A SURVEY OF NEW JERSEY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS REGARDING THE

MEASURES THEY USE TO ASSESS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is typically the primary function of school psychologists in order to determine students eligible for special education services. Furthermore, research has suggested that the use of assessment will not decrease in the future due to the laws that describe how disabilities are identified. Thus, it is important that school psychology training programs know what assessment measures are being used in the field so their students will be better prepared for practice. In this study, school psychologists in New Jersey public schools were surveyed to see what measures they use to assess students cognitively, academically, social-emotionally, and behaviorally. Participants were also asked if there was a discrepancy between what they are currently using and what they would like to use, and how they learn about and train on new assessment measures. Contact information was gathered through Internet searches and phone calls to schools. Out of the 1,599 school psychologists that were emailed, 525 survey responses to the online survey were initiated and 481 were completed. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and open-ended answers were reviewed individually and grouped together by common themes. Findings indicated that these school psychologists use certain measures more than others. Specifically, the most popular cognitive assessment method was the Wechsler intelligence scales, the most common education assessment methods were the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test – Third Edition (WIAT-III) and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (WJ-III Ach), the most common social-emotional assessment method was the Behavioral Assessment System for Children – Second Edition (BASC-II), and the most common behavioral assessment methods were the BASC-II and Conners – Third Edition. Additionally, school psychologists in this

study tended to learn about new assessment measures from colleagues, outside organizations, publications, and workshops, and primarily learned how to use new assessment tools by reading the manual on their own. Only about a fifth of the participants noted that there was a discrepancy between what they are using and what they would like to use to assess students, and a variety of reasons was listed as to why. Limitations are discussed, as well as training and practice implications and future directions for research.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

School psychology is a young profession when compared to other fields. One of the defining events in the beginning of school psychology was the establishment of Lightner Witmer's psychological clinic at the University of Pennsylvania in 1896. Witner is considered the father of both clinical and school psychology due to his contributions to the field (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). The purpose of the clinic was to train psychologists to solve children's problems related to learning and behavioral difficulties, and typically involved the use of assessments (Tharinger, 2008). Thus, from its earliest inception, the practice of school psychology has been linked to assessment.

The need for psychologists in the schools was generated when compulsory education laws were enacted in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. By 1920, every state in the United States required children to attend school, and this increased school enrollment drastically (Fagan, 2000). Furthermore, a significant number of these children had developmental, physical, learning, behavioral, and/or emotional difficulties. School practitioners eventually became known as "school psychologists." The first person to officially hold the title of "school psychologist" was Arnold Gessell in 1915 (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

Another major event in the field of school psychology was the publication of the Binet-Simon scales in 1905. At the turn of the twentieth century, psychologist Alfred Binet was commissioned by the French Ministry of Public Education to develop a way to identify children whose lack of success in normal classrooms suggested the need for special education. Binet, along with psychiatrist Theodore Simon, created the Binet-Simon scales, widely known as the first intelligence test. It was later adapted into English by Stanford University professor Lewis Termin and called the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scales. Binet, Simon, and Terman's work led to intelligence testing becoming linked to school psychology practice -- a connection that still exists to this day as intelligence tests continue to be a valued aspect of the special education classification process (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

As school attendance continued to increase throughout the early twentieth century, the number of children with disabilities in schools increased, and, subsequently, more school psychologists were needed. In the late 1920's, school psychology training programs began to be established and credentialing occurred. The field continued to expand throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, with the Boulder Conference on Clinical Psychology in 1949 promoting the scientist-practitioner model of psychology training and the Thayer Conference of 1954 shaping the training, credentialing, and practice in school psychology. Also at this time, Division 16 of the American Psychological Association (APA) emerged to represent school psychology (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

The "baby boom" that followed the conclusion of World War II continued to increase the number of students in schools. This led to an increase in public awareness regarding students with disabilities and the lack of laws protecting their education (Merrell, Ervin, &

Gimpel, 2006). In 1975, Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975), which mandated a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities, was enacted. States had to comply with the law in order to receive federal support (Reschly, 2000). Since all students with disabilities were now guaranteed educational rights, more students became classified as eligible for special education services. Additionally, with this law, learning disabilities were determined by a discrepancy between a student's intellectual ability and academic achievement. Consequently, it established a strong tie between school psychology and special education (Reschly, 2000). Thus, while the law established job security, school psychologists began to take on more of a "gatekeeper" role because of the shift in focus to assessing children's intellectual and academic functioning to find them eligible for special education services (Kicklighter, 1976).

Definitions of school psychology have evolved over time. For example, White & Harris (1961) stated that school psychology "concerns itself with the personality of the pupil in interaction with the educational process." Gray (1963) believed that school psychologists had two primary roles: "data-oriented problem solvers" and "transmitters of psychological knowledge and skills." Bardon and Bennett (1974) discussed how school psychology is "concerned with how schooling affects children in general and with the pupil interaction with a specific school." In general, earlier definitions tended to define the field by focusing more on the activities that school psychologists perform or should perform (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

Surveys of school psychologists prior to 2000 regarding their roles indicate a focus on assessment for special education eligibility. For example, a series of professional surveys was conducted by Winikur and Daniels (1982) in New Jersey in 1973-1974, 1974-1975, and

1977-1978. The survey data was analyzed to identify trends in the role of school psychologists. The authors found that school psychologists' primary function was assessment in order to classify students eligible for special education services. Additionally, Reschly and Wilson (1995) analyzed results from 1986 and 1991-1992 national surveys of school psychology practitioners and faculty. They found that during both time periods the respondents devoted more than fifty percent of their time to performing psycho-educational assessments.

Similarly, in 1995, Curtis, Hunley, Walker, and Baker (1999) analyzed survey responses from 1,922 members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). They found that school psychologists continue to spend the majority of their time conducting psycho-educational evaluations related to special education. Curtis, Hunley, and Grier (2002) examined the same survey responses a few years later and also noted that school psychologists who are responsible for serving large numbers of students are likely to conduct more evaluations and spend more time working on special education-related activities such as initial evaluations and reevaluations.

Currently, school psychologists are focused on defining the field's essential characteristics (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). The American Psychological Association, Division 16, defines school psychology using goals and objectives. The organization states that "the ultimate goal of all Division activity is the enhancement of the status of children, youth, and adults as learners and productive citizens in schools, families, and communities" (http://www.indiana.edu/~div16/goals.html). According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), "school psychologists help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally"

(http://nasponline.org/about_sp/whatis.aspx). In order to support children and youth, school psychologists work with parents, teachers, administrators, and community providers and perform activities including assessment, consultation, intervention, prevention, crisis response, counseling, supervision, training, and research (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002; Reschly, 2000).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), formerly known as the Education of the Handicapped Act, mandates multidisciplinary teams assess students' eligibility for special services. In New Jersey public schools, school psychologists are typically part of a Child Study Team. According to New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) Title 6A Chapter 14 Special Education, a Child Study Team is a group of specialists in the area of disabilities employed by the district board of education and is responsible for the "identification, evaluation, determination of eligibility, development and review of the individualized education program, and placement," along with school personnel and parents (p. 42). Child Study Teams also include a learning disabilities teacher-consultant and a school social worker.

