CONDUCTING FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS

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An Educational Service Agency Supporting School Excellence
OBJECTIVES

- Purpose of FBA
- The ABCs of FBA
- Record Review
- Advanced Interviewing
- Planning for Direct Observations

Small Group Discussion
What do you want to know more about?
A FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT IS...

- A process of assessment
- A process of gathering information from various sources

A FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT IS NOT...

- A discussion about a student
- A meeting about a student
- A completed checklist or set of forms
THE PURPOSE

▶ …of all activities within the FBA domain are to determine under what conditions a behavior is most likely to occur and what happens in the environment as a result of that behavior and maintains that behavior.

Propose a Testable Explanation
One must differentiate among antecedents and consequences that are *associated* with interfering behavior and those variables that are *functionally related* to interfering behavior.

- Verbal Instruction
  - Length
    - One- to Three Word Cues
Anecdotally,

- The student displays verbal opposition (e.g., verbally refusing to complete assignments) and property destruction (e.g., tearing up worksheets and books) when he was directed by the classroom teacher to complete math worksheets.
- Following these behaviors, the teacher delivered a verbal reprimand and then asked the student to leave the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Event</th>
<th>Triggering Antecedent</th>
<th>Problem Behavior</th>
<th>Maintaining Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher asks student to complete math worksheets</td>
<td>Verbal refusal and property destruction</td>
<td>Verbal reprimand (attention) and asked to leave class (escape)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting Events
Triggering Antecedents
Behavior
Maintaining Consequence Events
RANGE OF STUDENT RESPONSES

- Completed math worksheets with no verbal opposition or property destruction;
- Completed portions of the worksheets, and then displayed verbal opposition;
- Completed portions of the worksheets, and then displayed verbal opposition and property destruction;
- Displayed verbal opposition, but following verbal reprimands and verbal redirection prompts from the teacher, complied and completed the worksheets;
- Displayed verbal opposition, but following verbal reprimands and verbal redirection prompts from the teacher, engaged in additional verbal opposition and then property destruction;
- Exhibited property destruction and no occurrences of verbal opposition.
FURTHER ANALYSIS

- Revealed that the worksheets varied in terms of:
  - Length – the number of problems to solve.
  - Complexity – computation versus story problems.
  - Skill level – mastery, instructional, frustration.
Sometimes the teacher:

- Provided verbal praise when the student initiated the worksheets;
- Did not provide any feedback, regardless of the student's behavior;
- Delivered a verbal reprimand and asked the student to leave the classroom when the student exhibited interfering behaviors;
- Delivered a verbal reprimand, but did not ask the student to leave the room;
- Provided verbal praise when the student initiated the worksheets, but when subsequent interfering behavior occurred, delivered a varying combination of verbal reprimands, verbal redirection, and directions for the student to leave the classroom.
STUDENT INTERVIEW

- Headache – difficulty concentrating and “would rather just be left alone”
- If the math worksheets followed the completion of other difficult assignments then, “that was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”
- He sometimes arrived at school in a “good mood and didn’t mind doing the work.”
- He arrived at school after having an argument with his parents and was “pissed off at the world.”
- He smoked marijuana before coming to school, had the “munchies,” was very sleepy, and “just felt like chilling.”
A COMPLEX ENDEAVOR

- Identification and analysis of the variables that contribute to the occurrence of interfering behaviors requires the consideration of an array of interacting variables.
- These are not simple *stimulus-response* relationships.
- We look for predictability.
  - Gathering a sufficient amount of information, using a variety of methods, to feel confident that you’ve identified as many of the contributing variables as possible.
SETTING EVENTS

- Setting Events
  - Possible mediating conditions that do not have a causal link to the behavior itself
    - personal characteristics, sensitivities, and/or internal states
      - Sensitivity to loud noises
      - Depression
    - Skill/behavior deficits or excesses: communication, academic, social, personal living, or community living skills
      - Autism
      - Specific Learning Disability
      - Orthopedic Impairment
    - Significant life events / family stressors
      - The Modern Family
      - Trauma
ANTECEDENTS

- Stimuli that occur prior to a behavior *and* that influence its occurrence

**Neutral Stimuli versus Functionally-related Antecedents**

During the first few moments of an anecdotal observation of a student with a history of disruptive behavior (e.g., swearing, arguing), the school psychologist noticed that immediately prior to the onset of disruptive behaviors, a classmate began humming the tune of a pop song.

