Practical Functional Behavioral Assessment: Making PBIS Work in Real School Contexts

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Concern

Basic Message:
Any time you feel overwhelmed the answer is likely to include investing in the training of others.

Goals

- Propose an approach for making FBA a practical part of behavior support in all schools.
- Define how to teach typical school personnel to conduct “Practical FBAs”
- Present documentation that basic FBAs are valid for use in building behavior support plans.
- Present how a school district is using the Practical FBA training with school-based personnel.

A primary goal of FBA is to....

- guide the development of effective positive interventions based on the function of the behavior (e.g. tangible, escape, attention, automatic; Horner, 1994).

FBA is....

- an empirically supported practice that has been demonstrated to improve both the effectiveness & efficiency of behavioral interventions in schools

Who’s here?

- Administrators?
- Teachers?
- Paraprofessionals?
- Parents?
- Behavior Specialists?
- Higher Education Members?
- Other related services?
FBA is a systematic process for assessing the relationship between a behavior and the context in which behavior occurs (O’Neill et al., 1997).

FBA is critical to the design and successful implementation of positive behavioral interventions” (Watson & Steege, 2003).
“Logical Flaws” of FBA use in public schools

FBA is used mainly as a reactionary approach.
- opportunity is lost to utilize FBA technology to develop interventions that address minor behaviors that usually precede more serious problems.
- FBA is restricted to set of procedures used by “experts”
  - The rich supply of information from people with whom the student interacts with the most is lost.
  - FBA is restricted to rigorous procedures that are unrealistic for public school settings.
- Disincentive for using FBA technology.
- Cynicism as to the practicality of FBA.

Current Issues and Needs
- Do people already know how to do FBA?
- Can a district leader teach FBA procedures in a reasonable amount of time?
- Are the basic FBAs developed by school personnel valid for building behavior support plans?
- Do we have materials that are practical and effective for use by district specialists?

Proactive...Parsimonious...Practical FBA in schools
- FBA conceptualized by Scott et al. as a proactive pre-referral routine that uses the most parsimonious procedures required to create an effective behavior support plan.
- Given the time & resource constraints in schools, we must encourage schools to “work smarter” to develop capacity to implement technology to effectively support more students.
- Use Practical FBA procedures to develop capacity within a school to utilize FBA technology.

Practical FBA Logic Model

School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports 80% of Students

Secondary Group Supports 10-15% of Students

Individual Supports 5% of Students

Behavior Specialist responsible for 25 FBAs in school of 500

Promoted with “flexible” roles conduct practical, flexible FBA to expand the scope of FBA, prevent intensive problem behaviors, & decrease reliance on specialists

Practical FBA process D.A.S.H.

Define behavior in observable & measurable terms
- specify routines where & when behaviors occur
- summarize where, when, & why behaviors occur

Ask about behavior by interviewing staff & student
- observe the behavior during routines specified
- observe to verify summary from interviews

See the behavior
- observe the behavior during routines specified

Hypothesize: a final summary of where, when & why behaviors occur

Training Series

- 4 training sessions on conducting functional behavioral assessments (FBA) for students with mild to moderate behavioral problems in schools.
- The training series teaches participants to conduct interviews and observations in such a way as to precisely determine the relationship between student problem behavior and the context:
  - What the problem behaviors are.
  - When, Where, & Why a student’s problem behaviors occur.
- A summary of this information will help an individual student team develop effective behavioral supports that:
  - prevent problem behaviors from occurring
  - teach alternative behaviors
  - & effectively respond when problem behaviors occur.
**Format of Practical FBA Training Sessions**

- **Objectives**
  - Checks for Understanding

- **Review**
  - Comments/Questions

- **Activities**
  - Key Points

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**Practical FBA vs Comprehensive FBA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For:</th>
<th>Practical FBA</th>
<th>Comprehensive FBA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with mild to moderate problem behaviors (behaviors that are NOT dangerous or occurring in many settings)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students with moderate to severe behavioral problems, may be dangerous and/or occurring in many settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What:</td>
<td>Relatively simple and efficient process to guide behavior support planning</td>
<td>Time-intensive process that also involves archival records review, family-centered planning, and collaboration with agencies outside of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducted by whom:</td>
<td>School-based personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, administrators)</td>
<td>Professionals trained to conduct functional assessments with students with severe problem behaviors (e.g., school psychologists, behavior specialists)</td>
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**Session #1: Defining & Understanding Behavior**

- Overview of the practical FBA training series and introduces concepts, examples, and practice opportunities for participants to learn how to:
  1. Define behavior (WHAT),
  2. Identify events that predict WHEN & WHERE the specific behavior occurs,
  3. Identify the function of behavior (WHY), and
  4. Construct functional behavioral summary statements

**ABC's of Understanding the Function/ Pay-off of Behavior**

- What happens before (A or antecedent) the behavior occurs? Triggers? When? Where?
- What is the observable behavior (B)? The What?
- What happens after (outcome) the behavior occurs? The Why?

