

Target Keyword: Important Skills for School Therapists
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The challenges kids face in the academic arena grows with each generation. There are a number of factors at play. The increase in special needs education, for example. A recent government survey indicates one in 50 schoolchildren has some level of autism. Add the advancing sophistication of kids and their exposure to technology and cyber bullying; it is no wonder that suicide is the leading cause of death in children ages 15 to 24.

School systems are fighting back by employing on-property therapists to provide guidance and mental evaluation for the student population. What qualifies an applicant for this critical position? Consider some important skills for school therapists.

1) Interpersonal Communication

In their role as school therapist, an applicant must deal with many different individuals. Managing a problem child requires a comprehensive treatment plan that expands to the class and home environments too. There needs to be effective communication that goes beyond just dealing one on one with students or conducting tests. Therapists must provide guidance to educators, school counselors and parents, as well.

Good communication, both written and verbal, are important for school therapists. Hiring parties should pay attention to body language during an interview too. How a therapist presents him or herself during the meeting is telling. An applicant that sits with arms folded in front may come off as insufferable and cold to students, for instance. Effective communication is certainly one of the important skills for school therapists.

2) Diagnostic

A school therapist should have good diagnostic skills. Treatment protocols include professional evaluation and testing that involves identifying physical problems that might contribute to behavioral or developmental issues. A therapist should be able to assess the student, develop a theory on what may be causing delays or behavioral concerns and then order tests and ask for consultations based on a preliminary diagnosis.

The candidate for a school therapist position should have training in diagnostic protocols and be up to date on current testing procedures. That includes knowledge of physical, mental and developmental evaluating standards.

3) Organization

School therapists deal with many different scenarios at one time. This requires a professional that understands the rules of organization. There will be interview notes, test results, consultations and evaluations to manage. Therapists must worry about student privacy, as well. Without a workable system, it is impossible to handle the workload required.

A first impression tells an interviewer a lot about a candidate's organizational skills. Take note of the person's appearance when evaluating important skills for school therapists. Does the applicant keep everything in a binder? Is there a lot of shuffling looking for credentials or are things in their proper place?

4) Caring

Working with kids at any age takes a real love for the job. Caring is an important skill for school therapists and something that translates to both students and parents. It is not difficult to tell the difference between someone just doing a job and a professional who truly wants to help.

The therapeutic process requires trust. Troubled kids need to know that they matter to authoritative figures like teachers or therapists in order to build that trust. That starts with showing them you care. Spend time discussing students and their most common problems to get a read on the applicant.

5) Patience

Over protective parents, harsh unfeeling teachers, hormone driven students – this all adds up to a lot of pressure on a school therapist. Patience is probably one of the most critical requirements for any mental health professional. Part of developing this skill is experience.

Closely examine the background of the therapist including past jobs and education. Hiring requirements will vary by school system, but a qualified candidate should have experience working with kids at the appropriate age level. This shows that they have mastered the patience necessary to handle tough situations and difficult clients.

There is no perfect list of skills that makes a person a successful school therapist. The combination of ability, education and experience is what matters. Start the hiring process by considering academic requirements for applicants. Most school therapists have one of the following:

- M.A., M.S., M. Ed.
- Specialist Ed.S. or SSP
- Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies

- Doctoral PhD., Psy. D. or Ed. D

Once a candidate meets the educational requirements, look closely at the work experience. It is during the face-to-face interview, that you evaluate skill sets to find the right candidate. By further assessing important skills for school therapists, you match the most qualified professional for this vital employment opportunity.