

North Carolina School Psychology Workforce Report 2016-2017

Background and Relevance:

School psychologists in the North Carolina workforce have decreased over time, while the population of public school students continues to increase. Of specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) in NC public schools, the discipline of school psychology has less employed than other SISP professions, such as school counseling, school nursing and school social work. During the 2016-2017 academic year, the average school psychologist to student ratio in NC was estimated to be 1:2092, nearly three times the recommended staffing ratio for the provision of comprehensive school psychological services.

The National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) recommended staffing ratio¹ is one school psychologist for every 500-700 students for provision of comprehensive services. Comprehensive service delivery is defined through the ten domains of practice outlined in the [NASP Practice Model](#). The NC State Board of Education approved [NC Professional School Psychology Standards](#) and [School Psychologist Evaluation Process](#) are based on a model of comprehensive service delivery derived from the NASP Practice Model. In North Carolina, there are currently no Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that staff school psychologists in alignment with this model.

The information provided in this report includes data published through the Financial and Business Services Division within the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) and data collected through an annual survey of lead school psychologists and special education directors from the 115 LEAs in NC.² This survey is conducted by the NC DPI Consultant for School Psychology for the purposes of obtaining detailed information regarding NC school psychology workforce trends and needs.

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information regarding the current capacity of school psychologists within the North Carolina public education workforce. Additionally, some initial considerations towards practical solutions are offered.



ALTHOUGH THE NC PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY STANDARDS ARE DERIVED FROM 10 DOMAINS OF PRACTICE DEFINED THROUGH A NATIONAL PRACTICE MODEL, THERE ARE CURRENTLY NO LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES IN THE STATE THAT EMPLOY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN ALIGNMENT WITH THIS MODEL

Source: 2016-2017 NC School Psychology Workforce Data

¹ Source: NASP http://www.nasponline.org/assets/Documents/Standards%20and%20Certification/Standards/2_PracticeModel.pdf

This ratio, along with the standards for the profession, were developed through a rigorous and transparent 3-and-a-half-year process that included input from school psychologists, leaders, and affiliated group representatives. In total, more than 4,000 school psychologists and other stakeholders provided input that allowed for consensus.

² Charter schools are not included in this survey because it is generally understood that charter schools contract with private providers for psychological services. These services are typically limited to special education assessments, rather than comprehensive services as defined by the NASP Practice Model.

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Workforce Data

According to the information reported by the Finance and Business Services Division at NC DPI, during the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 795.23 full time equivalent (FTE) school psychologists employed in NC public schools. However, data obtained specific to school psychologists serving within that role (as defined by the NC Professional School Psychology Standards) is less than this number.

Instructional Support 2016-17

Instructional Support Position	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT			
	STATE	FEDERAL	LOCAL	TOTAL
Alt and Remedial Support Services	114.76	569.87	32.64	717.27
Audiologists	30.22	1.00	0.00	31.22
Career Technical Education Services (CTE)	0.00	32.31	87.68	119.99
Full Time Mentors	4.42	25.41	17.00	46.83
Guidance Services	3,740.26	33.53	320.15	4,093.94
Health Services	418.62	1.75	201.38	621.75
Instructional Coaches	698.22	71.34	146.87	916.43
Instructional Technology Services	188.34	7.37	64.88	260.59
Lead Teacher Services	46.34	74.18	74.05	194.57
Media Services	1,959.98	2.40	146.11	2,108.49
Other Instructional Support	258.65	40.54	114.99	414.18
Psychologists	621.72	113.42	60.09	795.23
Social Work Services	799.94	77.34	127.55	1,004.83
Special Populations Services	334.88	189.23	44.82	568.93
Speech Language Pathologists	1,497.72	39.27	38.64	1,575.63
Total FTEs	10,714.07	1,278.96	1,476.85	13,469.88

Retrieved from *Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget* (February 2017). NCDPI Financial & Business Services Division: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/resources/data/highlights/2017highlights.pdf>

According to the survey conducted of lead school psychologists and special education directors, the total number of positions available were reported to be 804.44. At the time that the data was collected (February 2017), the number of vacancies reported was 64.85. When considering the vacancies reported by the LEAs at that time, the actual number of school psychologists in the workforce was 739.59. Additionally, according to this survey, there were 12 LEAs that had no school psychologist employed within their district while 4 LEAs listed partial employment below 1 FTE (0.1, 0.39, 0.52, and 0.75). Of the 115 LEAs, 30 of them (26%) reported less than 2 FTE positions employed in this role.

