Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans

Guidelines for Effective Development and Implementation
March 2025

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Purpose

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) released Using Functional Behavioral Assessments to Create Supportive Learning Environments in November 2024 as joint guidance on the use of functional behavior assessments for all students whose behavior interferes with learning. This guidance from USED does not create or impose new legal requirements, but it is intended to provide information that assists local and state educational agencies in meeting legislative requirements under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and regulations for the implementation of IDEA under Title 34 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 300 (34 CFR Part 300).

This document provides guidelines to further aid Virginia school divisions in developing and implementing effective practices for conducting a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and developing a behavior intervention plan (BIP). These guidelines provide additional information for the implementation and expansion of federal requirements relating to FBA and BIP, as identified in the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs in Virginia*, and may support school divisions in integrating FBA and BIP within a system of function-based supports that promote positive behaviors, build academic and other behavior skills, and effectively reduce persistent interfering student behaviors in

the school setting. Additionally, these guidelines provide information on best practices and the use of consistent terminology in discussing, understanding, and supporting behavior through an FBA and a BIP. These guidelines are not a comprehensive summary or a detailed framework for conducting an FBA or developing a BIP.

What is Behavior?

Behavior is an action—something someone says or does. From picking up a pen, reading a paragraph, typing on a computer, and raising a hand to walking down the hall, students engage in many different behaviors throughout their day. The behavior an individual engages in varies throughout the day to meet the different needs of the individual in different contexts as an external reaction to their environment.

This document uses the following definitions to describe behavior.

Prosocial Behavior: Contextually appropriate behaviors that support the academic, social, and emotional growth of the individual. These are the behaviors that a student should engage in, both in and out of school, and within the expected context.

- Examples: The student using walking feet in the hallway or asking a peer to be their reading partner.

Interfering Behavior: Behavior(s) that impede or disrupt the learning of the student or other students. In the current environment or context, interfering behavior(s) get in the way of an individual engaging in prosocial behavior(s); making academic, social, and emotional growth; and may affect student progress and social relationships.

- Examples: The student flipping over desks during a lesson or spitting in a peer's face.

All behavior is a form of communication. By analyzing the environmental conditions surrounding the behaviors that can be seen or heard, we can identify what the individual is trying to communicate (the function) and intentionally intervene to support meaningful change. Behavior is not defined as good or bad, but rather by the function or purpose that it serves an individual. The FBA provides understanding for that purpose and helps teams to better support the individual by responding to those specific environmental conditions using prosocial, rather than interfering, behavior. Always presume competence and recognize that most individuals want to engage in prosocial behavior but may not yet have the skills to do so.

Overview of FBA and BIP

Function-based supports, including FBAs and BIPs, are highly effective for gaining insight into the factors contributing to interfering behavior and can be used to inform instruction

and intervention strategies for all students. This is not always linear process; it is unique to each individual student and requires collaboration from a variety of stakeholders. Student FBAs and BIPs can, however, be a proactive, responsive approach to reducing interfering behavior and exclusionary discipline while increasing opportunities for social and educational experiences that are inclusive and developmentally appropriate for all students.

Functional behavior assessment, or FBA, is defined as "a process to determine the underlying cause or function of a child's behavior that impedes the learning of the child with a disability or the learning of the child's peers" (8VAC20-81-10). An FBA is a systematic assessment in which the team gathers information to identify not only why an individual may be engaging in a behavior but also the conditions that influence the behavior, including what occurs immediately before (antecedents) and immediately after (consequences) the behavior occurs. The FBA clearly defines what the behavior looks like (topography) and uses data to identify why the student engages in that behavior (function). In collecting and analyzing this data, teams are better able to hypothesize why a behavior is occurring and use this information to make a proactive, data-informed, individualized plan that supports the reduction or elimination of the interfering behavior and promotes prosocial behavior under the same environmental conditions.

The proactive plan developed from the data gathered during the FBA is a behavior intervention plan, or BIP. Virginia Regulations define a BIP as a "plan that utilizes positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behaviors that interfere with the learning of students with disabilities or the learning of others or behaviors that require disciplinary action" (8VAC20-81-10). Rather than focusing on decreasing interfering behavior, positive behavioral interventions and supports emphasize the use of proactive teaching strategies and reinforcement of taught skills to increase prosocial behavior(s). In doing so, the interfering behavior is no longer the most efficient or effective way for an individual to get their wants and needs met. Based on this framework, a BIP is not a plan for the student or how the student should "act" or "behave." The BIP is a specific, concrete plan for the educators to follow, using the hypothesized function and other environmental factors found in the FBA process, to prevent, teach, respond, and monitor both interfering and prosocial behavior.

A BIP may be referred to as a behavior support plan (BSP) or positive behavior support plan (PBSP); however, these are not interchangeable terms. The VDOE utilizes the term "behavior intervention Plan" when referring to a written plan, individualized to the student, and developed using data from the FBA to intentionally address a specific behavior or behaviors that interfere with learning. A BSP or PBSP, however, is a guide for managing and supporting student behavior developed by considering good instructional

practices and positive behavior strategies that are likely to be effective (Association of Positive Behavior Support, n.d.). For example, a classroom teacher may have a behavior support plan that identifies how to demonstrate, teach, and reinforce identified classroom expectations that can be used by the teacher as well as paraprofessionals and substitute teachers.

Why FBAs and BIPs?

At any given moment, an individual may react to their environment using prosocial or interfering behavior. Depending on the severity (including intensity, form of the behavior or what the behavior looks like, and/or impact of the behavior in the environment), interfering behavior can result in poor academic skills; a lack of quality social relationships; and increased risk for dropout, jail, and poor postsecondary outcomes for the individual engaging in the behavior (O'Neill et. al., 2015). Interfering behavior may also result in interruptions to instruction, families being called to pick up their child or attend meetings to discuss potential solutions, and increased resources used to support the student. Additionally, the longer individuals engage in interfering behavior(s), the more difficult it will be for intervention efforts to produce meaningful change. While supporting interfering behavior on a day-to-day basis can feel exhausting and overwhelming, the stakes are too high to ignore. Proactive and effective intervention is essential to give individuals the skills they need for life-long academic, social, and postsecondary outcome success.

The FBA is used to better understand why the individual may be responding using interfering rather than prosocial behavior under those specific environmental conditions. It provides information beyond the general, day-to-day understanding or hypothesis regarding a student and their behavior. The FBA and corresponding BIP focus on overt behavior(s) that can be seen and observed (e.g., public behaviors such as crying, kicking a table, writing with a pencil) and not covert behaviors that are unable to be observed (e.g., private behaviors such as daydreaming, anger, internal speech). To ensure valid data are being used in the FBA and BIP process, objective and observable data rather than subjective or unobservable data are essential. This is not to say private, unobservable behaviors are not important. The FBA and BIP process does consider the many valuable and important facets of an individuals' life, including those that may not be able to be observed (Dunlap, Harrower, & Fox, 2021). In addition to the completion of an FBA to develop a BIP to support interfering school behavior(s), teams should ensure the comprehensive needs of the student are being met through other support services. Teams should consider the need for other comprehensive or wrap-around services within the school setting as well as referral to and collaborate with outside agencies, as

needed, to address any setting events or other areas of need that are outside the focus of the FBA and BIP.

The topography of a behavior describes the form of the behavior, or what the behavior looks like. The topography of the behavior must be clearly defined so all individuals can accurately observe and collect data. However, the physical description of the behavior does not provide enough information to determine how to make changes to the environment to support behavioral change. This must be done by identifying the function, or purpose, of the behavior.

Although two students may both engage in behavior that looks the same, the "why" behind their behavior that is reinforcing or strengthening the behavior may be different. For this reason, interventions are more likely to be effective when addressing the function, rather than the topography, of the behavior.

Developmentally Appropriate Expectations

While considering the need for additional assessment and intervention to effectively support interfering school behavior(s) through the FBA and BIP process, teams must consider the developmental and age-appropriateness of the behavior(s) being observed along with the behavior(s) being identified to strengthen. Although a behavior may not fit the classroom or school expectations, this does not automatically mean the behavior requires intervention. Students, especially those in early childhood settings, are still learning social-emotional and communication skills that allow them to engage in prosocial behavior. Teams must understand behavior that is typical or expected at each stage of development. Ensure the defined expectations do not exceed developmentally appropriate expectations so children are not held to unattainable or inappropriate standards.

For example, while preschool-aged children might be expected to stay seated for a story on the carpet, the time it takes to read the book and/or complete the associated lesson may be longer than what is developmentally expected of a three- or four-year-old child. Rather than teaching the student to sit longer during this or similar activities, consider how the activity can be modified to support more age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate instruction, which will benefit all children.

When to Conduct an FBA and Develop a BIP

Students with and without disabilities may engage in behaviors that interfere with their learning or the learning of others, including the ability to access and participation in the learning environment. A 2024 report found that 58% of teachers who responded

indicated they must address students' behavioral issues every day (Pew Research Center, 2024). An FBA and BIP can be used to better understand the factors contributing to interfering behavior and support the development of positive behavior interventions and supports to address identified factors for students with and without disabilities (Walker, Vhung, & Bonnet, 2018). An FBA can be conducted as part of a comprehensive special education evaluation for any student suspected of being a child with a disability (8VAC20-81-70.C). An FBA can also be completed for any student with or without a disability any time it becomes necessary to address a student's behavioral challenges, including when: (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2015)

- A student is engaging in behavior(s) that interferes with their learning or the learning of others, and Tier I and Tier II interventions have been implemented with fidelity and are not successful.
- The team needs to gather additional data to gain a better understanding of why a behavior is occurring and how to intervene to support student growth.

