

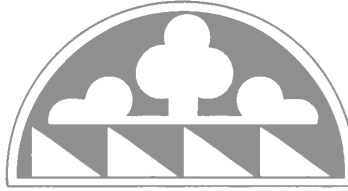
Behavioral Assessment and Interventions



Maryland State Department of
EDUCATION

July 2002

Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services



Maryland State Board of Education

Marilyn D. Maultsby
President

Nancy S. Grasmick
Secretary-Treasurer of the Board
State Superintendent of Schools

JoAnn T. Bell

Philip S. Benzil

Dunbar Brooks

Reginald L. Dunn

Clarence A. Hawkins

Walter S. Levin

Karabelle A. L. Pizzigati

Edward L. Root

Walter Sondheim, Jr.

John L. Wisthoff

Caroline Gifford (Student Member)

Richard J. Steinke

Deputy State Superintendent
Office of Instruction and Academic Acceleration

Carol Ann Baglin

Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Special Education/
Early Intervention Services

Parris N. Glendening, Governor

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For inquiries related to departmental policy, please contact the Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch, Voice – (410) 767-0433, TTY/TDD – (410) 333-3045, or Fax – (410) 767-0431.

This document was developed and produced by the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, IDEA Part B Grant #HO27A010035A funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Education or any other Federal

agency and should not be regarded as such. The Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services receives funding from the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education. This information is copyright free. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), this document is available in alternative formats, upon request. Contact the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education at Voice – (410) 767-0478, Fax – (410) 333-8165, or TTY/TDD – (410) 333-0731.

Introduction

Behavior is purposeful and cannot be understood outside of the context within which it occurs. Often behaviors interfere with learning. When these behaviors are repetitive and resistant to behavioral interventions, a functional assessment of behavior should be conducted to understand the function of the student's behavior and to plan effective interventions. Assessing and intervening in inappropriate behaviors early has the potential of reducing the incidences of school failure and facilitating positive social development.

Each school should examine its data to identify standards for behavior assessment and intervention planning for all students. The data unique to a school that specifically identifies the behaviors, frequency, location, and contributing factors will enable a school team to develop a comprehensive system of proactive, universal school-wide, positive supports designed specifically to meet the needs of the school. Whenever students exhibit behaviors that significantly interfere with their own learning or the learning of others, the school team should assess the function of the behavior in order to implement positive interventions and supports. Proactive, positive intervention should be used for all students and in all areas of the school community.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide administrators, educators, parents, and community members with a better understanding of the behavioral assessment and intervention process. The disciplinary requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have provided school systems with an opportunity to examine their practices for assessing behaviors and implement appropriate interventions for all students, not only for students with disabilities. The concept of intervening early upon inappropriate behaviors with the use of positive supports and strategies is incorporated within the behavioral assessment process.

Whenever a student's behavior that interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others comes to the attention of individuals involved with the student, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should convene to plan for a functional assessment of the student's behavior. This functional behavioral assessment (FBA) increases our understanding of the student's behavior and its function for the student, and is used to develop a behavioral intervention plan (BIP).



Terminology

A-B-C Analysis	A problem-solving process in which the antecedents and consequences currently operating for both the problem and the desired behavior are identified.
Accuracy	Describes whether or not a student uses a behavior or similar behavior the same way in response to the same antecedent.
Antecedent	A person, place, thing, or event coming before a behavior that triggers the behavior.
BIP	Behavioral Intervention Plan.
Consequence	An action in response to a behavior that maintains the behavior.
Duration	Describes how long the behavior lasts within a set period of time.
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment.
Frequency	Describes how often the behavior occurs within a set period of time.
Intensity	Describes the force, impact, power, and magnitude of the behavior to determine whether a behavior is becoming more pronounced.
Latency	Describes the amount of time that elapses between two events.
Setting Event	Environmental, social, or physical events or actions that occur at some time prior to the antecedent or behavior, which influence the behavior.
Topography	The physical appearance or movement involved with the behavior (e.g., screams, yells, bites, strikes others).

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Positive behavioral supports and intervention strategies represent a comprehensive system of behavior management that uses multiple approaches, including changing school-wide systems, implementing classroom management techniques, altering environments, and overtly recognizing appropriate behavior positively, rather than simply using one intervention in an attempt to eliminate a behavior. The purpose of positive behavioral supports and strategies is to actively teach and model appropriate skills and competencies to enable students to achieve better control over their behavior.

Too often the term “discipline” has been used to describe punitive actions taken in response to inappropriate behaviors. Positive behavioral supports and interventions represent a shift in thinking from traditional behavior management.

