



New Jersey Association of School Psychologists

The Role of the School Psychologist in Behavior Assessment and Consultation

Role of School Psychologist:

The role of the school psychologist is as a professional who collaborates with other professionals using the problem-solving model to look at all pieces of data in order to inform a picture of the “whole child.” A school psychologist uses best practice, which includes the use of behavioral principles when applicable. A school psychologist may choose to do a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) as part of his or her evaluation/assessment in order to facilitate support of the interventions derived. A school psychologist looks at the FBA or behavior observation as one piece of the puzzle combined with other data (i.e. a review of history, current trends, observations, assessments, and consultations). The school psychologist then ensures that the students are provided with the appropriate interventions required to be successful based on the data collected. In specific cases, school psychologists may consult with other professionals, such as psychiatrists, board certified behavior analysts, and substance abuse counselors, etc., in assessing and developing interventions regarding children exhibiting mental health and/or behavioral difficulties.

Defining behavior:

Behavior is what a child/student/person does. It is the observable external action of a child functioning in his/her environment. Behavior can be conceptualized as an action influenced by culture, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, emotions, external environment and genetics. All children display “behaviors” (both adaptive and maladaptive), including typical students, students with social/emotional concerns, learning difficulties, autism, ADHD, and students with other neurodevelopmental, cognitive or physical disabilities.

In order to assist a child in developing positive behaviors and/or reducing disruptive behaviors, both assessment and interventions are important.

Behavior Referrals:

All referrals for behavior assessment and support, including FBAs, should draw on the school psychologist’s review and involvement as an essential part of the assessment process. An FBA is considered a proactive strategy. IDEA requires an FBA under “certain circumstances”: if a student has a behavior which interferes with learning, has a disability, has been removed from class for more than 10 days, or for misconduct, which is or is not a manifestation of a child’s

disability or involves weapons, drugs, or serious bodily harm. A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) should be developed from an FBA if a child's behavior interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others.

Supporting the Behavioral Needs of Students:

Behavior assessment is a functional part of an integrated evaluation. Comprehensive evaluation of behavior should include an assessment of all aspects that influence behavior; these aspects include internal and external factors as well as learning and cognitive data. The following evaluations may be included:

1. Assessment of the learning environment, including observation of behavior and direct and indirect data collection. Evaluation may include a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). An FBA is a systematic means of identifying variables which may control behavior. Both the antecedents and consequences are examined in order to understand why a behavior occurs in a particular environmental context.
2. Cognitive assessment data – standardized intelligence testing, neuropsychological testing
3. Learning assessment data – standardized academic testing, curriculum based measurements.
4. Social-emotional assessment – including an evaluation of thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal relationships
5. Qualitative and quantitative information across environments and informants: input from parents, student, and teachers in the form of interview, survey data, and related approaches.

Behavioral Intervention should be conducted at multiple tiers of service and for *all* students. From the comprehensive assessment listed above, behavioral interventions should be designed to support all aspects of the child. Primary consideration should be made for promoting positive behaviors, prevention of inappropriate behavior and social/emotional learning.

For more information about how school psychologists provide appropriate behavioral, social, and emotional supports to meet the needs of all students, see the following:

http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/positionpapers/AppropriateBehavioralSupports.pdf