A strong Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework with consistent use of established data-informed decision rules can assist teams in identifying students requiring individualized support through an FBA and implementation of a BIP when interfering behavior is at a lower level of intensity and severity. The more intense the behavior and level of intervention are, the more resources, including time and staff, will be required. Schools should develop a process in which data-informed decision-making is used to proactively identify students who require Tier III intervention including an FBA and a BIP so interventions can take place before patterns of behavior are strengthened (Horner et al., 2011). Having a consistent, data-informed decision-making process across all tiers of intervention helps ensure students are not being over- or under-identified for needing an FBA and a BIP and appropriate resource allocation.

Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Federal and state regulations provide requirements for the consideration and use of FBA and BIP for students with disabilities, which include students with a suspected disability, students protected under Section 504, and students who receive specialized services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP), to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The IEP Teams must consider the use of positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address behavior when that behavior impedes with the learning of the student and/or others (8VAC20-81-110.F.2.a). This includes the consideration of goals, services, and accommodations to address the student's needs. If additional data are needed to gain a better understanding of why a behavior is occurring to address a

student's needs, an FBA may be conducted to gather relevant data to inform decision making and instructional programming. Based on the information gathered through the FBA process, IEP Teams may decide to address behavior concerns within the IEP as goals and services or through the development of a BIP, or both.

An FBA must be conducted and a BIP developed and implemented when a student's behavior that resulted in the change of placement is found to be a manifestation of their disability (8VAC20-81-160.D.6).

- If a current FBA has been conducted and is still an accurate assessment of the interfering behavior, a new FBA is not required.
- If a BIP has been developed and implemented based on the current FBA, the team must review the BIP and modify, as needed, to address the behavior.

The FBA and BIP must be reviewed and modified, as needed, for each subsequent removal from school after the first ten days if the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability.

For students with a disability whose behavior is found to not be a manifestation of their disability, an FBA and a BIP are not required, and schools may impose the same disciplinary procedures identified for students without disabilities. The IEP Teams should still consider the use of an FBA and a BIP, as deemed appropriate by the IEP Team, to address student need and to reduce recurrence of the behavior (8VAC20-81-160.D.7).

If an IEP Team identifies the need for an FBA and a BIP, the BIP is considered part of the student's IEP and treated and implemented with the same monitoring and fidelity as the IEP. This includes individuals whose interfering behavior is determined to be a manifestation of their disability. A summary of the data used to identify the need for an FBA and a BIP must be documented within the IEP (8VAC20-81-110.F.3).

FBA and BIP within Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports

Virginia Regulations identify the required use of FBAs and BIPs for students with a disability under certain conditions; however, FBAs are not inherently a special education process. The use of an FBA to inform instructional strategies and BIP development have been proven to be effective and should be considered for students with and without disabilities (USED, 2016; USED, 2024). Conducting an FBA and developing and implementing a functionally related BIP is an individualized Tier III intervention within an MTSS framework. Special education services are not inherently Tier III and should be integrated within each tier of support to ensure including the student in the least restrictive environment and alignment of general education instruction.

Positive behavior interventions and supports within an MTSS include:

- Tier I: Provides the foundational, universal instruction for school-wide and classroom behavior and academic expectations. Instruction is provided to all students, including students with disabilities, and provides the skills students need to be successful and to prevent future behavior concerns.
- Tier II: Targeted instruction for some students who require additional instruction to develop specific academic and other behavior expectations and skills. Instruction is provided to small groups of students with similar needs and interventions often target mild to moderately interfering behaviors. This is approximately 20% of a student population and is provided in addition to Tier I, universal instruction. Additional assessment is often not conducted, but function-based thinking is used to consider possible functions to identify targeted interventions.
- Tier III: Individualized and intensive instruction for a few students. Instruction at this level is the most resource-intensive and is provided in addition to Tier I (and Tier II when applicable) supports. Tier III supports require additional assessments to identify areas of intervention to meet individual student needs. This level of intervention consists of approximately 5% of a student population.

The FBA is used to gather additional data about the student and the environment to develop an individualized, functionally relevant BIP as a Tier III positive behavior intervention support. Within an MTSS, interventions are aligned across tiers, so ideally Tier I and Tier II instruction should be provided, with fidelity, before using data to inform any intervention at Tier III. The use of available data to hypothesize the potential purpose of behavior to identify potential intervention strategies, known as function-based thinking, should be used at all tiers.

Divisions should support their schools in developing a tiered framework to identify students requiring additional layers of support, including an FBA and a BIP. Divisions will need to consider the data, systems, and practices in place from both organizational (division and/or school) and individual lenses and develop local policies and procedures to support consistent practices aimed at improving social and academic outcomes (Center on PBIS, 2022).

FBA and BIP Considerations at the Tier III level:

- Systems (supporting staff behavior)

    - Organizational: Develop or modify the assessment and development process for FBA/BIP and ensure access to needed resources for BIP implementation
    - Individual: Training/coaching for staff implementing interventions
- Data (supporting decision-making)
    - Organizational: Data-decision processes for determining when students may require an FBA/BIP and identifying when students are being successful
    - Individual: Individual data sources determined, collected, and analyzed for FBA and setting goals, monitoring progress, and monitoring implementation fidelity of BIP
- Practices (supporting student behavior)
    - Organizational: Determine how teams determine the level of rigor for assessment (i.e., brief FBA versus comprehensive FBA versus wraparound supports)
    - Individual: Function-based interventions selected and implemented

Understanding the Basics of Behavior

These guidelines and practice recommendations are based on the principles of the science of behavior and the use of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to apply those principles to identify environmental variables that influence behavior and to develop interventions that produce meaningful behavior change. This document does not serve as comprehensive training on the principles of the science of behavior but should be used as a guide for teams to create a foundation and ensure consistent language is used by all team members. Each FBA and BIP team should have at least one team member who is fluent in the knowledge and application of the principles of the science of behavior, which are very briefly summarized below.

> Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the application of a field of science that uses the principles of behavior to improve socially significant behavior and typically focuses on observable and measurable behaviors. It uses a systematic approach to teach and support individuals to be successful in their environment

Three-Term Contingency

Three-term contingency refers to the antecedent-behavior-consequence (A-B-C) pattern in which individuals learn and act. Also known as a behavior chain, this pattern of events

creates a learning process for behavior. Most individuals do not engage in interfering behavior because they want to be manipulative or defiant, they engage in those behaviors because they have learned it is an efficient and effective way to get their needs met (Vargas, 2020). Through the FBA process, teams identify the specific interfering behavior(s), then observe and analyze the A-B-C pattern that has helped to shape and reinforce that identified behavior. By understanding the learning process that has occurred for the interfering behavior, educators can intervene and support a new learning process for prosocial behavior under similar conditions.

Antecedent

An antecedent is something within the environment (e.g., a stimulus that already exists, a lack of stimuli, an environmental change) that occurs immediately before a behavior. It can be considered a cue for the individual to engage in the behavior. When the antecedent occurs, this action signals to the individual (consciously or unconsciously) that now would be a good time to engage in the behavior because there is a strong possibility that the desired consequence (i.e., response to the behavior) will occur. Every behavior has an antecedent.

Behavior

Behavior is an action—something someone says or does. The FBA identifies an interfering behavior that is objective and can be observed and measured by a team.

Consequence

A consequence is a response or change that occurs in the environment immediately following the behavior. Teams should ensure when observing and analyzing consequences that the focus remains on what is objectively observed to follow the behavior, not what individuals perceive should occur or opinions about what may have occurred.

Note: When describing behavior, “consequence” refers to the environment’s response to the behavior. The use of this term is not referring to a disciplinary action given to the student in an attempt to deter future behavior, such as loss of recess, detention, or out-of-school suspension.

Setting Events

There are variables that may influence behavior at any given time but do not necessarily directly cause behavior to occur. These variables can be referred to as “setting events.” Setting events are events or actions that help to set the stage for behavior to occur (or not occur) depending on what the individual may want or need at any given moment. For example, if a student is feeling ill, asking the student a question may result in the student

shutting their book and putting their head on their desk rather than answering the question, which is the typical response for that student.

Examples of setting events may include but are not limited to:

- Communication: The student has ineffective communication skills or an absence of the student's communication system, including augmentative or alternative communication (AAC).
- Deprivation: The student has not had access to something they may want or enjoy (e.g., the student has not been able to play their favorite video game all weekend).
- Satiation: The student has had lots of access to something they want or enjoy and is no longer deprived (e.g., the student has been playing their favorite video game for six hours).
- Instruction: Materials inappropriate for age or instructional level; missing foundational skills (such as academic, executive functioning, or social emotional skills).
- Physical: Headache; sensory sensitivity; lack of medication, sleep, or food.
- Social: Presence of a disliked peer or staff member.
- Environmental: Classroom that is too warm or too cold; food or housing insecurity.

Behavior is a form of communication. Students are more likely to engage in interfering behavior that allows them to effectively and efficiently get their wants and needs met if they cannot effectively communicate for all purposes in all environments or contexts. A critical, proactive way to promote prosocial behavior is to ensure that all students have access to explicit communication instruction and the vocabulary necessary for engagement and active participation throughout the school day.

Students may require various communication modalities throughout the day. Students who exhibit difficulty with communication (e.g., students who are speaking but have trouble using verbal speech when tired or stressed) may require the use of augmentative or alternative communication, or AAC. This includes a continuum of supports and provides a means for students to communicate in other modalities instead of using interfering behavior to get their needs met.

Refer to the VDOE Assistive Technology Network web page for more information on AAC.