Traditional Behavior Management	Positive Behavioral Support
1. Views individual as “the problem.”	1. Views systems, settings, and skill deficiencies as “the problem.”
2. Attempts to “fix” individual.	2. Attempts to “fix” systems, settings, and skills.
3. Extinguishes behavior.	3. Creates new contacts, experiences, relationships, and skills.
4. Sanctions aversives.	4. Sanctions positive approaches.
5. Takes days or weeks to “fix” a single behavior.	5. Takes years to create responsive systems, personalized settings, and appropriate empowering skills.
6. Implemented by a behavioral specialist often in atypical settings.	6. Implemented by a dynamic and collaborative team using person-centered planning in typical settings.
7. Often resorted to when systems are inflexible.	7. Flourishes when systems are flexible.

Source: Functional Assessment: Putting Research on Methods of Behavior Management to Practical Use in the Classroom.

Behavioral supports and interventions should begin with early interventions in an effort to proactively alter current troublesome behaviors before the behaviors become a larger problem. Using proactive, positive behavior supports leads to a positive school climate. Effective school-wide practices include setting specific and individual student procedures.

Systemic Positive Intervention Strategies and Supports

It is important that existing school structures and processes include universal interventions where positive reinforcement is dominant and all students are provided explicit instruction on the expected behavior so they understand limits and expectations. Positive interventions need to occur as early as possible after the undesired behavior occurs. Universal interventions are those strategies or supports that are:

- Applied to all students;
- Proactive;



- Based on clear and predictable limits and expectations;
- Positive-reinforcement dominant; and
- Linked to the school's organizational goals.

Personnel must continually monitor interventions to ensure that the consequences of behavior increase the frequency of desired behaviors and decrease the frequency of undesired behaviors. To be most effective, informal, frequent, positive acknowledgement of desired behaviors is needed to support behavior that leads to desired goals. Individuals respond to many kinds of rewards, tangible and intangible. Consequently, school personnel need to review carefully the behavioral systems being employed at all levels within the school.

Positive support strategies are effective. The emphasis of these strategies is for adults within schools to direct attention, time, and resources on the positive, rather than negative aspects of behavior management. Students will perform to the level of our expectations. Since all behaviors are learned and occur for a reason, it is important that adults who interact with students understand how a behavior considered challenging functions for a student.

Before we can directly address specific skill or performance deficits, students first need an increased opportunity for:

- Individual control and choice;
- Positive attention; and
- Adult and peer status.

In order to provide explicit instruction to individual students that are aligned with the student's strengths, teachers need to examine:

- Teaching strategies;
- Environmental arrangements;
- Instructional activities and materials;
- Expected responses; and
- Assessment methods

To institute a comprehensive, school-wide approach to positive behavioral interventions, the following actions need to occur.

Define Parameters and Mechanisms

Once the decision is made to approach school-wide discipline from the position of meaningful positive recognition of appropriate behavior, the specific parameters and mechanics for implementation must be defined. The rules must be clear, understood by all, and implemented uniformly across all settings. These features are what will make a positive behavioral support system powerful and what will make a clear connection between the level of performance and the appropriate consequences.

Obtain Commitment and Support

Once the procedures and mechanics of a positive behavioral support system are clear, the purpose and objectives for the program must be clearly communicated to all members of the school community. All staff members and students must be provided the skills for effective implementation and planned opportunities for practice. For staff and parents this is usually accomplished most effectively through interactive professional development that employs adult learning styles to provide the adults an opportu-

nity to practice these skills in a comfortable and supportive environment. School administrators may consider eliciting the help of school staff, students, and parents in both planning and implementing the parent, student, and educator instructional activities.

Monitor Effectiveness

Any program is only as good as its implementation. Positive interventions and supports, including universal supports, must be monitored to see if they are being used as intended and to measure whether the desired results are being obtained. Even the best system of universal, positive behavioral supports is apt to lose its effectiveness over time if one of the defining characteristics is not consistently implemented across school environments.

Linkage to Improved Student Results

Administrators and teachers must ensure that a system of universal positive behavioral supports is in line with the school's plan for improved student results. This outcome can most easily be achieved by making informal strategies, supports, and rewards a subset of a larger, more formal recognition/reward program. For example, a school or class award (a formal reward) could be given to the student who receives the greatest number of recognition points (an informal reward) for assisting peers in academic skill development, which results in improved academic performance during a specified timeframe.

Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is most effective. First, under conditions of positive reinforcement, the response produces a consequence that results in increased frequency of the response. Second, the adverse emotional responses associated with punishment and extinction are apt to be reduced and, in fact, favorable emotions may be elicited. By understanding what drives human behavior, we can create the conditions necessary to encourage desired behaviors.

