).
5. Students and parents have the right to expect assessments that do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, nationality, primary language, cultural background, gender, or socioeconomic status.

A much lengthier discussion of these issues is contained in Jacob and Hartshorne (2007).

Training Needs

To be prepared for traditional assessment activities, the school psychologist needs training and practice in behavioral observation techniques, interviewing methods, a variety of assessment skills (e.g., skills for selecting, administering, scoring, and interpreting results of individually administered tests, and skills for assessing classroom environments), skills in conducting conferences and meetings, and report-writing skills. It also is imperative for the school psychologist to be aware of the administration and organization of schools, normal versus exceptional child development, and general psychological testing and measurement principles. Likewise, training in legal and ethical issues is mandatory to ensure adherence to the highest professional standards. Finally, the school psychologist needs good critical thinking skills to integrate all of this information and understand all of the forces responsible for creating the existing problem.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The advantages of traditional assessment activities are that, in many circumstances, they can help educators, parents, and others understand the behavior of a particular child. They also provide direct contact with the student. Traditional assessment is comfortable and has been mandated in legislation. Many people choose the profession of school psychology because they like the idea of working on a one-to-one basis with children, and traditional assessment provides opportunities to do so. In addition, the assessments school psychologists perform as part of their child study role are data based.

Salvia and Ysseldyke (2007) describe norm-referenced assessment, in which each child's performance is compared with that of other children, as follows.

Commercially prepared norm-referenced tests are standardized on groups of individuals representative of all children, and typical performances for

students of certain ages or in certain grades are obtained. The raw score that an individual student earns on a test, which is the number of questions answered correctly, is compared with the raw scores earned by other students. A *transformed score*, such as a percentile rank, is used to express the given student's standing in the group of all children of that age or grade. (p. 30)

Criterion-referenced assessments allow the school psychologist to monitor a child's progress. They "measure a person's mastery of particular information and skills in terms of absolute standards" (Salvia & Ysseldyke, p. 30). Criterion-referenced tests provide answers to questions such as, How many lowercase letters of the alphabet can Kelly identify? Ideally, criterion-referenced assessments and norm-referenced assessments complement one another by providing two important measures of a child's progress. In addition, data gathered from both types of assessments can lead directly to research, a function that is too often viewed as the lowest priority for school psychology practitioners. The use of data-based assessment can lead to increased accountability among school psychologists.

The disadvantages of traditional data-based assessment include the notion that because there are many children with problems, spending several hours with some of them will hardly make a dent in the needs of a school system. A study by Lichtenstein and Fischetti (1998) found that time spent on evaluations ranged from just under 4 hours to more than 24 hours, with a median of nearly 12 hours per case. Therefore, conducting lengthy evaluations is probably not the best way to have a major impact on the schools. Also, performing assessment activities day after day may be the quickest road to professional burnout. Every time a school psychologist finishes with one child, two more referrals may appear.

Finally, once the data have been collected and interpreted, then what? The child still has not been helped. In fact, when the child study role involves labeling children, there may even be negative consequences for the child. A discussion by Hynd, Cannon, and Haussmann (1983) summarized arguments for and against labeling children. The most critical negative factors appear to be that labeling a child as disabled may prejudice the way others respond to that child, many people may focus on the negative facets of the child, and the label may lower everyone's expectations for the child. On the other hand, labeling a child as disabled has traditionally been the only way the child has been able to receive special services because of various state and federal regulations.

TRADITIONAL ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST—INTERVENTION

Following assessment, in the traditional role the school psychologist works with others involved in the case to come up with some remedial techniques that will alleviate the problem and help the child. Although the ultimate goal of assessment is to help children by identifying intervention strategies, a comprehensive assessment such as that described above does not automatically precede the intervention. Many school psychologists currently advocate, and many states require, a prereferral approach in which intervention assistance teams (often called teacher assistance

teams, or TATs) meet with teachers individually or in small groups to discuss students who might be experiencing a variety of difficulties. Such teams plan strategies collaboratively, which in turn may eliminate the need for a formal comprehensive case study evaluation. The prereferral intervention or intervention assistance approach is described in Graden, Casey, and Bonstrom (1985); Graden, Casey, and Christenson (1985); Zins, Curtis, Graden, and Ponti (1988); and Ross (1995). This approach is a vital part of the emerging role that is discussed later.

Selection of an Intervention Strategy

Recommending and developing interventions involve creativity and common sense, as well as familiarity with current research. Witt and Elliott (1985) provide guidelines to use when considering various interventions. They suggest examining the *effectiveness* of the intervention and the *acceptability* of the intervention, that is, how well it works and how positively it is perceived by consumers. Some factors that are considered when determining an intervention's effectiveness and acceptability include the anticipated duration of the implementation to results, the type of intervention (whether the activity fits easily into the daily routine), the time and other resources needed for the intervention to be successful, the theoretical orientation of the intervention (e.g., behavioral), and the person responsible for implementing the intervention (e.g., a teacher or parent). Witt and Elliott suggest that the child's perceptions of the acceptability of the intervention strategy also be considered.

Acceptable intervention strategies are those that consider the available resources as well as the dynamics of the individual situation. Phillips and McCullough (1990) present the following list of eight "feasibility considerations" for deciding what interventions to implement:

1. How disruptive the intervention will be for the teacher, the classroom, and the school
2. How various individuals and systems will be affected (e.g., student, teacher, and family)
3. The availability of required support services
4. The degree of competence of the person(s) expected to carry out the intervention
5. The chance of the intervention's success
6. The length of time before results are obtained
7. The probable prognosis if the intervention is not implemented
8. The chance that the intervention will lead to a permanent change in the student's behavior

Students and interns often wonder how to determine what interventions to consider. Courses or field experiences discuss interventions and provide ideas. Some books also link particular problem areas with intervention ideas (e.g., McCarney, Wunderlich, & Bauer, 1993; Marzano, 2003; Rathvon, 1999). School psychologists

Figure 4.3. Catterall’s model of strategies for prescriptive interventions.

Intervention Technique	Indirect Approach	Direct Approach
Environmental	Environmental	Installed
	Activities done <i>around</i> the student	Activities done <i>to</i> the student
Personal	Assigned	Transactional
	Activities done <i>by</i> the student	Activities done <i>with</i> the student

research interventions in books, in journals, and on the Internet. They also attend workshops and conferences to help expand their resourcefulness. The NASP newsletter, the *Communiqué*, contains pullout pages on particular issues, which are suitable for handing out to parents and teachers. Canter, Paige, Roth, Romero, and Carroll (2004) compiled many of these pullout pages and added others in a book titled *Helping Children at Home and School: Handouts for Families and Educators*.

To select an intervention, the practitioner or team organizes the optional interventions, which include all those that are directed toward the target difficulty. Models are available that can then be used to sort and compare the interventions. For example, to classify the types of interventions available, Catterall (1967) suggested a four-part model of intervention activities. He categorized intervention techniques according to two dimensions: first, whether the activity’s focus is direct or indirect, and, second, whether the intervention technique focuses on the environment of the student or on the student himself or herself. Figure 4.3 shows Catterall’s model of intervention activities.

Catterall described *environmental* interventions as those activities implemented *around* the student, such as selecting a particular classroom or establishing classroom rules. *Installed* interventions are strategies in which something is done *to* the student, such as positive reinforcements, punishments, or peer tutoring. *Assigned* interventions are activities done *by* the student, such as honors assignments or homework. *Transactional* interventions are those activities done *with* the student, such as individual or group counseling or classroom contracts. Catterall’s model may be especially useful in ensuring that all possible types of intervention strategies are considered.

