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An Analysis of Functional Behavioral Assessments Used in
Public Schools in Tennessee and Georgia

A dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor in Education

by
Dana Winningham
December 2002

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Dr. Nancy Dishner
Dr. James Fox
Dr. Terrence Tollefson

Keywords: Behavior, Assessment, Discipline, Special Education

ABSTRACT

An Analysis of Functional Behavioral Assessments Used in Public Schools in Tennessee and Georgia

by

Dana Winningham

The purpose of this study was to survey special education supervisors in public school systems throughout Tennessee and Georgia to determine the types of Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) procedures used and training provided to assessment personnel in their school systems. The primary focus of the study was on who conducts assessments, differences between the amount of training and support provided by school districts, and the use of best practices in conducting these assessments.

Surveys were mailed to 317 supervisors, 108 in Tennessee, and 123 in Georgia. These supervisors were asked to respond to questions concerning assessments in their respective school systems. One hundred eight (78.8%) supervisors from Tennessee and 123 (68.3%) from Georgia responded. This resulted in a return rate of 72.8%. The size of the school systems represented in the study ranged from 200 students to 114,000 students.

Frequency tables were used to present demographic data about the school systems. Six research questions formed the basis of the analysis. The first four questions were addressed using crosstabulation procedures, while t-tests for independent means were used to address research questions five and six.

The results of the study indicate that 72.4% of the school systems involved in the study had procedures in place to conduct FBAs. Most training for assessment personnel is conducted at the school system level and special education teachers are the most targeted group for this training. The research found that there was no statistically significant difference in the length of training provided assessment personnel and the use of best practices in conducting FBAs. However, there were differences between the two states in the use of best practices in conducting FBA based training and support.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my two sons,

Dana Edwin Winningham II, and Robert Scot Winningham.

These two young men brighten my day with their love and support. They have not always understood me, but have always stood beside me--always giving me encouragement and love.

God made my life worth living; they have made it complete.

IN MEMORY OF

My Mother

Geneva Lucille Winningham

A wonderful Christian lady who instilled in me the value of hard work and sacrifice.

IN HONOR OF

All the special education teachers who have chosen to work with the
special populations in our school systems.

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Dr. Russell West, Chair

Dr. Nancy Dishner

Dr. James Fox

Dr. Terry Tollefson

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Educators are currently overwhelmed by the many tasks and responsibilities they are facing in public schools. Students arrive at classroom doorsteps with problems that can be overwhelming. These problems, especially when they are behavioral in nature, may prohibit all students from reaching their maximum potential. Because schools are a reflection of society, students who exhibit behavior problems have always been present in public schools and will continue to be there regardless of the interventions used. Dealing with behavior problems will continue to be part of an educator's responsibility in the classroom, but it has taken on a new perspective. Educators are facing problems that before now never existed in public schools. Management of disruptive students' behaviors in today's classrooms takes up increasingly large portions of instructional time. This robs all students of the chance to maximize their learning potential because valuable time that should be devoted to providing instruction is diverted toward those behavior problems (Cotton, 1990).

Background to the Problem

The passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ensured that every child, regardless of handicapping condition, would be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Several amendments over the past 26 years have been offered by Congress to expand and improve services provided under this mandate. However, the reauthorization of IDEA 1997 had far reaching implications for educators in dealing with students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors in an educational setting (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2000).

Never before had the IDEA addressed student discipline, nor had it given mandates to assess students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors within the educational setting. Its passage forced educators to address the behavioral issues of students as well as the learning problems of those with disabilities. These mandates reflected the thoughts of legislators and the general public about the importance of adopting appropriate strategies to address student problems, to provide for accurate behavioral assessments, and to implement appropriate positive behavior supports (Fitzsimmons, 1998a).

The federal government, through the passage of the 1997 amendments, mandated local education agencies to conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) on students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors that significantly impede their learning or the learning of other students. These assessments must include strategies to implement behavior intervention plans that rely on positive interventions and behavioral supports for these identified disabled students. The IDEA 97 also required that the relationship between the student's learning and exhibited disruptive behavior be addressed when planning each eligible student's individualized education program (Fitzsimmons, 1998a). The mandate gave practitioners little or no guidance in selecting the type of assessment to be used, identifying who would conduct the assessment, or specifying the amount of training that personnel conducting the assessment should possess. This lack of guidance has school systems struggling to meet the mandate. State education agencies began scrambling to develop recommendations for the mandated FBAs so they could provide local education agencies with up-to-date research based procedures to follow (Fisher, 1998).

States are providing recommendations for assessments while not knowing if their recommendations will meet the mandate of the 1997 amendments. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1998) conducted a survey of the states to determine:

1. Do states have existing policies and procedures related to schools conducting FBAs on students?

2. If policies and procedures for assessments do not exist, do they have plans to develop them?
3. Do they need assistance in developing procedures for assessments?

Forty-nine states responded to the survey. The results indicated that only 10 states had written policies, procedures, and guidelines in place, whereas 35 states had plans to develop policies. Four states were in the process of developing policies and procedures, but they were not yet finalized (National Association of State Directors of Special Education).

Most FBAs conducted in schools prior to 1997 dealt only with lower functioning students. Educators who are working with disabled students in public schools are perplexed as to why they are being held responsible for implementing IDEA 97 when they are provided so little guidance or direction in its interpretation and implementation. It might have been prudent for Congress to have postponed these mandates pending further research.

As mandated by IDEA 97, school systems throughout the United States are currently conducting FBAs on students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors. However, the federal government, which mandated the assessments, has not provided guidelines or models for their implementation. Consequently, each school system is formulating its own set of policies and procedures that may or may not follow recommended best practices. This lack of guidance from leaders in state and federal governments leaves school systems struggling to meet the mandate while continuing to keep their learning environments safe and free from disruptions.

Not only are schools systems mandated to conduct these assessments, they must also develop positive behavioral interventions based upon the assessments. Current practices for assessing student behavior may or may not be the most effective method to assess or change unwanted student behaviors.

Research has demonstrated that if FBAs are properly completed, they can lead to the development of effective behavioral supports, which in turn can lead to positive changes in

students' behaviors (Jolivette, Scott, & Nelson, 2000). Early identification of problem behaviors in young children enables educators to establish behavioral supports to address unwanted behaviors before they become too severe. If these problem behaviors are dealt with early in the child's life, they are more easily changed; this can lead to fewer and less complicated interventions (Jolivette et al.).

Georgia and Tennessee were chosen for the study because they both were in the same geographical region of the United States and they served students with similar socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Both states had urban, suburban, and rural students residing in their school districts.

As reported in the 1999-2000 Georgia Public Education Report Card State Summary (Schrenko, 2000), Georgia served approximately 1,400,000 students. Of this number, 251,000 (17%) were identified as eligible for special education services. Georgia funded its educational system mainly through property taxes, a state income tax, an ad valorem tax on automobiles, and a state lottery. These three taxes, along with the state lottery, allowed Georgia to fund schools at a higher rate because of the increased revenue they generated (Schrenko). According to the State of Tennessee Statewide Report Card 2000 (Walters, 2000), Tennessee served approximately 925,000 students, with 143,000 (15.4%) of those eligible for specialized services. Tennessee relied heavily on property taxes and sales taxes to fund schools. Tennessee had no revenue from a lottery, ad valorem, or state income tax. In comparing average teacher salaries in both states, teachers with the same training and experience made approximately \$5,000 more each year by teaching in public schools in Georgia (Walters).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to survey special education supervisors in all public school systems throughout Tennessee and Georgia to determine (a) the types of assessment procedures

used in their school systems, (b) the types of training provided to personnel conducting the assessments (workshops, training sessions), (c) who conducted FBAs in the district, (d) the amount of support provided to the practitioners who were conducting these assessments, and (e) the differences between the amount of training and support provided and the district's use of best practices in conducting these assessments. The special education supervisors in all public school systems in Tennessee and Georgia were the target population for this study. Supervisors from these school systems were asked to complete a survey detailing procedures they used to assess students who exhibit inappropriate and challenging behaviors. Results from the survey were used to determine if school districts that provide a high level of training and support for assessment personnel more closely approximated recommended best practices for conducting FBAs.

Significance of the Study

The United States Department of Education has provided mandates for states to follow in educating the youth of this country. One mandate was the passage of IDEA 97. As soon as this legislation passed Congress in 1997 requiring FBAs for students who exhibit challenging behaviors, individuals calling themselves “experts” began offering their services for the purported purpose of helping school systems meet the requirements of the new law. They offered to contract with school systems to conduct these mandated assessments, knowing that school personnel have had little or no training in this area. They were doing this even though the majority of studies on which they based their assessments involved students with low cognitive abilities or students who were emotionally disturbed and who were not in a public school setting (Ward, 1999).

Private companies also began scrambling to put together commercial packages to sell to school systems in an attempt to help school districts meet this mandate. This law caused school systems to reallocate funds, taking away scarce dollars available to educate disabled students. In

some cases, both individuals and private companies saw this as a way to skim money from schools and into their own pockets (Ward, 1999).

This new law affects approximately 15% of students in public school systems in the United States. To be in compliance, educators must conduct the assessments and provide learning environments that will help each student reach his or her maximum potential, regardless of disability (Fisher, 1999). School districts began to comply with the new mandates, using either contracted services from “trained experts” or purchasing commercial packages to ensure that they were meeting the federal guidelines pertaining to FBAs. Many school districts opted to train or hire their own specialists to conduct these assessments. It is important to know if school systems are meeting the government mandate by properly assessing students, or if they are gathering paperwork that has no real value to anyone, including the students.

This study could provide educators with an overview of the current assessment practices used in public schools throughout Tennessee and Georgia and to determine if their methods mirrored best practices for conducting FBAs. It could also allow districts to evaluate their methods and procedures and to compare the quality of their evaluations with others throughout Tennessee and Georgia.

Assumptions

It must be assumed that the answers provided in the survey were accurate, complete, and up-to-date. It must also be assumed that responses to the survey accurately reflected the types of assessments conducted, the assessment tools that were in use, and the staff development activities provided to personnel conducting the assessments.

Limitations of the Study

Special education supervisors from every public school district in Tennessee and Georgia were included in the survey. Respondents in the sample were limited to the person in the special education department in each school district who was responsible for ensuring that FBAs were being conducted. The response rate was 72.8% and this could have affected the results of the survey. Even though the amount of time in training and administrative support was reported, the quality cannot be assessed because there were no set standards or guidelines for training and support. Perceptions and biases of those who participated in the survey may also reflect upon the outcome of the study. Finally, the results of the study represented supervisors in school districts who responded to the survey and cannot be fully generalized to school districts outside Tennessee and Georgia.

Definition of Terms

Behavior Improvement Plan refers to a written plan that includes positive behavioral supports, interventions, consequences, and replacement behaviors for students (Jolivette et al., 2000).

Education of the Handicapped Act (P. L 94-142) refers to the law passed in 1975 that gives all students, regardless of their disability, a right to a free and appropriate public education. This law, last amended and reapproved in 1997, is currently known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and was last amended and reapproved and signed into law on June 4, 1997 (Vanderwood, McGrew, & Ysseldyke, 1998).

Environmental Manipulation as used in this study indicates the controlling of the student's environment to evaluate the validity of the hypothesis that was generated through the FBA process.

Free Appropriate Public Education pertains to the right given by the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1975 for all students to be educated with their peers in the least restrictive environment (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2000).

Functional Behavioral Assessment is an assessment of behaviors exhibited by students to determine the function of those behaviors. This assessment includes interventions to change the unwanted behaviors (Fisher, 1999).

Individualized Educational Program refers to a written educational plan that includes a student's present educational level of performance, measurable educational goals and objectives, his or her involvement in the general curriculum, and related services to ensure a free appropriate public education for an identified disabled student (Smith, 2000).

Local Education Agency pertains to a public school system that bears the responsibility of educating students in its zoned districts.

Research Questions

The study was designed to identify the types of assessments that were currently in use in public school systems throughout Tennessee and Georgia to assess students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors in school. The basis for the study was the desire to know if current best practices as suggested by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1998) were being used to assess students throughout Tennessee and Georgia. The following research questions formed the basis for the study and the individuals responsible for conducting FBAs were asked to provide information related to each.

1. What type of assessment procedures are used in school systems and how effective are these procedures in assessing students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors?
2. What programs and staff development activities are provided staff to train them in conducting FBAs and how effective are these activities?

3. Who conducts FBAs in school districts and how effective are they in conducting these assessments?
4. Is release time provided to district personnel to participate in staff development on conducting FBAs? If so, how is this time provided and how effective is it?
5. Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by school districts?

The null hypotheses associated with Question 5 are:

Ho5₁: There is no significant difference in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the state department of education.

Ho5₂: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the local school districts.

Ho5₃: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training offered by universities.

6. Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by the states involved in the study? The null hypothesis associated with Question 6 is presented:

Ho6₁: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the state in which they work.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 contained an introduction to the study, stated the problem, and gave the background and significance of the need to identify the types of assessments currently being used in two states to assess students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors. Also included in Chapter 1 were the assumptions, the limitations of the study, definition of terms, and research questions. Chapter 2 is a review of current literature pertaining to the topic of FBAs. The

chapter includes an introduction, a brief history of special education, an explanation of disabilities, student discipline, consequences of disruptive behavior in schools, funding issues, and interpretations of IDEA 97 and its mandates. Preservice and inservice training for assessment personnel, description of FBAs, and types and methods of assessment strategies complete the chapter. Chapter 3 contains the methods and procedures that were used in the study. It begins with an introduction followed by a description of the study, the population surveyed in the study, the instrumentation used, and an explanation of the validity of the instruments. Procedures that were used in the study are followed by an explanation of how the data were analyzed, and a summary. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the data that were collected through the surveys and a summary. Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. It contains a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature explores the history of special education and how PL 94-142 has changed through the years. A special emphasis is placed on training and preparation of teachers by colleges and local education agencies and their ability to train staff to conduct quality FBAs. Current best practices for conducting FBAs are reviewed under each topic subheading. Supporting research is cited throughout the review to give guidance on how assessments should be conducted.

Historical Perspectives of Special Education

In 1973, the United States Congress passed a civil rights act known as Section 504 that made it unconstitutional for states to discriminate against individuals because of a handicapping condition. According to Finn (1996), it was a very broad law that attempted to include every person who had some type of disability. The law covered everyone who was being educated or who was working in a location that received any type of federal monies. In 1975, Congress recognized that all students in public schools were not receiving the same education and passed what was then know as Public Law 94-142, Education of the Handicapped Act. Unlike the civil rights act passed two years earlier, money was allocated from Congress to help fund this mandate. Initially, the intent was to fund it at 40% of its total cost with the remainder of funds coming from state and local education agencies. The actual federal funding for this law has never come close to this projected amount (Finn).

The Education of the Handicapped Act evolved over the years and it is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The latest and most controversial revision

occurred in 1997 when Congress reauthorized the law for funding. Before 1997, IDEA dealt with students with disabilities and their right to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Amendments in 1997 were added to the Act, mandating that schools address discipline as well as learning when writing individualized education programs for students with disabilities. This law not only mandated educators to address discipline, they were also to provide positive behavioral interventions based upon FBAs. These assessments were to be conducted on all students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors that impede their learning or the learning of others. Educators were also expected to include behavioral supports to ensure the success of these interventions (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000).

School districts were not given direction or guidance on how these functional assessments were to be conducted. This caused a high level of anxiety among school administrators. Training and support for conducting assessments lagged behind, with colleges looking for ways to provide programs that could meet the needs of practicing educators.

Before the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, then known as the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), almost one million students were excluded from being educated in public schools (Vanderwood et al., 1998). More than half of the students with disabilities did not receive appropriate services that would enable them to benefit from full equality of opportunity. Some students were excluded because of the challenging behaviors they exhibited in school. Others were excluded simply because subjective and speculative decisions made by school officials determined that it would be too difficult or too expensive to educate them in a regular school setting (Technical Assistance Bulletin, 1998).

