CHAPTER 2

Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools

Thinking Functionally across All Tiers of Behavior Support

THE CURRENT CONTEXT REGARDING PROBLEM BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

A growing crisis faces students and educators. Student disruption, aggression, and academic failure are a problem in schools nationwide. Students' lack of discipline is viewed in many circles as the biggest problem faced by public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010) and is a common reason why teachers make requests for assistance from their principal or student support team. Students with behavior problems are at risk for multiple problems in academic, social, and daily functioning (Bradshaw, Bottiani, Osher, & Sugai, 2014). These students are more likely than students without problem behavior to drop out before completing high school; to be suspended, expelled, or placed in alternative school settings; to commit crimes against individuals or the community; to have difficult relationships with their parents and siblings; and to have a higher probability of being arrested (Bowen, Jenson, & Clark, 2012; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). These students not only harm themselves but also pose multiple challenges for their school administrators, teachers, and classmates. Administrators must spend significant amounts of time responding to teacher, parent, and student needs that accompany problem behavior. Teachers frequently have to interrupt instruction in order to attend to problem behavior. Students with problem behaviors will often require modifications to the curriculum or classroom environment in order to maximize their level of attainment.

Administrators, teachers, parents, and communities often feel overwhelmed and challenged by students with problem behavior. They want to create schools that are places of learning, not places to struggle with misbehavior. Unfortunately,

whether because of a lack of training or a lack of resources, many schools do not have the tools or skills to identify and implement effective solutions to behavior problems.

Historically, a common response to problem behavior in schools has been some type of punishment—for example, detention, suspension, or expulsion from school. These reactive approaches serve primarily as short-term solutions that remove the child from the setting. Detention, suspension, and expulsion typically are ineffective at producing long-term reduction of problem behavior, generalization of behavior change, or acquisition of appropriate replacement behaviors (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Royer, 1995). Clearly, schools need something more than a reactive approach to behavior management. Schools interested in implementing a proactive approach to behavior management should adopt a three-tier continuum of SWPBS.

OVERVIEW OF SWPBS

SWPBS is a three-tier prevention and intervention framework that is implemented schoolwide to support all students in the school (Horner, Albin, Todd, Newton, & Sprague, 2010). An assumption of SWPBS is that every student who attends school needs some level of behavior support; the level and intensity of support needed depends on the level of problem behavior the student presents. The intensity of support increases, at each level, from Tier 1 up to Tier 3. The level of support offered at each tier of SWPBS is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Most students come to school ready to respond to behavioral expectations and will benefit from a Tier 1, schoolwide behavior plan (e.g., Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997). Tier 1 SWPBS involves schools agreeing on three to five positively stated expectations (e.g., "Be respectful," "Be responsible"), teaching the expectations in all school contexts, (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, classroom), providing reinforcement to students for following expectations, and having agreed-upon consequences for students who do not follow the expectations. School teams are expected to use data, such as number of office discipline referrals (ODRs) per student, for decision making regarding the effectiveness or need for modifications to this level of support. Tier 1 SWPBS also involves teachers implementing an effective classroom behavior management plan with all students. Research from across the country indicates that Tier 1 SWPBS supports 75–85% of the student population (i.e., these students do not need additional behavior support; Horner et al., 2009).

Students who do not respond to Tier 1 SWPBS may benefit from efficient Tier 2 targeted interventions. The "targeted" group of students is the 5–15% who are at risk for developing severe problem behavior due to poor peer relations, low academic achievement, and/or chaotic home environments (Hawken, Adolphson, MacLeod, & Schumann, 2009). These students typically require more practice

in learning behavioral expectations and may need academic modifications to ensure learning success. An example of a Tier 2 intervention is called Check-In/Check-Out (CICO), which increases feedback and positive adult attention to the student throughout the school day (more detailed information on CICO is provided later in the chapter; Crone et al., 2010). Another type of Tier 2 behavior intervention may include instruction on social skills, such as teaching students how to interact with peers and/or anger management techniques (Kalberg, Lane, & Lambert, 2012). The crucial elements of Tier 2 behavior interventions are that they are efficient (i.e., students receive support shortly after being identified) and cost-effective to implement (i.e., similar procedures are used with a group of students without requiring large amounts of staff time to implement).

