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Careers

Careers to count on . . .

Looking for a job that is a sure bet? Well, don't assume that security equals drudgery. Professions in which jobs are projected to be plentiful for years to come are surprisingly diverse and satisfying. They include speech-language pathologists who help kids in school and truck drivers who tinker with onboard laptops.

Here are eight of the nation's most secure career tracks:

Forensic accountant | Speech pathologist | Traffic engineer | Health technologist | Truck driver | Technical security | School psychologist | Automobile technician

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST- A balm for the blackboard jungle

Rosario Pesce has been busy since September 11. First, the Cicero, Ill., high school psychologist "found all of our Arab students to make sure everything was OK with them," he says. Then, as part of a national crisis team, he traveled to the Family Assistance Center set up for World Trade Center victims at New Jersey's Liberty State Park. There he saw a wrenching scene: Families looking for remnants of lost loved ones were instead picking up urns that contained remains from ground zero.

September 11 upped the demand for Pesce's work, which has long included advising students grappling with depression, running support groups for pregnant teens, and testing for learning disabilities. Pesce, who was the national school psychologist of the year in 2001, also helps negotiate personality conflicts between students and teachers. It's no secret that many schools are already hard pressed to find teachers and counselors. And the rise in depression among adolescents and added federal money for mental health counseling has boosted demand for school psychologists as well. The profession, moreover, is facing an imminent brain drain as nearly one third of school psychologists are between ages 51 and 60, according to a recent survey, and thus approaching retirement. "If you're looking for a job where you'll make a difference and have great security for the next 25 years, this is it," says Ted Feinberg of the National Association of School Psychologists.

PAY AND PERKS: Average salary, \$50,000; nearly 30 percent earn between \$50,000 and \$100,000. School psychologists take summers off.

TRAINING: Most states require a master's degree and on-the-job training. Others require a Ph.D. in education or psychology. -Anna Mulrine

SPEECH PATHOLOGIST - Learning the lilt of language

Wendy Wingard-Gay, a speech-language pathologist in York, S.C., plays the guitar and sings to her students. Carol Ecke breaks out the crayons in her Great Falls, Mont., classrooms. Both women recognize that working with young children requires imagination. "All the kids like to be entertained," says Ecke. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) diagnose and treat speech disorders, swallowing disorders, and language disorders (picture toddlers who fail to develop language or stroke victims with impaired speech). Roughly half are based in schools, where they often carry heavy workloads: Ecke works in three public schools. Other SLPs toil in hospitals, nursing homes, or private practice.

The demand for speech therapy is anticipated to grow along with rising school enrollments and the burgeoning elderly population. Many schools already face a pressing shortage of bilingual SLPs. Medical advances also ensure that more premature babies and stroke and trauma victims will survive, many of whom are at risk for speech or language problems. And disability laws oblige schools to provide speech-language therapy to kids who need it.

PAY AND PERKS: Median salaries: \$42,500 for schools, \$45,000 for private practice. Surveys show high job satisfaction. Some 230 schools offer accredited master's or doctoral programs. A master's degree and clinical fellowship are required for certification. -Holly J. Morris