Maher and Zins (1987) presented a different approach to the organization of school-based intervention strategies. They identified six intervention domains: cognitive development, affective functioning, socialization, academic achievement, physical fitness, and vocational preparation. They also identified three intervention modes: one-to-one, group, and consultation. For example, to help a child improve his or her academic achievement, options include individual tutoring (one-to-one), small-group remedial reading (group), or working with the classroom teacher to enhance the child’s learning within the classroom (consultation).

Procedures for recommending intervention strategies are different for children identified as having disabilities and for children who are not disabled. Since the passage of EAHCA in 1975, decisions made concerning children with disabilities (particularly decisions involving inclusion or part-time or full-time special education class placement) must be joint decisions agreed upon in multidisciplinary conferences with documentation placed in the child’s individualized educational plan (IEP). Prior to the passage of

EAHCA, school psychologists often decided single-handedly which students qualified for special education services, which students did not qualify, and which students, if any, should be taken out of special education placements. Currently, though school psychologists often wield a fair amount of influence in placement decisions, the final decision is made by a team composed of professionals and the child's parent or guardian.

Individual and Group Counseling Interventions

Most school psychologists are prepared to provide some individual and group counseling services, and many enjoy this role. Catterall's model mentioned individual and group counseling as examples of transactional interventions, that is, interventions done with students. The amount of time school psychologists spend doing individual or group counseling is greatly influenced by the setting in which they work; their training, experience, and interest in counseling; their time and scheduling flexibility; and the presence or absence of other qualified professionals within the school and community. Some school districts employ school counselors, school social workers, or other professionals specifically to perform counseling services for students in all grades. Other districts employ counselors who are available only in the high schools and who may spend much of their time coordinating class schedules, arranging group testing, and advising vocational and college students.

The amount of time school psychologists spend in individual or group counseling is greatly influenced by the setting in which they work.

Some school districts expect school psychologists to perform crisis intervention activities, a type of counseling that is short-term and addresses a student's immediate need to talk to someone about a particular problem or event, such as the death of a family member or parental divorce. Other school districts may expect the school psychologist to counsel secondary school students only. Still others may encourage school psychologists to refer nearly all potential counseling cases to local mental health centers or other facilities and individuals in the vicinity. In such cases, when the psychologist is involved in referring students for counseling outside of the school district, the psychologist functions as a liaison with service providers in the community.

In some states a school district may be required to provide all necessary psychological services, including counseling, to students with disabilities or even to all students. In some cases, school psychologists may be expected to spend a large amount of time providing individual and group counseling to these students. In fact, school psychologists may be the professionals most qualified to provide counseling to students with disabilities. Examples of group interventions in which school psychologists may be involved include groups that work with children of divorce, children having difficulties with anger management, and children dealing with grief, along with more general groups to help students improve their social and problem-solving skills.

Training Needs

School psychologists involved in planning and implementing recommendations for interventions must possess competencies in a number of areas. They should have

good interpersonal skills, such as the ability to establish and maintain rapport, listen, and work collaboratively. They also should be able to generate realistic solutions to problems using knowledge of intervention research, available resources, and Internet research. Skills in evaluating outcomes include evaluating programs and deciding what changes need to be made for an intervention to be successful. Patience is also needed if, as found by Waguespack, Stewart, and Dupre (1992), teachers recall fewer than half of the steps involved in an intervention after a week, even when they have been provided with written instructions for implementation. Some of these skills are acquired during training (e.g., research skills), whereas others are acquired over time during the internship and later on the job. Students should not expect to have all the answers when they complete their training. Instead, it is hoped that students will acquire an interest in continuing their education throughout their careers so that they can keep up with research-based trends and innovations.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The major legal and ethical considerations associated with the traditional intervention role concern the appropriateness of particular interventions. Two of the most controversial intervention techniques in the schools have been the use of corporal punishment (spanking or paddling) and the use of “time-out,” in which a student is removed from classroom activities and isolated from peers for a period of time. Each of these is discussed at length in Jacob and Hartshorne (2007). Another body of literature surrounding legal and ethical issues in interventions addresses problems unique to counseling, such as confidentiality when a student in counseling suggests that he or she is going to harm someone or commit suicide. Is the psychologist obligated, legally or ethically, to reveal information in such cases, or if the student is being abused by a parent, or is pregnant, or if the student is taking or selling drugs? Again, school psychologists must be aware of current ethical and legal thinking on such dilemmas. The place to start is to become familiar with the ethical principles of NASP, the APA, and any state associations to which they belong. Jacob and Hartshorne’s (2007) book is an excellent source of down-to-earth discussion of these issues. Training programs are themselves ethically obligated to provide students and interns with the opportunity to consider all aspects of these matters.

A final ethical question with respect to interventions is more general and examines the right of any professional to change another person’s behavior without that person’s expressed permission. It is one thing for someone who wishes to quit smoking to make an appointment with a psychologist or counselor to learn behavior modification techniques to reach that goal. It is another matter for a teacher to ask a school psychologist for help in modifying the behavior of a child who has difficulty completing assignments, who asks questions without raising his or her hand first, or who talks too frequently to classmates. Jacob and Hartshorne (2007) advise that the school psychologist has a responsibility to set reasonable goals that will be in the best interest of the child over the long run. (However, it would be nearly impossible for a school psychologist to ascertain whether it is a reasonable goal to teach a 6-year-old child to raise his or her hand before asking a question.)

Advantages and Disadvantages

The school psychologist's traditional intervention roles provide the opportunity to help children by making suggestions to teachers, parents, and others. When suggestions work, the intervention role provides feelings of professional accomplishment and success. These are the kinds of rewards most school psychologists are hoping for—the knowledge of making a difference in one child's life.

Some of the disadvantages of the intervention role are similar to the disadvantages of assessment. Even if one child is helped, many other needy children are out there who are not being helped. Working with one child at a time is rewarding, but is there something that could be done that would help more teachers to help more children in the same amount of time? Some of the intervention activities (e.g., behavior modification plans or social skills training) require the expenditure of large amounts of time, often by the school psychologist, who explains the program, sets it up, and evaluates its effectiveness. Unlike the well-established reliability and validity of many instruments used in assessment activities, many if not most intervention methods have little research to support their validity, although efforts are under way to remedy this problem (e.g., see Elliott, Witt, & Kratochwill, 1991). In addition, the person implementing an intervention hears only about the strategies that did not work. ("I tried that behavior modification plan like you said for one day but Billy still wouldn't listen, so I gave up. Any other ideas?") When this happens the school psychologist may end up in a losing battle to combat the "yes-but" response discussed by Berne (1964): "Yes, but that won't work because he doesn't do any of his work." "Yes, but his parents won't go along with that." "Yes, but I have 30 other students who will want rewards, too."

Finally, in the traditional role of the school psychologist over the past 25 or 30 years most of the intervention activities have been directed only toward students who are determined to be in need of special education services. Students with disabilities have been considered the primary purview of the school psychologist. If a student experiencing difficulty in the classroom does not qualify for special education, the school psychologist could suggest interventions to classroom teachers or parents, but no special education services could be offered. School psychologists often refer to the youngsters who did not qualify for special education but were not succeeding in the regular classroom as the "kids who fell through the cracks" of the educational system. This heartbreaking situation has been another large reason that the field is moving toward the emerging model of service delivery.

TRADITIONAL ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST—CONSULTATION

To avoid the "yes-but" response discussed above and to have an effect on a greater number of students, many school psychologists have embraced consultation. Whereas assessment allows practitioners to determine the kind of services a student needs, consultation strengthens the chances that the appropriate services will be delivered. The term *consultation* is used to mean a great many things. More than a dozen types of consultation are discussed in Fagan and Warden (1996). At times consulting has been used synonymously with advising, counseling, suggesting, and

problem solving. When used by school psychologists, *consultation* generally refers to a mutual problem-solving process between two or more professionals. One of the professionals, the consultant, is viewed as an expert in some area. The other professional, the consultee, is experiencing a work-related problem and seeks the consultant's help to solve the problem. This definition comes from the mental health literature, most notably the work of Caplan (1970).