Public Law 94-142 mandated a free and appropriate public education for all students, thereby ensuring educational opportunities regardless of disabilities. Currently, more than five million students are served in specialized programs in public schools (Finn, 1996; Vanderwood et al., 1998). Although this law may end discrimination of disabled students, some contended that it

would put an undue burden upon local schools by causing the school systems to discriminate against regular education students (Finn). Finn suggested that everyone in Washington knew that this law should be revamped but were afraid to do so because it would mean political suicide. Nathanson (1998) referred to the distribution of funds for special education. He particularly questioned whether it was fair to spend a disproportionate amount of money for disabled students compared to students in regular education. Worth (1999) estimated that in 1999, 35 billion dollars was spent on educating disabled students in public schools in the United States. Finn estimated the amount to be as high as 50 billion dollars. He called the federal mandates inefficient and onerous and charged that they have not really improved services to the most needy students. Chinni (1996) stated that this money could have been spent upgrading regular education classrooms that sorely needed the additional funds. He maintained that providing funding for these specialized programs for disabled students was extravagant and was usurping funds that could be better spent in other ways in public education.

Over the lifetime of this law, funding has covered less than 10% of the cost of educating disabled students. This shifted the responsibility for funding the mandate to state education agencies and local governments. Considerable research has been conducted and many amendments have been offered to change the initial mandate (Finn, 1996). This law has now grown to include students who meet the definition of any of the following disabilities:

1. autism
2. deaf-blindness
3. deafness
4. emotional disturbance
5. hearing impaired
6. mental retardation
7. multiple disabilities

8. orthopedic impairment
9. other health impairment
10. specific learning disability
11. speech language
12. traumatic brain injury and
13. visual impairment (Federal Regulations, 1999).

Explanations of Disabilities

A student is considered to meet the definition of autistic if he or she has a significant developmental disability that adversely affects his or her educational performance. Generally, a child is diagnosed with autism before the age of three years. He or she must show delays in verbal and nonverbal communication and deficiency in social interaction. The child must also demonstrate characteristics of repetitive activities (continually wanting to perform activities over and over) and is usually resistant to any type of change in his or her schedule and daily routines. It should be noted that a child cannot be diagnosed with autism if his or her primary handicapping condition is emotional disturbance, because it cannot be determined whether the emotional disturbance, or the child's autism is causing the behavior. A medical doctor with background information from parents must make the diagnosis for autism. A psychologist cannot make this certification, either in a public or private setting (Federal Regulations, 1997).

The next two categories recognized by the United States Department of Education as being in need of special education services were students who have sensory disabilities, either visual or hearing impairment. Students diagnosed as being deaf-blind must have such severe communication and educational problems caused by hearing and vision loss that they cannot have their educational needs met in programs specifically designed for students who are only deaf or only visually impaired. If their educational needs cannot be accommodated in this type of setting,

they qualify for services as deaf-blind students. Students who have receptive hearing losses that affect their ability to hear and adversely affect their learning in school meet the definition of deafness. Deafness can be diagnosed and certified by either an audiologist or a specialist for the hearing impaired. An optometrist or ophthalmologist must diagnose a visual impairment. Certification of a student with emotional disturbance is the responsibility of the school psychologist and the individualized education program team. This team is made up of the parents, the student's regular education teacher, the student's special education teacher, the school principal, and any other person knowledgeable of the student. Currently, 1% of the school age population is diagnosed as having a severe emotional disturbance (Hanwerk & Marshall, 1998). The student must exhibit, over a long period of time and to a marked degree, a deficit in learning and social relationships that cannot be explained by intellectual abilities, health, or sensory impairments. The student must also exhibit tendencies for inappropriate behaviors that under normal circumstances would not occur, and he or she must have a general pervasive mood of unhappiness. Physical symptoms may also occur that are possibly caused by school or personal problems (Federal Regulations, 1999). This definition did not include students who are socially maladjusted or who may be oppositional and defiant (Murray & Myers, 1998). A student who is oppositional and defiant and refuses to follow school and societal rules does not qualify for specialized educational services under the provisions of IDEA. A student with a hearing impairment, but who is not deaf, may qualify for specialized educational services if the hearing impairment significantly affects his or her educational performance. The hearing loss does not have to be permanent or sustained. Mental retardation is defined as significant, subaverage general intellectual functioning. An Intelligence Quotient of 71 or lower on a standardized normed test qualifies the student as having mental retardation. The student must also have deficits in his or her adaptive behaviors and these deficits must have been manifested during the developmental period (Federal Regulations, 1997).

A student certified as having multiple disabilities must have more than two specific disabilities that affect his or her learning, such as mental retardation, language impairment, or a physical handicap. Any of these conditions will affect the student's learning ability, regardless of severity. These specific disabilities must be diagnosed and certified by the appropriate professional for each disability (physician, psychologist, etc.). A student with a severe orthopedic impairment caused by a congenital anomaly, such as cerebral palsy, or the absence of some member qualifies for these services. The causes for these impairments can stem from diseases, amputations, fractures, or burns (Federal Regulations, 1997).

Diseases such as tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, or sickle cell anemia can cause chronic or acute health problems for children. If these health problems cause the student to have limited strength, vitality, or alertness, this will affect the student's ability to learn and qualify him or her as other health impaired. The category specific learning disability contains the largest group of students who are diagnosed as disabled. These students exhibit a disorder in either understanding or using language, whether in written or spoken form. This may manifest in an inability to effectively listen, think, speak, read, write, or spell. If a student meets the criteria, and his or her performance on an individualized achievement test is more than one standardized deviation from his or her Intelligence Quotient, he or she meets the definition of having a specific learning disability. Stuttering, impaired articulation, and language or voice impairment qualifies a student as having speech language impairment. The speech language impairment must adversely affect the student's ability to learn if he or she is to qualify for special education services (Federal Regulations, 1997).

The last two categories that qualify a student for special educational services are traumatic brain injury and visual impairment. A student who has suffered an external force to his or her brain that results in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment (or both) qualifies for specialized services under the traumatic brain injury guidelines of IDEA. This applies

to either open or closed head injuries. This category does not include a student who has brain damage caused by congenital diseases or factors related to a parent's prenatal care. A student who is visually impaired must have a loss in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects his or her ability to learn. A student who has 20/50 vision in the best eye after correction is the lower limit to qualify for special education (Federal Regulations, 1997).

All 13 federally recognized groups of students qualify for special education services throughout the United States. In addition to the 13 disability categories, states have added to this list so they might serve students in special education settings; however, no federal money is allotted, nor can it be spent for the state-generated categories for special education services. Tennessee recognized two other categories that IDEA 97 did not intend to be covered in IDEA. They were other functionally delayed students, and students who exhibit intellectual superiority to other students in their peer group. To certify as being intellectually gifted, students must score at least two standard deviations above the mean on standardized intellectual examinations. Students who have an Intelligence Quotient below 71, but have adaptive behavior scores above 71, qualify as functionally delayed (Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards, 1999). Georgia does not recognize these two other categories through Special Education.

Student Discipline

Realizing that public schools are representative of the neighborhoods and communities that surround them, education leaders were forced to devise plans to deal with issues brought to the school setting that were initiated and first dealt with in the community. Lewis and Sugai (1999) noted in the report from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1998) that for the last 25 years, the number one concern facing America's educators has been lack of discipline in the school setting and violence in schools, especially acts of violence involving weapons and drugs. In this study, 16% of all high school students reported they had been

threatened with a weapon while at school. These weapons ranged from sticks to knives and guns. It is estimated that up to 100,000 students bring some type of weapon to school each day. Twenty-five percent of the eighth-grade students in the public schools reported they had been involved in some type of physical conflict. Only half of both boys and girls reported they felt safe in the schools they attended. Although the exact cause of this problem is unknown, almost everyone agrees that there is a link between family stress and dysfunction and the increase in antisocial behavior of students (Lewis & Sugai).

Students are continually exposed to risk factors that parents and educators did not intend for them to come in contact with at school (Walker & Sprague, 1999). Some students and parents cannot adequately deal with these risks, and students have been leaving public schools for what they consider the safety of private schools. During the past 10 years, the news media have detailed incidents throughout the country concerning public school violence and assaults on students and teachers. Lawmakers responded to this concern by mandating that schools address this issue (Fitzsimmons, 1998b). In 1997, Congress passed amendments to IDEA to address behavior of students in schools.

Mandates were given to local school systems requiring assessments and intervention plans based upon current research conducted in the field of behavior management to address student behaviors. One organization that responded to the mandate was the Office of Special Education Programs in Washington, DC (Fitzsimmons, 1998c). This office provided funding for researchers to find ways to aid schools in dealing with violent and disruptive students. According to Fitzsimmons, because of this research, practitioners noted the following key elements when dealing with students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors in schools:

Troubled students need habilitative services instead of haphazard punishment. A full continuum of educational, mental health, and other services should be available to them. Aggressive and violent behaviors do not develop overnight and cannot therefore be ameliorated or eradicated in short periods of time. The entire community is better off when troubled students are served more appropriately. School wide discipline policies need to be formulated and taught to all students. (p. 227)

These findings have been the basis for implementation of programs to deal with students exhibiting challenging and disruptive behaviors in schools.

Quinn, Rutherford, and Osher (1999) reported that educators are changing their approach from excluding students who are disruptive and are moving toward programs that focus upon students who are considered to be potential drop outs or already out of school. They are placing disabled students with disruptive behaviors into separate learning environments. These new learning environments, called alternative learning centers, must not only address the specialized curriculum needs of the students but must also present the general education curriculum. The general education curriculum is more difficult to deliver to students in an alternative setting than the specialized curriculum that had previously been provided. General education curriculum components can include shop classes, such as welding, or small animal care classes for students who have been enrolled in vocational educational programs at the secondary level. Providing access to these programs will be a challenge for school administrators to meet. School systems will have to become very innovative in their approach to this issue. Since the passage of IDEA 97, offering the general curriculum to all students, regardless of their placement, disability, or behavior exhibited in school, is not optional, but mandatory (Quinn et al.).

Fitzsimmons (1998c) reported that aggressive behaviors are learned and maintained, just as any other behavior the student exhibits. These aggressive students often have difficulty processing social information. They frequently have poor impulse control and are frustrated very easily. In addition, students who exhibit violent behaviors can be frightening to teachers, especially those teachers who have not had proper training in dealing with violent and disruptive students. Teachers know that a violent outburst by a student can spread to other students in the classroom. This, in turn, may lead to a very explosive situation that the teacher may not know how to control. Most schools have inappropriately trained staff and lack physical facilities and monetary resources to deal with students in these situations (Fitzsimmons).

Consequences of Disruptive Behavior in Schools

Teachers have been finding it more difficult to teach students because of the constant distractions caused by disruptive students. Not only are schools having to provide more services for students, they must do it with fewer resources and with teachers who lack proper training. Teacher shortages are occurring in school districts throughout the United States. Some thought this was a result of smaller teachers' salary in contrast to a vibrant economy. Others attributed the shortage to lack of respect for the profession by students, teachers, and the public (Furlong, Morrison, & Dear, 1994).

Special education teachers were given the task to work with students who exhibit the most challenging behaviors in public schools. Teachers reported that they carry out this task with inadequate training from universities and colleges, yet they are held accountable for the educational outcomes of these students (Furlong et al., 1994). Many times, educators who are unprepared for disruptions, rely upon punishment and exclusion to deal with students who exhibit challenging behaviors. Research has shown that this method is futile and ineffective in extinguishing unwanted behaviors exhibited by students (Scott, Desimone, Fowler, & Webb, 2000).

Educators have long understood that students who exhibit disruptive or challenging behaviors may also have academic difficulties that may lead to school drop out and the probability of menial employment opportunities. Students who exhibit challenging behaviors demand extra time and attention from the classroom teacher in a manner that takes instructional time away from every student in the classroom. This lack of instructional time has a negative effect that can cause all students to fall behind their peers and this adds another set of problems that must be addressed (Cotton, 1990).

A student's aberrant behavior and poor social skills can result in his or her exclusion from the regular classroom setting. This, in turn, feeds the cycle of poor academic performance from

the student who has been excluded (Gable, Quinn, Rutherford, Howell, & Hoffman, 1999). Even though these students exhibit academic abilities commensurate with their peers, they may at times be placed in isolated or separate rooms. Sometimes, if their behavior warrants, they are placed in separate schools, moving them away from the regular educational setting.

IDEA Funding and Changes

The changes that have occurred in special education over the past 25 years have been remarkable. A program that started out to help moderately to profoundly disabled students receive a public education now includes students with all types of disabilities, even intellectually gifted students within Tennessee. Because of the many changes made by congress in 1997, school systems struggled to meet the new demands. Funding has not kept up with the growth in the program. Local education agencies had to fund many of these programs with monies originally targeted for the regular education population and this caused some resentment among educators. School systems were forced to provide alternative programs that were very expensive to operate and staff adequately, but they must be available if an appropriate education is to be provided for all students. Time out rooms and places for isolation of disruptive students must be staffed appropriately, which takes more education dollars (Finn, 1996).

Cotton (1990) said that the mandates of IDEA have become so cumbersome that educators are spending less of their teaching day teaching students and more of their designated instruction time filling out paperwork to provide a paper trail for the federal government. Fulfilling the mandate is taking its toll on special educators, who are leaving special education for regular education classrooms, or leaving the profession altogether. Good teachers want to teach; they do not want to spend all their time filling out forms and handling classroom disruptions (Cotton).

Current Interpretation of IDEA 97 Related to Student Behavior

All students have a right to be provided an education in an environment free from disruptions and violence. Congress has given the responsibility to school administrators to provide this type of environment for all students, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin. School authorities also have been given the right to discipline students in order to provide this type of environment (National Association of School Psychologists, 2000). IDEA 97 addressed a number of issues related to disciplining students who violated school rules. These issues ranged from questions about allowing school administrators to unilaterally change the placement of disabled students, to setting standards for manifestation determinations (Rosenbaum, 2000). These latest amendments addressed both the procedural and substantive requirements related to the suspension, expulsion, and administration of FBAs for students in public schools who exhibit challenging behaviors (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000).

This new law did not allow students with disabilities to be excluded from discipline for rules violations in the school setting. It also did not allow disabled students to disrupt the learning process of others. It attempted to balance the need to provide students a safe environment to learn and an appropriate atmosphere for teachers to teach without violating the rights of students with disabilities to a free appropriate public education (Technical Assistance Bulletin, 1998). The passage of these amendments was Congress' attempt to protect students with disabilities without imposing excessively burdensome requirements upon school administrators and teachers, while still providing a learning environment free from disruptions for all students. This was a balancing act that took years to write and almost as long for the United States Department of Education to interpret and write guidelines for its implementation. School authorities were struggling to understand these mandates until the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education issued its final regulations on May 11, 1999 (Hartwig & Ruesch, 1999). Whether Congress accomplished what it set out to do remains to be seen. Time, experience, and trial and

error will be the determining factors of whether or not this new law has the effect was designed to have (Hartwig & Ruesch).

IDEA 97 was signed into law on June 4, 1997, by then President Bill Clinton. For the first time since the enactment of the law, amendments were added that recognized the growing number of behavior problems that educators were facing in the public schools. Discipline of disabled students was never addressed in federal law before Congress passed these new amendments. These laws reflect the infamous policy letter sent by The Office of Special Education Programs in 1989 that required school districts to continue providing educational services to students with disabilities who were subject to removal from school for more than 10 school days for disciplinary reasons (Maloney, 1999). This policy statement applied to every disabled student in the United States, regardless of his or her disability or whether this disability was a manifestation of his or her handicapping condition. The law also assigned the determination of whether the behavior the student was exhibiting was a manifestation of the student's disability to an individualized education program team and removed that responsibility from school administrators. Regardless of the decision made by school administrators concerning the appropriate discipline of a disruptive student, the individualized education program team must continue to provide educational services for the student. The manner of the delivery of those services was also to be determined by the individualized education program team, which includes the parent of the student (Maloney).

It is important to understand that under the interpretation of IDEA 97, the process for making a manifestation determination and conducting a FBA were two different processes, even though the new law made both team-based decisions. In conducting a manifestation determination, the team comes together with the sole purpose of determining if the student's disability caused the unwanted behavior. They interview students, teachers, and parents to get different perspectives on the student, as well as review records of discipline infractions and school attendance. The purpose of the FBA is to determine antecedents, functions, and consequences of

behaviors and to develop behavior intervention plans to curb these unwanted behaviors (Knoster, 2000). Teams conducting these assessments are charged with obtaining information about the student's social environment, antecedents, and consequence of the behavior and past events that may have contributed to this occurrence of unwanted behavior. They are given the responsibility to predict when, where, and with whom these behaviors may occur again. They must be able to characterize student behavior according to its function. The determination must be made whether the function of the behavior is positively reinforcing for the student or if the function of the behavior intended to avoid something that is aversive to the student. Finally, they must be able to distinguish between behaviors that are skill deficits and those that result from a performance deficit (Gable et al., 1999).