Is the classmate’s humming a functional antecedent that triggered the interfering behaviors?
REINFORCING CONSEQUENCES

- Consequences are those events that follow behavior and either increase or decrease the behavior.
  - Reinforcers and Punishers

Functional Consequences versus Neutral Consequences

During the first few moments of an anecdotal observation of a student with a history of disruptive behavior (e.g., swearing, arguing), during a sustained silent reading session the school psychologist noticed that immediately following the occurrence of these behaviors several classmates laughed, snickered, and/or guffawed. As the classmates’ laughter was fading, the classroom teacher directed the student to put down his book and to report to the guidance office. An educational assistant next escorted the student from the classroom.
THREE TYPES OF REINFORCEMENT

Positive
- Social
- Activity
- Tangible

Negative
- Social
- Settings
- Activities
- Tasks/Assignments

Automatic
- Arousal Reduction
- Arousal Induction
• Personal characteristics or sensitivities
• Skill and/or behavior deficits / excesses
• Significant life events

{Irrelevant}

SE → A

• Low or Divided Attention
• Academic Demand
• Social Demand
• Restrict Access to Preferred Item or Activity
• All Conditions, and/OR, Alone

{Inefficient}

A → B

• Attention
• Escape / Avoid Academic Task
• Escape / Avoid Social Demand
• Access to Preferred Item or Activity
• Arousal Induction/Reduction

{Ineffective}

B → C
GENERAL COMPONENTS OF THE FBA

- Identifying behaviors that interfere with a student’s ability to learn or demonstrate skills they’ve learned.
- Describing interfering behaviors in objective, concrete terms.
- Measuring the magnitude of interfering behaviors – frequency, intensity and duration.
- Identifying the individual variables, or setting events, that contribute to the occurrence of interfering behaviors.
- Identifying the antecedent and consequence variables that contribute to the occurrence of interfering behaviors.
- Developing hypotheses regarding the function(s) of interfering behaviors.
- Identifying function-based interventions to address interfering behaviors.
METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

- Record review
- Interviews
- Direct observation
- Rating Scales
- Testing the hypothesis(es)

Dynamic versus Linear Process
Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) Process

FBA Report

[IEP Writer]

FACTS – Part A
FACTS – Part B
(March, et. al.)

F-BSP Protocol
(Crone & Horner)

Motivation Assessment Scale
(Durand)

Data Sheets for Direct Observation

Excel Files For Data Analysis
GETTING STARTED

- Referral or request for FBA
  - Screen for appropriateness of the request
  - Clarify the behavior of concern
  - Obtain consensus about which behavior is to be the target for the FBA
    - Not doing an FBA on a person – the FBA is for a behavior
  - Obtain Consent to Assess or PTE/PTR
    - Give overview of FBA process to team members – who you are going to interview, schedule first observation
    - Schedule time to talk to parent/guardian on the phone

**Important:** Do not rely on information obtained during a team meeting as your interview data.
RATIONALE TO THE TEAM

“The reason to do an FBA is to answer two questions about a particular behavior - Why is the behavior happening – or, what might be triggering the behavior? And, why does it keep happening over and over again? If we can answer these two questions, then the team will be able to identify effective strategies and/or supports [that can help prevent the behavior from occurring in the first place, replace the problem behavior with a more acceptable behavior that serves the same purpose, and, help classroom staff come up with a consistent and effective way of responding to the problem behavior when it does occur].”
Small Group Discussion

RECORD REVIEW
RECORD REVIEW

- Outside evaluations
  - More thorough history—developmental, family, treatment
  - Mental Health and Medical information
- Prior FBAs and/or Behavior Plans
- IEP
  - SDIs related to behavioral/social/emotional goals
- Evaluation Report
  - Overview of cognitive/academic functioning
- Attendance / Grades
INTERVIEWING

- Teacher – set aside dedicated time (15-20 min)
  - Decide if you need to talk with more than one teacher
- Parent / Guardian – 30 to 60 min on the phone
- Student – 20 to 30 min (not required)
**Student Name_________________________**  **Age:____**  **Grade:____**  **Date:________________**

**Person (s) interviewed:** _______________________________________________________________________

**Interviewer** ___________________________________________________________________________________

**Student Profile:** What is the student good at or what are some strengths that the student brings to school?
______________________________________________________________________________________________

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**STEP 1: INTERVIEW TEACHER/STAFF/PARENT**

**Description of the Behavior**

What does the problem behavior(s) look like?

How often does the problem behavior(s) occur?

How long does the problem behavior(s) last when it does occur?

How disruptive or dangerous is the problem behavior(s)?