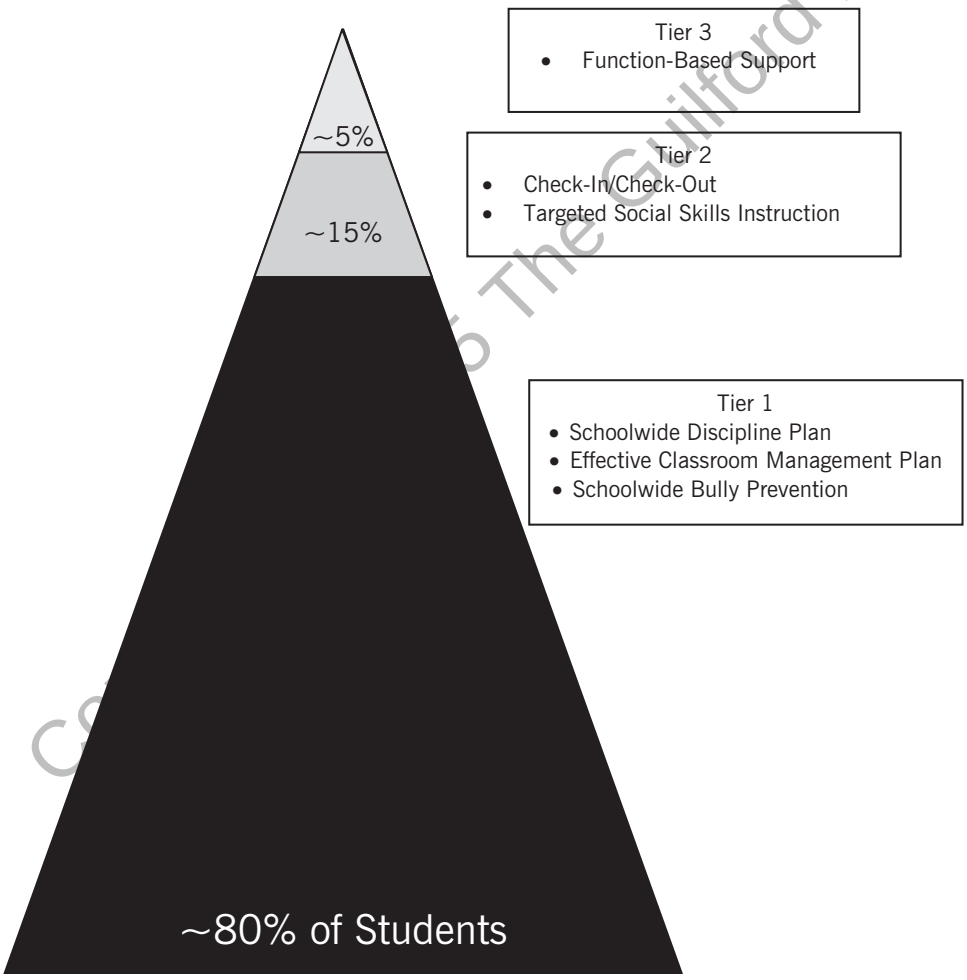

FIGURE 2.1. SWPBS. Copyright by Educational and Community Supports, University of Oregon. Reprinted by permission.

A small group of students (1–7% of the student population) may need Tier 3 interventions, which involve conducting an FBA and implementing an individualized BSP (March & Horner, 2002; O'Neill et al., 2015). FBA involves gathering data to determine why a student is engaging in problem behavior (i.e., what *function* does the problem behavior serve?). Some students act out to gain teacher attention while other students act out to escape work that is too difficult for them. Conducting an FBA and using those data to develop an individualized BSP has been shown to be a highly effective tool for intervening with problem behavior (Filter & Horner, 2009; McIntosh & Av-Gay, 2007; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2009).

The purpose of this book is to provide school personnel with tools to more effectively and efficiently implement the FBA-BSP process. The FBA-BSP process will also be referred to as "function-based support" throughout this book. The forthcoming chapters provide forms and guidance for FBA-BSP implementation. However, prior to introducing those materials, it is important to understand how FBA methods and processes (which are detailed in the next sections) can be embedded in each tier of SWPBS. Schools that are interested in embedding FBA methods into all three tiers must first agree to think "functionally" about problem behavior.

Note: This book is not intended as a primer on FBA or behavior management. There are a number of excellent resources on both these topics, many of which are listed in the Supplementary Section to this chapter. We assume that the reader of this book has knowledge and experience in FBA-BSP but requires practical assistance in effectively and efficiently embedding FBA-BSP into the school infrastructure.

THINKING FUNCTIONALLY ABOUT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

In the past, schools often implemented interventions based on the topography or form of the behavior. For example, if a student was frequently talking out or talking back, a menu of interventions were examined to determine what intervention fit best for these behaviors (Sprick, 2008). These interventions were not based on the function or the reason why the behavior was occurring. One of the most difficult challenges in designing effective interventions for children with problem behavior is the highly variable individual response to intervention. Strategies that work for one child may have no impact on the behavior of another child with similar behavior. Behavior intervention plans created in response to the type of behavior (e.g., fighting, stealing, talking back, profanity), rather than in response to the individual characteristics of the student or setting and without addressing the underlying function of the problem behavior, are unlikely to produce the intended effect, at least for any reasonable length of time.

To plan a successful intervention, the interventionist should consider more than the problem behaviors and a menu of intervention options: *What typically*

triggers the problem behavior? What reward does the student obtain by engaging in the problem behavior? Given the variety of interventions that could be applied, teachers and school staff need a means for deciding which intervention or combination of interventions will be most effective for an individual student, group of students, or specific school setting or routine.

Schools interested in implementing FBA within all three tiers of behavior support need to begin thinking functionally about problem behavior rather than relying on cookbook-like approaches to solving problems. To think functionally about problem behavior involves school personnel agreeing to the following assumptions: (1) human behavior is functional, (2) human behavior is predictable, and (3) human behavior is changeable.

Human Behavior Is Functional

The primary principle of function-based behavior support is that people act the way they do for a reason. That is, most behavior is functional: it serves a purpose. The function of the behavior may be to obtain something the person wants, to gain adult or peer attention, or to escape from an aversive situation or person. The results or consequences of a behavior affect the future occurrence of that behavior. As intelligent, discerning individuals, students begin to recognize that some strategies are more effective than others at producing the outcomes they desire. Students will use effective strategies more often than ineffective strategies. For example, a student who wants to be part of the cheerleading squad learns that practicing the routines and consistently attending tryouts on time is more effective than complaining that tryouts are unfairly biased toward the "popular" girls.

Ironically, students sometimes learn that *problem behavior* can be more efficient than appropriate behavior in producing desired outcomes. This may be true in cases when a student gets out of a difficult assignment by having a temper tantrum in class or when a student becomes the center of attention for his peers by swearing at a teacher. Much to the dismay of the school staff, these students recognize that inappropriate behavior can be an effective strategy for obtaining what they want. As a result, their problem behavior continues or intensifies. For example, consider the following cases:

> James is a seventh-grade student who has difficulty reading aloud fluently. In social studies class, each student is expected to take a turn reading part of the chapter out loud. When it is James's turn, he responds by getting angry: he pushes his books to the floor and swears at his teacher. His teacher responds by sending him to the vice principal's office. This problem behavior continues and worsens.

> Michael, a second-grade student, pushes the other children in line when he is told to stand at the end of the line. When the teacher lets him hold the

door, he stops pushing. This happens every time the students line up for lunch. The problem behavior continues on a daily basis.

Lisa is a fifth-grade student who loves to be the center of attention. She frequently makes loud, inappropriate jokes in class that cause her classmates to laugh. This behavior continues even though the teacher interrupts each incident by giving Lisa a long lecture about appropriate fifth-grade behavior.

Despite the disruption and frustration caused by each of these students, their behaviors are understandable within the given context. Each student is achieving his/her desired outcome (escaping embarrassment, obtaining a privilege, or receiving peer attention) by engaging in inappropriate behavior. The inappropriate behavior is serving a function for each student.

