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Functional Behavior Assessments Through the Lenses of a General Education Clinical Teacher

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to look at the experience of a clinical teacher implementing a Functional Behavior Assessment, and what impact the assessment had on decreasing student behavior. Three student participants were selected based on the frequency of disruptive behavior in the classroom. Direct observation was taken over four days in order to develop hypotheses about the function of behavior. Interventions connected to the function were created and implemented over the course of the next four weeks, as behavior continued to be observed. For two students, the intervention consisted of a self-monitoring checklist and for the third student it focused on steps to manage anger. For all three participants, frequency of behavior decreased over the course of the study; however, no behavior was extinguished. The clinical teacher discusses the ups and downs of the FBA process and how it can be implemented successfully by other general education teachers.

Functional Behavior Assessments through the Lenses of a General Education Clinical Teacher

“Everybody hates me!” Daniel shouted. I walked away trying to ignore his behavior. “Why are you so mean to me?” Daniel yelled. I took a deep breath as I tried to tune him out. Comments such as these were nearly a daily occurrence, and I often replied with a reprimand or redirection when Daniel responded defiantly. Yet, I was beginning to realize the attention I gave him, even negative, was helping to drive this disruptive behavior. This disruptive behavior was hindering his learning and negatively impacting the classroom environment. As one of his teachers, I was exhausted from the daily battle, and I knew if something were to change it would require me to look closely at my own actions and the actions of Daniel. But I knew if nothing changed, the rest of the year would only bring with it worsening behavior.

Purpose

During the study, I was a year-long clinical teacher in a fourth-grade class at Rolling Hills Elementary for a M.Ed. program in Teaching and Learning (all names have been replaced with pseudonyms). The school was located in a West Texas town of approximately 128,000 residents. Rolling Hills was a Title 1 school, and about 86% of the student population was economically disadvantaged at the time. From the start of the year, I was quickly overwhelmed by the amount of behavior my co-teacher and I were dealing with. Not just occasionally or with just one student, but all the time with several students. It felt like we were firefighters instead of teachers, trying to prevent and extinguish any flame that began to spark.

While reflecting on this issue, I recalled Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA). A Functional Behavior Assessment works to understand the underlying reason why a student is displaying a certain behavior and looks at the events right before and after the behavior to help

determine what may be triggering and/or maintaining the behavior (Lewis, Hatton, Jorgenson, & Maynard, 2017). The steps of the process involve naming the behavior(s) you want to change, collecting data on the behavior(s), recording the antecedents and consequences of the behavior(s), developing a hypothesis about the function of behavior(s), and lastly creating and implementing an intervention connecting back to one's hypothesis (Vaughn & Bos, 2015). I knew that my Special Education professor, who had many years of experience, highly spoke of this behavior tool and had taught that it was something we too, as general educators, could use in our classrooms as well. I also knew that from my little experience in the classroom, my co-teacher and I were not the only ones struggling to manage constant behavior challenges. So, I decided to focus my study on utilizing this tool as a general educator so that other classroom teachers could gain insight into the implementation and effectiveness of this behavioral assessment. I also wanted to see what impact, if any, this assessment made on lowering certain students' challenging behavior. Below, are the specific questions I asked during my study:

- 1) What are the teachers' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of FBAs?
- 2) In what ways, if any, does the implementation of FBAs in a fourth-grade classroom decrease disruptive behavior?

Related Literature

Challenging behavior can inhibit learning in the classroom, and oftentimes teachers are not equipped with the necessary tools to address and change disruptive behavior they encounter on a daily basis. In response to this issue, I looked at classroom teachers implementing Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) in order to determine the function of students' behavior, implement interventions, and decrease challenging behavior.

FBAs in the General Education Classroom

The concept of a Functional Behavior Assessment originated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, 2010). Because of its association with Special Education, it has remained generally obscure in the general education world. However, Scott, Bucalos, Liaupsin, Nelson, Jolivette, and DeShea (2004) argue that this intervention should be utilized and can be utilized in the general education setting when it is made efficient, yet kept valid in its implementation. In their literature review they looked at studies on FBAs done in general education settings, and though the FBA methods varied greatly between the studies, all the studies aside from one, resulted in positive behavior change (Scott, Bucalos, Liaupsin, Nelson, Jolivette, & DeShea, 2004). Thus, even though FBAs may look different in the general education classroom, the assessment is still proving effective in the end.