**Description of the Antecedent**

When, where, and with whom are problem behaviors most likely?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule (Times)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Specific Problem Behavior</th>
<th>Likelihood of Problem Behavior</th>
<th>With Whom does Problem Occur</th>
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### Summarize Antecedent (and Setting Events)

<table>
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<th>What situations seem to set off the problem behavior?</th>
<th>(difficult tasks, transitions, structured activities, small group settings, teacher’s request, particular individuals, etc.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When is the problem behavior most likely to occur?</td>
<td>(times of day and days of the week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is the problem behavior least likely to occur?</td>
<td>(times of day and days of the week)</td>
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</table>

### Setting Events: Are there specific conditions, events, or activities that make the problem behavior worse?  
(missed medication, history of academic failure, conflict at home, missed meals, lack of sleep, history or problems with peers, etc.)

### Description of the Consequence

| What usually happens after the behavior occurs? | (what is the teacher’s reaction, how do other student’s react, is the student sent to the office, does the student get out of doing work, does the student get in a power struggle, etc.) |

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### End of Interview

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### STEP 2: PROPOSE A TESTABLE EXPLANATION

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<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
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### Function of the Behavior

For each ABC sequence listed above, why do you think the behavior is occurring?  
(to get teacher attention, to get peer attention, gets desired object/activity, escapes undesirable activity, escapes demand, escapes particular people, etc.)

1.  
2.  

### How confident are you that your testable explanation is accurate?  
Very sure 5 4 3 2 1 Not at all
STEP 3: RATE YOUR CONFIDENCE IN THE TESTABLE EXPLANATION

If you completed both interviews, was there agreement on these parts? (Y/N)
(a) Setting Events ___  (b) Antecedents ___  (c) Behaviors ___  (d) Consequences ___  (e) Function ___

How confident are you that your testable explanation is accurate?
Very sure  6  5  4  So-so  3  2  Not at all  1

STEP 4: CONDUCT OBSERVATIONS (IF NECESSARY)

- If student has an identified disability and is at risk of suspension, expulsion, or change in placement you must conduct an observation of student
- If student does not meet above criteria, but confidence rating is 1, 2, 3, or 4 you should conduct observations to better understand when, where, and why the problem behavior is occurring.
- If student does not meet above criteria, and confidence rating is 5 or 6, you may go directly to Step 6

Summarize Observation Data

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Setting Event</th>
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</table>

Function of the Behavior

For each ABC sequence listed above, why do you think the behavior is occurring? (to get teacher attention, to get peer attention, gets desired object/activity, escapes undesirable activity, escapes demand, escapes particular people, etc.)
1.__________________________________________________________
2.__________________________________________________________
3.__________________________________________________________

STEP 5: CONFIRM/MODIFY TESTABLE EXPLANATION

Was there agreement between the Teacher Interview and the Observation? Y/N
a) Setting Events ___  (b) Antecedents ___  (c) Behaviors ___  (d) Consequences ___  (e) Function ___

Was there agreement between the Student Interview and the Observation? Y/N
a) Setting Events ___  (b) Antecedents ___  (c) Behaviors ___  (d) Consequences ___  (e) Function ___

Based on the interviews and observations, what is your working testable explanation for why the problem behavior occurs?
__________________________________________________________
Baseline and ABC

FBA-RELATED OBSERVATIONS
TWO TYPES OF DATA

Baseline

- *Prior* to intervention
- How often, how long, how intense, how interfering
- Used to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention

ABC

- Analytical
- To develop your hypothesis statement about the behavior
  - Antecedents
  - *Behavior*
  - Consequences
A-B-C OBSERVATIONS