Positions Reported:	Vacancies Reported:	LEAs with No School Psychologist Employed:
804.44	64.85	12

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The difference in the numbers reported appears to be the result of a number (~ 60) of LEA employed, licensed school psychologists accounted for in the LEA reports on the school psychologist salary schedule; however, these professionals are functioning outside of the role of a school psychologist practitioner within their respective districts. For example, they may serve in roles such as multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) coordinator, autism specialist, behavior specialist, or another specialized role within their district.

NC School Psychological Services - Workforce Trends Over Time

The table below summarizes workforce data throughout the past seven years. While the number of students receiving their education through NC public schools continues to increase, the number of school psychologists employed by NC public schools has decreased. Growth in the workforce was noted during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years; however, this was followed by a decline in the workforce over the past three years.

Academic Year:	School Psychologists:	Student Average Daily Membership (ADM):
2016-2017:	739.59	1,543,518
2015-2016:	749.40	1,525,942
2014-2015:	749.25	1,456,119
2013-2014:	781.14	1,456,330
2012-2013:	772.47	1,443,998
2011-2012:	739.76	1,436,162
2010-2011:	749.87	1,434,436

Consequently, as the workforce data indicates a decrease in number of school psychologists practicing in NC public schools, the number of vacancies that exist has grown from the 2015-2016 academic year.

Despite these numbers, there are some reports of LEAs adding positions within their school psychology departments, specifically within the past year. According the survey conducted for the 2016-2017 academic year, 20 LEAs (17%) reported that their total positions have increased from the previous year. 16 LEAs reported that total positions have decreased from the previous year and 73 LEAs reported that total positions have remained the same.

Action Steps to Consider

Establishing capacity for a comprehensive service delivery model will first require closing the employment gap by filling the (nearly) 65 vacancies that exist throughout the state. Some strategies to consider include, increasing enrollment in the existing school psychology training programs throughout the state, increasing placements in internship sites and actively recruiting school psychologists from states where a surplus exists. Filling the existing vacancies will bring the average ratio to approximately 1:1918. Addressing this gap is the first step in improving capacity; however, it is not sufficient in

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establishing the model of service delivery defined by national and state school psychology standards and through which school psychologists' performance evaluations are conducted.

After vacancies have been addressed, consideration of a long-term plan to establish the capacity needed to deliver comprehensive school psychological services is recommended. Some strategies to consider in this long-range plan could include aggregate funding (both general education and special education dollars) to fund positions. School psychologist staffing ratios are based on total student population (average daily membership - ADM) not IDEA child count totals; therefore, funds to support positions should not stream solely through special education monies. Additionally, there are currently a small number of LEAs of varying sizes that staff school psychologists at approximately 1:1000³. The planning process for establishing capacity could include additional probing of these LEAs to determine practical, actionable steps that many LEAs in need may also consider and apply within their respective districts.

FIRST:

**Close
employment
gap**

- Increase student enrollment of in-state training programs
- Increase intern placement in LEAs
- Recruit from other states

THEN:

**Improve staffing
ratio**

- Identify steps for aggregate funding
- Consider additional funding sources
- Determine replicable practices from LEAs where sufficient staffing exists

For more detailed information regarding the NC school psychology workforce, please contact:

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³ Individual LEA school psychologist: student ratio data is maintained through the NC DPI Consultant for School Psychology.