**Remember: Always start with the Behavior**

1. Once you have defined the behaviors (the WHAT)
2. & know the Where & When the behaviors occur #2 (Routine & Antecedents)
3. Then want to find out WHY (the outcome of the behavior...what happens right afterwards)

**Functions that behaviors serve**

- Problem Behavior
  - Obtain/Get Something
  - Escape/Avoid Something
  - Stimulation/Sensory
  - Social
  - Tangible/Activity
  - Adult
  - Peer
Create a Hypothesis Statement for Johnny’s Behavior

After interviewing Mr. Smith and conducting several observations of Johnny in the third grade classroom, the team determined that during less structured class time (free time, cooperative group art projects, etc.), Johnny tears up his paper and stomps his feet. After Johnny engages in this behavior his peers laugh at him.

Routine: During [some routine e.g.: Third grade classroom]

Antecedent/Trigger: “When...”
Less structured class time

Behavior: “Student does...”
Tears up paper & stomps feet

Consequence/Outcome: “Because...”
Peers laugh at him

Therefore, the function of the behavior is to:
Peer Attention

4 terms of Hypothesis/Summary Statement

Session #2: Investigating Behavior

- Review content from the first session
- Instruction, modeling, and practice opportunities in conducting FACTS interviews with staff (modified from Borgmeier, 2005) and students.
- Practice constructing behavioral summary statements from each interview.

**Task:** Complete a practice FACTS interview with a staff member at school site.
Session #3: Observing & Summarizing Behavior

- Review content from previous training sessions & practice interviews from week before
- Instruction & practice opportunities (using videos) for participants to conduct ABC observations of students within routines identified as settings in which the problem behavior occurs most frequently (based upon the staff FACTS interviews).
- Participants practice constructing summary statements based upon data from their observations to verify or modify summary statements derived from their FACTS interviews.

**To Do:** Complete a practice ABC observation at school site.

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Session #4: Function-based Behavior Support Planning

- Review of concepts, skills from first three sessions.
- Review practice ABC observations & summarizing results
- Provide opportunities for participants to practice the skills that they have learned in conducting interviews, observations, and constructing behavioral summary statements;
- Introduce the Competing Behavior Pathway and ideas for helping individual student support teams in designing function-based behavioral supports.

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Competing Behavior Summary

- **Summary of Behavior**
  - Setting Event
  - Antecedent
  - Problem Behavior
  - Maintaining Consequence
- **Desired Behavior**
  - Typical Consequence
- **Alternate Behavior**
Examining the Efficacy of Practical FBA Training Model for Personnel in Schools

**Methods:** 3 Phases of the Study

- **Phase 1:** Practical FBA training on FBA tools & methods provided to 12 school professionals.
  - Pre- & Post-Tests of FBA knowledge
- **Phase 2:** 10 of the 12 Trained participants conducted an FBA according to procedures they were taught for one student within their school.
  - Using Practical FBA tools: interviewed, observed, and hypothesized summary of student behavior.
- **Phase 3:** Functional analyses conducted by researcher to test each participant’s hypothesis/summary statement
  - Experimental manipulations to determine the efficacy of the Practical FBA training.

**Summary of Behavior - Shane**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Event</th>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Staff Interview Summary Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Failure in previous class that day</td>
<td>Difficult tasks, any word problems &amp; most math operations</td>
<td>Work refusal, doodling, work refusal, sent to office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC Observation Summary Statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relationship w/ teacher?</td>
<td>Teacher confrontation</td>
<td>Work refusal, doodling, work refusal, sent to office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Summary of Behavior (move to Behavior Plan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relationship w/ teacher &amp; previous academic failure</td>
<td>Teacher confrontation</td>
<td>Work refusal, doodling, work refusal, sent to office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math task</td>
<td>Avoid math task, teacher confrontation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Purposes of the Study**

- To determine if **staff with flexible roles** in schools (e.g., counselors, administrators) can be trained to **conduct FBA for students with mild to moderate behavior problems** (i.e., students with recurring problems that do not involve physical aggression or violent behaviors).
- To determine the **efficacy and acceptability** of Practical FBA methods and tools with school personnel.

**School Professional Participants**

12 School professionals with a flexible role (i.e., not directly responsible for instruction of students) in an elementary school (K-5)

- **7 Counselors / 2 Special Educators / 2 Principals / 1 V.P.**
- 58% stated they had completed an FBA before the training
  - Average knowledge of behavioral theory: 3.4 out of 4 (extensive)

1. Participated in four 1-hour Practical FBA training sessions (over the course of 4 weeks)
2. Completed tests of FBA knowledge before and after the Practical FBA training program.
3. Completed a Practical FBA using the tools & procedures from training (Phase 2).
   - FACTS interviews, ABC Observations, Summary Statement
4. Completed a Time Expended Log & Acceptability Rating Profile
Student Participants

- 10 elementary students identified for the study based on staff nomination for a functional behavioral assessment.
- Students were included based on the criteria that they were exhibiting problem behaviors within the school setting that were impeding their school progress, but were not dangerous to other students or school staff.
- Students were observed by school staff that have received the Practical FBA training to complete the Practical FBA process.
- Upon completion of the Practical FBA, Functional Analyses were conducted with each student to verify hypothesis of personnel.