Other issues that arise in discussions about consultation include the notion of consultation as an *indirect* role. That is, school psychologists work with consultees, often teachers, to solve work-related problems the teachers are having, usually with their students. School psychologists, then, are helping students indirectly by working directly with teachers. The consultee actually has direct responsibility for the students and may choose to accept or reject the consultant's assistance. Martin (1983) also emphasized the idea of consultation as focusing on prevention rather than intervention. Consultation must be voluntary; that is, no one should be forced to consult about a work-related problem. When people come to a consultant for help because they have been told they must (e.g., a parent is told, "If you and your child don't cooperate with the school psychologist, your child will be suspended from school"), the chances of establishing a positive working relationship conducive to mutual problem solving are just about nil.

It is particularly important for school psychologists to view consultation as a collaborative relationship between two or more professionals.

It is particularly important for school psychologists to view consultation as a collaborative relationship between two or more professionals. Curtis and Meyers (1985) noted that "one of the most fundamental principles underlying [consultation] is that a genuinely collaborative professional relationship among those engaged in the problem solving process is essential to success" (p. 81). Zins and Ponti (1990) are more specific about the collaborative nature of consultation: "Consultants and consultees work together to solve problems, and it is highly desirable for them to do so in the context of a partnership that emphasizes trust, openness, and cooperation" (p. 675).

Consultation encompasses many different skills. An effective consultant possesses a strong knowledge base and good interpersonal and communication skills. In addition, the effective consultant develops the consultee's ability to use inner resources. The consultant will not always be present when a problem arises. Therefore, the consultee should not be encouraged to depend on the presence and advice of the consultant. Conoley and Conoley (1992), among others, provide an elaborated version of this consultation model.

Certain steps or stages are characteristic of consultative relationships. These steps can be summarized as follows:

1. Enter into the consultation relationship
2. Diagnose the nature of the work-related problem
3. Collect data
4. Create and maintain a workable relationship
5. Define boundaries of the consultation relationship

6. Identify and develop possible resources
7. Make decisions
8. Terminate the consultation relationship

Forms of Consultation

Consultation can involve working with individuals or with whole groups or systems. The most common forms of consultation practiced by school psychologists are mental health consultation, behavioral consultation, crisis consultation, and organizational consultation. Other types of consultation relevant to school psychologists include advocacy consultation, case consultation, collaborative consultation, ecological consultation, parent consultation, and problem-solving consultation. Fagan and Warden (1996) have written about these additional types of consultation.

Mental Health Consultation

Mental health consultation has been described as the “prototypic consultation approach” (Conoley & Conoley, 1992, p. 6). Caplan’s (1970) volume, *The Theory and Practice of Mental Health Consultation*, was a milestone work in defining consultation, particularly as it applied to the mental health field. Meyers, Alpert, and Fleisher (1983) define mental health consultation as being based on the notion that, for problem solving to occur, the feelings of the consultee must be addressed. The reasoning is as follows: When a teacher consults with a school psychologist regarding a student in the teacher’s classroom, the teacher’s relationship with, and feelings toward, the student should be considered. If the consultant can alter the teacher’s feelings about the student, then the teacher’s behavior toward the student might change; and if the teacher’s behavior toward the student changes, then it will likely cause a change in the student’s behavior. It is further believed that if the teacher is aware that a change in his or her behavior toward the student has brought about a change in the student, then the teacher will generalize what she or he has learned to similar situations in the future.

If the definition of mental health consultation is extended, it seems logical that school psychologists might consult with other school personnel in promoting positive mental health in the schools and preventing or addressing mental health–related difficulties. Johnson, Malone, and Hightower (1997) cite research “which demonstrates that competence, mental health, and achievement are inseparable in schools” (p. 81). Building on the work of previous researchers, they further suggest that school psychologists use their consultation skills to work with teachers and thereby to improve the climate of the schools and foster the positive mental health of large numbers of students.

Behavioral Consultation

Behavioral consultation involves applying the principles and procedures of behavior modification and social learning theory to the work-related problems of the consultee. Typically a teacher comes to the school psychologist with a specific child or group of children who are exhibiting some type of unacceptable behavior. For example, a teacher might mention his or her concern about a child who picks fights with other children on the playground. With this initial contact by the teacher, the school psychologist has entered

into a consultative relationship. The next step would be working with the teacher to define and clarify the problem. The school psychologist might ask some questions: Does the child fight only on the playground? How about in the classroom? Does the child fight only with one particular child or with several children? How often do these fights occur? How long has this fighting behavior been going on? Is the child experiencing any other kind of difficulty in the classroom or at home? Does the child have any friends in the classroom? Do the fights occur only during a specific type of activity (e.g., competitive games)? The school psychologist's role in this initial interview is similar to his or her role in the prereferral stage of a comprehensive assessment, discussed earlier in this chapter.

In the data-gathering step, the practitioner would observe the child on the playground and perhaps in other settings, keeping track of the number of fighting episodes as well as the antecedents and consequences of the fighting. Once the consultant has worked with the consultee to define the inappropriate or problem behavior (fighting or pushing), an appropriate behavior that would be incompatible with the undesirable behavior can be identified, that is, an acceptable behavior that cannot be done at the same time as fighting. Running laps around the playground, for example, would be incompatible with pushing or fighting. Also during the observations of the inappropriate behavior, along with antecedents and consequences, the consultant would look for teacher behaviors, peer behaviors, classroom or playground events, and the child's own behaviors that might be maintaining the inappropriate behavior.

Throughout the consultation, the consultant should be monitoring his or her working relationship with the teacher, as well as checking in and asking how things are going and making certain the teacher knows what to expect next. The teacher should have realistic notions of the boundaries of the working relationship. The consultant might say, "I'll be observing Jennie on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom on several occasions this week. Then I'll get back to you when I'm here next week so we can set up a plan for you to use with Jennie to decrease her pushing behavior and increase her cooperative behavior." At the meeting the next week, the consultant would share the observations and work with the teacher to set up a system that reinforces Jennie's efforts at cooperation and decreases her aggressive behavior. Perhaps Jennie could earn points for running a certain number of laps per week and lose a given number of points for every fight in which she is involved. The important point to remember is that the teacher, having been given the necessary information, should be at least an equal, if not greater, partner in suggesting the

possible resources, deciding which program to follow, and implementing the program. Jennie is the teacher's responsibility; therefore, the teacher can accept or reject the consultant's assistance. Common sense suggests that the more involved the teacher is in setting up a program, the stronger his or her commitment will be and, therefore, the greater the chances that the program will succeed.

Consultation involves a relationship-building process. It is not merely a task to be completed by the school psychologist.

Terminating the consultation relationship is different for school psychologists than for consultants in other fields. School psychologists often are viewed as neither insiders nor outsiders in a given school. As discussed in chapter 3, school

psychologists may be viewed as guests who make frequent visits to the schools. In the case of Jennie, after her teacher has a plan in place, the consultant will probably want to maintain a working or collaborative relationship with her in case other problems develop or other children in her classroom need direct or indirect services in the future. The notion of follow-up is particularly important for school psychologists for this reason. The consultant will need to check in with teachers to find out whether the recommended plan is succeeding. Such checking in may be brief and informal; often it occurs in the hallway or in the teachers' lounge. Because consultation is a relationship-building process, it is not a task that is simply completed by the school psychologist. Rather, it is a way of functioning as a partner with teachers, parents, and others that transcends many of the other roles and functions of the psychologist in the schools. Rosenfield (2002) provides an excellent overview of instructional consultation, including a variety of useful forms and references. Likewise, Zins and Erchul (2002) identify many of the issues, steps, and types of consultation.

