

Mission, Vision, and Training Philosophy

The Graduate Programs in School Psychology at Illinois State University emphasize the scientist-practitioner model in which the science of psychology is used as a framework for the practicing school psychologist to help children, adolescents, and their families from an evidence-based perspective. Many of our courses offer real-world experiences with children, parents, and teachers in which graduate students apply theories and evidence-based practices learned through coursework.

In the scientist-practitioner model, research and practice are mutually beneficial. Research questions arise from experience working with children: Did my counseling program work? Is this child's reading improving? How can we improve the reading achievement of high-risk students? These types of questions are answered through research. Students who understand and conduct research can improve the quality of help they give children.

Our faculty members serve as advisors and colleagues for research opportunities, which include assisting with faculty research, graduate assistantships, and completing research requirements related to each program. Doctoral students receive training in research that helps answer both applied and theoretical questions, and are required to complete a research apprenticeship or master's thesis as well as a dissertation. Specialist-level training emphasizes applied research, and includes a required yearlong applied research experience.

As scientist-practitioners, our school psychology alumni are able to distinguish evidence from opinion in the application of psychological principles to human behavior, use existing theory and supportable techniques to develop innovative practice in the field of school psychology, and develop research to address practical and applied issues, or to answer theoretical questions. Our emphasis on the value of evidence-based training is designed to ensure that our graduates will function as change agents and become leaders in the field.

The values and principles that underlie the Graduate Programs in School Psychology include socializing students in the science and practice of school psychology and preparing professional school psychologists to:

- meaningfully improve the lives of children, adolescents, and their families
- be aware of and sensitive to the needs of children and families from diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and sexual orientation backgrounds
- provide the highest quality educational and mental health services for children and families while functioning as change agents in the systems in which they work
- integrate science and practice while providing evidence-based professional services and conducting clinically relevant research
- understand the legal and ethical responsibilities of their practice
- be life-long learners while maintaining competencies as professional psychologists