Three major points concerning disciplinary changes were included in IDEA 97 that were not in the law passed in 1975. First, it was mandated that if a disabled student exhibited problem behaviors, these behaviors must be addressed in the individualized education program and positive behavioral interventions, supports, and services must be included in the development of the individualized education program (Smith, 2000). Second, measurable goals and objectives that address the problem behavior in a positive and proactive manner must be included in this plan. Students cannot be denied educational services including general education regardless of the behavior that they exhibit. Third, it was mandated that discipline issues must be addressed through the individualized education program process even if the challenging behavior is not a manifestation of the student's disability. The definition of a problem behavior was not addressed in the federal mandate, which led many school systems to guess at their compliance with the law. Court decisions that arise from the implementation of this mandate may provide the definition to school systems (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2000).

Another amendment mandated that educators were to address the relationship between a disabled student's challenging behavior and his or her learning. This determination must be made

each time an individualized education program team comes together to consider changes in the student's program (Fitzsimmons, 1998b). Not only is this to be an individualized education program process, but the student is to be involved in the development of the individualized education program if it is determined by the team that the student can contribute to its development (Gable et al., 1999). No longer can students be expelled from school and denied a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for displaying disruptive or violent behavior, including the use of drugs, alcohol, or weapons in the educational setting. Educational services must continue regardless of the rules infraction (Maloney, 1999).

As reported in the Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards (1999), before IDEA 97 students who were suspended for rules violations in school were provided specialized instruction as required by the student's individual educational program. They did not have to be provided access to the general education curriculum in the regular education program not listed on the student's individualized education program. Because of the passage of this new mandate, if a student is suspended from school for more than 10 school days, he or she must not only be provided specialized instruction as listed on the student's individualized education program, but also general education services. Furthermore, CFR 300.520 (1) (b) (1)(1999) mandates that:

Either before or not later than 10 business days after either first removing the child for more than 10 school days in a school year or commencing a removal that constitutes a change of placement under section 300.519, (i). If the LEA did not conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan for the child before the behavior that resulted in the removal-, the agency shall convene an IEP meeting to develop an assessment plan. If the child already has a behavioral intervention plan, the IEP team shall meet to review the plan and its implementation, and modify the plan and its implementation as necessary, to address the behavior. (Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards)

Honig v. Doe, EHLR 559:231 US (1988) further defined the rights of students to a free appropriate public education. It ruled that disabled students could not be suspended for more than 10 consecutive school days and they must be provided educational services, even if the behavior exhibited is not a manifestation of their disability. In addition, *Honig* determined that if a

student has been suspended for more than 10 days throughout the school year, this could show a pattern of exclusion, and activate the protections provided by this new mandate (Bullock & Gable, 1999).

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1988) reported that since the passage of this new law, school systems are required to conduct the FBA and develop specific behavioral interventions before the change of placement of any disabled student regardless of his or her disability. This is not a new practice for educators, but is the first time it has been addressed by the United States Congress. The assessments and intervention strategies developed by the individualized education program team are to become a part of the student's individualized education program and must be reviewed at least annually (Jolivette et al., 2000). Intervention plans must address behaviors that impede the disabled student's or the other students' education in the classroom setting. This includes students who are dangerous or violent and those who may cause harm to someone around them (Fitzsimmons, 1998c).

Protections under IDEA 97 begin when a student may have a change of placement because of his or her unwanted behaviors. A change of placement is removal from the educational placement that the student has been in for more than 10 school days or an accumulation of more than 10 school days that sets a pattern (Bullock & Gable, 1999). Not only did this amendment give protections to students who were currently receiving special education services but to others as well. Students now are protected under this mandate if they have a history of the need of special education services, whether or not those services were provided. If the student's parents or teachers have expressed concern for the behavior of the child or if an evaluation has been requested, then it allows the student to receive these protections. A note to the student's teacher from the parent concerning behavior could conceivably cause the student to be protected under *Honig*. This made it very difficult for school systems not to be in violation of

the new mandate even if they were attempting to educate, to the best of their ability, all students in their systems (Bullock, & Gable).

The reauthorization of IDEA 97 and all of its amendments has caused a great stir among educators, especially school administrators. The mandate that schools must not only provide a free appropriate public education to disabled students but also provide interventions that address students' unwanted and challenging behaviors regardless of their disability, has caused the greatest controversy.

IDEA Requirements for Conducting Functional Behavioral Assessments

FBAs are mentioned in section 615 (K) (1) of IDEA 97 that stated that the individualized education program team is to conduct the assessment but gave little assistance or definition of what the FBA is, how it is to be done or what it must contain. It mentioned that other personnel who have knowledge of the child be included in the evaluation process, but little else was revealed in the law (Federal Regulations, 1997). The majority of studies that rely on the FBA process are mostly conducted on students with low cognitive ability or those diagnosed with emotional disturbances. Many of these studies have been conducted in private residential settings. These are low incidence groups and represent a minority of students who exhibit violent and disruptive behavior problems in schools (Ward, 1999). With little guidance from Congress, some school districts have reduced FBAs to a set of generic procedures and forms to meet the letter of the law (Stichter, Shellady, Sealander, & Eigenberger, 1999). It is significant that in a national survey of 60 individuals throughout the United States who were performing FBAs with high incidence populations, it was found that they did not agree on the procedures that should be used to conduct those assessments (Scott, Meers, & Nelson, 2000).

Mishler and Cherry (1999) reported that regulations issued by the Office of Special Education Programs in Washington, DC designed to help school districts interpret the law did not

address this issue. Instead, the regulations took the view that the FBA is an individual issue and it should be looked upon as such. The position was that forms and mandates could not be established that would meet the individual needs of every student. Practitioners who work in the field of behavior assessments agreed with this position; however, this allowed anyone to challenge the validity and quality of assessments that were currently being conducted in the school systems. These disagreements many times ended up being decided by administrative law judges appointed to hear these cases when disputes arose between parents and school districts (Mishler & Cherry).

Linehan (2000) noted that state education agencies began developing recommendations on how to conduct FBAs on students who exhibit challenging behaviors in the public schools in an effort to help local education agencies meet the new mandate created by the passage of IDEA 97. Some states focused only on assessments for disabled students and others included all students in the school population, including the preschool students from birth to age five. He found that 26 of the 43 states that responded to his survey had statewide initiatives in place to address these assessments. Of the 17 states that had no active initiative in place, 13 had plans to develop one. Another matter discovered by the survey was the lack of trained individuals to carry out these assessments. Some states had instituted training programs, but all were in infant stages of development (Linehan).

On August 27, 1998, the Tennessee State Department of Education's Division of Special Education issued its recommendations on conducting FBAs for students with disabilities (Fisher, 1998). These recommendations were based on a guide on FBAs published by The National Association of State Directors of Special Education. The focus of their recommendations was to be proactive in addressing the behavioral concerns of students with disabilities that may impede their learning or the learning of others and to ensure that Tennessee had "safe and well disciplined schools" (Fisher, p.1). The standard set forth by the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education was that the individualized education program decision-making

process must include discussions on FBAs. These assessments should identify and measure specific problems and must be conducted in the student's natural environment. They should be individualized for each student and include positive behavioral supports and strategies that will result in a change of disruptive and challenging behaviors (Fisher).

Joseph Fisher, Assistant Commissioner of Education for Special Education in Tennessee (Fisher, 1998), stated that recommendations for the FBA should be an integral part of a student's comprehensive evaluation and reevaluation process. It should not be an isolated practice designed for students who violate a school system's code of conduct. He said that proactively addressing student behavioral issues early in the evaluation process would enable educators to find solutions to students' unwanted behaviors.

Riva, Lyon, and Heefner (1995) noted that most students who exhibited behavioral, emotional, and social problems were not certified as emotionally or behaviorally disturbed. The emotionally and behaviorally disturbed group is a low incidence group of students with disabilities, which makes up a very small percentage of the population of students in the public school setting. However, the problem behaviors exhibited by students identified as emotionally or behaviorally disturbed are usually more serious and occur with more frequency than among their regular education peers. Based on the way students diagnosed with emotional disturbances have been perceived by schools, it is very difficult for this group of students to contribute positively to society. They have been singled out because of their identified disability and many times are not expected to accomplish what is expected of their peer group. This group also experienced the least favorable outcomes of any group, disabled or not. Employment opportunities were limited for this group of students. For them, success was often measured in very small steps and accomplishments must be measured over long periods (Jolivette, Stichter, Nelson, Scott, & Liaupsin, 2000). These students do not respond to traditional punishment, so they must have opportunities to learn self-discipline. They need more than the sound and consistent discipline

policies that exist in schools; they need positive behavioral instruction and support (Fitzsimmons, 1998a).

Emotionally disturbed students frequently exhibit learning disabilities that manifest themselves in academic performance (Coleman & Vaughn, 2000). Students diagnosed as emotionally disturbed also have more difficulty with social adjustment. As a result, they are unable to form relationships with people who might have a positive influence upon them, thus making it more difficult for them to achieve success (Wagner, D'Amico, Marder, Newman, & Glackorby, 1992). Emotionally disturbed students also have academic difficulties in multiple content areas. Often this is caused by their display of unwanted behavior, which includes noncompliance, aggression, and a display of disrespect for authority figures (Jolivet et al., 2000).

It should be noted that students who have been identified with disabilities have a higher rate of behavior problems than regular education students do. The exact cause for this is not known, but exclusion from same-age peers and regular classroom participation may be one reason. Poor self-esteem from years of struggling in the classroom may be another reason these students exhibit more challenging behaviors (Chandler, Dahlquist, Repp, & Feltz, 1999).

Sugai and Maheady (1999) stated that culturally diverse students had been over represented in special education for years. The cause of this could be that teachers have lower expectations for students who come from different backgrounds with different languages. Even though there are culture-free, culture-fair, and culture-specific tests, students who have language differences have a higher likelihood of being placed in a special education class than their English-speaking peers are. Students who possess cultural and language differences may be perceived as having deficits that can cause social difficulties between them, their peers, and their teachers. Unfavorable interactions between teachers and students can lead to confrontations, resulting in students being removed from the classroom and not having access to the same classroom

instruction as their peers. This may lead to lower academic performance by these students, thereby putting them at risk of failing or dropping out of school. Culturally diverse students require no more than good teaching and normal professional practice in order for them to learn.

As noted by Sugai and Maheady (1999), learning is an interactive process that is influenced by all the characteristics of the teachers who teach the classes and the students who are there to learn. Evaluators who work with students should be cautioned to be objective in their observations. They should carefully determine if teachers hold different behavioral standards for culturally diverse students and whether or not they behave and react differently to these students. Evaluators can make this determination if they focus on the classroom or school-learning environment where the student has been placed. Teachers may be completely unaware they are exhibiting these biases toward groups of students. If this is happening, it needs to be brought to the teacher's attention in a manner that is not threatening. This will enable the teacher to accept the criticism as constructive. Training teachers to avoid bias is needed to ensure appropriate education for all students (Sugai & Maheady).

Preservice Training and Support for Practitioners

Teachers who lack appropriate training in dealing with students who exhibit challenging behaviors may unknowingly reinforce disruptive behaviors either positively (by giving their attention to the student) or negatively (by removing him or her from the class and allowing the student to escape the adverse situation). Attaining a knowledge base of appropriate behavioral management techniques is critical for teachers and service providers in today's school setting. Teachers generally have a very limited repertoire of methods to deal with students who exhibit challenging behaviors (Vaughn, Hales, Bush, & Fox 1998).

Nichols (2000) noted although most teachers receive classroom management training in methods classes in college, this training should also expose teachers to a variety of proven

classroom management models that will allow them to develop individualized behavior programs for students in their classrooms. Unfortunately, the amount and quality of training that educators receive is sometimes based upon the college instructor's philosophy, training, and experience. Many college instructors have not taught in the public school setting in years and, therefore, have little experience with today's students. At a minimum, teachers should possess a foundation and knowledge of core principles of behavior analysis before entering the workforce (Nichols).

Teachers must be trained to accommodate the needs of individual students in their classrooms. Study carrels can be provided for students who are easily distracted by movement and noise in the classroom. Some students may need preferential seating due to impaired hearing or vision. Moving these students to the front of the classroom may be all that is necessary for the students to achieve academic success. Predictable scheduling may provide a secure setting for some students. Students should be taught how to follow a daily schedule. This will help them to transition from one activity to another and to move from one classroom to another. They must also understand how to handle the unexpected. Teachers can learn the simple strategies that may positively affect their classroom and improve student academic performance (Research Connections, 1999).

Educators cannot be blamed for the breakdown in functional behavioral analysis if training institutions do not provide them with these basics. They are expected to have knowledge in academic content before being hired to teach students in the public schools. Is it unreasonable to expect them to possess at least the basic understanding of behavior management techniques? (Stichter et al., 1999). Teachers may have to learn collaboration skills, the proper use of time management, and group problem solving techniques. Teachers working on assessment teams must be able to communicate and have good interpersonal skills. These skills will be important as the assessment process develops over time (Gable et al., 1999).

The University of Kansas addressed this issue by offering on-line courses to qualifying teacher education institutions that deal with disruptive students. They developed training modules based upon research conducted with students with disabilities who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors (Technical Assistance Bulletin, 1998).

According to Stichter et al. (1999), college instructors should teach practitioners skills that will enable them to “recognize behavior patterns, discriminate between assumptions and actual data trends and to understand that behavior is purposeful and serves a function” (p. 3). The FBA process is designed to promote long-term changes in a student’s behavior. Regardless of the strategies provided teachers to help them deal with disruptive behaviors, they must be easily implemented into the classroom setting because of the constraints under which teachers work. If the plan is too time consuming or too difficult to be efficiently implemented in the classroom setting, teachers will resist the strategies that have been agreed upon for the student (Jolivet, Lassman, & Wehby, 1998).

To date, most colleges and universities do not provide teachers the opportunity to learn and practice the skills necessary to work with students who present these challenging behaviors (Quinn, Gable, Rutherford, Nelson, & Howell, 1998). Colleges and universities do not offer these programs as part of the regular education teacher preparation program. McEvoy and Reichle (1995) reported that specialized behavior management training is focused on only in special education programs, even though regular educators are also required to teach and deal with disruptive students in their classrooms. The lack of these learning opportunities for all teachers creates schools that are less efficient and effective in educating students (McEvoy & Reichle).

Inservice Training and Support for Practitioners

States are required by IDEA 97 to provide inservice training for personnel who provide support and educational services to disabled students. This includes paraprofessionals who work with students as well as special and regular education teachers providing educational services to students with disabilities. Many service providers, especially paraprofessionals, do not have the training or resources to implement interventions that are effective for students with histories of aggression, self-injury, or destruction of property. This lack of training can lead to using ineffective methods to work with this type of student (Ward, 1999).

Fox, Gunter, Davis, and Brall (2000) noted that training of personnel to conduct appropriate assessments is extremely important. They maintained that poorly trained staff will not be able to effectively and accurately assess the information compiled throughout the assessment. Even with the development of appropriate instruments, observers must be skillful in observational techniques. They must have the ability to analyze situations and make accommodations and changes as the assessment process continues (Fox et al.). Even though IDEA 97 mandates training, no one has provided school districts the needed clear curriculum for providing inservice activities for personnel who work with students with disabilities. The focus of the training must include enhancing teachers' and paraprofessionals' abilities to use strategies developed in the behavior intervention plans to curb unwanted behaviors exhibited by students. It should emphasize the team approach to changing challenging behaviors. Parents, teachers, and paraprofessionals must work together to reach maximum results in changing students' unwanted behaviors (Gable et al., 1999).

Ward (1999) stated that another component of the training has to be the recognition of cultural diversity. Students who have immigrated into the United States come from different cultures from those students born in the United States. Behaviors differ from one culture to another, and each student who has immigrated has a built-in belief system that is an integral part

of his or her life. If teachers do not consider the diversity of cultures, they may miss seeing the true meaning of the behavior the student is exhibiting. A misdiagnosis can lead to misguided treatment approaches that will have little effect upon changing unwanted behaviors (Ward).

