

Components of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

The FBA has been a proactive and widely accepted practice used to assess and better understand challenging behavior in schools since the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997 (IDEA).

This process is most successful when all IEP team members are involved, including the general education and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists, school counselors, and psychologists. Parent/caregiver input is also vital to this process.

1. Student Profile and Demographic Information:

Record student name, date of birth, current age, grade, date of report, and persons conducting the assessment.

2. Target/Problem Behavior:

- Clearly and specifically describe the problem behavior. Define behavior in detailed, observable and measurable terms. Terms like "defiant," "uncooperative," and "difficult" are subject to interpretation. Be specific: "sits and refuses to work," "throws materials (books, pencils)," or "runs out of classroom."
- If there are several problems, prioritize them from greatest concern to least concern, and focus the FBA on the most concerning behavior, or a few closely related behaviors
- Create a hypothetical problem statement.

3. Sources of Information/Data Collection:

Information and baseline data must be collected to formulate a hypothesis about the function (what purpose the behavior serves for the student) of a behavior.

When collecting data for a thorough FBA, the following information sources should be included.

- Perform structured Interviews with knowledgeable individuals such as:
 - Parents/caregivers
 - Teachers (past and current)
 - Service providers (for example, school psychologist, behavior specialist)
 - Student
- Provide a behavior checklist to parent/caregiver, teacher(s) and student
 - (sample checklist: [Efficient Functional Behavior Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff](#))
- Complete the Marin SELPA Functional Behavior Assessment Form (Provide link here)
 - Review pertinent student files
 - Past interventions tried (i.e. SST meeting notes)
 - Psycho-educational Reports, assessment data, IEPs
 - Health/Medical records
 - Discipline Records
 - School cum folder/Permanent student school records
- Conduct direct observation(s) and collect and record data
 - Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence Data (link form here)
 - Behavior Rating Scales (link forms here)
 - Other target behavior data collection forms (i.e. frequency, duration, interval) (Put IRIS links for forms)



4. Predictors or Triggers for the Behavior

Identify the setting event and factors that seem to contribute to the student's problem behavior.

Consider:

- What sparked or triggered the behavior?
- Are there specific events, directives, personal interactions or academic tasks that result in the problem behavior occurring? (For example, problems on the school bus, incidents on the playground, transitioning from one activity area to another, group work with an undesired peer, or work in an overstimulated environment or with challenging content area.)



5. Consequences of the behavior

- Identify the consequences that follow each behavior. Examine and describe what is happening after the behavior occurs that may be maintaining it.
- Consequences are not always controlled by the teacher. Record what happens right after the problem behavior occurs. Consequences may include: attention from peers, avoidance of an undesired task, or getting access to something the child desires (For example, technology, a turn on the swing).
- Are the consequences consistent ones, which may be reinforcing the behavior and related to the function?



6. Function of the Behavior

Determining the function of the behavior is the most important aspect of the FBA; if the function is incorrectly identified, the Behavior Intervention Plan will not be successful.

The function of the student's behavior is one of the following:

- obtain something desirable (For example: attention or a preferred item or activity)
- avoid or escape something undesirable, unpleasant or punishing, either a task or feeling (For Example: unwanted writing assignment, embarrassment, fear, pain, negative reinforcement, unwanted peer/adult attention).
- meet a sensory or self-regulating need (For example: self-stimulation such as doodling, humming, pencil tapping, or repetitive speech)

All behavior is a form of communication and serves a purpose. Educators must figure out what a particular behavior is communicating by analyzing information and data. A student's action might be non-verbally saying, "I am tired," "I am bored," "The task is too difficult," "I am angry because I'm frustrated," or "I'm unable to use words to communicate my feelings."

Behavioral intervention(s) must be based on the identified function of the behavior.



7. Alterations needed to the environment, instruction, and/or interactions

Describe the relationship between the behavior and the environment (What are the setting events, antecedents & consequences?). Identify positive interventions that would reduce the undesirable behavior and alterations in the environment, instruction or interactions could prevent the behavior from recurring.

