

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT PROCESS
Department of Special Education
Lincoln Public Schools
Lincoln, Nebraska

What is a Functional Behavior Assessment?

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a process that identifies specific target behavior, the purpose of the behavior, and what factors maintain the behavior that is interfering with the student's educational progress. A target behavior may be "Johnny is off task 80% of the time during seat work." This target behavior may include several "off task" actions (e.g. Johnny talks to other students, leaves his desk, and drums his pencil on his desk instead of following directions). This process leads to development of intervention plans to teach acceptable alternative behavior. The resulting intervention plan focuses on teaching new behavior and social skills but usually also requires modification of the school or classroom environment and activities, adaptation of curriculum and instructional delivery, and changes in the teacher/student relationship that maintain the undesirable behavior.

When to do a Functional Behavior Assessment?

An FBA should be used for students with behavioral or emotional problems that are interfering with their educational progress or the progress of other students. The FBA can be a part of the SAT process, be used to develop an Individual Education Plan, or provide information for verification of a disability. However, any student who is exhibiting challenging behaviors that are not responding to typical school interventions may benefit from a functional assessment. Conducting a functional assessment before a behavior escalates into a disciplinary action allows both the teachers and parents to focus on positive outcomes and can help build a positive relationship between the teacher and the student and family.

What Happens During the FBA?

There are two distinct types of FBA processes, the **Indirect** and the **Direct** process. Both processes include 5 assessment and intervention development steps. The key is that there is a direct and natural link between the target behavior, the collection of unbiased and observable data about the behavior, and the intervention plan to change the behavior.

The Indirect FBA Process

The Indirect FBA includes the 5 steps of the assessment process in a condensed format. The Indirect FBA is most appropriate when the behavior incident requires immediate action, for behavior that is less serious and/or occurs infrequently, or as part of early intervention using the SAT process. The Indirect FBA is helpful when only a small group of individuals are involved (i.e. teacher, student, administrator). The Indirect FBA focuses on using simple verbal or written interviews with teachers, the student, and others involved in the target behavior. In the interview process, the target behavior, the circumstances that support the behavior, and the function of the behavior are identified. Based on this information, a hypothesis can be developed and a written plan can be formulated by the team. Follow up interviews or other data (e.g. disciplinary referrals, attendance record etc.) can be used to determine the success of the intervention or if the more comprehensive Direct FBA needs to occur.

The Direct FBA Process

The Direct FBA is a comprehensive assessment process that is appropriate when the target behavior is severe in duration, frequency, and intensity and/or is complex and deeply ingrained in the student's behavior patterns. The process is also appropriate when critical decisions are being made in regard to verifying a disability, making placement decisions, or choosing intervention methods that are intensive or intrusive.

Step 1 Defining the Target Behavior

The team (either SAT or IEP) will use interviews, school records, behavior observation documentation, incident reports, and other appropriate methods to identify the most severe and difficult behavior as the target behavior.

Step 2 Collecting Data

The team will collect measurable and observable data by direct observation of the target behavior in the environment in which it occurs. Documentation of possible functions of the behavior and environmental factors that support the behavior are part of the observation process. Direct observation, using charting and narrative data, provides a baseline to compare to data collected after implementation of the intervention. In addition rating scales, school records, narrative documentation, academic performance, and other related information are important. The data will include:

- Charting the frequency and/or duration of the behavior. This is the primary method of data collection. This data can be samples taken periodically through the day or continuous charting done through the day. This information may help pinpoint critical times and situations at which the behavior occurs.
- Where the behavior occurred
- Who was involved (peers and adults)
- What happened just before the behavior (predictors/antecedents)
- What happened just after the behavior (consequences)
- What was done to prevent or intervene in the behavior
- How did the behavior resolve or end
- Possible reasons for the behavior (attention, avoidance, opposition)
- The classroom environment and structure at the time of the behavior
- The instructional delivery used and level of adult attention given
- Academic and behavioral expectations
- Recent changes in student's life in or out of school
- Community, medical, or other related issues/other agencies involved when appropriate

Step 3 Developing an Hypothesis

The data collected about the target behavior is used to make a best guess (hypothesis) as to the function or purpose of the behavior. This step may be the most difficult because the team must make conclusions about behavior that is usually intertwined with other behaviors and the motivation for the behavior may be unclear or complex. The best course of action is to focus on the target behavior and the hypothesis of why you think the behavior occurred. The intervention steps of FBA test the hypothesis and allow for refinement of the intervention plan or to reject the hypothesis and return to the data to form a new hypothesis and intervention strategy.