Teacher Participation

In addition to the lack of FBA studies conducted in general education settings, rarely are they done solely by classroom teachers (Scott, Bucalos, Liaupsin, Nelson, Jolivette, & DeShea, 2004). In McKenna, Flower, Falcomata, and Adamson's (2017) study, teachers' involvement in helping to implement the FBA was assessed to have a high fidelity rate, meaning teachers followed the intervention protocol set by the researchers. Ellingson, Miltenberger, Stricker, Galensky, and Garlinghouse (2000) found that the hypotheses of the functions of behavior were consistent between the teachers and the researchers who had training in applied behavior analysis, where the teachers did not. It was also shown that teachers are able to successfully carry out direct observation during the FBA implementation (Ellingson, Miltenberger, Stricker, Galensky, & Garlinghouse, 2000). Lastly, in Young and Bauer-Yur's (2013) study, a first-grade teacher implemented an FBA for a student who never completed her morning work due to off-task behavior. The first-grade teacher succeeded in determining the function of behavior and

confirmed it through an alternate treatment design. She shared at the end of the process she would continue to use FBAs in her class from then on.

Determining Function

One of the main components of a Functional Behavior Assessment, as mentioned before, is the development of possible functions of behavior. This is such a vital part, because unfortunately as a teacher, sometimes our response to a disruptive behavior is actually maintaining the behavior. In other words, students continue to display the behavior because they know it will get their needs met (Lewis, Hatton, Jorgenson, & Maynard, 2017). Roberts, Marshall, Nelson, and Albers (2001) explained the function is hypothesized through indirect and direct observation; however, it can be confirmed through functional analysis which implements experimental conditions. The researchers found in their study through function analysis that higher-difficulty tasks were functionally related to off-task behavior, thus showing that the behavior's function was escape (Roberts, Marshall, Nelson, & Albers, 2001). In McKenna, Flower, Falcomata, and Adamson's study (2017), one participant, Eric, displayed challenging behavior to escape tasks and obtain peer/teacher attention. In response to the function, they altered the antecedent variable to where the teacher provided feedback regularly, as well they taught him alternative behaviors for getting help and ignoring peers. Overall, his disruptive behavior decreased as a result of connecting functions to interventions (McKenna, Flower, Falcomata, & Adamson, 2017).

Effectiveness of Intervention

In regards to the Functional Behavior Assessment as a behavior support, it has been proven effective in many studies. In Kamps, Wendland, and Culpepper's (2006) study, the two second-grade participants displayed high levels of challenging behavior at the beginning of the

study. Over the course of the study, Patricia's disruptive behavior lowered from a mean of 14.6 to 1.6 during independent work time. For Michael, his disruptive behavior went from 34 times to 0-5 times during independent work (Kamps, Wendland, & Culpepper, 2006). Rasheed, Fore, Jones, and Smith (2012) implemented FBAs for two middle school boys with an emotional/behavioral disorder, looking specifically to lower the behavior of talking out. For one participant, the incidence of talking-out was reduced from 52 occurrences to a mean of 4.8, and for the second participant, his talk-outs were reduced from 36 to a mean of 4.6 (Rasheed, Fore, Jones, & Smith, 2012).

As shown, Functional Behavior Assessments are effective tools in the hands of general educators in the classroom. Though behavior specialists are extremely valuable, they are not always available. Thus, teachers need this tool and need more studies that provide insight into the process of implementing an FBA from the perspective of a teacher. This study provided that insight through the personal journal kept by the teacher and through the practical strategies provided that are applicable to a general education classroom and teacher. In the end, I hoped that my research in FBA implementation in the general education classroom would enable teachers to feel equipped to respond and change challenging behavior, and use the FBA in a way that fits their needs.

What I Did

The process of implementing an FBA, as described earlier, were the steps I followed during the implementation of my study. Some FBA studies do include an additional step, functional analysis, where environmental variables are experimentally manipulated in order to determine a relationship between function and behavior (Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, 2010). However, not all FBAs include this step, and I did not, due to the additional time it would have

required. I also created my own data recording table (see Appendix A), which I used during all observations to record the duration and frequency of behavior, antecedents, consequences, and any other information that seemed significant.

Participant Selection

Students were chosen from two-fourth grade classes, one that we taught Social Studies and ELAR to in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Participation was solicited from three students who displayed consistent challenging behavior in the classroom setting. All three students were male and African American. Daniel and Jadon were in our morning class, and Ethan was in our afternoon class. Their challenging behaviors ranged from talking to peers, talking-out, refusing to work, angrily responding to teacher correction or task demand, making derogative remarks about peers and/or teachers, yelling, slamming things, and misusing property. Each child selected for the study was given an information letter and consent form for their parents to read and sign. The classroom teacher was also given a consent form so that her perspective could be obtained through interviews.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interviews, a personal journal, and observations. I interviewed Mrs. Johnson, my co-teacher, at the beginning and end of my study. Each interview lasted between 20-30 minutes. The second source of data was a personal journal I kept throughout the process. This journal held my thoughts as we (Mrs. Johnson and I) conducted an FBA for Daniel, Jadon, and Ethan. My journaling included methodological notes, “involving the research methods” I was using, theoretical notes about the hypothesized functions of their behavior, and/or personal notes sharing events in my life or my students’ lives that may have

affected that day's observation and implementation of the intervention (Hubbard & Power, 2003, p. 46). I journaled 3-5 times per week during the duration of the four-week study.

