Introduction to the Behavior Pathway

The Basis for Understanding Behavior and Behavioral Supports

Produced by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Behavior

Updated 7/12/2023
Self-Advocacy
Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.

Family Partnership
Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.

Specially-Designed Instruction
Teacher's design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.

Research-Based Instruction
Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.

Multi-tiered Support
Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.

Inclusive Activities
Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.

Transition Support
Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.
Disclaimer

The resources shown are designed to provide helpful information. Resources are provided for instructional use purposes only and do not constitute NYSED endorsement of any vendor, author, or other sources. To the best of our knowledge, the resources provided are true and complete.
Who Are We?

• The Office of Special Education (OSE) Educational Partnership is a coordinated and cohesive network focused on enhancing services and improving outcomes for students with disabilities and providing effective support for educational organizations (EOs) and families.

• Regional Partnership Centers (RPCs) and Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Centers are in each of the 12 regions of NYS and their own teams of specialists provide coordinated, direct supports and services to the EOs within their region.
Today’s Facilitators
Participant Introductions

• Name
• Role
• District
• School
• Population Served
## Training Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>BEHAVIOR</th>
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<td>BE RESPONSIBLE</td>
<td>✷ Take care of your personal needs</td>
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<td>✷ Return on time and quietly</td>
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<td>✷ Sign attendance sheets / complete eval. form</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✷ Participate with an open mind</td>
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# Virtual Training Expectations

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Objectives

• **Identify** the components on the Behavior Pathway and how you can use it to understand why behaviors occur

• **Develop** a working definition/elevator speech for each component on the Behavior Pathway

• **Explain** the different types of function of behavior and how each of the components on the Behavior Pathway leads to identifying the function

• **Apply** the new knowledge learned on the Behavior Pathway to one of your students
Agenda

• What is Behavior?

• Overview of the Behavior Pathway
  - Behavior
  - Antecedents
  - Consequence
  - Setting Events
  - Function

• Closure and Wrap-up
Slide Marker Icons

- Activity
- Handout
- Poll
- Discussion
- Reflection
- Action Plan
- Vetted/Policy
What is Behavior?

Learned
• Culture, Context and Experiences

Teachable
• Alterable, Change or Shape

Meaning
• Function, Purposeful, Why
Behavior Is Like An Iceberg

What we see: Behavior (10%)

What we don't see (90%)
The Behavior Pathway


5. Function
Behavior
The Behavior Pathway

Problem Behavior

1. Problem Behavior
   Behavior(s) that cause a concern

2. Antecedent

3. Consequence

4. Setting Event

5. Function
Problem Behaviors

Identified problem behaviors must be:

• **Observable:** The problem behavior must be an overt action that can be seen

• **Measurable:** The problem behavior can be counted, timed or otherwise quantified

• **Defined:** The problem behavior must be stated so clearly that it passes the “stranger test”—that is, it can be accurately documented by a person who is unfamiliar with the student

When descriptions of problem behavior meet these criteria, we say that the problem behavior has been operationally defined.
Which term is *observable* and *measurable*?

Aggressive—OR—hits with fist

Bullies—OR—takes objects from peers

Arrives at class 10 minutes late—OR—irresponsible

Out of seat 55% of time—OR—hyperactive

Inappropriate language—OR—curses

Off task—OR—not oriented to teacher or task
Example: Defining the Behavior

**Flopping:** Having any part of the body (other than feet) on the floor, without permission.

**Examples:** Falling out of chair; dropping to floor in hallway; sitting on floor

**Non-examples:** sitting on floor with permission; stomping feet; running away
Example 2: Defining the Behavior

**Talking Out**: Any verbalization made by the student that was not initiated by the teacher and/or distracts others from the assigned tasks in the classroom.

**Examples**: Answering a question directed to another student by the teacher; saying a swear word; talking when the teacher is giving directions

**Non-examples**: Answering a question that the teacher directed to the child; yelling to another student during recess; talking with a peer during group work
Are these observable and measurable?

- Gets out of desk and hits other students
- Has separation anxiety (from parent)
- Is spacey
- Refuses to follow adult directions
- Is emotionally disturbed
- Displays low frustration tolerance
YOUR TURN

Activity: Defining Behavior

Purpose: to build fluency in operationally defining behavior.

• Directions:
  ▪ Using the four examples of problem behavior on the next slide...
  ▪ Determine which of the statements provides an observable & measurable definition of the behavior
  ▪ Make sure it passes the “stranger test”
  ▪ Please write the letter(s) in the chat box
YOUR TURN
Activity – Share Out

A. Jeff makes noises when the teacher is providing instruction
B. Hailey is constantly of task during math
C. Kevin sits at his desk with his head down, when given a prompt to start work
D. Brenda is physically aggressive in the cafeteria
Is the behavior...

Observable?  
Measurable?