Step 4 Planning Interventions

A written Behavior Intervention Plan specifically identifying the new skills to be taught, modifications to be made in the environment and instructional delivery, accommodations made to the curriculum, and changes in behavior management strategies will be developed by the team. It is important to make clear who is responsible for implementing the plan and monitoring the effects of the plan. Techniques such as reinforcement types and schedules, structure and instruction provided, the type of progress feedback to be given to the student, and data to be collected to monitor the plan are specified. Remember to consider the student's strengths and weaknesses and what strategies have been helpful or unhelpful in the past. If appropriate, the student should be involved in developing the intervention. For complete details see the Behavior Intervention Plans handbook.

Step 5 Evaluating Effectiveness of the Plan

The team uses data that is relevant to the target behavior (i.e. usually the same data collected in Step 2) to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Data that is measurable and observable is collected during the intervention process. Direct observation of the student's behavior should be compared to the baseline data collected in Step 2. In addition collecting data on the occurrence of the new skill shows progress and provides positive feedback to the student. If the data is favorable the intervention continues. If the data is not favorable the team returns to Step 1 and reevaluates the target behavior and data collected, reformulates the hypothesis, makes appropriate modifications to the intervention, implements the new plan, and collects data to reevaluate the new plan.

DIRECT FBA SUMMARY
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **ID#:** _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

Teacher/Staff: _____ **Class/Subject:** _____ **School:** _____

Persons Involved: _____

1. Target Behavior: _____

2. What happens PRIOR to (predicts) the target behavior. (Check all that apply)

Where Class Hall/Passing Cafeteria/Line Playground Bus Other _____

When Before School AM Lunch PM Recess Other _____

People Teacher(s) Administrator/Counselor Peers Paraeducator Parent

Classified staff (Secretary/Bus Driver/Nurse/Volunteer)

Other _____

Teacher Behaviors

Encouragement/praise Independent work/less adult attention Individual attention

Instruction/lecture Performance feedback/evaluation Reprimand Request to participate

Change task Request task completion

Other _____

Student Behaviors/Emotion

Mood (sad, angry, happy) Describe _____

Drowsy/sleepy Inattentive Excessive activity (fidgety/restless) Anxious Withdrawn

Physical Complaints (hunger, pain) List _____

Other Behavior _____

Environmental Factors

Proximity to teacher/peers Availability of materials Elevated noise/distractions

Termination of preferred task or activity Change of task/activity Changes in routine

Excessive wait/Unstructured times Changes in adults or peers in classroom

Other or Describe above _____

3. What happens AFTER the student demonstrates the target behavior?

Teacher Behaviors

- Encouragement/praise Less adult attention More adult attention Task removed
- Tasks added Change task Reprimand Request to participate Removal from class
- Other _____

Student Behaviors/Emotion

Mood (sad, angry, happy) Describe _____

- Drowsy/sleepy Inattentive Excessive activity (fidgety/restless) Anxious Withdrawn
- Physical Complaints (hunger, pain) List _____
- Other Behavior _____

Environmental Factors

- Proximity to teacher/peers Termination of preferred task or activity Change of task/activity
- Changes in routine More peer attention Other or describe factors of concern

4. What Purpose did the target behavior appear to serve?

- Peer Attention/Acceptance/Approval Gratification/Reward Peer Engagement Sensory Stimulation
- Justice/Revenge Power/Control Adult Attention/Acceptance/Approval Avoidance Self Expression
- Other or Describe Above Concerns _____

5. Summary/Hypothesis state: (refer to Summary Statement Form)

Setting/Event (what makes it worse?)	Predictors (when, where, etc.)	Target Behavior	Function (what purpose is served?)