There are several reasons setting events can influence behaviors, including past or current trauma, manifestation of an individual's disability and/or other mental health diagnoses, or simply having a difficult day. Setting events should not serve as an excuse for behavior. The student's support team should consider how much influence setting events have on the interfering behavior, including what setting events are alterable or inalterable by the team. If the team cannot alter setting events, consideration of how to support the student when these setting events occur. Discussion of setting events should focus on which of these factors apply and how these factors impact the student. Take these variables into consideration when analyzing data as well as in the development of the BIP.

Consequences and Future Behavior

Consequences influence the likelihood of the behavior recurring in the future and can occur with or without intention or planning. During the FBA process, teams seek to determine how the consequence within the identified behavior chain impacts the student's future behavior. Each time the antecedent-interfering behavior-consequence pattern occurs and meets a need for the student, the consequence reinforces the interfering behavior and strengthens the connection. The stronger the A-B-C pattern becomes, the more likely the student will engage in the interfering behavior when the antecedent occurs because they have learned the consequence that will follow.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is a consequence that strengthens the relationship between the behavior chain and increases the likelihood that the antecedent will cue the behavior in the future to gain or escape the consequence. It is not about the perception of how something should change behavior, but instead, it is about how the consequence influences the individual's behavior and further influences future behavior. If a behavior does not continue (maintain at the same rate) or increase (occur more frequently), reinforcement is not occurring.

When discussing reinforcement, the terms "positive" and "negative" refer to whether something has been added or removed, respectively, from the environment. This is an important distinction from the common reference to positive and negative, which may refer to something being good or bad.

Positive Reinforcement (R+) refers to a consequence that has been added to the environment that increases or maintains behavior. While the added consequence is often something preferred or desirable, positive does not mean something good, desirable, or preferred. It means something has been added.

Negative Reinforcement (R-) refers to a consequence that has removed something from the environment that increases or maintains behavior. Again, negative does not refer to "bad," but whatever has been removed is frequently something that is less preferred or undesirable.

Reinforcement versus Bribery

Bribery occurs in the moment of interfering behavior. It is the act of negotiating or promising a potential reinforcer, once an antecedent has occurred, in the hopes of getting a behavior to stop or change. Bribery typically benefits the individual doing the bribing, not the person being bribed, and does not help to teach or reinforce desired prosocial behavior(s). Bribery may stop a behavior in the moment and reinforces the interfering behavior.

Reinforcement versus Preference

A preference is something an individual may like or enjoy. Unlike reinforcement, preferences do not have a proven effect on changing future behavior and do not guarantee future behavior change. Identifying a plan for responding to prosocial behavior (based on the FBA results) using student preferences is a tactical strategy for increasing the likelihood of reinforcing desired prosocial behaviors.

Punishment

Punishment refers to a consequence that has added or removed something from the environment and decreases the likelihood of that behavior in the future. As with reinforcement, punishment is not about one's perception of how a response should impact behavior but the impact on the behavior itself and the influence on an individual's future behavior. Punishment only occurs if future behavior decreases.

The use of consequence (response) strategies intended to decrease future behavior is not endorsed by the Virginia Department of Education as the sole method for responding to interfering behavior. Response strategies intended to decrease or eliminate a behavior may temporarily decrease a specific behavior. However, without teaching and reinforcing more socially appropriate behavior, the individual may revert to other, more severe forms of behavior to get their needs met. Evidenced-based instruction paired with reinforcement matched to individual student needs should be used for lasting, effective behavior change.

Functions of Behavior

Data collected during an FBA seeks to find how or why a want or need is being met by engaging in interfering behavior. This will help meet the student's want or need in a more contextually appropriate way. Understanding and describing why reinforcement of the

behavior is occurring is known as the function of the behavior. There are two basic functions for behavior: escape and gain. Behavior may be used to escape or gain several things within the external environment, including individuals' attention, activities, and items (tangibles), or within our internal environment such as pain or discomfort.

Escape

Escape describes when an individual engages in behavior to escape or avoid someone or something within their external or internal environment. The pattern of their behavior shows that if they engage in this specific behavior when the antecedent occurs, negative reinforcement will occur (i.e., knowing that the undesired activity or person will be removed from their environment). Students may want to escape a variety of different things, including people, social settings, activities, demands, or even public praise.

Gain

Gain is when an individual engages in a behavior to gain someone or something in their external or internal environment. The pattern of their behavior shows that if they engage in this specific behavior when the antecedent occurs, positive reinforcement will occur (i.e., knowing something or someone will be added to their environment). Students may engage in behavior to gain access to tangibles, such as preferred activities or items, or attention.

Research has shown automatic functions (where the individual is seeking to escape or gain something within their internal environment such as pleasure or pain) in the educational setting are extremely rare, comprising of only 2% to 4% of all interfering behaviors (Mueller et. al., 2011). Additionally, behaviors that may seem to be automatic (such as hand flapping or toe walking) may have an external or social function based on how the behavior has been responded to (reinforced) in the past. Automatic, non-social functions should be confirmed through a functional analysis conducted by a trained individual or team.

Multiple Functions

Every behavior may serve more than one function, or serve a different function based on the setting events, antecedent(s), and/or consequence(s) surrounding the behavior. Within different environments, consider the efficiency and effectiveness of the behavior in accessing the reinforcer (including communication efforts); the value, quantity, and immediacy of the reinforcer; and the role of potential setting events in influencing behavior under different conditions.

As the complexity of the FBA and analysis of data within the process increases, teams may need to seek support from individuals with additional behavioral expertise to assist in determining the function(s) of the interfering behavior.

Putting It All Together

The goal of a functional behavior assessment is to analyze the environment to determine how the concepts defined above are influencing student behavior. Through the FBA process, teams will use a variety of data collection methods to determine:

- What antecedent(s) cue the defined interfering behavior?
- What consequences stop the behavior at that moment and strengthen or reinforce the behavior to occur in the future (i.e., the student's want or need was met)?
- Based on this pattern, what function is the defined interfering behavior serving for the student?
    - Is the student's behavior escaping or gaining access to someone or something?
    - What is the student trying to escape or gain?
- What conditions increase or decrease the likelihood of this behavior pattern/chain being of value for the student at any given time (i.e., setting events)?

Data collected through the FBA should be summarized to clearly show how the objective, observable data was collected and analyzed to support answers to the questions above. Teams then use these data to make a proactive BIP to intervene and modify the student's environment for prosocial behavior within the same context(s) to be cued, taught, and reinforced.

Functional Behavior Assessment

A functional behavior assessment, or FBA, is not a linear process. It is an assessment in which objective data are collected and analyzed by a team to determine the function of an interfering behavior and the environmental factors that predict and reinforce interfering behavior(s) (Steege et al., 2019). Teams should gather both direct and indirect data from multiple sources to identify a clear antecedent-behavior-consequence (A-B-C) pattern for the interfering behavior and to use for intervention planning. Teams should be able to identify the evidence within the FBA summary used to determine the function of the behavior and make clear connections from the FBA to the BIP (and other supports such as specially designed instruction or accommodations, as appropriate).

As with other assessments and evaluations, the practices for gaining consent, collecting, analyzing, and documenting FBA data within established timelines should be conducted according to local school division policies and procedures.

Preparing for the Functional Behavior Assessment

Team Composition

The FBA requires gathering and discussing behavior-related information from multiple and diverse sources and should not be conducted by a single individual. Some schools may designate a team to complete all FBAs that include relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, or develop a unique team for each student. For students receiving special education services, the FBA team should include members of the IEP Team since the resulting BIP is implemented as part of the IEP.

Team membership should be identified based on the expertise the individual can bring to the team, not their title alone. The roles and responsibilities of each team member, including the student, should be clearly defined before beginning the FBA process.

Team members should include:

- Parent, guardian, or family member
- Student
- Individual(s) with knowledge of the student (identify both strengths and areas of growth for the student, contribute information about the interfering behavior and potential environmental/functional factors)
- Individual(s) with knowledge of the school/division (knowledge of policies and procedures and resource allocation)
- Individual(s) with behavioral expertise (knowledge and use of principles of ABA, the FBA process, and can support the development of a functionally related intervention plan)[1]

Other individuals who can provide relevant information specific to the student's needs (e.g., paraprofessional, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, school nurse, school counselor) should be included on the team, when appropriate. When identifying members for the FBA team, consider the expertise the individual brings to the assessment process rather than their title alone.

[1] Note that school personnel may implement interventions that are behavior-analytic in nature if doing so is part of their regular job duties but may not promote themselves as a behavior analyst (such as a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst or Licensed Behavior Analyst) unless they hold those credentials or license (*Code of Virginia* § 54.1-2957.17).

Importance of Student Voice

Involving students in their FBA and BIP is essential for creating more meaningful and effective interventions that address the root cause(s) of interfering behavior. In addition to providing valuable insight to the "why" behind their behavior, including the student can help increase the student's understanding of the intention and goals; teach self-advocacy skills; and better align interventions to meet the strengths, needs, and preferences of the student (Zhang, Boone, & Anderman, 2024). Including the student's voice demonstrates respect for their autonomy and agency, which can foster a positive and supportive learning environment.

Although not all students will have the ability or self-awareness to share all this information, teams should consider how to engage every student in the FBA and BIP process as much as possible.

Interim Safety Plan

Some interfering behavior may require a safety plan (also known as a crisis plan) to be in place in the interim while the FBA is being conducted. The plan may be needed because the interfering behavior is a safety concern, has a significant impact on the learning environment, or the behavior is quickly increasing in frequency or intensity.