According to Nichols (2000), educators must acquire critical thinking skills to be able to implement strategies to effectively change unwanted behavior from students in their classrooms. They cannot allow their biases and former experiences to influence their thinking when making judgments and recommendations for behavior improvement programs (Nichols). Davis (1998) added that educators need to be taught to assess behavior problems so they may develop appropriate interventions that will focus upon positive ways to curtail inappropriate behaviors. Teachers must be willing to change the way they deliver instruction to their students. Some may be resistant to do this even though there is a strong possibility that the change presented to them will reduce unwanted behaviors exhibited by their students (Davis).

The classroom environment is often overlooked as a potential cause for misbehaviors in students. Gunter, Hummell, and Venn (1996) reported that if teachers are expected to be effective in dealing with disruptive students, they need to honestly evaluate what they are doing and how they have their classrooms arranged. The authors suggested that to enable teachers to objectively see what they are doing in the classroom, they might videotape their own teaching for self-evaluation. They could also ask peer teachers to visit their classrooms to help make suggestions on management techniques. Teachers should take an objective look at what is happening between them and their students. This may enable them to change their approach in dealing with students who exhibit challenging behaviors. Teachers must understand that they may be inadvertently reinforcing disruptive behavior in their students. They should systematically evaluate their own teaching strategies in their classrooms to be able to effectively reach and teach every student (Vaughn et al., 1998).

Too often, training methods have given focus to meeting the mandates of IDEA 97 as opposed to providing quality instruction and training in ways to deal with disruptive students in the classroom. In many cases, sporadic inservice and preservice activities are provided with little coordination or consideration of the level of preparation, experience, or training of teachers and paraprofessionals. These factors should always be taken into consideration when developing activities to train teachers and paraprofessionals in dealing with students who display unwanted and challenging behaviors (Stichter et al., (1999).

Functional Behavioral Assessment

The FBA is now required by IDEA 97 (IDEA 20 U. S. C. 1415[k] [1] [B] [I] and IDEA Regulations 34C-F. R. 300.520 [b] [1] and [c]) to be conducted on students in special education who exhibit unwanted and disruptive behaviors in schools. This assessment is to be conducted to develop positive behavior intervention plans to help extinguish unwanted behaviors and lessen the impact of those behaviors on the learning of all students (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000).

There is no single etiology of students who display aggressive and violent behaviors. Walker and Sprague (1999) contended that if children were systematically exposed to risk factors such as drugs, alcohol, abusive caregivers, or dysfunctional families, they would develop tendencies to display unwanted behaviors in school. They would have a greater chance of developing defiance for authority figures, becoming aggressive toward their peers and teachers, and lack the ability to focus and sustain their attention for long periods. Students exposed to these risk factors also seemed to exhibit a higher hostility toward school and sometimes showed an inability to control their temper when put in stressful situations.

The student's environment, as well as his or her emotional and physiological makeup, also plays an important part in how he or she behaves in the educational setting. Educators who work with these students have no control over the origins of a student's violence and aggression. A

student may have a parent who has a mental illness or who is addicted to drugs or alcohol. If this addiction occurred during pregnancy, it could cause cognitive and psychiatric disorders in the unborn child. This type of student may be left at home for hours with no adult supervision or inappropriate supervision from individuals who may model unwanted behaviors. Students can be encouraged by these inappropriate role models to display behaviors that are disruptive just to get attention. Another factor that may influence students negatively are parents who lack parenting skills, causing them to discipline their child too harshly or not provide any discipline at all. This inconsistency on the part of the parent causes the child not to know what to expect or what is expected of him or her. The child then faces the natural consequences of his or her behaviors, which sometimes may be abusive in nature (Guetzloe & Rockwell, 1998).

Walker and Sprague (1999) maintained that in the short term, students who are continually exposed to these situations run the risk of having low academic achievement, a greater tendency for truancy problems, and sometimes being rejected by teachers and peers. This can lead to school failure, delinquency, or drug and alcohol abuse. This group also has a greater tendency to join gangs, which can lead to criminal activity. All these factors contribute to the social and psychological make-up of a child (Walker & Sprague).

In order to have disciplined and well run-schools, some school administrators have developed criteria that call for the exclusion of students who break school rules, regardless of how, why, or who broke the rule. The criteria for exclusion of students seems to be developed for all students, not taking into account the individual difficulties or disabilities that some students possess. According to Lewis and Sugai (1999), research shows that using traditional methods of discipline for all students is not effective in dealing with all students. There is also evidence that if traditional discipline practices are used equally on all students, there will be an increase in the rate of challenging behaviors, aggression, and vandalism in schools. Today's gun-toting, knife-wielding students are not students diagnosed with emotional or behavioral disturbances. These

students are regular education students who have taken out their frustrations with others in a violent manner. Traditional assessment methods that are currently in place cannot provide behavior support change for this group of students (Nichols, 2000).

Treating students with emotional and behavioral disorders in the same way as regular education students is risky and it sets them up for failure regardless of whether they are in a regular classroom or a specialized educational setting. Students must be seen as individuals and the programs that are developed for them must be individualized in order for educators to be able to address their individual needs (Peck, Sasso, & Stambaugh, 1998).

Consultative and School-Based Assessments

School districts that rely totally upon behavioral consultants to evaluate and make recommendations for disruptive students may be less effective than school districts that train their own staff to complete the evaluations. A consultative model designed for behavior specialists to work with school-based teams seems to be the most desirable method, in both cost and time to the system. This consultative model allows specialists to train school-based teams and be available to collaborate with teams if they run into problems (Chandler et al., 1999). This model is more effective because teachers who deal with students on a daily basis can adjust what they are doing as they continually evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. School based teams can be there immediately to address problems or change interventions for individual students. Systems that use specialists to do all their evaluations may have to wait days, or weeks, for assistance when problems arise. These outsiders may also meet with resistance if the teacher perceives the recommendations are difficult to implement and not time efficient. Acceptance by teachers is not an issue that school-based teams have to face when making recommendations for teachers to follow in implementing the behavior intervention plan (Wheeler & Redinius, 1994).

The Make a Difference Project in part sponsored by the Tennessee State Department of Education promotes the model that consultants use to work with school-based teams to develop behavior intervention plans for disruptive students. According to Vaughn et al. (1998), one such project started in 1995 at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. This project is designed to provide consultation services, behavioral assessments, and training of staff in public school districts in the northeastern portion of Tennessee. The Make a Difference Project will work with school systems to conduct behavioral assessments for students ranging in ages of 3 to 22 years. Selected teams made up of teachers, counselors, psychologists, and administrators attend a week-long training session that focuses on assessing students, developing interventions for students who exhibit challenging behaviors, and devising methods to implement these interventions in the public schools from which they are chosen (Vaughn et al.). This model enables school systems to avoid expensive outside consultants, which may result in private placement of students.

Individual assessments are also available through this project; however, the number of staff available to conduct these assessments is limited. This limits the number of individual assessments that the staff of the Make a Difference project may conduct. The project customizes each assessment to fit each individual student. Time available to implement strategies, student characteristics, and the setting that the student is in is all taken into account in each of the evaluations. The Make a Difference Project promotes a systematic way of assessing students, from the initial review of student records to implementation and evaluation of interventions that have been recommended by the team of individuals who conducted the assessment. Consultation services from this project are also available to school based teams to help with issues and behaviors (Vaughn et al., 1998).

Assessments

A functional assessment is a measurement of what a person can and cannot do. Strategies used in an assessment vary in both content and methodology. Conducting the FBA should be a team approach and the gathering of information should be both formal and informal (Slomka, 1996). Each member of the assessment team should bring to the team different perspectives and varied experiences. This should allow for better and more comprehensive behavior improvement plans, which in turn, help create a more effective behavioral support plan for students (Davis, 1998).

Applied behavior analysis identifies causes of behavior problems through the functional assessment process. The functional assessment process seeks information on internal and surrounding environmental factors that may have an impact upon the behavior of a student (Bakke, 1997). Advances in applied behavior analysis have allowed assessment specialists to establish technology designed to understand how a problem behavior looks, when it occurs, its duration, and how it is triggered. There is no single cause for a student to exhibit challenging behaviors, and practitioners working with these students must understand this (Quinn et al., 1998).

Behavior specialists normally use either a functional analysis or structural analysis to identify sources of variability for the student. Functional analysis manipulates the consequences that maintain the behavior, whereas structural analysis manipulates various antecedents or stimulus conditions that may increase the probability of the behavior occurring. It may be necessary to use both types of analysis to appropriately write a comprehensive support plan that addresses all the behaviors that a student is exhibiting (Davis, 1998).

A properly conducted FBA allows practitioners to develop interventions that are research based. These interventions must be positive in nature and must be developed and implemented through the individualized education program team process (Gable et al., 1999). A functional

assessment is a systematic assessment process that allows practitioners to develop strategies to deal with challenging behaviors exhibited by students in the educational setting. The functional assessment serves as a means to which nonpunitive behavioral interventions can be developed and evaluated using research-based strategies developed over long periods to remediate challenging behaviors exhibited by students. It allows practitioners to identify the exact behavior that occurs, predict when and under what conditions the behavior occurs, and the reinforcements that maintain these behaviors (Chandler et al., 1999).

Walker and Sprague (1999) held a different view on the value of FBAs to high functioning students in schools. They posited that practitioners might be leaning too heavily upon data obtained from the FBA process. They maintained that these assessments might be oversold as a cure-all for every student that causes problems in the schools. They noted that with so few studies conducted on students with high cognitive abilities, assessment purposes might be overextended in their effectiveness. FBAs will gain a higher acceptance by both practitioners and researchers if future applications of assessments on this group provide support for assessments currently used in the schools.

Methods and Strategies Used in Assessing Students

Aberrant behavior patterns extend beyond things that can be observed in an educational setting. A student's thoughts and feelings cannot be observed. For this reason, individuals who work with the student must be involved in the assessment. Cognitive therapists teach that thoughts cause feelings, and thoughts and feelings together cause actions. The teacher who works directly with the student on a daily basis has the best chance of making a change in a student's beliefs and emotions (Nichols, 2000).

One approach, not often used to conduct the FBA, is a home-based assessment. The greatest reason for not using this approach is the lack of time and personnel to conduct this type

of assessment. Young children act differently in different environments with different caretakers. Standard clinical practices have poor social validity and carry-over value to the natural environment (Stichter et al., 1999). This type of assessment can provide information that otherwise might not be obtained in an assessment conducted in the school or clinical setting. Students sometimes exhibit behaviors in one type of environment and not in another (Meyer, Hagopian, & Paclawskyj, 1999). The natural environment in which the student actually engages in unwanted behaviors allows the best chance for a change in those behaviors to occur (Nichols, 2000).

A home-based assessment would force the involvement of the parent or caretaker of the student. It would also allow for a better rapport between the assessors and the parent or caretaker. Parents and caretakers of students have information that school staff may never know. They see the child in a different light and in a much different perspective. Conducting a home-based assessment may also have its drawbacks. Families are very busy and finding time to meet in the home is sometimes hard to schedule. Parents can also view a home-based assessment as being intrusive upon their rights. They may feel that they are being scrutinized and that their parenting skills are being placed under a microscope. Considering all the advantages and disadvantages of conducting this type of assessment, the benefits of doing a home-based assessment outweigh the disadvantages (Rogers, 1998).

Researchers do not agree on how FBAs should be conducted; however, most do agree that the assessment should include some type of direct and indirect method for assessing the unwanted behavior. Both methods give information that is needed to appropriately assess student behaviors. The direct method involves observation of the student's behaviors in his or her natural setting. A "one size fits all" approach to conducting the FBA is doomed for failure and can never meet the many varied needs of students with behavioral problems (Carr, 2000). Indirect observational methods include interviews of the students, teachers, and parents. Review of

records and incidents that have occurred is also a part of this method for assessing the student. The process is complex and time consuming. Regardless of the method used, goals for the assessment should be clearly stated. The challenging behaviors must be agreed upon before the implementation of the assessment plan. Summary statements should also include specific types of situations where the agreed upon unwanted behavior is occurring (Technical Assistance Bulletin, 1998).

A functional assessment is designed to identify the purpose of unwanted behaviors exhibited by students in a purposeful manner. Its outcome should determine the “causes” of an unwanted behavior and the development of solutions that might eliminate these behaviors. It should identify times and situations when, where, and under what circumstances a behavior might occur (Bakke, 1997). It is important for assessment personnel to understand that everyone behaves in a manner that will meet his or her own needs. A student’s challenging behavior may serve the same purpose as appropriate behaviors serve other students in the same educational setting. This challenging behavior may meet the need of one individual student yet interfere with the learning of others in the classroom (Research Connections, 1999).

Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, and Hagan (1998) suggested that a properly completed FBA should provide a definition of the challenging behavior, predict when the behavior may occur, and identify the function of the behavior. It should predict specific conditions and reinforcers that may maintain the behavior and provide evaluation data that will support summary statements about the behavior exhibited by the student.

Lewis and Sugai (1999) pointed out that teachers must determine which behaviors are worthy of interventions and to what degree to intervene. Teachers must be able to ignore some behaviors exhibited by students. If the teacher determines that interventions must occur, he or she must have solutions ready to address the unwanted behaviors exhibited by the student. If problems persist, the assessment team should be contacted for a possible referral. After

interviewing those knowledgeable of the situation, the team must determine if the behaviors a student is exhibiting are serious enough to warrant an assessment. Gable et al. (1999) recommended that a team that knows the student answer the following questions:

1. Is the behavior the student is exhibiting very much different from that of his or her peers?
2. Is the behavior of this student interfering with the learning of others?
3. Have current behavior management techniques not worked in curbing this unwanted behavior?
4. Does the behavior exhibited represent a cultural or behavioral deficit?
5. Is the student's behavior potentially threatening or harmful to others?
6. If the behavior is persistent and chronic, will some type of disciplinary action occur?

If the team answers "yes" to any one of these questions, they should proceed with the assessment of the student.

Once this determination is made, the first step in conducting the assessment is developing a hypothesis about the problem behavior (Sugai et al., 1998). At the same time that the team is developing a hypothesis, those individuals conducting the assessment should agree upon a timeline for the evaluation plan. This plan will include who is responsible for the various components of the evaluation process and the types of instruments to be used in the assessment process (Koorland, Monda, & Vail, 1988). This ensures that a formal process is followed and everything that needs to be completed in the evaluation process is planned for and will occur. This should reduce errors and create an organized assessment process (Quinn et al., 1998).

The development of the hypothesis should come from interviews with students, teachers, and parents as a review of both educational and medical records if available. The hypothesis should clearly identify and define the problem behavior, events that may trigger the behavior, and events that help maintain the behavior (Gable et al., 1999). At this point, it is only an educated

guess and may or may not reflect what is really happening in the student's life. The exact nature of the behavior and its scope must be determined at this step (Quinn et al., 1998).

Fox et al. (2000) recommended that the next step in the process would be to conduct observations in the student's natural setting. Direct observations should then be completed in order to confirm a testable hypothesis statement. The major purpose for these observations is to describe and analyze events leading up to the student's outburst of behavior. Direct observations will also identify the triggering and maintaining events of the behavior. Follow-up observations and evaluations are necessary to determine effectiveness of the interventions in the behavior improvement plan developed for the student. These observations will allow assessment personnel to determine when inappropriate behavior occurs. Data regarding the location where the behaviors occur and who is present when the behaviors occur can be obtained through these observations. Antecedents leading up to the occurrence of these behaviors and consequences of the behavior should be noted in this process. All data should be collected and reviewed to define the behavior of the student (Gable et al. 1999).

Conducting these observations is the most time consuming part of the assessment process, and time is always a matter that practitioners must consider (Carr, 2000). Everyone involved in the assessment must agree on the exact behavior to be observed and the appropriate measurement strategies to be used (Koorland et al., 1988). Observations should be descriptive, and very general statements such as "making noise" should be avoided. "Tapping of a pencil" or "grunting" are much more descriptive and can be observed and measured. Direct observational techniques allow objective and factual data to be collected and limit subjective statements to influence the evaluation procedure. These data can be used to help identify and focus upon the unwanted behaviors. Everything that leads up to a student's unwanted behavior cannot be observed because of time constraints placed upon the observers and the limited number of personnel available to conduct the assessment (Quinn et al., 1999). One way to offset this

problem is to train paraprofessionals to conduct observations that are needed for the evaluation. The key to the success of this method is to properly train the paraprofessionals in how to accurately record data on these students in an unbiased manner. This will provide another "set of eyes" to provide beneficial information to evaluation teams (Koorland et al.).