Crisis Consultation

Crisis consultation takes an indirect approach to crisis intervention by helping teachers or others in the school to deal with students who are undergoing a crisis. The school psychologist discusses strategies with the teacher so that the teacher can work more effectively with one or more students facing a particular crisis. Students who have not worked previously with the school psychologist may be uncomfortable talking to a stranger about a private issue. They may be more comfortable talking to a favorite teacher. This teacher, however, may be uncertain as to how to deal with the student and may request some suggestions or ideas from the school psychologist.

In one study (Wise, Smead, & Huebner, 1987), school psychologists were given a list of 32 critical events and asked to mark those that they had been approached about during the previous semester. More than half of the psychologists were asked to deal either directly (crisis intervention) or indirectly (crisis consultation) when students were failing a subject, when students were being abused, when students' parents were divorcing or separating, and when students were experiencing problems with one or more teachers, repeating a grade, having difficulty with parents, and moving.

The valuable contributions that school psychologists make in helping school personnel respond to crises were emphasized during the 1997–1998 school year, after a series of unfortunate incidents in which students were involved in in-school shootings. Scott Poland, a leader in the area of responding to school crises and coauthor of *Crisis Intervention in the Schools* (Pitcher & Poland, 1992), serves as a team leader of the National Organization for Victim Assistance and is a member of the National Emergency Assistance Teams (NEAT). Poland's NEAT member team, consisting of two school psychologists and five other helping professionals, was invited to Jonesboro, Arkansas, after two students shot and killed a teacher and four students at a middle school. The team's role was to identify those most in need of services, to provide professional support and training to the caregivers already in the community, and to conduct a public forum to facilitate the processing of emotions within the community. (Poland's account of his team's work in Jonesboro appears in the 1998 NASP *Communiqué*.) As an outgrowth of the attention focused on school-based

violence during the 1997–1998 school year, NASP played an active role in developing *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998), published by the U.S. Department of Education and disseminated to more than 100,000 public and private schools in September 1998. Likewise, school psychologists were involved in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the devastating hurricane season of 2005.

Organizational Consultation

Organizational consultation applies the principles and practices of consultation to the larger framework of a school building or an entire school system in an attempt to improve the functioning of the entire organization or to implement planned changes.

Any skilled observer who spends time in the schools can see areas in need of change.

Any skilled observer who spends time in the schools can see areas in need of change. Centra and Potter (1980) developed a model of school-related variables, any or all of which may affect student learning. These variables include school or school district conditions, within-school conditions, teacher characteristics, teaching behavior, student characteristics, student behavior, and student learning outcomes.

Usually when someone talks about organizational consultation in the schools, she/he are talking about making changes relating to some or all of these seven variables. Harrington (1985) suggests that organizational problems within schools typically concern ambiguous, changing, or nonmeasurable goals; poor communication within the system; or attempts to implement changes without enough forethought. Harrington further suggests that school psychologists interested in organizational development and consultation adopt one or more of the following four roles:

- **Planning leader:** Helps to organize and coordinate change.
- **Information and communications link:** Collects organizational data and clarifies, synthesizes, and interprets the data for others.
- **Learning specialist:** Applies knowledge about learning and educational theory to the problems at hand.
- **Consultant to management:** Clarifies the problems and solutions for administration and acts as a liaison among the various groups involved.

School psychologists may be in ideal positions to engage in organizational consultation for a variety of reasons. First, the school psychologist is neither an insider nor an outsider in the school. Because school psychologists rarely work in just one school, they are not considered regular staff members in a given building, yet over time they usually work with enough individuals within a given school that they are not strangers either. Many school psychologists also have the advantage that, because they work in a number of different schools, they have the opportunity to observe what works and what does not work in other schools. Finally, school psychologists' backgrounds in research design, consultation, and assessment skills should prove useful for the practice of organizational consultation.

Illback, Zins, and Maher (1999) suggest that “viewing schools from a systems perspective enables the evaluator to gain a broader understanding of factors that potentially influence the operation of the school” (p. 922). They note that systems are made up of subsystems. In schools, such subsystems may be the individual school buildings, the school administration, the board of education, the special education personnel, or even the school psychologists. Subsystems are all interconnected, and a change in one subsystem causes changes in the other subsystems. Illback et al. note that one important organizational role for school psychologists relates to evaluation of programs. As schools move toward more outcome-based assessment of students for purposes of accountability, the program evaluation role may escalate in importance.

Training Needs

As noted above, to be effective consultants, individuals need good interpersonal skills, an awareness of the parameters of consultation, and knowledge about the subject under consideration. Conoley and Conoley (1992) label the skills needed for consultation “relationship-enhancing skills,” skills in “problem formulation and resolution,” and “personal and group process skills.” School psychologists new to the profession or even new to a particular school may not be immediately sought out as consultants. They may have to prove themselves first as competent professionals in more traditional roles (e.g., child study and intervention). At the same time, newly trained school psychologists may not possess the knowledge and experience needed for effective consultation. They may have effective interpersonal skills and feel comfortable with brainstorming and problem-solving strategies, but they may lack the wealth of resources and techniques that teachers or parents are looking for. A great deal has been written about consultation in the school psychology literature, for example, Christenson (1995), Conoley and Conoley (1992), Gutkin and Curtis (1999), Kratochwill, Elliott, and Callan-Stoiber (2002), Rosenfield (2002), and Zins and Erchul (2002). One thought-provoking article about training needs suggests not only that school psychologists need to be trained as consultants but also that teachers should be trained as consultees. Such training would enable teachers to formulate better questions and to become more active participants in the consultative relationship (Duis, Rothlisberg, & Hargrove, 1995).

Legal and Ethical Issues

Hughes (1986) suggested that certain ethical issues apply to all types or models of consultation. For example, regardless of the type of consultation, school psychologists need to be concerned with students’ rights, parents’ rights, the rights of consultees, and the rights of the school system that employs them. With regard to students’ rights, Hughes noted that school psychologists’ actions “should (a) not abridge children’s rights and (b) promote values of human dignity and respect for individuals’ rights” (p. 490). If school psychologists become aware, either through consultation or other roles, of practices that are unethical or go against a child’s rights, they have a responsibility to the child to work to change these practices.

According to Hughes (1986), parents have a right to privacy and confidentiality and a right to give or withhold informed consent to any plan or program in which “a

child is singled out for special treatment in a manner that permits classmates to perceive the child as different in a negative way” (p. 492). Consultees also have a right to privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent. Because the consultative relationship is voluntary, consultees have a right to accept or reject any suggestions or advice that evolves from the consultation. Employing school districts also have rights. Hughes suggests that school districts have the right to know how successful their school psychologists have been in achieving the objectives of consultation. In other words, school districts have a right to accountability data from the school psychologist; that is, they should be told how the school psychologist spends his or her time and how effective the school psychologist is (see chapter 5).

As with everything they do, school psychologists acting as consultants have a responsibility to students, parents, and school personnel to carry out all duties in a professional, competent, fair, and confidential manner.

Jacob and Hartshorne (2003) raise similar ethical issues regarding the consultation role for school psychologists. They note that “in the course of the consultative process, it may become apparent to the psychologist that he or she is unable to assist the consultee. If so, he or she is obligated ethically to refer the consultee to another professional. . . . It may also become apparent during the consultative process that another professional is better able to assist the consultee” (p. 223). As with everything they do, school psychologists acting as consultants have a responsibility to students, parents, and school personnel to carry out all duties in a professional, competent, fair, and confidential manner.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Consultation in all of its various forms can be an extremely valuable and satisfying role for the school psychologist. Consultation activities provide school psychologists with the opportunity to have an indirect impact on a large number of students. Consultation may be viewed by school personnel as a particularly valuable resource when difficult problems arise. In addition, it may be a useful tool in preventing problems. Consulting with a new teacher about behavioral strategies, for example, may help that teacher develop the confidence and skills needed to face problems as they arise or even to prevent problems. On the other hand, many school psychologists enjoy one-to-one contact with children. Since the consultant works only indirectly with students, the psychologist acting as consultant may spend more time with adults and less time with children. The idea that the consultee, usually the teacher, is free to accept or reject the suggestions of the consultant can be another frustrating aspect of consultation. A great deal of time and energy may be spent in collaborative problem solving only to have the results ignored completely or inconsistently applied.