This interim safety plan is designed to maintain safety during the FBA process. To develop the plan, the team should make their best guess regarding the function of the behavior (recognizing the hypothesis found after completing the FBA might be different). Based on this initial educated guess, identify the antecedent and response (consequence) strategies that can help to maintain safety in the learning environment. The plan should include how teachers and administrators will gain immediate assistance when severe or intense behavior occurs.

Teams should remember the interim crisis plan is not an intervention plan. The interim safety plan is a reactive plan to maintain safety. Although the interim safety plan may be effective in responding to escalated behavior situations, teams should still complete the FBA and design a proactive BIP responsive to the student's instructional needs and builds prosocial behaviors for continued success.

New and Existing Data

An FBA can be completed with both new and/or existing data. New data is data specifically and intentionally collected on individual student behavior. Existing data are data that currently exist within the student's record or data already collected by the teacher or school. However, the development of a BIP requires data gathered and

analyzed from the FBA. If the team identifies that no new data is needed to determine the function of the behavior and to develop a BIP, the team should consider if the student requires a BIP or if the interfering behavior can be supported in other ways using existing data. The objective, functionally relevant data needed by teams to initially identify a function and other environmental conditions for identified interfering behaviors is most often not data regularly collected for all students.

Gathering Consent

An FBA can be used as an assessment tool or strategy that is conducted as part of an initial evaluation or reevaluation to determine whether a student has a disability and the educational needs of the student (8VAC20-81-70.C). When an FBA is conducted in such cases, parental consent is required prior to conducting the assessment (8VAC20-81-60.b.1 and 8VAC20-81-70.G). If an IEP Team identifies the need for an FBA and a BIP, the BIP is considered to be part of the student's IEP and treated and implemented with the same monitoring and fidelity as the IEP (8VAC20-81-110.f.3).

An FBA may also be conducted outside of the special education evaluation or reevaluation process for any student to better understand their behavior and to inform individualized intervention and other instructional strategies. When conducting an FBA and developing and implementing a BIP outside of special education, local policies and procedures regarding consent should be reviewed (or developed, if needed) and followed.

Components of a Functional Behavior Assessment

Neither federal nor state regulations define how to complete an FBA. Additionally, not every student will require the same level of rigor in assessment or intervention. The intensity and severity of the interfering behavior, as well as the response to previously implemented intervention(s), should be considered when developing an individualized FBA plan. Regardless of the level of intensity or severity, the following components, including defining the behavior, collection and analysis of indirect and direct data, and the development of a functional hypothesis, will be included in the FBA process to varying degrees.

Teams must ensure that the data collected during the FBA process is current, reliable, and valid and can help the team make data-informed decisions for intervention. The FBA summary should include data that support a summary statement identifying an operational description of interfering behavior; the context of where, when, and with whom interfering behavior is most likely to occur; and the hypothesized function that can be used to develop a function-based BIP. Based on the data analysis, teams may also identify potential replacement behavior(s), long-term behavioral goal(s), instructional

needs, prevention strategies, and response strategies that may be considered in the development of a BIP.

Selecting a Behavior

Before beginning to collect data, teams must agree on what behavior(s) will be assessed in the FBA as the student may be exhibiting multiple behaviors that are interfering with the learning environment. Age and developmental appropriateness must be considered when identifying a targeted behavior.

Each interfering behavior may have been learned and strengthened over time for different reasons and may need to be assessed independently to determine the function. This may look like separate FBAs for each identified interfering behavior, which is not always practical or feasible. Rather than addressing all interfering behaviors at once, teams may need to prioritize behaviors to address.

To prioritize and identify the behavior for an FBA, teams may consider which behavior is interfering with the student's learning, the learning of others, or will make the biggest impact on the individual's life once addressed. Behavior change should be meaningful for the individual. Teams should not choose behavior(s) that is only of concern to or bothers the educators and is not harmful or potentially harmful to the student or others. For example, although it may be frustrating to the teacher that the student taps their pencil on their desk all day, this may not be a behavior that warrants an FBA.

Teams may consider:

- What is the most interfering behavior in the learning environment?
    - For example, John's teacher indicates that although the team has identified five different interfering behaviors, the behavior that interferes the most in the classroom is John's frequent blurting out. The other behaviors are a concern, but blurting out stops the teacher's lesson and limits the student's peers' ability to answer a question.
- Is there a behavior that almost always occurs before other interfering behavior(s)?
    - The team identifies that Julia swipes her materials off her desk. If the teacher does not respond soon enough, Julia will flip her desk over and throw her chair. The team identifies swiping materials as the behavior to assess in the FBA because the other behaviors are not likely to occur if Julia does not swipe her materials.

As the individual learns and strengthens prosocial skills, other interfering behaviors may naturally decrease without the need for additional FBAs. Multiple behaviors may also

serve the same function for the student, so a plan to address one behavior may also address other behaviors serving the same function.

For every behavior identified to decrease, behavior(s) for increase should also be identified and observed through the FBA to determine if there are opportunities where the student engages in the prosocial rather than interfering behavior. Consider the prosocial skill(s) that would support the student's academic, social, and emotional growth instead of the interfering behavior. Follow the same process for identifying behaviors to increase as used for identifying behaviors to decrease.

Defining Behavior

Once the target behavior for an FBA has been selected, a common definition must be developed to ensure data are valid and reliable between data collectors. Individuals may use different terms or definitions to define similar behaviors or use similar terms to define distinctly different behaviors. Taking time at the beginning of the process to make sure all team members have a shared understanding will ensure more validity in the assessment data and a clearer understanding of the interfering behavior(s) and related environmental factors. This process leads to the development of a more targeted, individualized behavior plan that supports meaningful student outcomes.

Behavior definitions should be:

- Observable (e.g., a public event that one can see and/or hear)
- Measurable (i.e., can be accurately measured (e.g., counted or timed) by two or more observers without discussion)
- Complete (Definitions should include both examples of what the behavior looks and sounds like, as well as non-examples that, to an outside observer, may look like the behavior is occurring but is not.)
- Active, not passive (i.e., what the person is doing, rather than is not doing or lack of action)
- Void of opinions, adjectives, traits, and diagnoses (e.g., lazy and noncompliant because of their attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder)
- Void of potential antecedents or consequences (e.g., when given a non-preferred task, to get attention)

An example of a behavior defined: Aggression or aggressive behavior means making physical contact with another individual using one's body or an object with enough force to leave a red mark. Examples include hitting peers with a closed or open fist, throwing items that hit others, and biting others. Non-examples include high-fives, handing

someone an object, yelling at a teacher or peers, throwing materials on the floor, or licking people or objects.

Student Strengths and Interests

Identifying the strengths, interests, and preferences of a student is essential to an FBA and the development of a BIP. By leveraging student strengths and interests, educators can design a plan that focuses on supporting behavioral change that is important and relevant to the student and their goals. Understanding strengths, interests, and preferences can also help to identify potential motivators that can be used to reinforce prosocial behavior.

- Strengths: What strengths does the student demonstrate that may assist in decreasing interfering behavior and increasing prosocial behavior?
- Interests: What interests does the student have within and outside of the educational setting? What goals might the student have related to these interests?
- Preferences: How does the student prefer to learn, be rewarded, and interact with peers and adults?

Indirect Assessment

Indirect assessment is the collection and analysis of data that has been reported by others (not a direct observation) that is relevant to the student and the interfering behavior. Indirect sources of data such as a record review, interview, or questionnaire may assist teams in gaining historical student behavior data and understanding how other individuals perceive the interfering behavior and other related factors. As a result of indirect data collection, the team should be able to develop an initial summary statement hypothesizing the A-B-C pattern and function of the interfering behavior. Based on these data, teams should develop a plan for direct observation.

Indirect data collection methods are typically considered subjective data because they require the individual to provide their interpretation of the environmental conditions. Although an individual may try to be as objective as possible, research suggests their interpretation may be skewed with some level of opinion or subjectivity. However, these data points may help identify data collection opportunities and triangulate direct observation data.

Record Review

A record review may be conducted to help the team gain an understanding of the student's academic and behavioral history. Record reviews may include attendance records, anecdotal classroom notes, evaluation reports (e.g., psychological,

educational, sociological, speech and language), past IEPs and progress reports, medical reports, and/or previous behavioral interventions and related data.

Record reviews may not identify the environmental context of the interfering behavior but may help the team gain clarity around past experiences, potential setting events, and strengths and preferences of the student. Record reviews may also help the team to identify any medical considerations or resource connections outside of the school that need to occur before moving forward with or during the FBA process.

Functional Behavior Rating Scales/Checklists

Functional behavior rating scales are quick tools that teams can use to gain quantitative information related to the function of each identified behavior. These scales can be used to identify potential antecedents, consequences, reinforcers, and the potential function of the interfering behavior.

The same scale should be completed by multiple individuals and the team should look for consistent responses across responders. Separate scales should be completed for each behavior of concern. Responses can be used to help target questions during the interview process and identify opportunities for direct observation. Functional behavior rating scales should not be used as a sole source of data to inform the FBA.

Note: Functional behavior rating scales are not the same as more comprehensive, multidimensional rating scales that may be used as part of an evaluation to determine special education eligibility.

Interviews

Interviews are question-and-answer conversations with individuals who have direct contact and knowledge of the student. Interviews are a helpful way of gathering additional information regarding the pattern(s) of interfering behavior and additional information that may be helpful in the FBA process or intervention plan development.

Information gathered in the interviews may include:

- strengths, interests, and preferences of the student;
- additional background regarding the student or interfering behavior(s);
- previously attempted intervention strategies, both successful and unsuccessful; and
- relevant information related to the interfering behavior, including potential setting events, antecedents, maintaining and non-maintaining consequences, and hypothesized function.

