



"Functional Behavior Assessments"

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Parents of students who are demonstrating problematic behaviors in school can request that their local school district conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment ("FBA") to identify how these behaviors can be remediated in a positive manner. An FBA is an evaluative process for addressing problem behavior. It relies on a variety of measures to identify the purposes (or the function) of specific behavior and to aide the Individualized Education Plan ("IEP") team in developing interventions to directly address the problem behavior. In addition, FBAs are also required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") if the school is going to change the student's educational placement in order to address the behavior that led to the violation of student conduct so that it does not reoccur. This requirement is irrespective of whether the behavior is a manifestation of a student's disability.

Before an FBA can be conducted, it is necessary to identify the behavior causing learning or discipline problems, and to define that behavior in specific terms that are easy to communicate and simple to measure and record. For example, if Adam is not completing his class work because he is refusing to do the work, the behavior can be identified as, "Adam refuses to complete class work."

The next step is observe the student's behavior in a variety of different settings and during different types of activities, and to conduct interviews with school staff and parents, in order to pinpoint particular patterns of the behavior. Important considerations should be given to observing the student in both structured and unstructured time as well as times that the student does or does not exhibit the behavior. Therefore, an observation of Adam throughout the day may reveal that he does not complete his class work in English or Social Studies, but readily completes it in Math and Science. It may also reveal that Adam is experiencing disciplinary issues in English and Social Studies classes, but is a model student the remainder of the school day.

Once the IEP team has collected enough data, the next step is to analyze the information. This analysis determines the patterns associated with the behavior. For example, Adam is refusing to complete class work whenever it requires reading. If patterns cannot be determined, the team should revise the functional behavioral assessment to identify other methods for assessing behavior. Once the problem behavior has been evaluated, the IEP team can begin to devise a Behavior Management Plan to address the problem behaviors.

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