THE EMERGING ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

Over the years many articles and books have been written by authors proclaiming a changing role for school psychologists. At various times in the profession’s history academics have announced that change is on the way and that school

psychology students would no longer be doing the traditional assessment-related activities that are so familiar. It may be true that in some locations such change has occurred, but the majority of school psychologists have continued to function in the traditional roles described above. However, it now appears that a more far-reaching change really may be imminent.

Many forces seem to be contributing to the changing roles of school psychologists: the current political climate, the IDEA reauthorization, impetus from within the profession to expand the roles, and the public's dissatisfaction with the schools. First, in the current political climate, the pressures to meet the stipulations of the No Child Left Behind Act have forced schools to focus on quantifiable outcome results for all students. All students have to be making gains in order for a school to meet the standards of "adequate yearly progress" in the legislation. "All students" includes students with disabilities, students functioning well in regular classrooms, and the students mentioned above who have typically slipped through the cracks of the educational system. Schools need help with these efforts, and no one can better assist than school psychologists with knowledge of assessment, statistics, research methodology, and learning and instruction.

The second impetus has been the 2004 reauthorizations of the IDEA legislation and the 2006 regulations to implement it, which emphasize the model of response to intervention (RTI) over more traditional assessment techniques. Many scholars over the years have suggested that the traditional way of identifying such students has major flaws, particularly for students with learning disabilities. The traditional model of identifying a student with a learning disability has been to administer an intelligence test and an achievement test and look for a discrepancy between the two. Then if a student is not working up to his or her potential as measured on the intelligence test, a learning disability is suspected. Critics of the traditional techniques theorized that the same sort of discrepancy could occur for other reasons, such as a motivational problem, a poor instructional match between the student and the teacher, or emotional difficulties. The latest thinking, supported by the August 2006 regulations to implement IDEA, is that there may be better ways to identify and assist students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities. One such way is the RTI model, in which the school psychologist systematically observes how a student responds to one or more evidence-based interventions. The method may reveal more about the student's difficulties than searching for a discrepancy that may not show up until a student is in the third or fourth grade.

There has also been a third impetus to change from within the profession. Many practitioners and university trainers have been looking for a way to expand the role from the traditional one to the emerging role. However, the responsibilities of simply completing the routine assessments, reassessments, staffings, and so forth have left little time or energy for anything else. School administrators have typically been agreeable to some changes in the school psychologist's role as long as they get all of their other duties accomplished. Although data are not available, anecdotal evidence from interns is that they are surprised to be working almost exclusively with the special education population and not meeting the needs of other students who are struggling academically or emotionally. Seasoned school psychologists also voice frustration at not feeling as though they are making real changes in their

schools. The administration at one intern's school keeps track of how many case studies each psychologist conducts. If they go below a certain number in a year (80 in one case), the administrator adds another school to that individual's load. Thus, opportunities for role expansion are undermined. This kind of administrative pressure and other frustrations have increased school psychologists' desire to change.

The fourth impetus, which is similar to school psychologists' frustration with their limited roles, is the frustration of the public in general about the state of U.S. public schools. Parents complain that their students are not being challenged academically; many also feel their children are not safe at school. Teachers complain that because of the pressure to "teach to the tests" and to make sure that students are meeting state and national standards, they are losing control of what they are permitted to teach in their classrooms. Teachers also note that students have many more behavioral and emotional difficulties than did students in the past and that parents generally cooperate less with the schools and are less involved in their students' education than they need to be. Even the popular media have become involved, with a 2006 series titled *America's Schools in Crisis*. The series, which was completed by a partnership between the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Time* magazine, featured schools in which students were dropping out at an alarming rate (30% or more). Urban and rural schools seem to be especially hard hit. Both have diminishing resources but are expected to meet the same standards as wealthier suburban schools. One example given on the show was of a class of more than 30 students in a classroom with only about 20 desks.

These and other forces combine to make this an excellent time for school psychologists to use all of their skills and knowledge in ways that can benefit the whole school system. The prototype for this role was suggested by Susan Gray as early as 1963 in her description of a data-oriented problem-solving role for the school psychologist. It was reinforced in 1997 by Ysseldyke et al. in their document *School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice II* (1997), known as the NASP *Blueprint*. A more recent version of the *Blueprint* was published in 2006 (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). The 2006 *Blueprint* begins with the notion of working toward two outcomes, in that "school psychologists should work to: (a) improve competencies for all students, and (b) build and maintain the capacities of systems to meet the needs of all students as they traverse the path to successful adulthood" (p. 12). The traditional role, focused as it has been on students with disabilities, has been much less focused on *all* students.

The emerging role builds on the data-based problem-solving skills of the school psychologist but relies on all of the skills and knowledge that school psychologists have acquired through education and experience. It is built around a basic problem-solving model of identifying the problem, defining the problem, designing an intervention, implementing the intervention, and then reevaluating to determine if the problem has been addressed adequately or if additional intervention is needed.

Identifying the Problem

Often the process of problem identification begins in a school-based meeting, similar to what may happen in the traditional role described above. Such meetings are called different things in different parts of the country, but some of the terms include

general education initiative, prereferral intervention, flexible service delivery, teacher assistance teams, and student assistance teams. At such meetings someone, usually a teacher, brings a concern to the team members' attention. The following example is probably one of the more typical problems faced at such meetings. A first-grade teacher discusses Andy, one of her students, who is struggling with learning to read, cannot sit still for more than a few moments at a time, does not complete homework assignments, and has difficulty paying attention. Under the traditional model Andy would likely have been referred to the school psychologist for an assessment to determine the cause of the problem. In the emerging model, additional information about Andy would also be requested, but probably not using a formal assessment conducted by the school psychologist. Instead, the participants would most likely request some curriculum-based testing to see how Andy compares with other students in his class and perhaps a functional-behavioral analysis (FBA) to determine the causes of his out-of-seat behavior and his low-homework-completion rate.

Defining the Problem

In the traditional model, Andy would have been assessed by the school psychologist using informal measures (e.g., teacher and parent interviews, classroom observation, and review of school records) and formal measures (e.g., intelligence tests, achievement tests, and standardized behavior rating scales). A multidisciplinary staffing or eligibility determination meeting would then have been held with all parties involved (teacher, parents, school principal, school psychologist, and school social worker) to determine the basis for his learning problems.

In the emerging model of school psychology, some sort of curriculum-based measure (CBM) would be used to see how Andy is performing and how his performance compares with that of his peers. Andy would probably be measured on reading fluency, reading accuracy, phonetic awareness, and so forth. Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) note that during this phase, "Some problems may be very small and likely to resolve on their own over time. Alternatively, other problems may be of immediate concern. If the difference between a student's current performance and what is expected is large, that student is likely to have a serious school problem that needs to be resolved" (p. 7). In the emerging model, the school psychologist would likely continue to use interviews, reviews of school records, classroom observations, and other data collection procedures associated with the traditional model.

Designing an Intervention

In the traditional model, if Andy were found to have a learning disability the multidisciplinary team would determine what and how much service he would need from special education, whether he would come to the special education room or receive those services through inclusion in the regular classroom, and what long-term and short-term goals should be established. In the emerging model, evidence-based interventions would be discussed to determine the best interventions for Andy. Andy might be provided with a peer tutor within the classroom to help him stay on task and to take turns reading with him. A chart might be developed to

monitor his homework completion rate. A given length of time would be set to give the intervention a chance to remediate Andy's difficulty.

