

HLP 10: Conduct Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) to Develop Individualized Behavior Support Plans (BSPs)



High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities

One of the most important pieces of knowledge to act upon when teaching is that all behavior is communication (function). The effective special educator, armed with this understanding, interprets student behavior(s) and makes critical, informed choices to avoid accidental reinforcement of unwanted actions and assigning of unneeded or unfair discipline. This teacher competency lays at the core of the functional behavior assessment (FBA) process and corresponding behavior support plan (BSP). The FBA process is a team effort, requiring collaboration from colleagues (HLP 1) and families (HLP 3) across meetings (HLP 2), and a range of data (HLP 4) to make decisions. Effective special educators are always thinking about antecedents of student behavior (long- and short-term triggers), how to describe and interpret behaviors, and what consequences are working to sustain the behaviors. They use a range of data, input, and practices to develop a BSP intended to replace the unwanted behavior with a more appropriate one that can be generalized across contexts.

This resource is intended to support school leaders looking to embed the HLPs in professional development, implementation, teacher observation and feedback efforts at their school site.

The major source for content within this resource is the chapter by Blair P. Lloyd, Howard P. Willa, and Timothy J. Lewis in *High-Leverage Practices in the Inclusive Classroom*; the book *High-Leverage Practices in Special Education: The Final Report of the HLP Writing Team*, and content on www.highleveragepractices.org.

Teachers Who Effectively Conduct FBAs to Develop Individualized BSPs

- Consider the five classic functions of behavior when trying to determine why a student is demonstrating a specific problem behavior. Those five functions of behavior are:
 1. **Social Attention/Communication** (positive social reinforcement)
 2. **Access to tangibles or preferred activities** (material or activity reinforcement)
 3. **Escape, delay, reduction, or aversive tasks or activities** (negative reinforcement)
 4. **Escape from or avoidance of other individuals** (negative social reinforcement)
 5. **Internal stimulation** (automatic or sensory reinforcement)
- Ensure that all essential components of an FBA are included in this assessment process. These components are (Hirsch et al., 2017):
 - A clear description of problem behavior;
 - Identification of events, times, and situations that predict the behavior(s);
 - Identification of the consequences that maintain the problem behaviors;
 - A hypothesis regarding events that prompt and support the problem behavior; and
 - Collection of direct observation data that support the hypothesis.
- Apply the Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (A-B-C) model when developing a hypothesis statement within an FBA.
- Analyze data collected through the FBA, select an appropriate replacement behavior based upon the function of the problem behavior, and develop an individualized BSP.
- Explicitly teach and reinforce the selected appropriate replacement behavior to the student.
- Incorporate environmental modifications within the student's BSP to prevent reoccurrence of the problem behavior(s).
- Incorporate environmental modifications within the student's BSP to make the replacement behavior more effective and efficient than the problem behavior, thereby increasing likelihood of the student using the replacement behavior.
- Collect data and monitor the student's progress with the current BSP, meeting with key stakeholders to adjust or continue intervention planning as needed.

Tips for School Leaders to Support Teachers

- The team involved in conducting FBAs may vary between districts and schools; however, focus should be on a team-oriented process when conducting FBAs and soliciting support from all members.
- Identify and recruit staff members who are skilled in connecting with students who have difficulty forming relationships to create pre-established student support teams.
- Provide educators with instruction, professional development, and/or coaching in the steps of the FBA process, leading an FBA meeting, and creating and implementing a BSP.
- Provide ongoing feedback and support to educators on their use of available data sources for decision-making throughout the FBA process.
- Support teachers'/team members' development and use of data collection tools to ensure ongoing progress monitoring data collection. Check in with individuals frequently to offer additional supports with data collection as needed/warranted.

Questions to Prompt Discussion, Self-Reflection, and Observer Feedback

- What are some examples of appropriate replacement behaviors that satisfy the 5 classic functions of behavior?
- Why is it necessary to consider and make environmental modifications when developing and implementing a BSP?
- In what ways does this HLP align with the collaboration and assessment HLPs (HLPs 1-6)?
- Why should school leaders encourage and promote a team-oriented approach to conducting and implementing FBAs and BSPs?

● References & Additional Resources

Online Resources

[High-Leverage Practices: A Professional Development Guide for School Leaders](#)

A downloadable online guide providing school leaders, including administrators, principals, mentors and coaches, with practical tools for engaging staff members in learning about how high-leverage practices can enhance student learning in the school and district.

Journal Articles

- Fairbanks, S., Simonsen, B., & Sugai, G. (2008). Classwide secondary and tertiary tier practices and systems. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 40(6), 44–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990804000605>
- Hirsch, S. E., Bruhn, A. L., Lloyd, J. W., & Katsiyannis, A. (2017). FBAs and BIPs: Avoiding and addressing four common challenges related to fidelity. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 49(6), 369–379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059917711696>
- Lewis, T. J., Hatton, H. L., Jorgenson, C., & Maynard, D. (2017). What beginning special educators need to know about conducting functional behavioral assessments. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 49(4), 231–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059917690885>
- Sayeski, K. L., & Brown, M. R. (2014). Developing a classroom management plan using a tiered approach. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 47(2), 119–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059914553208>
- Trump, C. E., Pennington, R. C., Travers, J. C., Ringdahl, J. E., Whiteside, E. E., & Ayres, K. M. (2018). Applied behavior analysis in special education: Misconceptions and guidelines for use. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 50(6), 381–393. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059918775020>
- Wehby, J. H., & Kern, L. (2014). Intensive behavior intensive behavior intervention: What is it, what is its evidence base, and why do we need to implement now? *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 46(4), 38–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059914523956>
- Wood, C. L., Kisinger, K. W., Brosh, C. R., Fisher, L. B., & Muharib, R. (2018). Stopping behavior before it starts: Antecedent interventions for challenging behavior. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 50(6), 356–363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059918775052>