

**THE TENTH ANNUAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL
SYMPOSIUM**



ASSUMPTION COLLEGE

APRIL 11, 2019

Hagan Campus Center Hall

Program Schedule

4:00 P.M. Welcome

**Dr. Nanho Vander Hart
Director of Special Education**

**Dr. Louise Carroll-Keeley
Provost and Academic Vice-President**

4:15 P.M. POSTERS

**Utilizing Reinforcer Function Assessments to
Determine the Reinforcing Value of a Student Token
Economy System**

Lindsay Braith

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

**Lowering Office Discipline Referrals through School-
Wide Positive Behavior Supports**

Laura Pandiani

PBS CAGS in Special Education Program

Fairness and Inequality in Cooperative Tasks

Anthea Oikonomou-Savvidis

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

**The Impact of SRSD on Middle School Students'
Narrative Writing Performance: A Preliminary Report**

Mara Power and Ann Marie Quinn

Special Education Program

4:45 P.M. PRESENTATIONS

**The Role of Tier Two in the Success of PBIS:
Building Students' Social Language**

Cathryn Chviruk

PBS CAGS in Special Education Program

**A Study of Irritability as a Mechanism in
Multiple Disorders**

*William Nall, Paul Avolese, Rachel DiLima,
Jason Prior, and Alec Twigden*

Clinical Counseling Psychology Program

**5:30 P.M. Presentation of Certificates of
Recognition**

**Leonard Doerfler
Nanho Vander Hart**

POSTER

Utilizing Reinforcer Function Assessments to Determine the Reinforcing Value of a Student Token Economy System

Lindsay Braith

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

Reinforcer assessments are effective in determining the reinforcing value of proposed reinforcers. The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the efficacy and reinforcing value of a current token system in place for a new student on a residential team as part of a program that specializes with students diagnosed with ASD. The current study used a multi-element design to assess the reinforcing value of tokens from the student's pre-existing token exchange schedule. When compared to another semi-preferred token method (expo marker checks) and an extinction condition, poker tokens were identified with the highest reinforcing value.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Karen Lionello-DeNolf

POSTER

Lowering Office Discipline Referrals through School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports

Laura Pandiani

PBS CAGS in Special Education Program

School-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) is based on a proactive approach to behavior, where students learn appropriate behaviors and expectations for all settings across a school day. Office discipline referrals (ODRs) are one way to monitor and assess behavior in a school. In this implementation project, I collected and analyzed data on ODRs from an elementary school in Worcester to create an action plan for the school using SWPBS. Data showed that most ODRs were being given for challenging behavior during recess. Therefore, an action plan, including measurable outcomes to reduce ODRs and improve school climate, focused on this setting.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Samantha Goldman

POSTER

Fairness and Inequity in Cooperative Tasks

Anthea Oikonomou-Savvidis

Applied Behavior Analysis Program

We examined the role of previous experience (a helpful or unhelpful partner) on cooperative behavior during a game task. In Phase 1, the participant could win the game based on the other player's behavior, and whether the other player allowed the participant to win varied across groups. In Phase 2, the participant had the opportunity to allow the other player to win. Results showed an aversion to inequity. In Phase 1, the participants did not allow themselves to win. However, Phase 2 results showed that aversion to inequity was influenced how helpful the partner was to the participant in Phase 1.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Karen Lionello-DeNolf

POSTER

The Impact of SRSD on Middle School Students' Narrative Writing Performance: A Preliminary Report

Mara Power and Ann Marie Quinn

Special Education Program

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is an evidence-based intervention used to teach writing strategies to general and special education students. After analyzing 2018 MCAS ELA scores for their students, two middle school teachers engaged in professional development in order to effectively implement this strategy with their middle school inclusion English class to increase writing performance with fidelity. Literature review, pre-test data, and description of implementation will be shared.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nanho Vander Hart

PRESENTATION

The Role of Tier Two in the Success of PBIS: Building Students' Social Language

Cathryn Chviruk

PBS CAGS in Special Education Program

Positive behavior support is a school-wide program to proactively create settings where students are successful, including a tiered approach to address the needs of all students. In this implementation project, I used a survey to collect data on the perceptions of school staff at an elementary school in Worcester regarding: 1) practices to manage behavior at the classroom level, 2) practices for students who need additional support, and 3) student needs not currently being addressed. Results of this survey were used to identify areas of need and to develop staff training and intervention to better support all students and teachers.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Samantha Goldman

PRESENTATION

A Study of Irritability as a Mechanism in Multiple Disorders

*William Nall, Paul Avolese, Rachel DiLima,
Jason Prior, and Alec Twigden*

Clinical Counseling Psychology Program

Stringaris (2011) defines irritability as “a mood of easy annoyance and touchiness characterized by anger and temper outbursts.” Irritability appears to be a symptom or characteristic of several disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Cassello-Robins & Barlow, 2016). However, there is scant research on the topic, and pathological irritability does not constitute its own disorder in the DSM. The purpose of this study is to examine how irritability relates to anxiety, depression, substance use, borderline personality disorder (BPD), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Previous literature has shown positive correlations with irritability and depression. Because depression and anxiety are so often co-occurring conditions,

we hypothesize a positive correlation between anxiety and irritability as well. We also hypothesize that irritability will be associated with substance use, BPD, depression, anxiety, and anger attacks. Because it is primarily a condition of impulse rather than irritability, we hypothesize that ADHD will not be associated with irritability.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Leonard Doerfler

Graduate Symposium Planning Committee

Dr. Leonard Doerfler
Director, Clinical Counseling Psychology
Program

Dr. Nanho Vander Hart
Director, Special Education Program

Assumption College
Graduate Studies Programs

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Master of Arts degrees (MA)
Certificate of Graduate Studies (CGS)
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS)

Applied Behavior Analysis

Clinical Counseling Psychology

Health Advocacy

Rehabilitation Counseling

Resiliency in the Helping Professions

School Counseling

Special Education

Transition Specialist