Function-Based Behavior Support: Using Functional Behavior Assessment to Develop Positive Behavior Support Plans

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“I see no hope for our future if we depend on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was a boy we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise and impatient of restraint.”

Aristotle
Learning From Past Mistakes

• “Jason has not done homework for 3 days. As a consequence he will receive an in-school detention.”

• Jacki has ADHD. She constantly distracts the class by banging her pencil and constantly getting out of her seat. When she does this teachers send her out of the room so they can continue their lessons.

• “Every day Lucy gets at least 2 pink slips for ripping up her papers. I don’t know why she hasn’t learned to ask for help!”
“Teaching” by Getting Tough

Angel: “I hate this school, & you’re a dumb________ teacher.”

Teacher: “That is disrespectful language. I’m sending you to the office so you’ll learn never to say those words again….starting now!”
Insanity

- Repeatedly doing the same thing the same way, and expecting different results.

Bill W., AA; Pat Parelli, horse whisperer
Assumptions of Positive Behavior Support

✓ All behavior serves a purpose (function)
✓ Behavior is context related.
✓ Inappropriate behaviors are learned and predictable.
✓ A learner’s inappropriate behavior is his/her best effort to be successful.
Learned Responses

• Students who chronically engage in problem behavior have:
  – Learned that it is a functional response for getting what they want
    • in many cases avoiding academic tasks they struggle with
  – Often do not have practiced alternative, more appropriate behaviors to fall back on
Positive Behavior Intervention & Support is...

• A process for understanding why a behavior is happening and what function it serves for a person.

• A way to teach youth more effective and efficient ways to communicate and manage uncomfortable emotions.

• A way to PREVENT challenging behaviors from happening in the first place by:
  – Modification of antecedents
  – Teaching new skills
  – More effective responses on the adult’s part
A Context for PBS

• Behavior support is the redesign of environments, not the redesign of individuals

• Positive Behavior Support plans define changes in the behavior of those who will implement the plan. A behavior support plan describes what we will do differently.

Rob Horner- University of Oregon
Be Proactive! & less reactive

• We need to **explicitly teach** expected and desired behavior, rather than take the risk, or expect, that students “should know”, or they will figure it out on their own.

• Our tendency when students don’t follow behavioral expectations is to punish students rather than teach students…
  – Would we punish a student for not reading a word correctly?
The Challenge

- **Problem:** *Eric enters the school building and within three minutes has a verbal conflict with another student, has walked away from a teacher who is supervising the situation, & has convinced other students to leave school with him. Staff members report that he is unresponsive to their directions and openly defiant.*

- What are possible causes for this problem?
- How would you know?
Understanding Function

The most common problem behaviors in school and in life serve a function:

1. **to get something**
   - attention; access to preferred activities; self-regulation

2. **to escape/avoid something**
   - tasks, embarrassment, situations, persons (peers and adults)

Adapted from T. Scott, 1988
## Typical functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Get/ Access</th>
<th>Avoid/ Escape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer/Adult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
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<td>Tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tangibles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
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The Importance of Context

Every behavior has a social and environmental context. When we try to answer the question “what function” is a behavior serving for a person” we attempt to identify relationships between the person, environmental events, and the occurrence or non-occurrence of specific behaviors.
Identify patterns of behavior: If we can predict problems, we can prevent them.
ABC of Behavior

Behavioral Events

A → B → C
ABCs of Behavior

Jared talks out at least two times per class. He smiles, and other students snicker, when his teachers remind him to raise his hand. Since the beginning of the year, the problem seems worse.

• What might be the function of Jared’s behavior?
• Do the reminders reinforce or punish the behavior? How do you know?
### Learning & A→B→C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a language arts class, a student is asked to read the word aloud on the board</td>
<td>student tries, but reads slowly, struggles, and gets the word wrong</td>
<td>peers laugh at the student and one student says, “That word is so easy”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What did the student learn?**

**NEXT DAY**

Student is asked to read the word aloud on the board | What happens today???

---

**NEXT DAY**

Student is asked to read the word aloud on the board | What happens today???
With IDEA, legislation calls for school personnel to work together in teams on behalf of students with impeding behavior.
Working as a Team: Two Heads are Better than One

- Targeted Teams: PBIS
- Student Assistance Teams
- Teacher Assistance Teams
- Others??

- To effectively and efficiently conduct an FBA and develop a BSP Teams should have a clear process for taking referrals, evaluating information, conducting observations, developing & monitoring plans, and providing teachers with on-going support. There should be at least ONE person on the team with expertise in the area of FBA and positive support planning.
Federal legislation has redefined the “educational landscape,” with the expectation that we address both academic and behavioral aspects of student performance.
So how do we begin?

