



Function Based Thinking (FBT) is a proactive model for thinking that uses an evidence-based, systematic process to observe and define problem behaviors which lead to the selection of the most appropriate interventions to match the function of the behavior. While Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) have been widely used for students who require a behavior intervention plan, a framework does not exist to serve students who may need minimal support. FBT can be a valuable tool for understanding the actions of all students in a classroom.

(Hershfeldt, Rosenberg & Bradshaw, 2010)

Be Ready to understand the "why" of FBT as a framework. Intervention strategies may either make behavior worse, have no effect, or improve behavior. A classroom built on the principles of FBT:

- Initially asks if the student is trying to obtain or escape something
- Empowers the general education teacher
- Supports students with mild/moderate behavioral issues
- Requires minimal support and behavioral expertise
- Aligns contextually to the general education classroom
- Provides opportunities for adult and student self-awareness

In order to **SET** up an environment which prevents a continuation of challenging behaviors, the general and special education teachers should first understand "what" the four steps in the process of a FBT framework include. An individual using FBT should use the acronym ABC (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) to identify the function of a behavior and apply appropriate interventions.

- **Identify Behavior:** *Behavior* (B) should be observable, measurable, objective, and specific. The definition should pass the "Stranger Test" - Individuals unfamiliar with the student should be able to observe the behavior with the same frequency as the general education teacher (Wright, 2010).
- **Gather Information:** The teacher should review pre-existing data in which the behavior occurs more frequently. This information will lead to the prediction of the Antecedent (A), the when, where, and with whom a target behavior is more likely to occur, as well as the Consequence (C), or what occurs immediately after the target behavior.
- **Develop and Implement a Support Plan:** Based on the data collected, a teacher-driven support plan should fit contextually within the classroom. Once a functionally equivalent replacement behavior has been identified, strategies for the antecedent and consequence should be determined in order to "surround the behavior."
- **Evaluate Outcomes:** According to W. Edward Demings "without data you're just a person with an opinion" (Panjandrum, 2014). Continuous monitoring of the progress should occur and necessary adjustments made as a result of questioning the impact the support plan has on student behavior.

(Jeffrey-Pearsall, 2016)

For more information about "how" to incorporate the four steps of the Function Based Thinking process, **GO** to:

- [Asking Why? A Function Based Approach](#), published by Pennsylvania Department of Education, includes a video, transcript, and slides regarding the use of a Function Based Approach to dealing with behaviors in the least restrictive environment.
- [Functional Behavioral Assessment: Identifying the Reasons for Problem Behavior and Developing a Behavior Plan](#), published by the IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University, provides information, scenarios, and activities within the Perspectives and Resources section which addresses the four steps in the Function Based Thinking process.
- [Function Based Thinking Training Guide](#), by Loman, Strickland-Cohen, and Borgmeier is a training module inclusive of activities to practice defining observable behavior, how to identify antecedents, answer the question of why the behavior is occurring, and construct a hypothesis statement.

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This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff of the VDOE TTAC at James Madison University. For questions about content, please contact [Amber Knighting](#) , [Jacki Nickel](#) , or [Cathy Cook](#) call 540.568.6746.

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