The idea of developing behavioral interventions based upon direct and indirect observations is not new to researchers. These methods have been used for years to obtain objective and factual data on student behaviors. Sometimes these observations have been conducted in a clinical environment, in specialized settings, and by individuals who have not directly worked with the students in a public school setting. Data gained from these types of observations can give the observer wrong clues about a student's behaviors. The context in which data have been collected does have an impact on assessment outcomes, therefore, influencing strategies to curb unwanted behaviors. This context is multidimensional in that the biological, social, and physical environment of the student will affect the assessment. The assessment should be conducted in the student's natural environment, if possible, to avoid misleading results (Carr, 2000).

Touchette, MacDonald, and Langer (1985) recommended that if the observer cannot identify a reliable correspondence with any stimulus, a more formal analysis should be conducted using a scatterplot. A scatterplot enables the observer to identify patterns of behaviors the student is exhibiting. Undesirable behavior is functionally identical to desirable behavior and is sometimes hard to differentiate. Both undesirable and desirable behaviors can be predicted to occur under one set of circumstances and not to occur under others.

The next step is to develop suitable replacement behaviors that achieve the same outcome as the identified problem behaviors. These replacement behaviors must be acceptable to those individuals in the student's environment. All must agree on the implementation of the plan. Strategies for the time it takes to implement, amount and type of positive reinforcement strategies

to be used, and consequences to be used if further unwanted behaviors occur must be agreed upon by those involved in its implementation (Jolivette, Stichter, et al., 2000). If it is determined that social skill instruction needs to be taught, it should be taught in small groups of five or six students. The teacher should model key skills by using problem scenarios selected from the student's natural environment. Students should have the opportunity to practice skills with feedback provided by the teacher (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Classroom supports must be provided for these students in order for them to achieve success. Behavior intervention plans without supports are doomed for problems and failure (Reschly, Tilly, & Grimes, 1999).

Clark and Knau (1998) suggested that properly developed behavior intervention plans contain a clear link between the data collected in the assessment and interventions selected. It should include parent input with professional judgments based on the defined problem. Goals and objectives should be based upon the student's ability to follow them and include positive strategies that will decrease undesirable behaviors. Finally, the plan must be implemented as written, ensuring that everyone working with the student participates in its implementation.

Jolivette, Stichter, et al. (2000) recommended that to effectively infuse the FBA process into the behavior improvement plan, the function of the unwanted or disruptive behavior must be determined. The assessment team must determine appropriate replacement behaviors to be used in the plan and a time frame for the presentation of these behaviors to the student. The environment should be manipulated to ensure an increase in the probability of success and to decrease the probability of failure. A teaching sequence should be developed to determine when these replacement behaviors would be taught, along with positive reinforcements and consequences if the student exhibits problem behaviors. Finally, data should be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the behavior intervention plan.

Touchette et al. (1985) recommended that after a behavior improvement plan has been developed, it should be tested by systematically changing the environment in which the behaviors

are occurring. When a change in the environment corresponds to a change in the behavior of a student, this suggests a controlling relationship. Manipulating the environment to evaluate the validity of the behavioral intervention plan will create a greater chance of its success. The evaluation of these replacement behaviors cannot be weak and haphazard. It must be research-based to ensure valid conclusions result from the experimentation, and everyone involved must understand that no behavioral intervention plan will immediately negate all unwanted behaviors (Jolivette, Stichter, et al., 2000).

Personnel conducting the assessment and developing the behavior intervention plan must understand that the functions of the behavior are not seen as being inappropriate, but school personnel judge the behavior that the student is exhibiting as appropriate or inappropriate for the setting. They must understand why the student is exhibiting the behavior (Jolivette, Stichter, et al., 2000). If the function of a behavior is to gain attention from teachers or peers, appropriate strategies should be included in the plan to allow access to attention (Fitzsimmons, 1998a).

To ensure extinction of unwanted behaviors, functional replacement behaviors should be developed and taught as any other academic subject. It should be noted that desirable behaviors taught in one context often fail to generalize to another context (Dooley, Wilczenski, & Torem, 1999). Controlling the behavior should not be the focus of the intervention plans. Interventions that focus only on the unwanted behaviors of the students do not provide for replacement of behaviors. Behavioral intervention plans should emphasize the teaching of appropriate behaviors to the student, not the controlling of the behavior (Gable et al., 1999). Interventions that are based only upon control usually only suppress the unwanted behaviors and result in the student exhibiting other unwanted behaviors. Positive behavioral supports address the cause of the problem behaviors (Fitzsimmons, 1998c).

Once a properly developed behavior improvement plan is implemented and working, it needs to be included in the student's individualized education program and reviewed at least

annually. This allows everyone responsible for its implementation to be able to better understand what has been happening with the student and what interventions need to be implemented. The plan must be continually evaluated and adjustments made as situations change in a student's life. A student's teachers, his or her grade level, and age are changing factors in a student's life that may affect the plans that have been put in place for achievement. This necessitates that this plan be a document that is continually revised and changed to meet the student's needs (Quinn et al., 1998).

These replacement behaviors should then be placed into long term individualized education program behavioral objectives. A behavior support plan should follow this step. This support plan should address the setting events, antecedents, behaviors, and consequences of the observed behavior. Its purpose is to neutralize setting events that may prompt the student's challenging behaviors, access replacement behaviors that are less disruptive, and decrease the consequences that help in maintaining the identified problem behaviors (Quinn et al., 1998).

The behavioral support plan details the actions for full implementation of the behavior support plan. In this step, it is spelled out who is responsible for implementation of each part of the plan. Teacher and student schedules, training of staff members, who is to be included, and materials to be used are specifically outlined. This plan should address the full range of behavioral issues and needs of the student population. It should also include strategies for preventing challenging behavior and intervening when such behaviors do occur. The teaching of desired replacement behaviors should be the focus of these interventions (Sugai et al., 2000).

Finally, monitoring the accuracy and consistency by which the support plan is being implemented and its positive or negative effects upon the student's unwanted behavior should occur (Quinn et al., 1999). This evaluation phase of the assessment determines if changes or modifications need to occur based upon observable data taken in the evaluation (Jolivet, Lassman, et al., 1998). Proper monitoring and evaluation of the behavior support plan will allow

researchers to make better recommendations if changes in the plan are needed (Sugai et al., 2000). The evaluation plan must be an on-going process. There are no guarantees that the plan that is implemented for the student will produce conclusive results. Sometimes teams cannot identify antecedents and consequences that will curb unwanted behavior. Assessments can produce inconclusive and sometimes confusing results, thus there is reason to continually evaluate and monitor the plan (Carr, 2000).

Summary

The IDEA was intended to give students ages 3 through 21 equal opportunities to a free appropriate public education. This act leveled the playing field for disabled students to be able to have access to a quality education provided all students. The latest amendments that were passed and included in the act in 1997 caused many educators to forget the intent of the law and forced them to focus only on one part of the law, discipline. It was Congress' intent to balance the right of all students to have access to an education and still provide a learning environment free from disruptions and violence. Congress forced educators to actively pursue avenues to positively address student behaviors that interfere with their learning and the learning of others.

Past research on conducting FBAs has focused on students with low cognitive abilities or students diagnosed with emotional disturbances. There is considerable evidence that properly conducted assessments and appropriately-written behavior improvement plans will curb unwanted behaviors in this group. On the other hand, there are fewer studies that focus upon students with mild disabilities or no disabilities at all. This group of students possesses average cognitive abilities and may come from social situations that cannot be changed or influenced by educators. Social settings away from the school may have a greater impact upon this group than it does for the lower intellectual group of students.

Because of the passage of IDEA 97 and the mandate to address behavior of all students with disabilities, educators were forced to use data from studies where assessments were conducted on lower functioning students and apply them to students who may not react as other students in those studies. Even though researchers do not agree on the exact methods that should be used in the assessment process, they do agree that appropriate social behavior can be taught to students regardless of their disability. Behavior occurs for a purpose regardless of the behavior, and every student, regardless of the disability, can benefit from a systematic analysis of his or her behaviors. Finding the function of the behavior of each student is the purpose of this systematic analysis. Once the function is learned, appropriate interventions can be designed and implemented for each student.

Educators are urged to understand that behavior analysis is a process and not a cure and will have to continually be monitored and adjusted to fit the student. Every problem behavior observed can be addressed but may not necessarily be changed to everyone's satisfaction. Teachers must be flexible and willing to change how they teach. A key factor to the success of this type of approach is persistence and professional dedication to the implementation of the behavior improvement plan. The teacher, parents, and support personnel who work with the student are the most important influences in changing students' unwanted behaviors.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter provides a general description of the study, along with methods and procedures that were used in the collection and analysis of data. It also includes information on how the respondents were chosen and information about the survey instrument.

Description of the Study

The purpose of the study was to survey special education supervisors in all public school systems throughout Tennessee and Georgia to determine: (a) the types of assessment procedures used in their school systems, (b) the types of training provided to personnel conducting the assessments (workshops, training sessions), (c) who conducted FBAs in the district, (d) the amount of support provided to the practitioners who were conducting these assessments, and (e) the differences between the amount of training and support provided and the district's use of best practices in conducting these assessments. A comparison was made to determine whether a high level of training and support provided to assessment personnel was related to the possibility that assessments approximate recommended best practices in these school systems. This quantitative research study was based upon the collection of data given by respondents completing the survey instrument and subjecting these data to numerical analysis (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

The literature review revealed that FBAs must be individualized for each student and conducted in a systematic manner in order to obtain the best results. It also became apparent that only a small amount of research had been conducted on FBAs of students with high cognitive abilities. Therefore, this study focused on the current literature available on students with low cognitive abilities.

Population

The population surveyed in this study included 317 special education supervisors in public schools throughout Tennessee and Georgia. This represented all school systems in the two states. The names and contact information for the special education supervisors chosen for the study were obtained from the state department of education websites of Tennessee (Tennessee Department of Education, 2002) and Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, 2002). There were limitations associated with relying on the perceptions of special education supervisors in assessing the effectiveness of the training, instruments, and personnel identified in this study. The extent to which a supervisor was involved in the assessment process shaped his or her particular perspective. While supervisors in small districts may have been active participants in the assessment process, those large districts may have relied on other assessment personnel who are dedicated to conduct these assessments. The supervisors were, however, considered the most appropriate group to survey, given their overall responsibility for the program.

Instrumentation

An initial survey instrument (see Appendix A) was developed from a survey that was presented by Conroy, Clark, Katsiyannis, Gable, and Fox (2000) at the 24th annual Teacher-Educators of Children with Behavior Disorders Conference in Arizona. The survey was used with the permission of Dr. James Fox who was involved in the development of the survey and its presentation at the conference in Arizona. Their questionnaire was developed in an attempt to ascertain national trends and state policies and practices related to the IDEA 97 disciplinary provisions. Questions obtained from the survey presented in Arizona were modified to obtain data needed to answer the research questions posed in this study. Other questions were added to obtain information needed from supervisors in school districts about their own assessment

methods. The current survey instrument was designed to obtain information on the six research questions and associated null hypotheses discussed in Chapter 1.

1. What type of assessment procedures are used in school systems and how effective are these procedures in assessing students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors?
2. What programs and staff development activities are provided staff to train them in conducting FBAs and how effective are these activities?
3. Who conducts FBAs in school districts and how effective are they in conducting these assessments?
4. Is release time provided to district personnel to participate in staff development on conducting FBAs? If so, how is this time provided and how effective is it?
5. Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by school districts?

The null hypotheses associated with Question 5 are:

Ho5₁: There is no significant difference in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the state department of education.

Ho5₂: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the local school districts.

Ho5₃: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training offered by universities.

6. Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by the states involved in the study? The null hypothesis associated with Question 6 is:

Ho6₁: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the state in which they work.

“Yes” or “no” responses were requested for items on the survey instrument. Supervisors were asked to expound if they answered “yes” to these items, by placing checks next to possible answers. A third response choice, “uncertain” was provided when possible answers might not correspond to their methodology of conducting assessments. The respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of each category on a Likert-type scale using categories of “Extremely Effective,” “Effective,” “Ineffective,” and “Very Ineffective.”

Validity of the Instrument

The initial survey (see Appendix A) was emailed to 10 experts who were knowledgeable in conducting assessments and who worked in the field of behavior analysis in universities throughout the United States. This panel was asked to provide input about the content of the survey. Five responded to this request, which resulted in four additions to the survey instrument: questions 1c, 2c, 3c, and 4c. The survey was then piloted using five external evaluators who were knowledgeable and had previous training regarding methods of conducting FBAs of students in the public school setting (see Appendix B). These external evaluators assessed the content and face validity of the survey instrument (Gall et al., 1996) by examining it for its content to ensure that appropriate questions were asked. Suggestions for modifications and recommendations for additions or deletions were sought from these external evaluators. The external evaluators offered no modifications to the survey instrument. The survey was returned to the evaluators a second time to determine content, face validity, readability, and length of time it took to complete the survey instrument. Information gained from these evaluators was used to determine if further modifications were needed on the survey instrument. The final survey instrument is shown in Appendix C.

Measurement of "Best Practice"

While most of the analysis consisted of direct responses to the individual items on the questionnaire, a summary measure of "Best Practices" was used in answering research questions 5 and 6. In creating a single score that represented the extent to which districts used best practices, responses to Question 8 were added. For each choice that was selected, the respondent received a score of 1. If they did not use the practice, they received a score of 0. These items were then summed to come up with an over all score of Best Practices. The minimum score was 0 and the maximum score was 10. Best Practices, therefore, represented the extent to which a district used a wide range of different methodologies.

Procedures

A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and the survey instrument itself was sent to 317 special education directors throughout the states of Tennessee and Georgia requesting their participation in the study and offering them a final report upon the completion of the study (see Appendix D). The recipients were informed of the approximate amount of time that it took (the external evaluators) to complete the survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided with the survey instrument to aid in the return of the questionnaire. A copy of an informed consent form as required by East Tennessee State University was also included in the envelope (see Appendix E). Respondents were assured that no identifying information would be used in this study. A numbering system was used on the instrument for identifying returned surveys so that follow-up procedures could be used. This was explained in the cover letter. One hundred seventy-six supervisors (55.5%) returned the survey within three weeks of the original mailing. A second survey and return envelope was then mailed to the 141 supervisors who had failed to respond to the original mailing. The second mailing resulted in 56 additional supervisors responding to the survey. After both mailings, 231 (72.9%) surveys were returned. This was

considered an excellent return rate. Data from the 231 returned surveys are analyzed and presented as tables in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

The survey instrument was designed to reflect directly on the six research questions and associated null hypotheses posed in Chapter 1. Frequency distributions obtained from survey information given by school supervisors were used to present the demographic profile of the participants and the school systems that responded to the survey. Crosstabulations were used to analyze the data for the first four research questions and t-tests for Independent Means were used to analyze the data and answer the hypotheses for questions 5 and 6. The SPSS version 10.0 computer software program was used to analyze the descriptive data provided by responses to the survey instrument.

Summary

The survey method used in this study identified (a) types of assessment methods that were currently in use, (b) training and staff development activities that were provided for assessment personnel, (c) who was charged with conducting the assessments, (d) how release time was provided to assessment personnel, and (e) use of best practices of conducting FBAs. The instrument was piloted to ensure its validity and reliability by using five trained practitioners who conduct assessments in the public school setting. The final survey was mailed to 317 special education supervisors in Tennessee and Georgia. The resulting data were analyzed using the SPSS version 10.0 computer program. Tables and narrative description were used to present and analyze the results in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of the study was to survey special education supervisors in all public school systems throughout Tennessee and Georgia to determine (a) the type of assessment procedures used in their school systems, (b) the type of training provided to personnel conducting the assessments (workshops, training sessions), (c) who conducts FBAs in the district, (d) the amount of support provided to the practitioners who are conducting these assessments, and (e) the difference between the amount of training and support provided and districts' use of “best practice” in conducting FBAs in their school districts. Findings from the survey are presented as responses to the six individual research questions posed in Chapter 1.