Lastly, I collected quantitative data over their behavior through my daily observations. Again, I collected these notes on the recording table I had created, which detailed how often they performed a behavior, how long the behavior lasted, if applicable, the antecedent, the consequence, and beginning and ending time of the observation. I collected the baseline data during the first week of my study, Monday through Thursday. I observed my morning and afternoon students for 30 minutes each day. Following the first week, I developed a hypothesis about the function(s) of behavior for each of my three students. The two main functions of behavior are to obtain or escape something. I developed a hypothesis through conversation with my co-teacher, analyzing my journal entries, and most importantly analyzing the direct data I had obtained through my observations that week. Based on the hypothesized function, we then taught an alternative, appropriate behavior that served the same function as the inappropriate behavior. We also changed the learning environment to ensure that the inappropriate behavior no longer allowed that function to be satisfied (Lewis, Hatton, Jorgenson, & Maynard, 2017). While implementing the interventions for three weeks, I continued to record data detailing the frequency, duration, antecedent, and consequence of my three students' behavior, Monday through Thursday. This continued to be for 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon.

Data Analysis

I analyzed data through the constant comparative method (Hendricks, 2003). I initially coded approximately 20% of my data, using level I codes. Level I codes simply describe what is happening in that particular portion of the data, "showing the basic activities and processes in the

data” (Tracy, 2013, p.189). I used the set of 20 Level I codes to code the remaining data. I repeatedly read through my data in order to compare old codes with new codes to “refine the properties of [my] categories” (Hendricks, 2003, p. 115). Then, I created a few level II codes that represented a deeper idea or concept found throughout my data (Tracy, 2013). Level II codes are formed when the data begins to be interpreted and conclusions drawn (Tracy, 2013). For each level II code, I wrote a memo where I processed through the data relevant to that specific code and begin to piece the findings together (Hubbard & Power, 2003). I also created a codebook (see Appendix B) that housed all my level I and level II codes, where I color-coded them, defined them, and provided an example for each (Tracy, 2013). I also analyzed my quantitative data by calculating the summation of the baseline data and displayed the varying frequencies of my student’s behavior over time in the form of graphs.

What I Found

Having implemented an FBA with three students, each of their behavioral journeys varied in many ways. Thus, I first briefly describe each boy’s progression over the course of the assessment. Next, I describe the main takeaways I had as a classroom teacher implementing the FBA in a general education classroom.

Daniel

Daniel’s challenging behavior had been prevalent from the start of the year. He often shouted out trying to gain teacher and peer attention, completely ignored task demands, and was verbally defiant when given a demand or when redirected. In his baseline data, I recorded five talk-outs, five occurrences of noncompliance to a task demand, two occurrences of verbal defiance towards a teacher, one time out of his seat without permission, and five times talking to peers. Daniel showed the highest frequencies in talking-out, talking to peers, and noncompliance

when given teacher demands or when completing a task individually or in a whole group. I hypothesized the function of his behaviors were to escape work and obtain teacher and peer attention. I implemented a self-monitoring checklist (Appendix C), in which he was taught to place a check if he met all expectations and an X if he did not. He was rewarded with getting to help the math teachers down the hall if he was able to place all checks next to each activity he participated in during our morning class.

Over the course of five weeks, (one week was a snow week so I only observed Daniel a day and a half that week) he showed progress. However, there were setbacks and extinction of certain behaviors did not occur, such as verbal defiance which he daily expressed up until the end of the study. However, as the graph below shows a decrease in the frequency of behaviors did occur. The frequency did seem to spike after the snow week; however, that may have been due to his routine being interrupted, as well as a student who Daniel often acted out alongside, returned from an alternative placement. In Figure 1 below, it is evident that the frequency of Daniel’s behavior was inconsistent, yet did decrease after that last significant increase on the 26th. Daniel did not respond positively to my feedback, whether constructive or positive, making the day the days hard and long oftentimes. However, after stepping back and looking at the big picture the progress is noticeable, even if it seemed nonexistent in the day-to-day.