Human Behavior Is Predictable

Human behavior does not occur in a vacuum. Environmental conditions can set up, set off, or maintain problem behavior. Take, for example, the case of James. James is embarrassed by his poor oral reading skills. Although his teacher is aware of his reading difficulties, she is puzzled by his problem behavior. She views his behavior as unpredictable and does not understand why he is undeterred by her numerous referrals to the vice principal's office. After closer analysis, the behavior support team notes two important contributors to James's behavior. First, his problem behavior occurs most frequently in situations when he is expected to read out loud in a large-group setting. This environmental condition serves as a *predictor*, or *antecedent*, for James's problem behavior. Second, when James is sent to the office for problem behavior, he escapes the embarrassment of stumbling through a reading passage in front of his friends. Like many preadolescents, James would rather have his friends believe that he is a troublemaker than have them find out that he is a poor reader. In this case, the *consequence* of being sent to the office is rewarding to James. In fact, James has learned that if he wants to get out of reading in front of the class, he *must* have a tantrum. By looking for the antecedents and consequences that set up and maintain James's tantrums, his problem behavior becomes very predictable.

Human Behavior Is Changeable

Not only can we predict behavior, but we can change it as well. Understanding the functions, predictors, and consequences of problem behavior helps us to pinpoint and script the appropriate behavioral interventions. A *functional* assessment of behavior switches the focus from treatment of within-child pathology to design of effective environmental routines. The behavior support team learns to analyze problematic routines (e.g., oral reading during James's social studies

class) and decide on how to make feasible, practical changes to these routines to promote the behavioral success of the identified student.

The next section details how FBA methods can be used at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 to meet the twin goals of reducing problem behavior and increasing appropriate behavior.

TIER 1 AND FBA

In our experience, we have found that educators often feel that FBA methods should be reserved for students who need more intensive behavior support. This assumption was likely reinforced when the IDEA (1997; revised in 2004 [IDEIA, 2004]) included provisions requiring educators to conduct an FBA and implement a BSP if a student with disabilities was at-risk for a change in placement (e.g., to be placed in a more restricted setting) or expulsion. However, school staff can think and respond functionally to problem behavior across all three tiers of SWPBS. To implement FBA methods within Tier 1 SWPBS, schools need to (1) examine antecedents/predictors and consequences that are supporting problem behavior for all or the majority of students and (2) provide all school staff with the tools to think functionally about problem behavior.

When examining antecedents and consequences that are supporting problem behavior, it is important for school staff to look for predictable failures (Scott et al., 2012). That is, what environmental variables of the school set students up for problem behavior? The assumption is, if 10–15 students are engaging in the same problem behavior (e.g., being loud in the lunchroom) or making the same behavioral errors (e.g., walking incorrectly in the hallway), it is not the students who need intervention on an individual level, it is the environment that needs to be changed or expectations that need to be taught explicitly or retaught.

As detailed in Figure 2.1, Tier 1 includes both implementation of a schoolwide discipline plan and effective classroom behavior management. FBA at Tier 1 involves focusing on antecedents or features in the environment that predict problem behavior. We know part of effective Tier 1 implementation involves schools establishing schoolwide behavioral expectations and teaching them explicitly (Horner et al., 2010). This explicit teaching should occur in all of the areas of the school (e.g., hallway, cafeteria, playground) and include instruction on how those schoolwide expectations are applied in the classroom setting. This prevention mechanism alone targets many of the antecedents or predictors for problem behavior. For example, in schools that do not have established schoolwide expectations, many students engage in problem behavior because they do not know what is expected, or because how one teacher expects students to behave in the lunchroom is different than what another teacher expects. Another antecedent feature of implementing Tier 1 SWPBS is establishing consistent consequences

throughout the school for rule infractions. This communicates to students that consequences will be applied consistently across all teachers and staff. When teachers and staff respond consistently, student perceptions like those in the following example can be prevented: "When I'm tardy to Mrs. Carroll's she doesn't do anything about it, but I make sure I'm on time to Ms. Winn's class because we have to stay after school and make up the minutes if we are late to class."

FBA methodology applied to Tier 1 is similar to that applied to Tier 3. That is, there is a focus on teaching new behavior versus relying on punishment or negative consequences to change behavior. With Tier 1 SWPBS, if many students are making errors or not following schoolwide expectations, school staff identify when and where it is occurring (i.e., predictors of problem behavior) and what needs to be retaught. In order for schools to identify problematic routines, settings, and/or times of the day, they must adopt a system to track schoolwide occurrences of problem behavior. For many schools, such occurrences are documented using ODRs.

To track ODRs, we recommend a Web-based system called the School-wide Information System (SWIS; May et al., 2000) for recording and analyzing ODR data. Information about SWIS is available online at *www.pbisapps.org*. SWIS is used to track data to evaluate Tier 1 SWPBS implementation. It can also be used with Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior supports.

Once schools have implemented an effective schoolwide discipline plan (Tier 1), SWIS can be used to identify problematic locations, times of the day, or teachers who may need additional support implementing Tier 1. Figure 2.2 demonstrates how this methodology is used. The figure illustrates the number of discipline referrals for one (fictitious) school, by location, for the first few months of school. For this school, most of the behavior problems are occurring in the classroom, commons, and playground. Thus, using FBA methodology, the Tier 1 behavior support team would hypothesize that expectations may need to be retaught in these settings, or the environments themselves need to be altered to prevent problem behavior.

If a disproportionate number of referrals originate in one or two classrooms, only those particular classrooms may need behavioral intervention. For example, Mr. Sanchez, a sixth-grade general education teacher, has referred 15 of the 30 students in his class to the office at least once. Ten of the students have been referred at least twice and five students have three ODRs after the first 4 months of school. Overall, Mr. Sanchez has generated more than 40 referrals for both minor and major rule infractions. So although the overall rate of ODRs for the school is high, the majority of ODRs are coming from one teacher. This signals a need for support for this teacher. Rather than focusing on individual students in Mr. Sanchez's class, the Tier 1 behavior support team would examine how well Tier 1 (classroom behavior management) is being implemented and then determine whether there are predictors (antecedents) and consequences that are

leading to high rates of problem behavior. Mr. Sanchez may also need support by receiving retraining on which problem behaviors should be handled in the classroom versus handled by office administration.