Teams should identify individuals to interview who know the student well and have directly observed the prosocial behavior(s) and interfering behavior(s). There is no standard number of individuals who should be interviewed. Interview enough individuals to gain a comprehensive understanding of the student; three to four individuals can often achieve this. To gain the most objective data possible, individuals should be interviewed individually, although teams may decide to interview individuals as a group. While standard interview questions may be used, follow-up questions may be needed to collect additional information. Interviewers should look for facts, not opinions, when conducting interviews.

Whenever possible, both the family and the student should be interviewed. Families can provide significant information about the student, including developmental and medical history; cultural, racial/ethnic, and linguistic considerations; and potential trauma and behavioral patterns that may be occurring within the school setting. Students may also be able to provide details about their likes and dislikes and potential insight into their behavior. Some students may be able to communicate exactly why they engage in the interfering behavior. When conducting student interviews, always consider the age and abilities of the student and modify the interviews as needed.

Analyzing Indirect Assessment Data

After indirect data are gathered, teams should summarize the data and identify patterns. Some questions that teams may ask when analyzing the data include:

- Which antecedents are reported to be the most frequent for the interfering behavior?
- What is the most frequent response that follows the behavior?
- Where does the interfering behavior most frequently and least frequently occur?
- What other events (e.g., time of day, specific individuals, subjects, types of work) can increase the likelihood that interfering behavior may occur?
- Is there an observed pattern of escalation or specific behaviors that often or always occur before another?

These initial data can be used to develop an initial hypothesis for the behavior chain, including possible setting events, and help teams identify the environments (i.e., location, subject, time) for direct observation.

Direct Assessment

Direct data are gathered through an individual directly observing the interfering behavior and the environmental conditions in which the behavior takes place. Direct data

collection gathers information relevant to the interfering behavior and may be used to help confirm or reject the functional hypothesis made by the team based on indirect assessment data.

Direct data collection methods are typically considered objective data because the recorded observational data are facts about what is directly observed in the environment, not the opinion or interpretation of the observer. Observers should focus on the overt behaviors they observe when documenting direct observations of the student's behavior and the environment.

The teacher and/or other staff who are a part of the environment where the interfering behavior is occurring may not be able to accurately observe their own behavior and how their behavior may be influencing the environment (related to possible antecedent and consequence changes). For this reason, direct observation data of the student and the environment for functional data collection may be best collected by an objective, outside observer or during a time when the observer is not directly involved with the student (Glasberg & LaRue, 2015). Based on information gathered during indirect assessments, teams should plan for who is responsible for observing and recording functional data during times when the behavior is most likely to occur, rather than the classroom teacher collecting direct data and attempting to respond to interfering behavior as needed.

During observations, the environment should continue as it usually would, as if the observer were not in the room. If the indirect assessment is an accurate depiction of the context surrounding the interfering behavior, there is no need to modify the environment to ensure the observer can observe the behavior.

If the observer is unable to observe the interfering behavior during the observation, the team may consider:

- Is the observer new to the environment? Consider spending short amounts of time during the day in the classroom to normalize their presence.
- Was something in the indirect data missed? Consider going back to review the data to determine other potential contexts to observe.
- Did something else change that has impacted the behavior? Consider how that may impact the behavior in the short and long term.

Direct assessment data is collected for several reasons.

- Event recording data are used to identify the frequency of the interfering behavior, including how often or how long the behavior occurs.

- Progress monitoring data are used for evaluating the effect of the intervention on both the interfering and prosocial behaviors. To monitor progress, baseline data must first be collected to identify why the behavior is of concern (i.e., impact on the student and environment) and help to identify a goal(s) for a BIP.
- Functional and environmental data are collected to better understand environmental factors influencing the student and the interfering behavior, hypothesize the function of the interfering behavior, and verify the functional hypothesis made from indirect assessment data.

Event Recording

Teams need to know if the identified interfering behavior is interfering in the learning of the student or other students and if so, how much. Teams may do this by collecting (through direct observation) and analyzing data that describes the interfering behavior, such as how often or for how long the behavior occurs.

Collecting these data can help to inform teams about the impact of both the interfering and desired prosocial behavior on student performance (Golden, 2018). Once identified, these data are used as baseline data (i.e., where the student started) for progress monitoring and determining the effectiveness of the intervention (i.e., whether the intervention supports behavior as intended).

Event recording and progress monitoring are not diagnostics; these do not indicate what level a student may be performing, the function of the behavior, or what skill deficits may require remediation. Instead, these are brief probes or snapshots of an identified behavior or skill used to determine progress toward a goal.

Baseline data must be collected before putting an intervention in place. Teams should establish a process for how and when baseline data will be collected during the FBA process. The data collected for baseline continues to be collected once the BIP has been implemented so teams are able to make comparisons to the student's performance before, during, and after intervention.

Considerations for data collection may include:

- What about the behavior is of concern, or what aspect of the behavior is the most interfering?
    - Data collection should match the area of concern. If the team indicates the behavior interferes with learning because the student spends too much time away from instruction while engaged in interfering behavior, the team may consider collection of duration data rather than frequency data.

- Methods of data collection may include:
  - Frequency/Rate/Event Recording (count number of occurrences)
    - When to Use: When determining how often behavior occurs. Behavior must have a distinct beginning and end and can be accurately counted.
  - Interval (dividing observation time into equal intervals and recording whether the behavior occurred)
    - Whole Interval: Behavior occurs for the whole interval.
    - Partial Interval: Behavior occurs at any point during the interval.
    - Momentary Interval: Behavior is occurring at the time from one interval to the next.
    - When to Use: When determining how often behavior occurs. Interval is an appropriate choice when behavior occurs too frequently or starts and stops too quickly to accurately count.
  - Duration (how long the behavior occurs)
    - When to Use: When determining for how long behavior occurs. Behavior must have a distinct beginning and end and can be accurately measured.
  - Intensity (how intense or severe the behavior is to the student or to others)
    - When to Use: When determining the severity of behavior.
  - Latency (how long it takes the student to engage in the behavior from the antecedent)
    - When to Use: When determining the amount of time between the antecedent and the targeted behavior.

- How often will progress be measured?
  - The frequency of data collection should match the intensity of the concern. To establish a baseline, teams should collect a minimum of three to five data points from three different days. Once the intervention is in place, daily progress monitoring is recommended.

- Who is responsible?
    - Teams should identify who will be collecting the data and who will be analyzing the gathered data.
    - Also consider the training and coaching that the student may need to ensure the data collected is valid and reliable.
- Where and when will data collection occur?
    - Data collection should take place during times of day when the interfering behavior has been identified to occur (or behaviors targeted for increase should be observed). This may be all day for some students and during reading block for others. Data collection should be consistent from day to day but collected over enough time and in enough contexts to get a representative sample.
- What data can be collected with fidelity?
    - When teams are determining how to collect baseline data, they should consider what the long-term data collection will look like to monitor intervention effectiveness. This consideration may include what identified data collector is able to collect with fidelity during the FBA and to monitor the BIP to ensure the data collected is valid and reliable.

Teams should also collect peer comparison data by collecting the same baseline data on typical peers not requiring an FBA and BIP. If the student's behavior is significantly discrepant from their peers, the FBA and BIP may be a helpful tool for supporting the student. If the behavior is not significantly discrepant from peers, the FBA and BIP may or may not be a helpful tool and classroom or grade-level support for universal or targeted instruction may need to be supported to ensure all students are successful.

A-B-C Data Collection

Collecting A-B-C data is a process of directly observing the student and the environment and recording the antecedent-behavior-consequence pattern observed for each occurrence of the interfering behavior. The A-B-C data can also be referred to as descriptive analysis. Direct A-B-C data collection is conducted based on the results of indirect data collection and is used to help confirm the indirect information gathered in that process. Direct A-B-C data collection can also help to identify contexts in which interfering behavior does not or is least likely to occur and prosocial behaviors are observed. Teams should use data gathered during interviews to identify when, where, with whom, and how long the observation should occur.

Example: Based on the indirect assessment data collected, the team makes an initial hypothesis: During whole group instruction, when asked an open-ended question, Hannah will place her head in her hands and begin to cry. When this occurs, the teacher will tell Hannah she will come back to her then will ask the question to another classmate. Hannah stops crying when the other student is asked the question. It is hypothesized that Hannah places her head in her hands and cries to escape answering whole group questions.

Based on this initial hypothesis, the team may identify times of day when Hannah's teacher is providing whole group instruction to conduct their direct observation.

The A-B-C data is often recorded using narrative or structured A-B-C observation forms. When collecting A-B-C data, the observer is looking for:

- What happened or what changed immediately before the interfering behavior occurred? (Antecedent)
- What happened or what changed in the environment following the interfering behavior? (Consequence)
- What worked to stop or pause the behavior in the moment? (Maintaining Consequence)
- Were there factors that influenced the behavior before the antecedent? (Setting Event)
- Are there other interfering behavior(s) that are observed to occur before, with, or following the defined interfering behavior?

When documenting the consequence of the interfering behavior, observers should consider both what worked to maintain or stop/pause the behavior (maintaining consequence) as well as responses that did not change or potentially increased/escalated the interfering behavior. Direct observation data collectors should also observe and take A-B-C data on when interfering behavior is least likely to occur. What about this environment decreases the likelihood of interfering behavior and can be replicated (through the BIP) to reduce the likelihood of interfering behavior? These data can help inform effective intervention strategies.

A-B-C Data Tips and Tricks

- Record what is being observed, not thoughts or opinions.
- When recording antecedents, identify the observed change in the environment that occurred before the interfering behavior occurred, not the context or setting.