• We begin with a functional assessment of the student and the environment.
What is FBA?

A systematic process for developing statements about factors that
– contribute to the occurrence & maintenance of problem behavior, &
– more importantly, serve as basis for developing proactive & comprehensive behavior support plans.
Rationale for Functional Behavioral Assessment

• The majority of student behavior is purposeful.
• Behavior (appropriate and inappropriate) is related to the context(s) in which it occurs.
• Behavior serves a predictive function.
• Functional behavior assessment answers the question of why the child or adolescent continues to engage in the problem behavior, rather than why (s)he exhibited the behavior the first time.
Purposes of Functional Behavioral Assessment

• Create order out of chaos

• Improve the *effectiveness* and *efficiency* of behavior support efforts.

• Professional accountability
Advantages of FBA

• Increases understanding of the causes of behavior;
• Facilitates hypothesis-driven treatment;
• Emphasizes skill building - not punishment
• Increases chance of positive student outcomes
Principles That Guide FBA

- We can’t fix it until we know why it’s broken.
- One size does not fit all.
- No one gives up something for nothing.
Summary: Components of FBA

• The Person
  • Strengths
  • Interests
  • Learning style
  • Social Network
  • Preferred Activities
  • Etc.
Antecedents: Setting Events

• Unique situations or conditions which occur at some point (sometimes distant in time) that increase or decrease the likelihood that given a particular antecedent (trigger) the behavior is more likely to occur. Often referred to as “slow triggers”.

• Setting events make students less resilient when faced with on-going stressors that the encounter throughout the day
Setting Event Examples

*Environmental:* quality of life; interactions; home environment; level of curriculum; social relationships;

*Learning Styles:* preferred activities; length of task; modality; choice making; skill level;

*Personal factors:* medications; illness; sleep; nutrition; sensory sensitivities;
Examples of Setting Events
Sugai, 2005

• Work completion is less important to Demetri after he has had an argument with his girlfriend before class, or

• Jane’s use of verbal profanity is more likely when she hasn’t had enough sleep night before, or

• Lack of breakfast increases value of getting sent to office (by vending machines) for failing to follow directions.
Antecedents: Triggers

• Any stimulus that occurs before the behavior and influences the likelihood that the behavior will occur.

• Examples: changes in routines; activity demand; length of task; teased by peers; reprimands; corrections
Consequences

• An event that contingently follows a behavior and affects whether a behavior will increase or decrease over time.

• Examining consequences that follow behavior helps us to determine the “function” that the behavior is serving for that person.
Examples of Consequences

- Being reprimanded
- Being corrected
- Losing privileges
- Poor grades
- Being ignored
- Extra work or homework

- Given office discipline referral
- Call to parent
- Removed from class
- Not being able to play sports
- Attention from peers
FBA Terminology

Antecedents

A

Setting Events

or

Slow Triggers

Environmental factors that influence behavior, not immediate

Immediate

or

Fast Triggers

Occur immediately before a behavior

Behavior

B

Problem Behavior

Goal:
Decrease

Appropriate Behavior

Goal:
Acquire skill & Increase

Consequences

C

(Outcome/Function)

Avoid/Escape

Reinforcement

Punishment

Access
When “Function” is not Enough

Behavior is a consequence of feelings and needs. **We must address the feelings and needs or the behavior will not change.**
Expanded FBA

**Antecedents**

- Setting Events
- also include...
- Perception
- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Self-Esteem
- Basic Needs

**Behavior**

- Problem Behavior
- Immediate or Fast Triggers/Stressors
- Occur immediately before a behavior

- Appropriate Behavior

**Consequences**

- (Outcome/Function)
- Reinforcement
- Punishment

- Access
- Avoid/Escape

**Goal:**

- Decrease
- Acquire skill & Increase
Perceptions

I can’t do it
Nobody likes me
I don’t know what is happening

Thoughts

Physical Response
Rapid heartbeat
Increased pulse
“Butterflies”

Feelings
Anxiety
Fear
Anger
Confusion

Behaviour
Act out
Shut Down
Run Away
Steps in a Function-Based Support Process

• Define the challenge
• Build a testable hypothesis (interview, observe)
• Confirm the hypothesis (observe, manipulate)
• Use “competing behavior analysis” to build possible elements of behavior support plan
• Use “contextual fit” guidelines to select final elements of behavior support plan
• Implement behavior support plan
• Monitor and modify as needed
Hypothesis or Summary Statements