When tailoring positive supports for the entire school community, a targeted group of students, or an individual student, the team should consider the students' strengths and use strategies and supports previously used as reinforcers for the students that have proved effective in the past. Below are critical components of effective reinforcement strategies.

- **Personal** Those responsible for delivering supports and reinforcers must do so in a personal way. Calling the student by name is one important criterion.
- **Sincere** It is important that you mean what you say.
- **Specific** The student must know exactly why he or she received a particular reinforcer. The student has to know why he or she is being praised. Behavior is a complex, ongoing chain of events. The contingency between a behavior and the consequence may not be clear. Pinpoint exactly the behavior you liked.
- **Immediate** Try to catch the student in the act of being good. Reinforce the behavior while the student is doing what you want. Do not wait until the end of class, the activity, or the end of the day to give specific recognition to the student for his or her actions. The longer the time between the completion of a behavior and the delivery of a reinforcing consequence, the less effective the reinforcer will be.



- **Frequently** This means that, at first, a student’s desired replacement behavior may need to be reinforced by approximations until the student is able to consistently demonstrate the expected results.

The following conditions should be addressed when developing positive behavioral interventions and supports. The challenge is to create an environment and conditions that encourage students and staff to collaborate because they want to, not because they have to.

Effective support systems are **SMART:**

- **Specific** Supports focus on the desired behaviors and provide the student with a clear “line of sight” between action and result.
- **Meaningful** The interventions and supports are personalized for the student, taking into consideration the student’s strength and needs, as well as a replacement behavior that serves the same function and is considered “worth the effort” to the student.
- **Achievable** The replacement behavior is viewed as achievable, but not easy.
- **Reliable** The rewards are provided “contingent” on taking an action or achieving a result.
- **Timely** Interventions and supports are provided consistently and as timely as necessary to reinforce the desired behaviors to achieve desired results.

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT

Functions of Behavior

Identifying the functions of a student’s behavior provides direct explanations of how a particular behavior “works” for an individual student in a given context. Behaviors serve to:

- Get something (positive reinforcement) such as social attention, sensory stimulation, peer status and peer attention, or tangible rewards;
- Escape or avoid something (negative reinforcement) such as someone. This function typically results in a behavior that allows the student to terminate or postpone an event. Students may throw tantrums, or display physical or verbal aggression; or
- Control events such as instructional activities.

The behavioral function may be different depending upon the context in which the behavior occurs. Also, multiple behaviors may accomplish similar functions or different functions in different contexts. Of course, positive interventions that are appropriate for one student will differ for another student depending upon the function of the specific behavior.

All behaviors are purposeful and serve to meet a need. Behaviors change from environment to environment and are maintained by consequences that reinforce the behavior. When a student is exhibiting a



behavior that is considered challenging, troublesome, or inappropriate, the behavior may be inadvertently maintained because the interventions being implemented are not addressing the root cause or function of that particular behavior for the student. In addition, individuals who work with a student may have different levels of behavioral tolerance. One person may perceive a behavior as troublesome, while another may not.

Behavioral Assessment

An FBA is a collaborative, student-centered process for gathering information that reliably predicts the conditions and/or circumstances around why a student is exhibiting an inappropriate behavior. A functional assessment is an assessment of a student’s behavior of concern to determine the function of that behavior for the student.

When a student displays inappropriate behavior, an assessment of that behavior should involve the collection of objective, observable data and information concerning that behavior across settings from a variety of individuals, including educators, parents, and the student. It is most critical that the behavior is described in objective terms. The data obtained should clearly and objectively describe the events leading to the behavior, the behavior itself, and the consequences in response to the behavior. In order to change the behavior, supports and intervention strategies used to teach the student an appropriate replacement behavior must satisfy the same function for the student.

Because all behaviors serve a function, such as the need to get something, avoid something, or control events, the behaviors students engage in are typically attributable to:

- ◆ Skill deficits;
- ◆ Performance deficits;
- ◆ Environmental factors;
- ◆ Interpersonal factors;
- ◆ A failure to self-regulate; and/or
- ◆ An instructional “mismatch.”

Although, under IDEA, an FBA is not required until a student with a disability has been removed for 10 school days or its cumulative equivalent in a school year, it is recommended that school personnel engage in the FBA process whenever a behavior is first observed to enable professionals to develop and implement appropriate supports and services in a BIP.

The FBA is to describe the behavior and the context in which it is observed. This information is used to guide the development of a BIP. As such, an FBA should be conducted whenever a student’s behavior is difficult to understand and/or a student’s BIP needs to be developed or revised.