As designed, this study involved surveying 137 special education supervisors in Tennessee and 180 special education supervisors in Georgia. Data were collected using a survey prepared for this study (see Appendix C). Surveys were mailed to special education supervisors in all 317 school districts in both states in March of 2002. A follow up letter and survey was mailed three weeks later to the supervisors to give them another opportunity to respond to the survey. One hundred eight special education supervisors (78.8%) from Tennessee responded to the survey and 123 supervisors (68.3%) from Georgia returned the survey after both mailings. This yielded an overall return rate of 72.8% from school districts in both states.

There were 1,477,355 students enrolled in the 231 school districts at the time the surveys were completed. The supervisor from the smallest school district to respond in the study reported an enrollment of 200 students and the largest school system had 114,000 students with 6,395 students being the mean size school district. The number of participants represented in the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Participants and School Systems That Participated in the Study by State

	<u>Tennessee</u>	<u>Georgia</u>	<u>Total</u>
# of Supervisors Surveyed	137	180	317
# of Supervisors Responding	108	123	231
% Responding	78.8	68.3	72.8
# of Students Enrolled in All Districts	645,021	832,334	1,477,355
# of Students in Smallest School District	340	200	
# of Students in Largest School District	114,000	100,000	

Research Question # 1

What type of assessment procedures are used in school systems and how effective are these procedures in assessing students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors?

The focus of the first research question was on the procedures used by supervisors in the school districts to conduct FBAs and how effective they were in eliminating disruptive behaviors of students. Table 2 shows that the special education supervisors in both states were very similar when reporting whether or not they had procedures in place to conduct FBAs.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Whether Supervisors had Adopted Procedures for Conducting Functional Behavioral Assessments by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Are Procedures Adopted to Conduct Assessments?</u>							
	Yes	82	76.6	81	68.6	163	72.4
	No	22	20.6	34	28.8	56	24.9
	Uncertain	<u>3</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2.7</u>
	Total	107	100.0	118	100.0	225	100.0

As shown in Table 2, 82 special education supervisors in Tennessee and 81 supervisors in Georgia reported that they did have procedures in place to conduct these assessments, whereas 56 said that they did not have procedures in place. Six were uncertain.

The methods used in conducting assessments and their effectiveness are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Effectiveness of Methods Used in Assessments by Supervisors by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Records Reviewed</u>	Extremely Effective	14	15.9	18	20.2	32	18.1
	Effective	69	78.4	63	70.8	132	74.6
	Ineffective	5	5.7	7	7.9	12	6.8
	Very Ineffective	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.6</u>
	Total	88		89	100.0	177	*100.1

Table 3 (continued)

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Checklists</u>	Extremely Effective	13	14.6	13	14.1	26	14.4
	Effective	73	82.0	71	77.2	144	79.6
	Ineffective	3	3.4	8	8.7	11	6.1
	Total	89	100.0	92	100.0	181	*100.1
<u>Interview Parent</u>	Extremely Effective	23	25.6	13	14.3	36	19.9
	Effective	57	63.3	66	72.5	123	68.0
	Ineffective	10	11.1	12	13.2	22	12.2
	Total	90	100.0	91	100.0	181	*100.1
<u>Interview Student</u>	Extremely Effective	25	27.8	16	17.6	41	22.7
	Effective	57	63.3	61	67.0	118	65.2
	Ineffective	8	8.9	14	15.4	22	12.2
	Total	90	100.0	91	100.0	181	*100.1
<u>Interview Teacher</u>	Extremely Effective	26	28.9	24	26.1	50	27.5
	Effective	61	67.8	62	67.4	123	68.1
	Ineffective	3	3.3	5	5.4	8	4.4
	Very Ineffective	0	0	1	1.1	1	.5
	Total	90	100.0	92	100.0	182	*100.5
<u>Interview Administrator</u>	Extremely Effective	7	8.8	13	15.5	20	12.2
	Effective	65	81.3	57	67.9	117	74.4
	Ineffective	8	10.0	13	15.5	21	12.8
	Very Ineffective	0	0	1	1.2	1	.6
	Total	80	*100.1	84	*100.1	164	100.0
<u>Direct Observation</u>	Extremely Effective	20	22.2	37	39.8	57	31.1
	Effective	65	72.2	52	55.9	117	63.9
	Ineffective	5	5.6	3	3.2	8	4.4
	Very Ineffective	0	0	1	1.1	1	.5
	Total	90	100.0	93	100.0	183	*99.9

Table 3 (continued)

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Develop Hypothesis</u>	Extremely Effective	12	14.1	10	13.3	22	13.8
	Effective	62	72.9	51	68.0	113	70.6
	Ineffective	11	12.9	14	18.7	25	15.6
	Total	85	**99.9	75	100.0	160	100.0
<u>Environmental Manipulation</u>	Extremely Effective	11	13.1	11	15.3	22	14.1
	Effective	63	75.0	51	70.8	114	73.1
	Ineffective	10	11.9	10	13.9	20	12.8
	Total	84	100.0	72	100.0	156	100.0
<u>Develop Behavior Improvement Plan</u>	Extremely Effective	15	17.0	10	11.5	25	14.3
	Effective	67	76.1	68	78.2	135	77.1
	Ineffective	6	6.8	9	10.3	15	8.6
	Total	88	**99.9	87	100.0	175	100.0

*Total valid % >100 due to rounding error

**Total valid % < 100 due to rounding error

As shown in Table 3, the least used method in conducting assessments was environmental manipulation. Supervisors used this method in 84 systems in Tennessee and 72 systems in Georgia. The most used method was a direct observation of the student, as reported by 90 supervisors in school systems in Tennessee and 93 in Georgia. Georgia supervisors reported that a direct observation of the student was extremely effective 39.8% of the time whereas Tennessee supervisors reported that this method was extremely effective 22.2% of the time. Eighty-five supervisors in Tennessee reported that they developed a hypothesis while conducting the assessment compared to 75 in Georgia.

Georgia supervisors used the parent interview and the student interview at about the same rate as those in Tennessee. However, supervisors from Tennessee noted that the parent interview

(25.6%) and student interview (27.8%) was extremely effective, whereas Georgia supervisors reported that the parent interview was extremely effective 14.3% of the time and the student interview was extremely effective 17.6% of the time. One Georgia supervisor acknowledged that reviewing records and interviewing administrators and teachers was a very ineffective way to conduct FBAs.

Research Question # 2

What programs or staff development activities are provided staff to train them in conducting FBAs and how effective are these activities?

Tables 4, 5, and 6 present summaries of the type of technical assistance that was provided assessment personnel who conduct FBAs in the local school districts by the state departments of education in each state. Table 4 shows the number and percentages of systems that reported technical assistance that was available from the state department of education to school districts by state.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Technical Assistance Offered by the State Departments of Education by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>State Department</u>							
<u>Offered Technical</u>							
<u>Assistance</u>	Yes	86	80.4	101	82.8	187	81.7
	No	9	8.4	7	5.7	16	7.0
	Uncertain	12	11.2	14	11.5	26	11.4
	Total	107	100.0	122	100.0	229	*100.1

*Total valid % >100 due to rounding error

As shown in Table 4, approximately 81% of the supervisors reported their state department of education did provide technical assistance, whereas 18.4% said either no or they were uncertain whether assistance was provided.

Table 5 presents the types of technical assistance offered by the state departments of education in Tennessee and Georgia.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Types of Technical Assistance Provided by the State Departments of Education by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Type of State</u>							
<u>Department</u>							
<u>Technical Assistance</u>	Phone	22	84.6	23	79.3	45	81.8
	Visit	3	11.5	4	13.8	7	12.7
	Manual	<u>1</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6.9</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5.5</u>
	Total	26	*99.9	29	100.0	55	100.0

*Total valid % < 100 due to rounding error

Table 5 shows that 45 supervisors reported they had phone assistance, whereas 7 reported that consultants came into the local school districts from the state department and 3 said that the state department of education provided assessment manuals.

The effectiveness of the technical assistance available from the state departments of education from Tennessee and Georgia are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Effectiveness of Assistance Provided by the State Departments of Education by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>State Department</u>							
<u>Technical Assistance</u>	Extremely Effective	9	11.3	4	4.1	13	7.3
	Effective	55	68.8	80	82.5	135	76.3
	Ineffective	<u>16</u>	<u>20.0</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13.4</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>16.4</u>
	Total	80	*100.1	97	100.0	177	100.0

*Total valid % > 100 due to rounding error

One hundred forty-eight supervisors rated the assistance from the state department as effective or extremely effective. Only 29 (16.4%) of the school supervisors described the assistance from the state department as ineffective. No one reported that this type of assistance was very ineffective.

In 1997, funding for IDEA was reauthorized. A part of that reauthorization was a mandate that all public school districts conduct FBAs on students who cause disruptive behaviors. Table 7 shows the type of training offered assessment personnel by state.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Training Offered Assessment Personnel by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>State Department</u> <u>Offered Training</u>	Yes	43	39.8	69	56.1	112	48.5
	No	46	42.6	42	34.1	88	38.1
	Uncertain	19	17.6	12	9.8	31	13.4
	Total	<u>108</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>231</u>	<u>100.0</u>
<u>District Conducted</u> <u>Training</u>	Yes	71	65.7	84	69.4	155	67.7
	No	32	29.6	35	28.9	67	29.3
	Uncertain	<u>5</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3.1</u>
	Total	<u>108</u>	<u>**99.9</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>229</u>	<u>*100.1</u>
<u>University Conducted</u> <u>Training</u>	Yes	26	24.3	14	11.6	40	17.5
	No	69	64.5	74	61.2	143	62.7
	Uncertain	<u>12</u>	<u>11.2</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>27.3</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>19.7</u>
	Total	<u>107</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>*100.1</u>	<u>228</u>	<u>**99.9</u>
<u>Private Consultant</u> <u>Training</u>	Yes	18	17.0	26	21.8	44	19.6
	No	77	72.6	79	66.4	156	69.3
	Uncertain	<u>11</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11.8</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>11.1</u>
	Total	<u>106</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>225</u>	<u>100.0</u>
<u>Training Through Other</u> <u>Sources</u>	Yes	18	17.0	31	25.8	49	21.7
	No	72	67.9	67	55.8	139	61.5
	Uncertain	<u>16</u>	<u>15.1</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>18.3</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>16.8</u>
	Total	<u>106</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>**99.99</u>	<u>226</u>	<u>100.0</u>
<u>Training Mandated By</u> <u>LEA</u>	Yes	35	34.0	36	30.5	71	32.1
	No	58	56.3	76	64.4	134	60.6
	Uncertain	<u>10</u>	<u>9.7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5.1</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>7.2</u>
	Total	<u>103</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>118</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>221</u>	<u>100.0</u>

*Total valid % > 100 due to rounding error

**Total valid % < 100 due to rounding error

As shown in the table, 34% of Tennessee school districts and 30.5 % of Georgia school districts mandate FBA training for personnel who conduct these assessments. More than half (56.1%) of the Georgia supervisors reported that their state department of education did offer training, compared to Tennessee’s 39.8%. Almost one in five supervisors (17.6%) in Tennessee reported that they were uncertain if the state department offered any type of training.

The survey indicated that most of the FBA training is provided by the local school district (67.7%). Even though university training was the lowest of any reported (17.5%), 24.3% of Tennessee’s special education supervisors reported that university training had been offered compared to 11.6% in Georgia. It should be noted that almost one third (27.3%) of Georgia’s supervisors were uncertain whether this training was offered in their state. One in five (19.6%) school districts used private consultants to provide training for their assessment personnel. One in five (21.7%) used some other means of training for their assessment staff.

Table 8 contains the data on the effectiveness of the training that are offered assessment personnel by state.

Table 8
Frequency Distribution of Effectiveness of Training for Conducting Functional Behavioral Assessments by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>State Department Training</u>	Extremely Effective	6	15.4	3	4.6	9	8.7
	Effective	30	76.9	54	83.1	84	80.8
	Ineffective	2	5.1	7	10.8	9	8.7
	Very Ineffective	1	2.6	1	1.5	2	1.9
	Total	39	100.0	65	100.0	104	*100.1

Table 8 (continued)

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>District Training</u>	Extremely Effective	11	16.2	4	5.1	15	10.3
	Effective	53	77.9	67	85.9	120	82.2
	Ineffective	4	5.9	7	9.0	11	7.5
	Total	68	100.0	78	100.0	146	100.0
<u>University Training</u>	Extremely Effective	8	33.3	1	10.0	9	26.5
	Effective	15	62.5	8	80.0	23	67.6
	Ineffective	1	4.2	1	10.0	2	5.9
	Total	24	100.0	10	100.0	34	100.0
<u>Private Consultant Training</u>	Extremely Effective	1	6.3	2	8.3	3	7.5
	Effective	14	87.5	19	79.2	33	82.5
	Ineffective	1	6.3	2	8.3	3	7.5
	Very Ineffective	0	0	1	4.2	1	2.5
	Total	16	*100.1	24	100.0	40	100.0
<u>Other Training</u>	Extremely Effective	0	0	17	58.6	17	38.6
	Effective	15	100.0	11	37.9	26	59.1
	Ineffective	0	0	1	3.4	1	2.3
	Total	15	100.0	29	**99.9	44	100.0

*Total valid % > 100 due to rounding error

Of the five types of training identified in this study, district training (67.7%) was the most frequent type of training for assessment personnel. Table 8 shows that 146 systems used district training, but only 10.3% of the school supervisors reflected that this type of training was extremely effective. The second most frequently used training was offered by the state department of education.

More than half (58.6%) of Georgia's supervisors reported that "Other Training" was extremely effective compared to Tennessee's 0%. Only 34 supervisors said that they had used

university training for their assessment personnel. However, 94.1% noted this type of training was effective or extremely effective. Twenty-four of Tennessee’s systems used this type of training compared to 10 from Georgia.

Table 9 shows the length of training by state that was provided to assessment personnel who conduct FBAs.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of the Length of Training Provided Assessment Personnel Who Conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Length of State Training</u>	1 - 2 Days	9	75.0	20	80.0	29	78.4
	3 - 5 Days	2	16.7	4	16.0	6	16.2
	< 6 Days	<u>1</u>	<u>8.3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.4</u>
	Total	12	100.0	25	100.0	37	100.0
<u>Length of District Training</u>	1 - 2 Days	11	100.0	17	89.5	28	93.3
	3 - 5 Days	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>10.5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6.7</u>
	Total	11	100.0	19	100.0	30	100.0
<u>Length of University Training</u>	1 - 2 Days	2	33.3	4	50.0	6	42.9
	3 - 5 Days	<u>4</u>	<u>66.7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>50.0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>57.1</u>
	Total	6	100.0	8	100.0	14	100.0

Of the 81 supervisors responding to the survey question, Table 9 shows that 63 said that 1-2 days was the most frequent length of training. Forty-one from Georgia and 22 from Tennessee listed this as the most frequent length of training for their assessment personnel. Only two supervisors, one from Tennessee and one from Georgia, train their staff more than five days.

The targeted audience for assessment training is displayed in Table 10. Nine different groups are listed by the frequency in which they are trained and by state.

Table 10

Frequency Distribution of Who is Targeted for Training within School Systems by State

	<u>Tennessee</u>	<u>Georgia</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ancillary Teachers	42	47	89
Psychologists	45	58	103
Administrators	27	31	58
SPED Teachers	64	82	146
Parents	11	4	15
Guidance Counselors	22	19	41
Regular Education Teachers	23	21	44
Diagnosticians/Social	3	0	3
Workers	0	0	0

Special education teachers are the most targeted group within the school system for FBA training. Table 10 shows that of the supervisors responding, 146 seek out training for this group of teachers. The school psychologist was the second highest trained group (103). Fifteen supervisors reported that they had focused training on parents, whereas only three reported training for diagnosticians/social workers.

Research Question # 3

Who conducts FBAs in school districts and how effective are they in conducting these assessments?