6. Comments: _____

STUDENT INFORMATION
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **ID#:** _____

School: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Gender:** M F **Birthdate:** _____

Student Legal Name: _____ Social Security No.: _____

Living With Female: _____ (402) _____ (Work)

Living With Male: _____ (402) _____ (Work)

Family Address: _____ (402) _____ Unlisted? Y (Home)

Mailing Address: _____ Home Zip Code: _____

Last School: _____

Permit: Y N **Ward:** Y N **Counselor:** _____ **504:** Y N

ELL: Y N **Special Ed:** Y N **IEP Mgr.:** _____ **Social Worker:** _____

AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Caseworker:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Probation Officer:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Physician:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

COMMENTS:

STAFF FEEDBACK
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **ID#:** _____ **Date:** _____

1. Target Behavior

2. Identify circumstances related to the target behavior.

WHERE

- In Class
- In Halls
- In Cafeteria
- On Bus
- Other

WHEN

- Before school
- AM
- Lunch
- PM
- Recess
- Other _____

PEOPLE

- Teacher(s)
- Classified staff
- Paraeducator
- Bus driver
- Peer(s)
- Other _____

Comments

3. What happens prior (predicts) to the student demonstrating the Target Behavior?

- Lack of adult attention
- Lack of peer attention
- Teacher requests student participation
- Teacher requests task completion
- Teacher delivers instruction
- Performance feedback
- Reprimand
- Teacher/student proximity

Comments

4. What happens after the student demonstrates the target behavior?

- Lack of adult attention
- Lack of peer attention
- Teacher requests student participation
- Teacher requests task completion
- Teacher delivers instruction
- Teacher/student proximity
- Teacher withdraws request

Comments

5. What function or purpose does this behavior serve for the student?

- Acceptance/Approval
- Attention/Adult
- Attention/Peer
- Avoidance
- Gratification
- Justice
- Get an activity or item
- Peer Engagement
- Power/Control
- Revenge
- Self Expression
- Sensory Stimulation
- Other _____

Comments

Completed by: _____ Date: _____
Position: _____

FEEDBACK/INTERVIEW – STUDENT
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **ID#:** _____

Date: _____ **Grade:** _____

Interviewer: _____

SECTION I

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. In general, is your school work too hard for you? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 2. In general, is your school work too easy for you? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 3. When you ask for help appropriately, do you get it? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 4. Do you think work periods for each subject are too long? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 5. Do you think work periods for each subject are too short? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 6. When you do seatwork, do you do better when someone works with you? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 7. Do you think people notice when you do a good job? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 8. In general, do you find your work interesting? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 9. Are there things in the classroom that distract you? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |
| 10. Do you think others believe you are trying your best? | <input type="checkbox"/> OFTEN <input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIMES <input type="checkbox"/> SELDOM |

SECTION II

- When do you think you have the fewest problems with _____ in school?
(Target Behavior)
 - What makes you successful during these time(s)?
- When do you think you have the most problems with _____ in school?
(Target Behavior)
 - What do you think causes this problem?
 - What happens after _____ occurs?
(Target Behavior)
 - How often does _____ occur?
(Target Behavior)
- What would help with this? _____ ?
(Target Behavior)
- What kind of rewards would you like to earn for good behavior or good school work?
- What are your favorite activities/subjects at school?
- What are your hobbies or interests?
- If you had the chance, what activities would you like to do that you don't have the opportunity to do now?

PARENT FEEDBACK
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **ID#:** _____ **Grade:** _____ **Date:** _____

Name: _____ **Relationship to Student:** _____

Target Behavior:

1. Does the behavior occur at all? If so, when does it occur? Where does it occur the most?

2. When did you first notice this behavior?

3. Did anything change in your child's life about the time you first noticed this behavior?

4. What things seem to trigger the behavior?

5. What do you typically do when your child exhibits the behavior?

6. What works best to help your child be successful?

7. What does not work or makes the behavior worse?

8. Is there any other information related to your child's behavior?

SP0010, page 9 of 11
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DEVELOP SUMMARY STATEMENTS FOR EACH MAJOR PREDICTOR AND/OR FUNCTION
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ ID#: _____