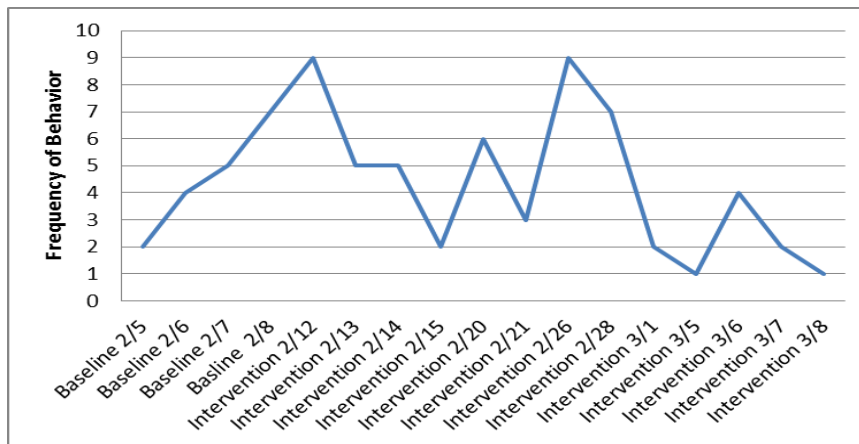


Figure 1. Daniel's frequency of behaviors over time.

Ethan

My relationship with Ethan began fairly neutral at the beginning of the study, but became more positive throughout the process. Ethan's day-to-day challenging behavior was most often talking-out and with peers at inappropriate times, and occasionally verbal defiance towards teachers when redirected. My relationship with Ethan began fairly neutral at the beginning of the study, but became more positive throughout the process. In his baseline data, I recorded four talk-outs, two occurrences of noncompliance, two occurrences of verbal defiance, one time getting out of his seat without permission, and 12 times talking to peers when inappropriate. This data showed that Ethan's high-frequency behaviors consisted of talking out and talking to peers during whole group instruction and noncompliance and verbal defiance when given a teacher demand. I hypothesized his behavior was functioned to escape work and obtain teacher and peer attention, just like Daniel's. Thus, I also implemented a self-monitoring checklist with the same behavior expectations given to Daniel, with the reward of lunch in the classroom with a friend after four days of all checks.

I suppose with Ethan the implementation seemed smoother because the response Ethan gave to my attention was positive. He was eager to fill out the checklist most days and even towards the end began to ask for the checklist if I had forgotten to place it on his desk at the beginning of our afternoon class. Concerning the frequency of behavior over time, Ethan showed less stable digression compared to Daniel's frequencies; yet, he did start with a lower amount of behaviors per day. As visible on the graph, Ethan had several days where his behavior jumped back up after going down, and these behaviors continued to be for the most part talking out and

talking to peers. Thus, as you can see in Figure 2, the frequency of Ethan’s behavior was inconsistent, but due to the positive change in our relationship as student and teacher he responded to correction more aptly and positively over the course of the study, making his behavior overall more manageable.

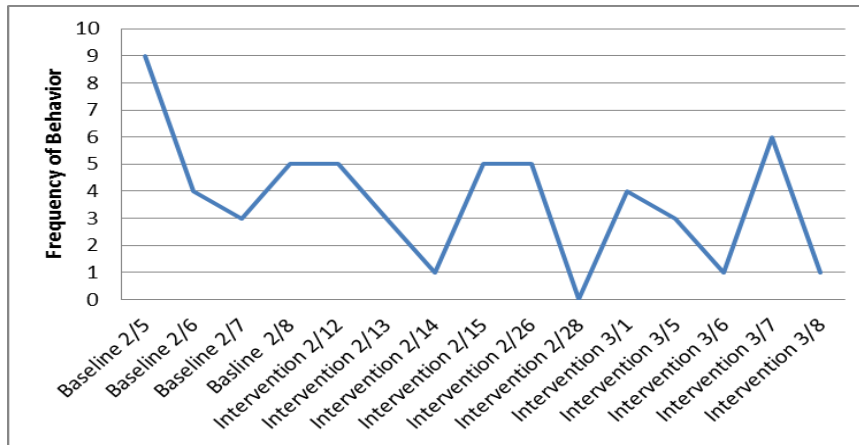


Figure 2. Ethan’s frequency of behaviors over time.

Jadon

Due to absences, Jadon was about a week behind the two other participants. Throughout the year he struggled most with angrily responding when corrected or redirected by teachers. In his baseline data, I recorded one occurrence of noncompliance, four occurrences of verbal defiance, three occurrences of physical defiance, two times getting out of seat, and seven times talking to peers. From his baseline data, it was clear that Jadon struggled most with talking to peers and verbal and physical defiance. His defiance was what I really focused on due to its intensity often causing the class to halt. In regards to talking, I hypothesized Jadon’s behavior was functioned to obtain peer attention; with the defiance I hypothesized the function was to obtain teacher attention. For his intervention, I taught Jadon several steps to calm down when he became upset or angry. They were as follows, breathe and calm down, come find a teacher, state

how you're feeling, explain what the problem was, and brainstorm a possible solution to the problem. On days when Jadon had no outbursts his reward was a positive note home to mom.