By embedding FBA methods into Tier 1, the number of students needing additional behavior support (Tier 2 and Tier 3) will decrease. One final way schools can embed FBA methods into Tier 1 is to ensure all staff are trained on the key behavior principles described previously (i.e., behavior is functional, predictable, and changeable). Table 2.1 provides an outline of the topics that should be covered in such training. Based on the authors' experience, this training can be accomplished in about 1 hour and can be embedded in one or two staff meetings at the beginning of the school year. The focus of the training is for staff to understand that although other variables may influence behavior (e.g., physical limitations, home environment), the factors that school staff have control over are related to the predictors and consequences associated with problem behavior. Once school staff begin to think functionally about problem behavior, these same principles can be applied to Tier 2 behavior support. The next section outlines how FBA can be embedded in Tier 2 SWPBS.

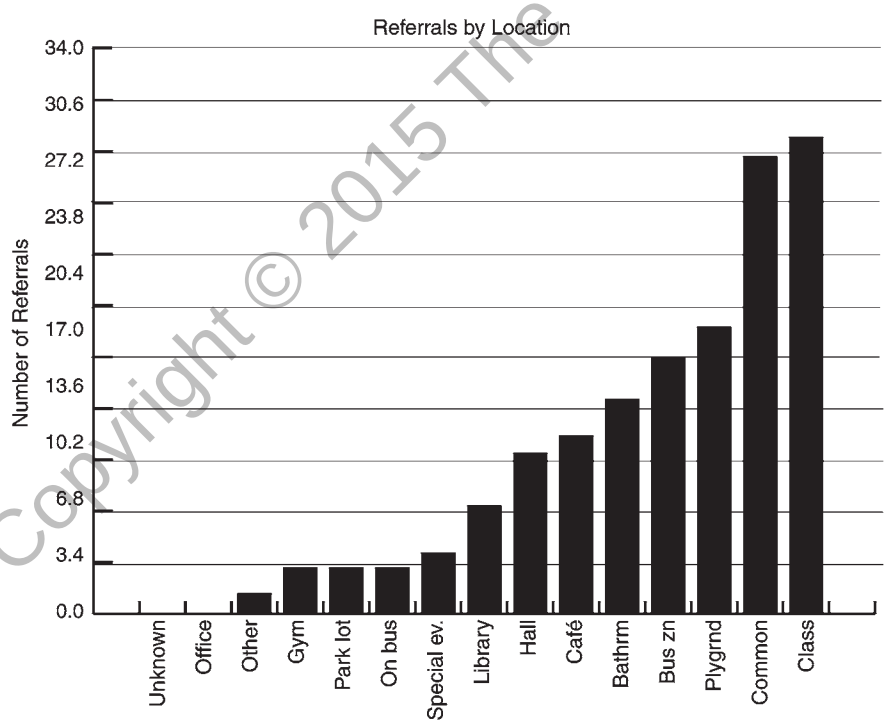

FIGURE 2.2. Discipline referrals by location. Copyright by Educational and Community Supports, University of Oregon. Reprinted by permission.

TABLE 2.1. Thinking Functionally about Problem Behavior: Outline of All Staff Training

- Explanations for problem behavior
  - Developmental (e.g., Piaget)
  - Medical/physiological (e.g., hormones, syndromes, diagnoses)
  - Behavioral
    - Behavior is maintained as result of consequences
    - Students act out to (1) gain something they desire or (2) avoid something unpleasant or that they dislike
- Human behavior is:
  - Functional
  - Predictable
  - Changeable
- ABC's of behavior
  - A = Antecedent
  - B = Behavior
  - C = Consequence
- Observing pattern of ABC's allows us to determine function
  - Functions:
    - Attention (peer or adult)
    - Escape (difficult task, unpleasant situation)
    - Tangible (e.g., student wants access to computer time, a preferred ball on playground or to be the line leader)
    - Sensory (behavior in and of itself is reinforcing such as rocking, nail biting)
- Practice identifying ABC's + function
  - Case examples from school
- Focus on antecedent interventions
  - ABC sequence—focus on "A" of the sequence
  - Can antecedent be removed (e.g., loud noises in cafeteria cause student to act out)?
  - Can antecedent be neutralized (e.g., student acts out because of hunger—can provide breakfast)?

TIER 2 AND FBA

Students who qualify for Tier 2 behavior support are those who need more practice and feedback on following behavioral expectations. Typically, Tier 2 interventions involve groups of students who are at risk but not currently engaging in severe or chronic problem behavior. Rather than individualizing interventions for each student who needs behavior support beyond Tier 1, the goal is for the school to develop interventions that can be efficiently applied for all students who have similar behavior intervention needs. More specifically, the key features of Tier 2 interventions include (1) similar implementation for all students (i.e., low effort by teachers); (2) continuous availability and quick access to the intervention; (3) training of all staff on how to make a referral and, if appropriate, how to implement the intervention; (4) consistency with schoolwide expectations; (5) continuous data-based progress monitoring; and (6) the intervention can be modified based on functional assessment data (Hawken et al., 2009).

Some sample Tier 2 interventions include CICO (Crone et al., 2010), social skills training, mentoring, academic tutoring, and successful recess (i.e., an intervention to target students who have difficulty on the playground at recess; Hawken et al., 2009).

One simple way to gather FBA data is via a teacher interview, but this may be infeasible at the Tier 2 level of SWPBS. At issue is that 5–15% of students in the school may need Tier 2 behavior support. In an elementary school with 600 students, this would mean that up to 90 students would need a teacher interview prior to receiving a Tier 2 intervention. Secondary schools are even larger (e.g., 1,500–3,000+ students), so they would require even more teacher interviews per school year. School personnel are unlikely to have the time (20–30 minutes per interview) or resources to conduct that many teacher interviews per year, while also serving those students with more significant behavioral challenges (i.e., Tier 3, or up to 7% of the population).