This research question focused on the personnel who conduct assessments in the public school systems and their effectiveness. A frequency distribution of the effectiveness of assessment personnel is shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Frequency Distribution of How Effective Assessment Personnel are in Conducting Assessments by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>SPED Teachers</u>	Extremely Effective	23	24.2	22	20.8	45	22.4
	Effective	68	71.6	72	67.9	140	69.7
	Ineffective	4	4.2	11	10.4	15	7.5
	Very Ineffective	0	0	1	.9	1	.5
	Total	95	100.0	106	100.0	201	*100.1
<u>School Psychologist</u>	Extremely Effective	34	47.2	36	39.1	70	42.7
	Effective	38	52.8	52	56.5	90	54.9
	Ineffective	0	0	2	2.2	2	1.2
	Very Ineffective	0	0	2	2.2	2	1.2
	Total	72	100.0	92	100.0	164	100.0
<u>Administrators</u>	Extremely Effective	10	17.5	9	13.6	19	15.4
	Effective	36	63.2	42	63.6	78	63.4
	Ineffective	10	17.5	14	21.2	24	19.5
	Very Ineffective	1	1.8	1	1.5	2	1.6
	Total	57	100.0	66	**99.9	123	**99.9

Table 11 (continued)

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Regular Education Teacher</u>	Extremely Effective	9	13.8	3	5.2	12	9.8
	Effective	37	56.9	41	70.7	78	63.4
	Ineffective	15	23.1	13	22.4	28	22.8
	Very Ineffective	4	6.2	1	1.7	5	4.1
	Total	65	100.0	58	100.0	123	*100.1
<u>Guidance Personnel</u>	Extremely Effective	7	14.6	3	6.8	10	10.9
	Effective	24	50.0	28	63.6	52	56.5
	Ineffective	13	27.1	12	27.3	25	27.2
	Very Ineffective	4	8.3	1	2.3	5	5.4
	Total	48	100.0	44	100.0	92	100.0
<u>Consultants</u>	Extremely Effective	13	35.1	9	31.0	22	33.3
	Effective	16	43.2	16	55.2	32	48.5
	Ineffective	6	16.2	4	13.8	10	15.2
	Very Ineffective	2	5.4	0	0	2	3.0
	Total	37	**99.9	29	100.0	66	100.0
<u>Parents</u>	Extremely Effective	7	11.7	6	12.2	13	11.9
	Effective	43	71.7	32	65.3	75	68.8
	Ineffective	8	13.3	11	22.4	19	17.4
	Very Ineffective	2	3.3	0	0	2	1.8
	Total	60	100.0	49	**99.9	109	**99.9
<u>IEP Team</u>	Extremely Effective	14	22.2	17	23.9	31	23.1
	Effective	46	73.0	52	73.2	98	73.1
	Ineffective	2	3.2	2	2.8	4	3.0
	Very Ineffective	1	1.6	0	0	1	.7
	Total	63	100.0	71	**99.9	134	**99.9
<u>Behavior Specialist</u>	Extremely Effective	23	46.9	22	46.8	45	46.9
	Effective	25	51.0	23	48.9	48	50.0
	Ineffective	1	2.0	2	4.3	3	3.1
	Total	49	**99.9	47	100.0	96	100.0

Table 11 (continued)

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Related Service Personnel</u>	Extremely Effective	4	17.4	6	18.8	10	18.2
	Effective	11	47.8	22	68.8	33	60.0
	Ineffective	5	21.7	4	12.5	9	16.4
	Very Ineffective	<u>3</u>	<u>13.0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5.5</u>
	Total	23	**99.9	32	*100.1	55	*100.1
<u>Other</u>	Effective	2	100.0	1	100.0	3	100.0
	Total	<u>2</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.0</u>

*Total valid % > 100 due to rounding error

**Total valid % < 100 due to rounding error

One hundred sixty supervisors reported that school psychologists were effective or extremely effective 97.6% of the time when conducting assessments. Behavior specialists were effective or extremely effective 96.9% followed by IEP teams (96.2%), and special education teachers (92%). The most ineffective group was guidance personnel (32.6%) and regular education teachers (26.9%).

The most involved group of assessment personnel was the special education teacher group. Of the 201 supervisors who responded, 95 from Tennessee and 106 from Georgia, reported that these teachers were involved in the assessments. Seventy-two supervisors from Tennessee and 92 supervisors from Georgia said that they used school psychologists in their assessments. Only three supervisors (two from Tennessee and one from Georgia) used “Other” personnel in conducting assessments.

Research Question # 4

Is release time provided to district personnel to participate in staff development on conducting FBAs? If so, how is this time provided and how effective is it?

One of the biggest obstacles that special education supervisors face in conducting assessments is how to provide release time for district personnel to effectively assess students. This should be done in the student's natural environment, which is the school setting during school hours. Table 12 presents how school systems in Tennessee and Georgia provide this time for their assessment personnel.

Table 12

Frequency Distribution of Release Time Provided Assessment Personnel Who Conduct Assessments by State

			<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
			<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
Release Time	Provided	Yes	68	69.1	75	68.5	143	68.8
		No	27	27.8	34	30.6	61	29.3
		Uncertain	<u>3</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.9</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1.9</u>
		Total	98	100.0	111	100.0	209	100.0

One hundred forty-three of the 209 school supervisors responding to this survey question reported that release time is provided assessment personnel to conduct FBAs. Table 12 shows that 68 supervisors in Tennessee and 75 supervisors in Georgia do allow personnel release time to conduct assessments. Sixty-one supervisors in both states do not provide release time whereas four were uncertain.

Table 13 shows the number of systems that use substitutes, comp time, assistants, and other ways to provide release time to assessment personnel. The data are displayed by the state in which the individuals worked.

Table 13

Frequency Distribution of how Effective Release Time is Provided Assessment Personnel by State

		<u>Tennessee</u>		<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Substitutes Used to Cover for Teachers</u>	Extremely Effective	13	27.7	18	31.0	31	29.5
	Effective	32	68.1	39	67.2	71	67.6
	Ineffective	<u>2</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2.9</u>
	Total	47	*100.1	58	**99.9	105	100.0
<u>Comp Time Given Teachers</u>	Extremely Effective	3	13.0	3	33.3	6	18.8
	Effective	15	65.2	6	66.7	21	65.6
	Ineffective	4	17.4	0	0	4	12.5
	Very Ineffective	<u>1</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3.1</u>
	Total	23	**99.9	9	100.0	32	100.0
<u>Assistants Used to Cover Classrooms</u>	Extremely Effective	6	15.4	9	28.1	15	21.1
	Effective	25	64.1	22	68.8	47	66.2
	Ineffective	7	17.9	1	3.1	8	11.3
	Very Ineffective	<u>1</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1.4</u>
	Total	39	100.0	32	100.0	71	100.0
<u>Other</u>	Extremely Effective	1	50.0	0	0	1	50.0
	Effective	<u>1</u>	<u>50.0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>50.0</u>
	Total	2	100.0	0	0	2	100.0

*Total valid % > 100 due to rounding error

**Total valid % < 100 due to rounding error

As shown in Table 13, of the systems that do allow release time, 47 supervisors from Tennessee and 58 from Georgia use substitutes to cover for teachers while assessments are conducted. The supervisors also reported that this method was effective or extremely effective 97.1% of the time. Twenty-three supervisors from Tennessee and nine supervisors from Georgia gave comp time to teachers for conducting FBAs. Assistants were used to cover classrooms in 71 systems and were effective or extremely effective 87.3% of the time.

Research Question # 5

Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by school districts?

In the course of the study, three training variables were identified: training offered by the state department of education, training offered by the local school districts, and training offered by universities. Three null hypotheses emerged from research question #5 for analysis.

Ho5₁: There is no significant difference in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training from the state department of education.

Ho5₂: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the local school districts.

Ho5₃: There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training offered by universities.

To compare differences in the types of training, independent sample t-tests were used to test the three hypotheses. The hypothesis tests are presented in Table 14. Table 14 shows a comparison of Best Practices by the extent of training offered by the State Department of Education, local school systems, and universities.

Table 14

Comparison of the Use of Best Practices by the Extent of Training Offered by the State Departments of Education, Local School Districts, and Universities in Tennessee and Georgia

		<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
State Department of Education Training	1-2 Days	29	9.59	2.92	1.25	.243
	3 or More Days	8	7.38	4.75		
Training Offered by Local School Districts	1-2 Days	28	8.75	3.74	.451	.656
	3 or More Days	2	7.50	4.95		
Training Offered by Universities	1-2 Days	6	8.83	4.40	.806	.436
	3 or More Days	8	6.63	5.50		

As shown in the table, there was a difference in the means scores of state department training (9.59 vs. 7.38), but they were not significantly different. This failure to find a significant difference may have been due to the low power of the statistical test caused by the small number in the group who used three or more days of training ($p = .243$). Null hypothesis H_{05_1} was retained. The state department of education training of 1 to 2 days scored an average of 9.59 compared to 7.38 to 3 or more days of training and a t-value of 1.25.

Table 14 also shows a comparison of extent of training offered by the local school district. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the supervisors whose systems offered training for assessment personnel by the local school districts ($p = .656$). Null hypothesis H_{05_2} was retained. The average score of supervisors using 1-2 days of training was 8.75 compared to 7.50 for those who used 3 or more days of training and a t-value of .451.

Table 14 shows that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of school supervisors in school districts that used universities to conduct training for assessment personnel ($p = .436$). The null hypothesis was retained. The t -value was .806 and the average score of supervisors using 1-2 days of training was 8.83 compared to 6.63 for those who used 3 or more days of training. Because of the small number offering this type of training, the difference could have happened by chance. Low statistical power was also a factor in this test.

Research Question # 6

Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by the states involved in the study?

H_{o6_1} : There is no significant difference in the use of best practice in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training provided by the state in which they work.

The analysis associated with this hypothesis is given in Table 15.

Table 15

Comparison of the Use of Best Practices in Conducting Assessments by State

<u>Use of Best Practices</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Tennessee	108	8.09	3.70	2.09	.037
Georgia	123	7.02	4.00		

Table 15 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores on the use of best practices in conducting assessments based on the amount of training provided in the different states ($p = .037$). Supervisors reported that assessments conducted in Tennessee

included two more of the best practice methods than those reported in Georgia. The null hypothesis was rejected. The mean score for assessment personnel in Tennessee was 8.09 compared with 7.02 in Georgia.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to determine the types and effectiveness of FBA procedures and staff development activities used in public school districts for assessment personnel who conduct these assessments. The researcher also attempted to determine if there were differences in the use of best practices and the amount of training provided assessment personnel by local school districts, the state departments of education, and universities located in the two states involved in the survey.

A survey instrument was developed and mailed in March 2002 to special education supervisors in 317 public schools in Tennessee and Georgia. A duplicate survey was mailed three weeks after the original mailing to increase the return rate of the surveys. Two hundred thirty-one surveys (72.8%) from school supervisors were returned after both mailings. School districts' supervisors responded from all regions of both states. The supervisor from the largest school district responding to the survey had an enrollment of 114,000 students, while the smallest school district's supervisor reported an enrollment of only 200 students.

The survey instrument used in the study was developed to obtain information concerning the research questions posed in chapter 1. Data from the three page questionnaire (see Appendix C) were analyzed using an SPSS version 10.0 computer program and were presented in chapter 4. Frequency tables were used to provide answers to the descriptive research questions (Questions 1-4). Independent sample t-tests were used to identify significant differences associated with research questions 5 and 6. These comparisons included the amount of training offered by the

state departments of education, local school districts, and universities within each state. A t-test for independent means was also used to determine if the use of best practices varied by state.

Research Question # 1

What types of assessment procedures are used in school systems to assess students who exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviors, and how effective are these procedures?

Of the supervisors surveyed, 72% reported they have in place procedures that assessment personnel follow when conducting FBAs. However, it should be noted that six supervisors were uncertain whether procedures were in place in their systems to conduct these assessments.

Carr (2000) suggested that most assessments should involve the direct observation of the student. This study found that this was the method most used by assessment personnel who conduct FBAs. According to the supervisors involved in the survey, this method was extremely effective (18.1%) of the time that it was used in the assessment process. Manipulating the environment of the student was the least used method of assessment. Only 156 supervisors used this method. However, it was reported as effective or extremely effective 87.2% of the time. Even though it was used less, supervisors noted that it was more (84.4%) effective than hypothesis testing. All other assessment methods were similarly used with the exception of hypothesis testing. Tennessee's supervisors used hypothesis testing 10.5% more than Georgia's supervisors did. This finding represented the widest range of any method used between the two states.

Research Question # 2

What programs and staff development activities are provided staff to train them in conducting FBAs and how effective are these activities?

Frequencies were used to show the extent to which technical assistance was offered assessment personnel and the types of assistance offered. Two hundred twenty-nine supervisors responded to this question. One hundred eighty-seven supervisors (86 in Tennessee and 101 in Georgia) reported that FBA assistance was offered by the state department of education in their respective states. Sixteen said that no technical assistance was available and 26 were unsure if there was any assistance available from this source. Assistance provided over the telephone was the most widely used type of assistance (81.8%) with visits from the state department the second most used type of assistance. It was interesting to note that only 13 of the supervisors noted technical assistance from the state department of education was extremely effective and 80 thought that their assistance was effective.

Again, frequencies were used to compare the types of training offered assessment personnel and the effectiveness of this training. It should be noted that less than one third of the school supervisors (32.1%) mandate training for assessment personnel even though federal law requires that these assessments be conducted (Federal Regulations, 1997). Forty-eight percent of the district supervisors in both states said that training for conducting assessments was offered by the state departments of education. One hundred fifty-five districts (67.7%) offered training at the local level. Even though LEA training was the most frequently used method, only 10.3% reported that it was extremely effective. Forty supervisors said that they used universities and 44 said consultants were used to conduct training for their personnel. One third of Tennessee's supervisors who had used universities to train their personnel noted the training was extremely effective. Only one supervisor in Georgia reported that university training was available to him or her.

The vast majority of training offered to assessment personnel in both states was less than 3 days. Of those responding to these questions, 63 said that the length of their training was 2 days or less. Sixteen supervisors provided 3 to 5 days of training and 2 provided more than 5 days.

Special education teachers (146) and psychologists (103) received the most training, while only 3 supervisors trained Diagnosticians/social workers.

Research Question # 3

Who conducts FBAs in school districts and how effective are they in conducting these assessments?

Students often exhibit behaviors in one type of environment and not in another. Therefore, input about a student's behavior should be sought from different people in varied settings at different times and in natural environments (Meyer et al., 1999). The natural environment in which the student actually engages in unwanted behaviors allows the best chance for a change in those behaviors to occur. The teacher who works directly with the student on a daily basis has the best chance of making a change in a student's behavior (Nichols, 2000). Because most FBAs are conducted on special education students, special education teachers are usually involved in the assessment.

In this study, special education teachers were the most targeted group for assessment training. However, they were felt to be less effective than psychologists, behavior specialists, and IEP teams. Regular education teachers and guidance personnel were all used in conducting FBAs; however, these two groups were reported to be the least effective groups involved in the assessment process. Gable et al. (1999) suggested that parents be involved in the assessment process. In this study, parents were involved in the FBA process in 109 school systems, but received training in only 15 of those systems. Parents were reported to be effective or extremely effective 80.8% of the time. Sixty-six supervisors used consultants and 55 used related service personnel to conduct assessments.

Research Question # 4

Is release time provided to district personnel to participate in staff development on conducting FBAs? If so, how is this time provided and how effective is it?

Of the 209 school supervisors responding to this question, 143 said that they do provide some type of release time for assessment personnel to conduct FBAs. Respondents from Tennessee (69.1%) and Georgia (67.6%) were very similar in providing release time. Three supervisors from Tennessee districts and one supervisor from a Georgia district were uncertain whether personnel were given release time to conduct their assessments. Of the supervisors who allow release time for assessment personnel, 50% used substitutes to cover for personnel while they were conducting assessments. One-third of the supervisors used teaching assistants, followed by comp time given (15%). Two Tennessee supervisors used other means to cover for staff conducting assessments.

Research Question # 5

Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by school districts?

The data appeared to show that there was a difference in the use of Best Practices and training offered by the State Departments of Education, local school systems, and universities in Tennessee and Georgia. However, when independent sample t-tests were run on the data, they showed that this difference was not statistically significant. The number of respondents in the more than 2-day group was very small in all three groups. This low number could have caused the difference in the mean scores to happen by chance. The null hypotheses were retained in all three groups.

Research Question # 6

Are there differences in the use of best practices in conducting FBAs based on the amount of training and support provided by the states involved in the study?