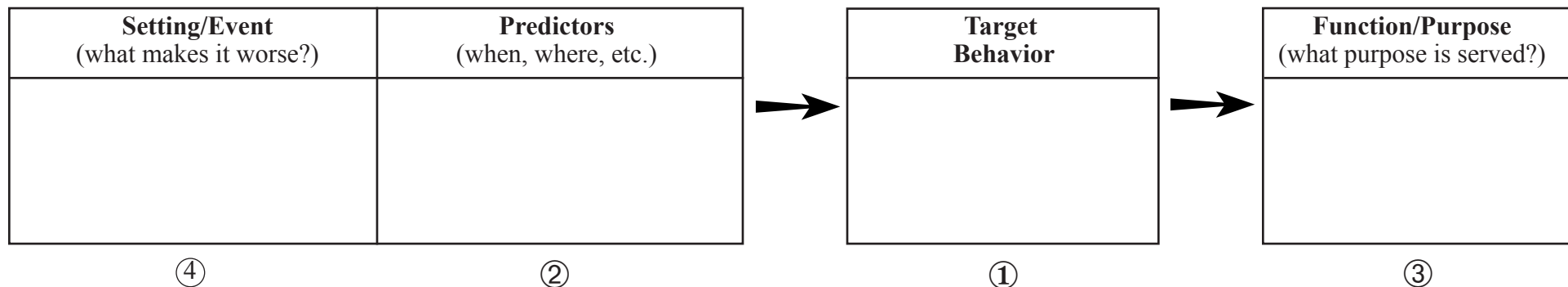
Date: _____ Grade: _____

<i>Setting/Event</i> <i>(what makes it worse)</i>	<i>Predictor</i> <i>(when, where, etc.)</i>	<i>Target</i> <i>Behavior</i>	<i>Function/Purpose</i> <i>(what purpose is served)</i>
		→	→
		→	→
		→	→
		→	→
		→	→

SUMMARY STATEMENT FORM
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ ID#: _____ Date: _____ Grade: _____

Supplemental Helps for Direct/Indirect FBAs



Complete the summary statement diagram following the numbered sequence (Behavior(s) first, then Predictors, etc.). Consider the items below as possible elements for inclusion in the summary statement.

What Important Events, Places or Activities Tend to be Associated with the Target Behavior?	What Appears to Trigger Target Behavior	What does the Target Behavior Look Like?	What Does the Student Gain from the Target Behavior?
<p>Physical:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped medications <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Illness <input type="checkbox"/> Physical pain <input type="checkbox"/> Hunger <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <p>Social:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Trouble at home <input type="checkbox"/> Fight/conflict with peers <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <p>Environmental:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Noise/distractions <input type="checkbox"/> Before/After school <input type="checkbox"/> Class <input type="checkbox"/> Activity <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<p>Class demands that are:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Too hard <input type="checkbox"/> Boring <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Long <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher reprimands <input type="checkbox"/> Peer teasing <input type="checkbox"/> Peer encouragement <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Late to class <input type="checkbox"/> Talk out in class <input type="checkbox"/> Disruptions <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate language <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespectful behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Property destruction <input type="checkbox"/> Carrying weapons <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgeting <input type="checkbox"/> Not completing work <input type="checkbox"/> Stealing <input type="checkbox"/> Threatening <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Insubordination <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<p>Escape or Avoid:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher demands <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher reprimands <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher correction <input type="checkbox"/> Negative peer contact <input type="checkbox"/> Tasks (difficult, lengthy) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <p>Gain Attention:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> From peers <input type="checkbox"/> From teacher/adults <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <p>Access Activity or Item:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Access to game <input type="checkbox"/> Access to toy <input type="checkbox"/> Access to food <input type="checkbox"/> Access to money <input type="checkbox"/> Access to task <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

**EXAMPLES OF SUMMARY STATEMENTS DERIVED FROM
A FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW**
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ ID#: _____

Date: _____ Grade: _____

<i>Setting/Event (what makes it worse)</i>	<i>Predictor (when, where, etc.)</i>	<i>Target Behavior</i>	<i>Function/Purpose (what purpose is served)</i>
<i>More likely if no breakfast</i>	<i>When Jake is asked to complete difficult or nonpreferred math and reading tasks</i>	<i>he will yell obscenities and/or throw objects</i>	<i>in order to escape from the tasks</i>
<i>More likely if she has not had enough sleep</i>	<i>When a peer has a toy or item that Samantha wants</i>	<i>she will pinch and/or scratch the peer</i>	<i>to try to get the person to give her the toy or item</i>
<i>More likely if she got little attention earlier in the day</i>	<i>During group work or other situations in which she is receiving little attention</i>	<i>Keesha will call out a teacher's name and/or pound and slap her desk</i>	<i>to attempt to obtain attention</i>
<i>More likely if there is an unexpected change in schedule</i>	<i>In a large variety of situations, when Curtis is experiencing "itchiness"</i>	<i>he will scratch his arms repeatedly</i>	<i>to relieve the discomfort</i>
<i>No identified distant setting event</i>	<i>When Carlos is scratching his arms and he is prompted to stop</i>	<i>he will yell obscenities</i>	<i>in order to continue scratching</i>