Therefore, rather than conducting a formal teacher interview for each student who qualifies for Tier 2 support, we recommend thinking functionally, as previously described, when selecting Tier 2 interventions. Here is an example:

> Mrs. Roderick-Landward comes to the behavior support team about a student, Halle, who engages in mild problem behavior (e.g., talking out, out of seat) throughout the day. The behavior support team looks at Halle's academic standing (i.e., grades, rates of work completion). Based on the data, it seems that she is on grade level and the teacher reports she is doing well academically. It's hypothesized that Halle is probably not acting out to avoid difficult work. Mrs. Roderick-Landward is then asked whether the student enjoys adult attention, and Mrs. Roderick-Landward answers in the affirmative. The behavior support team decides to place Halle on the CICO intervention and monitor her progress biweekly. CICO requires that Halle check in each morning with a CICO coordinator and carry a copy of a Daily Progress Report (DPR) to her class. Mrs. Roderick-Landward uses the DPR to provide feedback throughout the day on the extent to which she met schoolwide expectations. Halle then checks out in the afternoon with the CICO coordinator. Each of these daily interactions with an adult provides opportunities to receive positive attention. The process of identifying Halle for a Tier 2 intervention in this scenario takes about 5–10 minutes versus the 20–30 minutes it would have taken for a formal teacher interview.

When Tier 2 interventions have been implemented well, and still are not working, it is time to conduct a more in-depth FBA before moving to more individualized, Tier 3 support (for a model of how FBA is layered into Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, see Eber, Swain-Bradway, Breen, & Phillips, 2013). Let's go back to the case of Halle, who was placed on CICO for mild acting-out behavior throughout the day:

The behavior support team has met biweekly for the past 6 weeks, and although Halle showed some initial response to the intervention (as indicated by the percentage of points she earned on her DPR), she has had a recent decline in her performance. The behavior support team decides to do a brief FBA teacher interview with Mrs. Roderick-Landward and a student interview with Halle herself. Based on the interview with Mrs. Roderick-Landward, it appears that Halle has talked out less frequently in class but is now spending more time whispering with her friends during class instruction. She is not meeting her daily point goals on CICO for this reason. When Halle is interviewed, she indicates that she likes being on CICO, has enjoyed the tangibles (e.g., pencils, small snacks) she was earning, but was "tired" of the menu of rewards being offered. When asked what she'd be prefer to earn as a reward, she mentioned she'd like to have free time with her friends to talk or listen to music. As a longer-term reward, she wanted to earn movie coupons so she and her friends could go to the movies together after school. The behavior support team worked with the CICO coordinator to change the reinforcement system, and immediately Halle became more engaged and started meeting her daily point goals on a regular basis (at least 80% of the time).

Another way to embed FBA into the CICO intervention is by using the SWIS-CICO Web-based data system (May, Talmadge, Todd, Horner, & Rossetto-Dickey, 2014). This system allows schools to input the percentage of points students earn on their daily progress reports by period of the school day (or, in elementary school, by natural transition times such as after recess and before lunch). Similar to how schoolwide ODR data are examined to determine which settings in the school are problematic, SWIS-CICO allows school staff to examine periods of the day that are predictors for problem behavior for a specific student. This is especially important for secondary students who have multiple teachers throughout the day. An example report from the SWIS-CICO database is included in Figure 2.3. This graph shows the percentage of points a (fictitious, but representative) individual student called Chris Black earned by class period across 20 school days. Rather than intensifying support or moving immediately to Tier 3, the team examines the data to determine times of the day that predict problem behavior. For Chris Black, he is meeting expectations (i.e., 80% of points) in all of his classes except period 3 and period 6. In addition, for period 3 he only has 17 days of scores out of 20, which means either he skipped three periods or the teacher did not provide feedback on his daily progress report on those days. In period 6, he is close to meeting his goal, so the team decides to focus on period 3, doing a brief interview with the teacher as well as with Chris to determine ways to improve behavior during this time of the day.

Thinking functionally about problem behavior (i.e., using FBA technology) at Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels of behavior support will likely reduce the number of

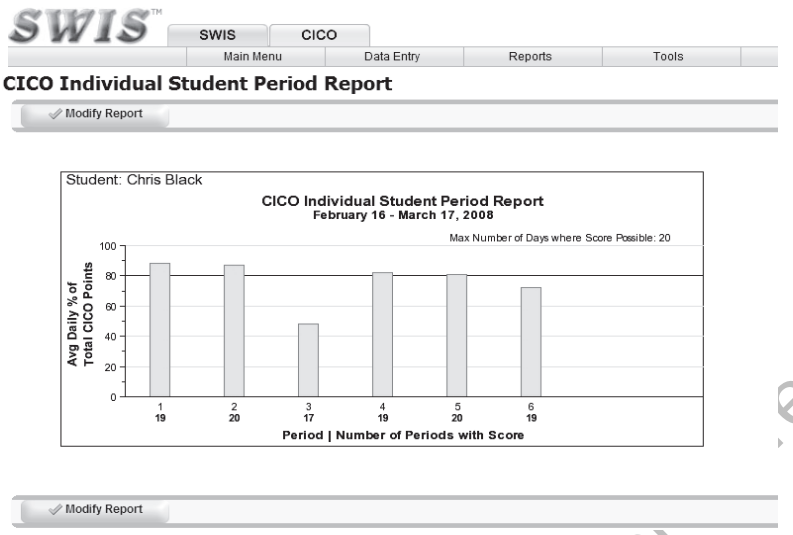

FIGURE 2.3. Sample individual student graph of percentage of CICO points earned by period. Copyright by Educational and Community Supports, University of Oregon. Reprinted by permission.

students who require more intensive behavior support. The next section details FBA methods at Tier 3 SWPBS.

