

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT

Online Prevention Module at <http://tucsonlinks.org>

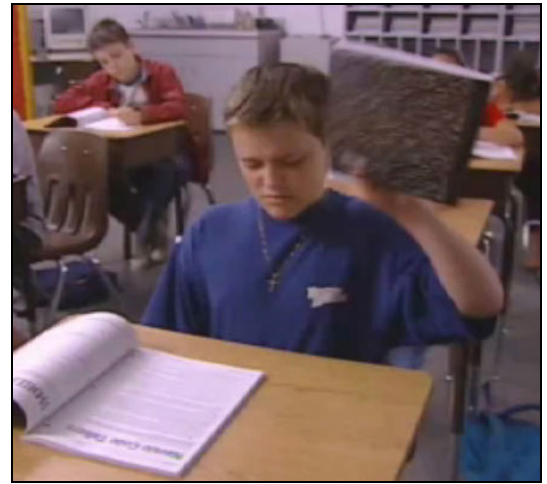
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Introduction

For a student who exhibits a pattern of frequent, regular episodes of misbehaving, it pays to consider what the student is communicating through this behavior. Why does Eddie slam his book on his desk every time students are asked to take out their math books? What is he trying to tell his teacher?

Functional Behavioral Assessment is a tool to help us understand why kids do what they do. The notion is that *all* behavior serves a purpose or a function; it fulfills some need. Functional Behavioral Assessment allows us to determine why a student is doing what he or she is doing. Then we can help the student come up with a more socially acceptable way to have his or her needs met that works for the student and that fits with the environment and culture of the class.



The real benefit of using Functional Behavioral Assessment is that you can determine the functions of a student's inappropriate behavior, so you can create more effective intervention plans to stop it.

Functional Behavioral Assessment


- Determine why a student is doing what he or she is doing
- Help the student come up with a better way to have needs met
- Determine the functions of a student's behavior to create more effective intervention plans

Two experts on Functional Behavioral Assessment from the University of Arizona, Dr. Carl Liaupsin and Toni Sparks-Hopkins, will describe how to use Functional Behavioral Assessment at your site.


The Function Matrix

	Access	Avoid
Attention		
Tangibles/Activities		
Sensory		

A behavior is observable and measurable and serves one or multiple functions. Using the **Function Matrix**, you can quickly and systematically determine the functions of behavior by looking at what happens before and after it. Professor Carl Liaupsin explains the Function Matrix:

 <p>Dr. Carl Liaupsin</p>	<p>The Function Matrix has two columns and three rows. The two columns pertain to the two basic principles underlying function: people are generally using their behavior to either access something or avoid something. Now of those "somethings", we have categorized them into three areas: Attention, Tangibles, and Sensory.</p>
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Toni Sparks-Hopkins further explains each box of the Function matrix:


<p>There are only two primary functions of behavior: access or avoidance. There are only three domains or areas where children are trying to access or avoid:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attention (from teachers, parents, peers, or anyone), 2. Tangibles or Activities, and 3. Sensory (such as noise or physical contact) 	 <p>Toni Sparks-Hopkins</p>
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To determine what a student is communicating through his behavior, the teacher needs to observe the behavior over time. What is Eddie trying to access or avoid?



ABC Analysis

The ABC analysis is a tool that helps you gather data to figure out where the student is functioning on the chart. Remember to think of behavior as an action you can see. Toni Sparks-Hopkins explains.

<p>The ABC Functional Behavioral Analysis is a very useful tool. All you need to remember is A, B, and C, and know what time these behavioral events occur, so you have some sense of whether there is a pattern to the behavior and if there is a trigger.</p> <p>The “A” is the <i>Antecedent</i>, and it refers to “what comes before.” It is the picture of what happens before the behavior occurs. If you were to take a 30-second movie clip of what happens right before the behavior, what would it show?</p> <p>The “B” is the <i>Behavior</i>. Paint a clear, specific picture of the behavior.</p> <p>The “C” or <i>Consequence</i> refers to what comes after the behavior. Imagine if you had a movie clip of what happens right afterward.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Toni Sparks-Hopkins</p>
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ABC Functional Behavioral Assessment Form

Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
	What comes before the behavior Where was it? Who was there? What was happening?	The specific behavior Paint a very clear picture of what happened	What happened after the behavior? What did I use as a consequence? What did I say?