FBA Knowledge & Skills Assessment

- Important to use to determine if participants have the requisite skills to conduct a Practical FBA.
- Questions address participant’s knowledge in:
  - FBA Process
  - 4-term Contingency/Summarizing Behavior
  - Operationally defining behavior
  - Identifying Antecedents, Consequences, Function, Setting Events
  - Using common interview tool (FACTS) to identify routines & summarize behavior

Pre vs Post: By FBA Skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Knowledge</th>
<th>Pre-Training</th>
<th>Post-Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FBA Process</td>
<td>0% (33% Partial)</td>
<td>92% (8% Partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Term Contingency/Summarize Behavior</td>
<td>17% (25% Partial)</td>
<td>94% (6% Partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define Behavior</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Antecedent</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Consequence</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Function</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify Setting Events</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms: ID Routine</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms: Summarize Behavior</td>
<td>0% (33% Partial)</td>
<td>67% (25% Partial)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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FBA Procedural Adequacy

- An FBA Procedural Adequacy Checklist was used to rate each FBA on the following criteria:
  - Interviews were conducted with a staff member who worked with the student during routines where problem behavior occurred.
  - Problem behavior was defined in observable and measurable terms.
  - A routine was prioritized for direct observation.
  - An antecedent event was defined as triggering the problem behavior.
  - Only one maintaining function of the problem behavior was identified.

100% of the FBAs conducted met all of these criteria.
Results: Phase 2

FBA Task Time Log Results

- Scheduling FACTS interview with teachers
  - Median = 5 min (Range = 2 to 90 min)
- Conducting FACTS interview with teachers
  - Median = 35 min (Range = 10 to 108 min)
- Observing Student Behavior using ABC Forms
  - Median = 15 minutes (Range = 5 to 30 min)
- Completing Summary of Behavior Table
  - Median = 15 minutes (Range = 5 to 30 min)
- Entire Practical FBA process for 1 student
  - Median = 95 minutes (Range = 65 to 275 min)
- Number of School Days to Complete Practical FBA
  - Median = 11 days (Range = 2 to 39 days)

Results: Phase 3

Comparison of Summary Statements Generated from Interviews

- 9 out of 10 of the summary statements hypothesized by the FACTS interviews with teachers were verified by results of experimental functional analysis
- The one FACTS summary statement that was not verified by FA actually resulted in further clarification from the direct observation.
- The school participant decided to use the results from the direct observation which resulted in a function that was verified by experimental functional analysis.

Student 1
Hypothesis: Escape Math Work

![Graph showing the comparison of summary statements]

1. Is Esc different than Attn?
2. Is Esc different than Control?

Participant 2
Hypothesis: Access Adult Attention

![Graph showing the comparison of summary statements]

All 10 of the FAs confirmed the Hypothesis Statements

Summary of Study

- FBA Knowledge & Skills Assessment
  - All participants learned from the training sessions
- FBA Procedural Adequacy
  - School personnel showed they could conduct an adequate FBA
  - Personnel correctly identified students that fit the criteria for a Practical FBA rather than a comprehensive FBA
- Efficiency & Social Validity of Practical FBA Training
  - Reasonable amount of time & process acceptable to participants
  - Summary statements generated solely from FACTS interviews were good, but refined through use of direct observation
  - Personnel were able to accurately identify variables & function of actual student behavior

Contributions of Study

- Use of Basic FBA v. Comprehensive FBA
  - Proactive, Parsimonious, Practical
- School personnel can conduct “valid” FBAs for students with mild to moderate behavioral problems.
- Usefulness & acceptability of training/tools
- Utility of FACTS interview tool, but implications of essential direct observation validation
- Ideas on how to organize personnel within a school/district to implement best practices
Challenges schools face today are not finding what works, but implementing what works.  
Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005

Since 1997 FBA has not been implemented widely in schools. Not due to lack of knowledge, but to practicality of use

How can Practical FBA be used?
- Designed to be used by someone well-versed in FBA and behavioral principles (e.g., behavior specialist, school psychologist) to train school personnel.
- Has been used in Springfield Public Schools to train instructional assistants, teachers, principals, vice principals, counselors, and specialists from elementary, middle, and high schools (over 40 in attendance).

Participants
- Middle and High School Administrators and Counselors
  - 4 sessions, 1.5 hours, 2 weeks apart
- K-12 educators – general education teachers, special education teachers, title reading teachers, classified employees
  - 5 sessions, 2 hours, 2 weeks apart
- Elementary teams – principals, counselors, school psychologists, special education teachers
  - 3 sessions, 1 half day followed by 2 sessions, 1.5 hours, 1 week apart

Thank you for your interest

Questions? Contact: sheldon.loman@pdx.edu