As shown in Figure 3, Jadon's functional behavior assessment began with a fairly low amount of behaviors displayed; however, after I taught Jadon the steps to calm down, his behavior, especially in regards to verbal and physical defiance became minimal. Many days Jadon was able to earn a positive note home to mom which he was greatly motivated by. Similarly to Ethan, Jadon responded well to the one-on-one attention provided him from me on a daily, consistent basis. A small incentive and a little extra support and attention seemed to be all this student needed in the end.

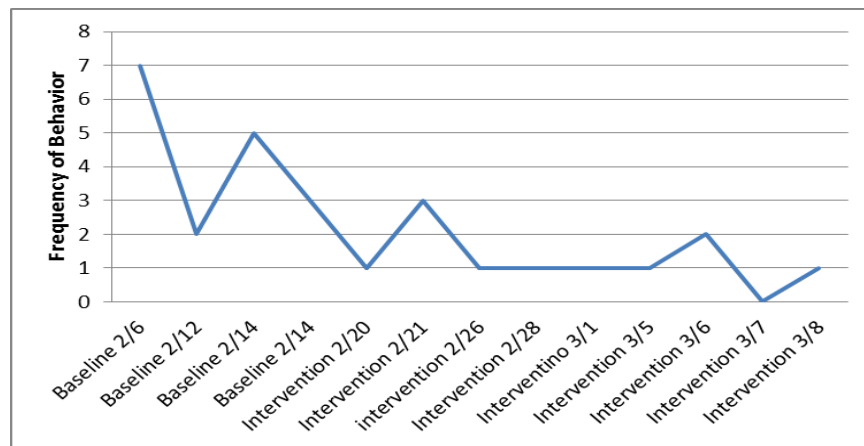


Figure 3. Jadon's frequency of behaviors over time.

A Juggling Act

Day one of implementing an FBA as a classroom teacher was a wake-up call. The daily responsibilities of a teacher are many, and when adding the many facets of an FBA, it feels like a three-ring circus.

There are many reasons why it is a challenge. First, as a classroom teacher and researcher, you have to balance both roles at the same time in the midst of the hectic, school day.

Recording behavior and remaining consistent in providing consequences to students is difficult when you are also worried about teaching a good lesson and managing the other 20 or more students under your care. The FBA itself encompasses a widespread amount of elements; collecting baseline data, hypothesizing functions, creating function-based intervention plans, implementing those plans, and revising as needed. Thus, as a classroom teacher, this assessment requires time and energy that can at times be hard to put towards one or two students in your class. However, with the right tools, the juggling act becomes smooth and feasible.

First, I realized it was vital to break the process down into its individual parts. When I attempted to look at my students' antecedents, consequences, and challenging behaviors altogether, it was difficult to place the puzzle pieces. But as I analyzed each component separately, I was able to put together the bigger picture and begin to hypothesize functions of behavior that ultimately led to appropriate interventions. Second, I had to make the tools my own. These tools included the recording sheet and the model I used to help analyze the baseline data. I revised and edited the forms until they provided the information I needed. After creating good-fit tools, the process then required consistency and reviewing, reviewing, reviewing. I had to go back and look at the hypothesized functions and plans daily so that I could implement them with intentionality. In the day-to-day tasks of a teacher, these outlines became a lifeline that helped me stay afloat as I navigated implementing the FBA. My co-teacher, Mrs. Johnson, put it this way, "you're able to write it down and reflect clearly," making it easier to remember all the small details at the end of a crazy, school day.

It May Get Worse Before it Gets Better

Unfortunately, the lesson of, it may get worse before it gets better, was definitely one I walked away with after implementing a FBA for three students. Working with students who are behaviorally challenging can feel like a daily battle leading down the same road of increasingly disruptive behavior. And in some ways this feeling was amplified because of the intentional focus the FBA required me to place on these particular students.

Many days, I was met with glares and comments like, "I'm sorry" in a sarcastic, mocking voice when I redirected challenging behavior. Of all three, Daniel pushed back hard as I tried to partner with him to improve his behavior in our class. However, for all three boys change did not come quickly or easily. It seemed like each of their behaviors got worse before I began to see positive change. Remaining consistent over the weeks, while still not seeing evident improvement required grit and sticking with something that at the time felt like it was totally useless. But just like it takes time for us to change, the same is true for our students. They need time. For us, this meant a painstaking process where many days I came home and journaled how the boys were continuing to talk back, be reactive, and disregard teacher demands despite my intentionality, consistency, and hard work.