Dr. Liaupsin elaborates:



Dr. Carl Liaupsin

When we fill out the ABC form, what we want to do is look for patterns. We write in what the problem behavior was, what we saw happening right before it and what we saw happening right after it. We look to see if there are instances over time in which the student performs the same behavior and the antecedents and the consequences are similar.

So, say the behavior is slamming a book on a desk. We might note that the behavior always happens when the teacher asks the students to take out their math books. We might note that the consequence is, for whatever reason, the student never ends up engaging in the math task.

In that case, we can look at a number of instances and see a pattern, and go back to the function matrix and say . . . it's pretty clear the student is trying to avoid a task.

Now you'll try your hand at conducting an ABC analysis on scenes of student behavior. Take out a pencil and use the form on the next page. When conducting an ABC analysis of the following stories, be sure to look for this information: Where is the behavior occurring? Who said what to whom? How did an individual student or the whole class respond? Where were people in relation to one another physically? What was the result of the behavior? You should try to make a record of as much of this type of information as is available. Remember, all behavior equals communication. Next you'll look at a situation and you'll write down the A, B, and C.

Keep in mind:

Where is the behavior occurring?

Who said what to whom?

How did an individual student or the whole class respond?

Where were people in relation to one another physically?

What was the result of the behavior?

Let's consider what this student is doing and do an ABC analysis of the situation. Fill out your own ABC chart.

EXAMPLE 1



Each day, the teacher tells the students to take out their math books.



Eddie becomes disruptive.



He slams his book on his desk, interrupts the teacher, and refuses to get started.



The teacher usually responds by sending Eddie to the office during math.

ABC Functional Behavioral Assessment Form

Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

Notes:

Compare your ABC analysis with our model. What are the differences? In terms of the antecedent, the teacher is in the front of the classroom giving instructions. What was the behavior? Eddie slams his book on his desk. What was the consequence? The teacher sent him out. So what functions does Eddie's behavior serve? What does he access or avoid? When Eddie slams his book as math begins, he may gain peer and teacher attention, access an activity after he leaves the room, and avoid the task by leaving the room.

ABC Functional Behavioral Assessment Form

Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
	Teacher asks students to take out math books.	Student makes loud noise.	Student goes to time out.

Our next example is Emily, who is always late for class. Try an ABC analysis of her situation.



EXAMPLE 2



"Good-bye! Remember your homework for tomorrow! Emily, you'd better get going or you're going to be late for your next class."



"Okay, I just have one more thing to finish."

"You can do that for homework."



"It's just too noisy out there. Can't I stay here for a minute?"



"No, you're going to be late again. Go on to your next class."

ABC Functional Behavioral Assessment Form

Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

Notes:

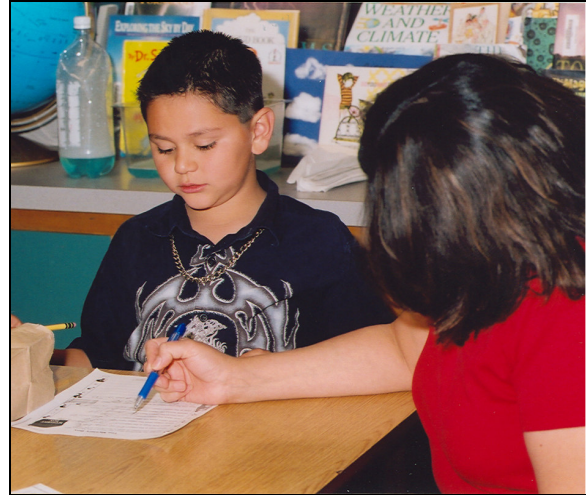
Compare your ABC analysis with our model. Notice in this example, Emily and the teacher have a number of interactions that need to be documented. Let's look at the first one. In terms of the antecedent, the class was over and the teacher remained in the front of the class. In terms of the behavior, the student remained in her seat working when all other students have left. What was the consequence? She remains with the teacher in the classroom. Notice that Emily told the teacher that it's too noisy in the hall. She may be trying to avoid a sensory issue or there may be something else going on. Is she being bullied in the hall, trying to miss part of the next class? More discussion with Emily may help you understand more about her behavior.