Many of the services provided by school psychologists today are required through federal and state law (Tharinger, Pryzwansky, & Miller, 2008). According to the federal law IDEIA, the role of the school psychologist is defined as being part of a multidisciplinary team, and the main function is to determine eligibility for special education. At the state level, duties assigned to New Jersey school psychologists include: evaluating students who may need special education programs and services; determining eligibility of students for special education programs and services; providing related services such as consultation with school staff and parents, training of school staff; and the design, implementation, and

evaluation of techniques addressing academic and behavioral difficulties (N.J.A.C. 6A:14, pp. 42-43). Additionally, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14, school psychologists may also deliver the appropriate related services to students with disabilities, provide preventive and support services to nondisabled students, and be a part of Intervention and Referral Services teams.

In order to determine eligibility for special education programs and services, Child Study Teams are required to conduct initial evaluations. According to the N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4, when conducting initial evaluations, Child Study Team members need to: use the most appropriate language or form unless it is not feasible to do so; apply standards of validity, reliability and administration for each assessment; include the use of individually administered, valid, reliable standardized tests that are normed on a representative population and scored using standard scores with standard deviation or norm referenced scores with a cutoff score; and, include a functional assessment of academic performance and functional behavioral assessments, language assessments, communication assessments, and assessments of the need for assistive technology devices and services when appropriate (p. 49).

Following review of the available data, a report is developed based on the data that is garnered, and a determination is made as to whether a child is eligible to receive special education. Within three years of the classification, a reevaluation must be completed to determine whether the student remains eligible for special education services. If the parents and Child Study Team agree, an evaluation akin to what was previously described will occur (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.8, p. 68).

Currently, research suggests that the majority of a school psychologist's time is spent assessing students for the purposes of special education. For example, in a national study by Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, and Hall (2002), 370 school psychologists

responded to a survey that included questions about their roles, types of referrals, consultation practices, and crisis team involvement. Bramlett et al found that assessment was the most common role. Hosp and Reschly (2002) surveyed 1,056 practicing school psychologists in the various United States census regions and found that school psychologists in every region spent one half to two thirds of their time in assessment related activities, such as assessment and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.

Although research demonstrates that school psychologists spend the majority of their time on assessment, there is a call for role expansion. Specifically, many of those in the field believe that school psychologists need to move beyond assessing for special education eligibility. For example, Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) discuss how a paradigm shift in school psychology is necessary to move away from the current medical model that exists in schools (which focuses on the individual level) towards a more ecological/systems perspective. With this shift, there would be less emphasis on an individual diagnosis of a child with a problem and more emphasis on prevention, creating a healthy environment for everyone who is in school.

Bradley-Johnson and Dean (2000) discuss the importance of an ecological approach. Specifically, school psychologists need to emphasize indirect service, which includes consultation, research, program development to create systems change, and in-service training. They also need to use a scientific approach to solve school problems and design programs in order to plan more effective data-based programs, modify programs to fit specific situations and individuals, and evaluate programs and their outcomes. Additionally, school psychologists need to emphasize the prevention of academic and mental health problems to ensure effective learning environments.

Research has shown that the use of assessment measures by school psychologists will not be declining in the future. According to Wilson and Reschly (1996), intelligence testing will not decrease due to the legal mandates in which disabilities are identified through this type of assessment. Hosp and Reschly (2002) also note that increases in number of children served by special education may also play a role in keeping school psychologists in the eligibility determination role. Finally, studies suggest that administrators and other school personnel still identify assessment as the primary activity and a priority in the role and function of school psychologists (Abel & Burke, 1985; Beauchamp, 1994; Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2001).

Assessment Types/Methods

Sattler (2006) defines assessment as "any activity designed to further the process of accumulating information and forming a judgment about the behavioral, emotional, or social characteristics of an individual" (p. 4). Assessment is a data-based problem solving process aimed at developing interventions to solve learning problems (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). Assessment is the foundation for school psychologists' interventions.

School psychologists employ a variety of assessment methods and procedures, including: a) standardized testing (which uses standardized measures so an individual's score can be compared to the scores earned by a sample of individuals), b) interviews with students, teachers, and parents, c) behavioral observations in various settings, and d) informal measuring with instruments that are not normed and must be used cautiously (Sattler, 2006). The assessment process will typically use a multi method approach and examine multiple domains of functioning, including cognitive, educational, social-emotional, and behavioral.

Assessments of cognitive functioning measure intellectual ability and are generally known as IQ tests. They are used to classify a child in special education as Cognitively Impaired. The results can also be used to classify a child with a Learning Disability based on a discrepancy between educational testing scores and IQ scores. In New Jersey, the school psychologist typically performs this type of assessment. Research demonstrates that the Wechsler intelligence scales (Wechsler, 2002, 2003, 2008) are the most commonly used cognitive assessment method (Wilson & Reschly, 1996). Other popular cognitive measures include the Stanford-Binet – Fifth Edition (SB-V; Roid, 2003), Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities – Third Edition (WJ-III Cog; Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001b), Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children – Second Edition (KABC-II; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004a), and the Differential Ability Scales – Second Edition (DAS-II; Elliot, 2007) (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

Educational functioning is measured by assessments that examine current academic performance. In New Jersey, the learning disabilities teacher-consultant is included in NJAC as performing this type of assessment. Common standardized, norm-referenced achievement tests include the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement - Third Edition (WJ-III Ach; Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001a), Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Third Edition (WIAT-III; Wechsler, 2009), and Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – Second Edition (KTEA-II; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004b) (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). However, Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) methods are also becoming more popular (Shapiro, Angello, & Eckert, 2004). In CBA, instructional materials, like reading passages and math problems, are adapted from classroom use.

Assessments that measure behavioral and social-emotional functioning include projective-expressive techniques and ratings scales (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). With projective-expressive techniques, a person is presented with an ambiguous stimuli, and it is assumed that he or she will project his or her own thoughts, feelings, and emotions onto the stimuli. Specific examples include the House-Tree-Person drawing task (in which a person is provided blank sheets of paper and is asked to draw a house, a tree, and a person), and a sentence completion task, in which respondents are provided the beginnings of sentences that they must finish (such as, "I feel disappointed when…" or "When I see myself in the mirror, I…"). However, projective-expressive techniques are not often employed in the schools because they are not standardized and thus lack psychometric properties (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006).

Standardized behavior rating scales are increasingly popular ways of measuring the internal and external behaviors that indicate social-emotional and behavioral functioning (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). Frequently used ratings scales include the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) Scales. In this behavior rating system, the parent report form is known as the Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) and the child completes the Youth Self-Report form. Another popular scale is the Conners – Third Edition (Conners, 2008), which is used to assess, diagnose, and monitor ADHD, as well as evaluate problem behaviors in children and adolescents. Another measure of internalizing features and external behaviors is the Behavioral Assessment System for Children – Second Edition (BASC-II; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004), which includes parent, teacher, and self-report forms. Finally, the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF; Gioia, Isquith, & Kenworthy, 2000) assesses executive function behavior and also

includes parent, teacher, and self-report forms. Behavior rating scales are widely used given their strong psychometric properties.

