

Functional Behavioral Assessments

SPaN Workshop March 5, 2010

Functional behavioral assessment is generally considered to be a problem-solving process for addressing student problem behavior. It relies on a variety of techniques and strategies to identify the purposes of specific behavior and to help IEP teams select interventions to directly address the problem behavior.

The IDEA 2004 requires IEP teams to conduct a functional behavioral assessment and to implement behavioral intervention plans to address behaviors that interfere with learning. A team should explore the need for strategies and support systems to address behaviors that impede the learning of the child with a disability or the learning of his or her peers.

In addition, the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guides public school discipline practices related to three assumptions:

- All students, with and without disabilities, deserve to be educated in safe, well-disciplined schools, and orderly learning environments.
- School personnel should have effective techniques to prevent behavior problems and to deal positively with them if they occur.
- A balanced approach to discipline must exist in which the order and safety of schools is maintained, while also protecting the rights of students with disabilities to receive a free appropriate public education.

Functional assessment is a key aspect of the behavior intervention strategies mandated for IEPs by the 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of IDEA.

Please see the supplementary handout titled [IDEA 2004: Functional Behavioral Assessment – Fact Sheet](#) for a more in depth look at laws surrounding FBAs and BIPs.

DR. MARIELA VARGAS-IRWIN

Today's speaker will help us understand the purpose of an FBA, how one is conducted, share with us what a good FBA looks like, and give us information on how to use the information obtained through an FBA.

Dr. Vargas is a Licensed Psychologist and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She is also the Director of Applied Behavioral Learning Services at The Integrated Center for Child Development. The Integrated Center for Child Development (ICCD) is a multi-disciplinary center offering neuropsychological, behavioral, medical, and educational services to individuals with special needs.

Applied Behavioral Learning Services is the behavioral unit of ICCD. ABLS uses the techniques of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to develop data-based individualized programs to teach communication, social skills, and self-care skills, as well as higher level executive control skills.

Dr. Vargas obtained her doctoral degree from Rutgers University, completed her internship at Boston Children's Hospital, and pursued post-doctoral training at the Judge Baker Children's Center. She has over sixteen years of experience working with children with autism and other developmental disorders with behavioral challenges. Dr. Vargas has worked as a home-based behavioral therapist, overseen home-based programs, designed training protocols for ABA therapists and supervisors, and consulted with families and schools. Her interests include verbal behavior and the development of inclusionary programs for children.

Please welcome Dr. Mariela Vargas-Irwin.