I came to the point where I had to recognize that I was not in control of all the factors that play a part in my students' behaviors. Home life, learned behaviors, other students, can set a student back overnight leaving you feeling like all was for nothing. I also learned I had to remain consistent no matter what. Even though it took the whole study for Ethan to earn his reward I kept encouraging and providing feedback, helping him achieve that goal in the end. Yet, for some students they may not reach the goal you set for them. At the end of the study, my mentor teacher and I sat dumb-struck as we tried to put into words the lack of progress we had seen in certain areas of Daniel's behavior. In these

moments, it becomes essential that you balance the lack of progress with remembering the successes that you *did* see. Mrs. Johnson shared that it also becomes pivotal that you don't see this as failure on your part or on the part of the assessment. It is neither. It is simply an opportunity to reflect, revise your plans, and try again.

Reflection Brings about Change

A functional behavior assessment doesn't just bring about change in students, though. If done correctly it will also change you. The nature of this assessment requires reflection. You must reflect on the baseline data in order to hypothesize functions and create interventions. And in my study, I reflected even more frequently through the practice of journaling.

Very quickly reflection took place as I realized the first day of collecting data that my recording sheet did not meet my needs. Yet, this was a small change in the process. During the first week during which baseline data was collected, I asked myself questions such as, what challenging behavior truly was, and reflected on whether or not I could be their teacher and remain neutral and unbiased as I took data on what I saw. I wondered if I was recording enough details and what type of interventions would help the boys succeed the most. These self-reflections helped me be more aware of my own biases as I recorded their behavior, working hard to operationally write down what I saw in a measurable way.

After creating and implementing the interventions, I continued to reflect on my own reliability as the implementer; was I implementing what and when I said I would? I contemplated if the very intervention I had created to decrease behavior was in actuality increasing it. Sometimes parts of the intervention simply failed. For instance, with Daniel's reward, he was consistently able to see the teacher he was only supposed to meet with on

good days. Thus, I had to reconsider and revise his reward to where it didn't involve seeing or not seeing his favorite teacher on campus, but rather centered on having the privilege of helping her at the end of the day. Many days I reflected on what I might need to do better in order to help my three students continue to improve. If I knew that I needed to re-teach, remind, or change how I responded I would try to implement those changes in the following days.

Reflection didn't even stop when it came to the end of the implementation. In fact, this was when I reflected the most on all the changes I would have made in hindsight of completing the FBA. Such as, I realized it is better to focus on one disruptive behavior at a time. When compiling my literature review, I had noticed some studies looked at one behavior and some looked at more; however, through the process I learned that when I naturally focused on one behavior with each student it was more successful. I also realized that some students need scaffolding in order to be successful with certain interventions. Daniel and Ethan were not ready to self-monitor and Daniel was never successful at completing his checklist on his own. Now I realize he needed more guidance and increased teacher feedback to help him understand what on-task behavior meant. In all reality, an FBA should never really end. As my co-teacher said in her final interview, we simply needed to "adjust for Daniel" and keep going, because ultimately it's about supporting and helping that student get his or her needs met without having to act out in order to do so. My co-teacher's also reiterated several times that behavior modification requires trial-and-error. Observing behavior, reflecting, trying a strategy, and reflecting is a constant cycle that a veteran teacher like Mrs. Johnson views as an essential part of a teacher's response to challenging behavior.

The Light at the End of the Road

No matter what behavior assessment is being implemented, working with students who consistently display challenging behavior has its challenges. However, if you take the time to see it through, the victories in your students' lives will be worth the process.

Throughout implementing the FBA there were many days as both teacher and implementer I was only about to see the set-backs or lack of progress. This made having another adult in the room extremely valuable. When I couldn't see the small changes occurring in my students' lives she was able to direct my attention to them. For example, with Daniel I would reflect on all the behavior we were still dealing with, but then Mrs. Johnson would point out that he hadn't been verbally defiant towards us that day, a huge victory! These victories happened all along the way as the boys' behavior changed, I simply had to open my eyes to see them.

By the end of the study, my co-teacher and I could confidently say that two of the three boys' behavior had significantly improved and challenging behaviors had decreased! With Ethan and Jadon, both boys positively responded to the intervention and their challenging behavior had decreased as a result. As well, my relationship with them benefitted, and both boys were able to obtain teacher attention without acting out to obtain my attention. Although, I did not take data on their academics, we also noticed how all three boys' quality of work improved and how they were completing more tasks on time. Mrs. Johnson also noted how their improved behavior positively impacted the entire classroom, thus the results of the FBA did not merely affect the three students who participated but the entire class.

Mrs. Johnson's comment at the end of the study highlights the effectiveness of implementing FBAs with students displaying challenging behavior, "I've learned just the potential those boys do have with a little extra support, how successful they can be." By uncovering the function of their behaviors and providing the support they needed, the boys were all able to improve in a small or large way. The FBA provided a systematic way for me, as the classroom teacher to work with my students in order to bring about that change.

Disruptive Behavior and the Teacher's Part in it All

From my two interviews with my co-teacher, a huge discussion that came up was whether or not the FBA was feasible for a classroom teacher to take on, and whether or not behavior should be dealt with alone or with others.