TIER 3 AND FBA

Moving from Tier 2 to Tier 3 supports indicates an increase in intensity and/or frequency of student problem behavior and the need for more intensive behavior support. However, within Tier 3 supports differing levels of assessment are needed; these include brief FBA, full FBA, and functional analysis. This next section details these different levels of assessment, beginning with the steps necessary to conduct an FBA. It should be noted that some of the procedures included in the brief FBA process can also be embedded in Tier 2 (as described above) after the student fails to respond to a Tier 2 intervention.

FBA Procedures

An FBA is initiated after the Tier 3 behavior support team receives a request for assistance. The request for assistance can be made by a teacher, an administrator, a team member, a family member, a student, or any other key individual. The goals, tools, and time investment involved at each level of FBA are outlined in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2. Goals, Process, Tools, and Time Investment for Each Level of Functional Assessment

Level of assessment	Goal	Process	Tools	Investment
Brief functional behavioral assessment	Define challenge	Short interview	F-BSP Protocol: Teacher Interview only or FACTS-A FACTS-B	20–30 minutes 20 minutes
Full functional behavioral assessment	Build understanding of when, how, and why problem behavior occurs	Short interviews	F-BSP Protocol: Teacher/Parent/Student Interview	20–30 minutes
			SDFA	20–30 minutes
		Extended interviews	FAI	20–45 minutes
		Direct observations	FAO	30 minutes–4 hours
		Review archival records	School records	30 minutes
Functional analysis	Confirm understanding	Direct observations and Systematic experimental manipulations	FAO	Up to 20 or more hours

Note. The forms listed should be taken as suggestions. Different forms are available and used by different school districts. Copies of most of the forms listed in this table are provided in the Appendices. F-BSP, Function-Based Behavior Support Plan Protocol; FACTS-A, Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff—Part A; FACTS-B, Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff—Part B; SDFA, Student-Directed Functional Assessment; FAI, Functional Assessment Interview (O'Neill et al., 1997); FAO, Functional Assessment Observation Form.

Along with our colleagues, we have developed time-efficient interview and observation tools to collect information on problem behaviors and their antecedents and consequences. Some of these tools are presented and discussed in Part III of this volume. Blank copies of all these forms are available in the Appendices.

The process of FBA can be expedited through accountability, good organization, and close attention to time management. Simple procedures such as regularly scheduled meetings, time-limited agendas, detailed action plans, and centralized record keeping can significantly improve time usage. These and other procedures for making the best use of time are discussed in detail throughout this book.

The efficiency of function-based behavior support can be further improved by recognizing that the intensity of the assessment process can vary depending on the complexity and severity of the problem behavior. Not every child who is referred for problem behavior requires a *full* FBA. For many children, the problem behavior can be adequately assessed by conducting a brief FBA. The brief

FBA relies on a brief teacher interview to define the problem behavior and identify the antecedents and consequences of that problem behavior. If the teacher is very familiar with the student and his or her problem behavior, an effective BSP can be built on this limited information. The brief FBA would be appropriately applied in situations where (1) the problem behavior is not severe or complex; (2) the team has a high level of confidence that the relevant antecedents, consequences, and functions have been identified through the teacher interview; and (3) the child is not in danger of suspension, expulsion, or alternative school placement.

Children with complex, severe, or at-risk problem behavior will require a full FBA. A full FBA is also appropriate if a child's behavior is not severe, but the team lacks confidence in the testable hypothesis generated from the initial teacher interview. A full FBA includes direct observations of the student in at least two settings. Interviews with additional teachers, the parents, and the child and a review of the child's school records are often included as well.

A small percentage of children may require a functional analysis of behavior to accurately assess and effectively intervene in the problem behavior. Functional analysis involves experimental manipulation of antecedents and consequences to increase the precision and accuracy of the assessment and must be carried out by an individual with experience in applied behavior analysis.

Because of limited existing resources, schools will require a comprehensive model of FBA that is efficient, effective, and inclusive, yet can be adapted to fit the different challenges these children represent. This book explains a multilevel model (brief FBA, full FBA, and functional analysis) and delineates a decision-making process to distinguish between the three options.

Brief FBA

The first task is to define the challenge. The behavior support team must develop an operational definition of the problem behavior. They will also identify the predictors and consequences of the problem behavior. Often, these tasks can be accomplished in a brief interview with the teacher. Teachers are often the team's greatest resource.

Teachers work with and observe their students every day. With focused prompting and practice, the teacher can provide a wealth of information about the predictors, consequences, and underlying functions of problem behavior.

The next step is to use the interview data to generate a testable hypothesis about why the behavior is occurring. The testable hypothesis describes the problem behavior, the predictors and consequences of the problem behavior, and the hypothesized function of the problem behavior—for example: "When James is asked to read a difficult passage out loud, he pushes his books to the floor and swears at the teacher in order to be sent to the office and escape the embarrassment of making a reading error in front of his friends."

Once the initial hypothesis statement is generated, the team decides whether they have adequately assessed the problem behavior or whether they require additional information: *How confident are they that the hypothesis statement is an accurate explanation for the problem behavior? How serious would the consequences be if they were wrong?* If the team has minimal confidence in their hypothesis statement, they should collect additional assessment information—that is, they should conduct a full FBA. In addition, if the referred student is at risk of suspension, expulsion, or alternative school placement, the team should invest additional time and resources in the assessment process.

If the team is confident about its hypothesis statement, and the problem behavior is neither dangerous nor placing the student's access to education at risk, the team should develop a BSP based on the brief FBA. The referring person takes the recommendations of the team and implements the strategies with the support of team members. A follow-up date is scheduled to evaluate the effectiveness of the recommended strategies.

Full FBA

This is the process of formulating and testing hypotheses about the problem behavior. The purpose of the full FBA is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of BSPs. Direct observations and extended interviews are added to the brief FBA. Observations are conducted in the settings where problem behavior typically occurs. At least one observation should be peer referenced—that is, the identified student's behavior is compared to the behavior of a composite of his peers. Without a peer-referenced comparison, it is difficult to determine whether the frequency and intensity of the student's problem behavior is significantly discrepant from his peers. Observations should also document predictors and consequences for each problem behavior event.

The full FBA may also include additional interview data. The student, the parents, and staff members may be interviewed to provide a more detailed understanding of the problem. Samples of observation and interview tools are included in the Appendices. A full FBA may also include a review of academic records.