- Review the data sheet
- Gathering A-B-C observations
  - How much time to allocate?
  - How many events to record?
  - What if problem behavior is not observed during scheduled times?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:55</td>
<td>Circle Time</td>
<td>Teacher asking day. Month, year</td>
<td>Calling out answers without raising his hand</td>
<td>Teacher reprimand; teacher instruction to raise hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20</td>
<td>Transition to floor for story</td>
<td>Teacher told students to grab a carpet-square and pick a spot on the floor to sit</td>
<td>Ran and pushed ahead of other students; knocked student over to the ground; yelled “I want to sit next to Mrs. ________”</td>
<td>Put in Time-Out chair; cried and yelled; disrupted class; other students “shhh, be quiet”; eventually taken to the nurses office for time-out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Musical Chairs</td>
<td>Screaming “I want to win” “I never get to win”, “she makes me lose”; threw himself on the floor; crying; pulling chairs over by the legs.</td>
<td>Music teacher called homeroom teacher to come take him back to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Teacher calling on another student to read aloud</td>
<td>Ran from seat grabbed book of student reading, and threw it; dropped to the floor crying and kicking table leg</td>
<td>Mother called to come pick him up early; waited in nurse’s office reading book with nurse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity (e.g. Math (division worksheet), Lunch, transition (in hall), Circle-Time, Gym (team basketball), Recess, Speech Tx, Art)</td>
<td>Antecedent (Events immediately preceding the behavior; do you know what ‘caused’ it? (e.g. request, demand, environmental stimuli (sound, crowd), interaction with someone (playing, arguing, observing))</td>
<td>Behavior (Describe in detail; include intensity (how much, how hard, how big), duration (how long did it last), frequency (how many times did it happen), affect (how did they appear; “frustrated”, “angry”, “crying”, “laughing”))</td>
<td>Consequence (Events following the behavior; what happened as a result, what did you do, what did others do, what did the episode end?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>Circle Time</td>
<td>Teacher asked another student to talk about the weather</td>
<td>Crying, whining</td>
<td>Teacher asked him to help with the weather station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:05</td>
<td>Math Activity</td>
<td>Teacher passing out a star to a student who answered a question</td>
<td>Crying; “I want to hold that star”; trying to take star from other students.</td>
<td>Teacher reminded him that we don’t always get a turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:25</td>
<td>Math Activity</td>
<td>Teacher giving out number cards to students for an activity</td>
<td>Crying/Whining; biting fingers; “I want to be number 1”</td>
<td>Ignored; stopped crying after 3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Partner activity - partner found “B”-word, not him</td>
<td>Crying; loud; angry; kept repeating he wanted to find his own word.</td>
<td>Teacher removed him from the group and took him to the nurses office to calm down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>Ending Activity</td>
<td>Game when children call on each other to find hidden pencils</td>
<td>Kept yelling “I haven’t had a turn”</td>
<td>Stopped yelling when he was called on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Antecedent</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Consequence</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/7/12</td>
<td>9:40 am</td>
<td>Teacher announces it is time for reading</td>
<td>Tells inappropriate joke</td>
<td>Peers laugh, class disrupted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/7/12</td>
<td>9:45 am</td>
<td>Teacher calls on George to read first</td>
<td>Throws book</td>
<td>Sent to office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8/12</td>
<td>9:35 am</td>
<td>Teacher asks George to pay attention</td>
<td>George crouches down so he can't see</td>
<td>George can't see instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/8/12</td>
<td>9:40 am</td>
<td>Teacher instructs class to move into reading groups</td>
<td>George sighs, puts head on desk</td>
<td>George doesn't join his group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8/12</td>
<td>9:42 am</td>
<td>Teacher asks George to move to his reading group</td>
<td>George slams his book shut</td>
<td>George's teacher warns him not to throw book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8/12</td>
<td>9:50 am</td>
<td>Teacher says go to your group</td>
<td>George throws his book and walks out of the class towards the principal's office</td>
<td>Avoids reading group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrative Observation
ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

- Prior to intervention
- How often, how long, how intense, how interfering
- Used to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention
  - Direct observation data
  - Permanent Product data

Small Group Discussion

What type of behavior makes it difficult to obtain an accurate baseline?
GATHERING BASELINE DATA

- Need operational definition
- What method to use
- How often to record
- When and where to record data
- Who will gather data

Event Recording
- Frequency
Interval Recording
- Partial interval
- Whole interval
Momentary Time Sample
- Latency (time until behavior)
- Inter-interval (time between behaviors)
SCATTERPLOT

NAME: _________________________________ BEHAVIOR: ____________________________________________________________

For each time slot, mark “0” if the behavior does not occur; and, shade the entire space if the behavior occurs.
Write the date for each day observed. This form should be used for consecutive days of recording behavior.

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## SCATTERPLOT

**NAME:** Clark Kent  
**BEHAVIOR:** Verbal Protest/Disrespect

For each time slot, mark “0” if the behavior does not occur; and, shade the entire space if the behavior occurs. Write the date for each day observed. This form should be used for consecutive days of recording behavior.

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### FREQUENCY WITHIN INTERVAL
SCATTERPLOT

NAME: Peter Parker  BEHAVIOR: Game-Play

For each time slot, mark "0" if the behavior does not occur; and, shade the entire space if the behavior occurs.
Write the date for each day observed. This form should be used for consecutive days of recording behavior.

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PARTIAL INTERVAL
For each time slot, mark "0" if the behavior does not occur; and, shade the entire space if the behavior occurs.
Write the date for each day observed. This form should be used for consecutive days of recording behavior.

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WHOLE INTERVAL
PLANNING

- Start a new FBA
- Select Student
  - Prioritize Behavior (one behavior only)
- Conduct Interviews
- Plan and conduct direct observations
  - Narrative recording
  - ABC
- Determine what data you will use for baseline
- Gather additional data
  - Via record review