- Identify whether a consequence (response to the behavior) resulted in the behavior continuing and/or increasing (did not work to meet the function) or stopping (behavior worked to meet the function).

Preference Assessment

Student preferences can often be learned through observation of how the student spends their time and interviews with families, staff, and the student. Teams may also conduct a preference assessment, which is a systematic procedure used to provide objective data on an individual's preference(s). This can be particularly useful when an individual has limited communication skills or when preferences are not easily observable. Preference assessments may be conducted through indirect methods (such as having the student indicate preference as part of an interview) or through a formal preference assessment.

Preference assessments do not identify guaranteed reinforcers (as reinforcement is only determined by behavior change) and do not identify the function(s) of behavior. Preference assessments can be used to determine the potential value of items (i.e., tangibles, activities, individuals, type of work tasks) that may serve as reinforcers and increase student engagement. Identified preferences may be used in designing interventions, instructional programming, and identifying potential reinforcers to increase prosocial behavior(s).

Analyzing Direct Assessment Data

Direct assessment data will need to be analyzed by the team to determine behavioral patterns and compared to the indirect data analysis. Data analysis is a process of counting and sorting the data to find patterns. Through data analysis, the team should be able to find consistent patterns of the A-B-C chain. The questions that teams sought to answer with their indirect assessment data are the same questions teams may seek to answer with their direct assessment data. Graphs can be used to visualize data for making decisions.

Triangulation of Data

Multiple sources of data should be used to determine the functional pattern of each behavior, also known as triangulation of the data. Triangulation of data is the use of multiple methods and sources of data collection on the same topic to inform decision-making. Triangulation of data within the FBA process is critical to ensuring all factors relating to the student are considered. This can be done by using both indirect and direct data collection methods, collecting data in multiple environments, and having multiple team members collect and analyze the data. Teams can compare these data sources

and find consistent patterns to make an informed decision on the function of the interfering behavior and the antecedents and consequences that cue and maintain the behavior.

Decision-Making

There is no right amount of data that needs to be collected for an FBA. In some cases, indirect and direct assessment data may show noticeably clear patterns and teams will be able to readily make a hypothesis regarding the function of the interfering behavior. In other cases, direct observation may differ from the hypothesis drafted from indirect assessment, and an additional observation or other assessment may need to be conducted. Teams should collect enough data to show a clear, repeating pattern between the interfering behavior and what predicts (antecedent) **and** maintains (reinforcing consequence) the behavior.

- If the direct data are consistent with indirect data, the team should feel confident the function of the behavior is identified and move forward with the development of a BIP. At this point, many teams will write a summary statement, or a hypothesis, about the function of the behavior to assist in developing the BIP. This may be the same as the initial hypothesis developed from indirect data analysis or revised based on direct data analysis and the triangulation of data.
- If direct data are inconsistent with indirect data, the team should consider the accuracy and consistency of the indirect or direct data.
    - If the direct observation data shows a clear and consistent A-B-C pattern, the team may consider using these data to hypothesize the function of the interfering behavior and move to developing a BIP.
    - If both the indirect and direct data are inconsistent and/or patterns are not clear, teams may consider collecting additional indirect and direct data to seek additional clarification. If a pattern is still unclear or the team is not confident in the indirect and direct assessment results, teams should consider conducting a functional analysis to confirm the function of the interfering behavior. A functional analysis should only be conducted with a trained team member who has knowledge and expertise in effectively conducting this assessment.

Develop a Hypothesis Statement

Once all data have been collected and analyzed, teams will develop a hypothesis statement. A hypothesis statement summarizes the data collected in the FBA process and describes the team's best guess at the purpose of the behavior and other factors relating to the identified behavior. This hypothesis is based on the objective data

collected and allows the team to develop a function-based intervention plan (Kern & Commisso, 2021). In the hypothesis statement, the team will identify the setting events, immediate antecedents, and immediate consequences that surround the interfering behavior as well as the hypothesized function of the behavior. For the hypothesized function, teams should identify if the student's interfering behavior is to gain or to escape as well as what the student is gaining or escaping. Teams should be as specific and concrete as possible so the information can be used as a starting point for identifying potential intervention strategies. A hypothesis statement should be developed for each behavior being evaluated through the FBA process, as well as each hypothesized function if the team finds a behavior may serve more than one function based on different antecedent and consequence patterns.

Teams will use this deeper understanding of the interfering behavior gathered from the FBA to develop a functionally related BIP. Teams may also consider other supports and services to support the student that may have been identified throughout the assessment process.

Intensifying Data Collection Methods

In most cases, indirect assessments and direct A-B-C observations or other direct data collection methods will lead to a strong hypothesis of the function of the interfering behavior and other relevant data to develop a BIP. However, as the intensity, severity, and resources required to support the behavior(s) increase, the rigor of assessment also increases and may require additional data beyond what can be gathered from previously identified data collection and analysis methods.

Behavior Intervention Plan

An intervention based on a "best guess" or "trial-and-error" approach is likely to take multiple attempts to get it right. Often, plans are developed and implemented in a manner that does not support the behavior change the team was hoping for, and the results do not match the intended outcome(s) for the student or staff. This can be a cyclical issue that is frustrating for everyone involved. In a trial-and-error approach, the interfering behavior continues to be reinforced and therefore continues to occur. By developing a BIP based on the function of the interfering behavior, as identified by the FBA, teams can increase the likelihood that the intervention will be successful on the first attempt in reducing interfering behavior and increasing prosocial behavior(s). Plans should be specific enough that anyone with appropriate training can follow it with minimal support and fidelity. Teams should also consider scenarios where the interfering behavior is likely to occur and plan accordingly as part of the BIP development.

Although a function of the interfering behavior was hypothesized in the FBA process, the outcome of the FBA does not result in a prescriptive plan for how to intervene. Instead, the FBA helps teams to better understand the relationship between the environmental conditions that cue and reinforce the interfering behavior(s) and the individual. The team can then make changes to the environment to no longer cue and reinforce interfering behavior, and instead, cue and reinforce prosocial behavior and provide instruction for identified skill gaps.

Consider: Students are practicing how to get the function of their behavior met efficiently and effectively each time they engage in a behavior. Every time the interfering behavior results in a consequence that meets a want or need, the connection between the antecedent, behavior, and consequence is strengthened. This pattern becomes a habit. The FBA allows teams to identify the antecedents and consequences that have helped to build the habit. With the BIP, the team is structuring a plan to help break those habits and build (or strengthen) new, more personally and socially productive habits.

The more thorough the information in the FBA is in helping the team understand these factors, the better able they will be to design a BIP that will set up the student for success. A meaningful, effective BIP designed to reduce interfering behavior and increase prosocial behaviors is dependent on a well-conducted FBA.

At any time, a BIP may be only one of many interventions and/or plans that are in place to support the student, including supports within the school as well as in the community. For a variety of reasons, these plans may support but may also contradict one another which can result in a lack of expected progress. Teams are encouraged to collaborate with other support providers and consider the interaction of these plans for supporting the student as a part of intervention planning.

Behavior Intervention Plan Components

Every student's BIP will be uniquely designed to meet their individual needs based on the data collected during the FBA process. All components should be considered for the development of every BIP. There should be a clear connection from the FBA to each identified action in the BIP. Using the data gathered within the FBA, the team develops a plan that identifies antecedent, teaching, and response strategies to make the interfering behavior inefficient, ineffective, and irrelevant (O'Neill et al., 2015). Intervention strategies should be chosen based on the function identified in the FBA, not on the topography of the behavior (the form, or how it looks).

Example: If the function of yelling is to escape a work task, a response strategy to always send a student into the hallway when they yell may end up reinforcing (strengthening or increasing) the behavior rather than decreasing or eliminating the behavior. Also,

consider the developmental appropriateness of each intervention. The expectations set for students and their goals should be within age and developmentally appropriate limits. When more is expected from a student than what they are developmentally able to do, their opportunity to be successful in learning and demonstrating prosocial behavior is limited.

Individuals who will be a part of implementing the plan (including paraprofessionals, general education teacher(s), resource/exploratory teacher(s), the student, and the student's family) should be active participants in the development of the BIP. Opportunities for input may include ensuring (a) the plan is a contextual fit, (b) developmental appropriateness, (c) goal setting, (d) identification of potential preferences, and (e) selection of replacement/alternative behaviors and other areas for skill development. The implementation of the plan is only as strong as the ability of all stakeholders to understand and implement the plan; therefore, training (i.e., coaching, modeling) should also be considered.

Replacement/Alternative Behavior

The replacement or alternative behavior meets the same function as the interfering behavior; it provides access to the same reinforcement as the interfering behavior but in a way that better fits the context of the environment (i.e., a more socially appropriate way for the individual to get the function of their interfering behavior met). The functionally equivalent replacement behavior must be easier and just as effective as the interfering behavior to functionally meet the needs of the student. It can be viewed as a short-term behavior while the student gains the skills needed to demonstrate the long-term desired behavior. For some students, this may include the use of AAC, even if the student is verbal. When identifying the replacement behavior, teams must also identify if it is a skill, performance, or fluency deficit then teach and reinforce the skills, as appropriate.

Example: The team has identified that the student kicks the teacher so he can be sent to the calm-down space and access a break from the current activity. Rather than kick the teacher to be sent to the calm down space, the student can be taught to use a signal to communicate to the teacher that they need a break. The signal allows for easier, more efficient communication of the need for a break than kicking the teacher and allows for the student's need for a break to be met.