An FBA should include the following steps: a collection of data; a proposed hypothesis for the behavior; and an assessment of whether or not the hypothesis is valid for the student.

Step 1: Collect Information

The collection of data is needed to:

- Identify the behavior; and
- Define that behavior in specific and objective terms.

This is accomplished through indirect observations and direct observations. Indirect observations include informal conversations, questionnaires, checklists, and structured interviews with key persons who have contact with the student and can offer insights into the contexts or conditions under which the



behavior occurs. Direct observation is the most reliable and valid procedure for collecting information because observers watch the behaviors as they are occurring and note the environmental events (environmental factors, antecedent and consequence events) that are associated with the behaviors. The data collected should include specific information regarding the environment, events, and activities immediately prior to and following the behavior.

Step 2: Propose a hypothesis of the student's behavior

The hypothesis should explain the relationship between an identified behavior and general conditions that appear to predict and maintain that behavior. The hypothesis should describe the relationship among an antecedent, behavior, and consequence. The hypothesis should also specifically describe the suspected function of that behavior for the student.

A complete hypothesis includes:

- An objective description of the behavior;
- Possible setting events and antecedents that trigger the behavior; and
- Possible consequences that maintain the behavior.

Step 3: Validate the hypothesis

Validation involves collecting additional information about the conditions under which the behavior does and does not occur, and demonstrating that occurrences of the behavior and the presence of these conditions are related and predictable. Typically this entails systematic observations of a student to identify and confirm patterns of predictable behaviors in order to create an effective intervention plan for changing the behavior. If, during the validation phase, the hypothesis cannot be confirmed, the hypothesis would need to be reformulated and revalidated.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLANS

Effective behavior interventions are planned, data-driven, and based on an assessment of the behavior. Undertaking an “intervention” without an assessment or a plan can lead to increased misbehavior. A BIP is individualized for the student, designed for the settings where the behavior occurs, and implemented consistently across those settings. Follow-up, monitoring, and revision of the BIP are essential as the identified inappropriate behavior is replaced by an acceptable behavior.

An FBA is the basis for developing an effective BIP. A student’s BIP is designed to address positively specific individual needs. BIP components should address:

- How to teach the student an appropriate replacement behavior;
- How to alter or neutralize any known setting events;
- How to alter or manipulate the events that typically occur before the behavior (antecedents);
- How to alter or manipulate the events that typically occur after the behavior (consequences) to positively reinforce the appropriate replacement behavior; and
- How personnel are to respond consistently to occurrences across settings.

Depending upon the identified features of a behavior, such as its frequency, duration and topography, it may be necessary to begin with a series of approximations that will serve the same function for the student while more extensive modifications are developed. With approximations, students receive reinforcement for successful small intermediate steps along a continuum. This provides school personnel time to make any needed environmental or curricular modifications to support the desired replacement

behavior. Selecting replacement behaviors which require less effort to display than the current behavior is important. A replacement behavior that takes more effort to display than the existing behavior is unlikely to occur. Thus, the goal is to carefully select and directly teach replacement responses that are easier to do than the current behavior **and** serve the same function. If a replacement behavior does not meet the student's need, the replacement behavior will not persist.

Even after appropriate replacement behaviors are identified and instruction has facilitated the student's success in using an appropriate replacement behavior, events will occur that may hasten the return of the inappropriate behavior. To increase the likelihood of a student exhibiting the desired replacement behavior in settings formerly associated with the identified inappropriate behavior, various modifications to these settings may be needed.