First, let me address the feasibility of implementing a FBA. As described earlier, there are challenges, but in the end, there are results that outweigh the temporary hassle. The FBA provides a template in which you, as the classroom teacher, can work intentionally to change a child's behavior for the better, as well as, teach them skills that will benefit them the rest of their lives. Just like reading assessments are geared towards helping a student increase their reading level, the FBA was created to decrease challenging behavior so that students can be behaviorally successful in class. Based on my experience, the FBA is feasible for a classroom teacher to implement, especially when it is done with only one student, since this would allow you to study one child's behavior. My co-teacher put it this way, "teachers are constantly assessing and trying to figure out what the situation is but if you actually put it down to paper and make yourself more intentional about it, I think it would be huge." Thus, the FBA simply takes what a teacher already does in her head, and allows him or her to document it in an intentional way that helps guide

future decisions regarding behavior strategies and interventions you could use with that student.

Second, is it best to address challenging behavior alone or with others? If the behavior is consistent enough and intense enough to require a formal assessment, the support of another adult is not absolutely necessary, but highly valuable. I had my co-teacher in the room, who was able to observe these students' daily behavior and help me process possible steps I could take with them. For most teachers, another adult will not be in the room each day. And as my co-teacher and I experienced this year, behavior specialists are often stretched thin and not called on until a behavior becomes extreme. Yet, every teacher has a campus full of other educators who have experience with challenging behavior and can provide a listening ear, wisdom from prior experiences, and another set of eyes when needed. If I came away with any lesson, it is this, "call for help," don't do this journey alone.

Implications for Teachers

If you are facing a student who displays challenging behavior consistently to where it is hindering his or her learning, and/or social relationships with others peers, try implementing a Functional Behavior Assessment. It is a systematic, useful tool for classroom teachers that allows you to take charge of an area that we all know greatly affects how our days go. Here are some helpful hints as you implement your first FBA or maybe your 10th:

- Break it down. Find or create a recording tool that fits your needs and use it to slowly put together the puzzle piece by piece.

- Start small; focus on one student and one challenging behavior that is most prevalent and/or intense. This will allow you to place a large amount of energy and attention on this one area, helping you and the student be most successful.
- Give it time. Don't throw out an intervention because it's been a week and things have only gotten worse. Allow the student to acclimate to the change in routine and procedure before determining that it's not working.
- Take time to reflect. Whether it's a daily journal or verbally processing with another teacher or behavior specialist, consider what you could change in how you respond to student behavior, and the victories and challenges you're facing along the way.
- Seek a support system. Whether it's your district's behavior specialist, a team teacher, or administrator at your school, get people on your team to help you through the process. This other adult could be an additional mentor for the student during the intervention process and/or simply another experienced educator to provide feedback to you as you assess and work to extinguish challenging behavior.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to look at implementing Functional Behavior Assessments in a general education classroom by a general education teacher. As the general education clinical teacher, and the research implementer, I was able to step through implementing an FBA for three students and see it bring about positive change. For all three students, challenging behavior was decreased, and for two out of the three students behavior was significantly changed so much that the classroom environment and student productivity was positively affected. Due to the time limit of the study I was not able to look at maintenance of positive student behavior. Thus, in the future I would like to see how long challenging behavior remains minimal or extinct

following the end of a FBA. As well, I would like to focus on one challenging behavior per student to see if that would make it more successful in completely extinguishing behavior.

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Appendix A
Data Recording Table

Student: Daniel **Date:** _____ **Beginning Time:** _____ **Ending Time:** _____
Location: _____ **Activity:** _____

		Antecedent	Consequence	Additional Info
Target Behaviors	Talking-out (talking where other students can hear him without prior teacher permission)			
	Noncompliance to task demands (not getting started on work within 30 seconds)			
	Verbal defiance (disagreeing or arguing with teacher)			
	Physical defiance (slamming material, misusing property)			
	Getting out of seat without permission			
	Talking to peers			

Appendix B
Codebook

Revising FBA process	Level I	Changing the way I implemented the FBA	With Daniel, I also need to rethink the reward he is given for all checks...
Why does behavior stop when I record?	Level I	Recognizing lack of behavior when I formally observed	Today, Daniel only had two behavior instances during the thirty minutes I was recording, and probably about 3x times that in the time period following it.
Challenging behaviors	Level I	Examples of behaviors that were disruptive	His most frequent off-task/disruptive behaviors were talking out, talking to peers, and noncompliance.
Changing my own schema	Level I	Personal reflection leading to a changed mindset	Maybe, sometimes the behavior I deem challenging is really behaviors that I don't like...
External factors affecting behavior	Level I	Outside factors that contributed to an increase or decrease in behavior	Jadon's first day was after a week of being out sick.
Challenges of FBA	Level I	Frustrations faced while implementing the FBA	Since I am the one recording and at times implementing the warning, reminder, or consequence I have to try to maintain neutral...