Long-Term (Desired) Behavior

The long-term, desired behavior is the prosocial behavior the student should engage in when the antecedent occurs. This is not simply the opposite of the interfering behavior, but instead is the behavior the student should exhibit under similar circumstances. For example, if the defined interfering behavior is kicking others (to gain teacher attention),

the long-term behavior would not be “keeping foot to self” or “not kicking others” but rather may be to raise their hand to ask for help as opposed to kicking others to gain the attention of the teacher. Long-term desired behaviors should be developmentally appropriate for the individual and the environment where the behavior is expected to occur.

Before teaching the long-term desired behavior, the replacement behavior should be taught so the student has an immediate way to meet the function of their behavior in a more socially appropriate way. Continue to reinforce the use of the replacement behavior while providing the necessary instruction to build the long-term desired behaviors. As with the replacement behavior, teams must identify whether the behavior is a skill, performance, or fluency deficit to identify the best instructional approach. Both the replacement and long-term behaviors will need goals, instructional strategies, and reinforcers to support the learning of each identified behavior.

Baseline

The student’s current performance (often a count or number) of a skill or behavior that will be used to monitor progress towards the identified goal(s) and development of replacement and long-term desired behaviors is their baseline. The goal is a number that can be graphed. The measure used to determine the student’s baseline must also be the measure that is used to monitor progress and be reflective of why the behavior is a concern. Baseline data for interfering behavior is often collected during the FBA process.

Goal

Once the student’s baseline has been determined, the team will set a measurable goal using the baseline and other data collected during the FBA process. Regularly monitoring progress towards goals will help teams to know if the intervention is working or if changes need to be made. Teams should consider setting goals not only for behaviors targeted for decrease (interfering behavior) but also for behaviors targeted for increase (short- and long-term prosocial behaviors).

Goals should be individualized to the student based on their current baseline, expected rate of progress, and the level of mastery needed for success. Goals can also be set (once the student has met the success criteria) for skill maintenance and intervention, or support fading, to ensure the student maintains the skill(s) as supports are removed. For students with disabilities whose BIP is part of their IEP, the BIP goal(s) may align with their IEP goal(s).

Some questions the team may consider when identifying a goal:

- What does reasonable progress and success look like for this student?

- How will the team know when the student has mastered the skill(s)?
- What are the student's peers able or expected to do?

Include the student, when possible, in developing the goal and consider their goals, abilities, and needs. Complete mastery of a skill is not always expected of students. However, it may be reasonable to set a goal for a mastery of skill, such as for student safety.

Antecedent/Prevention Strategies

Antecedent or prevention strategies are changes or modifications that can be made to prevent the identified antecedent (from the FBA) from cueing the behavior of concern and/or can cue the replacement/alternative and long-term prosocial behavior(s).

While some antecedents may be able to be eliminated within certain environments, not all antecedents can be avoided forever. Consider how antecedents removed from or added into the environment as part of the BIP will be gradually added back in or faded out, with support, as the student learns the skills needed to engage in more socially or contextually appropriate behavior(s) when the antecedent is present.

When identifying antecedent or prevention strategies, teams may consider:

- Change or modify alterable setting events.
- Alter or eliminate the antecedent so the interfering behavior is no longer cued.
- Structure the environment so the student is more likely to use the taught replacement behavior(s).

This may include the addition of new components in the environment, such as new visuals, or the modification of existing Tier I and Tier II supports to meet the individual needs of the student.

Teaching Strategies

Every time the interfering behavior occurs, the student is practicing that behavior and the connection between the antecedent, interfering behavior, and consequence is being strengthened. Consider how the strategies identified within the BIP will be taught to ensure the student has more opportunities to practice and strengthen prosocial behavior. Use the results of the FBA to identify appropriate strategies for how to teach:

- replacement/alternative behavior;
- long-term, desired behavior(s); and/or

- additional skill or performance needs that contribute to setting events or antecedents for the interfering behavior, such as prerequisite or access skills.

The skills that need to be taught should be clearly identified and detailed enough that an instructional plan can be created. Be sure to consider schoolwide behavior expectations when identifying skills to teach.

A plan for teaching may include:

- Scaffolded, direct instruction (model, guided practice, independent practice)
- Role play of desired behavior(s)
- Increased opportunities to respond
- Increased opportunities for feedback

Before identifying how to teach replacement and long-term desired behaviors, it is imperative to know whether the behaviors are skill, performance, or fluency deficits.

- Skill/Acquisition – "Can't Do": The student does not have, or has not learned the skill, thus cannot perform or demonstrate it.
    - Skill deficits are behaviors that have not been observed and cannot be elicited by providing opportunities for reinforcement.
        - Example: Student does not know how or when to raise their hand to gain attention or to volunteer.
- Performance – "Doesn't Do": The student has the skills but is unable to perform or demonstrate it.
    - Performance deficit behaviors have been observed and can be elicited by providing opportunities for reinforcement.
        - Example: Student has been explicitly taught how and when to raise their hand in class to ask a question and has demonstrated the skill but does not raise their hand in class.
- Fluency – "Might Do": The student has the skill but performs inconsistently, at the wrong time/location, or has not practiced the skill enough to be fluent.
    - Example: Student sometimes raises their hand but sometimes blurts out, or the student overgeneralizes and raises their hand every time they want to speak, even in a small group or a one-on-one situation.

Skill acquisition deficits require step-by-step instruction to demonstrate the skill, in addition to environmental modifications to set the student up for success (prevention or

cueing strategies) and frequent, immediate reinforcement of the skill. Behavioral skills should be taught with the instructional principles used to teach academic skills, including the use of direct, explicit instruction with a gradual release to support independence and generalization (Archer & Hughes, 2016).

Also, consider additional skills (such as functional or academic) that may need to be taught. For example, if the FBA results hypothesized the student engages in an interfering behavior to escape math tasks, does the student have skill deficits in math that may need to be taught in addition to a replacement behavior?

Performance and fluency deficits may require instruction on when and why to demonstrate the skill with increased practice opportunities in a variety of settings. Performance and fluency deficits will require reinforcement when the skill is performed.

Note: The ability to demonstrate an expected, prosocial behavior is often assumed to be performance or fluency deficits. Although these skills may have been taught at Tier I or Tier II, the skill instruction at those levels of intervention may not have met the instructional need(s) of the individual and the skill was never actually learned. Ensure prosocial behaviors are not a skill deficit (needing to be re-taught) before planning to support performance or build fluency.

Response Strategies

Identifying how educators will respond to both prosocial and interfering behavior. Although one goal of the plan is to reduce interfering behavior, it is important to recognize that interfering behavior will still occur while the student is learning replacement and long-term skills; a plan should be in place to respond when it does.

Identify how educators will respond when the student demonstrates:

- the replacement or alternative behavior;
- behavior attempts and progress towards independence of replacement and/or other prosocial behavior(s);
- long-term and other prosocial behaviors; and
- interfering behavior.

Just as reinforcers increase and maintain interfering behavior, reinforcers can be used to increase and maintain prosocial behavior(s). For lasting, effective behavior change, the use of evidence-based instruction should be paired with reinforcement that is matched to individual student needs. Increase the use of replacement/alternative and long-term, prosocial behaviors by responding with reinforcement that meets the function of the interfering behavior as identified in the FBA.

When implementing the BIP, the student may continue to demonstrate interfering behavior, especially in the early stages of learning. To the extent possible, do not respond to the interfering behavior with a consequence that will reinforce the interfering behavior (i.e., do not respond the same as before implementing the BIP). Plan for how to respond when the interfering behavior occurs so the interfering behavior no longer works in the student's favor, but ensure safety is maintained. Consider providing redirection, prompts, or cues for the student to use the replacement behavior and provide immediate reinforcement when the replacement behavior is observed or attempted.

Safety Plan

All behaviors addressed within the FBA should be supported by the antecedent, teaching, and response strategies identified above. However, some students may have behaviors that are not identified by the team as needing an FBA and a BIP, such as high-intensity but low-frequency behaviors. Additionally, some targeted behaviors may be of an intensity or severity that require a plan while teaching the new replacement and long-term behaviors. In these cases, teams should develop a safety plan for if/when this behavior occurs as a part of the BIP. Safety plans often include strategies for maintaining safety and de-escalation.

Implementation Planning and Monitoring

Teams should plan for intervention implementation. This is critical to the success of an intervention and ensures the BIP is implemented with fidelity. Teams should identify:

- When will the strategy be implemented?
- Where will the strategy be implemented?
- How will the strategy be implemented?
- By whom will the strategy be implemented?
- Do the implementers need training? How will that be provided and by whom?
- What materials are needed for implementation?

It is also important to plan in advance for what problems may occur. The team should determine what problems might arise that may impact implementation. By planning for problems that may be encountered, teams can limit implementation problems and increase intervention effectiveness. This saves time and resources and increases student success.

Progress	High-Implementation Fidelity	Low-Implementation Fidelity
Sufficient Progress	Continue with the intervention until the goal is met, then consider fading out the intervention.	Consider modifying the intervention to document what is working. Also, consider increasing fidelity, including training needs, which may increase the student's rate of progress.
Insufficient Progress	Consider modifying or changing the intervention and gathering new data if needed.	Consider providing additional staff training for plan implementation.

Monitoring Student Progress

Data must be collected and reviewed by the team to determine if the BIP is effective in supporting progress toward identified goals (NCRI, 2013). Before the BIP is implemented, the team should plan for how they will continue to collect data and monitor progress.