Web-Based Research and the Use of Electronic Surveys

Historically, surveys have been created in a paper-and-pencil format. However, the widespread use of computers and the Internet has allowed researchers to computerize and electronically distribute surveys (Roberts, 2006). Additionally, web-based psychological research has become more popular due to the many advantages it provides. The main advantage reported by researchers includes the large population access that can lead to higher external validity and generalizability of results (Buchanan & Smith, 1999; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004; Riva, Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003; Schmidt, 1997). Second, this method incurs less experimental costs, since the reproduction, distribution, and collection of paper-and-pencil surveys is eliminated and one does not need to deal with reserving space and obtaining equipment (Buchanan & Smith, 1999; Cronk & West, 2002; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Fricker & Schonlau, 2002; Schmidt, 1997; Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002; Smith & Leigh, 1997).

Third, there is also the convenience factor. An electronic survey can be provided around the clock, without any time limitation (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Riva, Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003). Schmidt (1997) also noted the advantage of dynamic/interactive electronic surveys in which feedback can be displayed that is specifically tailored to the content of the responses supplied by the user. They can increase respondent motivation because participants are more likely to supply accurate and thoughtful responses.

The ease of data entry and analysis is another advantage. The data entry stage is eliminated for the survey administrator, and software can ensure that the data acquired from participants is free from common entry errors (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Schmidt, 1997). Furthermore, the electronic data can be made compatible with existing data analysis software (Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002). Finally, there is the ease of follow-up. Sending out follow-up reminder e-mails to participants incurs little to no cost and can easily increase the survey response rate (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Conversely, there are many disadvantages to web-based research that are mentioned in the literature. First, it is difficult to control the study environment because web users have different types of hardware, software, and Internet connections, and they are usually unmonitored, so the results may not be reliable (Buchanan & Smith, 1999; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004; Kraut, Olson, Banaji, Bruckman, Cohen, & Couper, 2004; Riva, Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003). There is no way to ensure that everyone who participates in the study will see the exact same survey.

Second, people who participate in web-based research are self-selected and not random representatives of the general population. In particular, they are usually found on the high end of the socio-economic and educational spectrum (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Kraut, Olson, Banaji, Bruckman, Cohen, & Couper, 2004; Riva, Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003; Schmidt, 1997; Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002; Smith & Leigh, 1997). Furthermore, Cronk and West (2002) found that participants who were asked to complete the survey on the web at home were substantially less likely to complete it than those in the other conditions. This demonstrates a strong selection bias. Individuals who are not familiar with the use of computers may decline to participate, as well as those who do not have access to the Internet.

This "coverage error" could result in samples that are not representative of a population (Tuten, 2010).

Third, the creation of an Internet-based assessment instrument is not often an easy task for a psychologist. It usually requires the development of web pages and the administration of the database where the answers are stored (Schmidt, 1997; Riva, Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003). Fourth, participants may supply unacceptable data (for example, typing in text instead of a number) or multiple submissions if given the chance (Buchanan & Smith, 1999; Schmidt, 1997). Fifth, there can be issues surrounding anonymity and data security. On the Internet, people who have access to a site can download and examine the source code (Schmidt, 1997). Additionally, data can be hacked and anonymity can be compromised (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Kraut, Olson, Banaji, Bruckman, Cohen, & Couper, 2004; Shannon, Johnson, Searcy, & Lott, 2002; Smith & Leigh, 1997). Finally, e-mails involving surveys may be perceived as junk mail. Many respondents have a difficult time distinguishing between a legitimate survey and a spam message (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

Research has demonstrated a high degree of similarity between online questionnaires and in person "offline" questionnaires (Roberts, 2006). For example, Meyerson and Tryon (2003) assessed the validity of online research by comparing an "offline" self report questionnaire with an online version. Their results suggest that using the Internet for data collection is reliable, valid, reasonably representative, cost effective, and efficient. Similarly, Riva, Teruzzi, and Anolli (2003) compared Web-based data collection techniques with traditional paper-based methods and found no relevant differences in the psychometric properties of the different questionnaires. Thus, web-based assessments appear to be a suitable alternative to more traditional data collection methods.

In order to optimize one's web-based research, there are a few recommendations that one can follow. For example, because the demographics of web users are likely to be skewed, one must be cautious in generalizing survey results based on a web sample. By collecting demographic data in the survey, one can try to make sure that the population being considered is appropriate for the conclusions that are drawn (Schmidt, 1997).

Another recommendation for researchers is to pilot and pre-test their web-based assessment tools (Bimbaum, 2004; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Kraut, Olson, Banaji, Bruckman, Cohen, & Couper, 2004; Tuten, 2010). This can ensure that data collection will run smoothly when it is time for participants to take the survey. Furthermore, since participants may use different web browsers, it is also important to test survey websites thoroughly with a variety of Internet browsers so it will function optimally for as many participants as possible (Schmidt, 1997).

Finally, it is important to combat against participants perceiving survey invitations as junk mail. Evans and Mathur (2005) recommend that the contact e-mail should be short and direct the respondent to the survey URL.

Specific Aims of the Current Study

Historically, assessment has been a primary function of school psychologists in order to find students eligible for special education services. Research has suggested that the use of assessment will not decrease in the future due to the legal mandates that describe how disabilities are identified (Wilson and Reschly, 1996). Thus, it is important that school psychology training programs know what assessment measures are being used in the field. This knowledge can help graduate programs better prepare students for practicing in the

schools. Currently, there are no studies that can provide this information. Thus, in the current study, school psychologists in New Jersey public schools will be surveyed in order to discover what assessments are actually being used in the field to assess cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning. This study will also look at whether there is a discrepancy between what school psychologists are currently using and what they would like to use, and how school psychologists learn about and train on new assessment measures.

CHAPTER II

Methods

Participants and Procedures

Participants of this study were school psychologists in New Jersey public schools (n=481). Contact information was gathered through Internet searches and telephone calls to New Jersey schools. Personalized emails were sent to the participants asking them to click on a hyperlink and complete the survey (see APPENDIX A). The consent form was included in the online survey (see APPENDIX B). By clicking "continue," participants agreed to participate in the study. Participants could print the consent forms for their records. Participants could skip any questions of their choosing and stop answering questions on the survey at any time without penalty. Any partially completed data was retained. However, if participants left the survey midway through and returned to it at a later time, they could not resume the survey at the exact spot they were at previously. There was no reward for completing the survey, but participants were given the opportunity to request a summary of the results. Additionally, a reminder email was sent to everyone two weeks following the initial email.

The online survey was a custom-made web application designed by a web developer. It was hosted by a private account on Dreamhost. All data was downloaded from the survey site onto a password protected CSV spreadsheet, which could only be accessed by the investigator. Addionally, since IP address information was not included in the dataset and

participants did not provide any identifying information beyond basic demographics, participation was anonymous.