ABC Functional Behavioral Assessment Form

Time	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
1:35pm	Teacher is at front of classroom	Emily remains in seat (all other students leave class)	Emily is left with the teacher
1:36pm	Emily remains with teacher at the front of the classroom	Emily looks towards hallway	Emily remains seated in class working near teacher
1:36pm	Emily still working with teacher in the front of the class	Emily is looking at teacher with concern still in seat at front of the classroom	Emily picks up things to leave

Meeting the Need that Led to the Child's Misbehavior

A change in student behavior is more likely to occur if we meet the student's needs (the function of the behavior). So once you know the primary function of the behavior, you plan how to meet the need in an appropriate way. Students will work to get their needs met. Either teachers have to deal with these needs preventively for up to a few minutes, or they may spend hours a day dealing with the student using inappropriate behavior to get the need met, which takes much more time.



When we're doing intervention planning, our first and primary goal is to determine the function of a child's behavior is and then meet the child's need.

Children try to tell us what they need through their behavior. And so, we need to help children to get their needs met in appropriate ways.

For a child engaging in attention-seeking behavior, I recommend a preemptive or proactive strategy in which the teacher's intervention plan must include teacher attention at specific times during the day, so that the child doesn't have to engage in the inappropriate behavior to get that need met.



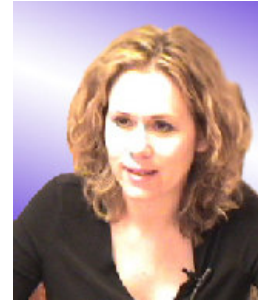
Toni Sparks-Hopkins

Review the Steps

Now Toni Sparks-Hopkins will review the steps in Functional Behavioral Assessment.

To do a functional assessment in your classroom to uncover the function of a child's behavior:

1. Use the ABC Functional Behavioral Assessment Form. Write down the time of the incident, the **Antecedent** (the “before picture”), the **Behavior**, the **Consequence** (the “after picture”). Collect information over the course of several days. Look for patterns.
2. Use the Function Matrix. Ask yourself if the child is trying to **access** or **avoid** something. Based on the patterns, what is the child trying to access or avoid? Is it **attention**, **tangibles and activities**, or **sensory**? Determine where the child is in the matrix.
3. Make an intervention plan. Meet every need. Make sure the results are measurable.
4. Implement the plan for at least two weeks.



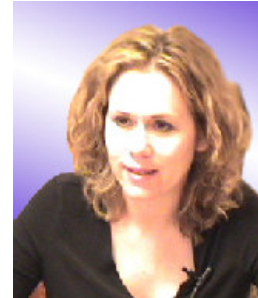
Toni Sparks-Hopkins

For ideas on ways to meet student needs appropriately, see:

McCarney, S.B., Wunderlich, K.C., & Bauer A. M. (1993). *Pre-referral intervention manual: The most common learning and behavior problems encountered in the educational environment* (2nd ed.) Columbia, MO: Hawthorne.

Toni Sparks-Hopkins gives examples of how to make the plan measurable and quantify behavior to determine if the plan is working.

If you have a student who has been engaging in a lot of disruptive behavior, it is important to have some baseline of the student's level of disruption. How many incidents occur each day? Record a quantifiable number. Then, once you put the plan into place, you can collect data in the intervention period, to determine whether the aggressive behavior has reduced or whether the behavior has increased (before it drops off).



Toni Sparks-Hopkins

Evaluate/Monitor

1. Collect baseline data
2. Set reasonable goals
3. Set benchmarks for achieving goals
4. Collect data during intervention



Conclusion

This ABC Analysis and Functions Matrix can be easily used in any situation. It can help you determine the function of a student's behavior so you can plan interventions to stop the behavior.



Functional Behavioral Assessment

- A process to deal with behavioral issues
- Creates more academic time
- Increases academic achievement
- Reduces teacher stress

These tools provide a process for navigating working through student behavioral issues. In an age when accountability has increased, we're much more responsible for making sure we're delivering academics in a finite amount of time and making sure we're reaching for the standards.

It's incredibly important that we don't have five or six students in a classroom, who, because of their intense behavioral needs, make the class lose instructional time toward achieving the state standards.

It's very important for teachers to have tools to be able to navigate behavioral issues because discipline and behavioral issues can usurp such a great deal of a teacher's time in a given school day. If it continues to be repetitive and problematic, it frustrates everyone.



Toni Sparks-Hopkins

For more information, please see these websites:

1. The "Facilitator's Guide" at this Florida website is excellent:
<http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/flpbs/resources.asp>
2. The following link provides an excellent introduction designed specifically for special educators:
<http://www.air.org/cecp/fba/default.htm>
3. In-depth training in behavior analysis and FBA are available through the following web-based course sequence:
<http://www.ed.arizona.edu/bss/welcome.htm>