Statement that describes:
- **Context** in which behavior is observed.
- The **Problem Behavior**
- **Antecedents & Maintaining Variables,** &
- **Function** of behavior
When Sequoia misses her 12:30 medication & teachers make multiple task demands, she makes negative self-statements & writes profane language on her assignments. Teaching staff typically send her to the office with a discipline referral for being disrespectful. (Sugai, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting event</th>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misses 12:30 medication</td>
<td>Teachers make multiple task demands</td>
<td>Sequoia makes negative self-statements &amp; writes profane language</td>
<td>Teacher sends Sequoia to office for being disrespectful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avoid difficult tasks
Caesar has dyed his hair three colors & is teased several times by his friends before class. When he enters the class, his teacher stares at his hair. Caesar immediately says “what are you staring at?” His teacher immediately sends him to in-school detention. (Sugai, 2006)
Jack gets into arguments with his math teacher if she asks him to correct his mistakes. As a result of this behavior Jack often avoids work and gains the teacher’s attention. This is more likely to happen if he has had difficulty with another subject prior to coming to math.
Jack gets into arguments with his math teacher if she asks him to correct his mistakes. As a result of this behavior Jack often avoids work and gains the teacher’s attention. This is more likely to happen if he has had difficulty with another subject prior to coming to math.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Event Manipulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with Another subject before math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check in with teachers of prior subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To insure success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide positive adult contact</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent Manipulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asked to correct his mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide answer sheet for comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind (pre-cue) alternative behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do first problem together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Manipulations (Skills to Teach)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach options to problem behavior:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ask for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teach missing math skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teach self-regulation strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequence Manipulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately reinforce/ positive adult contact before entering class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give break &amp; help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit with preferred peer when done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-teach skill in context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In history class Paul swears at the teacher when asked to take notes. When he does this he is sent to the office and avoids the activity. This is more likely to happen if Paul has been having arguments at home with his parents. Additionally, Paul has motor-planning problems and auditory processing difficulties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Event Manipulations</th>
<th>Antecedent Manipulations</th>
<th>Behavior Manipulations (Skills to Teach)</th>
<th>Consequence Manipulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-in in AM to assess problems prior to coming into school</td>
<td>Provide outline for Note-taking; Provide power-point Use peer notes Pre-cue Paul for Expected behaviors</td>
<td>Teach options to problem behavior: 1. Ask for help 2. Teach missing skills 3. Teach self-regulation strategies</td>
<td>Verbally reinforce appropriate behavior  Re-teach alternative skills in context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Juan verbally threatens the teacher ("You can’t make me do this _____!") when he is given a math assignment that he perceives as difficult. When Juan does this his teacher sends him to the office. This is more likely to happen if he comes late to school without his homework.
COMPETING PATHWAYS

Setting Events
Late to school without homework

Triggering Antecedents
Given math that he Perceives as difficult

Problem Behavior
Verbally threatens teacher

Maintaining Consequences
Sent to office; Avoids work.

Desired Alternative
Do math without complaints.

Acceptable Alternative
Ask for help or A break

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANNING

Setting Event Manipulations

Antecedent Manipulations

Behavior Teaching

Consequence Modifications
Mitch

- 15 years old, no disabilities, highly verbal, good sense of humor
- **Problem behaviors**: Talks out, calls peers names, uses teasing voice tone
- **Context**: In less structured contexts where he is not getting peer attention.
- **Maintaining Function**: obtain peer attention
- **Setting Events**: Extended time without peer contact.
Setting Events

Minimal peer contact

Triggering Antecedents

Seat work, Alone

Problem Behavior

Tease, Taunt peers

Replacement Behavior

Desired Behavior

Typical Consequences

Obtain Attention from peers

Maintaining Consequences
Identify the “Desired Behavior”

• The desired behavior is the behavior you want the student to perform

• Examples
  – Given seat work task --> work quietly
  – Given teacher request --> initiate compliance
  – Given taunt from peer --> turn and walk away
  – Given peer social initiation --> ??????
Setting Events: Minimal peer contact

Triggering Antecedents: Seat Work, Alone

Problem Behavior: Tease, Taunt peers

Desired Behavior: Do work quietly

Maintaining Consequences: Attention from peers

Replacement Behavior: Do work quietly
Define the Consequence Typically Associated with Desired Behavior

• What generally follows performance of the desired behavior
  – Ignored?
  – Praised?
  – Access to new activity?
  – Access to social contact?
  – Error correction?
Setting Events
Minimal peer contact