Sample

A total of 1,599 email addresses were located, and those school psychologists were contacted on a rolling basis over the course of ten days. 525 surveys were initiated, but not all of them were completed. After unfinished surveys were removed, 481 surveys were analyzed for this study.

Measure

The survey was created specifically for this study and includes 25 open-ended and multiple-choice questions (see APPENDIX C). Participants were first asked a few brief demographic questions that provided non-identifying information about their age, gender, ethnicity, training and professional background, and setting of current position. They then answered a series of questions regarding their position: time spent in various job functions per week, the grade level(s) they work with, and the number of students they case manage. Next, the subjects noted which types of assessments they use for cognitive, educational, social-emotional, and behavioral assessments. Finally, subjects were asked to describe how they find out about new assessment measures, how they are trained on new assessment measures, and if there is a discrepancy between what they use to evaluate students and what they would like to use to evaluate students.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using a statistical analysis software package, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze the data. Open-ended answers were reviewed individually and common themes among the responses were extracted and grouped together.

CHAPTER III

Results

Characteristics of the Sample

Survey respondents were school psychologists working in New Jersey public schools. 1,599 school psychologists were emailed, and a total of 525 responses to the survey were initiated. Forty-four of those participants partially completed the survey. Thus, the overall response rate was 32.83% and the usable response rate was 30.09%. Most participants were female (80.0%), Caucasian (85.84%), and had a Masters as their highest degree (44.80%). Other degrees that were noted were Doctorate (29.51%), Educational Specialist (19.32%), and Professional Diploma (6.37%). Almost all were on a child study team (99.15%). "Other" ethnicities that were written in included: American, Asian, Cuban, Eastern European/Persian, Haitian American, Hispanic American, Indian, Irish, Irish/German American, Italian, Italian American, Jewish, Latin American, Mexican American, Mixed, Native American, Portuguese, Swiss/German, White/Hispanic, and White/Russian.

On average, school psychologists in this sample conducted 34.11 cognitive evaluations, 7.83 educational evaluations, 24.89 social-emotional evaluations, and 20.17 behavioral evaluations. The average number of students on a caseload was 50.66, with responses ranging from zero to 350.

Demographic and position-related information gleaned from items 1 through 8, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 included in the analysis is presented in Tables 1 and 2. Additionally, some

items were not completed by some respondents. The number of respondents is noted when

not all respondents answered the item.

Table 1

Participant characteristics and position-related information

Characteristic	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	*N*
Age in years	40.65	10.488	25.0	70.00	474
Years certified as a school psychologist	12.08	8.930	0.5	39.67	477
Years working as school psychologist	10.77	8.084	0.42	39.67	477
Years at current position	8.36	6.905	0.42	39.67	476
No. of students on caseload	50.66	25.442	0	350.00	471
No. of cognitive evals per year	34.11	19.947	0	200.00	414
No. of educational evals per year	7.83	11.477	0	40.00	72
No. of social-emotional evals per year	24.89	18.723	0	100.00	346
No. of behavioral evals per year	20.17	17.786	0	120.00	332

Table 2

Participant characteristics and position-related information

Characteristic	N	%
Gender	475	
Female	380	80.00
Male	95	20.00
Ethnicity	452	
White/Caucasian	388	85.84
African American	13	2.88
Hispanic	10	2.21
Other	41	9.07
Degree	471	
Masters	211	44.80
Doctorate	139	29.51
Educational Specialist (Ed.S.)	91	19.32
Professional Diploma (P.D.)	30	6.37
Child Study Team	471	
Yes	467	99.15
No	4	0.85

An additional demographic question was asked regarding the participant's county of employment (item 9). This data was compared to the amount of school psychologists emailed per county. As one can see in Table 3, the distributions were fairly even. For example, Bergen County, the county with the most school psychologists initially emailed (n=173), had the highest number of school psychologists respond (n=53). Furthermore, 10.82% of the initial email list was made up of Bergen County school psychologists, and 11.23% of the respondents identified themselves as working in that county, which are very close percentages.

Table 3

Comparison of email distribution list versus survey respondents

	Emailed participants		Survey respondents	
County	N	%	N	%
Atlantic	49	3.06	12	2.54
Bergen	173	10.82	53	11.23
Burlington	87	5.44	29	6.14
Camden	93	5.81	32	6.78
Cape-May	17	1.06	3	0.64
Cumberland	31	1.93	9	1.90
Essex	134	8.38	40	8.47
Gloucester	51	3.19	19	4.03
Hudson	74	4.62	24	5.08
Hunterdon	39	2.44	12	2.54
Mercer	71	4.44	24	5.08
Middlesex	119	7.44	36	7.63
Monmouth	130	8.13	44	9.32
Morris	110	6.88	24	5.08
Ocean	69	4.32	27	5.72
Passaic	89	5.57	11	2.33
Salem	17	1.06	5	1.06
Somerset	83	5.19	19	4.03
Sussex	39	2.44	8	1.69
Union	96	6.00	28	5.93
Warren	28	1.75	13	2.75

Data was also collected on the estimated percentage of time spent in various job functions per week (item 10) and the grade level one works with (item 11). Data for the former is included in Table 4. However, this data should be reviewed with caution, because, according to participant feedback via email, some participants found the question to be confusing since they believed categories overlapped. Since the job function categories were not operationalized enough for some, the data may be considered unreliable. For example, school psychologists may have believed that case management and evaluations included paperwork, so they became unsure as to how to enter in their time. Additionally, grade level data was too varied to code, so it was not included in the analysis and will not be included in this paper.

Table 4

Average percentage of time spent on a job function per week

Job function	M	SD	Min	Max	N
Case management	22.86	13.24	0	70	481
Paperwork	18.59	11.09	0	80	481
Evaluations	15.62	9.73	0	50	481
Meetings	14.60	7.99	0	50	481
Consultation	9.57	8.16	0	70	481
Counseling	8.78	9.65	0	75	481
Crisis intervention	4.83	4.94	0	45	481
Program development	1.91	3.16	0	25	481
Other	0.84	2.47	0	20	481

Use of Measures

For survey items 13, 15, 17, and 19, school psychologists were asked to check off the types of measures they use for assessment in a specific category. All 481 respondents answered this item. Frequency counts were performed to determine how many respondents selected each answer choice. Frequency data on each response provided information about current practices of assessment use. Specifically, responses indicated that for cognitive evaluations, the Wechsler Scales were used by most (94.8%), while the Stanford-Binet – 5th Edition, other tests not on the lists, and Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities – 3rd Edition were only being used by 33.7%, 20.4%, and 14.1% of the respondents, respectively. The Differential Ability Scales – 2nd Edition (9.1%) and Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children – 2nd Edition (6.7%) were endorsed by some of the participants. Only 2.9% of the respondents did not perform these types of evaluations.