Does the behavior pass the “stranger test?”
Examples of “operationally defined” behavior...

- Refuses to follow directions
- Destroys classroom property
- Leaves the building and run towards the road
- Refuses to enter the classroom
- Throws chairs
- Bangs head against the wall
- Puts head down on desk
- Refuses to start assignments
- Disrupts instruction with repeated vocal outbursts
- Flapping, flicking, and spinning
- Bites self or others
- Violates personal space
Joe’s Behavior Pathway

Joe throws his pencil, rips his paper and curses loudly.
Joe’s Behavior Pathway

Problem Behavior

1. Problem Behavior
Throws pencil, rips paper and curses loudly.

2. Antecedent

3. Consequence

4. Setting Event

5. Function
Antecedents
The Behavior Pathway
Antecedent

4. Setting Event

2. Antecedent
Preceding conditions that trigger the problem behavior

1. Problem Behavior

3. Consequence

5. Function
Antecedents

Essential Characteristics

• Antecedents **trigger** or **prompt** behaviors

• They are **observable** and **measurable** characteristics of the environment.

• They are **present in the environment** prior to the occurrence of the behavior.

• They have a directly **functional cause/effect** (if this, then that) **relationship** to the occurrence of a target behavior.
Antecedents

Examples

• **Location** - density of people, type of lighting, noise level, size of room, unfamiliarity.

• **Activity** - non-preferred, long, boring, lengthy, passive.

• **Task** - difficult, new, number of errors made, length (trials), physical effort required.
Antecedents
Examples Continued

- **Instruction** - pace, number and types of prompts, response opportunities, teacher proximity, availability of teacher attention or schedules for other forms of reinforcement.

- **People** - teacher directives, verbal/non-verbal prompts, tone of voice, past experience, unfamiliarity.
## Antecedents

Examples and Non-Examples

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<th>Non-Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher directive</td>
<td>Uninvolved parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent work longer than 10 minutes</td>
<td>Unmotivated student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise volume</td>
<td>Auditory sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical proximity of Mrs. Jones</td>
<td>Angry, sad, frustrated (emotions)</td>
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Example...

When given a teacher directive to begin independent work *(antecedent)*

Travis will remain off-task, leave his space and engage his peers *(problem behavior)*.

*Does the antecedent meet all antecedent criteria?*
Given a directive to provide an answer during large group instruction, Tomeka looks away and does not respond.
Joe’s Behavior Pathway

Antecedent

1. Problem Behavior
   Throws pencil, rips paper and curses loudly.

2. Antecedent
   Given double digit math problems

4. Setting Event

5. Function

3. Consequence
Consequence
The Behavior Pathway

Consequence

4. Setting Event

2. Antecedent

1. Problem Behavior

3. Consequence

Events that occur after the behavior because of the behavior

5. Function
Consequence

Essential Characteristics

• They are either:
  - Observable and measurable reactions in the environment, or
  - Create an internal state of pleasure or remove an internal state of discomfort (e.g., automatic reinforcement of stereotypical behavior)

• They occur following behavior

• They are functionally related to behavior in that a behavior is said to elicit/evoke the consequence, or cause the consequence to occur

• Their functional relationship to behavior may also be said another way -- consequences that are elicited/evoked by a given behavior may, in turn, sustain or strengthen that behavior (reinforce), or weaken or suppress that behavior (punish)
Consequences Shape Behavior

Consequences can **decrease** the likelihood a behavior will occur again in the future under the same or similar environmental conditions (e.g., punishing consequences)

Consequences can **increase** the likelihood a behavior will occur again in the future under the same or similar environmental conditions (i.e., reinforcing consequences)
Consequence

Examples

• Examples of behavior **sustaining** or **strengthening** consequences:
  - Teacher attention (smiles, prompts, scolds)
  - Peer attention
  - Being ignored or left alone
  - Being sent away
  - Getting a toy, or a good grade
  - A satisfying level of physical activity
YOUR TURN
Activity – Identifying Consequences

• During recess, when peers tease him, Ben hits his peers, and they leave him alone

• During reading, when asked to read aloud Tracy tells jokes, the other students laugh, and she is sent to the office

• During circle time, when praised Jessie starts crying, the teacher stops circle time and comforts her
Joe’s Behavior Pathway

Consequence

1. Problem Behavior
   Throws pencil, rips paper and curses loudly.

2. Antecedent
   Given double digit math problems.

3. Consequence
   Sent to the Principal’s office.

4. Setting Event

5. Function
Setting Events
The Behavior Pathway

Setting Event

1. Problem Behavior
2. Antecedent
3. Consequence
4. Setting Event
Events that affect the reinforcement value of the maintaining consequence
5. Function
Setting Events

Essential Characteristics

• Examples of behavior sustaining or strengthening consequences:
  
  - They can be **environmental**, **social**, or **biological** in nature
  
  - They are present **prior** to the occurrence of the problem behavior
  
  - They **increase the probability** the antecedent will trigger the behavior by increasing the anticipated value of the reinforcing consequence
Setting Events Strengthening and Weakening

Setting events temporarily affect the expected reinforcement value of the consequence.

When given an apple (antecedent), hunger due to missed breakfast (setting event) increases the likelihood Bob will eat it (behavior) because doing so will be especially rewarding (consequence).
YOUR TURN
Activity – Identifying Setting Events

• Fatigue (lack of sleep)
• Previous conflict
• Time of day
• Hunger (lack of food)
• Illness
• Transitions
• Staffing pattern
• Changes in other environments (parental relationships, moves, deaths)
• Medications

Which of these are:
- Environmental?
- Social?
- Physical?
Setting Events
Examples and Non-examples

• Examples:
  ▪ Previous arguments with staff
  ▪ Bullied on bus ride
  ▪ Arriving at school with incomplete homework
  ▪ Headache
  ▪ Morning conflict at home

• Non-Examples:
  ▪ Birth order
  ▪ Autism Spectrum Disorder
  ▪ Emotion dysregulation
  ▪ Poor social skills
  ▪ Low academic ability
  ▪ Race/Ethnicity
Setting Events

Additional Examples using Scenarios

• Kevin is more likely to put his head down and close his book during 7th period English classes

• Kyrie is more likely to refuse directions to remain in his seat at the library table and use profanities when Steph, LeBron and Josie are also present in the library

• When Carla has spent the weekend at her father’s house, she is more likely to argue with Mr. Jefferson and refuse to follow his directions during Monday “Do Nows”
Joe’s Behavior Pathway

Setting Event

1. Problem Behavior
   Throws pencil, rips paper and curses loudly.

2. Antecedent
   Given double digit math problems

3. Consequence
   Sent to the Principal’s office

4. Setting Event
   Bullied during the AM bus ride

5. Function
Function
The Behavior Pathway

Function

1. Problem Behavior
2. Antecedent
3. Consequence
4. Setting Event

5. Function
The type of reinforcement the behavior achieves for the student
Reinforcement Theory

• Reinforcement always involves delivery of a consequence that sustains or strengthens the behavior

• Reinforcement maintains or increases the likelihood the behavior will reoccur again under similar conditions in the future
Possible Functions of Behavior
(Or the various ways reinforcement can grow and sustain a behavior)

- Positive Reinforcement
  - Obtain/Get Something
    - Stimulation/Sensory
    - Adult
  - Social
  - Tangible/Activity
    - Peer

- Negative Reinforcement
  - Escape/Avoid Something
Hypotheses

• All *Get/Obtain* functions are said to fall under the **positive reinforcement** hypothesis

• All *Escape/Avoid* functions are said to fall under the **negative reinforcement** hypothesis
Common Functions of Behavior

• **TO AVOID/ESCAPE:**
  - Peer attention
  - Adult attention
  - Difficult task
  - Boring task
  - Easy task
  - Physical demand
  - Non-preferred activity
  - Reprimands
  - Sensory stimulation

• **TO OBTAIN/GET:**
  - Peer attention
  - Adult attention
  - Desired activity
  - Desired object/items
  - Sensory stimulation: auditory, tactile, etc.
YOUR TURN
Activity – Identifying Function

• When told to work with a partner in science, Steve tears up his assignment and stomps his feet. The teacher then has Steve return to his desk, and he completes the same assignment, while the rest of the class works together with their partners.

• What is the function of Steve’s behavior?
Joe’s Behavior Pathway

Function

4. Setting Event
Bullied during the AM bus ride

2. Antecedent
Given double digit math problems

1. Problem Behavior
Throws pencil, rips paper and curses loudly.

3. Consequence
Sent to the Principal’s office.

5. Function
Escape non-preferred Tangible/Activity (Negative Reinforcement)
The Behavior Pathway Components

4. Setting Event
Events that affect the reinforcement value of the maintaining consequence

2. Antecedent
Preceding conditions that trigger the problem behavior

1. Problem Behavior
Behavior(s) that cause a concern

3. Consequence
Events that occur after the behavior because of the behavior

5. Function
The type of reinforcement the behavior achieves for the student
Pause and Think!

• What questions might you still have?

• What is one new concept or idea you have learned from this training?

• Is there still something you need more information on?
Objectives: How did we do?

Are you able to:

• **Identify** the components on the Behavior Pathway and how you can use it to understand why behaviors occur

• **Develop** a working definition/elevator speech for each component on the Behavior Pathway

• **Explain** the different types of function of behavior and how each of the components on the Behavior Pathway leads to identifying the function

• **Apply** the new knowledge learned on the Behavior Pathway to one of your students
Thank You!