Implementing the Intervention

In the traditional model and the emerging model, this step is basically the same: to implement the intervention. The concept of intervention integrity is important regardless of the model and refers to the intervention being carried out as planned. A good deal of frustration on the part of school psychologists over the years has revolved around the improper implementation or lack of implementation of carefully planned interventions by teachers, parents, or others involved. This problem can be circumvented by working carefully with the people who will be implementing the strategy to make sure that they feel comfortable with the intervention and believe that they have the skills to carry it off. Rathvon (1999) emphasized the importance of supporting those doing the implementation, understanding the teacher's or parent's perspective, and checking in frequently to see how the intervention is working. It is far better to fine-tune a strategy along the way than to find out there was a problem that caused the teacher or parent to become frustrated and just give up. This checking-in process is called *progress monitoring* and involves not only informal contacts and updates but also data collection and analysis (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). The process of monitoring progress is important in any intervention, but it is a vital link in determining the student's response to the intervention.

Reevaluating the Implementation and Results

In the traditional model of school psychology, reevaluations are written into the IDEA legislation. Youngsters identified as eligible for special education must be reevaluated at least every 3 years to determine if they are making progress in meeting their IEP goals. There are also end-of-year meetings in which the progress of all students with IEPs is discussed. Other than that, it is up to the teacher to keep track of each student's progress unless additional concerns are raised.

The emerging role emphasizes continuous progress monitoring, and decisions about the next step for a student are based on data. If the student is responding to the evidence-based intervention, that intervention is continued. If the student is not responding, a new intervention may be in order. This process continues until an effective match between the student and an intervention is found. If the repertoire of interventions has been tried and the student continues to have difficulty, it may be time to consider having the school psychologist administer a traditional assessment battery. In Andy's case, if the teacher has tried peer-assisted learning, homework-completion monitoring, and a behavior modification plan to increase his in-seat behavior, and Andy is starting to catch up to his classmates in reading and behavior, the intervention will continue. If he is making little progress despite everyone's best efforts, then more information might be needed about Andy, and more intensive interventions

The emerging role emphasizes continuous progress monitoring, and decisions about the next step for a student are based on data.

may be appropriate. The emerging role can be used for behavioral and social–emotional difficulties as well as for academic problems.

ADDITIONAL ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Most school psychologists working in school systems spend the majority of their days involved in helping students through the activities described above. Whether functioning in a traditional manner or making the move to the emerging role, school psychologists use a combination of the basic skills in data-based problem solving, intervention planning, and consultation. Still many school psychologists are involved in one or more less traditional roles and functions to some degree. Usually these roles (e.g., research, training, and administration) do not help students in a direct manner but rather help students through providing data, training, supervision, and support to others who do work directly with students. A few less traditional roles, however, benefit children directly but expand services to somewhat less traditional clients or are offered in less traditional settings (e.g., providing support for postsecondary students with disabilities, expanding services to infants, or providing services to those in charter schools). Sometimes these additional roles and functions are taken on by a school psychologist already working full-time in the schools. For example, a school psychologist might be assigned to a committee to look at group testing in the school and/or the interpretation of group testing results. Another school psychologist might be involved in developing a program for gifted students or helping to train school bus drivers to use behavior modification techniques to control their passengers.

Research

Some school psychologists become involved in short-term or long-term research projects, such as in the following examples:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of a behavior modification plan for an aggressive fifth-grade boy
- Examine past records to determine gender differences in the reason-for-referral section of the referral form
- Evaluate the effectiveness of special class placement versus mainstreaming for junior high students with learning disabilities
- Compare the behavior of second-grade students undergoing social skills training with second-grade students not undergoing such training.

School psychologists' involvement in research endeavors traditionally has been conducted in large part by university-based trainers of school psychologists. As described in chapter 6, trainers typically acquire additional skills in research and statistics in pursuit of their doctoral degrees. Some trainers may have become trainers

because they enjoy the research aspect of the job. In addition, universities generally expect faculty to conduct and publish research in order to be promoted and tenured, the so-called publish-or-perish syndrome. Finally, university settings generally have facilities that support research efforts, such as computers, libraries, and even graduate students to serve as research assistants.

School psychologists employed by the public schools have not traditionally received much encouragement from their employers to conduct research. Those wishing to conduct research may have to make time for such projects in addition to all of their other job demands. Some school psychologists have ideas for research projects they would like to undertake, but they lack the technical expertise or collegial support to do so on their own. In recent years, efforts have been made to link practitioners in the field who are interested in certain areas of research with individuals at universities who have the resources to assist in relevant projects. Such “professional matchmaking” efforts should be encouraged on a larger scale. A similar practice is evolving in teacher training, in which an attempt is made to develop close collaborative relationships between education department faculty and school-based teachers and administrators. Such a practice provides better field experiences for students, cooperative teaching arrangements on and off campus, and increased opportunities for education research projects.

Occasionally school psychologists become involved in research projects somewhat involuntarily. Because school psychologists may be the members of the school staff with the most background in research design and statistics, they may be sought out by administrators, teachers, or school board members to plan studies, gather data, and disseminate results.

Phillips (1999) proposed a system in which research is incorporated more effectively and less painfully during training (e.g., faculty members need to be models of research skills and students should be included in research projects early in their training) and in which research is viewed more broadly in practice. In other words, research should be seen as a necessary part of any problem-solving process, as a means of defining important issues in the profession, and as a way of keeping in touch with the professional literature. Phillips made a distinction between school psychologists who are “knowledge brokers,” that is, the evaluators and disseminators of research, and school psychologists who are “melders,” those who are actually conducting research projects.

Research should be seen as a necessary part of any problem-solving process, a means of defining important issues in the profession.

Staff Development and In-Service Training

An additional task undertaken by many school psychologists involves staff development or in-service training. As school psychologists travel from school to school and consult with teachers and other school personnel, they may be able to identify training needs common to a school or even an entire district. For example, as news of the RTI movement spreads, school psychologists may hear from teachers who want help understanding response to intervention, who want to know how to

do curriculum-based measurement, who want more information about evidence-based interventions, and so forth. Such requests may provide excellent opportunities for in-service workshops for teachers in which information on these topics is shared and discussed. In many ways the planning of in-service workshops can be viewed as a sort of grand-scale or organizational consultation. At times the school psychologist may be the presenter at such in-service workshops. At other times, the school psychologist may be involved in planning the workshops and locating speakers from outside the district. School psychology students who overcome their fear of public speaking will find opportunities to reach large audiences, either at in-service workshops or in other forums, and to indirectly influence more children's lives, along with changing the school psychologist's role and functions.

University Training

Many school psychologists are involved in training prospective school psychologists. Some of these trainers work for universities and spend all or most of their time in teaching, conducting research, and becoming involved in professional service activities. Other school psychologists are employed as practitioners in the schools but spend some time supervising practicum students and school psychology interns and teaching university classes as part-time adjuncts to training programs. Full-time faculty members who are on the tenure track at a university are almost always expected to have doctoral degrees, and most commonly PhD degrees. Adjunct faculty, however, may be able to teach undergraduate classes with a master's or specialist degree.

Supervision and Administration

Some large school districts or special education cooperatives hire one school psychologist to supervise the other school psychologists and to perform the various administrative functions necessary to run a psychological services unit. Such an individual usually has a doctoral degree in school psychology, educational administration, or a related field. A school psychologist functioning in such a supervisory capacity usually has a reduced caseload relative to other school psychologists on staff to compensate for time spent in administrative and supervisory duties. Although every school psychologist has some administrative responsibilities, such as paperwork and meetings, supervising school psychologists may spend the majority of their time involved in these and other administrative activities.