- How will progress toward the goal be measured?
    - Student progress data should be collected by continuing to collect the data used to determine a baseline for the goal(s). If an alternative behavior(s) has been identified through the development of the BIP that was not identified during the FBA process, baseline data for this behavior is collected before implementing the BIP.
- How often will data be collected?
    - The frequency with which data is collected will depend on the intensity and frequency of the intervention. As the intensity and frequency increase, the data collection will increase. Behavior data can often be collected daily.
- Who will collect the data?
    - Identify the specific individual(s) who will collect progress data. Do not forget to provide data collection training to ensure that accurate, reliable data is collected.
- When and where will data be collected?
    - Be specific with the location(s) and time(s) in which data is being collected. Data may not be collected all day, every day, but should be collected enough to get an accurate depiction and make meaningful decisions.

- What decision rule will be used to determine progress towards the goal?
    - Trendline analysis or four-point decision rule are often used to determine progress (or lack of) towards the identified goal.

Begin collecting and analyzing data as soon as the BIP is being implemented with fidelity. Sufficient progress towards a goal means that the student is making progress at a rate that will allow them to meet the identified goal by the date identified within the BIP. Teams must decide how they will determine if enough progress is being made. Do not wait long amounts of time before considering student progress. By collecting daily data and plotting data on a graph at least weekly, progress can be assessed after two weeks of implementation with fidelity.

It is helpful to plot progress monitoring data on a graph to support decision-making. Graphs allow teams to visually analyze the student's progress, compare where the student was (baseline) to where the student is currently performing, and how close the student is to meeting their goal with the current intervention. School divisions currently implementing an MTSS framework may have these decision rules already established.

Monitoring Implementation Fidelity

The most well-developed, function-based BIP will be unsuccessful if it is not implemented as intended. Teams must ensure that all stakeholders have the training and resources needed to implement a BIP. Once implementation supports are in place, the fidelity of the intervention (i.e., the plan is being implemented the way it was intended to be implemented) must be assessed (Carroll et al., 2007). One method to do this is to make a checklist of all the components of the BIP and record whether each strategy was implemented as designed. Fidelity may be assessed by a coach, administrator, outside observer, or through self-assessment and should be assessed for all implementers. This provides an opportunity to identify additional areas for modeling or areas of miscommunication or confusion. Modeling and coaching should be provided until the intervention is implemented with fidelity. Once at fidelity, frequent checks should be conducted to ensure fidelity remains high.

If the student is not making progress, first conduct a fidelity check to ensure all components are still being implemented as designed. Always consider the fidelity of implementation before making an intervention change. Just as with monitoring progress, identify who, what, when, and how fidelity data will be collected and identify how and when fidelity data will be reviewed.

Additional BIP Considerations

Teams should frequently monitor the impact that the BIP is having on student success, as well as on staff, family, and others in the learning environment or who work with the student. While the plan developed by the team may match the needs of the student, consider the following:

- Ease of intervention implementation.
    - Teams must ensure the plan can be implemented with fidelity for the duration of time the student requires the intervention. If the plan is unable to be implemented with fidelity or the plan is not sustainable after a few days, the team should consider other options that also meet the functional needs of the student but are more easily implemented.
- Social validity.
    - Teams should consider how the intervention appears to others when being implemented. Are the identified interventions socially and culturally appropriate? Would the team feel comfortable with others outside of the team observing implementation of the intervention? Consider not only other school staff members but peers and community members as well.
    - Teams should also consider how the intervention is valued by the student. Does the student (and their family) value the intended outcomes of this plan? Does the implementation of the plan support the student's least restrictive environment or set the student apart from their peers? Plan development should consider how the student will continue to be included in the educational environment and ensure age and developmentally appropriate engagement with peers.
    - The interfering behavior assessed through an FBA was targeted for intervention because the behavior was interfering with the learning of the student and/or others. While the student may be making growth towards the goal, the team should also continually assess whether the growth made by the student is making a difference in the student's interaction with their environment.
- Match the values of the student and implementing staff.
    - The student is an integral part of the FBA and BIP process. While the BIP is designed for the educator, the goal is to change student's behavior. In designing the BIP, be sure to include the student in identifying strategies they feel comfortable with and are okay with educators implementing.

- The BIPs are designed using principles of ABA and evidence-informed strategies, but that does not mean all individuals asked to implement the plan agree with these strategies. This disagreement could unintentionally lead to the BIP not being implemented with fidelity. Provide opportunities to educate team members and implementers not on the team on the practices used to develop the BIP and why those practices were chosen to support the student. Also consider other options that also meet the functional needs of the student but are more accepted by implementers.

Evaluation and Fading

Changes to the BIP occur based on student progress, implementation fidelity, and data. Once the student has met their initial goal or is on target to meet their goal, teams should meet to identify next steps. Planning may include the identification of new skills to teach, generalization of skills, or how to fade supports as the student has gained the necessary skills. Evaluation of the BIP (and FBA, as needed) should occur until data show the student can access core and/or specialized instruction without the support of an individualized BIP. Once the student has demonstrated developmentally appropriate proficiency in identified prosocial behavior(s), the student should continue to be supported through Tier I instruction and Tier II intervention, as well as any required specially designed instruction.

Glossary

Access skills
The skills that may or may not be linked directly to the content but are required for the student to be able to meet the content standard(s). Access skills may include self-awareness and other social emotional skills, executive functioning, functional communication, and foundational academic skills (Alber-Morgan et. al., 2022).

Augmentative or alternative communication (AAC)
All forms of communication (other than speech) used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. The AAC ranges from no-tech to high-tech supports and can be accessed in a variety of ways.

Baseline
The student's current performance (a number) of a skill or behavior. The baseline serves as a starting point to identify and monitor progress toward the desired goal(s).

Behavior intervention plan (BIP)
A plan that utilizes positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behaviors that interfere with the learning of students with disabilities or the learning of others or behaviors that require disciplinary action (8VAC20-81-10). A BIP is an individualized support plan developed using the results of a functional behavior assessment.

Behavior support plan (BSP) or positive behavior support plan (PBSP)
A guide for managing and supporting student behavior utilizing positive behavior strategies rather than a specific plan of action based on individual assessment data.

Data triangulation
Process of collecting and comparing multiple data sources or data types to confirm findings.

Data-informed decision-making
Process of using objective, measurable data to guide and improve decisions.

Environment
The physical, social, and instructional factors that influence behavior.

Four-point decision-making rule
Comparison of the last four data points collected during intervention implementation to a goal line to evaluate whether the current intervention or strategy is working.

Function
The reason or purpose of a behavior. Understanding the function of a behavior helps in identifying the need that the behavior fulfills for the individual.

Function-based thinking
A model for thinking and a systematic process for defining problem behaviors and selecting interventions that match the function of the behavior (Hershfeldt, Rosenberg, & Bradshaw, 2010).

Functional behavior assessment (FBA)
A process to determine the underlying cause or function of a child's [student's] behavior that impedes the learning of the child with a disability or learning of the child's peers (8VAC20-81-10).

Goal
Identifies the expected behavior change, including what the student will know or be able to do, as a result of instructional change, such as implementing the behavior intervention plan. The team will set a measurable BIP goal using the baseline and other data collected during the FBA process.

Interfering behavior
Any behavior that gets in the way of an individual engaging in prosocial behavior(s) and making academic, social, and emotional growth. These behavior(s) interfere or disrupt the learning of the student or other students and may impede student progress and social relationships

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
A systemic, data-driven approach that allows divisions and schools to provide evidence-based practices and interventions to meet the needs of their students. This is done through a clearly defined process that is implemented to fidelity by all stakeholders within the division and/or school.

Negative reinforcement
When something undesirable is removed from the environment, the behavior is more likely to occur again.

Prerequisite skills
The skills the student must know and have mastered before working toward a specific standard (Alber-Morgan et. al., 2022).

Preference
An individual's choice or liking of a specific activity, item, or condition over others.

Prosocial behavior
Contextually appropriate behaviors that support the academic, social, and emotional growth of the individual. These are behaviors that students should engage in, both in and out of school, and within the appropriate context.

Positive reinforcement
When something desirable is added to the environment, the behavior is more likely to occur again.

Punishment
A consequence that weakens the relationship between the antecedent and the consequence. Punishment decreases the likelihood that the antecedent will cue the behavior occurring in the future.

Record review
A comprehensive examination of existing documentation related to a student's educational history, behavioral incidents, and previous interventions to inform the FBA process.

Reinforcer
Any stimulus or event that, when presented immediately following a behavior, increases the likelihood of that behavior occurring again in the future.

Reinforcement
A consequence that strengthens the relationship between the antecedent and behavior. Reinforcement increases the likelihood that the antecedent will cue the behavior occurring in the future.

Replacement/alternative behavior
A behavior that is a more socially acceptable alternative that serves the same purpose and allows the individual to get the function of their interfering behavior met.

Three-Term Contingency
Refers to the relationship between an antecedent-behavior-consequence (A-B-C) pattern, or chain of events, in which individuals learn and act.

Topography
The physical form of a behavior, or what the behavior looks like. The topography describes the specific movements and actions that make up a behavior that can be seen or heard.

Safety plan
A detailed, written plan to ensure the safety of the student and others in situations where the student engages in behavior(s) that may pose a risk of harm.

Social validity
The social and cultural acceptability of an intervention from the perspective of the individuals involved (i.e., the student, parents, peers, and teachers).

Strategy
A specific method or approach that is designed to achieve a particular goal. Strategies that are identified for a BIP should be evidence-based and chosen based on the behavioral patterns identified through the FBA.

Student's voice
Students actively contribute their values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds, in collaboration with adults, to ensure instructional strategies and implementation of those strategies are inclusive of student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions
(The Glossary of Education Reform, n.d.).

Trendline analysis
Using data points to create a line that best represents the overall direction or pattern of the data over time to identify trends (increasing, decreasing, remaining stable) and to make predictions.

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