Ten methods were identified that might be included in a FBA. They were: (a) reviewing student records; (b) using checklists; (c) interviewing parents, students, and supervisors; (d) conducting direct observations of the student; (e) developing a hypothesis; (f) manipulating the environment of the student; and (g) developing a behavior improvement plan for the student. An Independent Samples t-test was used to show if the use of best practices was different between Tennessee and Georgia based on training provided by the state in which the assessment personnel work. An analysis of the mean scores showed that assessment personnel in Tennessee used significantly more of the assessment methods when conducting assessments than Georgia's assessment personnel used.

Conclusions

Based on an analysis of the findings from this study the following conclusions are offered:

1. Special education supervisors are aware of but not fully meeting the mandate provided in IDEA 97 that school systems are to conduct FBA's on students who exhibit disruptive behaviors in the public school setting.

Every supervisor who responded to the survey (231) indicated that he or she was conducting FBA's on students who exhibited disruptive behaviors within his or her school system. As suggested by Carr (2000), some type of direct or indirect researched based method of assessment was used in conducting these assessments. However, they are not fully implementing all the provisions of the mandate that was handed down by Congress in 1997. Even though all systems were conducting these assessments, 25% were not including behavior improvement plans as part of their assessments, which is required in this mandate. Therefore, they are out of

compliance with the mandate and this leaves them in a vulnerable position if challenged in a due process hearing or a court of law.

2. Functional behavioral assessments can be an effective tool to bring about change in the unwanted behaviors of students if properly conducted by assessment personnel.

School systems' use of researched based assessment methods were rated effective or very effective in changing unwanted behaviors 80% of the time that they were used in the assessment process. This was a very high rate since more than 30% of the systems did not develop a hypothesis which is an essential step in conducting the assessment after interviews with parents, students, teachers and reviewing educational and medical records of the student (Sugai et al., 1998). Fox et al. (2000) also suggested that hypothesis statements should be developed and direct observations should be conducted to test them in the assessment process.

3. Personnel who conduct FBA's within the school system may not be trained in the proper techniques of conducting assessments.

All teachers, especially regular education teachers, are asked to deal with disruptive students in their classrooms even though many of them have not had any type of training and are very limited in their repertoire of methods to deal with disruptive students (Vaughn et al., 1998). Universities and public school systems need to work together to see that all teachers graduating from teacher training programs are properly trained to deal with students with disruptive behaviors. All supervisors who responded to this study reported that they conducted assessments; however, less than one third mandated training for their assessment personnel. How can the expected outcome of a FBA be positive when the personnel who are assessing the student lacks training in the assessment process?

4. Tennessee and Georgia's assessment personnel differ in their use of research based assessment methods.

Functional behavioral assessments should always be individualized for each student. A “one size fits all” approach should never be used when conducting assessments. However, there are researched based methods that should be considered in all assessments (Carr, 2000).

Assessment personnel in Tennessee used more of these methods than did their counterparts in Georgia. Training for these personnel was very similar in every area except training provided by universities. In Tennessee, school systems used university training more than twice as much as used in Georgia. This type of training was also rated the most effective type of training that was offered in school districts in either state. This was the only factor identified that could have influenced this difference.

5. Conducting functional behavioral assessments is a team process.

This seems to be the way that assessments are conducted in the two states involved in this study. No school system used only one person to conduct the assessment, nor did any system use all available personnel on every assessment. Special education teachers were generally always involved in the assessment process. Perhaps that is because these students seem to find their way into some type of special education class. Others involved in the assessment process included, in order of frequency, school psychologists, regular education teachers, and school administrators. The use of different individuals in the assessment process allows a more comprehensive assessment and they should obtain results that are more reliable.

Recommendations for the Improvement of Practice

After analyzing the data in Chapter 4, the following recommendations are presented for the improvement of the practice in conducting FBAs:

1. Every FBA should include a behavior improvement plan with stated goals and objectives that address the unwanted behavior of the student.

Inclusion of a behavior improvement plan with stated goals and objectives is an integral part of the assessment process and also part of the mandate of IDEA 97 (Fisher, 1998). The data showed that 25% of the supervisors from responding school systems did not include a behavior improvement plan with every FBA. This may be happening because of all the paperwork that educators are required to fill out on students who have specialized needs. Another reason might be that they are just too busy to follow and document a formal plan. Inclusion of the behavior improvement plan in the assessment process will give educators appropriate steps to follow to curb students' unwanted behaviors. The assessment without this plan will be ineffective at best.

2. School supervisors should seek out training for their assessment personnel from universities.

Training offered by universities was seen as the most effective type of training obtainable to assessment personnel in both states involved in this study. It was also the least used type of training. Twice as many supervisors from school districts in Tennessee used this type of training than did those in Georgia. This may be because Tennessee has an initiative, the Make a Difference Project, to train school districts in how to conduct appropriate FBAs (Vaughn et al., 1998). Georgia does not have this type of arrangement with universities. Training for educators in Georgia is provided by the Georgia Learning Resources System. Seventeen sites are strategically located throughout the state of Georgia so that no parent or educator is more than 50 miles from one of these locations. Two professionals and one clerk are located at each site to provide training and support for parents and educators (Georgia Learning Resources System, 2002). It may be that there are simply not enough universities offering this type of training to meet the needs of school districts. In addition, university-based training typically involves an extensive commitment of time. In either case, supervisors should take advantage of every opportunity that is available to provide the most effective training for their assessment personnel.

3. Psychologists should be an integral part of the assessment process.

The data from the study showed school psychologists were the most effective group in assessing students when conducting FBAs. Perhaps this was because of the college training that they had in evaluating and observing students. If educators are to be effective, they must not only use the best tools available for assessing students, but must use the most effective personnel when conducting assessments.

4. Parents must be involved in the assessment process.

Parents were seen in the study to be a very effective group in the assessment process. However, they were being underutilized or not used at all by some school systems. The FBA process must be a team process and parents must be part of that team. They should not only be a part of the assessment process, but should be included in implementing the written plan for changing the behavior of their children. Behaviors are not isolated; many of the same behaviors occur at school and at home.

5. The natural environment of the student should be assessed to determine if changes in the environment affect students' behavior.

The assessment process should not focus only on the individual student. Everything in the environment could affect the student at some point in his or her life. This includes the home, parental situation, and the school itself. Assessment personnel should include these recommendations if they are noted to be a factor in the student's behavior. The classroom environment seems to be the easiest factor to change, but is seldom looked at as an antecedent to a behavior that a student is exhibiting. Educators must not be afraid to look at themselves and their classrooms as potential causes of students' unwanted behaviors.

Recommendations for Further Research

Behavior issues in our public schools have always been and will continue to be a concern for educators. Disruptive student behavior has become the number one issue facing educators today (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Educators are constantly looking for effective ways to deal with these issues because of the instructional time that is lost in dealing with these problems (Cotton, 1990).

Properly conducted assessments can be effective in curtailing behavior that is not acceptable in today's schools. Therefore, I offer the following recommendations for further research:

1. This study could be replicated in other states in different regions of the country. This would allow for expanded demographics and socioeconomic status in the population surveyed.
2. A larger population of supervisors could be targeted to increase the level of confidence in the results of the study and might prove to be a more accurate picture of assessment practices.
3. Future studies might include supervisors' attitudes toward unfunded mandates that are handed down by Congress--mandates that they are held accountable for and expected to implement.
4. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to compare assessment procedures used over periods and the effectiveness of such procedures in reducing disruptive behaviors in our public schools.
5. Personnel who conduct FBAs should be included in further research to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the different assessment methods.
6. Face-to-face interviews with supervisors should be held to allow for more in-depth questions and responses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

(Initial) Functional Behavioral Assessment Survey

Instructions: Please answer each question as it pertains to your school system.

<p>1. Does the state department of education provide technical assistance on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate the effectiveness of the technical assistance and check the type of Assistance:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>	<p>2. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered by the state department. of education?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness and check the intensity of the training:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>
<p>3. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered by the local school district?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness and check the intensity of the training:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>	<p>4. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered through a university?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>
<p>5. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered through private consultants?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>	<p>6. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered through other sources?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please specify the source and evaluate its effectiveness: _____:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>
<p>7. Is this training mandated by your Local Educational Agency for assessment personnel?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p>	<p>8. Has your school district adopted procedures for conducting functional behavior assessments?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p>

If you answered "Yes" on Question #8, please rate the effectiveness of each procedure:

Direct assess.	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Indirect assess.	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
State developed forms used	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Commercial forms used	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
School district forms used	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective

Please check methods used in your assessments and rate their effectiveness:

Records review	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Checklists	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview student	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Direct observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Checklists	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Develop Hypothesis	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Environmental Manipulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Develop BIP	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective

9. Does your school district provide training and staff development activities for personnel conducting functional behavior assessments?

Yes No Uncertain

If "Yes" please indicate the types of training and rate their effectiveness

Workshops	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Inservice/staff development activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Release time to visit with other schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective

APPENDIX B

External Evaluators' Qualifications

1. Evaluators have experience teaching special education students in the public school system.
2. Evaluators are certified special education teachers.
3. Evaluators have knowledge of and have attended training sessions on how to conduct functional behavior assessments.
4. Evaluators have participated in assessing students in the public school setting.
5. Evaluators are currently involved in conducting assessments within the public school setting.

APPENDIX C

(Final) Functional Behavioral Assessment Survey

Instructions: Please answer each question as it pertains to your school system.

<p>1. Does the state department of education provide technical assistance on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate the effectiveness of the technical assistance and check the type of Assistance:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective ___Phone ___Visitation ___Manuals</p>	<p>2. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered by the state department. of education?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness and check the intensity of the training:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective ___1-2 days ___3-5 days ___6 or more</p>
<p>3. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered by the local school district?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness and check the intensity of the training:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective ___1-2 days ___3-5 days ___6 or more</p>	<p>4. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered through a university?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective ___1-2 days ___3-5 days ___6 or more</p>
<p>5. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered through private consultants?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please rate its effectiveness:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>	<p>6. Has district wide training on how to conduct functional behavioral assessments been offered through other sources?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p> <p>If "Yes" please specify the source and evaluate its effectiveness: _____:</p> <p>___Extremely Effective ___Effective ___Ineffective ___Very Ineffective</p>
<p>7. Is this training mandated by your Local Educational Agency for assessment personnel?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p>	<p>8. Has your school district adopted procedures for conducting functional behavior assessments?</p> <p>___Yes ___No ___Uncertain</p>

If you answered "Yes" on Question #8, please rate the effectiveness of each procedure:

Direct assess.	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Indirect assess.	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
State developed forms used	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Commercial forms used	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
School district forms used	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective

Please check methods used in your assessments and rate their effectiveness:

Records review	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Checklists	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview student	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Interview Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Direct observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Checklists	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Develop Hypothesis	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Environmental Manipulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Develop BIP	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective

9. Does your school district provide training and staff development activities for personnel conducting functional behavior assessments?

Yes No Uncertain

If "Yes" please indicate the types of training and rate their effectiveness

Workshops	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Inservice/staff development activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Release time to visit with other schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective

If "Yes" who is the target audience for this training? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychologists | <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance counselors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators | <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Education Teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

10. Is release time provided personnel for training on conducting assessments?

- Yes No Uncertain

If "Yes" please rate the effectiveness of each method used.

- | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Substitutes are hired to cover for teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Comp time is given | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Assistants are used to cover for teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |

11. Which district personnel are involved with conducting functional behavior assessments and rate their effectiveness in being able to carry out assessment responsibilities.

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Sp. Ed. Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| School psy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Gen. Ed. teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Consultants | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| IEP teams | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Behavior spec. | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Related service Personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |
| Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective | <input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Ineffective |

12. What recommendations do you have to improve training and support of personnel conducting behavioral assessments?

13. What recommendations do you have to ensure assessment personnel use best practices in conducting assessments?

APPENDIX D

Survey Letter to Supervisors

Dear Colleague:

My name is Dana Winningham; I am the special education supervisor in the Cumberland County School System in Crossville, Tennessee. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program at East Tennessee State University. For my dissertation, I have chosen to conduct a survey of special education supervisors throughout the states of Tennessee and Georgia to determine types of functional behavior assessments in use, types of training being provided personnel conducting these assessments, and who conducts assessments in your school system.

I am asking that you take from 10 to 15 minutes of your time to complete the enclosed survey and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Also, included is an informed consent form that is required by my university. You will not have to return the informed consent with the survey, it is for information purposes only. The number on the survey instrument is merely to insure that you will not receive unnecessary follow-up correspondence and it will not be used to identify any of your responses. I assure you that the answers that you provide will remain confidential, with only the combined results from all the surveys returned being reported. If you would like a copy of the results of the survey, provide me with your e-mail address and a copy will be sent to you upon completion of the study.

Thank you, in advance for your help in completing this survey.

Sincerely,

Dana Winningham
Supervisor of Special Education

APPENDIX E

East Tennessee State University INFORMED CONSENT

Principal Investigator: **Dana E. Winningham**

Page 1 of 2

Title of Project: An Analysis of Functional Behavior Assessments Used in Public Schools in Tennessee and Georgia

This Informed Consent will explain about a research project in which I would appreciate your participation. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to respond. By no means is there any pressure for you to participate in this research.

PURPOSE

The purposes of this research study are to survey public school systems throughout Tennessee and Georgia to determine the type of assessment procedures used in their school systems, the amount of training provided assessment personnel, support provided by school administrators for assessment personnel, and use of best practices for conducting behavioral assessments.

DURATION

Participants will be asked to complete a survey instrument that should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. An initial and follow-up survey instrument will be mailed to participants during the Spring of 2002.

PROCEDURES

The instrument to be used is a four-page survey instrument calling for participants to respond "Yes," "No," to ten of the fourteen questions. Respondents are asked to rate the effectiveness on each question that they answer "yes". The other four questions are designed to allow the respondents to place a check mark by pre-determined responses. The survey instrument will be mailed to all special education supervisors in Tennessee and Georgia. The instrument does not request the participants' name, but it does have an identifying number so a follow up survey may be mailed to all non-respondents. In no way would the identifying number be utilized to determine the identity of the participants.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

No risks or discomforts should be associated with this research, or is there any direct benefit or compensation to the volunteer participants. Any potential benefit to the participant would arise from that individual's reflection upon the items contained on the survey instrument and his or her personal reaction to those items. The benefit to the institution would be a better understanding of current practices of functional behavior assessments in use in Tennessee and Georgia. Benefits beyond the institution include the augmentation of the research base identifying types of assessment methods in use in Tennessee and Georgia.

Principal Investigator: Dana E. Winningham

Page 2 of 2

Title of Project: An Analysis of Functional Behavior assessments Used in Public Schools in Tennessee and Georgia

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, problems, or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Dana E. Winningham at (931) 456-5401. You may also call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at (423) 439-6134 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that my study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Department for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the East Tennessee State University/V.A. Medical Center Institutional Review Board, the Food and Drug Administration, and the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury which may happen as a result of your being in this study. They will not pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 9-8-307. For more information about claims call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at (423) 439-6134.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The nature, demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me. Your study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

VITA

DANA WINNINGHAM

- Personal Data: Date of Birth: October 17, 1952
 Place of Birth: Crossville, Tennessee
- Education: Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee;
 Bachelor of Science in Education, 1975
 Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee;
 Master of Arts, 1975
 Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee;
 Specialist in Education, 1983
 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
 Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D., 2002
- Professional
Experience: Biology Teacher, Dyersburg City Schools, Dyersburg High School
 Dyersburg, Tennessee, 1975 - 1977
 Physical Education Teacher, Warren County Jr. High School,
 McMinnville, Tennessee, 1977 - 1978
 Biology Teacher, Cumberland County High School,
 Crossville, Tennessee, 1978 - 1980
 Assistant Principal, Cumberland County, Martin Jr. High School,
 Crossville, Tennessee, 1980 - 1982
 Principal, Cumberland County, Homestead Elementary School,
 Crossville, Tennessee, 1982 - 1992
 Supervisor of Special Education, Cumberland County Schools,
 Crossville, Tennessee, 1992 - present
- Honors and
Awards: Who's Who in American High Schools, 1970
 Who's Who in American Schools and Universities, 1974
 Robert Hill Johnson Award, 1973
 Tennessee Tech Athletic Hall of Fame, 1988