EVOLUTION OF PROFESSIONAL ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

Professional roles and functions are not static. They grow and change based on many factors including political and social climate, educational developments, and psychological research findings.

Research to Guide Emerging Roles

A substantial body of professional literature addresses what school psychologists do on the job (actual role), what they would like to do (preferred role), and what

others—parents, teachers, and students—think they actually do or would like to do (perceived role).

Researchers studying actual roles have asked school psychologists to maintain logs of their activities for a certain period of time or to estimate how much of their time is spent engaged in particular roles and functions (e.g., LaCayo, Sherwood, & Morris, 1981; Smith, 1984). A recent study (Bramlett et al., 2002) sent surveys to a random sample of 800 NASP members, asking them to estimate how much time they spent on various professional activities, among other questions. Of the 370 usable surveys returned, it was determined that nearly half (47%) of the respondents' time was spent in assessment. Beyond assessment, of the respondents' time, roughly 16% was spent in consultation, 13% interventions, 8% counseling, 7% conferencing, 3% supervision, 2% in-services, 1% research, 1% parent training, and 3% other.

Occasionally studies on roles and functions focus on one particular activity. For example, Fish and Massey (1991) were interested in how much time school psychologists spend with the various systems in students' lives (i.e., family, school, and community members). They asked their subjects to record the contacts they had with family members, school personnel, and various members of the community. Their findings suggest that school psychologists spend an average of 18% of the day in contact with school personnel, 8% of the day in contact with family members, and 2% of the day in contact with other members of the community. (Presumably the remainder of their time was spent with students or engaged in other activities such as completing paperwork, reading professional literature, or driving between schools.)

Another study (Watkins, Tipton, Manus, & Hunton-Shoup, 1991) examined the role relevance and role engagement of school psychologists' various professional activities. *Role relevance* was defined as "the degree to which various roles are seen as relevant to (or important defining features of)" the field of school psychology (p. 328). *Role engagement* includes the roles in which school psychologists are involved in their professional practice. The study found common ground between role relevance and role engagement. School psychologists responding to the study were engaged in assessment, consultation, counseling, and interventions and also considered these roles relevant to the practice of school psychology.

In addition to the more traditional roles, school psychologists in the study were engaged in several other activities that they considered relevant to the profession, namely, program development and accountability, continuing education, training and supervision, and educational and vocational counseling.

Reschly (1998) discovered that school psychologists continue to spend more than 50% of their work time in tasks related to psychoeducational assessment, most often in determining children's eligibility, new or continued, for special education programs and services. He found that between 1992 and 1997 "there have been no discernible changes in either current or preferred roles" (p. 4). In the 5-year period,

Bahr's study suggests that school psychologists support some role changes . . . but that generally school psychologists are unwilling to completely overhaul their traditional roles.

school psychologists continued to express preferences for a combination of the traditional roles of assessment, intervention, and consultation. Few of the practitioners expressed interest in expanding their roles in the direction of systems and organizational consultation or research and evaluation. Bahr (1996) presents data supporting Reschly's (1998) work. Bahr's study suggests that school psychologists support some role changes (e.g., increased use of curriculum-based assessment, increased consultant follow-up with teachers) but that generally school psychologists are unwilling to completely overhaul their traditional roles.

Some studies have examined others' perceptions of the roles of the school psychologist. Roberts (1970) found similarities between school psychologists' own perceptions of their actual and desired roles and teachers' perceptions of the actual and desired roles of school psychologists. In the Roberts study the area of greatest difference involved teachers' desire for school psychologists to be more involved in counseling individual students. Hughes (1979) asked school psychologists, pupil personnel directors, and school superintendents for their actual and ideal perceptions of the role of the school psychologist. All three groups supported a move away from the traditional diagnostic assessment role. However, the three groups differed in the direction they wanted to see school psychologists go. School psychologists in the sample wanted to expand their roles in consultation (mental health and organizational development) and research. Pupil personnel directors wanted the time saved from the assessment role to be evenly distributed to all of the other roles (e.g., counseling, parent education, and consultation). The superintendents in the study wanted school psychologists to spend their time doing more counseling.

More recently, Peterson, Waldron, and Paulson (1998) asked a group of Midwestern teachers about their interactions with school psychologists. Results indicated that although most of the teachers (89%) had at least talked to a school psychologist, they had little contact, because the school psychologists were rarely around. The teachers in the study preferred the psychometrician and the problem-solver roles for school psychologists, and they believed that school psychologists could offer valuable suggestions about teaching practices. Unfortunately, the teachers believed that the school psychologists were unavailable because of heavy caseloads and multiple building or district assignments.

In an effort to determine what students would like from school psychologists, Culbertson (1975) asked a group of college undergraduates two questions: (1) If you were to plan an ideal elementary, middle or junior high, or high school, would you include a psychologist as a member of the school team? (2) If yes to the above, what would you like the role and duties of the psychologist to be? Please describe (p. 192).

Of the students surveyed, 92% indicated that they would include a psychologist as a team member. As to what such an individual would do, the top five responses, in order, were helper (i.e., someone to talk to), assessor of students' abilities, counseling adviser, ombudsman, and information communicator.

Examples of Balanced Roles and Functions

Most school psychologists perform a combination of the roles and functions discussed above. Although assessment, intervention, and consultation are presented here as though they are mutually exclusive activities, in practice the distinctions among them become blurred. Interviewing a teacher about a particular child, for instance, may be part assessment, part intervention, and part consultation. Chapter 1 provides survey information about the relative portion of time school psychologists spend on these roles. The scenarios in Boxes 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 portray the overlap among the roles and functions in the practice of school psychology. The three daily logs illustrate the variety of activities in which the school psychologists are involved, the differences in activities depending on the ages of children served, and the differences and similarities in activities depending on whether the district has adopted a traditional or an emerging role for school psychologists.

Trainers' Contribution to Preparation for Changing Roles

University professors engaged in training students to enter the field of school psychology are in a unique and sometimes uncomfortable position. Most have worked in the schools as practicing school psychologists at some point in their careers and recognize the realities of the field (e.g., too many students with difficulties, too much paperwork, and too much pressure to place students in special education classrooms). On the other hand, they know that school psychologists have the training and skills to do more than serve as the gatekeepers to special education. Thus, trainers of school psychologists are caught between emphasizing the traditional role and not preparing students adequately for the emerging role, or emphasizing the emerging role and not preparing students adequately for more traditional positions. Therefore, most try to achieve a balance. They teach students a variety of skills, including assessment (traditional and nontraditional), consultation, and intervention, and they hope that graduates not only are employable but also will be able to help improve the educational climate of any setting in which they find themselves employed.