After completing the full FBA, the team confirms or modifies the testable hypothesis. If the team feels unsure that they have accurately identified the predictors, consequences, and function of the problem behavior, they must make another decision. *Should they design a BSP based on the FBA, or should they invest a significant amount of time and resources to conduct a functional analysis?*

This decision must be made without capriciousness. A functional analysis is likely to consume significantly more staff time and will require the assistance of personnel with expertise in applied behavior analysis, even if trial-based functional analysis, as described in Chapter 1, is used. The team must decide whether

they have the resources available for conducting a functional analysis in each case. If resources are readily available, the behavior support team can go ahead with the functional analysis. If resources are sparse, the team must first consider the severity of the consequences of being wrong about their testable hypothesis and choose to conduct or not conduct a functional analysis accordingly. For example, if the student poses a significant danger to himself or others, a functional analysis of his behavior may be warranted. If a functional analysis is not recommended, the team will begin to design the BSP (in many cases, it will be reasonable to decide to design and test a BSP at this point).

Functional Analysis

Functional analysis allows the team to empirically confirm their understanding of the problem behavior, predictors, and functions. It involves the experimental, systematic manipulation of environmental variables to evaluate hypothesis statements (Vollmer & Northrup, 1996). A functional analysis should result in a clear understanding of the predictors, maintaining consequences, and function of the problem behavior. This information is used in the design and implementation of the BSP.

The reader may note in Table 2.2 that the assessment period is the longest for the cases with the most severe consequences. The assessment period is increased from 20–30 minutes to 2 or more hours, and then to as many as 20 hours or more. In cases of serious behavioral consequences, the teacher will not have the luxury to wait through several hours' worth of assessment. Teachers need an intermediary plan for addressing immediate problem behavior. Schools should have a universal crisis plan for dealing with serious problem behaviors. Although the behavior support team completes the FBA, the school should support the teacher with a short-term crisis plan for keeping the student and the classroom safe (refer to the Supplementary Section in this chapter for resources on crisis plans).

INTERVENTION: WHAT STEPS ARE INVOLVED IN EVALUATING AND MODIFYING A BSP?

Once the team has decided on and completed the appropriate level of FBA, they begin the process of designing, implementing, and modifying the BSP. The BSP should produce multiple outcomes: (1) procedures for preventing the problem behavior through alteration of the setting events and predictors; (2) procedures for teaching appropriate behaviors; (3) procedures for manipulating consequences of problem behaviors; (4) consideration of the contextual fit of the BSP; (5) data collection procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the BSP; and (6) a timeline for implementation, evaluation, and follow-up.

TABLE 2.3. Steps and Procedures for Designing a Behavior Support Plan

Identify the problem

- Receive request for assistance.
- Decide to build formal plan of support.

Conduct an FBA

- Describe problem behaviors in operational terms.
- Conduct interviews and observations to build and test hypothesis statements.
- Conduct functional analysis if necessary.

Design a plan of support

- Generate behavioral goals.
- Complete a Competing Behavior Pathway form (see Appendix B, Step 6).
- Generate a list of potential intervention strategies.
- Consider all relevant contextual variables.
- Select elements of BSP.

Implement the plan

- Agree on the roles and responsibilities of each individual on team.
- Agree on the roles and responsibilities of additional key players (e.g., parents, student).
- Decide on a time for follow-up meeting.
- Document the intervention plan in a BSP.
- Distribute the BSP to all participating individuals.
- Implement the BSP.

Table 2.3 lists the procedures involved in designing a BSP. Examples of hypothetical BSPs are also given in Chapter 4. For additional information on designing BSPs, refer to the basic texts listed in the Supplementary Section at the end of this chapter.

After the BSP is implemented, the behavior support team must evaluate the plan in terms of its effectiveness and efficiency. The team should reconvene 2–3 weeks after the initiation of the BSP. The team should then review the goals of the BSP, examine the behavioral data, and determine whether the goals have been met. If the goals have been achieved, the next step is to evaluate the efficiency of the BSP: *Is the BSP adequately efficient, or can it be redesigned to save time and resources?* If the efficiency of the BSP is adequate, the team does not need to modify or reevaluate it. They should plan to conduct a follow-up meeting for the student in 1–2 months. If the efficiency of the BSP can be improved, the team decides on the necessary modifications. The modified BSP is implemented. After 2–3 weeks, the team should meet again to reevaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the modified BSP.

In the original evaluation meeting (2–3 weeks after initiation of the original plan), the team may decide that the goals have not been achieved. Prior to modifying the BSP, the team needs to determine why the goals were not achieved. Commonly, the BSP is ineffective because it is not implemented appropriately. The team should consider whether there are contextual limitations that make it

difficult to implement the plan (contextual fit is discussed further in Chapter 4). If there are serious contextual limitations, the team should take these into consideration and modify the plan. If there are no contextual limitations, the BSP should be reimplemented with fidelity.

The team may find that the goals of the BSP were not achieved despite adequate implementation of the plan. The BSP may have been unsuccessful because the original assessment of the problem behavior was incorrect. The team must decide if further FBA is necessary. Further assessment may be appropriate, especially if the original BSP was based on data from a brief FBA. If the behavior support team decides that further assessment is needed, they should continue to develop and confirm an understanding of the problem through additional observations, interviews, or systematic manipulations. If the team feels that further FBA is not necessary, they should modify the BSP. Once again, they should plan to reconvene in 2–3 weeks to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the plan. The steps involved in a brief FBA, a full FBA, and functional analysis are summarized in the flowchart in Figure 2.4.