Triggering Antecedents
Seat Work, Alone

Problem Behavior
Tease, Taunt peers

Desired Behavior
Do work quietly

Typical Consequences
More work, points

Maintaining Consequences
Attention from peers

Replacement Behavior
Identify the “Replacement” Behavior

• An appropriate Replacement Behavior:
  – Serves the same function as the problem behavior
    • The replacement behavior is a member of the same response class as the problem behavior
  – Is as, or more efficient than the problem behavior
  – Is socially acceptable
  – Can be learned to criterion in 10 school days
Setting Events: Minimal peer contact

Triggering Antecedents: Seat Work, Alone

Problem Behavior: Tease, Taunt peers

Desired Behavior: Do work quietly

Maintaining Consequences: Attention from peers

Typical Consequences: More work, points

Replacement Behavior: Request to work with peers
Fundamental Rule

“You should not propose to reduce a problem behavior without also identifying (and then teaching) alternative, desired behaviors the person should perform instead of the problem behavior” (O’Neill et al., 1997, p. 71).
The FBA Process

1. Collect Information.
2. Develop testable hypothesis or summary statement.
3. Collect direct observation data to confirm summary statement.
5. Test hypothesis of problem behavior.
7. Develop details & routines for full implementation of BSP.
8. Develop strategies for monitoring & evaluating implementation of BSP.
How do we get the information that we need to discover “patterns” of behavior that allow us to build hypothesis statements......
Functional Assessment Approaches
(The majority of these forms can be found on the pbis.org website.)

• Indirect Information
  – Routine Matrix
  – Interviews (F-BSP; Student; FACTS Part A&B
  – Rating Scales (Setting Events Checklist)
  – SARS

• Direct Observation
  – ABC Charts
  – Scatter Plots
# Routine Matrix – FACTS Part A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>Refuses to read; Forgets book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>Does not complete assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
See Handout
Direct Methods -
Direct Observation
One hundred rumors are not comparable to one look.

Ancient Chinese Proverb
Direct Methods - Direct Observation

- There are three primary purposes for collecting direct observation data
  - Direct observation serves to objectively confirm (or deny) a relation between behavior and environmental events.
Direct Methods -
Direct Observation

• Direct observation provides quantifiable baseline (pre-treatment) information that can be used to gauge the magnitude of the problem behavior and the effects of environmental, curricular, and replacement behavior manipulations.
Direct Methods - Direct Observation

- There are many methods for collecting behavioral data
  - antecedent-behavior-consequence
  - (A-B-C) charts
  - frequency counts
  - scatter plot charts
A-B-C Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
# ABC Recording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Ant.</th>
<th>Beh.</th>
<th>Consq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:01</td>
<td>Math seat work</td>
<td>Teacher gives sheet</td>
<td>Tom says, “No”</td>
<td>Teacher glares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05</td>
<td>Math seat work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom talks to peer</td>
<td>Peer looks at Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:06</td>
<td>Math seat work</td>
<td>Teacher says “Get Busy”</td>
<td>Tom ‘flips the bird’</td>
<td>Teacher sends to office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7
Linking Functional Behavior Assessment to Positive Intervention Plans
Characteristics of Positive Behavior Intervention Plans

• Individualized

• Hypothesis based

• Multiple interventions or support strategies
Components of a Written Plan

- Baseline Data Results
- Description (definition) of the challenging behavior
  - When, where, with whom, how often,
  - What are the maintaining consequences behavior
- Hypothesis Statement
  - Function(s) of the behavior
Components of Positive Support Plans

• **Modifying Setting Events & Antecedents**
  – *Includes modifications to environment, curriculum, instruction, & demands*

• **Skills to Teach**
  (Replacement skills (maintained by same function as problem behavior and more efficient than problem behavior))
  – *Includes asking for help, asking to take a break, anger management, social skills, problem-solving skills, self-regulation strategies, executive skill functions*

• **Function/Consequence Strategies**
  – *How will we reinforce the positive behavior?*
  – *How will we respond to the problem behavior?*

• **Interventions and Supports that Consider Quality of Life**
  – Health and physiology
  – Communication
  – Mobility
  – Control/choice
  – Social relationships
• **Implementation Design**
  – *Who is going to do what, when; action plan*

• **Crisis Intervention Plan (if needed)**
  – *Prevent damage to people*
  – *Prevent damage to property*
  – *Prevent “defining” events*

• **Evaluation and Assessment**
  – *Defined what information will be collected*
  – *Identify who will collect the information*
  – *Define when and how the information will be used for decision-making.*
Case Study
Stop asking me if we're almost there.
For crying out loud, we're nomads

• [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

• [www.nhcebis.seresc.net](http://www.nhcebis.seresc.net)