Out of the 481 respondents, the most widely used educational evaluations are the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test – 2nd Edition (6.9%) and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – 3rd Edition (7.5%). Only 1.5% use the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – 2nd Edition. 1.9% noted they use other measures that were not listed. Additionally, it is important to note that 85% of the respondents indicated that they do not perform these type of evaluations, which makes sense given the learning disabilities teacher-consultant usually does this task in New Jersey public schools.

Regarding social-emotional evaluation measures, a majority of respondents use the Behavioral Assessment System for Children – 2nd Edition (BASC-2) (77.5%). However, many also use projective techniques (48.6%) (See Table 9 for the projective techniques that were noted), other measures not listed (31%), Beck Youth Inventories (21.8%), and the

Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) Scales (12.9%). Only 3.7%

of participants indicated that they do not perform social-emotional evaluations.

Similar to the social-emotional measures results, most respondents use the BASC-2

(73.6%) for behavioral evaluations. However, almost as many use the Conners (71.7%).

Participants also indicated that they use other measures not listed (18.9%), the Behavior

Rating Inventory of Executive Function (16.4%), the Beck Youth Inventories (14.8%), and

the ASEBA Scales (11.4%). Very few respondents indicated that they do not perform

behavioral evaluations (5.0%). The responses to items 13, 15, 17, and 19 are summarized in

Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8. The responses to each item's "Other" category are listed in Table 9.

Table 5

Use of cognitive evaluation measures

Measure	*N*	*%*
Differential Ability Scales – 2nd Edition	44	9.1
Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children – 2nd Edition	32	6.7
Stanford-Binet – 5th Edition	162	33.7
Wechsler Scales	456	94.8
Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities – 3rd Edition	68	14.1
Other	98	20.4
Do not perform cognitive evaluations	14	2.9

Table 6

Use of educational evaluation measures

Measure	*N*	*%*
Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – 2nd Edition	7	1.5
Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test – 2nd Edition	33	6.9
Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – 3rd Edition	36	7.5
Other	9	1.9
Do not perform educational evaluations	409	85.0

Table 7

Use of social-emotional evaluation measures

Measure	N	%
Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) Scales	62	12.9
Beck Youth Inventories	105	21.8
Behavioral Assessment System for Children – 2nd Edition (BASC-2)	373	77.5
Projective Techniques	234	48.6
Other	149	31.0
Do not perform social-emotional evaluations	18	3.7

Table 8

Use of behavioral evaluation measures

Measure	N	%
Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) Scales	55	11.4
Beck Youth Inventories	71	14.8
Behavioral Assessment System for Children – 2nd Edition (BASC-2)	354	73.6
Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF)	79	16.4
Conners	345	71.7
Other	91	18.9
Do not perform behavioral evaluations	24	5.0

Table 9

Measures listed under "Other"

Assessment Category	Assessments
Cognitive	Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2nd Edition (BDI-2), Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT), Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI), Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV), Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development, McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities, Bender-Gestalt, Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration (VMI), Leiter Nonverbal Intelligence Test, Cognitive Assessment System (CAS), Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test – 2nd Edition (KBIT-2), Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS), Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI)
Educational	Wide Range Achievement Test – 4th Edition (WRAT-4)
Social-Emotional Projectives	House-Tree-Person, Human Figure Drawing, Kinetic Family Drawing, Kinetic School Drawing, Thematic Apperception Test, Children's Apperception Test, Sentence Completion
Social-Emotional	Adjustment Scales for Children and Adolescents (ASCA), Burks Behavior Rating Scales – 2nd Edition (BBRS-2), Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale – 2nd Edition, Children's Depression Inventory (CDI), Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale – 2nd Edition (RADS-2), Conners 3, Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2nd Edition (MMPI-2), Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI), Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS), Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales
Behavioral	Attention Deficit Disorders Evaluation Scale – 3rd Edition (ADDES-3), Brown ADD Rating Scales, Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS), Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), Gilliam Autism Rating Scale – 2nd Edition (GARS-2), Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS)

New Assessment Measures

      For survey items 21 and 22, school psychologists were asked to check all of the different ways they learn about and train on new assessments. All 481 respondents answered this item. Frequency counts were performed to determine how many respondents selected each answer choice. Frequency data on each response provided information about the current practices of school psychologists regarding this topic. The most popular way to learn about a new assessment is from workshops or conferences (78.6%), followed by notice from a colleague (73.4%), a publication (55.3%), a professional organization (54.5%), the publisher (47.8%), and a supervisor (21.8%). Other (2.9%) noted methods were conducting online searches, reading catalogues/mailings, attending graduate courses, and learning from student interns.

      Respondents typically trained on new assessment measures by reading the manual on their own (88.8%). They also attended workshops through organizations/conferences outside of the school district (71.1%) and attended workshops provided in-house by their school district (26.4%). 6.0% noted they had other methods, which included training DVDs, going through manuals with colleagues, attending graduate courses or webinars, participating in norming studies, and reading books. The responses to items 21 and 22 are summarized in Tables 10, 11, and 12.

Table 10

Learning about new assessment measures

Method	N	%
From a colleague	353	73.4
From a publication	266	55.3
From a publisher	230	47.8
From a professional organization	262	54.5
From a supervisor	105	21.8
From workshops/conferences	378	78.6
Other	14	2.9

Table 11

Training on new assessment measures

Method	N	%
Reading the manual on your own	427	88.8
Workshops provided in-house by school/district	127	26.4
Workshops through organizations/conferences outside of school district	342	71.1
Other	29	6.0

Table 12

Responses to "Other" questions regarding new assessments

Topic	Method
Find out about new assessments	Online searches, catalogues/mailings, graduate courses, student interns
Train on new assessments	Training DVDs, go through manual with colleagues, graduate courses, participate in the norming study which provides training, books, webinars

Discrepancies Between What One Uses and What One Would Like to Use

The last question of the survey (item 23) asked respondents if there were

discrepancies between what they use and what they would like to use to assess students.

73.2% of them answered this question "No" (n=352), with only 26.6% saying "Yes"

(n=128). One person chose not to respond (0.2%). Table 13 lists what respondents said they

would like to use, in addition to any concerns that were mentioned.

Table 13

Responses to "Discrepancy" questions

Topic	Method
Assessments they would like to use	Neuropsychological assessments, different cognitive measures, the BASC, BRIEF, Conners, Beck, Vineland, BMI, brief batteries, nonverbal tests, the Battelle, curriculum based assessment measures, MMPI, memory tests
Concerns	Not enough time for evaluations, budget constraints, the need for a greater variety of tests, need for a county system to share assessment tools among districts, case management leaving no time for best practices in assessment, need for additional training, district policy mandates, desire to also give the educational evaluations, need to use more cross battery assessment, need for a better preschool assessment besides the Battelle

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

This study focused on discovering which assessments New Jersey school psychologists currently use to assess cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning. Additionally, it examined whether there is a discrepancy between what school psychologists are currently using and what they would like to use and how school psychologists learn about and train on new assessment measures. Since there are currently no studies that provide this information, a survey of 481 school psychologists in New Jersey public schools was conducted regarding these topics, and the collected data was analyzed quantitatively.