Questions about the FBA process	Level I	Elements of the FBA I still did not fully understand	I wonder if being more consistent with the secret signal would be helpful?
Behavior not recorded	Level I	Behavior that occurred when I was not formally observing	The time period before I recorded data included making noises, verbal defiance against peers, and responding defiantly...
Hard moments	Level I	Challenging interactions with participants	He also made the sarcastic comment, "I'm sorry" when corrected.
Small victories along the way	Level I	Recognizing changes happening in the right direction	Ethan had a good day, with no blow ups or major disruptive behavior that hindered his or others learning.
Consequences of behavior	Level I	Teacher response to participants behavior	As I look over the consequences of his behavior, often it seems its met with no consequence/ignore by the teacher...
Hypothesizing functions	Level I	Creating a data-supported guess about function of behavior	When given a demand, Daniel is noncompliant in order to obtain teacher/peer attention and escape tasks.
The same road of increasingly disruptive behavior	Level I	Frustrating downward cycle with a participant	He is angry with me for implementing consequences, and I am angry with him for his behavior.

What sets them off	Level I	Things that occur right before challenging behavior	The student sits right next to Daniel, and they definitely feed off each other.
Behavior strategies	Level I	Teacher-directed strategies to prevent behavior	...Mrs. J provided consistent reminders to Jadon throughout the morning that really seemed to help him...
Teacher perspective of FBA	Level I	Personal thoughts about the FBA from a teacher	I think it gives you a systematic way to look at the kids...
Organic behavior assessment	Level I	The natural way a teacher assesses students' challenging behavior	...you kinda do this process naturally as a teacher now, where like you observe behavior and you are assessing...
Outside expertise	Level I	Experience with outside expertise coming into the classroom to help with disruptive behavior	When I taught in a smaller school there wasn't much outside expertise to come in and help...
Lack of training in dealing with behavior	Level I	Recognizing absence of formal, teacher training regarding challenging student behavior	... I don't feel like that's what administrators train the teachers on much, it's more on curriculum and teaching instruction...
Advice from a veteran teacher- call for help	Level I	Thoughts from a highly experienced teacher regarding dealing with challenging behavior	Try lots of strategies , if it doesn't work it's okay, move one, try another one, and it will get better.

<p>FBIP</p>	<p>Level I</p>	<p>Functional Behavior Intervention Plan</p>	<p>*see charts in journals</p>
<p>Implementing intervention</p>	<p>Level I</p>	<p>How the day-to-day intervention implementation went</p>	<p>I talked to him and discussed desired behaviors and the self-monitor checklist before the start of the day...</p>
<p>Positive results from FBA</p>	<p>Level I</p>	<p>Things that changed for the better because of the FBA</p>	<p>Not only that, but these boys are getting personal attention from their teacher that is intentional and geared towards just behavior.</p>
<p>Reflection brings about change</p>	<p>Level II</p>	<p>When teachers reflect on students' challenging behavior, change happens in the teacher's actions and the student's behavior</p>	<p>He was never able to accurately self-reflect on his checklist, rather he would simply place all checks. However, today I placed a smiley-face next to the activities he was successful in, giving him a prompt that it was a go to put a check there.</p>
<p>It may get worse before it gets better</p>	<p>Level II</p>	<p>Challenges faced before seeing the positive results</p>	<p>However, Daniel had a rough morning up until this point. From the start of the morning, he had consistently not followed directions...</p>
<p>A juggling act</p>	<p>Level II</p>	<p>Staying on top of all the various elements of the FBA process</p>	<p>It requires consistency and daily discussions and check-ins that are hard to fit into everything else a teacher has on her plate.</p>

<p>The light at the end of the road</p>	<p>Level II</p>	<p>Positive changes that happened while implementing the FBA</p>	<p>Thus, it seemed that Ethan was beginning to understand how to truly self-monitor.</p>
<p>Disruptive behavior and the teacher's part in it all</p>	<p>Level II</p>	<p>Teachers' insight into what their part is in eliminating challenging behavior</p>	<p>...in the last three years I've called for help more than I have any of my other years of teaching, so it has nothing to do with years of experience, your classroom management quality, it depends on new behaviors.</p>

Appendix C
Self-Monitoring Checklist

5 minute TEKS	
Restroom	
Writing	
Reading	
Vocabulary/Roots	
Restroom	
Lunch	
Specials	

Teacher signature: _____

Date: _____

Put a check if:

- You got to work quickly (within 30 seconds)
- Worked the entire time
- Raised your hand to get help from Miss. Clark or Mrs. Joiner
- Voice level 0 during independent work
- Voice level 2 during group and partner work