Teachers can make changes that will assist the student in demonstrating the appropriate behaviors, by examining the following classroom factors:

- **Curriculum:** *Can the student access the material in a meaningful way?*
 - *Is the material too difficult, leading to frustration?*
 - *Is the material too easy, leading to boredom, and a search for more stimulating activities?*
 - *Is the material interesting? Is it age and ability appropriate? Does it reflect or draw upon the student's cultural and background experience?*
- **Instructional Strategies:** *Are there varied, engaging instructional strategies that are aligned with student interests, strengths, and needs?*
 - *Are task expectations provided clearly (in verbal and written formats)?*
 - *Are task and behavioral expectations modeled?*
 - *Are complex tasks broken down into meaningful parts?*
 - *Are there enough scaffolded supports to lead to independence in tasks and activities?*
 - *Is there an emphasis on student engagement (For example: provide high interest learning material, use visuals and technology to support learning)?*
 - *Are opportunities provided for choice and control within the classroom (For example: choice between two writing prompts, choice of output to show understanding)?*
 - *Are schedules used to support students during time of transition (For example: visual schedule, First/Then board)?*
- **Environmental Factors:** *Is the classroom environment conducive to learning?*
 - *Are their opportunities provided for choice and control within the classroom (For example: choice between two writing prompts, choice regarding learning output, choice for student to stand at desk)*
 - *Is the environment comfortable and safe for learning? Is the room too hot/too cold? Too loud, too quiet? Too crowded/too distracting?*
 - *Do students feel safe to request changes in the environment to better align with their needs?*
 - *Are breaks accessible when a student is overwhelmed by environmental factors (For example: quiet space, break card)?*
- **Intra/Interpersonal:** *Are relationships, or lack there of, impacting learning and behavior?*
 - *improving the social interactions between the student and others (For example: staff/student journal, structured free time activities)*
 - *Is social skills training, character building, and /or peer tutoring provided?*
 - *Is there an emphasis on promoting self-esteem and self-regulation strategies?*



8. Functionally equivalent replacement behavior (FERB)

What can the student do (instead of the problem behavior) to get their needs met? Identify appropriate behaviors to be substituted in the place of the inappropriate ones.

- **Obtain something desirable:** *How can student receive appropriate attention? How can the student gain access to preferred activities or items?*
 - individual point system
 - use of cue cards to make request
 - functional communication training (link)
- **Avoid something undesirable:** *How can the student appropriately request to take breaks? How can the student request an alternative assignment?*
 - use of structured breaks (verbal permission or using break card)
 - student chooses order of assignments
- **Meet a sensory need:** *How can a student regulate sensory input/output more appropriately?*
 - students can request headphones
 - listen to music
 - use of a regulatory system/toolbox (Zones of Regulation, How is My Engine Running?) to identify methods to regulate

- squeeze a fidget toy
- chew gum



9. Appropriate Reinforcement

What is the response, by teachers, staff, and classroom peers when the student is meeting behavioral expectations? Is the reinforcement currently being used motivating to the student? Recommend any changes of reinforcement.

Teachers can assist students in demonstrating appropriate behaviors by strategically looking for the positive aspects of a student's behavior. It is important to remember that success may not be achieved quickly; however, noticing the incremental successes towards the larger goal will help the student feel successful, will foster positive relationships between teachers and students, and increase the likelihood that the student will achieve the behavioral expectation.



10. Goals, services, recommendations

Identify specific changes that would help the student demonstrate more acceptable behavior. Determine the appropriateness of the student's present educational placement and services. Make recommendations for goals and services.

In summary, the Functional Behavioral Assessment is based upon the following assumptions:

- behavior is a form of communication
- behavior serves a function and has a purpose
- challenging behaviors do not occur in a vacuum
- behaviors occur in response to identifiable stimuli
- behaviors are governed by the consequences that follow them