Use of Measures

Survey results indicated that for cognitive evaluations, the Wechsler Scales are the most widely used assessment tool. Specifically, 94.8% of the participants endorsed the use of this measure. This is consistent with the literature reviewed in the first chapter, which stated that the Wechsler intelligence scales are the most commonly used cognitive assessment method (Wilson & Reschly, 1996). The Stanford-Binet – 5th Edition is used by 33.7%, and 20.4% of the respondents use other tests that were not listed. In comparison, not as many participants noted that they used the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities – 3rd Edition (14.1%), Differential Ability Scales – 2nd Edition (9.1%), and the Kaufman

Assessment Battery for Children – 2nd Edition (6.7%). Since school psychologists working in schools tend to have restrictions on spending and test kits are expensive, it stands to reason that if most school psychologists use the Wechsler Scales, then the other tests would be used less. Also, school psychologists may use the Wechsler Scales because they are well established in the field, and the district may prefer them.

Regarding educational evaluations, 85% of the respondents indicated that they do not perform this type of evaluation, as opposed to the 2.9% of respondents that did not perform cognitive evaluations. This discrepancy makes sense given that the learning disabilities teacher-consultant usually performs the former and the school psychologist typically performs the latter in New Jersey public schools. Additionally, survey results showed that the most common educational evaluation tools are the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test – 2nd Edition and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – 3rd Edition. These achievement tests are probably used more because they can be easily compared to their cognitive counterparts and can also assess a wide range of ages. Only a few respondents use the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – 2nd Edition, and some noted that they use other measures that were not listed. These lower numbers may be attributed to the fact that the Kaufman test is a newer test in comparison to the others. Also, similarly to the "other" cognitive tests, there may not be money available for school psychologists to purchase different tests, or the district or school psychologist may prefer tests that are more known in the field.

Almost all of the respondents indicated that they perform social-emotional evaluations. A majority of survey respondents indicated that they use the Behavioral Assessment System for Children – 2nd Edition (BASC-2) for social-emotional evaluations

Assessment Battery for Children – 2nd Edition (6.7%). Since school psychologists working in schools tend to have restrictions on spending and test kits are expensive, it stands to reason that if most school psychologists use the Wechsler Scales, then the other tests would be used less. Also, school psychologists may use the Wechsler Scales because they are well established in the field, and the district may prefer them.

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(77.5%). Its popularity may be due to the fact that it includes multiple raters (self, teacher, and parent) and measures both adaptive and problem behaviors across many different scales. Additionally, 48.6% of the respondents use projective techniques, which include tasks like drawings and sentence completion. Their widespread use is not surprising, given that they are cost-effective and often only require a piece of paper and pencil. However, since they are not standardized, and thus lack psychometric properties, many school psychologists may not feel comfortable using them for evaluations in schools.

Similar to the social-emotional measures results, most respondents conduct behavioral evaluations and use the BASC-2 to complete them (73.6%). However, almost just as many use the Conners (71.7%), which offers an assessment of ADHD and can be helpful in looking at the cause of behavior. Additionally, many respondents indicated that they use other measures not listed (18.9%), the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (16.4%), the Beck Youth Inventories (14.8%), and the ASEBA Scales (11.4%).

There are many possible reasons why there is more of a variety of endorsement for the social-emotional and behavioral evaluations. For instance, a school psychologist may use multiple social-emotional and behavioral assessment tools for one evaluation. Each tool might provide different information or a different perspective and, combined, will provide a more comprehensive evaluation. Also, these tools tend to be less expensive than cognitive and achievement assessment measures, so they may be more readily available to school psychologists. Finally, they tend to be less time consuming to administer, allowing for school psychologists to easily use multiple measures for one evaluation.

New Assessments

When school psychologists were asked to check all of the different ways they learn about new assessments, 78.6% said it is from workshops or conferences and 73.4% from a colleague. Over half indicated they learned from a publication or from a professional organization (55.3% and 54.5%, respectively). Almost half learned from the publisher (47.8%) and about a fifth endorsed that they learned from a supervisor (21.8%). A vast majority of the respondents trained on new assessment measures by reading the manual on their own (88.8%). Over 70% also attended workshops through organizations or conferences outside of the school district. Fewer attended workshops provided in-house by their school district (26.4%) and even less noted that they had other training methods (6.0%). It appears that most school psychologists rely on many different methods to learn about and train on new assessments.

Discrepancies Between What One Uses and What One Would Like to Use

About a quarter of the respondents endorsed that there were discrepancies between what they use and what they would like to use to assess students (26.6%). Many of those respondents suggested they would like to complete more in-depth evaluations that included neuropsychological or non-verbal assessment instruments, while others would rather have access to "brief" versions of tests. Some stated that they would like to use a different preschool assessment tool other than the Battelle. A few even noted that they would like to complete educational evaluations in addition to cognitive evaluations.

Additionally, these respondents stated that they would like to use a wide variety of measures not available in their district due to various time, budget, policy, training, position,

and resource constraints. Given today's economic climate, it is not surprising that these constraints exist, and they will probably continue to exist into the near future. The number of positions is shrinking, which increases caseloads and decreases time. Budgets and opportunities for training also decrease, leaving school psychologists to use what the district already has available whether they want to or not.

Limitations of the Study

Participants

A total of 1,599 school psychologists in New Jersey public schools were emailed surveys. 552 school psychologists began to complete the survey. However, only 481 of them provided useable surveys. There may be unique factors to these 481 school psychologists that prompted them to visit the survey and complete it in its entirety. To complete the surveys, the school psychologists needed to access a computer, access their email, read the email, click on the link embedded in the email, agree to complete the survey, and visit each page by clicking continue while answering questions until the last page is reached. They also needed to be willing to discuss the topic of assessment and have the time to dedicate to the survey. Certain school psychologists may not like to participate in online studies, conduct assessment, or respond to surveys.

Since respondents share the above-mentioned characteristics that enable them participate, that means the non-respondents may share their own characteristics. The differences may be in the participants or in their assessment practices, and the possibility of these differences means that caution should be used when generalizing this study's findings to all school psychologists in New Jersey public schools. Additionally, the respondents in

this study are school psychologists practicing in New Jersey public schools, so one should use caution when generalizing the results beyond New Jersey, especially since the role of a school psychologist can vary from state to state.

Methodology

  Contact information for possible participants for this study was found using Internet searching and telephone calls to schools. While this search was exhaustive and completed over the course of a few months, this method was not perfect. School psychologists could have changed school districts or e-mail addresses without that information being updated on the Internet. Additionally, some school psychologists may not have been included because their contact information was not readily available online, and contact information could not be located through telephone calls.

  There are also issues to consider when using email as a means of communication and the Internet to host the survey. People who use the computer and respond to emails are a self-selected group. Individuals who are not familiar with computers or online surveys may decline to participate. If the survey had been a paper-and-pencil version, additional respondents may have chosen to respond. Conversely, it would also stand to reason that certain respondents who completed the online survey may not have completed the paper-and-pencil version because more steps would have been required, including physically writing out the responses and mailing the survey back to the investigator. Furthermore, considering that studies have shown a high degree of similarity between online questionnaires and traditional paper-based methods, it should be noted that one should expect that there would

have been no differences in responses if a participant had completed a paper-and-pencil version instead of the online version.