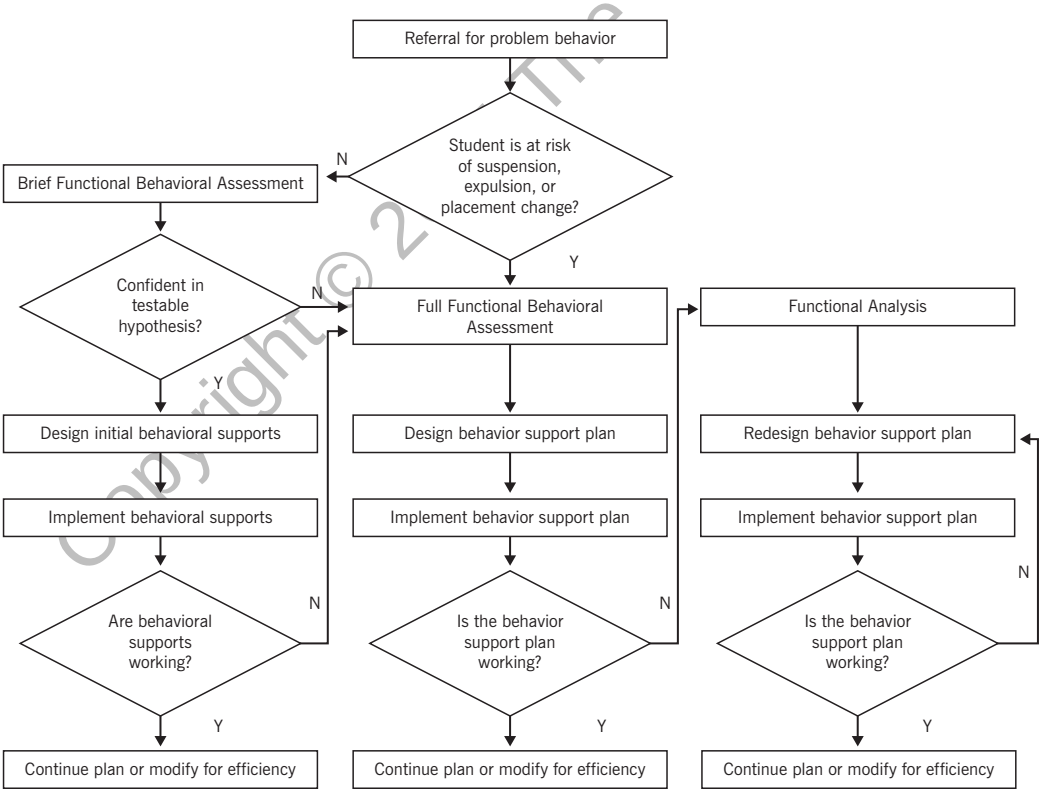

FIGURE 2.4. Flowchart of the FBA-BSP process.

SUPPLEMENTARY SECTION

Conducting Functional Assessments

Bloom, S. E., Iwata, B. A., Ritz, J. N., Roscoe, E. M., & Carreau, A. B. (2011). Classroom application of a trial-based functional analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 44*(1), 19–31.

Chandler, L. K., & Dahlquist, C. M. (2001). *Functional assessment: Strategies to prevent and remediate challenging behavior in school settings*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Johnston, S. S., & O'Neill, R. E. (2001). Searching for effectiveness and efficiency in conducting functional assessments: A review and proposed process for teachers and other practitioners. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 16*(4), 205–214.

Jolivette, K., Barton-Arwood, S., & Scott, T. M. (2000). Functional behavioral assessment as a collaborative process among professionals. *Education and Treatment of Children, 23*(3), 298.

O'Neill, R. E., Albin, R. W., Storey, K., Horner, R. H., & Sprague, J. R. (2015). *Functional assessment and program development: A practical handbook* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Steege, M. W., & Watson, T. S. (2009). *Conducting school-based functional behavioral assessments: A practitioner's guide* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Tools for Conducting Functional Assessment Interviews

Assessing Activity Routines Form (see Appendix E).
Brief Functional Assessment Interview Form (see Appendix F).
Functional Behavioral Assessment–Behavior Support Plan Protocol (see Appendix B).
Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff (see Appendix C).
Student-Guided Functional Assessment Interview (see Appendix D).
Functional Assessment Interview (in O'Neill et al., 2015).

Tools for Conducting Functional Assessment Observations

Functional Behavioral Assessment Observation Form (in Sugai & Tindal, 1993).

O'Neill, R. E., Albin, R. W., Storey, K., Horner, R. H., & Sprague, J. R. (2015). *Functional assessment and program development: A practical handbook* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Tools for Developing Behavior Support Plans

Functional Behavioral Assessment–Behavior Support Plan Protocol (see Appendix B).

Behavior Management

Gable, R. A., Park, K., & Scott, T. M. (2014). Functional behavioral assessment and students at risk for or with emotional disabilities: Current issues and considerations. *Education and Treatment of Children, 37*(1), 111–135.

Kamps, D., Wendland, M., & Culpepper, M. (2006). Active teacher participation in functional behavior assessment for students with emotional and behavioral disorders risks in general education classrooms. *Behavioral Disorders, 31*(2), 128–146.

Mueller, M. M., Sterling-Turner, H. E., & Moore, J. W. (2005). Towards developing a classroom-based functional analysis condition to assess escape-to-attention as a variable maintaining problem behavior. *School Psychology Review, 34*(3), 425–431.

Scott, T. M., DeSimone, C., Fowler, W., & Webb, E. (2000). Using functional assessment to develop interventions for challenging behaviors in the classroom: Three case studies. *Preventing School Failure, 44*(2), 51–56.

Smith, B. W., Sugai, G., & Brown, F. (2000). A self-management functional assessment-based behavior support plan for a middle school student with EBD. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 2*(4), 208.

Stoiber, K., & Gettinger, M. (2011). Functional assessment and positive support strategies for promoting resilience: Effects on teachers and high-risk children. *Psychology in the Schools, 48*(7), 686–706.

Interventions for Schoolwide, Classroom, or Non-Classroom-Specific Settings

Scott, T. M., Anderson, C. M., & Spaulding, S. A. (2008). Strategies for developing and carrying out functional assessment and behavior intervention planning. *Preventing School Failure, 52*(3), 39–50.

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Crisis Plans

Shukla, M., & Albin, R. (2003). Twelve practical strategies to prevent behavioral escalation in classroom settings. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 47*, 156–161.

Sprick, R. (2008). *Evidence-based behavioral strategies for individual students* (2nd ed.). Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing.