

Reflection Paper

Subject: Special Education Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans

Grade: 2nd, Special Education

Module 4: Assessment for Active Learning : Teacher implements instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by:

Selected Indicator: Using academic, behavioral and health data to select and/or design interventions, and assist in the development of individualized educational programs for students with disabilities.

Goal:

I will learn strategies to utilize academic, behavioral and health data to select and design interventions, and assist in the development of individualized educational programs for students with disabilities. As a result, students will develop strategies to improve their performance and assume responsibility for their own learning.

Initial Summary:

Currently, I teach special education at the elementary school level. Throughout lessons, I am often interrupted by my students' behaviors, especially if I am not directly giving them my attention or working with them. I spend a lot of time reviewing expected behaviors and modeling what appropriate behavior looks like with my students. This impacts my sessions with students as they run on the half hour which is a limited amount of time to work with each student. This time is valuable and important to be teaching not continually setting and reviewing behavior guidelines. One student in particular, Student A, consistently and continually calls out at inappropriate times, avoids tasks, can be non-compliant with following adult directions, increasingly high frustration levels as workload increases, etc. For example, when Student A arrives to my resource room he enters using negative talk "I can't. I won't. This is too hard", avoids non-preferred tasks, and becomes frustrated with the work no matter how easy or hard the activity/lesson may be. These behaviors are also apparent within the general education environment including the general education classroom and specials such as Art, Music, and/or Gym.

I currently struggle with how much teacher modeling and behavior management strategies I should be providing Student A. As a result, I am not seeing growth in this student's learning due to the time spent in constant review and discussion with this student regarding his behaviors.

It is very apparent to me that an area of growth is to work at creating a better method for controlling and managing student behaviors especially with Student A. It is important that I learn to vary both my role and this student's role in the school environment when developing more concrete and explicit behavioral expectations and provide him with consistent descriptive feedback. My hope is that Student A will develop strategies to improve his performance for greater independence in the school environment.

Reflection:

To develop a plan on achieving my goal, I researched materials about behavior management, developing and implementing Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP). One resource that was particularly helpful was the book titled First-Class Teacher: Success Strategies for New Teachers Edited by the staff of Canter and Associates. I read the selection "Reach Out to Difficult Students". This resource allowed me to see the importance of conducting one-on-one conferences with difficult students. I learned that when meeting with youngsters, they do not want to be told what to do, they want to feel they have a say in how they choose to behave. I also learned the importance of listening carefully to the student's input and to validate their thoughts. This selection provided me with a new understanding for conducting one-on-one conferences and how to make these meetings more beneficial for both the student and teacher. The goal of my conferences is to stop the misbehavior not only in the short run but in the long run and to work on one behavior at a time. I could see how this could benefit Student A as I have never had him be a part of creating strategies for himself to decrease his behaviors.

A second resource beneficial to me was the book titled: Functional Behavior Assessment For People with Autism: Making Sense of Seemingly Senseless Behavior by Beth A. Glasberg, PH. D. I read through the following selections: "Why Problem Behaviors Occur", "How Are Behaviors Learned?", "Getting Started: First Steps for Completing a Functional Behavior Assessment", "Measuring Behavior", and "You Finally Know the Function of Behavior: Now What?". This resource allowed me to understand why various student behaviors occur, how they are learned, how to measure and collect data on behaviors more effectively and efficiently, and the importance of developing and implementing FBA/BIPs to address student behaviors. I learned that problematic behaviors are learned in the same manner as other forms of communication. In other words, an individual who has some need identifies a behavior to get his need met. For example, "a boy who learned that hitting his instructor resulted in the removal of his work communicated, 'Take away my work, please' by hitting." This book highlighted that other consequences, "such as getting the boy's hands held down by his sides or getting a talking-to from the principal, do not prevent him from learning this communication. What matters for him at that moment is that he is motivated to escape his work, and, as a result of hitting or swiping materials off of the table, he does." One of the most crucial components I learned through this book is how a FBA grows out of 'Learning Theory'. 'Learning Theory' is simply how people develop particular behaviors. According to this resource, learning is summed up across four variables: Motivation + Antecedent + Behavior + Consequence = Learning. I learned that just as people learn useful behaviors (i.e. buying coffee or brushing your teeth), they also learn maladaptive behaviors (i.e. aggression). I learned that the reason why we conduct a FBA is to analyze how a behavior was learned so that we

can discover how to help someone “unlearn” it, and instead learn a new way to get his needs met. The last thing I learned from this resource was the process steps for completing a FBA: 1. Create an assessment team (the school based team that provides Student A with special education and related services), 2. Select a target behavior (non-compliance and poor body position not indicating engagement), 3. Define the target behavior, 4. Measure the target behavior, 5. Establish a baseline, 6. Interview team members (classroom teacher, special education teacher, paraprofessional, and SLP), 7. Observe the behavior (data collection), 8. Experiment with the behavior. This book provided me with an articulate and detailed understanding for implementing a FBA and developing a BIP with the school psychologist and school based team.

After reading Functional Behavior Assessment For People with Autism: Making Sense of Seemingly Senseless Behavior by Beth A. Glasberg, PH. D., I realized that conducting an FBA to find the function of Student A’s behavior may lead to the creation of a successful BIP with the focus of decreasing the rate of Student A’s disruptive behaviors. I wanted to be sure this was the right direction as I collaborated with several school professionals on their best practice approach for developing and implementing FBA/BIP’s. One specialist in particular, the school psychologist, helped me and the rest of the team to better understand what our current method of behavior management was and what specific changes or additions could be made to my behavior management approach. She emphasized that behavior expectations for Student A are not learned automatically, they must be modeled explicitly, reinforced, and measured with data. I felt I had made it clear to Student A from the first day that there were behavioral expectations (appropriate body position indicating readiness for learning, following directions, cooperating with adults, voice volume, raising hand quietly to ask for help, etc.) but the school psychologist helped me to realize that I never immediately positively reinforced expected/good behavior (e.g. I placed daily stickers on his positive reinforcement incentive sticker chart that might have taken 2-3 weeks to achieve a desired activity such as computer time, reading to the kindergarteners or principal, etc.). Since Student A’s positive behavior sticker chart took so long to become filled and was randomly reinforced, he did not learn how to demonstrate and follow appropriate behavior because the appropriate behavior was not being reinforced often enough. Therefore the unacceptable behavior continued and worsened. As a result Student A developed learned helplessness and frustration with increased work load and in addition I became frustrated. Student A was not being held responsible for improving his behavior.

The school psychologist also emphasized the importance of all team members using the same approach so we were consistent with our implementation. After I thoroughly read about the development and implementation of FBA/BIPs and meeting with the school psychologist to better understand the process, I decided that the best approach to achieve my goal was to apply my new learning and collaborate with Student A’s team to begin the process of creating a BIP for Student A. Prior to developing a BIP with the school psychologist and team, data was collected to complete the FBA.

Once the FBA and BIP were completed and implemented, I could identify how my teaching and professional practice had changed as a result of this process. I learned to implement a FBA based on target behaviors and then develop a BIP to reduce the rate of these behaviors. I now efficiently and effectively am able to maintain organized daily data collection among team

members (after implementing the FBA) to ensure proper behavior management that is consistent across all settings and environments. My knowledge and application of explicitly modeling and teaching expected behaviors consistently has changed. I have learned that there is no skirting around the issue of developing a more formalized plan for a student with significant behavior concerns. Even though implementing and developing an FBA/BIP takes a lot of time and team effort, students with significant behaviors definitely benefit from consistent implementation of BIPs.

Prior to the FBA/BIP, I led constant team meetings to review Student A's behavior concerns. We trialed over 20 strategies/tools to attempt to decrease the behaviors. It is clear now that these trials were used inconsistently across team members, and did not change student behavior—teams need to clearly define the target behaviors and develop a formalized plan (BIP) to consistently implement on a daily basis in order to see behaviors change in the student. As soon as the team began working on the same target behaviors, the student's behaviors started to improve as he learned there was a pattern for positive behavior and a reward attached to it (e.g. computer time, shootin' hoops', reading with the principal, special jobs-picking up mail, etc). I now have set very explicit and clear expectations within Student A's positive reinforcement incentive chart: cooperate, follow directions, complete work (all addressing the target behaviors of non-compliance and body positive not indicating engagement per the BIP). Depending on how well Student A does with his daily incentive chart, he earns more rewards for his positive behavior on a daily basis, (no longer a 2-3 week basis).