Box 4.1 School Psychologist 1: Daily Log

Background: School Psychologist 1 is employed by a small-town district. She works in three elementary schools and a junior high with students in grades Pre-K–8. She serves a total of 1,800 students. She spends 1 day per week in each of her four schools. Fridays are spent at her office catching up with e-mails, phone calls, paperwork, and report writing. Fridays are also the one day in the week that she tries to go out to lunch with the only other psychologist employed by the district, to stay in touch, to share what is going on in the various schools, and to discuss professional issues. School Psychologist 1 follows a fairly traditional role.

continued

Box 4.1 *Continued***Monday, October 2**

7:30 a.m.	Stopped at office for e-mail messages, phone messages, and supplies.
8:00 a.m.	Arrived at Grace School.
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Participated in Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) meeting.
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Checked with principal regarding new referrals and follow-up to TAT meeting.
10:00–10:30 a.m.	Observed boy with attention problems in first-grade classroom.
10:30–11:00 a.m.	Talked to first-grade teacher about my observations; teacher decided to move child to front of room and to check with parents about whether he needs glasses. Promised to check back with her next week.
11:00–11:45 a.m.	Began testing a fourth-grade girl who is having learning and behavior difficulties in the classroom.
11:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Had lunch in teachers' lounge and talked with teachers about their needs for in-service programs. Topics suggested included autism, working with children of low average intelligence who cannot keep up in regular classrooms, and working with children experiencing crises (parental divorce, sexual abuse, death of a sibling); no decision yet. A more formal needs assessment will be developed.
12:45–1:00 p.m.	Checked e-mail and phone messages. Did quick Internet search on in-service workshops.
1:00–1:30 p.m.	Counseled a sixth-grade student who has just moved into the district and is having trouble adjusting.
1:30–2:20 p.m.	Administered achievement tests and sentence completion test to fifth-grade boy referred for academic difficulties and low self-esteem.
2:30–4:00 p.m.	Met with districtwide NCLB committee to discuss testing results and school report card.
4:00–4:30 p.m.	Scored and interpreted tests; caught up on paperwork; made phone calls.

Box 4.2 School Psychologist 2: Daily Log

Background: School Psychologist 2 is one of two school psychologists assigned to work full-time in a large urban high school. His office is in the high school and he spends all of his time there. The school has 3,000 students in grades 9–12. School psychologists working exclusively in high schools seem to be, by necessity, in the center on the continuum spanning traditional role to emerging role. Generally they are more involved in providing counseling, crisis intervention, and support services to students in special education than they are with initial assessments of students.

continued

Monday, October 2

8:00 a.m.	Arrived at Hillcrest High School.
8:00–9:00 a.m.	Met with ninth-grade teachers concerned about students’ attitudes toward school and poor study habits. Planned a PTA program for later in the month on the topic of how parents can help students succeed; also discussed the possibility of a peer counseling program.
9:00–10:00 a.m.	Held group counseling session with six 10th-grade girls identified as having low self-esteem and poor social skills. In the session last week, four of the six admitted having been abused by their boyfriends and most had been either abused or neglected by parents or other family members.
10:00–10:30 a.m.	Participated in a conference call with the assistant principal to the leader of a community task force aimed at stopping gang activities. Discussed ways in which school and community personnel could work as a team.
10:30–11:30 a.m.	Administered achievement tests and talked with an 11th-grade boy who is failing all of his courses and is thinking about dropping out.
11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Had lunch in the teachers’ lounge. Two teachers voiced concern about a 12th-grade girl whom they suspect is pregnant. Another teacher asked for help with a hearing-impaired student who has been mainstreamed into her class but does not seem to be keeping up with assignments.
12:30–1:30 p.m.	Held individual counseling session with a ninth-grade boy who referred himself for help in dealing with serious family problems and feelings of anxiety.
1:30–2:15 p.m.	Met with two school psychology graduate students; gave them a tour of the building, discussed the role of the school psychologist in the secondary school, and answered some of their questions.
2:15–3:15 p.m.	Observed in a cross-categorical special education resource room at teacher’s request. Students are not getting along with each other and these problems are interfering with getting work completed.
3:15–4:00 p.m.	Did paperwork, e-mail messages, phone calls, etc.
7:00–9:30 p.m.	Attended class at local university on vocational assessment and transition services for high school students with disabilities.

Box 4.3 School Psychologist 3: Daily Log

Background: School Psychologist 3 works for a large middle- to upper-middle-class suburban district. Her district has six elementary schools, each serving about 600 students each in grades pre-K–5; three middle schools, each serving 800 students in grades 6 through 8; and one large senior high school with 3,000 students in grades 9–12. The district employs eight school

continued

Box 4.3 *Continued*

psychologists, with each one serving anywhere from 1,000 to 1,200 students. The total number of students served by School Psychologist 3 is 1,000. She serves one elementary school, and she shares one of the middle schools with another school psychologist. School psychologist 3's district has moved to a model they call *flexible service delivery*, or FLEX. This represents the emerging role model of school psychology.

Monday, October 2

- 7:30 a.m.** Arrived at Fairland Elementary School (considered to be the main office). Checked e-mails, voice mail, etc.
- 7:45–8:30 a.m.** Attended Teacher Assistance Team meeting. Arranged to observe a kindergarten child and a first grader later in the day to gather more information. The principal wants to set up a volunteer program to help with reading. Two teachers, the school counselor, and I offered to help with this (brainstorming ideas about how to recruit volunteers, how to support volunteers, how to monitor the program, etc.). Heard about a child who has just moved into the district (fourth grade) and is reading at a pre-first-grade level. The student's mother is coming in after school to talk to his teacher. I agreed to attend this meeting to introduce myself and ask some questions about previous schooling.
- 8:30–8:45 a.m.** School day begins; welcome students as they enter. (This is a new policy from the principal. All staff members are expected to greet students in the hall every morning.)
- 8:45–9:15 a.m.** Taught social skills to a group of students in a self-contained special education classroom.
- 9:30–10:00 a.m.** Observed kindergarten student in the classroom and on the playground. The student seems to have difficulty controlling his impulses; he shoves, pushes, and grabs everything and everyone in his path and pays little if any attention to directions, warnings, or consequences.
- 10:00–10:30 a.m.** Talked to kindergarten teacher about my observations; she would like me to talk with him about his behavior at some point but she also wanted some ideas for helping him behave appropriately in the meantime. I suggested placing him somewhere in the room (front row?) with the fewest distractions and the best opportunities for teacher intervention. Also, developing a reward system for compliant behavior with frequent reinforcement. We decided to focus first on increasing in-seat behavior, since he would be less likely to push and shove others from his chair. I agreed to stay and begin taking baseline data for his in-seat behavior.

continued

10:30–11:00 a.m.	Observed in-seat behavior of this student every 10 seconds. The student was in his seat for less than 5 minutes out of 30 minutes. All of the other students used as comparisons in the class were in their seats at least 20 minutes during the same time period.
11:00 a.m.–12:00 noon	Individual counseling with two students (30 minutes each). One student, a fourth grader, is working on difficulties with anger management. The other student, a fifth grader, has parents who are going through a very bitter divorce.
12:00 noon–12:15 p.m.	Drove to middle school.
12:15–1:00 p.m.	Lunch in middle school teachers' lunchroom. Talked with the sixth-grade teacher team concerned with the large number of students who cannot read or write beyond the most basic level. I agreed to coordinate a curriculum-based measurement of some sort to gather data about the problem. In the meantime, we considered an after-school remedial program 2 days a week. The program would be voluntary but "strongly recommended" to some students if they want to pass their courses this year. We also discussed writing a grant proposal for next year for assistance with this problem.
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Attended a middle school team meeting. Several problems were discussed along with the sixth-grade reading difficulties mentioned above.
2:30–3:15 p.m.	Conducted Internet search regarding curriculum-based measures for sixth-grade reading skills. Also looked for some evidence-based interventions to try with these students. Checked e-mail and voice mail messages; returned phone calls, etc.
3:30–4:00 p.m.	Met with the other school psychologist and the school counselors in the middle school. Talked about a possible joint presentation on service delivery in a middle school for an upcoming state school psychology conference.

CONCLUSION

The roles of the school psychologist are multifaceted. School psychologists are engaged in numerous activities that are all ultimately aimed at helping children. Although each role demands unique training and skills, all of the roles, from child study to intervention and from consultation to research are based upon data-based problem-solving skills and positive consultation and collaboration skills. Without data-based problem-solving skills to identify a child's strengths and weaknesses, to determine whether our intervention strategies work, to support the efficacy of our consultative skills, and to support or refute our research hypotheses, we are at best do-gooders, that is, individuals with good intentions but without empirical substantiation for our work. Without positive consultative and collaborative skills, our best efforts may not be attended to or carried out.