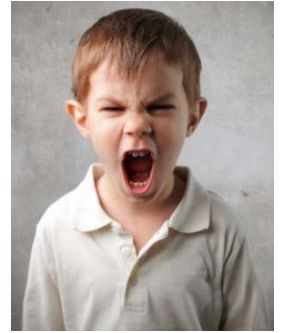


What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and How is it used?

An Overview for Parents

Why is a student exhibiting challenging behavior in school? Behavioral assessments can help you answer that question.

When any student is engaging in problem behavior, the school may conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) to determine possible reasons for the behavior. The FBA is a structured information gathering process regarding those challenging behaviors.



Basically it answers the question of why a student is doing something. Often the behavior is one that meets an unmet need of the child. It might be avoidance of a task, sensory overload, inability to communicate or any variety of reasons.

For instance, Mary, who has limited communication skills, hides under her desk and cries daily and the teacher struggles to get her to come out. As the team analyzes the behavior, they find the behavior occurs before recesses. Through observations they discover that that when Mary does go out for recess, she is left out of activities and is overwhelmed by the noise. Her behavior helps her to avoid an uncomfortable situation that she is unable to discuss.

If the student has an IEP, the team including the parents will meet to discuss the behavior. If the student is on a Section 504 plan or has no plan, the school can follow a similar procedure. Someone from the team, often the school psychologist, takes data on a behavior usually using the ABC method:



Antecedent: what is happening before the behavior begins?

Behavior: what is the challenging behavior?

Consequences: what is the result of the behavior?

What are the steps in conducting an FBA?

1. **Identify and agree on the behavior(s) that need to change.** The identification process begins with describing the challenging behaviors so that everyone understands the concern. If a child has many problem behaviors, it is important to focus on those that are the most serious.
2. **Determine where the behaviors do and do not occur.** The team may conduct interviews, perform observations, and discuss the following questions:
 - What is different about the places where the behaviors do not occur?
 - What is different about the places where the problem behaviors do occur?
 - What is different about the places where the behaviors do not occur?
 - What is different about the places where the problem behaviors do occur?

- What is different about the places where the behaviors do not occur?
 - What is different about the places where the problem behaviors do occur?
 - Is the problem behavior related to how the child responds to the teacher or peers?
 - Does the number of other students present, or the difficulty of the schoolwork, cause a problem?
 - Does the time of day or a child's mood affect the behavior? Are there daily problems for the child (such as on the bus in the morning, or challenges with peers in the hallway)?
 - Do the behaviors occur in a specific set of circumstances or a specific setting?
 - What specific events seem to support or influence the problem behaviors?
3. **Collect information on the child's performance from as many sources as possible.** There may be other places to get information about the child's challenging behaviors. That may include a review of previous assessment data, behavior incident reports, and other documented information the school has about the child's behavior. Parents also might share information from other assessments including mental health providers. While this is good information to know, parents should be knowledgeable about how much private health information they should share.
 4. **Develop an informed guess (hypothesis) about why problem behaviors occur (the function of the behaviors).** Using all the information gathered through observation and review of data, an idea of why the behavior occurs is stated. This helps predict where and why your child's problem behaviors are most and least likely to occur.
 5. **Identify behaviors that can be taught and supported within the school and that provide your child with positive alternatives to the problem behavior(s).**

When is a FBA required?

Utah Special Education rules and the IDEA require an FBA whenever a child with a disability has an educational placement change for disciplinary reasons in any of the following instances:

1. When a child is removed from school for more than 10 consecutive days or series of removals totaling 10 full or partial days for behavior that is a manifestation of the student's disability.
2. When a child is removed for more than 10 school days for conduct that is not a manifestation of the disability but the IEP team determines that an FBA is necessary.
3. When a child is placed in an interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days for behavior involving a dangerous weapon, illegal drugs or infliction of serious bodily injury.

10

From this information, the team will then develop a Behavior Intervention Plan. Check our website for an information sheet on BIPs.

Information for this sheet is adapted from:

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[LRBI Technical Assistance Manual: Positive Behavioral Supports & Selection of Least Restrictive Behavioral Interventions, Utah State Board of Education, 2015.](#)

[Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules](#)