Another limitation of using technology to conduct this study is how frequently one checks their email. Some school psychologists may not check their email frequently, so the email could have been skimmed over, left unread in a long list of emails in an inbox, or possibly forgotten. Furthermore, many districts and/or school psychologists have email filters that are set to detect and filter out emails from unfamiliar email addresses or emails with content that include links and may be looked at as mass-produced. Certain filters could have filtered out the survey invitation and placed it in a "junk mail" folder separate from the inbox. In those cases, the email recipient may never have seen the invitation, which kept him or her from participating in the study.

An additional issue regarding the use of email to invite survey participants relates to how the emails were sent. In order to avoid overloading the website, invitation emails were sent out on a rolling basis over the course of ten days. A reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial email was sent, stating the date that the survey would be closed. Subsequently, the earlier a participant was emailed, the longer time they had to complete the survey, because they knew about it longer than the participants that were emailed after them. However, the survey was available for five weeks, which should have given everyone who was emailed enough time to complete the survey if they desired to do so.

Implications for Training and Practice

Traditionally, the role of the school psychologist is to use assessment to determine if students are eligible for special education services (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson,

Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002; Curtis, Hunley, Walker, & Baker, 1999; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Winikur & Daniels, 1982). This role is mainly due to the fact that the assessments are required through federal and state law (Tharinger, Pryzwansky, & Miller, 2008). While a call for a shift to an indirect service delivery model at the systems level through consultation, research, and program development exists in the field (Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000), this study has shown that school psychologists are still primarily conducting assessments. Only 2.9% of the respondents of this survey indicated that they do not perform cognitive assessments, 3.7% do not perform social-emotional evaluations, and 5.0% do not perform behavioral evaluations. Thus, school psychologist training programs need to continue to provide comprehensive assessment courses that cover cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral evaluation methods in order to produce school psychologists that are ready for practice.

Furthermore, this study found that across all types of evaluations, certain assessments are being used more than others in New Jersey public schools. Thus, training programs that have students doing their practicum in New Jersey public schools should consider training their students to use these measures so they are well prepared for this experience. For example, the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University currently teaches its school psychology students the Wechsler scales and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities through the cognitive assessment course. According to the results of this study, the school may also want to consider teaching its students the Stanford-Binet, as it appears to be used more often in New Jersey public schools than the Woodcock-Johnson.

Also, at the GSAPP, the learning disability assessment course currently covers the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children. While the number of school psychologists performing educational assessments in schools is small, according to the data, this type of course should cover the Wechsler Individualized Tests of Achievement (WIAT) in addition to the Woodcock-Johnson.

Finally, for personality and behavioral assessment courses that train on social-emotional and behavioral assessments, the Behavioral Assessment System for Children, Beck Youth Inventories, Conners, Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning (BRIEF), ASEBA scales, and projective techniques should be covered. These assessments are currently being covered in courses at the GSAPP, and, according to the data, that should continue. However, it may make more sense for the BRIEF to be included in the behavioral assessment course, as opposed to the learning disabilities course, so students can use it as a part of behavioral evaluations in practicum.

Once school psychologists have graduated from their training programs, it becomes their responsibility to keep up with the release of new assessments in order to maintain the best practice. School psychologists in this study indicated that they typically learn about new assessments from workshops, conferences, colleagues, professional organizations, and/or publications. Thus, it is important for school psychology students to learn about different events and organizations that can help them stay connected to updates regarding assessment practices and tools. It is also important for school psychologists to maintain these connections after they have graduated so the information is easy to get a hold of in order to follow the best practices.

Once school psychologists hear about a new assessment measure, a vast majority of them are trained to use it by reading the manual on their own. This stresses the importance of training programs ensuring that a student is able to pick up a manual and teach his or herself how to administer the test on his or her own. Additionally, many respondents indicated that they attended workshops through organizations or conferences outside of the school district, which again stresses the importance of maintaining connections to organizations that provide these types of training opportunities. However, fewer attended workshops provided in-house by their school district, so school psychology graduate students should not expect that this will be provided to them once they are working in a school district.

When school psychologists were asked if there were discrepancies between what they use and what they would like to use to assess students, only about a quarter of the respondents said there were discrepancies. This indicates that, in general, school psychologists are able to use measures that they want to use for evaluations. This is good news for school psychology students who are concerned about feeling forced to use certain assessments by the district. However, those who indicated there was a discrepancy noted that there were various time, budget, policy, training, position, and resource constraints that prevented them from using different measures. Considering today's economic climate and the fact that school districts continue to maintain tight budgets, this discrepancy may rise into the foreseeable future as monetary resources shrink. School psychologists may have difficulties advocating for various testing materials that are not deemed "essential" to improving students' academic functioning.

Summary and Future Directions

School psychologists use a wide variety of assessment tools in order to evaluate students' cognitive, educational, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning. This study used an online survey to explore what school psychologists in New Jersey use for assessment in public schools. The results demonstrate that these school psychologists use certain measures more than others. Specifically, the most popular cognitive assessment method was the Wechsler Scales (94.8%), the most common education assessment methods were the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test (6.9%) and the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (7.5%), the most common social-emotional assessment method was the BASC (77.5%), and the most common behavioral assessment methods were the BASC (73.6%) and Conners (71.7%).

Training programs can use this information to better train school psychology students for professional experiences in New Jersey public schools. Additionally, since the school psychologists in this study tended to learn about new assessment measures from colleagues, outside organizations, publications, and workshops, it is important for training programs to expose their students to psychology conferences, organizations, and publications so their assessment knowledge can remain current throughout their career. Furthermore, training programs need to make sure that students know how to teach themselves a new assessment by reading the manual, as that is the most common way students learn how to use new assessment tools. They can also attend training workshops, but students should not expect that training will be provided to them by their school district, as only some respondents endorsed this option.

Discrepancies sometimes exist between what school psychologists are using and what they would like to use to assess students. Many reasons were listed as to why this is the case, including budget and time constraints. In the future, this discrepancy may become more common as budgets continue to be cut, and school psychologists and school psychology students should prepare for this.

Future studies could include researching the assessments school psychologists use across the country and comparing the results to the results from New Jersey public schools. Similarly, data from private schools in New Jersey could also be collected using this survey and compared to this study's data to see if there are any differences. Additionally, this survey could be modified to investigate whether or not psychologists in private practice use the same assessment tools that are used in schools. The results of that study would be particularly interesting because psychologists in private practice have more freedom to choose what they want to use to assess children.

Also, investigators could examine what school psychology training programs are teaching their students and if that is in line with what is being used in the field. Furthermore, research could be conducted that focuses on how prepared school psychology students and recent school psychology graduates feel regarding assessment measures once they are in practicum or working professionally. Do they believe that their training program prepared them appropriately? What assessment measures should have been taught but were not?

