

WHAT WORKS

# Functional Behavior Assessment

FBA is a widely recognized and evidence-based process founded on the principle that if behavior can be predicted, it can also be prevented.



Marcel Parks is led to the office at Armstrong Elementary School in Hazelwood, MO, after trying to punch the principal. The school is creating an FBA for Marcel in order to pinpoint what triggers his violent behavior. From the film *Marcel*.

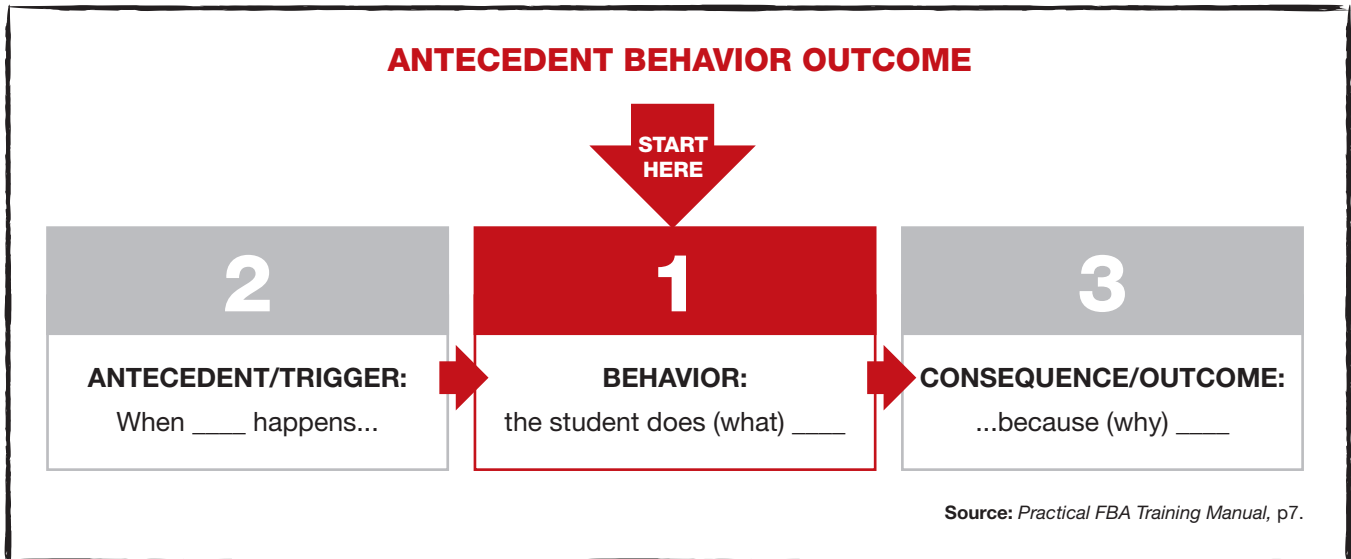
**S**tudents who display behaviors that interfere with their own or others' learning and social interactions present many challenges to school personnel. For example, behaviors such as aggression, verbal and nonverbal opposition, property destruction, self-injury, threats of violence or harm, and bullying clearly violate school rules, social boundaries, and standards of acceptable behavior. Our natural response when facing problem behavior is to attempt to stop the behavior immediately. While this may solve the initial problem, it does not address the causes of the behavior and is not likely to stop the behavior from happening again in the future.

Research consistently demonstrates that multiple students might exhibit the same behavior (e.g. physical aggression towards classmates) due to different motivating

## FBA PROCESS AT A GLANCE

Data on a student is collected through observation, interviews, and a survey of records and is used to drive all decision-making. The FBA process:

- ▶ Identifies problem behavior (the WHAT)
- ▶ Predicts WHEN and WHERE the specific behavior occurs
- ▶ Identifies WHY a student engages in the specific behavior (what do they want to gain or what do they want to avoid)
- ▶ Summarizes the WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY of a student's behavior and develops strategies to prevent specific behavior from occurring in the future
- ▶ Often results in significant change in behavior



and reinforcing factors. Students might exhibit aggression to gain attention, to avoid classroom assignments, or in response to frustration when denied a desired activity. Interventions based on such functions of behavior have been found to be more effective than those based solely on diagnostic classification or the mere description of behavior.

Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is a widely recognized and evidence-based process founded on the principle that if behavior can be predicted, it can also be prevented. Each FBA begins with identifying the problem behavior. Behavior, defined by FBA, is:

- **Observable** (can be seen)
- **Measurable** (can be counted or timed)
- **Defined clearly** (easily recognizable to a person not familiar with the student)

Once the behavior is identified, an FBA looks at what prompted the behavior (i.e. antecedent or trigger) and what happened as a result of the behavior (i.e. the consequence or outcome). This is commonly referred to as Antecedent Behavior Outcome (ABO).

When conducting an FBA, it is important to realize that this is not a one-size-fits-all assessment process. FBA refers to a broad range of assessment procedures. The results of the FBA are used to design individually tailored, function-based interventions that focus on both increasing appropriate behaviors and reducing interfering behaviors.

➡ When conducting an FBA, it is important to realize that this is not a one-size-fits-all assessment process.

**SOURCES**

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