

BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR MALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: AN EXAMINATION OF FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENTS AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST PARTICIPATION (219 pp.)

Director of Dissertation: Caven S. McLoughlin, Ph.D.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the academic and behavioral outcomes for male high school students with disabilities for whom functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) were conducted compared to those who did not receive this treatment. Although there is considerable research that has supported the use of functional behavior assessments in highly-controlled settings with limited samples of young children with disabilities, there has been little examination of large samples of older students in school-based settings. In addition, no research has attempted to examine the impact of students' outcomes based on the presence of school psychologists in this process.

Three treatment groups were analyzed in this study—a group that received a functional behavior assessment and subsequent behavior intervention plan, a group that only received a behavior intervention plan, and a group that only received traditional discipline. In addition, an analysis was conducted for the effects of the presence or absence of a school psychologist during treatment. Seven dependent variables were used that measured changes pre- and post-treatment; they were total number of disciplinary referrals, total number of days of disciplinary removal, and the five subtests of the Ohio Proficiency Test (Reading, Math, Citizenship, Science, and Writing).

Analyses demonstrated that behavioral improvement was measured, regardless of treatment, for students who had school psychologists present on their behalf versus those who did not. Second, there was an interaction effect wherein students with FBAs showed significantly fewer disciplinary referrals post-treatment only when school psychologists were present during treatment. Finally, students who received traditional discipline showed significant drops in their Math OPT performance.