In addition, I learned that instead of trying to fix all the small, to me, frustrating behaviors, it is best to target a couple and work for improvement on those. I found that other behaviors also began to decrease. I learned that in order to make the student's BIP most effective, it is important to continue to collect data and track any changes in behaviors or the function of the behaviors. If there is a change in the function of behavior it is important to revise the BIP to make it the most effective in managing the student's current behavior/s. Lastly, and most important, I learned that it is crucial that not just the special education teacher (me) implement the behavior plan but rather the entire school team should follow a consistent approach in order to be most effective.

As a result of my new learning, my new teaching and professional practices have had a positive impact on my students' performance both behaviorally and academically in several ways. Following the development of Student A's FBA/BIP and implementation of his positive reinforcement incentive chart, I began spending much more time on his direct instruction of academics and learning. Therefore, his progress began increasing both academically and behaviorally. One example of his behavior improving was his demonstration of consistent compliance with adult requests and directions both during Special Education services out of his classroom as well as within the classroom setting. The frustration levels have greatly decreased in both me and Student A as I now have clearly taught and set expectations as well as provided him with daily feedback on his positive reinforcement incentive chart. Additionally, verbal descriptive feedback such as "You are SO smart!, I am so proud of you...are you proud of yourself?!, What an awesome job you just did! Keep it up!!". Student A now understands, across all settings and adults that he works with, that when he chooses to engage in negative behaviors, he will lose out on his daily

reward/s as well as the verbal praise he so desires to receive for reinforcement. Additionally, Student A has now learned and continues to apply strategies to help himself when he becomes frustrated during the school day with the increasing difficulty in work load and certain events during the day that are non-preferred tasks (i.e. writing times or math lesson). Some examples of strategies Student A has learned to help him during challenging times include: a sensory diet, the use of a cushion and therapy band on the chair in his classroom. In addition, specific times have been scheduled for motor movement breaks. These breaks include: wall push-ups, animal walks, floor tile jumps, Theraband pull-a-parts, jumping jacks, squats, trampoline jumps, shootin' hoops, etc. Other calming strategies Student A has learned to utilize include: laying under a weighted blanket, sipping cold water from a water bottle, and deep breathing techniques.

With continued use of the positive incentive system and reinforcing Student A's use of de-escalating strategies, he began performing in a more productive and positive way on a more consistent basis (4 out of the 5 days each week would be positive and productive performance days compared to only 1 out of 5 days prior to the BIP). As the weeks progressed, I noticed the positive impact my explicit teaching and modeling of behaviors had on Student A's learning and development of acceptable behaviors. At Student A's parent-teacher conference, I was delighted to hear that the parents had begun to implement a similar plan at home as well. This reciprocity from school to home has made a large impact on his performance as well. I realized that I had previously missed a large portion of how I can enable my students to be successful during instructional times both in the resource room and in the general education classroom. Once Student A began to internalize and generalize these sensory strategies and consistently practice these expected behaviors on his positive incentive chart, he was able to complete lesson objectives and assignments more successfully because he knew what was expected, how to start the activities with less distractions and/or avoidance, and less adult prompting for appropriate behaviors. As a result, the need to model sensory strategies and appropriate school behaviors has decreased and he is able to accomplish more on his own academically, thus achieving greater independence in his performance at school.

As I reflect about how I may capitalize on this new learning experience, I have learned a very clear distinction between where my teaching and professional practice was and where it is now. Previously, I neglected to explicitly model and teach expected behaviors to Student A as well as my other students. This caused frustration for both Student A and me. I now understand the importance that implementing a FBA led to selecting target behaviors to monitor with clear data collection/measurement across all educational environments (including art, gym, library, music, etc), and developing a BIP which led to the implementation of a positive reinforcement system are crucial components to a successful school experience. Expected behaviors for some students are not automatically learned, they must be explicitly taught, reinforced, and monitored. Looking towards the future, my plan is to begin collecting clear/measurable data when a student begins showing significant behavior concerns. After collecting and analyzing the data, I will meet with my school based team and propose that a potential FBA/BIP might be needed. Next, I will ensure that the targeted expected behaviors are clearly modeled with role playing to assist students in relating to, applying, and eventually generalizing and internalizing. Finally, I will continually reinforce and monitor students' behaviors with a positive reinforcement incentive system that is linked to the BIP and facilitate an understanding of expectations to see what areas that

may need re-direction or additional role played situations for.