Additionally, while some inferences were made in the discussion, this study did not explicitly ask school psychologists why they use what they use to assess students. Another survey could be developed that specifically asks school psychologists "why?" and how they feel about the tools they use and their role in assessment.

Finally, another interesting study would be to further investigate how recent budget constraints affect assessment resources and how school psychologists assess a student. Are school psychologists using fewer measures or abbreviated versions of tests because there are more assessments to complete and less time to complete them in? Are they being told they cannot buy certain tests because there is no room in the budget?

In summation, findings of this study indicate that the role of the school psychologist remains to be a "gatekeeper," as assessment for special education services continues to be a primary function. Specifically, only 2.9% of the respondents indicated that they do not perform cognitive evaluations, 3.7% do not perform social-emotional evaluations, and 5.0% do not perform behavioral evaluations. This reflects the influence of federal and state legal mandates, such as IDEIA, that require the school psychologist, as part of a child study team, to assess students in order to determine eligibility for special education services. Until the laws change and there is less necessity for school psychologists to perform assessments, school psychologists will continue to play this role into the foreseeable future.

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APPENDIX A

Dear NAME,

My name is Victoria Dietz, and I am a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Applied & Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study I am conducting that involves briefly surveying School Psychologists in New Jersey public schools.

In this study I am interested in examining the cognitive, educational, social-emotional, and behavioral assessment practices of School Psychologists working in New Jersey public schools. Findings from this study will hopefully inform training programs about the specific types of assessments that are actually being used in schools, so graduates can be better prepared for professional practice upon graduation.

If you would like to participate in this study, please take the electronic survey available at: http://www.nj-school-psych-survey.com. It should take no more than fifteen minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time without any penalty to you, and you may skip any questions you choose. The survey is anonymous and your answers will not be linked to you in any way. There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Additionally, you will be given the opportunity to request a summary of the results, which will be distributed once the study is completed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at vdietz@eden.rutgers.edu.

Thank you for your time,
Victoria Dietz
School Psychology Doctoral Student
Graduate School of Applied & Professional Psychology
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
152 Frelinghuysen Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854

APPENDIX B

<u>Survey on Assessment Measures Used by School Psychologists</u>

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Victoria Dietz, a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Applied & Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine what school psychologists in New Jersey public school districts are using to assess students' cognitive, educational, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning in order to inform school psychology training programs and better prepare graduate students for professional practice.

Approximately 1000 school psychologists will participate in the study. You will be asked to answer questions about the measures you use for cognitive, educational, social-emotional, and behavioral assessments. You will also be asked a few brief demographic questions. It should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete the entire study.

Your answers will be anonymous and will not be linked to you in any way. There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. The study may produce valuable information about assessment measures used by school psychologists.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the survey at any time without any penalty to you. Additionally, you may skip any questions you choose.

If you have any questions/concerns or would like to obtain results from the study when it is completed, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator or the advisor of this study:

Victoria Dietz (Principal Investigator)
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
152 Frelinghuysen Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854
732-373-7040
vdietz@eden.rutgers.edu

Lew Gantwerk, Psy.D. (Advisor)
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Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
41A Gordon Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854
732-445-7795
gantwerk@rci.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

By clicking "continue" below, you agree to participate in this research study.

APPENDIX C

1. *Age:*
   ___ *years*

2. *Gender:*

   _____

3. *Ethnicity:*

   _____

4. *Highest degree attained:*

   _____

5. *Length of time you been a certified school psychologist:*
   ___ *years* ___ *months*

6. *Length of time you been working as a school psychologist in New Jersey:*
   ___ *years* ___ *months*

7. *Length of time in current position:*
   ___ *years* ___ *months*

8. *Are you on a Child Study Team?*
   ____ No
   ____ Yes

9. *Which county are you currently employed in:*
   Do Not Wish To Respond
   Atlantic
   Bergen
   Burlington
   Camden
   Cape May
   Cumberland
   Essex
   Gloucester
   Hudson
   Hunterdon
   Mercer
   Middlesex
   Monmouth
   Morris
   Ocean
   Passaic
   Salem

Somerset
Sussex
Union
Warren

10. *Estimated percentage of time spent in various job functions per week:*
    Case Management ___%
    Consultation ___%
    Counseling ___%
    Crisis Intervention ___%
    Evaluations ___%
    Meetings ___%
    Paperwork ___%
    Program Development ___%
    Other ___%

11. *Grade levels you work with:*
    _____

12. *Number of students you case manage:*
    ___

13. *What type(s) of assessment do you use for a cognitive evaluation? Please choose all that apply and note any additional specific measures in the "Other" category.*
    ____ Differential Ability Scales – Second Edition
    ____ Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children – Second Edition
    ____ Stanford-Binet – Fifth Edition
    ____ Wechsler Scales
    ____ Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities – Third Edition
    ____ Other (Please Specify) _____
    ____ I Do Not Perform Cognitive Assessments

14. *Average number of cognitive evaluations per year.*
    ___

15. *What type(s) of assessment do you use for an educational evaluation? Please choose all that apply and note any additional specific measures in the "Other" category.*
    ____ Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – Second Edition
    ____ Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second Edition
    ____ Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – Third Edition
    ____ Other (Please Specify) _____
    ____ I Do Not Perform Educational Assessments

16. *Average number of educational evaluations per year.*
    ___

17. What type(s) of assessment do you use for a social-emotional evaluation? Please choose all that apply and note any additional specific measures in the "Other" category.
    ____ Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) Scales
    ____ Beck Youth Inventories
    ____ Behavioral Assessment System for Children – Second Edition (BASC-2)
    ____ Projective Techniques (Please Specify) _____
    ____ Other (Please Specify) _____
    ____ I Do Not Perform Social-Emotional Assessments

18. Average number of social-emotional evaluations per year.
    ___

19. What type(s) of assessment do you use for a behavioral evaluation? Please choose all that apply and note any additional specific measures in the "Other" category.
    ____ Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) Scales
    ____ Beck Youth Inventories
    ____ Behavioral Assessment System for Children – Second Edition (BASC-2)
    ____ Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF)
    ____ Conners
    ____ Other (Please Specify) _____
    ____ I Do Not Perform Behavioral Assessments

20. Average number of behavioral evaluations per year.
    ___

21. How do you find out about new assessment measures? Please choose all that apply and note any additional ways in the "Other" category.
    ____From a colleague
    ____From a publication
    ____From the publisher
    ____From a professional organization
    ____From a supervisor
    ____From workshops/conferences
    ____Other (Please Specify) _____

22. How are you trained on new assessment measures? Please choose all that apply and note any additional ways in the "Other" category.
    ____Reading the manual on your own
    ____Workshops provided in-house by the school/district
    ____Workshops through organizations/conferences outside of the school/district
    ____Other (Please Specify) _____

23. Is there a discrepancy between what you actually use and what you would like to use to evaluate students?

_____ No

_____ Yes (Please Specify) _____

Thank you for completing the survey!

If you have any further questions or comments, please contact Victoria Dietz at vdietz@eden.rutgers.edu.