References

- Bettenhausen, S. (1997). Using proactive strategies to deal with students with challenging behaviors. In *Counterpoint*, Vol.18. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- Carr, E.G., Durand, V.M. (1985). Reducing behavior problems through functional communication training. In *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 18(2), pp. 111-126.
- Dunlap, G., & Foster-Johnson, L. (1993). Using functional assessment to develop effective, individualized interventions for challenging behaviors. In *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 25(3), pp. 44-50.
- Colvin, G., Kameenui, E. J., & Sugai, G. (1993). Reconceptualizing behavior management and school-wide discipline in general education. In *Education and Treatment of Children*, 16(4) pp. 361-381.
- Dunlap, G. (1998). Functional behavioral assessment & planning. NASDE Satellite Teleconference.
- Feil, E. G., Sverson, H. H., & Walker, H. M. (1995). Identification of critical factors in the assessment of preschool behavior problems. In *Education and Treatment of Children*, 18(3), pp. 261-271.
- Flannery, K. B., O'Neill, R. E., & Horner, R. H. (1995). Including predictability in functional assessment and individual program development. In *Education and Treatment of Children*, 8(4), pp. 499-509.
- Gable, R., (1996). A critical analysis of functional assessment: Issues for researchers and practitioners. In *Behavioral Disorders*, 22(1), 36-40.
- Gable R., Quinn M., Rutherford, R., Howell K., & Hoffman, C. C. (1998). Addressing student problem behavior. Part II: Conducting a functional behavioral assessment. The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. Available: <http://www.air-dc.org/cecp/>.
- Gable R., Quinn M., Rutherford, R., Howell K., & Nelson M. (1998). Addressing student problem behaviors: Part I: An IEP team's introduction to functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plans (2nd ed.) The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. Available: <http://www.air-dc.org/cecp/>.
- Gable R., Quinn M., Rutherford, R., Howell K., Hoffman, C. C. (2000) Addressing student problem behaviors: Part III: Creating positive behavioral intervention plans and supports. The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. Available: <http://www.air-dc.org/cecp/>.
- Gresham, F. M. (1998) Designs for evaluating behavior change. In *Handbook of Child Behavior Therapy*, New York: Plenum Press.
- Hartwig, E. (1999). A new understanding: Discipline in education. Presentation, Administrative Law Judges, Office of Administrative Hearings Sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education.

- Hendrickson, J. M. (1992). Assessing the student-instructional setting interface using an eco-behavioral observation system. In *Preventing School Failure*, 36(3), pp. 26-31.
- Lewis, T. J., & Sugai, G. (1996). Functional assessment of problem behavior: A pilot investigation of the comparative and interactive effects of teacher and peer social attention on students in general education settings. In *School Psychology Quarterly*, 11(1), pp. 1-19.
- Lombardo, L. (1997). Behavior intervention: Place the emphasis on the positive. In *Counterpoint*, Vol.18. A publication of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- Lombardo L. (1997) Functional assessment: putting research on methods of behavior management to practical use in the classroom. In *Counterpoint*, Vol.18. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- O’Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Storey, K., Sprague, J. R. (1990). *Functional analysis of problem behavior: A practical assessment guide*. Sycamore, IL: Sycamore.
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (1999). Research Brief. Interventions for chronic behavior problems.
- Sasso, G. M., Reimers, T. M., Cooper, L.J., Wacker, D., Berg, W., Steege, M., Kelly, L., & Allaire, A. (1992). Use of descriptive and experimental analyses to identify the functional properties of aberrant behavior in school settings. In *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 25(4), pp. 809-821.
- Sugai, G., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Hagan, S. (1998). Using functional assessments to develop behavior support plans. Eugene, OR: *Preventing School Failure*, 43(1), pp. 6-13.
- Sugai, G., Horner, R. H., Dunlap, G., Hieneman, M., Lewis, T. J., Nelson, C. M., Scott, T., Liaupsin, C., Sailor, W., Turnbull, A. P., Turnbull, R., Wickham, D., Ruef, N. M., Wilkcox, B. (1999). Applying positive behavioral support and functional assessment in schools. OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support.
- Taylor-Greene, S., (1997). School-wide behavioral support: Starting the year off right. In *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 7(1), pp. 99-112.
- Tilly, D., Kovaleski, J., Dunlap, G., Knoster, T., Bambara, L., Kincaid, D. (1998). Functional behavioral assessment: Policy development in light of emerging research and practice. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- Todd, A. W., Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., & Sprague, J. R. (1999). Effective behavior support: Strengthening school-wide systems through a team-based approach. In *Effective School Practices*, 17(4), pp. 23-37.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs. (2000). Functional behavioral assessment. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/factsheets.html>



Internet References

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (CECP)

American Institutes for Research

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Suite 400

Washington, DC 20007

<http://www.air-dc.org/cecp/>

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Behavioral Research and Training

5262 University of Oregon

Eugene, OR 97403

<http://www.PBIS.org>

Council for Exceptional Children

1920 Association Drive

Reston, VA 22091-1589

<http://www.cec.sped.org/>

National Association of School Psychologists

4340 East West Highway

Suite 402

Bethesda, MD 20814

<http://www.nasponline.org/>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities

Academy for Educational Development

P. O. Box 1492

Washington, DC 20013-1492

<http://nichcy.org/>

Office of Special Education Programs

U.S. Department of Education

Mary E. Switzer Building

330 C Street, SW

Washington, DC 20202

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>

PACER Center

8161 Normandale Boulevard

Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

<http://www.pacer.org>



Maryland State Department of
EDUCATION

**200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2595
marylandpublicschools.org**